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Affirmation and Reaction: Towards a Critical Biosemiotic Sociology

by

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Thesis

Submitted to the College of Arts & Sciences

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in

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Abstract

Does our physicality influence society? If it does then what meaning can be derived from that relationship? What follows is an analysis of theory which strives to develop a conceptualization of reality and society which incorporates both a radical social constructivism with the assumption or “givenness” of external reality. The works being drawn upon are predominately associated with phenomenological sociology, systems theory, and semiotics but additional works from philosophy and political science are considered. The result of this venture is the conclusion that affirmation, the proof of the reaction, is the foundation of society. From this conclusion follows the postulation that the greatest danger to social change is the subversion of meaningful action through the creation of recursive forms of affirmation which disperse collective resistance into systems of limited influence.

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1. Introduction to Part 1

“Human existence, if it were thrown back on its organismic resources by themselves, would be existence in some sort of chaos, empirically unavailable, even though one may theoretically conceive of it. Empirically, human existence takes place in a context of order, direction, stability.” ---- Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 69

These words from the *Social Construction of Reality* express the rather peculiar problem inherent to social constructionism and phenomenological sociology. Knowledge is socially constructed, and objects are boundary projects. But what are objects boundaries of, and what is knowledge constructed out of?

In 2014, Risto Heiskala’s article “Toward semiotic sociology: A synthesis of semiology, semiotics and phenomenological sociology” was published. Drawing upon his 2003 book “*Society as Semiosis*”, he argues that action theory, phenomenological sociological, and neo-structuralist semiotics are far from being conflicting rivals, but rather their distinct approaches work together to offer a more nuanced understanding of meaning.

There are numerous similarities between this work and Heiskala’s book given that both are rooted in the same three perspectives (action theory, semiotics, and phenomenological sociology). Indeed, one interpretation is that this thesis attempts to add a fourth category (biosemiotics) to Heiskala’s three-tiered triangle for evaluating meaning (see Figure 1).

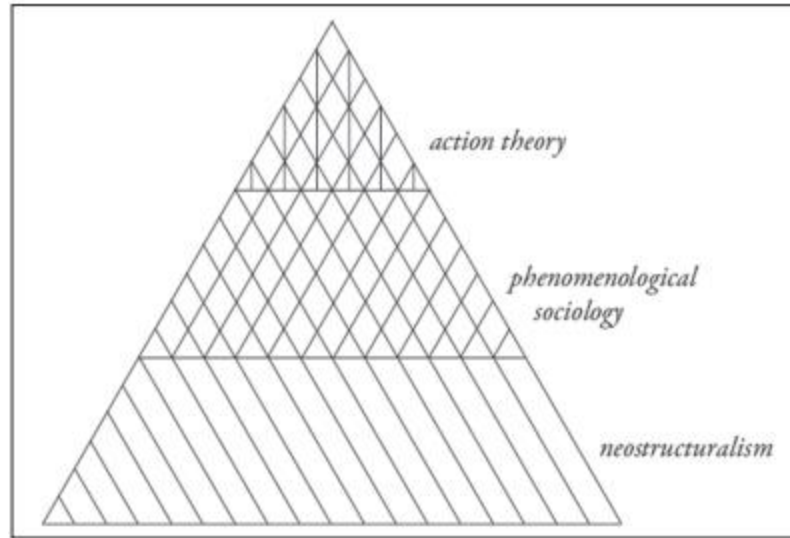


Figure 1: The triangle model of meaning-analysis. From “Toward semiotic sociology: A synthesis of semiology, semiotics and phenomenological sociology”, by R. Heiskala, *Social Science Information*, 53(1), p. 49. Copyright 2014 by SAGE Publications. Reprinted with permission.

In effect the work would add biosemiotics underneath neostructuralism, thereby rooting action theory, phenomenological sociology, and neostructuralism within biosemiotics. The result of this addition would be to imbue the synthesis with a more “biological” element. Although as biosemiotics emerging from Sebeok is rooted in C.S. Peirce’s study of signs (Favareau, 2010), one could consider it an extension of neostructuralism.

However, it is more accurate to say that this thesis views meaning making and analysis as having two distinct forms which underlie conceptualizations of meaning. The first form is the meaning of the given. This form is where a manifestation makes itself known by its effect. The rock falling is the meaning of the rock falling; it is the self-evident statement of the real. Its meaning is derived from its effect, be it known or unknown. If I consume a poison, I am affected by it even if I did not know I had consumed it. The givenness of the poison is made apparent to me by its effect, not by my awareness of it. The second form is the meaning of the conceptual, the constructed. It is a thing which speaks of another thing. The law of gravity justifies the falling of the rock. If I am aware that I have consumed a poison, then I can act as if I had

consumed it. It is out of these two forms which emerges the perceived modification to Heiskala's triangle. That the foundation of the pyramid is not simply neostructuralism but rather the study of those signs which are *pre-linguistic* (See Figure 2).

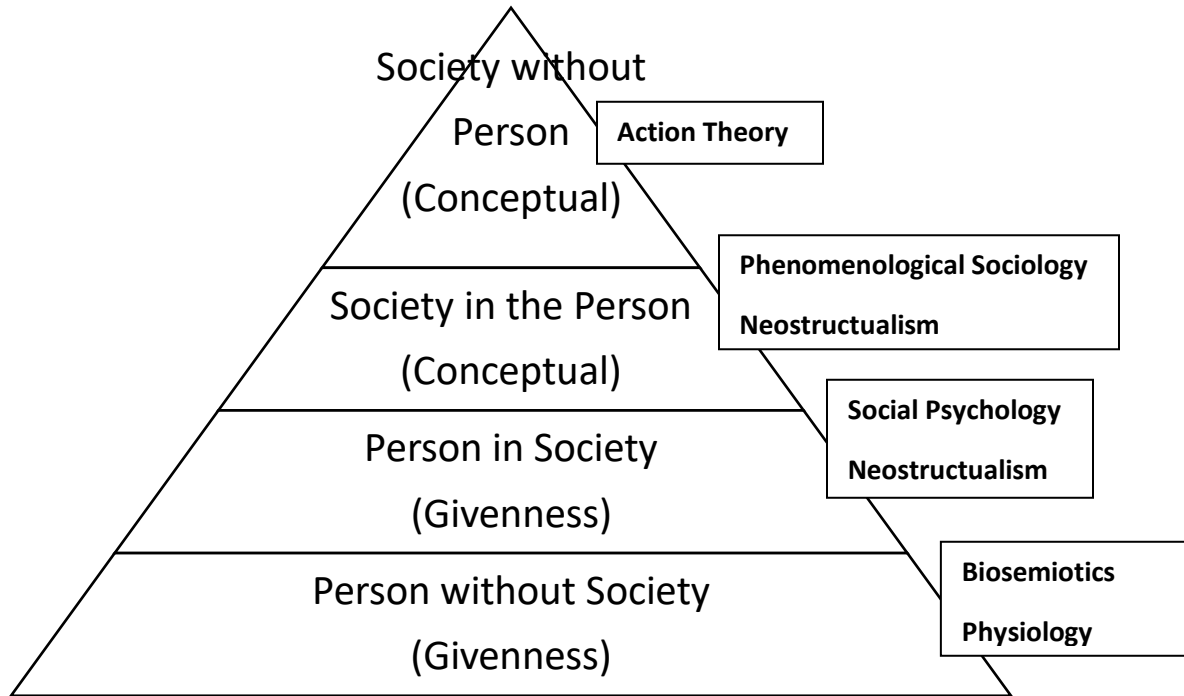


Figure 2: Meaning-making: Society and the person. Reimagining Heiskala's triangle.

However, modifying the triangle is not an ambition of the first part of the thesis. Rather it strives to balance a paradox upon a single point, which is reflected in its engagement with the triangle of meaning-making. On one hand, there are life-signs rooted in the givenness of the universe (the physical laws); on the other hand, there are social signs based upon nothing more than other social signs (social constructions). If these two types of signs are not part of the same system, then how do they interact? Rather than suggest that the social signs represent the real, this work draws upon Luhmann and his use of structural coupling and autopoiesis to conceptualize social systems. The coupling of life-signs with social signs by means of reaction within *umwelt* acts as the resolution of the paradox. *Umwelt*, the surrounding world, being a

notion of Uexküll, found with differing meanings in both biosemiotics and phenomenological sociology. The real is the given and the response within the umwelt is the reaction.

The second part of this thesis extends the umwelt into the lifeworld by drawing upon phenomenological sociology in the form of Schutz's (1973, 1967) lifeworld, Mannheim's ideologies, and Dilthey's (2002) conceptions of knowledge in addition to Baudrillard's (1994) hyperreal and Lipovetsky's (2005) hypermodernity. With the Peircean abduction serving as a bridge between experience and truth, the reactions in umwelt are brought into the simulation which is the lifeworld. Experience is understood retroactively through a constructed system of knowledge and, in turn, influences the very system of knowledge within which it is understood. However, the system of knowledge exists beyond experience as a simulacrum.

This work attempts to synthesize the three perspectives into a singular framework of affirmation. Affirmation being that action requires a reaction to be understood. Drawing upon biosemiotics serves to frame the consciousness within the organism and thus root intentionality and rationality within a reactionary system, such that all action is predicated upon a reaction. This framework also exists as a critique of all systems which emphasizes one part over the others. Drawing upon Lyng's (1990) idea of edgework, Alcoff's (2007) systemic ignorance and Rothe and Collins's (2017) commodification of resistance, this work frames them within the affirmation paradigm to explore the peculiar nature of humanity.

Before intentionality and rationality there must be consequence. An idea which is mutually compatible with the "meaninglessness" of the non-social and the meaningfulness of the social. A concept which can transgress the boundary between these two worlds. This assertion however is contingent upon first showing why the idea is necessary in the first place and as such

the beginning sections focus on the distinction between the self as complex and phenomenological, and the self as limited in perception.

Some may find the work's focus on the individual disconcerting, especially for those who consider groups and institutions to be the loci of human experience. The work here takes the perspective that the experience of being human emerges from an interaction of group *and* individual. The meaning of the social and the limited nature of the individual.

There is, in this, a rather semantic argument to be made. That society is not the source of "humanness" but rather an "us-ness" of which humanity is simply the broadest current incarnation. Society is the place where we become who we are, through the understanding of the "us." This view leaves us with the unanswered question of what makes us human. This work proposes that the answer is in the nature of our finite perceptions. Our senses of normalcy are rooted in what we are exposed to, our understanding of the mundane. It just so happens that our view of normalcy is that which we consider as humans, and not of amoebas or dogs. We have conceptual knowledge (*erkenntnis*) of other organisms but not direct knowledge (*wissen*) from other organisms. This condition prevents humans from creating a sense of what it means to be an organism without use of their imagination, which thus roots the organism's experiences within human knowledge (*wissen*).

The individualistic nature, in this sense, is more accurately understood as a finitude, a limiting of perceptions and not independent free-thinking. Although any perception is functionally infinite, as one can create effectively an infinite number of interpretations, what I refer to here is the fact that a person cannot perceive all

perceptions. Mannheim realizes correctly that a person does not manifest the entirety of their class' knowledge. Alcoff recognizes that a person can use their ignorance to shield themselves and protect the status quo from disruption. I suggest that to affirm oneself, one must enter into groups. Yet, the groups exist only within a mutual manifestation. No group can look beyond itself; thus, it is limited to the potentialities of its members. Of course, the members' range of forms is confined to the known, and thus they can only be that which their group belonging allow.

Change within a group occurs not only due to a variation in the environment but also because its members are not identical. Humans are finite; they cannot know all there is to know nor perceive all that there is to perceive. Their finite nature, situated in a particular point and place in time, the *umwelt*, creates a flow of information which shapes both their involvement in systems and their sense of self. The ebb and flow of information is as important as the distinct information possessed by both systems.

A person with socially perfect perspective would be the perfect social researcher, mutable and ever-changing. Their standpoint shifting based upon whatever perspective they take. However, our perceptions are not infinite, and thus we cannot know everything.

The human is both uniquely finite and infinite. Finite in how they engage with the world and infinite in what that engagement can mean. But infinite meanings are not necessarily limited to humans, only social beings. The uniqueness of humans emerges from the pre-existing conditions which created them. To speak of the social construction of anything, requires understanding how "humans" experience the world, not as a matter of symbols but signs. One must take care not to conflate the signs with the symbols, the construction with the real. The

social world of humans is, by definition, one which humans can interact with, and one they can perceive.

It is the finite nature of perception which creates the distinction between us. The sense that I am only me and not you. Without groups there can be no sense of other. But in the absence of the finite there is only the group. I can only exist insofar as I am separate from you, but I must also exist relative to you otherwise there is no me. It is that separation which creates humanity for both good and ill. Humanity is as much ignorance as it is knowledge.

Some may be inclined to consider the “chaos” and the limited nature of perception as the realm of biology, but that lacks a necessary nuance. Biology, as a discourse, is empirically available. The “chaos” of existence, in being empirically unavailable, cannot fall within a discourse. It is experience without explanation and thus without history. However, this does not mean that the “chaos” is not important, in fact it is of singular significance. The realm of “organismic resources” is devoid of meaning in the strongest sense. It is not a post-hoc application of categorization and structure as a discourse might suggest. It is meaningless, completely and utterly. The givenness of the real is simply a declaration of what is, without concern for the meaning of what exists. To conceptualize this place, it is necessary to try and remove all things meaningful from the initial state. One must assume that existence does not purport meaning.

What follows is a discussion of umwelt, lifeworld, self, and action. They are intended to explore the meaningless and chaotic world in theoretical terms and in that manner lay the foundation for the affirmation perspective by conceptualizing the objectification of the world. Objectification as the demarcation of meaningless motion, or

kinesis, seeks to balance the self-evident nature of the world with its social construction. Rather than assume the pre-existence of things in the social world, only the pre-existence of sign is permitted. Umwelt as the individual model of the world is used to justify the divide between the meaningless world of the organism, structured by pre-existing conditions such as physiology, and the meaningful world of society, structured by mutually developed systems of knowledge.

The assumptions of action orientation and charismatic need are offered as a way to conceptualize a series of divides concerning the self. A distinction between the “meaningless” minimal self and the meaningful social self. The difference between the consciousness as a simple observer and an active will. Two assumptions which recognize that an individual is “thrown” into the world.

All the preceding discussions serve as the foundation for the affirmation metadiscourse and affirmation discourse. Interaction is fundamentally expressive; the person is manifesting themselves in the world. Yet the engagement with the world precedes an understanding of the world, and so it is in interaction that understanding arises. The notion of affirmation attempts to balance the individualistic nature of the lived experience with the inherently social nature of its conceptualization. The metadiscourse seeks to recognize the person as both a subject of discourses and an entity, which in moving between discourses, is transcendental to them.

Finally, the notion of affirmation is considered regarding Habermas’ colonization of lifeworld and communicative action more generally, as well as reflecting upon De Tocqueville’s notion of softness. The subversion of communicative power being caused by the disconnect between affirmation and action outcome is suggested. To conceptualize the affirmation perspective is to present a specific thematization of human existence which pervades the social.

Luhmann (2018) writes, “One cannot trust chaos” (p. 43), but society emerges from chaos; the generalizations of the world exist in unstable contradiction.

2. Literature Review

C.S. Peirce: The Categories

C.S. Peirce presents a triadic sign rooted in his universal categories. The *representamen* or *sign* represents an *object* to a person, and the *sign* is also subject to being interpreted. The interpretation is the *interpretant*. For example, when a person sees a chair, the sight is a sign of the object, the chair. The function and purpose of the chair is the interpretant. However, Peirce's understanding of sign exists beyond linguistics.

