THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MODERN SOCIAL THEORY
AND THE UNCONSCIOUS DIMENSION OF THE SOCIAL

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To my parents

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ABSTRACT

Through a discussion of Marx in particular and an extended overview of social theory in general the central questions from which I start are posed:
Rejecting individualist models of the social (either positivist or hermeneutic) as also teleological accounts of it,structural/objectivist models such as early Parsons' or Althusser's are considered to be the most advanced.However,these approaches cannot theorise either the emergence of the new in history or the possibility of active agency from the part of social actors.Both problems are closely interwoven with the conceptualisation of the social as closed and fully determinable structural entities.

An alternative approach theorising social structural entities as open,and thus avoiding these problems is identified.It can be seen as evolving from the general statements of Derrida to the specific theorisations of the social presented by Laclau and Mouffe and,in a more developed way,by Castoriadis (who provides also a theorisation of "autonomy").

However,the way this "openness" should be theorised remains unclarified.To avoid conceiving it as operating on a transcendental level,it has to be located within the (re)production of the social through individual action,i.e. within a theory of "structuration".

Such theories of structuration have been presented by Giddens and Bourdieu,but in a partial and insufficient way.However,the connection between the openness of the social and the modality of the (individual) unconscious Castoriadis refers to,indicates an alternative.

This alternative is explored through an analysis of Freud and psychoanalytic theory.It is argued that the psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche provides a theory of the reproduction of the social through the individual.The necessary indeterminacy implied by the operation of this reproduction partly through the (individual) unconscious (a level with a specific modality),and the relative autonomy of the conscious/rational ego imply that this reproduction is never fully determined.Thus the "openness" of the social can be more precisely conceptualised and the questions of agency and history can be addressed in a more fruitful way.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The modern conception of the social,dating from around the end of the eighteenth century,introduces a level of phenomena relatively opaque to the participating in-dividuals and yet with a certain cohesiveness and dynamic.

Attempts to account for these phenomena at a general theoretical level can be seen as dividing,broadly,to two categories:individualist and holistic ones.

Individualist approaches,either positivist or her-meneutic,failed to ground their central assumption,that of conceiving the individual as definable independently of the social.Thus their assertion that the social can be seen as produced by individuals cannot be sustained.

On the other hand,holistic approaches of a positivist na-ture failed to theorise the specificity of the social which they claimed to be an irreducible and sui generis level.

The ground was left open for holistic approaches falling broadly within the idealist tradition: For these,initially, society was seen as the subject of history in a path of general evolution.When the evolutionary perspective was abandoned,certain constant and transhistorical categories supposedly always ordering the social were retained.The rejection even of these constants marked a final phase within this tradition: what remained was the assertion of the possibility of objective and complete knowledge of the social,based on an ultimate accessibility of the social to reason.In general this last phase (which we can identify in the early Parsons and,in a more developed form,in Althusser if we discard his alliance to the predominance of production) was correlative to a conceptualisation of so-cial structural entities as closed and fully definable ones.

The central problems these late objectivist approaches

faced were the impossibility to theorise social actors as active (since they were considered as fully determined by the social) as also to theorise the emergence of the new in history (within fully closed structural entities change cannot be theorised except through a return to a predefined path of development,an assumption that was,however, rejected).

The starting point for the present study is an attempt to address these problems,without regressing to an individualistic or evolutionist perspective.

An obvious way forward was to discard the assumption of fully closed structural entities and to introduce a certain "openness" within the conceptualisation of the social.

"Post structuralist" authors have moved,in general,towards such a direction.We can consider Derrida as the exemplary case introducing an openness (as "différance") alongside a differential notion of structure.However,Derrida's relevance to a theorisation of the social is far from evident.

A similar approach to Derrida's,but specifically addressed to a theorisation of the social,is introduced by Laclau and Mouffe.They fail,however,to satisfactorily theorise how exactly the openness they claim for the social can be conceptualised.

Castoriadis' theorisation of the social as primarily "social imaginary significations",having the modality of "magma" and hence never being fully definable or closed,is more comprehensive.Castoriadis theorises the (individual) unconscious as also sharing this modality,and presents a comprehensive theory of autonomy at both individual and social levels.However,he does not clarify the level of existence of social significations,running the danger of considering them as operating at a transcendental level,as a kind of (negative) essence.

