

TOWARDS A TEXTUAL SITUATION ANALYSIS OF POLITICS

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THE GREAT DEBATE

Philosophically motivated debates between objectivism and subjectivism have characterized all along the line the history of social sciences not only in Western Germany, but also in Great Britain, the United States and France. In France the debate has taken a »modified« form, because existentialism and phenomenology must be characterized as »subjectivism in objectivism« and structuralism must be characterized as »objectivism in subjectivism«. Subjectivism in objectivism refers to the subject-centered reflection on »being-in-the-world« and objectivism in subjectivism refers to the objectified search for (unconscious) linguistic structures.

The present French (as well as British) discussion within social sciences includes emphatic attempts to override the artificial oppositions between subjectivism in objectivism and objectivism in subjectivism. Many different solutions have been presented, such as Alain Touraine's and Pierre Bourdieu's. Derrida's de-constructions can also be read (Benoist 1970, 31–54) as a novel intervention in this debate, and a very serious one, too.

If we wish to bypass the numerous blind alleys that are constructed by the traditional object subject speculations, it is tempting to try to benefit from Derrida's de-constructions. It is, however, difficult to follow Derrida if we still want to represent the research object in constitutive terms. Derrida argues namely that the future of his grammarology ». . . can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, presented as a sort of monstrosity.« (Derrida 1976, 4)

It is difficult to break absolutely with constituted normality and line up with Derrida's »monstrosity«. I think that Mike Gane — in his exceptionally

penetrating article on Derrida — is right in claiming that »The danger in fact that faces, or seems to face, Derrida in the absence of topography . . . is precisely the delirium of the Hegelian type, however much it is apparently faced and overcome in *Outwork* . . . for in the end without the Marxist or Freudian topography, Derrida seems destined to become the governor of a distant Byzantine province: *an exarch*. (Gane 1982, 218) Because such a topography is lacking in Derrida's works, the Derridan dialectic bears the danger of becoming »a delirious formalism inhabiting a ghostly medium created by itself.« (Gane 1982, 210)

It seems correct to claim that various efforts to constitute a pre-given social totality have turned out to be ineffective. This claim does not exclude all mediations, i.e. »practice«. It is quite interesting that Derrida also emphasizes the value of practice: »In order to define writing, the gram, *différance*, the text, etc., I have always insisted on the value *practice*. Consequently, everywhere, from this point of view, that a general theoretical-practice of the »signifying practices« is elaborated, I have always subscribed to the task thus defined.« (Derrida 1981, 90)

The task is set, but Derrida again avoids constitutive intentions. And Mike Gane again encapsulates Derrida's own exteriority: »Thus it is possible to see that Derrida insists on the *principle* of the pure difference as an exteriority that cannot be experienced (though it is experienced as a nothing) and therefore has no conceptual content. It is for these conjoint reasons that grammarology, overdetermined politically and theoretically, must be thought as a practice without an object.« (Gane 1982, 215) A practice without an object is not constitutive practice, but a play.

There are, today, numerous political and social scientists who stress the constitutive role of difference in solving the artificial oppositions created by the subjectivism—objectivism debate. Some of them also want to situate Derrida within their own project as a source of inspiration for making good use of the idea of *différance* as the constitutive principle. (Gane 1982, 218) This kind of appropriation of Derrida's contribution is, however, deceptive, although as such these efforts are very worthy.

Derrida does not develop the constitutive character of *différance*, as he wants to break absolutely with constituted normality. This conclusion, of course, does not imply that the constitutive character of *différance* could not be taken as a basis for the theorizing of the social complexity, but then we also loose sight of the Derridan discourse — or look beyond him.

In this article I have set myself the task to analyze the constitution of the political-being-in-the-world or being-in-the-political-world, but I will only present an introduction. I shall interpret being-in-the-political-world as an

aspect of the social complexity perceived as a textual situation. I am aware of the overwhelming difficulties that result from conceiving the social complexity as a unitary object, a pre-given totality. This is the reason why I shall proceed in the direction of differential and conjunctural analysis and shall also try to make good use of the constitutive character of difference.

DOUBLE-CONSTITUTION

How is the research object of a social analysis to be distinguished from all the different aspects of being-in-the-world? Can it be accomplished in the domain of social science analysis itself? I do not believe that. If it could be done, we were to regard social science analysis as an autonomous science in the sense that it totally informs its materials through recourse only to itself (and to no other science) (Veyne 1982, 179), and thus it would in a sense be historically closed.

