5. The Reflexive Formation of Order in Approaches to the World

Allow me to recapitulate the outcome of the third and fourth chapters:

The embodied operators of triadic constellations exist in space and time. This means that embodied selves realize their boundaries by experiencing themselves and their state in a temporally structured way and by directing themselves out of their own center into the surrounding space of vastness. This space is potentially social in that the boundary realizations of embodied selves can touch each other here in a temporally structured way. The reflexivity of the overall structure is operatively realized in the taking on of the perspective of thirds on the encounter between embodied selves. The operations of order formation thus exhibit a triadically reflexive structure.

Ordering structures are formed in the different dimensions and made compatible in the practical executions of excentric, i.e., operatively triadic relationships between lived bodies and their environment. Structures are stabilized by being expressed in triadic constellations. It is in this sense that order formation follows the principle of mediated immediacy: in embodied relationships to the environment, sensibilities and practical references are formed and then stabilized by those involved expressing them for each other.

Within the social dimension formation of order is about determining the social undecidedness relation. On the one hand, this concerns how the borders of the personal sphere are drawn and on the other, whether embodied action centers exist as individuals or as dividuals, that is, as elements of groups. A wide range of entities can be involved in such order formation in an operatively fundamental way: spirits, animals, human beings, plants, gods, or others. What entities participate in an ordering system in a generally recognized way is subject to historical change. For an ordering system to become established long-term, the structure of boundary drawing and the other structures of order formation have to be stabilized in a compatible way. This also includes the institutionalization of a preference for either individualization or dividualization.

The formation of compatible social, spatial, temporal, symbolic, and substantive structures is made possible by different triadic constellations. Since space and time are considered to be particularly invariant as regards historical modification, I will begin with these dimensions of order. Starting from what is regarded—including by me—as the invariant structure of

embodied, spatial actors' relationship to their environment in modal time, we can identify at least the following differences: it makes a difference whether a relationship to the environment in modal time is oriented toward a duration and refers to a space of vastness or whether the embodied relationship to the environment is integrated into digital spacetime. It seems that only the first form of relationship between lived body and environment allows for the existence of spirits and makes possible an institutional preference for dividualization. Within ordering systems whose lived-body-environment relationships are primarily structured by digital spacetime, there is an institutional preference for individualization and such entities as spirits, according to current knowledge, do not exist as generally recognized social persons.

Symbol formation involves other differences in triadic relationships. Institutions and symbols are objectifications made possible and reproduced by triadic constellations. They are neither identical with the spatiotemporal order nor with the spatiotemporal ego-alter-tertius constellation. The symbolic dimension of order is thus neither spatial nor temporal and also differs from the social dimension. It has a historically variable structure of its own kind which guides actors in their relationships to each other. Although it is not identical to the spatial, temporal, or social dimension, the institutionalized symbolic order does not remain the same once and for all. It is based on an objectification made possible by the reflexive structure of triadic constellations and has to be actualized again and again. Tertius does not disappear in the objectified institutional-symbolic order; on the contrary, the objectification is generated and sustained by the the reflexivity-enabling tertiary perspective continuously being actualized by concrete thirds. Otherwise the objectified rule of institution/symbol formation could be arbitrarily applied and would thus no longer be a rule.

If the institutional and symbolic order is always tied to current executions in triadic constellations, the spatiotemporal structure of these constellations remains continuously relevant to the formation of institutions and symbols. Because it has to be maintained in embodied relationships to the environment, the institutional and symbolic order is not at a remove from spatiotemporal relationships. The spatiotemporal structures of triadic constellations and the particular institutional and symbolic structures can either support or destabilize each other.

The triadic, reflexively structured context can be traced back to two distinct observational units in which embodied action centers touching each other are involved: spatiotemporal triadic communication substantively related to a particular topic and substantively oriented, spatiotemporal, insti-

tutionalized composite acts. In spatiotemporally structured communication, participants express for and in front of each other whom they are affected by to such a degree that they are challenged to communicate and have to clarify what the substantive content of the communication is. While institutionalized composite acts are inconceivable without communication about content and about with whom communication is possible, they cannot be reduced to it. Institutionalized composite acts always include the embodied handling of things or the use of more or less advanced technology.

It is clear that these operative units cannot be isolated from each other. Institutions are integrated by communication, which in every partial act symbolically represents the relationship to the composite act as well as expectations regarding how the sequence of actions will unfold. Furthermore, instances of triadically constituted communication form the units of reflexive institutionalization processes/reflexive institutions and legitimations that connect institutions to each other.

In each of the individual executions, structural connections are identified, actualized, and explicated in relation to specific problems in a way that is sufficient for practical purposes. The overall context of spatiotemporal, substantive, and symbolic relationships forms a constantly present background of non-explicated expectations. These constitute a relatively chaotic quantity, i.e.: individual characteristics and individual, structurally relevant expectations or expected states of affairs are explicitly identified while all other structurally relevant expectations have a chaotic relationship to each other. In the case of the latter, it is undetermined what expectations in what dimension of order are at stake or who has them. In the case of disappointment, the non-explicated, not yet individually identified background expectations with an initially chaotic relationship to each other become isolated as individual, discrete expectations. Only then does it become clear what expectations exist and who has them.

Currently identified expectations or states of affairs point to a reflexively ordered form of communicatively supported institutionalization. Touch between ego and alter in the substantive and spatiotemporal dimensions takes place in front of or in reference to tertius and in the course of its implementation becomes objectified, that is, the validity of the rule-governed pattern is represented. This integrates the relationship into a symbolic context and allows for the formation and stabilization of spatiotemporal and substantive patterns. On one hand, diabolic symbolization becomes important here in its general limitation of communicative address, and on the other the formation of institutionalized composite acts, whose participants

symbolically represent and interpret each other for and in front of each other. In this way they clarify what a particular institution is about, what spatiotemporal structures it exhibits, and as whom ego-alter-tertius address whom, or as whom they interpret a symbolic gesture. In triadically structured communication, institutions of beginning and ending are established, connecting composite acts with each other and making possible the progress from one composite act to another.

Legitimations must be distinguished from institutions of beginning. The latter ensure the transitions between individual composite acts, while the former create normative and meaningful connections between composite acts and reflexive institutions, thereby also guaranteeing the legitimacy of limiting the circle of addressees and of particular institutional forms of individualization/dividualization. Legitimations are second-order reflexive institutions referring reflexively to first-order reflexive institutions (e.g., of beginning or of competition), which in turn refer to institutionalized composite acts. In the social theory I am developing here, violence is provisionally understood as the starting point for legitimations. Violent communication asserts the claim of explicating the norms of an ordering system in an immediate and at the same time generalized way, with "generalized" meaning that all the dimensions of order formation are involved. The generality of the claim to legitimacy asserted in violent communication includes the challenge to provide other legitimations. The only way for ordering systems not to become destroyed by their violently communicated laws is for violence to be rationally and procedurally regulated, structured in the form of procedures. Legitimations of enduring ordering systems therefore contain modes of representing the law that are themselves not directly violent.

The multidimensionality of order formation leads to a structured hypothesis that guides my analysis of individual processes of order formation:

1. We can distinguish typical orders of approaches to the world.
2. Each order of an approach to the world exhibits a specific *dia-symbolon* and associated symbols, securing the communicative context in a twofold manner: the *dia-symbolon* represents the boundary between social persons and other entities while the associated symbols safeguard communication.
3. Orders of approaches to the world are thus distinguished according to how participants represent themselves for and in front of each other in the triadic process of sociation. A fundamental difference is whether participants represent themselves for and in front of each other as indi-

viduals enduring across situations or rather as currently effective operators integrated into relationship networks, i.e., as dividuals.

4. The order of an approach to the world procedurally structures compatible violent communication.
5. The order of an approach to the world is characterized by compatible structures in the
   spatial dimension,
   temporal dimension,
   and substantive dimension.

I refer to the entirety of the compatible structures as the order of an approach to the world. Since there is great empirical diversity here, individual approaches to the world must be described by way of ideal types of ordering systems.

For this comparative approach to make sense, there have to be at least two differently structured types of approaches to the world. In view of my limited knowledge of ethnological and historical research, I hypothetically distinguish between three types of ordered approaches to the world. There are probably more.

A. The approach to the world of dividualizing sociation
B. The approach to the world of individualizing sociation
C. The approach to the world of multi-sociation

This classification supplements or replaces the pervasive distinction in sociology between segmentary, stratified, and functional differentiation (Luhmann [1997] 2013:chap. 4).[96] Here is how I see the difference between these two kinds of typologies of society: the differentiation I'm proposing is guided by the ways in which the social undecidedness relation is determined in the social dimension and how this is supported by structures in the other dimensions of order formation. The traditional distinction, by contrast, emphasizes the ways in which a society is broken down into social subunits. My approach of analyzing approaches to the world understands these subunits as the differentiation of an ordering system into subuniverses.

I introduced the notion of a "universe of meaning" in the context of symbol formation and reflexive institutionalization, above. Berger and Luckmann begin their analysis of symbolic universes in relation to the problem of legitimation. They are addressing a problem here that emerges

96 Luhmann also distinguishes between "center/periphery" here as a possible form of differentiation. He ultimately, however, holds to the threefold division when describing dominant forms of differentiation.

from their theory of institutionalization. According to this theory, different institutions are created in the process of sociation, without, however, there being an institutionally backed guarantee that individual institutions will be compatible with each other. Their compatibility, the authors argue, is achieved by the institutionalization of meaningful coherence between the institutions. Berger and Luckmann refer to this process as "legitimation" (Berger and Luckmann [1966] 1991:110ff). Legitimation ultimately leads to the institutionalization of an overarching symbolic universe that organizes all processes of institutionalization taking place at a given time into a coherent nexus. In the context of the theory I am putting forward here, the problem of coherence, at least that of normative coherence, is solved by the procedural order of violence. It is by means of this procedural order that processes of institutionalization are presented as being normatively coherent, which in turn makes ordering systems into legitimized ordering systems. The way in which the ordering system is legitimized is closely tied to the formation of the respective *dia-symbolon* and the spatial, temporal, and substantive structures compatible with it.