While,therefore,a general and abstract recognition of a certain openness of social structural entities -and of the

social in general- has been accepted by a number of theorists,this "openness" has not been theorised in a satis- factory way.

To avoid any transcendentalism,a possible alternative would be to locate any "openness" within processes of (re)production of the social through (individual) social action,i.e. within a theory of "structuration".

A move from "structure" to "structuration",heralded by Chomskian linguistics,has been expanded on the level of a general social theory by -among others- Giddens and Bour- dieu.Both are aiming at a transcendence of objectivism and subjectivism and both emphasize a certain activeness from the part of the social actors.Giddens adopts a semi- individualistic stand,while Bourdieu maintains the social construction of the individual.Since,however,the modality of the social is not explicitly theorised,even in the case of Bourdieu,these claims cannot be substantiated.

If,however,a connection was to be made between the type of structuration theory Giddens and Bourdieu propose and the theorisation of an open modality of the social Laclau and Castoriadis assert,a direction beyond subjectivism and ob- jectivism could be indeed opened.

I propose that such a connection can be made through the psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche.A detailed ex- amination of Freud in particular and psychoanalytic theorisation in general indicates:

(i) the specificity of the level of the unconsious (a specificity indicated by Castoriadis) as a non fully deter- minable and never directly approachable level of psychical operation,a level that is,moreover,always "represented";

(ii) the necessity of a social environment for the development of the psyche both at an unconscious and at a conscious level.The representations the psyche uses,as well as the "objects" internalised in the process of construc- tion of endopsychic agencies,are inescapably social.

Hence the psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche allows

us to present a theory of the way in which the social influences the individual psyche.Moreover,since these influences are manifested in consciousness and action,we have also a theory of social reproduction,a theory of structuration.

As part of this reproduction occurs within the level of the unconscious,the non determinable nature of this level implies a radical indeterminacy.Additionally,the relative autonomy of the conscious/rational ego indicates another degree of indeterminacy.Thus the impossibility of a full determination of social reproduction through the individual can be asserted.

We can indicate,therefore,precisely what was sought:an affirmation of a certain "openness" of the social inherent in the processes of social reproduction.

This theorisation of openness allows the affirmation both of a limited but always existent activeness from the part of the actor,due to the relative autonomy of the conscious ego; and the possibility of a higher level of autonomy,made possible by the necessary indeterminacy that social reproduction through the unconscious implies.

Moreover,the emergence of the new in history can be conceptualised as always inherent in social reproduction,alongside and independently of intentional action specifically aiming at social transformation.

The two central problems of objectivist structural theories,the question of agency and the question of history,can thus be more satisfactorily approached.

The recognition of the social relevance of the level of the unconscious allows also the affirmation of the hermeneutic nature of knowledge of the social (in so far as social structures that exist and are reproduced through the individual unconscious are concerned).Moreover,the theorisation of the always meaningful nature of social practice becomes possible.

Thus a more fruitful way of approaching -though,of

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course,not of solving- certain central questions of social theory is indicated.

Although the above discussion is presented in a seemingly atemporal manner,it bears,naturally,the imprints of its age.

It marks,precisely,the gradual erosion of the belief in an ultimate (and absolute) rationality of society and history,that,in one form or another,had been a dominant (if not the dominant) view of social thought over the past two centuries.

The recognition and theorisation of the limits of such rationality is a central guiding line of the present study.However,unlike a certain "post-modernism",the indication of these limits is not seen as implying an all pervasive relativity.The aim is to retain the relevance and significance of conscious/rational thought and action alongside the elements that transcend and limit it.

A note on the level of abstraction may be added here.The present study is concerned with a theorisation of the social at a high level of abstraction,dealing as it does with "social" phenomena in general.

By necessity,what such a level of abstraction gains in generality,it loses in detail and specificity.For example,what exactly social phenomena can be subsumed under the general theorisations advanced,is not discussed.

However,it has to be stressed that this theorisation is not to be seen as operating independently of and outside the concrete empirical material of social science.It is not an a-prioristic speculation but a theoretical exercise,feeding from and hoping to offer something /to more concrete studies.A division of labour within the field makes a theoretical inquiry,in which greater rigour can be applied to concepts and formulations,separate from studies dealing with empirical material as such.