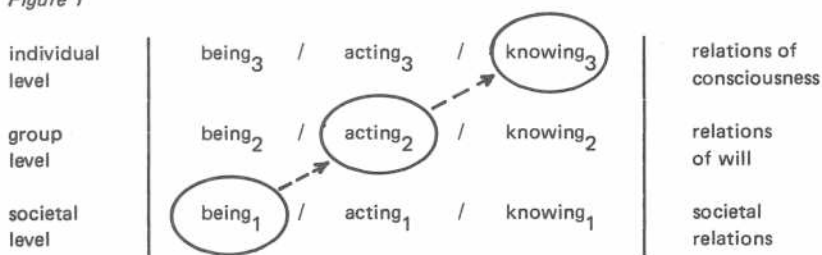
A science can inform its materials through recourse to itself or alternatively to other sciences. While speaking so, I do not mean the explanation of facts as such but the introduction of the subject-matter as facts. When I emphasize that a social analysis, and any branch of science for that matter, is not historically closed, I mean that it can specify its research object only in relation to other sciences.

It is possible to speak about *double-constitution*. Double-constitution characterizes sciences that are not considered as autonomous. When social analysis is considered as doubly-constituted, it means that it is also informed about its subject-matter as facts through recourse to subject-centered sciences such as psychology on the one hand, and society-centered sciences such as anthropology on the other hand. Double-constitution certainly does not mean that social sciences should seek explanations for its subject-matter outside its own domain, but precisely the opposite: the idea of double-constitution evades all kinds of epistemological reductionism. Double-constitution means that at the same time the field of social phenomena has to be constituted from two opposite directions: from society to individual and from individual to society.

If the field of social phenomena is or should be doubly-constituted, it is not difficult to understand why there are so many constitutive debates going on in the social sciences: in these debates one kind of reductionism is being opposed to another kind of reductionism. There is no need, here, to describe these various pairs of oppositions, because it is easy to find thorough descriptions and discussions of them in the social sciences literature.

A human subject is multi-definitional. A human subject as a social being is also multi-definitional. He is simultaneously a societal being, a collective being and an individual being; he belongs to a specific society, to a multiplicity of mass human groups and he is an intentional individual. Furthermore, a social subject is not only a being subject, he is at the same time an acting subject and a knowing subject. These modes of social existence are also multi-definitional. This multi-definitionality of his existence can be schematized in a simple «existential map» (Figure 1):

Figure 1



In this «existential map» being₁, acting₂ and knowing₃ have been circled because at the societal level societal relations (being₁) determine the mode of social existence, at the group level relations of will (acting₂) determine the mode of social existence and at the individual level relations of consciousness (knowing₃) determine the mode of social existence. The «multi-definitionality» of the social subject does not mean that social practice could be divided into the respective levels. Social practice is the real mediation in the social world, it is unitary and links together both being, acting, knowing and societality, collectivity and individuality.

SOCIALIZATION VIA SYMBOLIZATION

Two problem fields have to be distinguished: *constitution via formation* and *constitution via realization*. Constitution via formation proceeds from society to individual and constitution via realization proceeds from individual to the societal level. This does not mean precisely that constitution via formation would refer to the social constitution of an individual and constitution via realization would refer to the constitution of a society by individuals. To exemplify this, let us take a look at the constitution of a subject.

The social subject *as an individual* is constituted not only via formation,

determined by his societal and collective context, but also via realization, determined through the effects of his own intentional activity. A specific subject is not born as a ready individual, but a historically specific society is always already present. A specific subject is born into a historically specific society and is socialized in this society. It is interesting to glance at an individual's socialization process seen primarily as the constitution of a subject via formation.

Paul Valéry has said, that »One is born manifold and one dies single«. Simone de Beauvoir very interestingly reflects on this statement and reasons that this is not at all the way she sees it herself. She also notes that Bergson, like Valéry, emphasized that in fulfilling ourselves we lose most of our potentialities. (Beauvoir 1979, 39) It seems to me, however, that Valéry does not necessarily have to agree with Bergson. One does not have to die single, i.e. lose one's potentialities, because he has been constituted via realization, but because he has been constituted via formation or because he has been socialized into society. Evaluating singleness or manifoldness is then quite another question.

Manifoldness can be asserted to mean that one's conception of the world is not critical and coherent but disjointed and episodic, one's personality is composite. This is why Antonio Gramsci concludes that to criticize one's own conception of the world means therefore to make it a coherent unity. Gramsci seems to think that one dies manifold, if he does not realize himself via criticism, if he just belongs simultaneously to a multiplicity of mass human groups, if he stays a man-in-the-mass or a collective man, a conformist. (Gramsci 1978, 324) It can, however, be argued that realization via criticism opposes singleness and opens up an intellectually sceptical, i.e. manifold perspective.

There is another person who cites Paul Valéry with pleasure: Jacques Lacan. Lacan's ideas are most interesting if we want to look at the constitution of a subject via formation. Lacan emphasizes the idea that structures as symbolic orders are already present, they have been constituted, before the infans subject enters into them. Symbolization is the process which runs through phylogenesis, ontogenesis and sociogenesis. The process of symbolization is that which ensures the passage from nature to culture via the psychic. The infans subject localized in time and in space, localized in a situation, simultaneously realizes ontogenesis and sociogenesis. (Lemaire 1981, 63–64) This is one interpretation of the double-constitution.