Ordering systems can be internally structured into sub-universes of meaning. Whether and in what way such an internal structure is possible or necessary for the survival of the ordering system is an empirical question. In other words: this question will have a different answer depending on the ordering type.

Thinking in terms of different sub-universes of meaning makes sense if these also exhibit the characteristics of a specific approach to the world. I.e., sub-universes form a specific *dia-symbolon*, specific procedural structures of violence, and compatible structures in the substantive, spatial, and temporal dimensions. Since the formation of sub-universes is also part of overall order formation, an order can only become stabilized if its structures and those of the sub-universes are sufficiently compatible. Here it can be enough to communicate that the structures of the sub-universe are restricted to it alone and that there is no claim to validity for the overall order. The order of multi-sociation is broken down into numerous sub-universes, such as religious universes or those of economy, politics, science, and so forth. The different sub-universes are compatible insofar as the claim to general validity is limited for each of them. Within a religious universe, for instance, it may be obligatory to believe in a certain god and only in this one. This reference to the beyond, however, is not binding for everyone, and at the same time it must be made clear that this reference is also not binding for the structuring of other universes of meaning. In this way, very divergent universes of meaning can coexist.

As long as law is secured directly by violent communication, a differentiation into sub-universes of meaning is rather unlikely. This is because violence makes demands on the embodied action centers involved in a direct and comprehensive way and mobilizes them for the maintenance of the overall order. The procedural aspect of the representation of the legitimacy of the overall order has to have become foregrounded for the differentiation of an order into sub-universes to become possible. From this we can deduce the following rule: the closer to violence procedural representations of law are, the less likely that sub-universes will evolve.

5.1 Dividualizing sociation

I derive the term "dividualization" from the works of Marilyn Strathern. She argues that the Melanesian concept of the person does not refer to an individual, but to a dividual, who stands in relation to others without forming a closed unit (Strathern [1988] 2001:269f). Her example allows me to work out the key characteristics of the ideal type of dividualizing sociation.

Strathern follows Leenhardt, who was first to point out the distortion involved in conceiving of Melanesians as individuals who have relationships with other individuals. The individual here is rather fully absorbed in the plurality of its relationships.

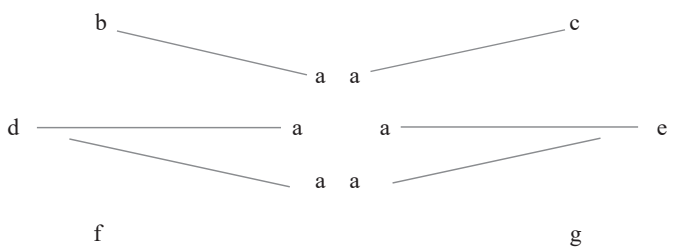

Figure 3: The Melanesian dividual according to Leenhardt ([1947] 1979:154)

According to Leenhardt, the circle formed by the small "a" in fig. 3 describes an empty space where an I could be, but, within the framework of

the Melanesian conception of the person, is not. Instead of an individual, there is a cluster of relationships. "The lines correspond to him and his father, him and his uncle, him and his wife, him and his crosscousin, him and his clan, and so forth" (Leenhardt [1947] 1979:153). Strictly speaking, the center does not contain an individual actor but a representative of a group. "To understand what I am writing here, it is necessary to visualize the Melanesian social landscape. A young man is never encountered alone but always in a united group of 'brothers' maintaining the same relationships as a unit with other groups" (Leenhardt [1947] 1979:153). Thus every small a is the replication of a group member in relation to the replications of the elements of another group, for b, c, d, e, f, and g are not individuals either, but relationships in a network without nodes.

The missing I is symbolized in Leenhardt's figure by the circular formation of the small a's, which enclose an empty center.

It is here where Strathern intervenes critically into Leenhardt's model: the circular formation, she argues, indicates that Leenhardt is still holding on to the idea of the I. In Melanesia, however, there is no empty space pointing to an absent I. There are only particular actualizing events that create connections between groups.

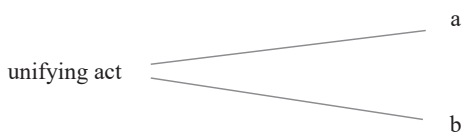

Figure 4: The Melanesian dividual according to Strathern ([1988[2001:270–275)

Strathern uses the model represented in fig. 4 in an attempt to understand actors' obligations to act.

> Two relationships are involved, with the agent as pivot; they form, we might say, an analogous pair. This follows from the fact that as a person the agent is always socially distinct from the cause; and in acting for or because of the cause also acts with reference to other causes. The wife who grows food for her husband does so 'herself' because she is separated from him by her own ties with her natal kin. Thus she acts with reference to 'two kinds of men' – her spouse and her siblings. In short, an agent who acts with one person in mind is also acting with another in mind. (Strathern [1988] 2001:274)

This model modifies Leenhardt's perspective in two ways. For one, Strathern argues that an actualized relationship here is not an isolated dyad, but rather a "recursive duality" (Strathern [1988] 2001:274). This relation, however, would be more appropriately described as triadic. The unifying act only connects the actor with "a" insofar as a connection with/separation from "b" is created at the same time. The second modification is that the triadic structure is created in each particular execution. It is only a specific actualization that creates the unit that is connected with the other two corners of the triangle and thereby also generates their connection. What we would call an individual consists of a multitude of such relations. It is in this sense that Strathern speaks of the Melanesian dividual as created by specific, currently executed relations. Considered in terms of the spatial and temporal dimensions, this can be described as the specific, current embodied execution of individual triadic relations, without an agent/actor referring to himself as an I, or as a permanent action center.

It seems unlikely that Strathern's description of the way in which actions are caused is exclusive to Melanesia. What she describes quite precisely reproduces notions of perspective-taking in, e.g., the theory of symbolically mediated interaction. Situating these notions in a triadic concept—which Strathern's work makes virtually unavoidable–can lead to either an individualizing or a dividualizing relationship of actors to themselves. In triadic communication, actors can represent themselves in front of and for others as a permanently addressable action center and interpret others accordingly. But those involved can also reference themselves and each other merely as current points of execution of a temporally continuous relation rather than as permanent action centers.[97]

And yet the triadic constellations described for Melanesia exhibit peculiarities that do not quite fall into line with a homogenization of this kind. For one, experience in the Melanesian context is structured by reference into an unstructured space of vastness. Leenhardt describes this space as "discontinuous" (Leenhardt [1947] 1979:45), by which he means that it cannot be understood in terms of continuously measurable, three-dimensional extension. Unstructured space of this kind also contains "deified ancestors" as well as spirits. This space can even be structured into regions to which one can direct oneself or from which something comes, such as the islands where the deified ancestors live, "Bolotru Island for the Fijians or Suné Is-

97 Without referencing the temporal dimension, LiPuma (1998:56ff) objects to Strathern's account by pointing out that "dividualization" and "individualization" occurs in both Melanesia as well as modern Western societies.

land for the Solomon Islanders. We may believe these islands unreal, and in fact they are. But the Melanesian considers our geography, and not his own mythic world, unreal" (Leenhardt [1947] 1979:45f). The existence of unstructured spaces of this kind must be taken into account if we are to understand the triadic executions of communication described by Strathern. Considering the spatiotemporal characteristics of triadic constellations immediately makes obvious the differences between this perspective and the pragmatistic concept of perspective-taking. These differences are based in the fact that embodied actualizations in modal time and directional space are integrated into a duration and contain a strong emphasis on the space of vastness. This gives triadic relations a particular character, which can be shown by looking more closely at individual phenomena.

> Parallel to male initiation is a rite for girls. Gimi girls are betrothed before puberty, and at her first menses the bride is 'initiated' by men of her husband's clan. They take male spirit from their forest and deposit it in the female. She drinks ancestral semen (river water) and eats a spirit child (a marsupial encased in sugarcane and vines, a penis). These objects are forced on her. If she does not eat these foods she will not bear her husband's children. Childbirth becomes testimony to male efficacy. (Strathern [1988] 2001:112f)

Strathern adds the following in an endnote: "This is also a sociological issue: the male spirit that the bride has within her is paternal in origin. It must be driven out and a 'spirit child' from the husband's clan substituted in its stead" (Strathern [1988] 2001:359).

Neither Strathern nor her source Gillison explains in more detail how the ancestors exist in the forest in space and time. Given Leenhardt's analyses, it seems likely that spirits and ancestors exist in unstructured space, i.e., in space that is extended but not measurably so. Regions or places can be located in such a space with effects of their own without being measurably extended. In terms of time, spirits must be thought to exist in duration. Ancestors, or their spirits, exist in the forest and it is undetermined whether they are in the past, the present, or the future. As these enduringly existing thirds, they are introduced by the men of the clan into the body of the bride by means of certain substances. This separates her from the—also enduringly existing—spirits of the paternal clan. Instead of them it is now the spirits of her husband's clan who are at work in the bride. This constellation is marked less by a continuous I as it is by continuous relationships mediated by spirits.