Moreover,the orientation of the present work is not towards a theoretically polished and simple answer.The abstract level at which the social is dealt with does not imply a "grand" and all encompassing theory.Indeed,a specific aim sought is to argue against any foundationalism and to provide a direction of approaching social phenomena that does not dissolve the multiplicity of concrete forms of the social into the manifestations of a single "essence".

PART I: THE APORIAS OF SOCIAL THEORY

I. A RETURN TO MARX

Marx can be seen as a double landmark in the history of social thought. A landmark, naturally, of the beginnings of this thought -creating what Foucault called an entire "field of discursivity"[1]- and hence very much a representative of his epoch. And yet, paradoxically, in his contradictions and ambivalences, as also a landmark of importance in today's crossroads.

In a sense, therefore, a return to Marx is a paradigmatic way to pose certain themes of contemporary relevance while precisely indicating which theoretical assumptions are to be discarded and which to be retained.

Let us inquire, then, about the ontological status Marx attributes to the social.

MARX AND THE DISJUNCTURE BETWEEN "MATERIAL" AND "IDEAL"

The "German Ideology" is the first, and in many cases the most consistent exposition of Marx and Engels's "materialism". This "materialism" is proposed as an alternative to the idealism of the Young Hegelians which "consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men"[2].

Marx and Engels deny this idealism. What is lacking, they claim, is an "inquiry into the connection of (German)

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1. M.Foucault,"What is an author?" in P.Rabinow (ed.) The Foucault Reader,Harmondsworth:Penguin,1986,p.114

2. K.Marx & F.Engels,The German Ideology (1846) (thereafter GI), London:Lawrence and Wishart,1974,p.41.

philosophy with (German) reality,the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings"[3].

In contrast,Marx and Engels want to begin from the premises "...of real individuals,their activity and the material conditions under which they live,both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity"[4] and they assert,in the famous passage,that "the production of ideas,of conceptions,of consciousness,is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men,the language of real life.Conceiving,thinking,the mental intercourse of men,appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour"[5].

We have,therefore,in opposition to the "mental intercourse","mental production", "consciousness", "thinking", "ideas","conceptions",and so on,the "material intercourse","the activity of real individuals",the "material behaviour".What is the nature of this opposition?

Marx and Engels do not simply invert a causal chain,replacing the assertion that ideas determine people's "real life" as they see the Young Hegelians asserting,with the assertion that it is this "real life" that determines ideas and consciousness,while retaining a sort of equivalence between the two levels.

If thoughts,ideas,consciousness and the like reflect,more or less accurately,the "materiality" of real life,Young Hegelians' claim has simply to be completed:It is not enough to change what people think,to combat their unhappiness.People must also,and primarily,change their real life,their "actual material intercourse".

However,as long as the two levels are seen as two sides of

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3. ibid.

4. GI,p.42

5. GI,p.47

the same coin,it is not particularly relevant which of the two is considered as the determinant one.Since a change in material life implies a change of ideas,given an equivalence between the two,a change in ideas implies -and expresses,on the level of thought- a change in material life.The assertion that the real is reducible to the ideal is by no means affected by a reversion of the proposition while retaining an equivalential assertion.

As is well known,Marx and Engels do not retain this equivalential assertion.The repudiation of the mental intercourse is made on the name of a material intercourse that precisely is not available to the participating individuals as an idea or consciousness,a "real life" that is in disjuncture with the thoughts the very persons they live it have.

For Marx and Engels "material intercourse" and "real life" are reflected in thought,consciousness or ideas only in a distorted way (except in specific historical circumstances).The determining character of the material level cannot be deciphered through an analysis of the ideal one.What people think and what they do represent two different modalities,the truth of which cannot be deciphered reciprocally.

What is then the "truth" of the determinant level,the material one? What is the ontological status of the "real life of men" in contradistinction to the "mental" one and what access do we have to the former?

We can reconstruct Marx and Engels's answer in two consecutive steps:

The first,separating this "material level" not only from "ideas" but also from "nature" and considering it as indicating what we may call a "social level".

The second,presenting this social level as emanating from and reducible to the rationality of labour as a transhistorical human attribute reflected in the development of history.