The central role Lacan attaches to the symbolization process emphasizes the status of language. Lacan states that psychoanalysis is language. In the Lacanian thought language is considered as the condition of the unconscious,

and the unconscious is structured like a language. It is via language that the infans human subject constitutes himself. Language is thus the precondition for the act of becoming aware of oneself as a distinct entity.

»To speak of the self is to fix one's attention inward; to speak of social and political things is to direct one's attention outward«, Marvin Zetterbaum claims. (Zetterbaum 1982, 59) This is how »modern thinkers« approach the meaningful existence of self. In Rousseau's time the authentic, natural man was introduced. Rousseau asks: »How can man, who is by nature himself something entire, be brought into conformity with a completely different entirety of the société politique?« (Rousseau 1950, 211)

Before Rousseau's time man was defined only from the standpoint of something external to himself. (Löwith 1967, 305) It is Rousseau's contribution that he observed the opposition between man and artificial (social) man, the opposition between self and society, the opposition between amour de soi (love of oneself) and amour propre (vanity or pride arising out of comparison of oneself with others) (Zetterbaum 1982, 61), the opposition between interior and exterior. It could be argued that Rousseau also brought about a reconciliation between the natural and the social man. (Zetterbaum 1982, 63) This conclusion can also be contested. It is the opposition of self and society and the »romantic critique« of society by means of the authenticity of a »solitary self« which is Rousseau's main concern. The mediation, not necessarily reconciliation, between the two has been until today a topical problem. This is a problem which Lacan also tackles.

LACAN: CONSTITUTION OF THE SUBJECT

Lacan's presentation begins with his theory of the Mirror-stage, a child's (of six to eight months) self-recognition in the mirror (in the mother). The mirror-stage prefigures or preforms a child's access to the Symbolic confronting him first with the imaginary (the Image), which precedes the Symbolic. The actual transition to the (triadic) symbolic order takes place in the Oedipal drama, in the Oedipus.

The Oedipal drama is the source of the recognition of the Other (the Father as Law and Speech is the representative), the differentiation of the Self and the Other, the distinction between interior and exterior. It is language – as symbolic register or third order – which establishes mediate relationships between self and society. (Lemaire 1981, 57) But »any mediate relationship imposes a rupture of the inaugural continuity between self and self . . .« (Lemaire 1981, 68) One may now talk about the loss of the authenticity

of the solitary self. Lacan himself talks about »the division of the subject» (the »Spaltung»). This argument implies that accession to the Symbolic produces the loss of an essential part of the subject, since in the Symbolic the subject can be no more than represented or translated. (Lemaire 1981, 68) In Rousseau's words: amour de soi turns into amour propre.

For Lacan the constitution of the subject via formation is analogous to the constitution of the subject by accession to the Symbolic. In linguistic terms this means that the human being is rather a consequence of the symbolic order (signifier) than its cause: »The signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier». From this perspective, the subject should not be looked at as creating the symbolic order, which is already always present as family, culture, society; he reacts to it, he has no hope of gaining a total mastery of it. The infant subject is submitted to the symbolic order his only alternatives being to constrain himself to it or to fall ill. (Lemaire 1981, 68)

Lacan's language is psychoanalytic just like his psychoanalysis is linguistic. He is motivated to (psycho)analyze those subjects who have, in fact, failed to enter into the symbolic, who are ill. If the subject enters successfully into the symbolic, if the outcome of the Oedipus is favourable, he can distance himself from his surroundings by naming the thing (the Real) with the symbol, he can mediate the self and the thing with the symbol. The subject can also fail to enter (completely) into the symbolic. This happens if the subject remains prisoner of the imaginary. Lacan calls this inability to distinguish and correlate between signifier and signified »foreclosure» (Verwerfung), which is conducive and co-responsible for psychosis. Lacan distinguishes »repression» from »foreclosure». »Repression» is conducive to neurosis. In the case of neurosis the subject has already entered into the symbolic, but he has lost sight of the signifier's referential value, he represses his symptom's signified. (Lemaire 1981, 227–234)

The Lacanian perspective is not only psychoanalytic and linguistic, it also belongs to the realm of social sciences and social history. The Lacanian perspective opens up a methodological possibility to trace an (infant) individual's societal constitution via formation as a passage through the symbolic order. Lacan's approach emphasizes the importance of the pre-verbal stage (Mirror-stage) and the formative role of the Oedipus. It also tries to go beyond the Oedipal drama and reach an individual's socialized existence as being-in-the-world mediated by language. Lacan's approach is positive, because he differentiates the societal mechanism, i.e. the symbolic order, which constitutes an individual's objective thought-forms. Lacan's distinctive merit is in pointing out *how* an individual's societal and genetic constitution via formation takes place.

STRUCTURALIST DILEMMAS

Lacan not only wants to describe how an individual's constitution via formation takes place, but also why it takes place in a certain way. Lacan's interest or ambition extends, however, even further than this. His ambition is characteristic of the »structuralist« programme.