Only if this restructuring of triadic relationships is successful will the woman give birth to the children of her husband, i.e., her husband's clan. Giving birth to children is proof that the restructuring of triadic relationships was successful. It demonstrates that the woman's relationships in modal time and directional space have become integrated into unstructured space and the duration of clan existence. When the woman will have given birth, it will have been shown that the spirits of her husband's clan are successfully at work in her. This very nicely illuminates the structure described by Strathern above: the bodily activity of the woman—giving birth—documents that, and in what way, she generates the separation from/connection to two kinds of men: separation from her father's clan and connection to her husband's clan. It also becomes evident that it would be a simplification to only point here to the bride taking on the perspectives of different groups and of these social relationships working in her. It is not just the matter here of the currently living men in her father's and husband's clans, but also of her relationship to the spirits of both of these clans who are at work in her as a result of the infusion of substances. These extracted her from the space and the duration of the paternal clan and introduced (or forced) her into the spatial relationships and the duration of her husband's clan. Strathern points several times to the violence that is part of carrying out the ritual. In this constellation, it is more the relationships between the clans that are seen as enduring than it is an individual person.

The "unifying act" (Strathern 1988:276) expressing the success of the ritual, and thus the separation/connection, is birth. Birth is thus conceived as a communicative act that concludes the ritual by qualifying it as successful. It does not make sense to me, however, to describe the communicative execution of giving birth as an action. The concept of action is strongly tied to an orientation toward either value or instrumental rationality. Most significantly, however, it is possible to intentionally refrain from performing an action. That, however, is not the case when a birth is induced by spirits. It makes more sense to me to understand giving birth here as an event that is endured with the lived body, an event that opens up a future and thus also a past. The birth creates a relationship to the future insofar as with this event, the woman/the child are integrated into the duration of the husband's clan; conversely, the birth creates a relationship to the past by symbolizing for everyone involved that the woman's relationship to her father's clan has been cut. This makes the birth, an event that accentuates the embodied here and now of the present, into a valid communicative interpretation of the bride's initiation ritual into the clan of her husband.

In the context of my discussion of the social dimension, above, I referred to Schmitz's semantic analysis of the *Iliad* in order to elucidate the variability and difference of experiences of the lived body. According to Schmitz, there is no word in the *Iliad* that designates the body as a unit. The body is a "togetherness of limbs" or a "heap of limbs." The body is not experienced as having an impulse center, but rather sources of movement that can be distributed in the chest area, the knees, the hands, and so forth. The body is not a continuous unit; instead there are embodied implementations in the present that consolidate the limbs/sources of movement (see Schmitz [1965] 2005:§ 79). Even the heroes in the *Iliad* cannot really be referred to as individuals. They are dividualized in their lived bodies; they do not have a unified, continuous action center that could be described as an I, a soul, or the will of the person. Analogously, we could speak for the Melanesian person of a togetherness of relationship-instituting substances that serve as motivation or create a receptiveness to be motivated.

The substances have to be brought together/separated: the substance connecting the bride to her father must be removed from her and the substance relating her to her husband's clan must be introduced into her. This makes the bride receptive to the relational demands made by her husband's clan. The relational substances arranged into an unstructured space and duration create connections to all manner of entities—to men, to children to be born, to the earth, to plants, to spirits. The togetherness of the relational substances is actualized depending on the situation, without explicative reference to an I, to a continuous action center. There are triadically reflexive implementations in modal time, but the excentric selves involved do not make reference to themselves as continuous I's. In terms of modal time, individual relationships are actualized here and now and others pushed into the background. But no I that would outlast the current relationships is explicated along with this. In other words: no I is explicated in the triadic implementations as which the involved embodied selves could find themselves in different social relationships. Instead the relational substances and their effectivity are explicated in the communicative implementations.

Taking the triadic concept of communication as our starting point also allows us to engage with Descola's criticism of Strathern:

> However, without denying the existence of a theory of a "dividual" person in Melanesia, we should bear in mind […] that that theory coexists alongside – or is in some situations supplanted by – a more egocentric conception of a subject; and there is no evidence to suggest that this theory is a product solely of European colonization. […] [I]t is safe

> to accept as a universal fact the form of individuation that an indexical consciousness of the self renders manifest and that is reinforced by the intersubjective differentiation that stems from the use of "you." (Descola [2005] 2013:117f)

This criticism is based on the fact that an individual actor linguistically refers to herself as "I" and to her counterpart as "you." The question now is how to think about this reflexivity. I have already shown that pragmatism considers it to be the individual actor's reflection of herself. Starting from this assumption would mean having to retract part of Strathern's analysis. If, however, we assume that reflection of oneself is a triadically mediated reflexive execution, the linguistic particles pointing to "I" refer to the starting point of current embodied executions. This, however, does not yet entail a stabilizing explication of an "I" that is tied to its body and is thus made up of "interiority" and "physicality" (see Descola [2005] 2013:116f). Sharing this premise of Descola's would, far from being "safe," run the serious risk of obscuring the reflexive structure of Melanesian explicative executions. For here, as Descola himself admits, "the principles that constitute one particular body…are distributed outside of it" (Descola [2005] 2013:118).[98] Given this, the reference expressed in the first-person particles merely refers to the current point of execution of dividuality. This point is the current mediation, executed by means of reference to spirits, of the continuous relationship between groups. The distribution between interiority and physicality does not exist in reference to the individual but, if at all, in reference to the triadic constellation of communication. Descola cannot take Strathern's analysis seriously because he does not allow the assumptions guiding his observations to become unsettled.

As is the case with all other structural elements, the I is only stable and only exists insofar as it is explicatively represented. Thus all we can say is that there are current executions in modal time, unifying acts, but there is no I. Different enduring relations, the relational substances, are explicated in the triadic executions. As we will see below, individualizing sociation explicates an I that outlasts situations and that is expected to take responsibility for its actions.

The close connection between the *dia-symbolon* and the procedural ordering of violence clearly emerges within the framework of dividualizing

98 Translation significantly modified. For some reason, the published English translation eliminates reference to distribution outside of the body entirely (translator's note).

sociation. The connection between individual groups contains a specific form of the procedural structuring of violence that takes place by means of the circulation of gifts. This corresponds to Girard's second form of the channeling of violence (see above) as it incorporates violence into the reciprocal obligations between groups. Different actors are included in this reciprocality as active, operatively fundamental units: human beings, spirits, tame and untamed animals, and plants. The exchange of gifts is a current execution, a unifying act in Strathern's sense. The success of the exchange is represented in the consumption of the exchanged goods. Consumption—and here too I follow Strathern—is an interpreting, unifying act, by means of which social relationships as relationships in the here and now are integrated into the space and duration of group existence (Strathern [1988] 2001:289).

The exchange of gifts and the consumption of goods play a key role in the channeling of violence. The reciprocality of the social relationships and the connections between the social actors are represented in this exchange. The exchange of gifts connects to each other and, as a *dia-symbolon*, designates those who are to be recognized as social actors. A disappointment of the expectations of reciprocity in the exchange of gifts threatens the overall context connecting the individual activities with each other. This makes it likely that the expectations disappointed in the exchange of gifts will be represented by violence. The established and intensive exchange of gifts has a double effect: it both channels and leads to violence. In his overview of violence and war in Melanesia, Knauft cites Gordon and Meggit's ethnography, beginning his quote with a statement by a Melanesian followed by an interpretation by the ethnologists:

> "We make Te [ritual exchange of gifts, GL] first and then we fight." This adage can be interpreted in two ways: one clan builds up alliances through the Te and then attacks the enemy; or Te transactions inevitably cause bad relations between groups because of inadequate exchanges or defaults that generate excuses for their engaging in warfare. On the surface the Te enables people to establish friendly relations, but in the process it creates potential conflict that lurks beneath the surface of sociality, or actual disputes. (Gordon and Meggit 1985:149 cited in Knauft 1990:277)

In the exchange of gifts, relationships are executed in triadic constellations here and now and are thereby also integrated into the space/duration of group relationships. If expectations of reciprocity are violated in the exchange, this leads first to verbal conflict over whether these expectations

should be maintained or whether there should be a shift to learning. Such disputes are nothing other than reciprocal criticism by means of which the expectations are identified that must be held on to counter-factually. They serve to explicate the norms of the ordering system. If the violation of the expectation of a fair trade is situatively experienced as dramatic enough to threaten the reciprocity of the exchange of gifts, the necessity of holding on to these expectations counter-factually has to be represented in a generally binding way. Thus criticism and justification of the current exchange of gifts transition into violent communication, i.e., the exchange of gifts leads to war between those who can direct normative expectations at each other. This violence routinely leads to fatalities and can even end in downright slaughter. If they are not able to flee, all members of the enemy clan, not only the able-bodied warriors, are killed. Since reciprocity also applies to slaying, violent communication has the tendency to become perpetuated in an unremitting series of blood feuds that characterize many societies in New Guinea.

There are also ways, however, of stemming the impending spiral of reciprocal violence by institutionalizing the reflexive institutions of power and influence. To the extent that such institutions develop, so-called "big-men" become established. These big-men have a following within the framework of established networks. Big-men inhabit a political position of leadership, within their group and in relation to other groups. They have the power to escalate conflict or to secure peace. Their power can appear particularly great when they are able to limit conflict and avoid war (Knauft 1990:289ff).

Attempts to explain the prevalence of violent communication by rational factors in the modern Western sense fail. The ecological hypothesis, according to which dense settlement leads to a struggle over land, is not tenable; deadly conflicts occur equally in thinly populated areas. The plurality of involved actors also diminishes the persuasiveness of this explanation. The land of the defeated—that is, killed and banished enemies—cannot be taken over because the spirits who live there and are connected to the vanquished cannot be expelled in the same way. So as not to incur the vengeance of the spirits, the victors avoid settling on the land formerly inhabited by the murdered groups (Knauft 1990:270). If there were no spirits, the human actors of Melanesia could act according to Western assumptions about rationality. The fact that there are spirits is connected, as I have shown, to the different structures of space and time of this ordering system which this example allows us to see more clearly. The space of this ordering system cannot be defined in terms of measurable extension, but it can

be subdivided into distinct areas. The unstructured space where the spirits of the enemy exist can be distinguished from the space where the spirits of one's own group exist. These are two distinct areas that are differentiated from each other in a vague way, e.g., "beyond the river" or "behind the hills." The space of the area itself is relatively chaotic, in the sense of chaotic variety. Areas can be further differentiated into individual places, such as "behind the hill by the three trees." Spatial structures of this kind are distinguished by their practical relevance. They indicate where to go in order to find something or what places to stay away from in order not to encounter someone, e.g., a spirit. But it is not the matter here of an extension in the sense of a three-dimensional, measurable extension (see Schmitz [1967] 2005:§§ 134, 137–139).