THE "MATERIAL" AS "SOCIAL"

Marx and Engels make immediately clear that the "material intercourse", the "language of real life", corresponds to "production":

"(Men) begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation."[6]

Yet the level of production is not seen as directly determined by this "physical organisation" within which production is carried out: "By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life."[7]

Production therefore is only indirectly reducible to the natural environment. Marx and Engels's analysis is focused on production while the natural environment -as also the biological nature of man- remain on the background as limits rather than as the actual determinants of production, limits which are acknowledged but not discussed. While imposing "definite conditions"[8] the material/natural environment is not determining, in a reductive way, the "real essence of man":

"We cannot go here either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself -geological, orohydrographical, climatic and so on."[9] The mode of production ("mode" referring simply to the form of production) is something more than a refection of these natural limits:

"The mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the in-

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6. GI,p.42

7. ibid.,emphasis added

8. GI,p.47

9. GI,p.42

dividuals.Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals,a definite form of expressing their life,a definite mode of life on their part.As individuals express their life,so they are."[10]

Thus production as "a definite mode of life",is precisely a characteristically human activity,not a reflection of nature.The counterposition of production,therefore,as "material activity and material intercourse of men",to "forms of consciousness",is not a distinction between nature and thought.

"Matter" in this case retains the traditional philosophical denotation of the term:it is the outside,the negation of thought,what is either opaque to it or only partially penetrable.But unlike this definition,"material" for Marx and Engels,while still the outside of thought,is not reducible to a closed,mute and determinant nature.It refers rather to a level of activity specifically human: production.

Hence we have a threefold distinction:

nature   ---   production --- thought
(natural environment,
 biological
         human nature)

a distinction in which a discontinuity is implied between each of the three terms.We could indicate as "social" the level that production defines,while recognising that "thought" is also social but of a modality somehow "different" from that of "production".[11]

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10. ibid.

11. Traditional references to Marx and Engels' materialism tend to concentrate on the irreducibility of nature to thought,thus obscuring the specificity of the level of production that is the primary aim of

In Marx's later writings the distinction between nature and production becomes more explicit and clear.Instead of the variations of the term "intercourse"[12] which we have in "German Ideology",the term "relations of production" is introduced,in opposition to the "forces of production" which -the forces- refer precisely to the actual natural/environmental/technological elements.In the famous words of the 1857 Preface:

"In the social production of their life,men enter into definite relations,that are indispensable and independent of their will,relations of production which correspond to a definite stage in the development of their material productive forces.The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society,the real foundation,on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness"[13]

This passage is revealing.It clearly dissociates the actual productive "forces" from the "relations" of production,the superstructure,and the latter from the "forms of social consciousness".Thus the three levels can be presented as:

Marx and Engels's discussion and which,as we argued,while differentiated from thought,is equally differentiated from nature.Such interpretations effect a naturalistic reduction that is in no way present in Marx and Engels.(For a relatively recent example see S.Timpanaro,On Materialism,London:New Left Books,1975)

12. "Verkehr" which was rendered as "intercourse",and Verkehrsform,form of intercourse,Verkehrsweise,mode of intercourse,Verkehrsverhaltnisse, relations or conditions of intercourse,see editors' note in GI,p.42.

13. K.Marx,Preface to "A contribution to a critique of political economy"(1859),usually referred to as the "1859 Preface".The translation used in K.Marx & F.Engels,Selected Works V.I,London:Lawrence and Wishart,1953,p.329

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            forces of
            production
nature ------- relations  ---- political ------thoughts,
(natural      of production     and legal        ideas
environment,                    superstructure
biological
human nature)


Natural
  level----/------- Social level I ---------/---Social
                                                level II
                              (level of consciousness)
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The forces of production are the mediating element between
the level of nature and the relations of production.These
relations,together with the "political and legal
superstructure" are in turn separate from the "forms of
consciousness".It is this intermediate level that can be
termed the "social level I" as distinct from and ir-
reducible to the -also social- level of consciousness
(which can be designated as social level II).

Once a specificity is assigned to this "first" level of
the social,however,the question of how is to be analysed
arises.Since the mode of production is the determinant in-
stance of this level,it is on the analysis of this mode
that the modality of the social has to be sought.We can see
Marx's subsequent work as precisely an attempt to define
this modality of production.

The rejection of individualism
and the structural character of the level of production

Early on,however,a possibility is ruled out:that of con-
ceiving production as the result of interaction between in-
dividuals,in the manner,for ex.,of classical political
economy.