Lacan's structuralist ambition points in two directions. On the one hand, there is the search for the hidden unconscious structures of society, on the other the emphasis on »structuralism« as thought without thinkers. (Kurzweil 1980, 228) In the first direction Lacan »follows« Lévi-Strauss, who wants to lay bare the unconscious, mental structures, which would be culturally universal. When Lévi-Strauss analyzes tribal myths, Lacan analyzes an individual's conscious and unconscious symbolic thought, but both emphasize that the universal structure or core of cultural and societal forms is the Oedipal unconscious. The followers of both Lévi-Strauss and Lacan co-operated for a while to prove their masters' point with sophisticated techniques, but »failed«. (Kurzweil 1980, 146) This »failure« was basically caused by the ahistoricity of the structuralist approach. This kind of counterargument, of course, is not a very novel one, but still valid.

The ahistoricity of the »structuralist« programme compels its practitioners to neglect defining the historical specificity of the discourse. This negligence applies to the Oedipal structure itself: the temporal universalization of the role of the Oedipal structure annuls the possibility to define its actual range of constitutive competence. Due to Lacan's ahistoricist perspective, he never really cares to analyze what is the historical specificity of the symbolic order as the »given« socio-cultural symbolism. Lacan's whole emphasis is laid on the »timeless« presence of Father and Family as representatives of any society and any law. Lacan is able to conceptualize an individual's sociogenesis, the transcendence of natural order by the adoption of culture, but he cannot conceptualize genesis in a society.

Lacan's discourses are dialogues between »timeless« nature and »timeless« culture in an individual's maturation process. The ahistoricity of Lacan's approach is linked with the »symbolic determinism« of his explanatory scheme. According to Lacan, an individual's fate, destiny, acts, refusals, are, in the last instance, determined by the displacement of the signifier. This kind of deterministic thinking is manifested in that Lacan pays altogether too little attention to an individual's constitution via realization. The constitutive role of an individual's resistance or criticism is bypassed or almost totally offset by the keen interest in an individual's alienation or falling ill, which for Lacan seems to be the only form of individual opposition. Lacan's »symbolic

determinism» is especially fatal if one's research topic happens to be in the political dimension. Lacan never actually reaches this dimension in his analysis. The possibility which Lacanian analysis might open to intervene in an individual's socialization process, cannot be regarded as politics in the strict sense.

Lacan's great merit is that he denounces naive rationalism, the philosophy of the supremacy of mind and consciousness over the whole phenomenal field of human experience. Lacan's great merit is that he denounces naive empiricism, the philosophy of the supremacy of sensation and observation over the whole phenomenal field of human experience. Lacan's great merit is that he looks at the constitution of individuality from the perspective of how a human being is subjected to external and pre-existing symbolism, and how there is an interplay between *doxa*, opinion, and *episteme*, knowledge, in this constitution — or an interplay between *savoir* and *connaissance*, as Foucault might say. Lacan's analysis of the constitution of individuality is, however, problematic due to its »structuralist« ambition to represent thought without thinkers and to represent thought without thinking (innovation). In both cases the subject is seen as absolutely de-centered from himself. These cases actually coincide in the »structuralist« programme, because it is argued that the symbolic order or structure itself speaks about itself or reveals itself by itself: the object itself constitutes the method of analysis of itself. The result is that it is rather difficult to approve an analysis which cannot be applied to itself, which is not self-reflective. This dilemma forces us to take a more moderate or traditional view on social being and consciousness.

INDIVIDUAL AND TEXTUAL DISTANCIATION

Being and consciousness can be seen as a unity mediated by practice. But practice itself poses problems. These problems always and again take the form: what is the beginning? Is there at the beginning a word or a deed? This is what Johannes and Faust asked; this is also what Marx asked. Marx answered like Faust: »In the beginning was the deed.« In the very beginning, people have acted before thinking. This a practico-materialist answer to the dilemma.

What and where is the beginning and who are concerned? In the quoted case Marx is interested in representing how the universal equivalent (money) is constituted practically by the action of society. We could also go back in history to the time when the human being is constituted practically, and ask an analogous question: is the first the word or the deed? The answer might

be: the first is the deed, which refers to the raising on two feet and freeing one's hands.

»In the beginning was the deed» is not, however, a sufficient answer, because before the deed there is the contradiction between intention and action. There is no beginning without prior practice. In the quoted case Marx argues that the opposition between use-value and value is latent in the nature of commodity. The need to give an external expression to this opposition for the purposes of commercial transactions produces the drive towards an independent form of value, which finds neither rest nor peace until an independent form has been achieved by the differentiation of commodities into commodities and money. (Marx 1976, 181)

Marx's representation poses now two critical questions. First, how is all this need and drive possible if thinking does not precede doing? Second, if we interpret that (in the beginning) people act before thinking, does this not also lead to antihumanism?