The ordering system of dividualizing sociation shows some initial differentiation into sub-universes. Examples of this are gender-specific rituals and the gendered division of labor. There are institutionalized composite acts such as gardening, hunting, or warfare that are reserved to a particular group of persons, either women or men. This can be understood in terms of a differentiation of relationships to the world, for it is the matter here of different substantive, spatial, temporal, and symbolic structures that govern an approach to the world divided along gender lines. Corresponding reflexive institutions and procedures develop to buttress the specific interactions between the gender groups (for a summary of these phenomena, see Strathern [1988] 2001:chap. 3).

Differentiation into female and male universes is not the same as segmentary differentiation. The latter refers to the existence of, in principle, homogenous societal structures, such as families, between which there is no division of societal labor (see Durkheim [1933] 2013:230). Luhmann puts forward a similar argument (Luhmann [1997] 2013:27), stressing that segmentary differentiation can "be translated into […] individuals" (Luhmann [1997] 2013:28). Statements of this kind widely miss the point of the structure of dividualizing order that emerges from ethnographic research. The ordering system described by Strathern and Leenhardt foregrounds the relationships of exchange between groups and the ways in which the genders are integrated into these relationships in different ways (Strathern [1988] 2001:chap. 3). Here it is not homogenous and basically autonomous segments, but rather groups dependent on each other that are the point of reference for the formation of sub-universes of meaning.

Individualization as a degenerate form

I would like to conclude this discussion of dividualizing sociation by looking at the possibility that individualization is a manifestation of the deterioration of dividualizing sociation. Knauft (1985) describes the New Guinean society of the Gebusi, who are surrounded by other prospering societies and are being forced into the defensive. The neighboring societies belong to the type of dividualizing sociation and entertain far-reaching relations of exchange and violent warfare. They are significantly more prosperous, have a larger population, and inhabit a larger territory.

The Gebusi are explicitly unwarlike. The norm is to always be friendly to each other in order not to harm the spirit of good community. While retaliation for norm violations is considered indecent, such violations are definitely taken note of. Because the Gebusi frown upon violence, it is impossible for them to violently represent the violation of expectations in reciprocal relationships such as exchange. Nor is there an institutionalized obligation on the part of the norm violator to represent the validity of norms by means of, e.g., shame.

Nevertheless, there are phenomena which the Gebusi interpret as violent acts representing the law. These are events that a Western observer would classify as illness, while the Gebusi see them as suffering caused by magical violence. This magical violence is interpreted as an illegitimate violent reaction to a previous disappointment of normative expectations. The logic is as follows: A violated a normative expectation held by B, e.g., by failing to uphold reciprocity in the exchange of goods or women. The Gebusi are actually obliged to accept the disappointment of normative expectations such as these. Some of them, however, do not, and use magical violence to represent their holding on to normative expectations. But since this violence is illegitimate, it must itself be punished. Since it is a matter here of the violent representation of violated normative expectations, the obvious approach is to identify the magicians responsible by asking whose expectations were violated by the victim of the magical violence. Because they violated the central norm comprehensively governing the social coexistence of the Gebusi—i.e., the maintenance of good community—it is imperative to identify and punish the perpetrators of violence. This is not about relations between groups, but about the generation of individualized act-guilt relations. The deed is explicitly judged in an ethical manner. Following the norm of peaceful coexistence, the question of whether the accusation of magical killing is true or not is decided in a rule-governed procedure. If it is a matter of relations between individuals, the problem of

individual interests has to also be considered. This is expressed in the way in which the procedure is implemented and how the persons are selected who carry it out. It takes the form of night-time séances in which a medium establishes contact with spirits before the eyes of the villagers. The spirits give information allowing the person to be identified whose normative expectations were violated by the bewitched person as well as details of how the magical violence was conducted. The person thus identified must publically cook a "sago," a dish more or less difficult to prepare. If this is not done successfully, the sorcerer is definitively convicted (Knauft 1987:465).

This process is evidence of how far-reaching the rationalization of violent communication in triadic constellations can be. Even without a central power, the perpetrator's legitimate isolation from the group can be secured. It is very rare for relatives of a convicted and executed sorcerer to respond with blood revenge. At the same time, this example also clearly shows the inclusive character of violent communication, which is only aimed at entities able to disappoint normative expectations.

The pacification of social coexistence and the individualization associated with it have two consequences. Statistically speaking, the prosecution of sorcery leads to a homicide rate that is at least as high if not higher than it is in the surrounding warlike societies. Forgoing the enforcement of reciprocal obligations by means of violent representations of the law prevents the society's integration into further-reaching relationships of exchange. In the other societies of New Guinea, the expansion of such relationships of exchange leads to many and varied economic developments. These development possibilities are obstructed for the Gebusi because their society lacks an institutional enforcement of the reciprocity of exchange. Furthermore, the Gebusi are always defeated in conflicts with their warlike neighbors, who are able to establish trade-based alliances and thus also expand militarily. Individualization here turns out to be a dead-end for the development of a society.

Finally, I would like to consider whether the order of dividualizing sociation can be understood within the framework of the nature/culture distinction. Embodied executions here are integrated into an order of space and time in a practically relevant way, an order that is characterized by unstructured space and time (which can be differentiated into practically relevant areas) in which relational substances exist in the sense of a duration. This allows for a strong integration into the surrounding space, its segmentations, the entities at work in it, and thus also a highly developed embodied sensibility for the effects of spirits. Surrounding space is not to be con-

fused here with a space of proximity, with the connotation of local, not far away. The unstructured space of vastness instead contains areas not found in measurable proximity. In the order of dividualizing sociation, the question whether spirits exist in the space of proximity, within a radius of about two kilometers say, is simply nonsensical.

A thought experiment:

If we wanted to apply the nature/culture distinction to spacetime structured in this way, we would have to assume the existence of a space devoid of meaning and an immaterial, cultural belief system that is distinct from it. Such a space would contain measurably extended bodies and objects and measurable physical phenomena such as light or sound waves. This idea of space would destroy experienced space as it finds expression in ethnography; it would force us to deny, for instance, the reality of relational substances. Thus the bride ingests river water of a certain chemico-physical composition that has the immaterial meaning of creating a relationship. This modern realism, however, brings with it its own problems. The river water and its composition as well as the behavior of the involved bodies are observable and measurable. Orientations towards norms, consciousness, decision-making, or actions, by contrast, are not empirically verifiable in this sense. They cannot be shown in the same way as a measured value can be shown. Because they cannot be measured, Western social scientists have to *believe* in norms, consciousness, decision-making. This places spirits and the decisions of an I on the same level. Neither of them can be experienced in an immediate way by the senses as can a measurably extended object. The next consequence would be to only consider those things real that exist in measurable extension. A peculiar corollary follows from this: since pain as it is experienced does not exist in three-dimensional space either, the pain experienced at the dentist's, for instance, would be unreal. The only real thing would be the measurement of neurophysiological excitation. The former merely corresponds to a subjective experience that cannot be located as such in three-dimensionally extended space, while the measurement points to an objectively real state of affairs in three-dimensionally extended space.

I must admit that I am not convinced by this position. Even if a doctor explains to me that a shot won't hurt because there are no nerves at the incision point, I may still experience pain. It seems useful to me to hold on to a phenomenological realism of this kind.

Holding on to phenomenological realism means starting from embodied experience and the necessity of explicating it. This forces us to recognize that there are different explications. In one form, those involved expli-

cate in front of and for each other that they regard themselves as immaterial I's that make decisions and are socially oriented. In other ordering systems there are communicative executions that explicate relational substances as real and as having an effect in embodied experience. One makes as much, or as little, sense as the other. The difference is merely that one of the explications is compatible with the methodological nature/culture distinction, while the other is not. But why in all the world should there only be one ordered approach to it?

5.2 Soul individualism

Individualizing sociation by pointing to a soul is another way to determine the social undecidedness relation. Soul individualism is characterized by excentric embodied action centers referring to each other in communicative explication as individual I's, which are understood as souls with a free will that can or ought to be made responsible for their actions. The soul-individual endowed with a free will and integrated as such into a hierarchical order based on God constitutes the *dia-symbolon* of this order. The question whether and how a being is recognized as a social person is immanently connected to this being's position in the hierarchical divine order (Lindemann 2018:82ff). Descent and ascent are possible within this order without calling it into question as such. In fact, it is precisely mobility that makes it necessary to establish hierarchically legitimized procedures for determining who in what position should be recognized as a social person in what sense.

Soul individualization developed along with a specific procedural structuring of violent communication distinguished by the centralization of power and the establishment of the system of judicial trials. This relieved the aggrieved party of having to violently represent the validity of normative expectations. Instead it was now the court or the penal system—backed by the recognized central power—that did so. This solves a problem the Gebusi were not able to: on one hand, relationships of exchange are pacified and can evolve into market relationships; on the other, those involved can be certain that there will be a binding representation of those expectations that can be held onto despite disappointment. Backed by the central power, the law is explicated in legitimate proceedings.