Peirce's three categories are Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. In Houser's (1992) introduction to Peirce's work, summarizes Firstness as all that which exists independently, Secondness as that which depends upon on something, and Thirdness as a mediation between the other two.

Taking from C.S. Peirce's (1865, 1953) presentation "On a New List of Categories" and a letter to Lady Welby, more specifically, Firstness refers to the most abstracted of entities. Abstracted in the sense that an entity is focused upon to the exclusion of other entities, as opposed to dissociation which is awareness of one entity without an awareness of another entity. The qualisign (Icon), the sign of Firstness, refers to a "ground." A ground is something like "blackness," from his example "The stove is black." In order to assess if the stove is in fact black, that it "embodies blackness," one must compare the stove with an idea of "blackness." This comparison of the stove's "blackness" and the abstraction of "blackness" is why the ground is an abstraction rather than a dissociation.

Secondness involves experience, usually that which life forces one to feel. C.S. Peirce uses the example of drifting along in a hot-air balloon when a piercing whistle begins to sound. Individually, the balloon ride and the whistle are feelings but put in relation to each other they

create an experience, rendering the person aware of both. The experience is based upon an awareness of multiple feelings and is thus not rooted solely in a ground but also a correlate.

Thirdness involves thought. If Firstness is feeling, and Secondness is experience, Thirdness is cognitive. Peirce uses the example of giving something to someone. The act of giving necessitates a relinquishing of possession. A person gives something. However, giving is rooted in a sense of ownership, a law. This law is not found within experience or feeling, but rather an understanding of the situation. In that same way that the falling of the rock appeals to the law of gravity (another example he offers), there is a reason or interpretation of the action. This rational and interpretation is Thirdness.

Consideration

How do these ideas relate to this work? Fundamentally, the notion of Firstness requires an understanding of entities and concepts beyond the perception. It requires an abstract reality. In addition, Peirce (1865) states, “The conception of being... plainly has no content” (p. 288). In contrast, a premise of this work is that “being” has content insofar as it is itself a ground. If I say, “That thing is a stove,” I am appealing to a ground of “stove-ness.” The thing in question must appeal to the qualities of a stove.

This work begins with the assumption that consciousness and by extension perception are themselves communicative processes. A system for linking organismic resources with a predictive and goal-orienting system. It is less an argument for free-will and more a consideration of the line between the organism and self. Perception by the consciousness, as a thing-in-itself, is treated as a dissociation and a medium. Perception is experienced without the consideration of other distinct perceptions, and any distinction within it is constructed.

Perception by the organism is treated as the imposition of a condition, a change in state produces a change in the system.

In the statement “That which I perceive is a thing,” thing-ness serves as a ground. However, “that which” serves to limit the perception creating a quale. The abstraction emerges out of a presupposition of distinction. I perceive an entity which is a thing. If I begin with “I perceive that,” there is still a sense of object. “I perceive” lacks an object but also an abstraction. Either the presence of entities must be assumed, or it must be suspended. The foundational premise of this work is that whereas an abstraction involves comparing ideas and concepts, a coupling of organismic perception involves states or conditions. A condition allows an absence or presence without speaking to the content or cause of said absence or presence. It is a concrete sign, yet in addressing only itself, it is also perfectly abstract.

Umwelt: Surrounding World

Umwelt, or surrounding world, is a term perhaps infrequently used in contemporary sociology although it is seen in the earlier works of the phenomenological sociologist Alfred Schutz within his notion of lifeworld. Originating from Jacob von Uexküll’s (1909) work, *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere*, the meaning of the term varies both within Uexküll’s works and beyond them (Tønnessen, Magnus, & Brentari, 2016). Consider these two definitions from Uexküll:

1. “The part of the environment of a subject that it selects with its species-specific sense organs according to its organization and its biological needs” (von Uexküll, 1982, p. 87).
2. “[A]ll that a subject perceives becomes his *perceptual world* and all that he does, his *effector world*. Perceptual and effector worlds together form a closed unit, the Umwelt” (von Uexküll, 1992, p. 320).

The approach to umwelt is divided between two uses (Tønnessen, et al., 2016). In keeping with the first definition, umwelt is approached as an experience unique to a species, a species-specific environment. Umwelt, as shared across a species, draws upon the notion that members of a shared species tend to perceive and interact with the world in similar ways, as confined by their common physiology and needs. Following more in the tradition of the second definition, umwelt is described as an individual experience. Umwelt understood as an individual experience. Although the perception and doings of an organism may be confined by a shared physiology and needs, interaction is further confined by the individual organism's specific position and engagement within the world. A central notion of a species-specific environment is that the "world" of a species is relatively stable and consistent, which allows the creation of a species-world.

The following two definitions highlight the second tradition and its emphasis on umwelt as representation or model of reality. Yet at the same time, umwelt is not the living being or animal. It is not the innerworld of the creature, but a representation of the external rooted within the organism:

1. "Umwelt marks the difference between the world such as it exists in itself, and the world as the world of a living being. It is an intermediary reality between the world such as it exists for an absolute observer and a purely subjective domain. It is the aspect of the world in itself to which the animal addresses itself, which exists for the behavior of the animal, but not necessarily for its consciousness" (Merleau-Ponty, 2003, p. 166).

2. “Umwelt: The model of the external world built by the brain of an animal. It is a subjective model, and any animal lives therefore in an environment whose sounds, images, smells and tastes are manufactured by its own brain” (Barbieri et al., 2014).

In *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1991) refer to a “species-specific environment” (p. 65), a reference to Uexküll’s umwelt. This notion is tied into Gehlen and his argument that social institutions direct a human’s undifferentiated drives, preventing and relieving angst from the gathering of such urges (Berger & Kellner, 1965, p. 112).

Berger and Luckmann (1991) take the position that humans have no species-world of their own, no “man-world” as they call it. Rather, humanity’s interaction with the world is governed by “world-openness” and undifferentiated instincts. Human instinct lacks an explicit orientation, which allows them to develop within and in relation to their environment. Society then is not a product of biology or natural environment but a product of human interaction, which allows for self-production. Although they do not deny the biology of humans, the physicality is unstable and mutable, unable to serve as a foundation for society.

Like Gehlen, Berger and Luckmann emphasize the unique nature of *homo sapiens* to develop the role of society. However, undifferentiated instincts and world-openness fail to address umwelt as an individual experience. In claiming that humans do not possess a species-world, they circumnavigate one part of the problem of umwelt. Humans cannot have an umwelt because their environments are unstable. However, that is half true. Humans may not have a species-specific environment, but they must possess a perception of the environment which is contingent upon species-specific faculties. A model derived from the species-specific organs. The undifferentiated nature of such a perception is secondary to the confined range of the model.

In addition, there is the Schutz's use of *umwelt*, which differs from the above uses. *Umwelt* is the "world of directly experienced social reality" (Schutz, 1967, p. 30). It is an aspect of *lifeworld*, which will be discussed in more detail. For the sake of convenience, Schutz's use of *umwelt* will be referred to as "social *umwelt*," "Schutz's *umwelt*," or the "realm of consociates" (Zhang, 2004, p. 91).

Consideration

Continuing from C.S. Peirce and Uexküll, this thesis follows in the tradition of biosemiotics, emphasizing the realm of signs beyond both the consciousness and the social. The two divergent meanings of *umwelt* highlight a potential for constricting the expansive notion of human "world-openness." Settling the consciousness with the *umwelt* serves to embed the mind within a series of pre-existing conditions which influence the subjective manifestation of the mind. In Part 2, the phenomenological tradition will be focused upon.

Self and Will

On one hand there are notions of self-integrity in psychology, which presents the self as an object considered. On the other hand, the self can be understood as an object separate from observation. The complex self, for instance, is a collection of systems forming a cohesive whole. A human is an organism which is a series of inter-related processes working together to form a whole. The phenomenological-self (ϕ -self) is the "lived" experience of being something, the self-aware observer (Bruya, 2015). However, this differs slightly from the social self. The social self is a sense of self and identity which reflects upon the self as an object, the self referenced in self-integrity. Finally, there is ipseity, the "minimal" self, the fundamental experience of consciousness. It is unspoken and devoid of reflection, simply the awareness of experiencing. (Nelson, Parnas, & Sass, 2014).

Minimal Self and Individual Umwelt

How is reality experienced the moment before reflection? How does the organism perceive in the absence of consciousness? As Dharmakīrti argues, the perception of an object depends upon perceiving the very act of cognition (Krueger, 2010). One must be aware that they are observing in order to conceptualize their observation.

To enter the chaotic, unempirical existence of the human-world one must begin at the point before a consciousness which possesses, at most, a minimal self. As ipseity lacks reflection, one must realize that in the absence of reflection there are no objects. This assertion, however, stands contrary to phenomenological tradition's notion of intentionality. Intentionality being that consciousness must be directed towards an object (Thompson, 2011). What then does the consciousness observe in that state? It cannot see objects, as it is not reflexive. At the same time, it ultimately comes to see objects.

The postulation of this work is that in the absence of reflection all that can be observed is a form of motion. To draw upon the Buddhist notion of dependent origination (Pratītyasamutpāda) as described by Krueger and Boisvert (2003), this motion is a causal matrix without entities or a sense of necessary causes. The causal nature of the matrix is rooted in a perception of time passing as a summation, not as an event. The matrix is an eternal or atemporal substance lacking composing elements. Reality, then, is understood as a medium without objects, a medium in the sense of Heider (1923), as possessing multiform elements. However, unlike Heider's mediums, which address things through an artificial sense of unity (Boell & Hoof, 2016), this unity speaks of itself not of things. It is in a sense paradoxical. Heider, a psychologist, focused upon perception (Boell & Hoof, 2016), but it is necessary to go, for a moment, beyond perception. If perception takes place in umwelt, then a creature does not perceive the real

directly. That is their perception is filtered through their orgasmic resources. However, if all creatures can perceive some semblance of the real, in other words, the real is shared, then the real must be experienced in different ways. I conclude that, in the real, whatever variance which may persist is potentially beyond the perception of a creature. It is not simply that a creature observes the real, but rather they observe a narrowed and constricted real. Any perception of the real cannot itself be meaningful or take an object for its consideration. Otherwise, all creatures would perceive the real in the same fashion, however; given the breadth not just of human understanding but the perceptual methods of all organism, this is not the case. Rather, all perceptions are fundamentally an illusion of unity emerging out of physicality and subsequently the social.

This variance or motion is a thing in the sense that it is, at the level of perception, uniform (Heider, 1923), but it is not a thing in that it is not an object (Boell & Hoof, 2016). I refer to this motion as kinesis, to emphasize both its separation from object but also quale. The information provided by the c-self, as perceived by the ϕ -self without any sense of arrangement. Kinesis is the abstract “change” or “uniformity” implicit within the umwelt; it is variance in the real produced by a limiting of scope. The unobjectified quale is the individual perception of the kinesis devoid of social reasoning, distinguished from the objectified quale, and the object is the social perception of the real which is constructed by the overlapping of individuals’ qualia through interaction.

This notion of kinesis is more a place-holder than a grand idea. Instead of dismissing the real as either unimportant because it is inaccessible or framing it as directly knowable, kinesis seeks to maintain a sense of balance. The real is held as extending beyond our perceptions, to the point that it is meaningless to strive to

conceptualize it. However, it also finds expression within the umwelt and beyond. Kinesis then represents the expression without a system of conceptualizing it; it is a variance without speaking to what it means.

Consideration

Is red a feeling because it is an abstract thing we perceive, or have we have developed to distinguish it from the rest of our field of perception? The answer offered in this work is that the organism's system reacts, but the consciousness interprets those reactions and builds a system of objects and values beyond simply noxious, positive, and neutral. Thus, the feeling of red will only exist when red is denoted as something worth distinguishing from the field of perception even if red is able to be perceived by the system. The self must be turned towards red before it can experience it as red. However, that does not mean the perception does not affect the complex-self. An autonomous response to red can still occur independently of the self's awareness.

3. Re-actionality

The difficulty in discussing structure is that there is a difference between structure as an object and structure as a form of stability without object. Objects are stable entities in so far as they are boundaries. As Haraway (1988) notes, “Objects are boundary projects” (p. 595). These objects are produced by social interaction. However, what are objects boundaries of, and how can these boundaries contain that which is generative?

In the realm of the meaningless, it is not that objects are stable elements, but rather they are created from a perceived stability and uniformity of the motion. A pre-objectified perception cannot contain a perception of objects. As Luhmann (1990) writes, “The surrounding environment contains no distinctions” (p. 10)¹. It is in this sense that the real, often taken for granted, must be considered. Not merely as an abstract entity but as a thing beyond. The notion of reality as extending beyond perception is necessary when conceptualizing the human ability to conceptualize it. This view is a weak form of realism, such that the objective is limited not to objects but a vague and ephemeral variance.

Reaction and Umwelt

Umwelt is an organism’s model of kinesis, the undifferentiated variance of the real. At its foundation is the organism’s structural coupling with the givenness of the real. A change in the environment is a change in the environment, nothing more and nothing less. As C.S. Peirce (1953) describes, “The stone’s actually falling is purely the affair of

¹ “Die Umwelt enthält keine Unterscheidungen” (Luhmann, 1990, p. 10) Although Umwelt has multiple interpretations, Luhmann’s use has been interpreted as referring to the environment (Christis, 2001), which is why I translated it as “surrounding environment” instead of “Umwelt” more generally or “the organism’s model of the world.”

the stone and the earth at the time. This is a case of reaction” (p. 9). This reaction without rationalization serves as foundation and constraint for the emergent consciousness.

Just as the rock falls, cells are subject to the physical reality. Signs emerge from that which is not a sign, “the inexorable laws of physics” (Favareau, 2010, p. 524) as suggested by Favareau. To frame it within laws (a Thirdness), reaction at this place sits on the line between these “laws” and the signs. It is an interaction of “laws,” which are not signs as qualia but signs as the demanded. The system of umwelt develops out of repeated altering iterations, reacting to the physical expression of the universe. The laws of the universe result in the manifestation of the biological laws. To give an analogy, the game of chess specifies the concrete movement of pieces, their arrangement, and the goal. It is out of these rules (physics) that strategies and specific ordering of moves (biology) can emerge.

Out of this foundation emerges a greater complexity with memory and self-replication at its heart. If the foundation are the rules of chess, this is a collection of moves within the game. The unobjectified matrix becomes compartmentalized as it is confined to the organism’s frame of reference. It is in this shift, that the organism is capable of engaging with the real. Not directly but through the coupling of perceptual systems with the environment. The quale and the reaction are merged and there is no object of the quale. The bruteness of the real is coupled with an awareness of it. A change in the environment is associated with another change in the environment, which produces a new environment or change. This unobjectified quale is the foundation of boundaries as its stability and persistency allows the quale and the reaction to be separated. Namely through the creation of an index, a sign which is associated with another sign. Facial cues indicating emotions, and smoke suggesting fire are the oft-used examples of an index. The index invokes the reaction appropriate for the sign it is associated with.

Following from the index, the self further orients the consciousness to the motion, by projecting the effect and motion of the organism relative to the perception of the world. Thereby allowing reactions to be based upon projected or anticipated motion. However, the ability to project future conditions is not enough to create objects. Rather, one creates a sense of stability which can become objects. The quale and the object of the quale must be separated. This is performed through the creation of an interpretant relative to the index, which will be discussed in the section on affirmation.

In the foundation of umwelt, difference is found in the presence or absence of a phenomena and not in the categorization of the phenomena. It is a model, a representation, of reality and as such it is similarly aligned. Something is, or it is not. These states contrast with the real where the is-not is simply absent. It is within the umwelt that absence can be perceived. A landmark can be missing from a map, but that same landmark cannot be missing from reality: It simply is not. The real as the summation of that which exists lacks a conception of not-being. It is only in umwelt and the lifeworld that non-being emerges.