The repeated attacks of Marx against Robinsonades are well

known:"The solitary and isolated hunter or fisherman,who serves A.Smith and Ricardo as a starting point,is one of the unimaginative fantasies of the 18th century romances...no more is Rousseau's social contract,which by means of a contract establishes a relationship and connection between subjects that are by nature independent...The prophets of 18th century saw the individual not as a historical result but as the starting point of history;not as something evolving in the course of history but posited by nature."[14]

The historicity of the individual is continuously stressed.Not only individuals do not determine production through their interaction,but their very individuality is a historical product: "Man is only individualised through the process of history.He originally appears as a generic being,a herd animal -though by no means a "political animal" in the political sense."[15]

And this individuality is again,to a great extent,determined by production:"their personality (of the rentier,the capitalist,etc.) is conditioned and determined by the quite definite class relationships"[16].

However,Marx does not simply reject individualism as an explanatory device for the specificity of the social.In his analysis of the capitalist relations of production in "Capital" he specifically sees the individual as part of the greater structural whole of production.[17]

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14. K.Marx,"General introduction to Grundrisse" (1857),usually referred to as the "1857 Introduction".The text used as appendix in GI,op.cit.,p.123

15. K.Marx,Grundrisse(1857-58),D.Mclellan (ed.),London:Macmillan,1980, p.96

16. GI,p.84

17. It is the important contribution of L.Althusser to emphasise this structural character of the analysis in "Capital".The acceptance of this assertion,though,does not need to imply the acceptance of Althusser's whole theoretical edifice.For more discussion of Althusser,see below and in the following chapter.

In "Capital" capitalist production is seen as a structured whole that incorporates commodities,money and capital as well as capitalists and workers,all connected together in a circular relationship,and in a continuous process of flux.

While commodities,money and capital are material things,their interconnection within the nexus of capitalist relations of production refers to their specific function and role within these relations.

"Capital" does not represent only "machines" or "forces of production" but the whole of the system of capitalist production."Capital" is not,thus,a thing,but a specific relationship implying a series of other elements within an interconnected whole:

"Capital is not a thing,but rather a definite social production relation,belonging to a definite historical for- mation of society,which is manifested in a thing and which lends this thing a specific social character.Capital is not the sum of material and produced means of produc- tion.Capital is rather the means of production transformed into capital which in themselves are no more capital than gold or silver in itself is money."[18]

The elements of the system acquire their significance within the totality of the system,and are not disparate unities brought together in an interelationship,until,that is,money and commodities become capital:

"In themselves money and commodities are no more capital than are the means of production and of subsistence.They want transforming into capital.But this transformation it- self can only take place under certain circumstances that centre in this,viz,that two very different kinds of commodity-possessors must come face to face and into contact;on the one hand,the owners of money,means of

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18. K.Marx,Capital(1867),London:Lawrence and Wishart,1954,Volume III, p.794.Thereafter the three volumes of Capital will be denoted as C1,C2,C3 respectively.

production,means of subsistence,who are to increase the sum of values they posses,by buying other people's labour-power;on the other hand,free labourers,the sellers of their own labour-power,and therefore the sellers of labour."[19]

Capitalist relations of production,apart from commodities,money and capital in specific forms,performing specific functions and being related in determinate relations,also require the agents of production,the capitalist and the worker.These agents exist within the relations of production in exactly the same way as do the commodities,money,or capital:as nodes in a network,determined in their specific function and with given relationships with the whole:

"Capitalist production...produces not only commodities,not only surplus-value,but it also produces and reproduces the capitalist relation;on the one side the capitalist,on the other,the wage-labourer[20]...The functions fulfilled by the capitalist are no more than the functions of capital executed continuously and willingly.The capitalist functions only as personified capital,capital as a person,just as the worker is no more than labour personified."[21]

Moreover,the nexus of relationships which determines them is not presented as such to the individuals.They are not consciously creating or reproducing the capitalist relations of production.The famous "commodity fetihism" is a case of the misrecognition of the social relations that exists behind and determine commodities as commodities.

Finally,the "whole",the totality of capitalist production relations,is not static.Rather it is in a continuous flux in which it reproduces itself in an always expanded

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19. C1,p.668

20. C1,p.578

21. Unpublished chapter of Capital,Vol.I,in the Penguin edition. (Harmondsworth:Penguin,1976),p.989

form.The direction of this flux Marx defines as the primary law of increasing capital accumulation.

How can,however,this structured whole operate "behind people's back" while these very people are parts of that whole? How can people "produce materially" not only "under definite material limits,presuppositions and conditions in-dependent of their will",but also being in the dark about these limits and conditions that are inherent in their actions? What anthropological model can be used to conceive such a disjuncture?