An example of such an ordering system can be found in the historical events occurring in Europe between the late twelfth century and the saddle period (1750–1850). In the violent competition for power between the

great rulers, individual rulers prevailed and established their rule over a larger territory. The territorial ruler's absolute power allowed him to make law. Rather than simply balancing out infringements of the law or disappointed normative expectations as under the old law, the individual culpability of the perpetrator was established in a trial. In these cases, it was a matter of determining the material legal truth and of making an ethical judgment about the crime. Because she committed it out of ill will, the perpetrator was expected to take responsibility for what she did and had to be punished for it (see Achter 1951). None of this exists in the order of dividualizing sociation.

In these proceedings, torture became a legitimate means of discovering the truth. Looking at torture, as well as the debates surrounding its abolition, gives us clear insight into the phenomenon of the communicative reference to the individual as an I-center endowed with a will. In this period, the law of proof did not allow for conviction of capital crimes only on the grounds of evidence but also required the testimony of witnesses and/or a confession. The testimony of two witnesses was a prerequisite for conviction; if there was only one witness or none at all, a confession was indispensable for a legally valid conviction (Langbein [1976] 2006:4). The great importance attributed to confessions was based on the doubts raised by circumstantial evidence. Here we find the essential difference between continental and English law: the latter allowed for convictions based solely on circumstantial evidence without a confession or witness testimony.

It was not least due to the doctrine of the free will that developed in the twelfth century that the stricter law of proof in continental Europe facilitated the introduction of torture. Fried summarizes the scholastic doctrine of the free will in reference to Francis Bacon and Thomas Aquinas: "No form of torture can violate the free will of a human being. What the will wants under external coercion may not be *sponte* or *spontanea voluntate*, but it always remains *voluntarie*. If coercion is stopped, what is confessed *voluntarie* under torture becomes tortureless *spontanea voluntas* when it is repeated or confirmed" (Fried 1985b:422f). The distinction between *voluntarie* and *spontanea voluntas* refers to the legal practice according to which a confession was only considered valid if it was made without threat of torture. An offender could be tortured during pre-trial proceedings. If he confessed, this was considered voluntary but not attributable to the spontaneous free will. That only came into play if the offender repeated his confession without his hands being tied or without being shown the instruments of torture. If, however, he withdrew his prior confession, what he said under torture was still considered grounds for, at the very least, seri-

ous doubts about his innocence. New pre-trial proceedings with more torture would, in any case, be justified in order to follow up on these suspicions.

Thus there was indeed recognition of the fact that torture entailed coercion, but it was denied that this coercion could affect the innermost core of the free will. Higher being, the soul, could not be coerced by lower being, the body. The application of torture merely served to weaken the offender's resistance to the truth to the point that he would voluntarily tell the truth: "Freedom and torture are siblings in the emerging Western culture of reason that seeks to know the truth" (Fried 1985b:424; Schmöckel 2000:237ff concurs). Attempts to regulate torture (e.g., in the criminal law code *Constitutio Criminalis Bambergensis* or Holy Roman Emperor Charles V's criminal code) should not be seen as expressing fundamental doubt in the truth of statements arrived at by torture. The aim was rather to prevent a method which was in principle very well suited to bringing the truth to light from becoming discredited due to misuse.[99]

The practice of torture was based on the assumption of a free will rooted in the beyond. As all those subject to torture were recognized as being equally free, this suggests an egalitarian understanding of personal subjects. Thus criminal law as it emerged in the thirteenth century and whose essential components included torture made no distinction between serfs and yeomen (see Hirsch [1922] 1958:234). This established a form of equality in secular criminal law and in the practice of torture that in Christian Europe had until then only existed as equality before God.

Torture addressed the individual soul as a continuous unity that is made responsible in the here and now for something it did—in some cases a long time ago. It was not about creating the conditions necessary for a settlement, not of punishing the accused as an element of a group of equals. It is rather that in criminal trials characterized by torture the perpetrator was addressed as a continuous action center structured as an I responsible for a certain crime committed of her own free will.[100] The court had to determine whether this was the specific person who committed this specific crime at this time in this place. An attribution of this kind would hardly be conceivable for Melanese dividuals, who do not exhibit duration as ac-

99 See the discussion among jurists on this matter, e.g., in Damhouder (1565) or Carpzov (Falk 2001).

100 Several centuries later, Sartre hit the nail on the head in all naiveté, i.e., in ignorance of history: we are "condemned to be free" (Sartre [1943] 2010:574) – in the context of criminal law as it emerged in the thirteenth century.

tion centers structured as an I, but are rather embedded in the embodied relationships to their environment—i.e., in the duration of their experiential space. It seems likely to me that similar structures were in place in Europe until the thirteenth century. It was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that European society began to undergo changes that make it necessary to speak of individualizing sociation from this point on. This kind of sociation addresses actors as soul-individuals with their own duration, which is guaranteed by a binding reference to transcendence, that is, to the Christian God. Inasmuch as she has an immortal soul, the individual already participates in transcendent eternity in this world.

5.2.1 *Dia-Symbolon*

The soul-individual endowed with a free will and at the same time integrated into a hierarchical order with a secured reference to transcendence can be understood as the *dia-symbolon* of individualizing sociation. There was no equation here of the sphere of social persons and the sphere of living human beings. What beings were accorded a free will grounded in an immortal soul that allows for a belief in God, remained open—in more than one direction. It is doubtful that only human beings were free in this way and it is doubtful that this freedom applied to all humans. A significant change in relation to the old law was expressed in the establishment of freedom and equality. Under the old law, the free lords were the actors obliged to maintain equilibrium. Methods of representing the law tended to make use of violence; anyone caught committing a crime red-handed could be slain without penalty. Otherwise, a crime threatening the equilibrium of the order had to be compensated in the form of a penalty, but in any case there was no ethical evaluation of the deed (see Achter 1951). The focus on compensation and reciprocity here has certain similarities to the principles of gift exchange and its inherent reciprocity. Under the new law, i.e., beginning approximately in the thirteenth century, actors came to be addressed as I's responsible for their deeds. This held for freemen as well as those who were not free, which raised a problem that seems bizarre from today's perspective: which of the entities currently considered unfree can be criminally prosecuted? Servants? Oxes? Housemaids? Trees? Dogs? Departing from the law of compensation to an ethical evaluation of crimes also made it possible to include beings in legal proceedings that under the old law could not commit crimes requiring compensation: from the mid-

fifteenth until the mid-sixteenth centuries, ecclesiastical courts prosecuted the evil deeds of rats, mice, insects, and other animals.

The documented ecclesiastical court cases make quite clear an aspect I find particularly important here: the significance of hierarchy-backed decisions about who can be considered a social person. According to the theologico-philosophical doctrine of freedom of the will, this was a privilege restricted to human beings. Canon law did not recognize animals as criminally liable subjects until well into the fifteenth century, meaning that they could not be punished in ecclesiastical court cases. Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, however, renowned theologians and canon law jurists began to argue that animals could also be punished by a "malediction" or major excommunication, i.e., exclusion from the Christian community (see Amira 1891:571). This view persisted for about a century, until the mid-sixteenth century when it came to be disputed again and was subsequently abandoned entirely.[101]

The animal actors against which ecclesiastical courts litigated did not include domestic animals but rather insects, scarab beetle grubs, rats, and other noxious animals that threatened the harvest or food stores. The documented ecclesiastical court cases exhibit the following ideal-type pattern: the responsible court decided whether the appearance of the damaging animals was to be understood as their own action or whether it was an indication of the intervention of a higher power. Only once the decision of the court made these animals into the legitimate addressees of communicative activities could they be interpreted as social actors with the right to legal representation in a court of law. Inclusion in legal communication constituted a form of recognition as a person with a free will. Procedural recognition did not appeal to a general criterion holding everywhere and for all time. It rather depended on the decision of the responsible authority in the hierarchy whether, for instance, weevils or dogs are social persons with a free will. This delimitation of the social world could always be renegotiated depending on the situation, and thus led to temporally and locally limited boundary establishments.[102]

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101 In practice, anathemas against noxious animals seem to have been issued long before the fifteenth century. See Berkenhoff (1937:84ff) and Evans ([1906] 1988:25ff).

102 The debates surrounding the inhabitants of the new world show that individuals in their particularity were determined by their similarity/dissimilarity to other individuated entities. This means that the question as to whether someone is a social person or not was not posed as an "either/or" but in terms of "more/less" similar (see Lüdtke 2015:chap. 7, chap. 8). Even those who were dissimilar

5.2.2 Space and time

If it was to endure, individualizing order required compatible structures of space and time. Two phenomena show how these developed in tandem with each other: the establishment of linear perspective as the symbolic form of relating to space, and the development of mechanical clocks, which made it possible to isolate temporal reference from its sensory incorporation into the rhythmic duration of seasonal change.

Linear perspective allows for a relationship to space that starts from a subject who faces objects as well as measurable space. "The first is the eye that sees, the second is the object seen, the third is the distance between them" (Dürer cited in Panofsky [1927] 2012:67). The things confronting the eye and the expanse separating objects from the eye and each other (the expanse between things) are both mathematicized in their extension. Linear perspective is based on the idea of measurable space in which things exist in measurable extension. This leads to a conception of space distinguished by mathematical three-dimensionality, and brings about an ambiguous relationship between subject and world. The "world of things, an autonomous world confronting the individual" is drawn "into the eye" of the observer, for how the world appears depends on his point of view (Panofsky [1927] 2012:67). At the same time, linear "perspective subjects the artistic phenomenon to stable and even mathematically exact rules" (Panofsky [1927] 2012:67). The result is a tension-filled relationship between embodied directional space and mathematical space: on the one hand, linear perspective requires a point of view from which to unfold, thus accentuating a directional space that places the acting subject in its center from which the order of space unfolds. On the other, linear space makes it possible to mathematize space, so that the position of the eye as viewpoint can also be calculated. In this way, the eye, as absolute point from which lines of vision can unfold, becomes a point that can be calculated in relation to other points as a point where sight originates (see Panofsky [1927] 2012:29f).