Action Orientation and the Charismatic Need

To shift from the realm of the theoretically conceived (real) to the available (lifeworld) it is necessary to establish the notion of an action orientation. The complex-self reacts to stimuli, independently of the ϕ -self. In a sense it is akin to Schopenhauer's will, a mindless and irrational impulse (Schopenhauer, 2011). It is an orientation to motion, which is the reaction. The reaction of the body to a change in environment as being akin to the falling of the rock. There is a necessity to the reaction. It could *not* not react.

However, the phenomenological-self also experiences the complex-self reacting to stimuli. The ipseity self, the basic pre-reflexive entity of consciousness, allows a sense of reaction, devoid of complexity. It does not react as to qualia as social beings understand it, but rather it reacts to that which it perceives. The feeling of pain without an understanding of source, merely the state which produced it. The reflexive self in turn can consider the response and create qualia. The creation of qualia allows the reflexive self to orient itself relative to its physicality and the surrounding world. For this reason, the phenomenological self perceives the complex self's motion and in its observation is oriented towards it, allowing for the possibility of action.

This orientation to action is coupled with a necessity to action. A need or an urge to manifest within the world. Although Gehlen suggests undifferentiated urges, in this situation a singular urge would be more accurate. A charismatic need for expression.

If action orientation is a general inclination towards action due to an organism being inclined to motion, then the charismatic need is the fundamental urge to manifest the phenomenological self in the world. The observer-effector self must seek to manifest itself within the world, otherwise it would not manifest. This desire for one's actions to have an effect. The need for one's existence to be recognized. It emerges from action orientation and the objectification of the world as the way in which the consciousness recognizes its manifestation.

If I am hungry, I cannot merely subsume my consciousness into the organism and, like an automaton, feed myself with only the input from the sensation. I must recognize the sensation and act upon it, however briefly. The charismatic need is the assumption that there is a requirement or need for the phenomenological self to act. At the same time, the need requires an affirmation from the change in stimulus. The necessity of this change links the complex-self with

the phenomenological-self. To be active, the desires of the will must re-shape the perceived. The will is not a passive observer, merely recording the happenstance of the physical, rather it engages with the world.

Assuming that the observer exists and that it can influence a range of motion fails to explain why the observer actually affects motion. Or put another way the presence of an observer is insufficient to explain why an observer acts upon a situation. The assumption of charismatic need is that the observer-effector is driven, in some way, to affect behavior.

On one hand, the perceptual and effector worlds of umwelt are rooted in motion but confined within systems of physicality. They are motion driven by motion, without drive or purpose. On the other hand, the observer emerges from the perceptual world and influences motion. This is the orientation of the phenomenological self towards action. It is a link between the effector and perceptual worlds. It is the combining of kineso-centrism with a sense of spatio-temporality rooted in the individual's physical body. Qualia exist to explain the motion of the world which the self is thrown into. Consciousness needs intentionality, and so it creates the qualia from the meaningless, which serves as the basis for consideration.

4. Introduction to Part 2

The preceding section has presented the notion of re-actionality, which is rooted in the physical nature of the organism. Whereas intentionality emphasizes the ability of the mind to be oriented towards something, a thing or concept, re-actionality emphasizes the mind's reaction to a change in state. A change in state, not simply of perception, but also the underlying basis for the expression of cognition such as neurological and perceptual organs. It is an orientation to something beyond the limits of cognition, a communicative enterprise with the complex self.

The second part of this work enters fully into the social and argues that, with re-actionality at its heart, consciousness creates a system of objects and values in order to conceptualize and direct its reactions. The argument further continues that re-actionality underlies both intentionality and rationality as drives towards action. These three components form a system of recursive self-evident justifications, the system of Affirmation. The communal attempts at justifying reaction creates a discourse of Affirmation, an arrangement of objects which legitimate the expression and conceptualization of such objects. At the same time the individual draws upon multiple systems of Affirmation and personal experience to create a personal affirmation.

5. Literature Review

Dilthey: Knowledge and Awareness

Dilthey distinguishes between *wissen* (Knowledge) and *erkenntnis* (Cognition). *Wissen* is a product of life experience and the reflection upon life. Dilthey (2002) writes on *wissen*, “The first givens are lived experiences...they belong to a nexus that persists as permanent amidst all sorts of changes throughout the entire course of a life...the acquired nexus of psychic life emerges from that foundation” (p. 102). The term carries with it a historical element, as one can reflect upon past experiences. *Erkenntnis* is a conceptualization of the experienced, emphasizing cognition over tangibility. Dilthey (2002) describes it thusly, “It can experience what is only through re-feeling and reconstruing, through connecting and separating, through abstract systems and a nexus of concepts” (p. 24).

In addition, Dilthey notes a slight difference between reflexive awareness (*innewerden*) and “being aware” (*inne-sein*). The former implies a sense of becoming aware, while the latter does not imply any sense of reflexivity. He writes, “Lived experience is always certain of itself... Every assertion about what is experienced is objectively true if it is brought to adequation with the lived experience... it asserts only the occurrence of the perceptual attitude itself” (Dilthey, 2002, pp. 47-48). The consciousness is aware of what it experiences and unaware of what it does not experience. What the consciousness experiences is true.

Mannheim: Ideology

In *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim (1954) presents the notions of ideology and worldview. On the topic of worldview (*weltanschauung*), “Every individual participates only in certain fragments of this thought-system...as a totality the thought-system is integrated systematically (Mannheim, 1954, p. 52). In other words, a person does not possess the entirety

of a group's understanding of the world, but rather they experience only parts of the worldview. Mannheim also distinguishes between two forms of ideology. The particular ideology emphasizes an individual's ideas and concepts. Views and claims are perceived by opponents as concealing a person's true interests. Mannheim (1954) emphasizes a skeptical understanding inherent to particular ideology. "This means that opinions, statements, propositions and systems of ideas are not taken at their face value but are interpreted in the light of the life-situation of the one who expresses them" (p. 50). In contrast, the total ideology is more abstract, relying on analysis and descriptions as opposed to motivations. Whereas the particular ideology is individual, the total ideology is group.

Consideration

Influenced by Mannheim's ideology, *wissen* in this work places the conceptualization of the world within experience. Direct experience is tautological, and thus can exist as a given when placed within a logical framework. It is from experience that all things can be derived. *Erkenntnis* in turn is rooted in *wissen*. A system which derives meaning from experience. This work uses *erkenntnis* as both a collection of shared experiences and the conceptualization of personal experiences within a collective framework. *Wissen* then is personal experiences both within and without a collective framework of comprehension. Although affirmation is both motivation and explanation, which is similar to Mannheim's ideologies, it is more broadly a justification for what is and what will be. Affirmation is the proof of the matter at hand. A motivation affirms an action by giving it a reason for being done, which in turn justifies the desire in performing the action as the action now has a motivation. An explanation affirms an action by placing it within a broader context which legitimates the action's occurrence as part of a narrative. At the same time the explanation is re-affirmed by the action conforming to the

expectations of the explanation, the fulfillment of the narrative proves the narrative's validity. In addition, past experiences act as affirmation by affirming what the consequences of current actions will be in light of previous actions.

Action

Action is often understood as behaviors guided by an agent, as suggested by Harry Frankfurt. David Velleman (2008) influenced by Zhuangzi and Csikszentmihalyi argues that effortless action lacks self-regulation. Csikszentmihalyi argues that being in the moment with intense concentration, while viewing the action as inherently rewarding, all the while experiencing temporal distortion is to be in flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). This notion of flow ties into Villerman's autotelic experiences, where the purpose of the action is performance of the action. This sense of action separate from the self is also seen in Lyng's (1990) notion of Edgework. This idea is influenced by Marx and Mead, wherein the alienation of species being is connected to the "Me" and "I." Edgework, which is boundary work, suppresses the "Me" and allows an authentic "I." The conflict between action driven by agency and action that cannot be driven by agency. In Ideomotor theory, actions are understood through their perceived effects (Shin, Proctor, & Capaldi, 2010). Action shaping perception and perception influencing action. Humans as both complex and singular, driven and driver.

Action is a thing which is done, usually understood as performed under the volition of agents. It is the object of the agent's "doing," intentionally done. It is an answer to the question, "What does it/you/they do?" As an object it is inherently social, one can only do that which is comprehended. For Schutz, a motive shows the intentional nature of an action. He distinguishes between in-order-to motives, and because-motives.

Social structures can be reduced to human action, which in turn can be understood through motive (Kim, 2005). For Habermas, the lifeworld promotes “communicative action,” which produces mutual understanding through interaction (Baxter, 2011). This action is in contrast to system, which are actions driven by purpose and reason to accomplish a specific goal (Lövestam et al., 2016). System includes both instrumental and strategic actions, where instrumental action is an isolated task following a set of rules and strategic actions are intended to influence the actions of an adversary (Baxter, 2011).

Lifeworld

Husserl’s lifeworld is the realm of those entities which experiences of are incomplete representations of those entities. As Husserl (1970) writes in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, “It is the spatiotemporal world of things as we experience them in our pre- and extra scientific life and as we know them to be experienceable beyond what is [actually] experienced” (p. 138). However, this lifeworld is also ordered. Husserl (1970) writes, “This general structure, to which everything that exists relatively is bound, is not itself relative” (p. 139). This foundation can be taken for granted by exogenesis traditions of epistemology, which assumes that the developed facts are akin to the structure. Lifeworld possesses a self-evidence which the knowledge of scientific discourse is rooted upon.

More recently, Agre and Horswill (1997) refer to the lifeworld as the world conceptualized in a way meaningful for an individual’s life. It is not simply a world of objects, but how a person relates to them. The physical artifacts of the world being organized around activities. There are networks of practices and norms which simplify and routinize activities. As Agre and Horswill (1997) declare, “A lifeworld, then, is not just a physical environment, but the

patterned ways in which a physical environment is functionally meaningful within some activity” (p. 114). In this understanding of lifeworld, the physical nature of the environment is central.

In contrast, there is the work of Schutz, which brings lifeworld into sociology. Schutz’s lifeworld is “the one and unitary life-world of myself, of you, and of us all” (Schutz, 1973, p. 120). It is everything that is experienced in common. The lifeworld consists of the natural realm, the world beyond, and the realm of individuals, a social world. The social world is the lifeworld shared which can only be experienced intersubjectively. This world is pre-scientific drawing a separation from Husserl (Kim, 2005). Schutz divides the lifeworld into four areas. A community in the same time and space, the we-relation, is *umwelt*. A community in different time and space, the you-relation, is *mitwelt*. The future generation, the inheritors, are *folgewelt* and the past generation is *vorwelt* (Zhao, 2004; Kim, 2005; Endress, 2005).

Habermas uses the term lifeworld to describe the underlying assumptions and relationships that influence and guide the interaction between people (Lövestam, Orval, Koochek, & Andersson, 2016). Additionally, Thompson defines Habermas’s lifeworld as a “symbolic space” where person and culture are produced and brought together (as quoted by Lövestam et al., 2016).

Consideration

As discussed in earlier this work approaches lifeworld as a social world, which emerges out of *umwelt*. Meaningful action then exists solely within the lifeworld. With affirmation as a system of justification, it is often tied to action through reaction, although it includes that which is done beyond meaning. The falling of a rock appeals not to intentional actions but a self-

givenness of reality, although we intentionalize the falling through the law of gravity. It is in lifeworld that the clearest aspects of affirmation are seen in the discourses and metadiscourses.

6. Lifeworld and Objects

Objectified motion signifies the shift from the meaningless to the meaningful, from chaos to order, from the natural to the social. A certain ambiguity must exist here. The individual must be capable of objectifying motion before objects can be created; however, most individuals are raised within a pre-existing lifeworld. The objectification of motion without “object” is a difficult problem to resolve. As knowledge is a shared activity (Gergen, 1985), there must exist a state where a boundary exists but not an object. It is only through the mutual realization of the boundary that it becomes an object. The unobjectified qualia represents the boundaried motion lacking the abstraction associated with object categories. In other words, these qualia are representamen without the conceptualization of an underlying semiotic object. Whereas objects are categorized to an abstract category, the quale is understood simply as that which it is perceived to be. The tick reacts to butyric acid, which signifies the presence of a mammal, but the tick does not know what butyric acid is, merely that it can perceive it. Perceptions occur independently of formal knowledge.

Lifeworld is therefore a simulation, to draw upon Baudrillard’s concept: “It [simulation] is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1). Lifeworld, in the arrangement and organization of models, is a model of a model. In contrast, *umwelt* is a model of the real, lacking the imposition of meaning mandated by the social. The central distinction made here is that lived experiences begin in *umwelt*.

To highlight what is meant here, consider the illustrious musician Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840). Based upon records of his health and the anatomy of his hands, it is thought

that he had Marfan's syndrome. The resulting anatomy of his hands would have "been a very definite advantage" (Sperati & Felisati, 2005, p. 127) in his career. Marfan's syndrome exists in the realm of the lifeworld; it is a collection of physical characteristics identified by Antoine Marfan. The characteristics Marfan used to define the syndrome exist within both the *umwelt* and the lifeworld. As Marfan drew upon his own observations, the syndrome is confined to his physicality (*umwelt*) and his pre-existing framework of the human body (lifeworld). The overlap between the two forming a kind of social *umwelt*, where the experienced is made meaningful. The entirety of characteristics which are retroactively understood as Marfan's syndrome exist in the real and extend beyond the known. That which Marfan cannot perceive still exists. However, in the absence of the violin, there can be no violinists. For Paganini's anatomy to facilitate his musical career, there must first be music and a career to be had in it. But the qualities of Marfan's syndrome can exist independently of music. Paganini's anatomy is peculiar insofar as it differed from other people, who may have pursued a career in music. The significance is understood through a comparison. Comparison, at the level of objects, exists in the lifeworld (See table 1 for an overview). Marfan's syndrome exists in the lifeworld, the observable signs exist in the *umwelt*, the meaningful signs with the social *umwelt*, and the entirety within the Real.

Table 1
Overview of Concepts

<i>Realm</i>	Reality	Umwelt	Lifeworld
<i>Understood as</i>	Kinesis	Qualia	Objects
<i>Exists as</i>	Itself	Representation	Simulation
<i>Differentiation</i>	No Difference (Variance)	Difference	Different/Same
<i>Conception</i>	Being ¹	Being /not-Being (on/off)	Relational Being/ not Being
<i>Engaged by means of</i>	Existence	Reaction	Action

¹ There is no sense of not-Being.

Structural Coupling

On the topic of structural coupling, Luhmann (2013) notes, “We can derive that society is coupled with its environment only via consciousness...there are no physical, chemical, or purely biological effects” (p. 87). Combining this notion of Luhmann with the idea of simulacrum as offered by Baudrillard, it can be concluded that society reacts to representations and simulacra through society’s coupling with consciousness. The system-environment of society consists of constructed interpretations.

The transformation of environmental noise into order is contingent upon the selective inclusion and exclusion of information. As Luhmann (2013) defines, “Information is a selection from a range of possibilities” (p. 91). For there to be a range

of possibilities there requires a conceptualization of alternatives. As society is coupled with consciousness, the consciousness is coupled with observations, both reflexive and immediate. It must also follow, based upon the earlier notion of umwelt, that the observations of the consciousness are coupled with the physicality of the organism.

The distinction of the real, the umwelt, and the lifeworld represents the theoretical form of the environmental noise, the nature of the information and thus how the coupled system can engage with it. The real has no information because it has no possibilities; it consists of everything which exists. umwelt, by excluding information, creates the possibility of alternatives and thus allows for the possibility of information. However, the alternatives are not necessarily understood in a temporal sense, only in the sense of differing states. An on/off system is activated by the presence or absence of a condition, not the timing of the condition. Lifeworld, then, includes temporality in the form of memory and object. Although one can simply speak of the environment and the system, the nature of the coupling is inherently shaped by the nature of the system. Society, coupled with consciousness, is fundamentally excluded from certain perceptions of the environment. The boundaries of consciousness are the limits of the social.