Moreover,in what sense can we conceive of this whole as following "laws" in an abstract way,laws independent from persons' volition? What,in other words,is the ontological status of the "material" -i.e social- level of production?

THE SOCIAL AS RATIONAL

Marx's answer to the above questions is not a direct one,but it is implied in his further analysis of capitalism.We can trace it in the basic assumptions under-lying the analysis in "Capital".The same assump-tions,though,are present in Marx's earlier work.

Establishing that capitalist relations of production form a structured whole in flux is only the first step.The second,and pivotal one,is the definition of value.

By defining value as corresponding to "simple average labour",i.e by postulating a measure of value that is con-stant,the further definition of "surplus value" becomes possible.Capital can be seen as nothing more than accumu-lated surplus value and the primary law of capital ac-cumulation as reflecting the accumulation of surplus value:

"It should never be forgotten that the production of this surplus value is the immediate purpose and the determining motive of capitalist production."[22]

What the labour definition of value does,is to effect a

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22. C3,p.352

connection between the structured whole of the capitalist mode of production and a fundamental human activity,labour.The law of accumulation,the guiding force of capitalist production appears thus as a form of surplus value accumulation,i.e as the exploitation of this labour.

Thus capitalist relations may be "fetishised" and people may not recognise their role either as exploited or as exploiters,but the moving force behind all,the thread that holds all the elements of the mode of production together,is nothing more (or less) than the fundamental human attribute of labour.

However,the labour definition of value requires the possibility of defining a constant and given measure of "simple average labour".Marx considers "simple average labour" to vary in different countries and at different times,but in a particular society to be given[23].Closer examination,however,reveals that only in single commodity production with no technological change can we indeed have such a constant measure.[24].But capitalism,in Marx's own account,is obviously not such a case.Therefore a major and fundamental assumption cannot be sustained.

Moreover,the labour theory of value cannot provide Marx -as indeed classical economics in general- with a measure of value independent of prices and wages.As Morishima remarks,"as soon as the heterogeneity of labour is allowed for,the theory of value is seen to conflict with Marx's own law of equalisation of the rate of exploitation through society,unless the different sorts of labour are reduced to

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23. C1,p.51

24. see the detailed analysis in A.Cutler,B.Hindess,P.Hirst,A.Hussain, Marx's Capital and Capitalism today V.I,London:Routledge,1977,pp.30-37.
Also the analysis of C.Castoriadis in "Value,Equality,Justice, Politics:From Marx to Aristotle and from Aristotle to ourselves"(1975) in Crossroads in the Labyrinth,Sussex:The Harvester Press,1984,pp.266-273.

the homogeneous abstract human labour in proportion to their wage rates.But in such a case,the resulted value system depends on relative wages and hence Marx's intention of obtaining an intrinsic value system completely independent of markets is not fulfilled."[25]

Hence,as marginalist economists have rightfully pointed out ,on a "strictly analytical ground,there is no justification whatever for giving any sort of logical priority to either "values" over prices or to prices over "values".Each of them can be derived from the other;and both of them can be obtained from the interindustry relations expressed in terms of physical quantities of commodities.(Critics of Marx) go on to point out that the only system of exchange ratios which can be observed empirically is the system of prices.The "value" system is therefore regarded as something which belongs to Marxist ideology and has no empirical correlate."[26]

Marx's next step,the calculation of surplus value requires an additional assumption: that the "necessary labour" for the worker to survive is a given and constant quantity.Yet it is obvious that this bare minimum is by no means historically constant,even within a given mode of production,especially within capitalism.Therefore this additional assumption is equally unsustainable.

Thus Marx's labour theory of value is revealed to be severely flawed:it is not in accord with his own analysis of the capitalist mode of production,regarding the necessary technological change,the continuous expansion,etc.Moreover,it cannot provide a measure of value independent of the market.As for the definition of surplus value,it is not only based on the dubious foundation of

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25. M.Morishima,Marx's Economics,Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1973,p.180-1

26. L.Passineti,Lectures on the theory of Production,London:Macmillan, 1977,p.149

this labour theory of value,it requires an additional assumption that is equally dubious.

The elements of Marx's theoretical edifice we are referring to,the homogeneity of labour,the existence of "simple,average labour" and even more the definition of "surplus value" are not simple postulates.They are the corner-stones upon which the analysis in "Capital" is based.We cannot replace them and still retain the analysis.