Following Cassirer, Panofsky calls this space a "symbolic form" determining perception and distinguishes this relation to space from other historical relations, discussing at length the different structure of space documented in Greek art (Panofsky [1927] 2012:41–44). What is particular

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remained in a relation of similarity, even if distant. For this reason, it seems, these inhabitants were never completely excluded from the sphere of possible actors.

about space founded on linear perspective is that it is understood as a continuous system that can be reduced to the relations between height, width, and depth. This resolves the relations of embodied space "between 'front' and 'back,' 'here' and 'there,' 'body' and 'nonbody' […] into the higher and more abstract concept of three-dimensional extension" and thus presents them "in the guise of a 'coordinate system'" (Panofsky [1927] 2012:43). Space and every position in space becomes a mathematical quantity or point that can be calculated in three dimensions.

The change in the relationship to space documented in the establishment of linear perspective can also be seen in other areas, particularly in the development of a mechanical understanding of the world that spurred on the possibilities of technical construction in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Schmidtchen 1997:549ff; Troitzsch 1991). The emergence of linear perspective also corresponds to a change in the relationship to time that became relevant in the fourteenth century and which is reflected in the construction of mechanical clocks.[103] Time measurement became independent of the embodied integration into the rhythmic change of seasons and was aligned to the mechanical measure of hours that were always and everywhere the same (Dohrn-van Rossum [1992] 1996). Once measurable time and space that can be measured in three dimensions became forms that determined the lived body's relationship to its environment, the individual could identify herself as a three-dimensional body isolated in the three-dimensional space where it finds itself at a certain time at a certain place. Accordingly, the space of experience was restructured in such a way as to diminish the importance of a relationship to a surrounding unstructured space of vastness. This modification first appeared in the order of individualizing sociation and became completely established once digital spacetime became effectively institutionalized in the context of multi-sociation.

5.2.3 Differentiation of universes of meaning

Individualizing sociation is characterized by an internal tension. On one hand, actors are addressed as responsible and thus also isolated soul-individuals with their own wills and their own duration. On the other, the individuals addressed in this way are again integrated into a hierarchical or-

103 The invention of the striking clock has not yet been precisely dated. Dohrn-van Rossum refers vaguely to a period "between the ninth and the fourteenth centuries" (Dohrn-van Rossum [1992] 1996:45).

der and its overarching duration. This reference to transcendent duration keeps the soul-individual in his place; he is integrated into the estates system that also characterized the prior medieval period (until the twelfth/thirteenth century) (Duby [1973] 1974). His position in the hierarchical order is where God placed him. At the same time, his relationship to transcendence also contains the possibility of understanding himself as a soul-individual with his own duration, able to look from the outside at the worldly order and to criticize it for breaking God's commandments. The individual is accorded the freedom of acting in line with the prevailing order or of pursuing his own interests.

The tension between the integrating relationship to transcendence and individual free will brought about two different kinds of sub-universes. For one, sub-universes emerged that bound individuals to a particular place in the hierarchical order, such as the estates-based universes of the clergy, the nobility, and the peasants. These sub-universes exhibited different substantive, spatiotemporal, and normative structures (Duby [1973] 1974). The delimitation of who belonged to such a sub-universe—i.e., its *dia-symbolon*—was determined by its position in the overall order. The sub-universe of peasants was determined to a significantly greater degree than the others by spatiotemporal structures closely adapted to the change in seasons. Peasants were unlikely to orient themselves according to a form of time symbolized by the clock and independent of the change in seasons—this was more relevant for the clergy, for whom this form of time determined, e.g., the discipline of monastic life. The differentiation of these sub-universes corresponds to Luhmann's characterization of this order as stratificatory (see Luhmann [1997] 2013:section 4.6).

The ability of embodied action centers to also relate to each other as free individuals independently of general precepts provided a starting point for the formation of sub-universes structured in a second way. Thus individuals acquired the ability to create a sub-universe based on a substantive differentiation of actions (the guild system). This sub-universe included its own set of laws governing the proper completion of substantively specified actions. There were specific temporal rhythms, specific gathering places, and so forth. These distinctions were also integrated into the estates system, but were not reducible to it. Neither were those sub-universes reducible to the estates system that formed in relation to reflexive institutions whose function it was to connect individual institutionalized composite acts. Particularly relevant to the way in which society went on to evolve was the institutionalization of money (Ingham 2004; Lindemann 2018:218ff), as can be seen in the sub-universe of mercantile activity and

the money-lending that it made possible. Money-mediated trade and money-lending contained their own spatiotemporal structures which could be individually negotiated: a loan was given for a certain period and had to then be repaid with interest to a specific person in a specific place. The exact determinations within the general framework were consigned to the discretion of individuals. Money, or the possibility of selling something for money, functioned as the *dia-symbolon* for the participation in this sub-universe: anyone without money was excluded. Until the eighteenth century, these sub-universes of rule-governed individual discretion were still subsumed under Christian *caritas* (Le Goff [2010] 2016:148ff). The use of money was incorporated into a general economy of social relations, which can be seen in the three ways in which money was used in the Middle Ages. Those with money used it to acquire land, to guarantee military safety for their own people, and for salvation (Le Goff [2010] 2016:34f). Under these conditions, it was impossible for a form of economic communication to develop that was based solely on the individual's discretion. In the discursive debates surrounding these sub-universes that can be traced back to the thirteenth century (Le Goff [2010] 2016:20ff), self-interest was considered a sin. This indicates how the differentiation into sub-universes oriented toward media was captured by the stratified order, that is, by criticism appealing to the beyond. As long as criticism of an action as sinful remained effective, the characterization as sinful of an orientation toward the sub-universe of purely economic action at the very moment it was taking on an independent existence successfully integrated these actions into the hierarchical order.

The tension of individualizing sociation also became evident in spatial relations. On the one hand, geometric space emerged as a symbolic form of the relationship to space. On the other, this symbolic form did not become fully established in the daily lives of the actors in their respective sub-universes. The daily life of peasants exhibited a relationship to the surrounding space, the land on which the actors lived, that was more in terms of an area in which embodied action centers were situated and who referred to this space according to their customs. Spirits, demons, or devils could also inhabit space in this area, thereby, in a more comprehensive sense, imbuing it with a particular character. While the land was already conceived of in terms of its measurements, it had not yet been reduced to a measurable extension that could be treated purely as an immovable commodity. The dissolution of embodied relationships to space required violence. Polanyi's ([1944] 2007) descriptions of the local population's resistance to the transformation of land into a commodity in the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries show this very clearly. Until this transformation has been completed, land remains more than a measurable immovable commodity.

The ambivalence of spatial relationships has an equivalent pertaining to the boundaries of the sphere of social persons. It seems as if spirits can exist in an unstructured space of vastness, or in a space of vastness structured by embodied directions and areas. But it has not been possible to locate them in a three-dimensional, mathematizable space. At least there are no documents to date that can be considered explications of the existence of spirits in three-dimensional space. This leads to the hypothesis that if three-dimensional space comes to determine the structure of the relationship between the lived body and its environment, spirits, demons, angels, and so forth lose space in which to exist. If this is true, the modifications of spatial relationships taking shape in the fifteenth century changed the spatiotemporal structural conditions of sociation to such a degree that the existence of these beings became problematic, at least for some. The new symbolic form of space first became established among the educated, who, as enlightened individuals, dismissed the belief in spirits as superstition. From an analytical distance, what we have here is less a struggle between enlightenment and superstition than spatial relationships with different structures. In this sense, the witch trials beginning in the fifteenth century are an indication of how little the new symbolic spatial order had taken hold in everyday life. The witch trials constitute a link between the criminal law emerging in the thirteenth century (with its notion of individual responsibility) and the existence of spirits, devils, and demons in experiential space.[104] Since the deeds of witches and sorcerers were evil and committed out of ill will, criminal law had to intervene, making use of the customary means of uncovering the truth. The truth had to be established by witnesses in a hierarchically legitimized trial, which determined whether there had been a pact with the devil (Neumann 2007).

The witch trials were criticized from the beginning. It was argued, for one, that in a world created by God, spirits, demons, and devils could not act on their own authority (see Thomasius [1701] 1986). This argument refers to the tension between individual freedom and its integration into the divine order, and was enough to stay particular witch trials. In the eighteenth century, another line of argument began to assert that beings such as spirits or demons do not exist in the first place. This had to do with

104 Behringer ([1985] 1997) shows how a magical relationship to the world and state criminal law worked together at this historical moment.

the increasing establishment of the new symbolic form of space. Once space had become a calculable, thoroughly structured, three-dimensional formation, the reality of spirits, witches, and sorcerers became the superstition of the uneducated (Behringer 1995). This development, however, also destroyed the necessary condition of soul-based individualism, namely that the free will of individuals is integrated into an overarching order backed by transcendence and that all doubtful cases can be decided in hierarchically legitimized proceedings. Ultimately this development destroyed the possibility of integrating institutionalized sub-universes through criticism. The order of soul individualism began to break apart.

It is unclear at what point the possibility of individual freedom, based on a universally binding reference to the beyond, and the possibility of the integration of individuals by means of this reference emerged. In his theory of the Axial Period, Jaspers ([1949] 2014) discovered first indications of the emergence of such ambivalent transcendent references roughly in the period between 600 BC and the birth of Christ. Eisenstadt continued this research and tried to identify different cultures of the Axial Period that made possible different routes to modernity (Eisenstadt [2000] 2011). It is on this basis that he developed his theory of multiple modernity. I do not wish to enter into this discussion here, only to point out that beginning approximately in the thirteenth century, communicative addressing of individuals became widespread and characteristic of European development. At least contemporaries saw the radical understanding of Christian freedom—reflected not only but also in torture communication—as a distinguishing feature in relation to other advanced civilizations of the Axial Period, e.g., China (see Fried 1985a). Further research is necessary to determine whether non-European Axial Period civilizations such as China or India indeed addressed individuals in a less pronounced way. If we include Achter's (1951) analyses and his differentiation between old and traditional law on the one hand and made law on the other, the specific dynamic of individualizing sociation cannot be found prior to the thirteenth century in Europe either.