7. Affirmation

With re-actionality as the givenness of reality as experienced by the organism within umwelt, affirmation is the proof of that reaction. It is a proof not merely in a logical sense, or as a matter of consideration, but also as a self-evident experience. More specifically, A affirms B if the givenness of A supports the abduction of B. Peirce's abduction being that A would be expected if B was true, thus if A exists then B is likely to be true (Peirce, 1931-35, 5.189). Note then that there are two core directions of affirmation. The first is the abduction of A, that is by affirming A one indirectly proves that which can be abducted from it. The second is the abduction of B directly, in other words, when multiple truths can support the abduction of something. However, affirmation is rooted in the support of the abduction not the rejection of an abduction. If the abduction of A is contingent upon B (A is expected if B is true), the truth of the negation of B does not disprove the abduction. There is simply no evidence to support the abduction. Thus, contradictory abductions can exist in affirmation, as there is nothing which requires their rejection. This contrasts with the rule of modus tollens, wherein the absence of a consequence is the basis for rejecting the antecedent. In other words, with both, "If A then B" and "There is no B," we can state "There is no A." Modus tollens is the basis for hypothesis testing and as such abduction differs from that method.

Given that a contradiction does not disprove an abduction, the strength of the abduction is contingent upon the strength of the necessity of A, the strength of A necessitating B, and the necessity of anything else which necessitates B. An abduction is rejected when there is insufficient reason to hold it. However, the social creates a series of abductions which justify each other. Experiences and conceptualizations are placed within a pre-existing system of

knowledge. Affirmation exists as a web of contingent abductions dependent upon each other for support.

It is necessary to note a distinction here. Previously, *wissen*, direct experience, was referred to as true; however, the truth Peirce is referring to in abduction is different. He writes, “The surprising fact, *C*, is observed. But if *A* were true, *C* would be a matter of course. Hence, there is reason to suspect that *A* is true” (Peirce, 1931-35, 5.189). Truth, in this sense, refers to truth as part of a logic system independent of the self. Direct experience is a fact in that it is Secondness. This claim, however, does not imply a realness of the experience, as for Peirce reality is that which can be concluded independently of unique individuals (Peirce, 1931-1935, 5.311). Under this light, an abduction can be considered to convert a subjective experience into a possible truth, which in turn can be assessed by the community. If the proposed truth is real, it will be confirmed. For this reason, it must be concluded that affirmation as a system of abductions can only exist in the social *umwelt* and the lifeworld, as those realms alone have a sense of meaning and object. Affirmation in *umwelt* can only be the “truth” of direct experience.

In the most basic realm of *umwelt*, affirmation is simply reaction oriented to *qualia*; it is brute. In other words, it is experience without a sense of objects existing beyond the perception. An organism may react to a certain stimulus as noxious or pleasant, but that does not imply an awareness of an underlying object. The stimulus itself possesses the reaction. In the absence of object, an organism’s peculiar reaction cannot be distinguished from their perception. In the absence of object, if an organism feels pain whenever it perceives red the *quale* is closer to pain-red and not red and pain. The red is pain, not simply red accompanied by pain. This experience is rooted in the “absolute *ego* of pure apperception” (Peirce, 1868, p. 109). It is through the separation of *quale* and reaction that the ϕ -self is developed. Just as the private self is a

distinguished by ignorance and error (Peirce, 1868), quale and reaction are separated by the same.

Indexes allow the possibility of error and ignorance in a way which promotes the development of the object. An index is created when the reaction towards a quale is shifted onto a different quale, which becomes the index. When an index is learned the reaction to an index is different than which the index, itself, would normally invoke. Smoke becomes a sign of fire, producing a reaction to smoke as fire. When an organism can perceive an index of emotion, be it facial cues or behavioral responses, and another index, they can compare another organism's response to the sign. When two organisms perceive an index, and the two react differently in regard to it, the perception of the other's response creates a testimony. However, testimony implies an object, in other words that there is a source of the quale which produces a reaction. The assumption that my quale and reaction are the same cannot be true when another reacts differently to what I assume is the same quale. Likewise, if the quale produces a different response, there must be something different between qualia. The two indexes interact to develop a symbol.

Affirmation in the social world involves objects, the products of testimony. An object can be understood as a complex stimulus characterized by its persistency and thus exists beyond the social, insofar as a quale is by nature an objectified boundary and not a feeling within a summation of feelings. The feeling of red can be taken as an object just as red can be. However, object in this context is referring to the red not the feeling of red. Objects require a mutual perception, which creates a sense of a feeling-creating entity.

Affirmation in the social realm can be divided into two categories; the metadiscourse and the discourse. The metadiscourse is the combination of social meanings and personal experiences

rooted in the individual. This metadiscourse emphasizes the direct experience of life, it is the knowledge of the real developed by the creature as it experiences its existence. The discourses are the social meanings rooted in a specific type of experiences. Discourses are the knowledge of a collection of people, produced by the interaction of individuals with each other.

The Affirmation metadiscourse

Engaging with the world presents two problems for the ϕ -self. Firstly, the self is confronted by a disconnect between itself and what is. In other words, the self experiences some semblance of failure. Secondly, the self needs to know what it is doing and what it can do. Following in Peirce's footsteps, it is error and ignorance which separates the self from the pure ego (Pierce, 1865). The ϕ -self, rooted in physicality, is aware of the shifts in the complex self which occur independently of the ϕ -self. It is through those changes that the ϕ -self is aware of the external and how the ϕ -self effects the complex-self and its own perceptions. This creates the need for a systematic objectification of motion.

Put more simply, as a person acts within the world they seek an explanation for what is done, both in the present and the past. The undifferentiated instincts of the person need explanation. Pre-existing the individual these drives are explained retroactively. The issue then is the transformation of qualia into objects. Although a human, as a physical entity, could persist in the absence of the social, as a social being they cannot. A person has no need to question the distinctions if creates, until those boundaries are questioned. Outside of the social there is no reason to wonder if others see the world in the same way; the lines are founded upon their experience of the world.

The interaction with other people transforms the qualia into object. The person must incorporate interpretations of the world separate from their own. This interaction transforms the

umwelt from a representation to an abstraction. The world transforms from an unquestioned experience to a contingent entity. In social constructionism, “knowledge is not something people possess in their heads” (Gergen, 1985, p. 270). This is true perhaps but only insofar as knowledge is inherently social. The social individual is the embodiment of a surrounding and contingent knowledge, their habitus a product of socialization. As long as the individual performs their existence, they express, for the most part, the knowledge which creates them. Present interaction is a continuation of past interaction, but not of an abstract community rather of the individual.

The knowledge of the individual is a thread woven through time, created by the previous communities of the individual and informed by the contemporary communities present and distant. This personal worldview created by momentary interaction with disparate individuals and ideologies is a metadiscourse. It is not knowledge in that it is the interpretation of knowledge performed upon an individual.

However, as the term metadiscourse implies, this worldview is both contingent upon societal influence and detached from it. It is dependent upon the social but extends beyond it. A metadiscourse cuts across discourses and communities, built by imperfect and momentary interactions with the person. A person is a unique multiplicity of systems, both complex and phenomenological, whose stability is found not in solely in knowledge but in a persistence of experience and presence.

To put it another way, a psychic system is unique because it has access to the truth of wissen. The real does not experience itself, while the social is coupled to wissen through the psychic system. However, the psychic system, in recalling a continuous past,

structures its recollections into a conceptual framework (erkenntnis). The social is the rendering of the extra-communicative of wissen into a communicative form.

The affirmation metadiscourse although seeming akin to Mannheim's particular ideology, is significantly different. The main difference is that an ideology, being associated with knowledge, is social. This social nature is why the particular ideology requires a sense of skepticism. There is a questioning of the underlying goals and desires of the individual, the ideology is being questioned. The metadiscourse is social insofar as it is coupled with society, but its defining aspect is in its extra-communicative element. It is a part of the psychic system and cannot be accessed directly by social systems, save through personal self-reflection. The particular ideology is the questioning of the affirmation metadiscourse and its use of social concepts and values to justify the self. Particular ideology is an attempt to take the extra-communicative and make it social.

8. Affirmation and the Lifeworld

A Return to Lifeworld

To tie the discussion on affirmation back into the realm of the social, it is best to expand upon the lifeworld. There is Schutz's distinction of *umwelt* and *mitwelt*, which although helpful is insufficient. For this reason, it is necessary to follow in Zhao's footsteps, which suggests a community separated by time and not space in the form of the internet (Zhao, 2004). In addition, Habermas makes a distinction between the lifeworld and system, which will be a helpful distinction in this situation.

The two worlds which are to be considered are the community of time and not space, and the community of space but not time. Regarding the community of time and not space, the realm of consociated contemporaries, and although Zhao is completely correct that the internet produces a "remote togetherness," this is not the complete expression of these interactions. Rather these interactions also occur at the level of media and wide scale events, events which shape society but are not directly experienced. In the United States, experiences such as Hurricane Katrina or the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center are situations which transgress time but not space for those observing through news and media sources. Those experiences which shape the era of the times, in addition to the anonymous interactions on the internet, are both communities separated by space but not time. The interaction between viewer and reporter is detached, anonymous in so far as neither knows the other.

The community of space and not time is more the realm of system but not fully. Consider Zhao's (2004) example of strangers on the bus. Although Zhao uses this example to highlight immediate individuals who are not consociates, for this explanation to be complete hinges upon the assumption that nothing will cause a transgression. The line between consociates and

contemporaries is, according to Zhao, based upon more than proximity. However, the individuals can still become consociates if something breaks the established order. If an event outside of the expected happens on that bus, such as the bus breaks down, this can and will break clock-time and system. The routine, the instrumental rationality, is questioned, and the spell of order breaks. Time shifts from clock to experience, a return to complexity. Such unexpected bonding events can bring those strangers together creating, however briefly, a community of time and space. It is this potentiality which creates this community of space but not time.

The community of space and not time is also the realm of artifacts and places to draw upon Agre and Horswill's (1997) description of lifeworld. The transgression of clock-time on a bus occurs within a physical space at set point in clock-time. This physical space can be interacted with at a point in clock-time where the community of individuals is absent or outside the performative context of the space. To use a library as an example, the building and the books exist physically within the world. The library is organized, ideally, to facilitate its function as a library. When the library closes, the artifacts are still arranged meaningfully but exist in a time where they are not used. If one enters the library when it is closed, the community which creates the library still exists, but the person is detached from them temporally. Books that have been returned may be sitting in a box waiting to be placed back upon a shelf. An arrangement understood by those with some prior experiences with libraries but not by a new visitor. Even if a stranger has no conception of the events which created the physical setting, they can engage with the community through the meaningful arrangement of a physical space. If a stranger flips over bookshelves when no-one is present, they are still affecting the community.

It is worth questioning if there are two realms or four, and if they are even separate from the social *umwelt* and *mitwelt* to begin with. The distinction between an anonymous internet

community and the anonymous community created by news and media is at its core a difference between the social umwelt and mitwelt. News and media are more in line with mitwelt while the internet community is more akin to a social umwelt. The core difference being the individual's direct engagement with members of the community. In other words, the social umwelt consists of interactions contingent upon co-presence to produce and negotiate the boundaries between systems. That is to say, the social umwelt is the summation of interaction systems.²

Likewise, in the case of communities of proximity (commuters) and communities of artifacts (library), the former is more rested in umwelt and the latter more in mitwelt. Of course, communities of proximity are often associated with artifacts, such as the bus for the commuters. These communities are capable of shifting an individual between otherwise detached communities. A community within mitwelt being brought into the realm of umwelt and vice-versa.

Time, as both event-based and clock-based, highlights a rather significant difference between the two. The mitwelt is temporal in a clock sense, where time is understood through an abstract measure which can be compared across events. My doctor's appointment is at 9:45 A.M., and I waited 15 minutes to be called into my appointment. We know the temporal separation of events in regard of seconds, minutes, and hours. Event-time, in contrast, is measured through processes. I find a seat in the waiting room of my doctor, I sit down, I read a health journal, the nurse calls my last name and then my first name, and she takes me back to an exam room. As long as event-time follows the projected clock time, all is well (See Figure 3 for more information on the distinction between mitwelt and social umwelt).

² See Nassehi (2005) for a description of Luhmann's views on interaction systems.



Figure 3. Expanding upon Lifeworld.

Motion Between Communities

Although these notions of community emphasize a certain persistency, it is worthwhile to consider their existence as determined relative to the person. The mitwelt is the communities and aspects of the communities inferred by the person, while the social umwelt are the communities and aspects directly known to the person. As the individual moves through and within communities their perspective shifts. When the person enters their workplace, their immediate

community shifts to one of work. Their front-stage and back-stage, to reference Goffman, reorients itself relative to the audience and the players.

This horizontal shift into a different community is followed by a vertical change in discourse and authority. When a person enters a hospital and becomes a patient, they are subject to the authority of the medicine discourse and the hospital bureaucracy. However, when a person enters a hospital and becomes a doctor, they are also subject to the authority and responsibility inherent to the discourse and bureaucracy. The person is differentially integrated into the system. They are placed within a stratified hierarchy. Yet, in keeping with Luhmann (1995), the system is self-contained within its state of autopoiesis. The stratification applies only within the system, where it is given meaning and significance. However, the individual, existing beyond the system, is integrated into it.

In becoming part of the system, the person learns the methods and ideologies which creates the system. Part history, part instrumental rationality, it informs and determines the person's place. The person takes that system knowledge and experiences, internalizing them. The one who enters a hospital and becomes patient, persists as patient even after the conclusion of the interactions. A persistence sustained by both the system in the form of records and the individual through as personal experience. The motion between communities and systems provides the person with an understanding of the self produced through a series of incomplete interactions with multiple systems. It is this process which creates an individual's affirmation metadiscourse and their understanding of the affirmation discourse.

The development of time-space distanciation (Giddens 1990), particularly through the use of global communication and transportation has furthered the boundaries of these suggested communities. It would be much easier to compare the community of the

Zeitgeist to the legend of the first marathon, a weary Pheidippides running to Athens, carrying news of a distant battle. A sole source of information brought to a community like a glowing beacon of light. The consequence of the battle dictating the age to come. The community of gossip to be compared to the frenzied and anxious debate amongst the Athenians. There is a pleasant simplicity to that.

The technologies associated with modernity have complicated this however, making it more fluid. No longer is an event in a far-off place beyond view. Videos and photographs can be recorded and sent across the world in a matter of seconds. A community can discuss events taking place across the world in real-time. Although these representations are not the same as being there in the moment (thus being separate from space), they allow a level of engagement previously unimaginable.

Space, however, can still function much the same way it has. Humans still have yet to transcend their limited physicality and exist fully in multiple places at the same time, although limitation of space can be partially overcome. A community of proximity emphasizes being in a place where something is happening or where the community has experienced something. A recording does not transcend space, but it does extend time. In contrast, a conference call may unify space but not necessarily time.

My local banking branch, my favorite coffee shop, the Golden Gate Bridge as I interacted with it, however, are artifacts rooted in time and space, and thus, when I engage with others in or concerning those topics, I enter a community of proximity. On the other hand, a community of artifacts recognizes the symbolic meaning of an entity detached of personal experience. A bank, a coffee shop, and the Golden Gate Bridge are examples of artifacts which can be understood when separated from time, at least on a certain time scale.