There is no need to give different answers to the above questions. The answer is connected with the fact that there are objective thought-forms, *real-abstractions*, which do not only belong to the individual thinking but are significations of the societal level. At this level, people may have acted *spontaneously* before thinking, but they have still been guided in their action by objective thought-forms. Because the societal level is at the same time the level of an individual's everyday life and consciousness, the necessary precondition for an individual's self-reflection is that he distanciates himself from this everyday spontaneity. This can be called *individual distanciation*.

If an individual has to distanciate himself from his everyday consciousness (from »himself») in order to know who and where he is, this seems to imply that either the world must be »metaphysical» in a real sense, the world must be upside down (die verkehrte Welt) just as the analysis of fetishism emphasizes, or we have to be ourselves »metaphysical» in a real sense, we have to be upside down, in the sense that we have an unconsciousness, just as psychoanalysis presents. It would be, now, a most interesting question what is and what can be the relation between these two forms of analysis. Do they mutually exclude or support each other? If they support each other, will the »metaphysicality» of the real world seem more or less conspicuous than before?

The »metaphysicality» of the world (or of us) could explain why we do not have to end up with antihumanism, although we consider that, in this world, people often act before thinking. People, who are guided by objective thought-forms at the level of their everyday life, are living in the world of real appearances (reales Schein). The world of objective thought-forms is

real, because individuals have the possibility to take part in its concrete practices at the level of their everyday consciousness. The world of objective thought-forms is apparent because it hides the constitution of these practices from the participants at the level of their everyday consciousness. The question of humanism must now be approached from this perspective.

It can be argued that the essence of humanism is to trust people and that a humanist programme should be based on this trust. But we have to ask what could be such a humanist programme, which did not reflect the conditions of its own realization. If the practico-materialist viewpoint considers that in certain (historically specific) circumstances people act before thinking, this is not an antihumanist standpoint but a critique of those forms of thought, which are real but prevent the realization of a humanist programme. The »humanist« standpoints, which do not reflect the conditions of realization of their own programme, are quite ahistorical and utopian.

The historicity of a humanist practice is a central question to Marx. In this connection Marx speaks about the end of the prehistory of man but not about the end of history. Marx means that not until man is the master of his own destiny, in the sense that he thinks (plans) before he acts, can the real history of man begin. Marx situates the beginning of this rupture to that period in history where this world, i.e. capitalism, is overcome, but he certainly does not think that the goal is a state of affairs where there is nothing left to be done. One never reaches such a point, because the end of history can only be the end of us all.

Practice (acts, actions, activities) can never be historical so that there could exist past practices, *practice as such is always present*. The form of the present practice can be determined by a symbolic order (information) which is present as *traces* of the past. Traces, not practices, bridge past and present and future. These traces are, again, products of constitutive practices, they are historical as significations.

Social practices leave behind significations as traces and traces of traces. These traces carry meanings. It is in this sense that social life exists only via meanings and can be comprehended only via meanings. But it cannot be reduced to them, because practices carry or mediate meaning.

Meanings (significations) can be read as *texts* telling about those acts and actions, which carry them. Texts cannot be artificially detached from actions and subjects. But actions (practices) take place in time, which instantly runs away from the moment of the subjective act and there is left only a trace of the act. An intentional act is the point where texts come into being with the birth of meaning. But at the very moment of the act as event there is already a *distanciation* between intention and text. Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1977,

135–151) has especially emphasized this fact. The *textual distancing* means that traces of practices sediment one on top of another into a *symbolic order*. The »meaning that endures» is a meaning which is sedimented in a historically specific text. Acts do not ride on time but meanings as traces do ride on time: meanings (significations) are materialized in texts which bridge past and present. The textual distancing as sedimentation of significations explains why texts themselves seem to speak to their readers. The more the texts seem to speak themselves, the more they are distanced from the context of their original production.

When I speak about texts, I do not mean just writings. All kinds of significations as traces of practices can be read and studied as texts. When I speak about reading, I do not mean something like browsing through these lines. I mean perception in an existential situation. The more distanced or sedimented the texts are, the more compulsory it is to read them.

People must always read, in their existential situation, the most distanced texts (objective thought-forms). The more the texts are distanced, the more difficult it is for people to notice that they are reading them and determined by them in their action: these texts themselves seem to speak to the listeners. Reading a text and not noticing what one is doing means that one does not notice the possibilities there are open via practice for changing the circumstances. It means that one is not individually very distanced from the text. In other words: one is not very apt to articulate that which is already articulated.

TEXTUAL SITUATION

In the previous pages I have looked at how constitution via realization takes place in time as textual sedimentation and textual distancing. I have also tried to outline how a social scientist has to articulate that which is always already articulated. (Mehtonen 1982, 244) He has to distance himself individually from the sedimented text if he does not want to be »a prisoner of textually given prejudices». This requires characterizing the relation between historicity and meaning (signification).