Thus the whole analysis in "Capital" is based on an assertion which contradicts Marx's explicit rejection of a transhistorical human nature: that labour can be seen as "a substance/essence,which can appear under a given form or take a given expression,but which,in itself,does not modify itself,does not alter,and subsists as the immutable foundation of changing attributes and determinations"[27].

The basis of "Capital" is,therefore,metaphysical.The postulation of labour as the missing link between the mode of production and its abstract laws and the people that participate in it,rests on an ultimate rationality of the mode of production,a rationality expressed through the foundational "essence" of labour.

If we can identify such an -implicit- essentialism in "Capital",it is all the more explicit in Marx's earlier work:

The very centrality attributed to production,requires an assumption of labour as a transhistorical essence.As argued above,"production" is not introduced by Marx as the mirror of nature but as a social category,i.e as a level distinct from both nature and thought.Yet production is considered as determining the whole social level.In the classic words of the 1859 Preface:

"The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society,the real foundation,on which rises a legal and political superstructure

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27. Castoriadis,op.cit.,p.274

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and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."[28]

This determinacy seems to be based on a convincing argument:since production is necessary for the existence and continuity of any social formation,the "organisation of production" -the relations of production,the mode of production,the economy- is also necessary and therefore determinant.

However,there is here a logical gap :the necessity of the function of production does not imply,ipso facto,that the mode of production will be a determinant social in- stance.Precisely because production for Marx is a social and not a natural instance,the necessity of production by itself only poses a barrier,a natural given,a limit to what is at any moment possible.But this necessity does not imply anything at all about the social organisation of produc- tion.To argue anything about this level -or organisation- a further assumption is needed.And this assumption is made by Marx and Engels,though in a subtle way:it is the assumption of man as a homo faber and of labour as the underlying es- sence of man.

In "German Ideology" we read:"Men begin to distinguish them- selves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence...As men express their life so they are.What they are,therefore,coincides with their production."[29]

Quite revealing:Production,is the dividing line between men and animals;it is the primary human attribute.Hence the second part of the assertion (what they are...) comes as a natural argument.Men's life does not coincide with their production because the latter is necessary,but because it is the attribute par excellence of man.Man does not simply

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28. "1859 Preface",op.cit.,p.389

29. GI,p.42

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have to produce.Man is man in so far as he produces,in so far as he is a homo laborans.Once again,labour appears as the essence/substance of man.

The centrality and determinant role of production rests,therefore,on a philosophico-anthropological assumption.This assumption appears in the 1844 Manuscripts and traverses the whole of Marx's work up to,as we saw, "Capital" and beyond (e.g. the reference to "needs" in the famous phrase of the "Critique of the Gotha programme":"from each according to his ability,to each according to his needs!"[30]).

In the 1844 manuscripts we read:"Productive life is the life of the species.It is life engendering life...The animal is immediately one with its life activity...man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and his consciousness.He has conscious life activity."[31]The consciousness man brings to his life activity does not impede this life to continue to be equated with "productive life".

In "German Ideology" this "productive life" becomes the "material intercourse" to become in turn the "relations of production" in the 1859 Preface.

In the "Preface",the forces of production are not,in their determinant role,a chance residue of the successive modes of production,but precisely the reflection of the most important attainment of man:the gradual increase in -technological- mastery over nature,the continuously ascending curve of technology,a mastery that is the effect of man as homo laborans over history.Thus in the "Preface",to the assumption of labour as the predominant human activity,a notion of historical progress is added:The

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30. K.Marx,Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875),Moscow:Progress publishers,1978,p.18

31. "Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844" in K.Marx & F.Engels,Collected Works V.3,London:Lawrence and Wishart,1975,p.276

rationality that,by definition,characterises production,can only be reflected in a continuous development of the productive forces.The weight of this development transcends the inertia of any particular mode and forms the visible side of the invisible motor of history:the increasing rationality,that through a period of alienation of man from his work,lead him,but in an immensely advanced form,in its beginning:in the mastery and self-consciousness of production.From primitive communism to communism via the different historical modes of production,the human essence realises itself in a series of dialectical turns.