The astute reader may notice a rather unstable element within these communities. If I talk to someone about my local coffee shop I enter into a community of both proximity and gossip. However, if they talk to me about a bank I have never visited but they have, my community to the topic is one of artifacts, while their community is one of proximity. The reason for this outcome is that the person understands the community relative to their position to it. Although my interaction with the person is one of proximity, the topics can exist in separate spheres of comprehension. The nature of our abductions is different. I appeal to a general knowledge (artifacts), but they appeal to a specific and concrete knowledge (proximity). The overlap between the two is the foundation for communication.

Although *mitwelt* is described as a community not of time it is more accurate to say it is a community of clock-time, that is a kind of abstract and independent form of time. Clock-time is the passing of seconds and minutes, independent of what is occurring. Clock-time is in contrast to a kind of contingent time. Contingent time represents a form of time which passes through a changing of states rather than the regular passing of measured increments. It is contingent upon what is occurring. Luhmann (2018) notes the distinction between events and constancy; however, these two forms of time are forms of events.

Basic examples of contingent time are “natural” cycles. Winter ends when spring begins, a child enters puberty, and so on. It does not matter the duration of these affairs, merely the occurrence of them. The line between the states are also ephemeral and uncertain. Even if winter ends on March 18th in clock-time, that does not mean that flowers will immediately begin blooming and that green leaves will return at the final

stroke of midnight. Yet winter ends and spring begins even if its expression is slow and gradual. The forms mix and then separate.

Some may argue that, as seconds are defined by the International System of Units upon the shifting of an electron between ground-states in Caesium-133 (Taylor & Thompson, 2008), clock-time is itself contingent time. However, this is simply an example of time as a simulacrum, to say nothing of how the sensors we create are themselves constructed to produce representations of what we cannot directly observe.

A second may represent the shifting of an electron, but it is through an atomic clock that we perceive it as time. If I am running late, I understand the ticking of the clock as a looming deadline. If I am anxiously awaiting a doctor's phone call, the motions of the clock become a foreboding presence. The nature of a simulacrum is that one does not see what it represents but rather what it has become. Seconds represent the real but can become their own thing and thus become a simulacrum. The second in creating a sense of uniformity from the real can become a uniformity in its own right. One can attempt to deconstruct the simulacrum of seconds by asking, "Why is a second a second?" but that deconstruction is rooted from the perspective of the simulacrum. One is presupposing the existence of seconds, rather than recognizing what seconds represent. One who is ignorant of what seconds represent must ask retroactively why seconds exist. In ignorance one can only know that seconds exist and then must seek a cause for them to exist. Yet this creates the paradox wherein the individual assumes the existence of what they know exists despite not knowing about the existence of the underlying phenomenon which creates what they know exists. If that which is represented was not perceived, there would be no basis for the representation.

The Affirmation Discourse

Just as each individual has a metadiscourse which conceptualizes their existence relative to the society and world, a discourse possesses a similar system of justification. However, a discourse is knowledge in a way that the metadiscourse is not. Whereas a metadiscourse is the synthesis of discourses which create a comprehensible justification of personal experiences, a discourse needs only legitimate its hold on a particular region of society. A discourse claims a type of experiences as its own, whereas a metadiscourse claims the experiences of a given system (the individual). At the same time, the discourse exists only as a legacy of interaction. A discourse need only justify its reason for existence to continue, while a metadiscourse must explain the entity which has experienced itself.

An affirmation discourse emerges from the systematic and social objectification of experiences, which are in turn categorized and then subject to explanations and interpretations. As the metadiscourse is an understanding of the world derived from a single person's experiences, the discourse is a conceptualization of the world formed by the interpretation of shared history. The metadiscourse is the conceptualization of extra-communicative experiences while the discourse consists solely of communicative experiences. A discourse is merely that which can be conveyed and nothing beyond that. However, this does not mean that discourses are atemporal. The conceptualizations of historical events are communicative, and as such can be incorporated into a discourse. Unlike Mannheim's total ideology, the affirmation discourse is not an "objective description of the structural differences" (Mannheim, 1954, p. 51), but rather the discourse describes what living in the community means to the community. The discourse assumes a total ideology, which in turn justifies the normative valuation of the community's elements. Every community has its own affirmation discourse, which is influenced by internal

and external discourses. However, this influence is not between discourses, as they are not coupled, but between individuals who can interact with each other and the discourse itself. The discourse conceptualizes only that which is contained within it, but individuals can bring concepts from beyond the discourse into it.

There are two general orientations to an affirmation discourse: a vertical discourse, which places the matter at hand within a framework, and a horizontal discourse, which places the framework around the matter. The vertical discourse is the discipline *of* something---the sociology of marriage, of the life course, of family, and so on. The matter at hand is understood as part of a bigger project. The horizontal discourse is the *something* of disciplines. Marriage, the life course, and the family can be understood within the disciplines of sociology, psychology, biology, and so on. The composite disciplines are overlapped to create an understanding of the thing.

The affirmation discourse at the level of society is an idealized conception of the life course within the given society. It is composed of the disciplines and discourses contained within it. It consists of the underlying assumptions about the society which are necessary for interaction within that society. It is in that sense similarly to the lifeworld of Habermas, but as a subcomponent of lifeworld it is closer to *mitwelt*. The *mitwelt* is understood as the world of how “Das Man” live. At the same time, the *mitwelt* is not merely a “good” affirmation but an affirmation of what is. It is how the world is “supposed” to be for good and ill.

The breadth of this *mitwelt*, or the societal affirmation discourse, is impossible to clearly define. It is not simply the summation of the various system registers. Nor is it merely language itself, although language plays an important part in the boundary project. Abstract ideas such as beauty or cultural ideals may not be directly conceptualized through language but rather

expressed visibly through media. It is the network of abductions which justify the manifestation of society as it is. Inequality may be concealed, or it may be openly justified. It is not the truth of society, rather it is the compilation of its justifications and as such also a declaration of what life within society ought to look like in society's view.

To help explain the difference between the *mitwelt* and the *social umwelt*, the affirmation discourse and the metadiscourse, consider a coffee shop. The *mitwelt* coffee shop is an ideal image of a coffee shop drawn from media depictions and interactions with other people. It is what a person thinks other people envision when they think of coffee shops and by extension what the person thinks a coffee shop will look like. The *umwelt* coffee shop, in contrast, is the person's image of a coffee shop based upon personal experiences and informed by external depictions. It also includes their immediate experiences if they are in a coffee shop at the moment of a communicative event. The *mitwelt* is what the *social umwelt* is expected to be, but the *social umwelt* is what is experienced.

The affirmation discourse then is both a vertical discourse, the nature of coffee shops as an institution, and the horizontal discourse of coffee shops as places of engagement. They are the shop within society and society within the shop, respectively. How a coffee shop should function and how it should be engaged with. The metadiscourse is what one thinks of coffee shops, based upon experience and the discourses. The experience with the barista, writing a paper in the seat by the window looking out upon a parking lot and an old water-tower, and so on. If a person loves coffee shops or if they hate them. If they think of them when considering examples for their thesis or not. Are coffee shops places for studying or conversations with friends? The

metadiscourse is the self-evident nature of an abduction derived from more than communication (See Figure 4 for how the discourse and the metadiscourse relate to umwelt and the real).

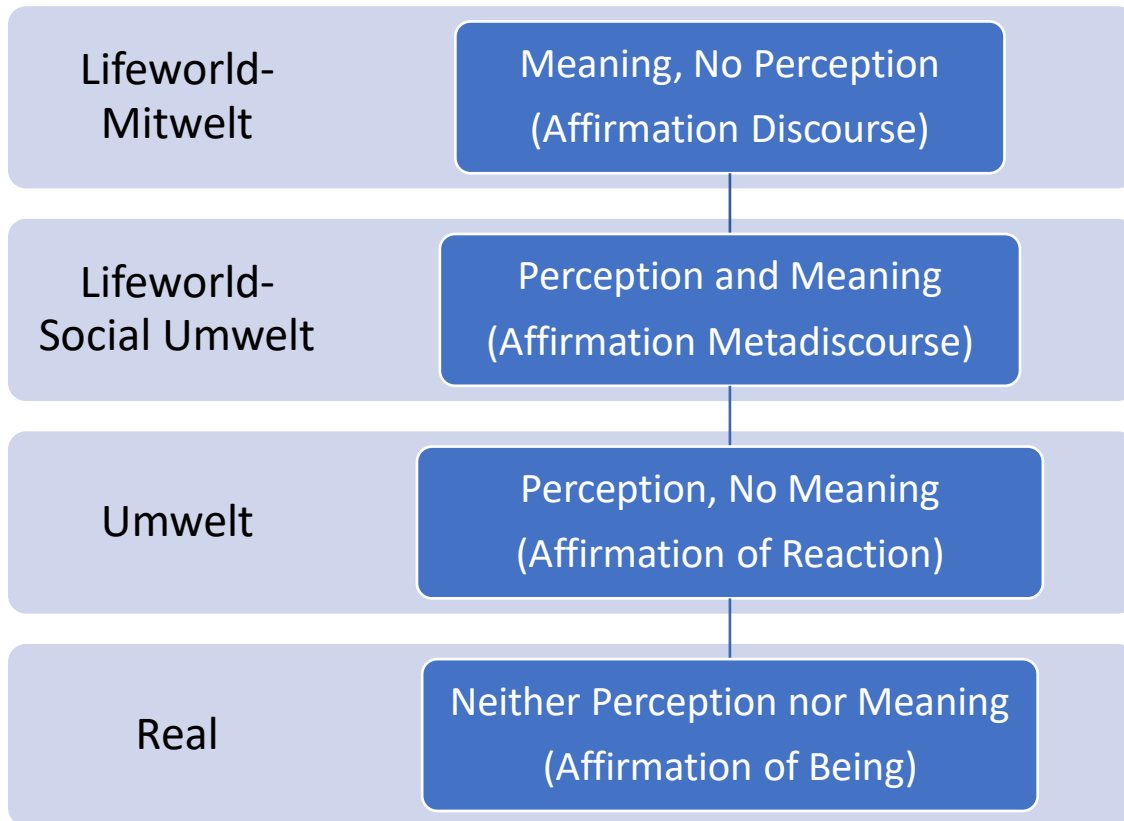


Figure 4. Linking Lifeworld with Affirmation.

Power and Violence

Continuing upon this expanded notion of affirmation, violence involves controlling the affirmation of oneself and others. Violence is the ability to manifest one’s will in the world both physically and meaningfully over another will. It is labor imposed upon another person. Violence shapes the world in accordance of the will through the negation of other wills. Power, in turn, is both a trust in violence and an alternative form of violence. It is a communication media, “a code of generalized symbols which guides the transmission of selections” (Luhmann, 2018, p. 121). Whereas violence is direct tangible physical control, power is influence founded upon a belief in

the certainty of an embodied violence. This embodied violence is detached from the physical and exists in the potentiality of negation.

However, as power becomes detached from such overt physicality, it takes on a different form. Speech, for instance, can exist as both violence and power. Speech is power when it delimits the boundaries of what something can be, when it appeals to a discourse for a justification of the expressed concepts. Speech becomes violence when it negates the person who experiences it, such as when the speech produces feelings of alienation and stress. In effect, one fears for their belonging or their well-being.

Where “power is constituted through the distribution of preferences for alternatives” (Luhmann, 2018, p. 169), violence confines and influences alternatives directly. Violence compels through tangibly negating a person’s will, but power compels through directing a person’s will. Power, at its extreme, limits the preferences of a person to a single choice so that they cannot entertain alternatives. This limitation is created by both tangible conditions, such as poverty, where alternatives may exist but cannot be pursued and structural conditions where the thought of alternatives is prevented by a rigid system of conceptualization. Violence, in contrast, negates the alternative preferences by over-ruling the individual’s will. However, power implies within it a negation of the will by the external valuation of alternatives. The personal reasons for action are subsumed within group justifications for actions.

Power, rooted in a trust of violence, acts as an indirect control over the means of affirmation. The creation of category is itself an act of violence, severing the world into pieces regardless of the world’s will. One does not think of a wall or a sidewalk as violent because the violence only emerges when one resists the meaning ascribed to the objects.

That is, when one tries to climb a wall or walk on the street. The power of category is in the violent potential of enforcing the category. A category matters insofar as it can be imposed. However, power justifies the expression of violence; it provides the context necessary for violence to manifest. To have power in a society is to control or influence the expressions of self and others: to shape what society ought to look like. This is not simply to exclude but also to conceal. It is the establishment of “place,” where a person or group ought to be in society.

Power within society can be a control of conceptions (discourses), or an ordering of bodies (physical). Most significant of the discourses is the affirmation discourse, which serves as an integration of the subsidiary discourses into a collective *mitwelt*, an intellectual overlap of affirmation metadiscourses. This discourse within its creation privileges certain approaches to affirmation. However, this system becomes part of the system-environment for other systems. Systems of inequality can be justified directly by affirming them as the status quo or indirectly by justifying a discourse which is contingent upon the oppression. In addition, the spread of strategic action or system within the lifeworld is due in part to the changing nature of the affirmation discourse and the spread of reflexivity.

The Components of Affirmation Discourse

Although one can speak of discursive affirmation as a monolith, that fails to distinguish between the underlying divide between existence and integrity. The former is concerned with being recognized as existing, and the latter is concerned with being seen in a positive light. In this regard affirmation at the level of a discourse can be said to have four components:

1. Recognition---To see as a discrete phenomenon, or cause.
2. Categorization---To place alongside similar phenomena.
3. Explanation---To place the category in context with other categories.

4. Validation---The occurrence of the category is supported or endorsed.

The first affirmation is a recognition, the realization that the phenomenon is somehow unique or noteworthy. This is the first level of abduction, wherein one determines that a feeling is *of* something: the separation of one's reaction from the feeling or the realization that self and others are reacting to something. This realization also creates the ground which is used for comparison. The experience of a spoon implies the existence of a spoon, which in turn implies a "spoon-ness" which a spoon embodies.

The second affirmation, categorization, is a generalization of a phenomenon by applying a common set of characteristics to a range of phenomena. This is the second abduction, that something is like other things. The existence of multiple yet different spoon-feelings implies the existence of multiple spoons. This abduction requires a distillation of a ground, which the first abduction provides. One must be able to assert that a spoon has the quality of a spoon in order to label it as a spoon.

The third affirmation is explanation. Explanation is the linking of categories through a narrative and boundary. For example, spoons are eating utensils which links them thematically with forks and knives. It is therefore reasonable that spoons would be in the same drawer as forks. In addition, as eating utensils it is reasonable to expect that the spoons would be in places where food is consumed. This abduction places the spoon or the object of consideration within a broader context.

The final affirmation, validation, is the positive normative valuation of the category. This abduction places the object within a moral context. Eating dessert with a dessert spoon and not a serving spoon is a sign of "good" manners. For individuals, this affirmation is described within self-affirmation theory where it has three components.

The individual strives to see themselves as good, virtuous, and efficacious (Sherman & Cohen, 2010).

It is necessary to realize that a higher-level affirmation by necessity incorporates the lower-level affirmations (see Figure 5). To say that a person or entity is good requires recognizing, however implicitly, the explanations and categories which the person or entity associates with. Likewise, to explain something requires a sense of what something is and what other things are. One cannot validate without recognizing that something is.