Texts are historicist because they are sedimented, they are distanced to a different degree. On the other hand, existing practices are always present, there cannot exist past practices but only traces of them as a symbolic order which determines the form of action. This setting can be visualized in a very simple way (Figure 2):

Figure 2

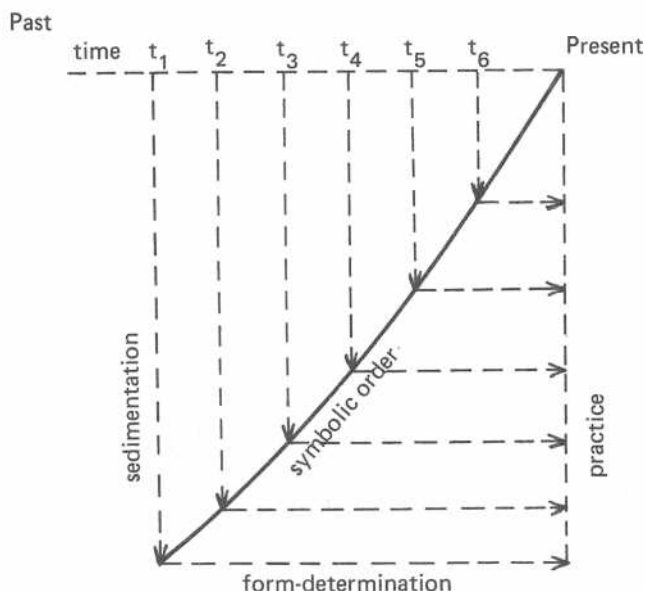


Figure 2 is a very simplified and idealized description. It roughly illustrates how traces of a real historical process sediment into a whole hierarchy of significations in layers. The historically earliest traces build up the base of the hierarchy of significations. This hierarchy of significations in layers makes up a symbolic order, which determines the form of the present practices of individuals. Approaching social being and action via symbolic order implies that one has quite an unconventional conception of the present, and of history for that matter. The present is not just conceived as a point (t_7) in linear or chronological history. It is conceived as a *situation*, where the past and the future are also present via the symbolic order. The present as a situation can be visualized as the pyramidal domain which the symbolic order and its projection into the future draw on both sides of the practice-axis.

The present is a situation which the symbolic order, and its projection into the future distinguishes. It is now possible to explicate what I mean by the »multi-definitonality» of the subject. As said before, in practice the subject is one and cannot be de-centered from it. The »layered architecture» of the symbolic order, however, makes up a historicist context, which constitutes the subject at many levels.

In the »existential map» an individual's constitution via formation was sketched to take place at the individual, collective and societal levels. These three levels can be interpreted as belonging to different layers of the hierarchy of significations. At the societal level, the subject is constituted via objective thought-forms, whose historical endurance is longer than that of collective or individual thought-forms, which simultaneously constitute the subject at the collective and individual levels. Objective thought-forms (such as the fetishistic thought-forms) endure the whole history of capitalism (commodity-production). The collective thought-forms (such as the different class-ideologies) also change inside the historical period of capitalism. The individual thought-forms (such as the specific ideologies produced by a special intellectual labour) change conjuncturally.

A subject's practice is one, the layers of the symbolic order are many. All the layers penetrate a subject's everyday life. None of them resides somewhere beyond (jenseits) a subject. Because a subject is simultaneously constituted at different levels, via genetically different thought-forms, it is very arbitrary to typologize him in one or some formal category. He lives in a »paradoxical space». This »paradoxical space» offers differential possibilities for a critical analysis of his social being. He is able to distanciate himself individually from the constitutive constraints of the different layers of the symbolic order to a varying degree. The more sedimented or textually distanciated the thought-forms are, the more difficult it is to individually distanciate from them. This fact explains why it is always more difficult to change those aspects of the social world which are reproduced via thought-forms of longer historical endurance. This last statement, of course, reflects the tautology of the real world.

POLITICAL SITUATION

The present is a situation that connects practice, meaning and historicity. A social science analysis of any given presence must be a textual analysis of the situation. Situational analysis challenges the idea of a pre-given unity, but it does not lapse into postulating a heterogeneous assembly of practices. A practice as mediator in the social world is always unitary. A symbolic order is differentiated and it should compel a researcher to look at the social world as differentially constituted. This is the sense in which one can and must recognize the constitutive role of difference without having to neglect the mediatory character of practice in the social world.

The differential nature of a signified situation requires that a researcher

has to specify the historical and constitutive limits of his textual analysis of a situation, one has to choose the temporal span (time-axis) and the spatial range (practice-axis) of his analysis. It is possible to do this in two ways: one can either specify the period in real history (e.g. capitalism) which he wants to study, or he can specify the form-determining character of a practice which he wants to analyze. In both ways one ends up specifying a signified situation with a determinate temporal span and constitutive range. In the previous case, where I spoke about societal, collective and individual levels, the specification was done in both ways.

It is possible and necessary to apply the textual analysis of a situation to political phenomena. There is no need, here, to speculate on what constitutes the «political» as an aspect of the social world. I shall just recognize that historical practices also have a political aspect and that traces of these practices sediment into an aspect of the symbolic order which, then, determines the form of the present action of individuals.