5.3 Body individualism in contingent multi-sociation

The term contingent multi-sociation or simply multi-sociation refers to a form of order formation in which individualization is no longer hedged in by an overarching hierarchical order. Sociation takes place here by, in a first logical step, legitimate social persons being identified who, in a sec-

ond step, become integrated or can integrate into a wide variety of different sub-universes.

As we have seen, the social undecidedness relation can be determined in different ways. The *dia-symbolon* of dividualizing sociation is, as we saw above, the possibility of participation in the group's relations of exchange. In the end, there are no doubtful cases: anyone who is situatively experienced as being operatively effective and can disappoint normative expectations is a social person. In individualizing sociation, the *dia-symbolon* is the free will, incorporated into a hierarchy backed by a universally binding reference to the beyond. Doubtful cases are decided from above by hierarchically legitimized authorities. The *dia-symbolon* of contingent multi-sociation contains a substantive criterion: every entity that can be identified as a living human body should be recognized as a social person. Doubtful cases are decided by scientific experts, particularly from the fields of biology and medicine (see Lindemann 2002a:chap. 7).

What a "human" is is defined by a fourfold demarcation I call the "anthropological square" (Lindemann 2009d:98; 2018:113ff). First there is the question of when a human being is alive enough to be protected by the specific rights expressed in human rights. In other words: at what point is a human being alive enough to have the right to life? This question leads to the well-known problems of boundary drawing at the beginning of life: what status does an embryo have, a fetus, a preemie, or a baby that was just born? Analogously, at the end of life there is the question of when a human being is no longer alive enough to be a person accorded guaranteed protective rights. The well-known boundary questions asked at the end of life are: at what point is a human being dead? When can treatment be terminated? Both of these cases of boundary drawing have to do with boundaries that can be crossed. Something that is not yet a human person becomes one, and, on the other end, a human person becomes something that is no longer one, a corpse. We can also identify two boundaries that cannot be crossed: the difference between human and machine and that between human and animal.

It is important to keep in mind here that these are not unambiguously fixed boundaries, but are rather contested from the beginning. The anthropological square does not describe tightly drawn boundaries, but rather dimensions in which the boundaries of human life are drawn and disputed.[105] Human beings are understood as living human bodies of this world

105 Not only the boundaries drawn at the beginning and end of life are conflicted and problematic, but also those between humans and animals and humans and

who, starting at an identifiable point in time, live for a limited period; as living beings they are not on the same level as animals and they are not machines. Other distinctions have become meaningless for the generally binding understanding of humans (such as the difference between human beings and God or human beings and demons). This anthropological difference is a crucial institution of modernity: it draws the boundaries of the social that are binding for modern society. Its understanding of the human is the cognitive condition for being able to talk generally about "human beings" in a way that includes everyone, without regard for specifics of class, culture, or religious reference to the beyond. This cognitive universality of the human is closely tied to the normative universality expressed in human rights.

Those who are recognized as social persons based on this substantive criterion can participate at will in the differentiation of sub-universes. These processes of differentiation are no longer integrated into an overarching whole by a religio-critical discourse, i.e., the differentiation of sub-universes is no longer discursively observed in view of whether the logic of action or communication of a particular sub-universe will threaten the overarching order. In this way, economy, politics, science, and so forth can emerge as coexistent sub-universes, each making their own specific contributions to the continued existence of the overall order.

In contingent multi-sociation, social persons are sociated in a logical two-step process. On the one hand, as human beings they are the institutionalized element of sociation and, on the other, they are sociated as such an element into different sub-universes. The term "multi-sociation" emphasizes the involvement of the elements of society in multiple sub-universes. There is no general guideline governing which sub-universes social persons should be sociated into. A wide variety of sub-universes can develop and it is contingent in which of them social persons will actively participate.

Luhmann's systems theory postulates that the sub-universes of meaning —he refers to the subsystems of functionally differentiated society—are no longer integrated into an overall order, i.e., in his terms, into an overarch-

machines. Should human rights also be accorded to the great apes (Cavalieri and Singer [1993] 2011), a demand made, for one, because of their cognitive abilities? Should robots be given a special moral status (Fitzi and Matsuzaki 2013)? In the debates surrounding such questions, the boundaries of the anthropological square are constantly being problematized and—at least so far—constantly being restabilized.

ing context of meaning (Luhmann [1997] 2012, [1997] 2013). This might be true if order were only social order. If, however, order is understood as the order of an approach to the world, we arrive at a different conclusion. The latter perspective shows that multiple (sub-) universes of meaning can emerge because the overall order is split into nature and culture. Nature here is structured according to universal laws, on the basis of which a variety of cultures can develop, formed by the recognized social actors, human beings. This split corresponds to the matrix of modernity described in Chapter 2.

The structure of this overall order can be broken down as follows: nature is determined by a spatiotemporal structure corresponding to measurable, digital spacetime. Modal-time structures and duration as well as directional space and the space of vastness are understood as subjective moments that have little to do with an objective, intersubjectively valid order of space and time.

The *dia-symbolon* of this order is the living human body of this world. This human being is characterized by a free will that exists in a three-dimensionally extended, this-worldly body—without a generally binding reference to the beyond. The individual human being with her three-dimensional body is accorded freedom and dignity (Lindemann 2010, 2012b, 2018:chap. 3). This normative assumption holds universally for all human beings—but only these.

Living human beings of this world are understood to be capable of forming any manner of (cultural) universes (Lindemann 2018). The formation of these universes of meaning is to be understood as an always incomplete, historically open process. There is no conclusive answer to the question of what kind of meaning formation, or universe-of-meaning formation, human beings are capable of (see on this point the discussion of anthropological assumptions in Chapter 2 as well as Lindemann 2014a; 2018).

Assuming that the different sub-universes can be coordinated with each other by way of digital spacetime, individual sub-universes can develop their own spatial and temporal structures as well as their own material orientations and symbols. The temporal structure of a family with young children or the rhythms of school are different from the temporal structures of economy, science, or law. Furthermore, each of these sub-universes devel-

ops different substantive and symbolic structures to stabilize itself.[106] These include, not least, reflexive institutions specific to the particular sub-universe that govern the selection of who is to be involved, i.e., fulfilling the function of a *dia-symbolon* specific to that sub-universe. For the sub-universe of the economy, for instance, this means that those to be involved have to have money at their disposal to buy things or commodities that they can sell. This guarantees, at the very least, the possibility of becoming sociated in line with the economy's logic of action or communication. It does not guarantee the concrete participation in individual composite acts, i.e., the execution of individual acts of exchange of a commodity for money. Those to be involved have to accept here that according to the institution of competition (see above), those actually involved are selected from the larger pool.

In light of this differentiation of possible relationships to the world found in, e.g., economic, familial, legal, or scientific action and communication, it makes sense to speak of a differentiation of sub-universes. This is affirmed by Luhmann's theory of functional differentiation, according to which individual sub-universes can no longer be integrated into an overarching pattern of meaning. My theory of approaches to the world aims at an analysis of the conditions for the formation of sub-universes by understanding them as components of an overall order characterized by the separation into nature and culture and by a specific determination of the social undecidedness relation.

The difference between affirming and analyzing the order of modernity becomes clear when we consider the significance of the order-forming power of violence. The separation between nature and culture-forming human beings includes the notion that force is exerted in nature, but not violence. In this view, violence can only be directed at social persons and these can only be human beings. Indirect forms of violence are also possible in relation to humans, e.g., when things are destroyed that for human beings symbolize the actions of other humans. In these cases, too, human beings remain the addressees of violence, even if indirect ones. Only in this sense is it valid here to speak of violence against things. In the order of contingent multi-sociation, violence cannot be wielded against a thing that does not symbolize that it is related to another human being.

106 See on this point, e.g., the discussion surrounding the compatibility of family and work, as well as the debates about the different temporal horizons of economy, law, and politics.

It is a characteristic of multi-sociation that physical violence is not supposed to be exerted either within the framework of sub-universe-specific institutionalized composite acts and communication nor within the framework of particular reflexive institutions. The reason for this lies in the monopolizing character of violent communication, which fully mobilizes the embodied action centers in all respects of order. Violence represents, in the moment and in a way that brings together all dimensions of order formation (social, spatial, temporal, substantive, and symbolic), what expectations are to be held onto under all circumstances and in every way even if they were disappointed. The monopolizing character of violent communication excludes the possibility that participants represent themselves for and in front of each other as individuals who, on the one hand, are involved in the logic of action or communication of a particular sub-universe, such as the economy, while at the same time remaining addressable by any other kind of communication, i.e., they can become sociated following the logic of any other sub-universe.

As far as I can see, there are only three exceptions to this rule: the sub-universe of the family and partially that of school, as well as the sub-universes of law and of politics. The function of the first is to socialize embodied action centers into an order by means of balanced violent communication (see the section entitled "Perpetrators, victims, thirds," above). The function of the sub-universe of law is to represent the normative expectations valid for the overall order. Herein lies the function of law for all of society (see also Luhmann [1972] 2014:83ff). This includes both the representation of legitimacy by means of court proceedings that are to be carried out without violence (Luhmann [1969] 2013, [1972] 2014:85–89) and the violent but no longer public enforcement of the sentence (Foucault [1975] 1995; Luhmann [1972] 2014:85–89). In most cases this entails violent confinement, but in cases of particularly egregious norm violations, legitimate killing can also be prescribed. Politics between states or associations of states also relies heavily on violence and the threat of violence. Wars between states and threats of war are always possible ways of representing the rights of states to acquire and safeguard sufficient natural resources, water, protection from terrorist attacks, and so forth.