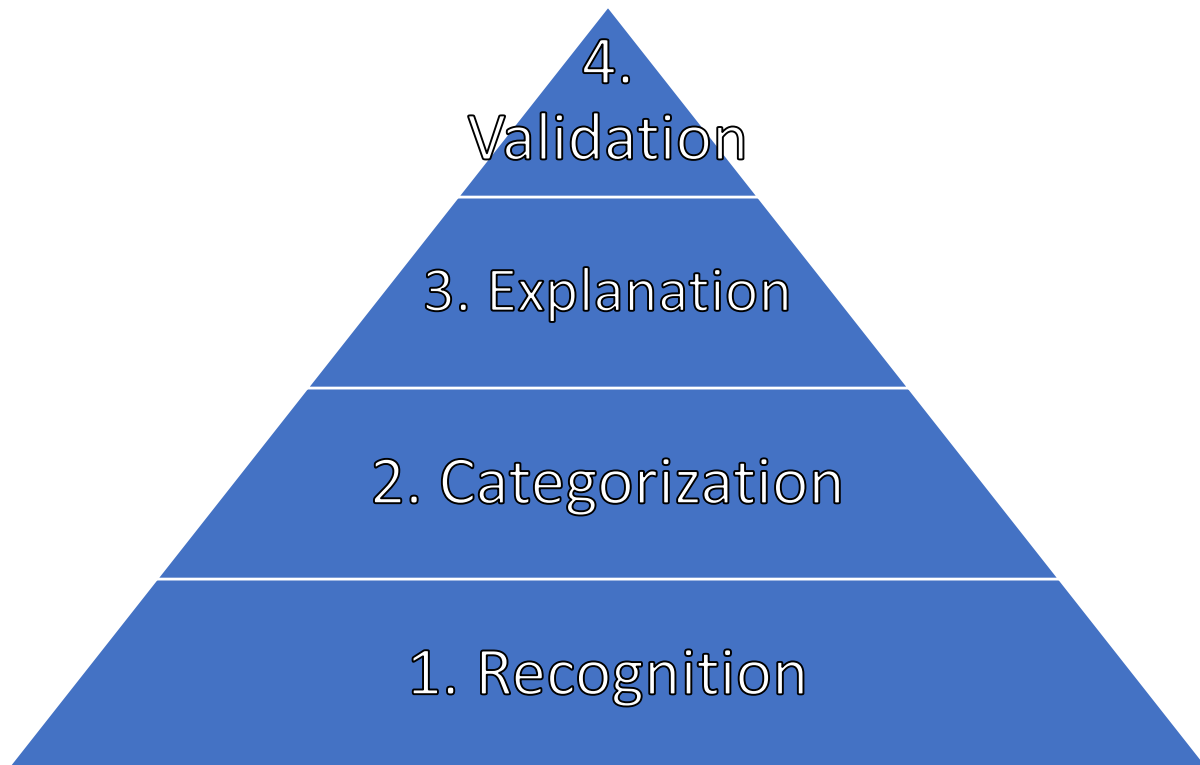


Figure 5. Components of Affirmation.

Affirmation and the Social World

Affirmation is the foundation of everything that the social world is. Qualia are not merely functional in a performative sense; they are the foundation of the self. The individual interacts with the world and in that interaction knows themselves as a force. Engaging with other individuals

creates objects from the shared understanding, from which the person knows themselves as an agent and actor. The self becomes objectified.

As the will reaches out into the world, it finds creatures like itself. The will, desiring affirmation, engages in those interactions selfishly, trying to use the other for its gain. When one fails to impose its will upon the other, the pair struggle to reach a shared understanding. The ego discovers an alter ego. It is the resulting conflicts between wills, which produces a convergent comprehension. The will must conceptualize the *umwelt* of the other, and in doing so, it leaves the meaningless world behind. At the same time the will comes to see itself as an object not merely a *qualia*.

However, most people are born in a pre-existing lifeworld as Schutz suggests. The creation of object takes place early and quickly, so as to be indistinguishable from the creation of *qualia*. The importance of this, however, pervades the social. The creation of object is a perpetual effort to explain *qualia*. *Qualia* are extra-communicative, and thus exist beyond the communicative.

History and discourse are the affirming of a certain set of experiences, which is built by individual attempts to mutually justify and explain one's existence. Affirmation is both a communal and an individual project. One does not question a world in which they have a place they accept. Likewise, the world does not question a person who fulfills their assigned role. The system-environment of the psychic system is created to justify the system. The objects they see in the everyday are those which they use to explain themselves. It is not truth or power which drives a system, but the affirmation that conceptualization of the environment brings.

Affirmation in the social world is assumed implicitly in the number of meso-level theories which unknowingly draw upon it. Tittle's (1995) control balance theory asserts

that a person acts to offset a perceived imbalance of control. Self-affirmation theory is founded upon the premise that a person strives to preserve self-integrity (Sherman & Cohen, 2010).

Theories such as these reflect a need for self-manifestation, which is affirmation.

9. Deliberative Discourse and Affirmation: Habermas

On the Assumption of Meaning

Simply focusing on the ideas of affirmation is insufficient. Let us now consider its application. Rienstra and Hook (2016) critique Habermas, asserting that his argument is dependent upon “heroic assumptions of agent rationality and agent deliberation” (Rienstra & Hook, 2006, p. 317).

Under affirmation, the linguistic telos is not mutual understanding as Habermas suggests, but rather affirmation derived through appropriate reaction. A speaker uses language to create an idea within the listener’s mind in order to produce a reaction which validates the speaker’s thoughts and actions. *This is the notion of double contingency combined with affirmation.* Mutual understanding as a teleological end is true insofar as it is the idealized understanding of the phenomenon. It is idealized in that it distinguishes communication from other signs and assumes that there are multiple individuals capable of interpreting the signs intentionally being created. Mutual understanding then is the simultaneous affirmation of the participants through a shared understanding of the ideas being invoked.

The error of simply assuming that the end of the linguistic is mutual comprehension is that the assumption of shared meaning precedes the communicative act. The speaker assumes comprehension and attempts to express a motion within that field of comprehension. There are two things there. The first is the language: the words, the syntax, and so on. The second is the motion within that language: the sense beyond the words, or the ideas being expressed. The speaker assumes the meaning and structure of the former in order to express the latter.

Communication arises out of an individual need to be affirmed. Communication is unique from other attempts at affirmation in that affirmation is achieved by the reciprocation of a transmitted sign. In particular, the sender wants a response which conforms to their own perceptions of the sign and the individual they are interacting with. Or more simply put, the speaker wants the listener to react in a way which conforms to what the speaker has said and how they said it.

Mutual understanding cannot be a telos without presupposing an ideal purpose of communication. Yet if one presupposes the purpose, then they neglect the foundation which creates the phenomenon and thus create an end untethered from its source.

The problem is that true understanding is secondary to perceived understanding and affirmation. Neither side will question the language use if they can conceptualize the motion it creates, and neither participant will question the assumptions they assume to be true.

It is also insufficient to assume that a disconnect in meaning or goal must result in conflict resolution. As the goal of communication is not resolution but affirmation, a facsimile of conflict resolution can be sufficient to satisfy an individual, until it becomes unsustainable.

The meaning of a language is separate from the sign of the language, insofar as the spoken arrangements do not obligate a specific meaning to them. An individual interprets the signs, binding them to the specifics of a language and their experience.

If there is a goal to communication beyond affirmation, it is a convergent comprehension. If that convergent comprehension is ideal, then it would be mutual understanding. In other words, individuals attempt to communicate in order to affirm their sense of self and worldview. As that which we call communication is a venture involving multiple people, a new goal emerges from the overlapping of the individual goals. This new goal is mutual affirmation through the

mechanisms of debate and discussion. Convergent comprehension then is the situation wherein all participants understand the content of the communication despite differing views underlying their translation of the content. Mutual understanding then is an ideal, a situation within which the participants are aligned in regard to the underlying meanings and thus view the content of the communication in the exact same way.

However, it is under triple contingency (Strydom, 1999) that the nuance of affirmative-based communication becomes more apparent. Triple contingency recognizes that an interaction is not merely between individuals but within a social context. Triple contingency produces a filtering of alternatives based upon societal expectations and the present condition in order to better produce a desired response.

The Pursuit of Truth

Nilsen's (1966) ethic of significant choice argues that all decision making should be free of coercion and based upon all information available at the time of the decision. Habermas (1996) writes on his discourse principle that "just those action norms are valid to which all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses" (p. 107). Habermas (1984) assumes a series of preconditions necessary for an agent. They must have a capacity to interact and judge facts, a self-awareness which allows them to reflect on their own biases. Finally, they act in a "purposive-rational" fashion. Habermas (1984) likewise argues that "valid norms must be capable of meeting with the rationally motivated approval of everyone affected under conditions that neutralize all motives except that of cooperatively seeking the truth" (p. 19). The basis for this is that the norms must address a common interest amongst the effected as seen in his discourse principle.

Under affirmation individuals act in the world to justify their own existence. If we apply this notion to Habermas' assumptions, a series of additional assumptions emerge. These assumptions are the true first-order assumptions.

The first assumption is that the truth is universally affirming. If one accepts this then mutual understanding is the teleological end of communication. If everyone finds affirmation only in the truth, eventually all discussions will lead to the truth. This is because a falsehood contradicts the truth, which means that something that is false will also be un-affirming under certain conditions, as truth is the fundamental affirmation. This assumption drives the ideal individual to pursue truth. This assumption also means that no debate will challenge affirmation, as the discovery of truth will always replace a false source of affirmation.

The second assumption is that there is a universal discourse. This discourse could be understood as Habermas' lifeworld, which incorporates all systems. As a universal discourse all arguments are equally valued, only the nature of their validity matters. Habermas (1996) notes the difference between propositional truth, normative rightness, and sincerity. This assumption prevents any discourse or system from claiming sole authority over a debate and thus affirmation.

The third assumption is that in the absence of truth there is an unresolved heterogeneity or an imperfect homogeneity of the community. In other words, a false conclusion exists in an unstable state. Either it is a product of ignoring certain relevant members of the community or the community is not universally representative. As a result, individuals entering or being recognized by the community will inevitably result in debate and truth. This assumption prevents imperfect unanimity from becoming truth, as it is contingent upon the breadth of the community not merely its totality.

The first assumption, that truth is universally affirming, serves as a basis for the other two assumptions and provides a reason why a person would pursue truth. The second assumes the equality of explanation in regard to affirmation. That, the source of the justification is not as important as its explanatory power. The third assumes that in the absence of truth a community will inevitably be confronted by conflict requiring debate.

These assumptions are an example of the application of affirmation and action-orientation in a theoretical situation. As more abstract theoretical concepts, they attempt to synthesize the more grounded theories of social psychology with more philosophical notions of sociology and philosophy.

10. The Colonization of the Lifeworld

Habermas (1984) writes of the colonization of the lifeworld by system. The emergent and integrative communicative action supplanted by strategic action. The colonization of the lifeworld by system is perhaps a misleading description. Colonization is the claiming of a region which did not previously belong to an entity. But what is happening is not truly a colonization in that system pervades the lifeworld; instead, it is a radical separation. As the lines are drawn, they also demarcate. The aspects of the lifeworld which fall within a system are claimed and then excised from the lifeworld as they are subjected to a series of strategic actions which are founded upon free association.

It is, admittedly, inaccurate to speak of modernity as if it were some clear demarcation in time, some concrete project. Rather, modernity is a mentality produced within a specific historical and temporal environment. It is a way of understanding the world, and not itself the world. However, the mentality of modernity creates modernity as a simulacrum. It is similarly incorrect to speak of lifeworld and system as truly discrete. Both are constructs superimposed upon the real, and communication is predicated upon a strategic element; systems may react to the environment and thus persist. Institutions are by nature distinct from their environment and a person uses their place within systems to conceptualize their sense of self. For this reason, what follows is founded upon an idealistic interpretation, a conceptualization of the social world; the contemporary focus on reflection, in the form of scientific and strategic concerns, and the simultaneous distrust of traditional authority produces a radical separation between the lived and the governed.

This separation draws from two foundations: radical reflexivity and institutional detachment. Firstly, the hyper-modernist has become detached from institutions due to a personal

reflexivity and the deconstruction of traditional authority. The individual reflects upon their place in the world, as they shift through society at the level of different institutions and communities. They find that, regarding system, that they are interchangeable with other people. The system considers them strategically, as resources. If they possess the skills or connections, they can occupy a role within an institution. For many, they are unable to derive purpose or meaning within the mere performance of a role. Put another way, they find there is no vocation in work, that all are replaceable within a system. The traditional authority has been supplanted by lego-rational authority. What is created is “a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform” (Tocqueville, 2004, p. 862), not at the level of a society but of organizations. The loss of faith forces the person to detach from institutions such that none are truly central for their sense of self. Rather, meaning is derived by what the work allows or permits. If the work is important to the person’s identity, it is despite the system not because of it.

The hypermodern institution likewise becomes disconnected from the rest of society. It is driven by its own internal reasoning, and a need to be self-sustaining. It cannot rely upon the external to make it real, as the only vessels to carry it beyond itself have become detached from it. The person in losing faith with the structure compartmentalizes the system to the region it belongs.

As institutions exist as a part of a society, no singular institution is sufficient to justify the life course of the individual. In reflection the individual finds each system lacking, governing a region of life. The functional differentiation of systems begins to divide the realm of the living into pieces of discourses. The only thing which remains constant is the person. The person, as Lipovetsky (2005) realizes, draws upon traditions

detached from authorities and in the case of religion is detached from tradition itself. The atomized universe of modernity becomes a battleground with the individual in the center.

The institution codifies interactions within it, but lacking fluid interactions with individuals, it becomes crystalline. It ceases to be a place where a person lives and becomes a place where a person enters. A place which can be left, but within which is governed by internal and absolute rules. The historical nature of system remains convincing only within the confines of its boundaries---a thought collective (Dean, 2014) confined to itself. However, as life exceeds a single discipline, a person can readily invoke a single aspect of a discourse, detaching it from the context of its creation.

In detachment, a single idea or a single statistic can be used to represent centuries of discourse, a use still serving to affirm the individual. Of course, all appeals to discourse are fragmentary and incomplete because the person invoking them only has their experience with the discourse not the summation of the tradition.

This crystallization of institutions has its benefits. It is a radical form of Durkheim's organic solidarity, where cohesion is formed by interdependence. In its extreme form, it is a relationship devoid of any sense of collectiveness, save the contingent relationship. One can be whomever they wish to be, outside the organization, and the organization can be whatever it can be. A custodian cleans the office. A clerk welcomes visitors in the office. The office building does not matter, the custodian does not matter, and the clerk does not matter. Even the business itself is of little concern as long as everything follows its role it does not matter. As long as payroll is processed, it need not matter.

The community transforms from relationships contingent upon group belonging into ones of free associations. The focus shifts from mutual identity to an interrelated function. In order to

strip away the sense of the collective, however, all possible elements which may create it must be removed. Important interaction must be codified, bound to the law of functionality. When things are rendered to the communicative, they can be controlled. Yet it is in this growing bureaucratization that emerges the curious truth. The system, in only applying to the function, does not speak beyond itself. This notion is reminiscent of Hobbes' (1994) statement: "As for other liberties, they depend on the silence of the law" (p. 143). One is free of the system when they are beyond it. Of course, such would be implied by the idea of autopoiesis. However, the shift in organization highlights a reframing of the system. Whereas a system in mechanical solidarity is "within" the group, a system rooted in radical organic solidarity is "outside" the group. The former is a subcategory within, while the latter is a categorization parallel to.

However, this mode of radical organic solidarity runs the risk of creating detached spheres of interaction driven by affirmation. Individuals are slotted into positions, not integrated into them. If the sphere provides enough positive feedback, then the individual is satisfied. Pockets of homogeneity are created through a narrowing of focus and not an understanding of a summation. This situation poses an existential danger to the individual in the form of system.

It is not merely that system is separate rather it has become inhuman. As systems carve out their piece of lifeworld, what remains is less than human. The individual moves through systems and is defined by that interaction. However, as the systems become rigid a person cannot fully express themselves. They either become the role within in the system or they leave the system behind. As the discourses distribute the human being amongst themselves, the only recourse is nihilistic ignorance or rebellion. When every act

or thought is the realm of a discourse, the individual becomes ignorant of their own summation. Their experiences are divided amongst quarreling experts.