It is illuminating to illustrate a political situation by using the previous three-layered setting. In this setting the capitalist epoch is the temporal span of the signified situation, while its constitutive range extends to the societal relations of this specific historical formation. The differential constitution of this signified situation can be sketched by a very simply figure (Figure 3):

Figure 3

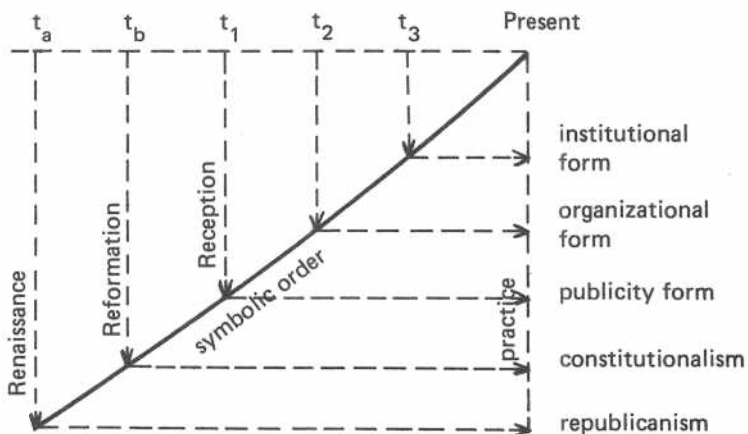


Figure 3 pictures three different time periods (t_1 , t_2 , t_3), which are the genetic contexts for definitely modern political thought-forms. With the passage of time these have textually distanced from the origin of their production and sedimented into the political aspect of the symbolic order which now determines the form of the present political practice. The three time periods are not given points in history. They are ruptural events taking their time.

In this figure I have also drawn two earlier ruptures (t_a , t_b), wanting to emphasize that the rupture t_1 is the genetic context for the conception of the modern bourgeois form of state. It should not be confused with the concept of early modern state (the absolutist state). The »Reception» takes place in the time period of t_1 . »The Reception severed modern from medieval history and facilitated the emergence of the idea of the state as the public institution acting in the name of public authority and the general interest.» (Dyson 1980, 42–43)

The Reception was preceded by the Renaissance (time period t_a) and the Reformation (time period t_b). The Renaissance was the period of the revival and actual systematization of republicanism (civic humanism). The Reformation (and Counter-Reformation) introduced the idea of constitutionalism. Both of these political significations – crystallized and sedimented in time – have an effect on the present political practice. But neither one of them determines, however, the basically modern form of bourgeois political practice. It is the sedimentation of the »receptionist» conceptions that does this.

The »receptionist» ideas emphasize the notion of a distinct and sovereign public power which is established by the people and which requires its own public law. (Dyson 1980, 40) The conceptions about the distinction between private and public and the doubling (Verdoppelung) of society into civil society and state are also »receptionist». The »receptionist» conceptions, represented by the modern classics of political thinking, sedimented around the late eighteenth century. K. Dyson rightly emphasizes that England was not deeply affected by the Reception although the Renaissance and the Reformation had already secularized the character of political affairs in England. (Dyson 1980, 42) But in France (in North America, and to a certain extent also in Prussia and Sweden) the late eighteenth century was a period of a great rupture, which the French Revolution originated. During this time the *publicity form* of the modern state crystallized. The publicity emerged and constituted the real political subject, the citizen.

The publicity form is the most general, enduring and adequate form of the modern, bourgeois state. It denotes that the state power is based on law (Staat als Rechtsordnung) supported by a public opinion. The publicity

form is conducive to citizen's political action which can, from now on, organize with a determinate goal to exercise pressure on the state apparatus.

The citizens' political practice is constitutive for novel political conceptions which start emerging in the nineteenth century (t_2). The novelty of these conceptions is linked with the demands to extend, enlarge and enforce the political rights of all political subjects including the working population, and later women too. This is a very slow process. It is not until the first half of the twentieth century that these radical conceptions and traces of radical political practices sediment into the *organizational form* of the modern integral state. The most crucial political decisions taken are the passing of universal and equal suffrage which can be interpreted as the real introduction of »bourgeois» political democracy. This is not a participatory democracy but a representative democracy (»bourgeois pluralism»). Its realization actually buries or bypasses many of the more radical values represented by supporters of direct citizen participation.

It may seem peculiar that the state apparatus, the institutional or administrative state, is the »final instance» to change its basic character in this historical process of ruptures. The explanation for this is the fact that the change has to be seen as two-fold; two »historical orders» have to be distinguished. One could speak structuralistically about paradigmatic and syntagmatic dimensions or about the historical order of different social formations and the historical order of a specific social formation. This would be a clue to the pertinent understanding of the question.