Otherwise, the procedural order of violence characterizing multi-sociation is distinguished by a far-reaching prohibition of at least physical violence. This serves the general goal of preventing one sub-universe's logic of action or communication from occupying the entire horizon of experience of an individualized embodied action center, ensuring that individuals can also always be addressed as potential participants in other universes of

meaning. As we saw at the beginning of the chapter on violence, sociological social theories are characterized by a pacifist understanding of sociation. This can now be understood as an affirmation of the structurally necessary renunciation of violence in the order of contingent multi-sociation. An analysis of this order, including its special procedural order of violence, is still outstanding. The challenge of a multidimensional analysis of order is to understand the specific, structurally necessary rationalization of violence without falling into the trap of disavowing violence.

5.4 The reflexive relationship between social theory and a theory of society

These three sketches are meant to illustrate how a theory of society can be formulated in the context of a theory of approaches to the world. Including a theory of society is necessary for rational theory construction, and is the only way to rationally verify the claim to universality a social theory must necessarily make. The purpose of social theory is also to guide empirical research on contingent multi-sociation, but the formulation of such a theory is itself part of the operative reproduction of the sub-universe of science and thus also of multi-sociation. In order to understand the relationship between social theory and the theory of society better, we must take a brief look at the relationship between theory and empirical research. Three different levels of theory are relevant here, each of them with their own specific relationship to empirical evidence: social theory, theories of limited range, and theories of society (see Lindemann 2009b:19–33).

A social theory develops general statements about what phenomena are relevant to order formation and how to describe and analyze them. Thus, e.g., action, interaction, communication, composite action, or situative practice become the core concepts of different social theories. Insofar as social theories determine what to consider relevant for observation, they predetermine the object by formulating the key assumptions guiding observation and thereby structure empirical research. Since social theory, then, decides in advance how something can appear as an empirical phenomenon, it has the character of a universal a priori. It makes formal assumptions that are thought to apply to the analysis of all historically occurring ordering types. Stating formal universal assumptions in this way only seemingly contradicts the current dominant theoretical position. The demand to engage with the logic of the field and to take situated practices seriously as such without applying universal concepts prohibits, it is argued, universal

formal assumptions.[107] However, such a demand overlooks the fact that the claim that there are only situated practices is itself a formal universal assumption. *Everything*, according to this claim, should be observed as situated practice.

Scientific sociological observation is always guided by assumptions. Making these explicit is the requirement of good scientific practice. Explicating the assumptions guiding one's observations, i.e., one's own social theory, also has an important methodological advantage. The more explicitly and precisely socio-theoretical assumptions are formulated, the more likely it is that empirical data will have the chance to unsettle these assumptions. The converse is also true: the more socio-theoretical assumptions remain implicit and vague, the less likely it is that empirical research will be able to challenge these implicit assumptions. Only when theory is made explicit can research discover that empirical phenomena cannot be clearly and precisely grasped with the social theory being used. Unsettled assumptions provide the occasion to reject, amend, or expand the social theory being used in order to more precisely grasp the empirical phenomena.[108] The concept of unsettling shows that this is not about immunizing social theory against empirical evidence. The aim is rather to allow social theory and empirical data to interrogate each other. The social theory I am proposing here, then, is a heuristic a priori, i.e., one that is provisionally valid and can be unsettled by empirical research.

Empirical research presupposes a social theory and leads to assertions that are true for limited segments of order formation. These are theories of limited range. It is in this sense that researchers can make empirically grounded assertions about the spatiotemporal structures in the organization of treatment in hospitals or about social inequality or about the concrete rules for the circumscription of the sphere of social persons. Theories of limited range can be verified or falsified (Lindemann 2009b:23). Assertions about the ideal-type connections between structures can be extrapolated from such empirically backed theories (see Lindemann 2008a). I call a connection of this kind the ideal type of an ordering system. The sketches of different ordering types presented here attest to the possibility of formulating different ideal-type ordering systems on the basis of existing research.

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107 See, e.g., Amann and Hirschauer (1997), who call for starting from the systematicity of the field instead of bringing one's own concepts to bear on it.

108 On the concept of unsettling in distinction to falsification, see Lindemann (2009b:21ff, chap. 6).

The multi-dimensionality of order formation inherent in the social theory underlying my work has consequences for what is traditionally called a theory of society. The very name of such a theory focuses on the order of the social, thus implicitly giving primacy to the social dimension. This is expressed in the statement that something, an X, is socially or societally constructed. X can be any number of things, such as gender, space, or time. Because I wish to express an expanded perspective on order, which is neither limited to the social dimension nor grants it primacy, I use the term "order" or "ordering system" in place of "society." Thus I do not distinguish between societies or types of sociation, but rather between types of order formation. Since, however, the concept of a theory of society is already established, I do use it as well. It should be clear, however, wherein the difference to the traditional use of the term lies.

The reflexive insight that a theory of society is an event of societal communication was emphatically propounded by Luhmann in particular (see Luhmann [1997] 2012:chap. 1). The question now is whether this insight can be used to generate more knowledge. I see a danger that the form of reflexive integration into the communicative autopoiesis of modern society put forward by Luhmann entails a kind of affirmative self-commitment to modernity. This ultimately excludes the possibility of formulating a social theory that can claim to analyze other ordering systems commensurately with the modern one—something that is only possible if the formulated social theory sufficiently distances itself from the communicative structural specifications of modernity. A formal universal social theory must at least provisionally claim to do so; otherwise it could not even attempt to understand the modern order as an ordering system alongside other possible ordering systems, i.e., analyze the contingency of the modern order.

It would be naïve, however, to simply claim that the social theory being used is universally valid. Such a claim becomes irrational if it does not include the reflection that this social theory is being formulated in the context of modernity. It is for this reason that the theory cannot be separated from the object it describes; as universal social theory it is at least also the theory of the object it operatively reproduces.

If the reflexive integration of the theory into modernity is to be more than a mere theoretical postulate, there must be a methodological possibility of critically evaluating the historical situatedness of universal social theory. The distinction between heuristic formal universal a priori and heuristic historical a priori serves this purpose. Comparing the two a priori assumptions allows us to determine whether and how the heuristic formal

universal a priori of social theory differs from the different historical a priori of the respective ordering types. The former formulates the assumptions guiding observation in empirical research leading to theories of limited range. The historical a priori is the result of an extrapolating reflection (Lindemann 2008) that brings together theories of limited range in such a way that the construction principles of a specific historical ordering system can be formulated in terms of ideal type. Relating social theory and a theory of society to each other is thus a matter of theoretical reflection including empirical research as an intermediate step. Empirically mediated theoretical reflection allows us to examine to what extent the principles of construction characterizing the modern approach to the world of multi-sociation—and in particular the structures of scientific communication—determine the theory of approaches to the world.

In systems theory, insight into the observer's reflexive involvement in the examined object becomes a certainty given from the outset which is owed to the reflexive construction of the theory. This squanders a possible gain in knowledge. The distinction between universal and historical a priori replaces theoretical certainty with open questioning and critical examination, made possible by the systematic place in the theoretical reflection process given to empirical evidence. The social theory creates the conditions for this by guiding empirical research in such a way as to make the extrapolating generalization possible that is required for the formulation of a theory of society. In that it makes possible a formulation of a historical a priori, this extrapolating generalization is the condition for a rational construction of theory. Theoretically explicating the historical a priori allows us to reflect on whether the theory of approaches to the world constitutes an event that reproduces the communicative structures of modernity. Without such an empirically mediated theoretical reflection it would be impossible to rationally criticize the social theory's claim to universality.

Insight into this reflexive context allows me to draw the reader's attention to a problem in the way in which I have presented my theory of approaches to the world. The theory is concerned with the problem of the contingency of the shared world. This implies that, in principle, very different entities can function as social actors: gods, angels, animals, plants, human beings, spirits, and so forth. And yet nowhere in this book do I make direct reference to, e.g., interviews with ants or angels. Instead I throughout only cite reports conveyed by human beings about their communication with ants, angels, spirits, or the like. This is an example of the stipulations of the historical a priori of modernity—i.e., its orientation toward the anthropological square (see above)—operatively encroaching up-

on the formulation of the theory. The theory claims to distance itself from modernity as well, but at the same time its operative elaboration repeats a fundamental principle of legitimate modern communication by primarily considering living human beings as social persons. For instance, a reproduction of modern structures of communication can be found in the examples cited in section 3.1 to elucidate the structure of centric and excentric positionality. The section on centric positionality almost exclusively presents examples with animals; it is not until the section on excentric positionality that human beings show up in the illustrations. Centric positionality is a formal characterization of the structure of relating to the environment in which expressions of life may be understood, but not language and symbolic communication. The latter is tied to the formal complexity of excentric positionality. Although the theory presented here assumes that it is historically contingent which beings appear, e.g., as centrically or excentrically positioned, the order of the examples follows the structural specification of the modern historical a priori, according to which differentiated, linguistically communicated cultural formations are operatively generated by human beings and not by spirits, ants, baboons,[109] or gods. Even a theory attempting to distance itself from the historical a priori of modernity must submit to the structures of scientific communication prescribed by this a priori. Counter to its own intention, the way the theory is elaborated thereby repeats a blind spot of modernity. At least its reflexivity allows us to recognize this.

109 As noted above, primates are an especially interesting case. Chimpanzees in particular seem to be the species that allows the validity of the boundary between humans and animals to be called into question and restabilized again and again (see footnote 107).