Yet, as Giddens (1998) argues, “Experts cannot be automatically relied upon to know what is good for us” (p. 59). There is a fundamental paradox of expert knowledge. To judge if an expert is competent, one must first be well-informed in that field, however, to become knowledgeable, one must be taught by an expert of that field. But if one cannot trust an expert, they can only trust themselves and their own experience as it relates to the expert opinion. Finally, in a world of increasing information, one does not have the time to process all of it. An expert may dedicate their life to a discipline and thus knows the subtle nuances within it. A non-expert in contrast lives a life not oriented towards that discourse and thus is unaware of the complexity within it. Ultimately, there is not enough time to become an expert in every field and so the question is one of faith. Does a person trust the expert, whom they are unqualified to judge, or themselves and their experiences, which they know as truth?

On Softness or “Douceur”

Alexis de Tocqueville (2004) in *Democracy in America* posited that a threat to democracy would emerge in the softness or “douceur” of the majority. That the populace, having turned away from others in self-interest, would allow themselves to be led by a government acting as a guardianship. A system within which, “men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting” (Tocqueville, p. 862). It is on this topic, that the subversion of communitive action should be discussed.

The colonization of lifeworld as proposed by Habermas indirectly touches upon this radical thematization of the life experience but not in the same fashion. A person is seen no longer as a summation but a fragmented collection of discorsal ideas. The greatest danger to

communicative power is its subversion. When the system creates a mode of expression and affirmation which is incapable of meaningful action, it is appearance without substance, form without weight. It is an illusion of action, a performance perhaps, but sincerely believed.

The commodification of resistance yokes acts of morality to a system of radical consumption (Rothe & Collins, 2017). The critique Marx once levied against religion can now perhaps be turned against consumerism. The performance of religion being replaced by secular gesturing, prayer exchanged for protests. It could be said that a good deed is good for its own sake and, in that sense, is autotelic. As activism is commodified so too does it become good to consume for one is consuming “correctly.” Activism becoming illusory action, both an expression and a protest of real problems. It is an artificial consolation, the imaginary flowers on the chains and a desperate need to express oneself in a world of ever-growing complexity. Where suffering was once the realm of inscrutable gods, it has become the realm of byzantine systems.

In a society with multiple systems, each system monitors its boundaries individually. Communicative power is prevented in systems of power, but its expression is allowed in less powerful systems. The public sphere, as it becomes detached from the procedural element of law, becomes such a place.

No law or code can extract communicative power from its subversion because subversion preserves the action while preventing the outcome, and law is an action norm. The observer cannot know why the action failed; they must infer it. The hinderance of system is a difficulty. but it is not solely the cause of failure. The observer must look within the mechanisms and beyond the appearances. Yet, as Luhmann (2018) notes, “The greater the combination of

recognizable causes, the more difficult it becomes to isolate who originated the action” (p. 46).

Does a movement fail because there was insufficient support or because its opposition is too strong?

One can blame either the barrier or the force pushing against it. The barrier is too strong, or the force is too weak. The rightness of the force is immaterial. Indeed, the barrier merely exists in contradiction to the force and must reject the rightness of the force being laid against it.

Habermas (1996) writes:

“The legal rationalization of force must not be conceived as taming a quasi-natural domination whose violent core is and always remains uncontrollably contingent. Rather, law is supposed to dissolve this irrational substance, converting it into a “rule of law” in which alone the politically autonomous self-organization of the legal community expresses itself” (p. 189).

Habermas seeks through rationalization to strip violence of its compulsive nature. In doing so he bypasses the Discourse Principle by arguing that procedural rationalization can overcome an individual refusal to submit.

But the revolutionary can never be justified within the system she overthrows. A violent resistance cannot legitimate the destruction they bring under the gaze of their tyrant. Yet they are products of society and communitive power. They are not merely deviations or failures; they are a consequence. No system can provide the mechanisms for being overthrown. It can allow its radical reconstitution but not a violation of its rules. A system can dissolve itself, but it can never overthrow itself. The revolutionary is justified through her summation, her gestalt. All that she is creates her, but just as her manifestation is from the self, her creation is in the social.

To understand the revolutionary and her revolution is to create doubt about the stability of the state. To understand is to justify, even if it is merely to elaborate upon the machinations which lead to the moment. But the revolutionary has no need for the state, as she is born from all the social elements which have created her. Habermas would create a world where the revolutionary cannot enter the streets. But the rebel is justified by an appeal beyond the state, an appeal to that which they consider right.

Using the affirmation discourse, the greatest danger to democracy is when communicative power is subverted and rendered useless. Yet this can be readily accomplished because the purpose of communication is not power but recognition, not action but the sense of action, and not truth but the order provided by truth.

The problem with any indirect form of government is that it severs citizens from the issues, although this can be overcome when local concerns forcibly connect citizens with an issue. The informed citizen is confronted with a plethora of problems and solutions, yet their knowledge does not actually matter. The informed citizen and the uninformed citizen both vote for a party, and as long as they perform a cursory study of their morals, they will find a suitable candidate. But just as ignorance can allow a subversion so too can too much knowledge. The more knowledge there is on a topic, the greater the complexity of the situation.

When expert knowledge is granted privilege, why would the non-expert waste their time to learn the basics of a discourse? Why study something when their opinion will not be valued because they are not an expert in that field or a charismatic television personality? Why not simply elect people who will listen to the experts, in line with the

person's moral perspective? There is enough to be done in this world without wasting one's time studying a dozen discourses they have no interest in.

If there is a softness in the people, it emerges from an insurmountable nature of the era. When there are so many choices to be made, one risks being overwhelmed by indecision.³ The deluge of knowledge from media and discourses is a weight which breaks the camel's back or the lion which finds itself chained to inescapable responsibilities of employment and household. The child's forgetfulness and affirmation are an absurd declaration in a world which exists so heavily in negation. What else is a person to do but turn inwards? To focus on what they can hold and cherish?

The subversion of communicative power comes with the principle of equality and knowledge whereas its subjugation comes through violence and inequality. The person realizing both the range and similarity of human experience. From the realization emerges the terrifying limits of their own potential. The freedom from such terror is found in the perpetual childhood of Tocqueville, and the hollow expression of Nietzsche's child. In being driven towards affirmation the person is susceptible to the subversion of communicative power---asking to help their parents and being sent on a useless task.

A reader might construe this as a suggestion that equality is harmful for individual expression, but that is inaccurate. Knowledge of others causes self-reflection, which pushes people towards authentic self-expression. However, one must weigh the costs and benefits associated with authenticity. Capitalism strives towards the commodification of identity, so that profit may be made off the individual identities. This results in expression being tied to one's economic power, as the expression of one's self is linked to their ability to consume. It creates an

³ Consider Barry Schwartz's 2004 book, *The Paradox of Choice*, where he suggests that the expansion of consumer choices produces malaise amongst consumers.

inversion of the self. One hunts in the morning so as to become a hunter and one critiques after dinner so as to become a critic because they are a hunter and a critic. Those without resources end up being more than just deprived; they are negated. With a finite amount of resources which identity expressions can one afford to purchase?

On Ignorance

The specialized distribution of knowledge is an important aspect of systems. If information is a selection from a set of possibilities as Luhmann suggests, then knowledge is the range of possibilities. What one does not know is just as important as what they do know. Yet knowledge is both experience and its conceptualization. It is both the truth of wissen and the structuring of *erkenntnis*. Turri (2012) proposes conceptualizing knowledge as “true belief manifesting intellectual power” (p. 258). However, Turri is drawing upon the tradition of justified true belief, which considers truth as possessing a stronger sense than the mere belief in something as true. Something is or is not true independent of belief. In contrast, Elder-Vass (2012) proposes that knowledge be understood as a justified belief such that “the holder of the belief has good reasons for holding it” (p. 212). Elder-Vass (2012) elaborates on “good reasons” as normative attitudes and rules which confirm the belief as legitimate: “We will recognize that it [knowledge] is most accurately characterized, not as *justified true belief*, but as *socially authorised belief*” (emphasis in original, p. 232). This definition of knowledge disregards the possible truth of a belief and focuses upon the normative nature of knowledge.

On the topic of truth, there is a conundrum here as direct experience is inherently true yet also confined to individual perceptions. All beliefs are true insofar as they

emerge from honest experience. The question is whether the extrapolation of experience into distinct conceptions is valid. In other words, is the belief justified? The implication of justification, then, is that the beliefs are then tested against the external for continuity.

Following upon this, personal knowledge represents a series of true beliefs emerging from personal experiences which are organized into a framework and then adjusted based upon new experiences. More importantly, though, is that framework shapes the experiences, which in turn influences the framework. In the absence of information, knowledge becomes recursive: Experiences are explained by the structure and the structure is justified by the categorized experiences.

The subversion of communicative power exists at the level of this knowledge and ignorance. Rather, at the level of the individual, knowledge and ignorance are of the same substance. But ignorance is expressed in two ways. One can be aware that they possess a gap in their knowledge, or one can be unaware that they lack knowledge.

Ignorance, though, can involve an active element. A person cannot know what they do not know. They can only be aware that they lack some insight. The content of that insight may be beyond them, although they may infer or conceal its shape through what they do know.

Linda Alcoff (2007) presents ignorance as a “substantive epistemic practice,” emphasizing ignorance as a product of social norms and personal choices. Social norms justify pre-existing modes of thought and justification while the person chooses not to question them. Ignorance is a useful tool in the subversion of communicative power. One need only know that which they need in order to succeed in the specific social order. In addition, one only knows that information which they have been exposed to.

If one is happy and content, they may not look for the limitations within their lifestyle, but if one is unhappy, it is sufficient to merely conceal the modes of meaningful change.

On Suffering and Knowledge

There is also another pressing issue: Can the truth of *wissen*, which is extra-communicative, be transmuted directly into a communicative form? On one hand, *wissen* can be transformed into a form of personal knowledge, which integrates social categories with the direct experiences of the self. On the other hand, social categories, themselves, lack the truth inherent to *wissen*. In the words of Wittgenstein (1986), “The essential thing about private experience is...that nobody knows whether other people also have *this* or something else” (p. 95, para. 272). Categorization separates and unifies: It allows us to count apples and tell them apart from oranges. Categories emerge from overlapping analysis and the lifeworld as shared experience. But what of experiences beyond the scope of a sociodicy?

The affirmation metadiscourse is not the same as the affirmation discourse or the lifeworld. It exists beyond and within them. However, if social order exists it follows that communication is possible. Communication, though, is not the same as a transmission of truth. Although *wissen* is true for the one who experiences it, is it true for others?

The difficulty is that if the experiential truth of *wissen* is extra-communicative and the structural truth of *erkenntnis* is communicative then how can a mutual justifiable truth be found?

One solution is that the closer two people are in categorization, experiences, and physicality the more their true beliefs will be rooted in similar direct experiences.

However, what is closeness? Is it proximal, temporal, cultural, or biological in nature? Standpoint theory for instance appeals to an intersectional understanding of a person. A person is enmeshed in a web of identities and group belongings. It is through that pluralistic position that one conceptualizes their experiences and the experiences of others (Buzzanell, 2015). The very notion of identities and groups, however, requires the possibility of a comparable worldview: That a group of persons experiences similar events across a comparable life course. For this to be possible, it requires that the extra-communicative be rendered into a comparable and thus communicative form. To communicate requires an assumption of comparability between participants. One must assume that there are discrete measures or grounds which can be compared across individuals.

The assumption of comparability is further complicated as a finite set of direct experiences can be conceptualized in different ways. A change in interpretation can produce a rippling effect, radically altering the perspectives of otherwise similar individuals, as repeated instances of a slightly differing interpretation can evolve into ever expanding differing of perspective. A slight initial difference of perspective may lead to significant deviations after repeated instances, as past experiences are recalled during present experiences.

If direct experience and knowledge are understood as coupled systems, then discourse emerges out of the exchange of knowledge through means of interaction. A discourse is, in a sense, the inversion of the metadiscourse. It is detached from experiences and composed from a group of privileged individuals giving contingent meaning to fragments of their life. A discourse is akin to a dictionary, where each entry is composed of elements which themselves possess an entry. One can understand the entry as a series of interdependent categories or, in opposition, as an entry known through experience, separate from other conceptions.

In this sense, there are two extremes of language. The first is language existing solely within discourse, completely detached from experience, a recursive set of definitions. The second is language rooted solely in experience, such that to express within the language is to invoke the experience as it is, in other words, a private language. However, the language of which we are accustomed to sits between those two extremes. We lack the ability to directly transfer memories and experiences to others and our understanding of language extends beyond the signs and into our engagement with their referents. The medium and the motion within the medium as it were.

All communication must have a potential for failure. A person may communicate something which is misunderstood, or the respondent may reject what is communicated. However, the gap between discursal understanding and direct experience offers a different problem than simple ignorance. One can know what something is, but not know how that something is experienced. It is this disconnect which makes establishing a universal truth difficult. C.S. Peirce (1931-35) states:

“The real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a community, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase of knowledge” (5.311).

The central problem, however, is with information. As it has been suggested, the lifeworld, the social real, is confined through its coupling to people. The people in turn are coupled to umwelt, which is a filtering of all possible environmental information. The real in the social sense is

confined to the information available within the lifeworld. However, that information is not the information of umwelt, nor vice versa.

One cannot speak of information without implying a range of perception. The color of an object is information contingent upon being able perceive “color.” However, those who cannot see color do not live in a “less real” state. Rather, those who can see color do not have the experience and thus information of not being able to see color. The real consists of both experiences simultaneously, and as such both are valid sources of information. To disregard the “vagaries” of individuals, the community must be assumed to have access to a specific and consistent form of information. Otherwise, there can be no testing for truth. However, information is not a singular entity it is contingent and can be contradictory. The error is to assume that differences in information are necessarily differences in truth.

What we have thus far are three major ideas. The first idea is that a lack of direct experience results in a person relying on discourses to conceptualize new information. The second idea is that although extra-communicative and communicative forms have overlap, they are not identical. The third idea is that information is not a clear-cut object awaiting analysis but emergent upon one’s perceptions. All of which has been preparing for a discussion on suffering.

The goal here is not to make suffering “knowable” but rather to make sense of the “senselessness,” to recognize what makes it difficult for us to understand suffering (Wilkinson, 2005). It is in suffering where the difficulty of converting the extra communicative into a communicative form takes on its clearest state. If suffering is understood as a negation of what is (Frank, 2008), then affirmation causes a person to strive towards converting the negation into something meaningful. To paradoxically take what is not and explain it, thereby re-creating it within the lifeworld. Conceptualizing the suffering within language protects the sufferer from its

full effects (Scarry, 1985). Likewise, it allows a person to communicate some aspect of their experiences to others. However, that does not mean that there is language capable of fully expressing suffering, nor does the conceptualization negate the suffering.

The difficulty is a person can only affirm what they recognize and understand. However, due to structural forms of ignorance, a person is confined in their ability to understand and thus affirm. As suffering exists beyond social norms, it cannot be fully recognized. For it to be recognized, it must be conceptualized within systems but, in doing so, loses the senselessness which makes it suffering. Knowledge is unable to comment on suffering, without negating its subversion of meaning. Suffering is only noticeable on the cusp of the social. If we can conceptualize it, then it can cease to be suffering and become mundane. If we separate ourselves from it, then it is never mentioned and has no form. Likewise, we can re-frame those who suffer as existing in the natural state of the world. One who is not suffering can consider themselves “blessed,” removed from suffering by such things as privilege, randomness, or divine intervention. In other words, the non-sufferer can invert suffering, making suffering the norm and its absence the oddity. The focus then is upon the privileges of those who avoid suffering, which affirms the non-sufferer.