It is better to speak simply in terms of the past, the present and the future. We can distinguish between two things: the human beings *live time* and *live in time*. When we live time, as Heidegger would have it, time must be seen flowing from the future to the present. When we live in time, time must be seen flowing from the past to the present. In the first case the historicity of presence must be conceived via temporality. In the second case the temporality of presence must be conceived via historicity. How does this differentiation, then, determine the two »historical orders»?

When we live time, when the historicity of presence (Dasein) must be conceived via temporality, we »confront» our existential situation in terms of the future. It is the future that pushes the present into the past. It is here that we should find out what our possibilities are in changing the circumstances. When we live in time, when the temporality of presence must be conceived via historicity, we »confront» our existential situation in terms of the past. It is the past that pushes the present into the future. It is here that we should find out how we are constituted via our circumstances. These two »historical orders» intersect just as double-constitution implies. This is also what happens

in the case of the administrative state: it is the »final instance» to be thoroughly constituted via formation from the perspective of the past. It is the »first instance» which can be intentionally intervened from the perspective of the future.

There are two kinds of changes which the administrative state confronts. First, the administrative state is in a specific society an object of constant, rapid but piecemeal changes. They can easily be realized and they can be opposed to »revolutionary» ruptures which also happen suddenly but have an enduring effect. Secondly, the administrative state is also the »final instance» whose basic structure is moulded to correspond to the societal dynamism which has been established by the bourgeois revolutionary rupture. This institutional change has not taken place until after the Second World War. It is, now, described in all the discussions about state-interventionism, crisis of pluralism, arise of corporatism.

Con-textual analysis of politics and state should take careful notice of the differential constitution of a politically significant situation. I have, by way of illustration, tried to outline a differential constitution of the symbolic order, the different forms of the modern state, which determine the form of our present political action. This representation is not only roughly illustrative, it is also *idealized* and *simplified*.

The idealized character of the illustration depends on the fact that I have not paid any attention either to the temporal irregularities in textual distanciation (non-simultaneous facets of sedimenting practices) or to the significant differences in sedimenting practices (differences of mediators of sedimentation). Certain thought-forms of certain genetic origin »may be wintering» before they are found. Certain thought-forms are sedimented via different interests than were those of their original producers. There are always temporal and mediatory gaps and slips in sedimentation. The simplified character of the illustration depends on the fact that the uneven development in a society is not taken into account. The uneven development taking place in different spheres of a society is closely connected with the uneven tempo of sedimentation of heterogeneous »social information».

ARTICULATION OF THE ARTICULATED

Practice, historicity and meaning are connected in a signified situation. There is the problem of how to articulate that which is already articulated and not be trapped in the given symbolic order. I shall conclude this presentation with a few comments on this topic.

The problem has to be specified. The previous illustration can be approached in terms of one's being, acting and knowing. The existential map pictured the forms of determination in a three-layered situation. It can also be thought of in terms of the forms of the modern state. At the societal level of a symbolic order it is being that precedes action and thought, at the collective level of a symbolic order it is action that precedes thought and being but at the individual level of a symbolic order it is intention that precedes action and being.

The »multi-definitonality» of a subject can be considered as the mode of presence of a subject in a differential situation. The attributes of this mode of presence are being, acting and knowing. There are three difficulties that are inherent in this mode of presence: *the difficulty to be in a situation, the difficulty to change a situation and the difficulty to comprehend a situation*. These difficulties are interconnected. The difficulty to be in a situation is greatly affected by action- and knowing-horizons of a subject. One can feel uneasy in a situation if one is torn apart by divergent thought-forms, which do not facilitate consistent action. One may also feel satisfied in a situation, if one is not able to imagine a better alternative, if one just lives in time and not time.

The difficulty to change a situation has above been discussed. This difficulty concerns the revolutionary potential to change the sedimented thought-forms. The difficulty to comprehend a situation concerns the nature of our capabilities in individually distancing from the given symbolic order. From this position one cannot postulate that there is the »right» perspective on matters, which would be based on the constitutive position of the interpreter. But it emphasizes the three-fold fact: a person has to study society as a text; he has to look at this text from a distance to be able to »escape» from the domination of the »primary articulation»; a person has to specify his own constitutive position to be able to evaluate how he can see a signified situation or how he is motivated to see a signified situation.

Interpretation of a textual situation does not follow any simple methodological rule. Furthermore, the constitutive position of an interpreter conditions the interpretation of a text. It is even possible to claim that in a sense a person sees what he wants to. The interpretation of a textual situation is determined by an interpreter's *interests*. This can be understood in two ways. First, the interest of an interpreter always conditions the interpretation of a textual situation in a certain direction: the more sedimented the texts are, the more dominant the role of the interest is in an interpretation. Secondly, the role of the interest in an interpretation must be connected with the motives for interpreting a certain situation with a certain purpose. This

purpose or purposes can be selected in numerous ways. One possibility would be to speak in terms of being, acting and knowing. A person could have either an existential, actional or intellectual motive for interpreting a certain situation. This is again the case when we must speak about the constitutive role of difference.

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