To answer the question, “Can direct experience be perfectly converted into abstract communicable knowledge?” the answer is no. Although a gap of understanding may be overcome by empathy and similar experiences, a degree of separation will always remain. Some elements of experience cannot be rendered shareable, likewise some elements of knowledge cannot be experienced.

The Culmination of Subversion

The coupling of systems does not imply a consistency of meaning between them. A system can mimic the expressions of another system in an attempt to produce favorable responses. What is it then when one offers an argument or perspective which will convince a person and not the argument of which they themselves subscribe to? Although the resulting expression or action may be desirable to both systems, it is inaccurate to say that the perceived action is the same for both systems. Rather, both systems know what is done through their system of knowledge. As a result, it is possible for a dissonance to emerge. Nilsen (1966) suggests that lying is not simply providing false information, but it also includes misrepresenting something. One lies when they intentionally create a false image of something in the mind of another (Nilsen, 1966). As the lifeworld is separated into discourses what emerges is a form of domination not rooted simply in physical force, or a privileging of certain truths, but within the selective application of truth. One need not believe in a single regime of truth merely whatever truths re-create the regime. The question is in the effectiveness of the structural ignorance.

The principle of affirmation is that individuals act and believe so as to justify their existence and experiences within a world they have been thrown into and, in turn, create a world in which they are justified. However, this justification emerges from the self-evident nature of direct experience. In a global and interconnected society, a person's inclination can produce a sense of malaise. Awareness of others creates a sense of alternative outcomes, and a historical context. One evaluates themselves relative not to a homogeneous town but to humanity writ large. The temporality of the person juxtaposed with the seeming atemporality of the world. A person must not only explain why they do that which they do, but they must justify it within the face of all humanity.

In response to the question “Why am I not...?”, one can answer by appealing to various factors, be they external or internal factors. However, external explanations risk creating a perception that one lacks autonomy and agency, while internal explanations risk the person feeling insufficient compared to others. The positive form of the question “Why am I...?” is in many ways an easier question. One need only consider that which they are and not the infinite possibilities of what they could be. Indeed, one can simply answer, “Because I am,” and appeal to the truth of wissen. This positive form explains why things are, not why they are not.

The subversion of communicative power is more than just an act of domination by those in power; it is a form of risk management in a world of growing complexity. A person needs affirmation, but action carries a risk of irrevocable change and potential instability. The control paradox (Brandimarte, Acquisti, & Loewenstein, 2013), where perceptions of control, can lead to behaviors which undermine that very control. The example they use being control over certain elements of privacy leading to increased disclosure of private information. Subversion is more than voluntary servitude (Romele, Gallino, Emmenegger, & Gorgone, 2017), or the black boxes of Callon and Latour (1981). Subversion is required for ontological security in the face of increasing risk and uncertainty. The creation of a legio-rational bureaucracy in the state is reinforced by the creation of activist and corporate bureaucratic organizations. These created systems in turn commodify activism transforming it into a form of capital which can influence the bureaucratic institution. The person cannot change the world directly and so acts indirectly. However, in detachment, the act alone must suffice for affirmation regardless of its outcome.

The social cannot know a person as they are, a collection of communicative and extra-communicative experiences, a gestalt, partially beyond social comprehension. It must render us into components and show us that summation. However, as the individual

is social, they are, to some extent, beyond their own comprehension. It is through the creation of self-categorizations that a sense of telos can be created. By rendering an infinitely complex self into a series of finite categories, one can develop a culminative sense of purpose. Everything the social shows to us is as fragmented shards assembled together like a collage into a portrait. It is a broken looking glass. But when the portrait is made clear, when enough shards of glass have been assembled, the person can see themselves within that image and through that know what they are to be.

A reflection exists between the one reflected and that which reflects them; it is a relationship more than a state. The reflection is created by the presence of the person, and the person reacts to the representation which produces a change in the image. The transformation is a mutual process, contingent upon the mutual ability to react to one another. However, as the discourses become more complex, identifying more and more information to be collected, and technology evolves, allowing more and more information to be gathered and stored, the looking-glass self becomes more and more complex. It transforms from a blocky and disjointed representation to a hyper-real reflection.

If the looking-glass is ever made whole, it shows a constructed entirety of the person: a conclusion, a potentiality, and a means of fulfillment. Everything they could think themselves to be is represented in this panoptical vision. Everything they wish they could be is represented. There is no thought beyond the visage, no concept eluding it.

When presented with this complicated construction, the viewer is enraptured, like Narcissus facing his reflected image. They do not need to look beyond it, as all they would wish to see is reflected within it. Every thought they think becomes embodied within the reflection. A panoptical mirror becomes their prison.

A culmination of technology, knowledge, and social forces; a radical extension of “substantive epistemic practices”; and a situation where the control of the affirmation metadiscourse reaches its zenith. A perfectly recursive self-understanding, where the boundaries between the social and the self become increasingly unstable. The discourses becoming so disconnected, that the metadiscourse is built upon completely detached aspects of discourses which are coupled together in a fluid and unstable fashion, concealing the complexity within and across the lifeworld. Rather than focus on the placement of their life within the world, a temporal and historical context, a person focuses solely on their life being lived. The revelation of hidden motives,⁴ placing decisions in the hands of the individual, instead of liberating simply overwhelms. The nature of the mirror is that our knowledge (erkenntnis) of ourselves will outpace our bristling at the domination of that comprehension. That we will know everything that we can possibly know and as such will be unable to act beyond it. That we will stumble down a predetermined path because we are unable to reach beyond our selves. When all things are neatly defined, it is not merely object but motion which is categorized. When the mechanisms of affirmation are solidly integrated into a system, one cannot look beyond it. For all that we are will find satisfaction within the system.

If the discussions of discourse ever become perfectly recursive, either through unanimity or saturation, there will be no motion beyond or within, merely containment. The system will not change if the environment does not. There is too much to know and not enough time to learn it. As Luhmann (1998) writes, “The world can only be identified paradoxically on the basis of a particular code, that is, only as a logically infinite information load” (p. 11). Instead of an equilibrium of perfect knowledge, the danger of

⁴ Mannheim K. (1954).

equilibrium is in the infinite mutability of knowledge, an anchor not a foundation. The more the system responds to the complexity of the environment, the more complex the system becomes. Luhmann (1995) describes it thusly, “Every system must maintain itself against the overwhelming complexity of its environment, and any success, any permanence, any reproduction makes the environment of all other systems more complex” (p. 182). However, the increase in system complexity is coupled with an insensitivity to changes in the environment (Valentinov, 2014). The risk of this situation is that the complexity of the systems will outpace the mutability of the environment, such that the changes in the environment caused by an individual or a group of individuals will be insufficient to produce a change within a system.

The most uncertain yet persistent element of society, the individuals within it, will be objectified and controlled. Not out of cruel domination but in order to express the self in its entirety. One will go to the store and browse a list of goods selected for them, one will read online news articles automatically curated for them, and one will apply to jobs recommended to them. One will live a life pre-determined. The irony is that this pre-determination is no different from a utopia where a person self-actualizing flows readily. The person engages with the world optimally, avoiding the aspects of the real which would hinder their self-expression. However, if there is a need for action, a time for the mirror to be broken, then it cannot occur. One needs only to be themselves, to be unaware of the life they are maintaining to be content. If the shadows on the cave wall are vibrant enough, the chains need not be broken. The subversion of action takes place when meaningful change is itself subordinate to external systems: When the means of its expression are situated within the status quo.

11. Conclusion

A Return to the Affirmation Discourse

The affirmation discourse is more than the summation of truth, it is the selective application of truth for an explanatory purpose. To speak of the lifeworld as a collection of things and people is also to speak of patterns and justifications. The affirmation discourse is a sociodicy; it justifies the existence of a society. However, knowledge creates the society it seeks to explain. In the social, to arrange and explain is to create because the act of explanation creates the very category within which the phenomenon is placed.

The principle of affirmation is intended to avoid the post-hoc justifications of human behavior and society which impose societal constraints upon a pre-existing reality. Kinesocentrism recognizes the potential influence of the “organismic resources” while attempting to preserve the boundary-less nature of them. It attempts to re-engage with the works of phenomenological sociology while acknowledging that social constructivism has been influenced by a specific interpretation of such works.

Limitations

Some may consider this “a view from nowhere,” an attempt at neutrality, devoid of moral commitment. There is some truth to this critique. To be foundational, a perspective must explain both the good and the bad equally. However, if one begins with the assumption that certain forms of affirmation are good, then the system provides a framework for approaching and promoting those forms of affirmation. The system is as much a tool as it is an explanation. Rather than begin with judgements, this approach endeavors to explain the emergence of difference and, in doing so, shows the complications underlying social cohesion.

The creation of the qualia assumes that objects are not known directly, or more accurately not experienced directly. More specifically, the assumption of kinesis is based upon four foundational claims: that there is a reality, that categorization is not an inherent part of reality, that there is a “motion” within the real, and that our perception of reality is a model. Kinesis, as a concept, is problematic in that it is not reality itself, but the observation of reality devoid of meaning and structure. It requires there to be differences within reality; otherwise, there could not be any motion across a measure. This limitation is partially subverted by the fact that Kinesis is a meaningful term given to a meaningless entity, a term which, however, presupposes its own conclusion. It is possible that a perfect perception of reality would be stagnant, with the absence of any motion. In a sense, Kinesis is simply the perceived variation in reality, which becomes the basis for umwelt and the lifeworld. Of course, umwelt is the limited perception of the motion within the real, which creates the paradoxical nature of the topic. Does motion within the real exist because of our limited perceptions or does it exist independently of our perceptions?

However, the focus in this work is not on environment but the modelling of the environment. The dual assumptions of thrownness are incredibly weak but almost necessarily so. They represent the assumptions that humans can perceive and interact with a model of the world, while the final assumption of charismatic need extends upon these two by pre-supposing a drive to act. The assumption that a consciousness will act out in the world can be critiqued as a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the work assumes that any consciousness which does not act will not exist in a functional sense.

This work subscribes to a radical constructivism: “Radical constructivism, on the other hand, begins with the empirical statement: Knowledge is only possible, in that there is no access

to Reality but through it.” (Luhmann, 1988, p. 8).⁵ However, Elder-Vass (2012) critiques the neo-Kantian position which argues that we cannot speak of the world outside of discourses. Elder-Vass (2012) emphatically points out, “To recognise the existence of such a world of discourse is to recognise that there is something outside us that influences us!” (p. 261). This work circumnavigates this limitation by simultaneously holding the inaccessibility of the real and the availability of the lifeworld as mediated through *umwelt*. The awareness of discourses is situated within a self-aware discourse. To say that discourses exist applies merely to the realm of the lifeworld. Although rooted in the real, one cannot apply a concept of the lifeworld to the entirety of the real.

Likewise, Habermas’ (1987) critique of Luhmann as “meta-biological” could be applied to this work, as it draws heavily on Luhmann’s works. As Habermas (1987) states, “subject-centered reason is replaced by systems rationality...it replaces metaphysical background convictions with metabiological ones” (p. 385). However, the goal of this work is not to replace subject-centered reason, but to address the complexity of reason. This work strives to preserve an emergent view of rationality, one which emphasizes the flawed elements of human reasoning as explored by Mercier and Sperber (2017). Knowledge is not merely an understanding of the world; it is an understanding rooted within the “thrownness” of the knowledge creator. Just as the self creates knowledge, the knowledge creates the knower.

Final Thoughts

I have no doubt that anyone who reads this will list a few dozen names or works that I have failed to engage with. Names such as Norbert Wiley, Thomas Sebeok, and Bertrand Russell

⁵ “Der radikale Konstruktivismus beginnt dagegen mit der empirischen Feststellung: Erkenntnis ist nur möglich, weil sie keinen Zugang zur Realität außer ihr hat” (Luhmann, 1988, p. 8).

will no doubt be thrown against this thesis with the vehement vigor of those more well-versed in these topics than me. I have attempted to draw upon as many sources as possible to explain that which I wanted to explain within the time I have to explain. However, the foundation for this work is not just theory but also experience and one cannot merely arrange the theory without having first the thought to do so.

When I worked as an evening custodian at a hospital, I would see the day shift doctors, nurses, medical assistants, custodians, and so on leaving as I began my shift. I would watch as they crossed the street heading towards the parking lot. The sky turning gold and pink as the sun began to set. This sight made me wonder, “Why?” Why were they there crossing the street at that moment? In some ways it is an obvious question. They are going to their car after a day of work. They go to their car in order to go home. They go home because that is where they live. They live there because they rent or own that residence. They rent and own that residence because they decided to live there. They decided to live there due to a series of factors, each one with its own web of influences. A byzantine series of explanations.

When I saw a nurse walking to the parking lot. The nursing school did not know that she would be at the hospital so many years in the future, although they may have envisioned giving her a nursing degree which would allow her to work as a nurse. The nurse did not know she would be there in that specific point of space and time when she entered nursing school, although she likely envisioned working as a nurse. The hospital did not know that she would be there in that particular moment, although it produced the situation through the creation of the job and the parking situation. Her choice to be at particular moment in space and time is not an individual choice. Rather, like a bearing ball carrying momentum, she is driven by the forces acting upon her. Yet within each moment there is a seeming element of rationality and of intentionality. She

chose her actions, even if the choice was predicated upon a myriad of influences. And indeed, so had I.

This is perhaps the most difficult element to convey. I cannot justify this work solely upon the corpus upon which it rests, or the strength of its arguments. Rather, it is also a product of my mind which has thought it. If one were to ask, “Where is the proof of my thesis?” I would provide to them this thesis. Struggling to justify myself and my interpretations, I pull from every thinker within and without the discourse that I can think of. Written in an academic tradition which has spanned centuries, according to the rules of a discipline and university, under the gaze of a committee. In the end, I create a web of references and commentary intended to validate my claim but, in the process, simultaneously showcase the breadth of my own ignorance and preconceived notions. Yet still I wrote it.

The individual reacts to their experiences, but only insofar as their knowledge and ignorance allows. The subversion of action, hinges not upon an un-free choice but an ineffective one, to which the world does not respond to. It is not enough to be able to make a choice, for no choice is truly free. It is always contingent. A decision emerges more out of necessity than volition. In the passing of time, even a refusal to choose becomes a choice. Rather, the subverted decision is one which has no effect upon the social. One always has the choice to rebel, but rarely do they choose to do so.

When I hear a knock at my door, I go to answer it. Not merely because answering my door is what one is supposed to do, or because I wish to know who is knocking and why, but rather I wish to affirm my hearing of the knock. The knowledge of who is at the door tells me that that the knocking I heard is real by giving it a source. The presence of a

person also affirms that I ought perhaps to answer doors when they are knocked upon. Unless of course I am the one knocking upon them, then I would reason that someone else should answer it. If there is no one at the door, then I seek an alternative solution to explain what I have heard. Not because the knowledge is, in of itself, important but because it gives proof to my experiences.

My journey to the door is an attempt to validate a question, to satisfy my curiosity. The desire for explanation is not to learn the truth but rather to justify the asking of the question. The child asks a question to satisfy their curiosity. To prove that the question, itself, was worth asking. Their curiosity was worth pursuing. The truth of a matter is simply the perfect justification which will stand up to all irritation of doubt. Ideally, an inaccurate explanation can be judged and corrected, thereby being brought closer to the truth. However, that only takes place when there are those willing to evaluate the explanation, which requires that the answer be unsatisfactory to some extent. Truth is coupled with affirmation. That which affirms is true, while that which is true is that which affirms. The truth of a system is all things which justify the system's manifestation.

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