The argument of the "Preface",therefore,is not so much based on an autonomous development of the productive forces,as on human labour as the characteristically human activity.Productive forces are the residue of this activity.They represent the accumulation,over history,of man's labour.Thus their determinant role is another way of expressing the ultimately rational character of this labour,a rationality that is reflected in their unidimensional,evolutive,path.[32]

The primacy of the productive forces,therefore,is simply a way of bringing onto the surface what remains implicit in the whole of Marx's work,namely human labour as the essence of man.(It has to be remarked that the argument of the ""Preface" appears,in a less polished form,already in German Ideology).This assumption,already embodied in the

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32. This is clearly recognised by G.A.Cohen in his "defence" of the 1859 Preface argument.The underlying assumption about human nature is,for Cohen,that:
"- Men are,in a respect to be specified,somewhat rational
 - The historical situation of men is one of scarcity
 - Men posses intelligence of a kind and degree which enables them to improve their situation"
(G.A.Cohen,K.Marx's theory of history: a Defence,Oxford:Clarendon Press,1978,p.152)
 Cohen simply makes explicit a version of the essentialism that necessarily has to be assumed alongside any argument about the primacy of the productive forces.

determinant role assigned to production,remains central in the analysis of "Capital".

In his more mature writings,Marx does not deny his previous work,he builds upon it.The transhistorical constant of labour becomes,for the first time of history,the moving force of the totality of production.In pre-capitalist societies the (economic) surplus is appropriated by non-economic means,while in capitalist production it appears for what it really is:pure economic exploitation.By appearing as such,by realising itself in the principle of the whole,the exploitation of labour opens also,for the first time,the possibility of its transcendence in what Lukács called "the objective possibility of class consciousness"[33],i.e the possibility of the proletariat to assert itself by abolishing,at the same time,exploitation in general.The (pre)history of mankind,based upon exploitation,can thus be ended,and a new chapter can begin in which production is socially and consciously controlled.

One can only marvel at this magisterial synthesis that combines a philosophy of history,an analysis of capitalism and a political/social ideal in a most fascinating way.It is precisely the grandeur of this synthesis that still appeals.

However,the underlying foundation of this synthesis remains,as argued,a metaphysical one of labour as an essential,and historically unchangeable,attribute of man.

Thus the second step of Marx's -and Engels's- analysis of the social level introduced as "material" in "German Ideology" and identified with production is completed: the specificity of production,discernible from both nature and thought in its materiality and,as a consequence,the specificity of the whole of the social that production determines,rests on the assumption of a transhistorical

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33. G.Lukács,"Class Consciousness" (1920) in History and Class Consciousness, London:Merlin Press,1971,p.79

human essence.

Marx's Hegelianism and his theory of knowledge

Evidently,therefore,in the very core of his thought,Marx remains a Hegelian.It may not be "thinking" that "causes its own synthesis,its own deepening and its own movement"[34] as Marx accuses Hegel to do,but it is human labour and production that does so.Marx's scheme provides a most elaborate and subtle illustration of Hegelian thought.The transgression of exploitation becomes possible because of its -unique in history- appearance of economic exploitation as such in the very driving principle of the capitalist mode.

Society may not be,therefore,a reflection of nature or the product of people's thoughts,but it remains,in its historical unfolding,the development of an essence through a series of reductions: man as homo laborans ---- development of production --- history as the realisation of this essence.In its innermost core,therefore,Marxist thought remains firmly Hegelian.

It is this Hegelianism that also provides Marx with a theory of his own discourse.The distinction between the "truth" of Marx's analyses in "Capital" and the "errors of bourgeois economists",is based on the possibility of production of becoming self-transparent to thought at a particular historical circumstance and for a particular historical agent.

The proletariat is this privileged agent that becomes,by virtue of its position,capable of touching the true kernel of man's historical existence.Through the historically unique feature of capitalist relations of production,namely to posit the extraction and accumulation of surplus value as the motor of the mode of production,this process can indeed be conceived for what it really is,i.e exploitation,from the part of the agent that is exploited :the

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34. "1857 Introduction",op.cit,p.141

proletariat.

It is only in this way that Marx (and Engels) can present a theory of their own discourse consistent with their denunciation of thought and "forms of consciousness" as mere epiphenomena.The social -as production- determines thought, but since this social is the expression of a human essence,and hence ultimately rational,at the appropriate moment in the movement of history this rationality can reveal itself directly to thought.[35]

MARX'S POLITICAL PROJECT

Marx's theoretical work stems very much from a political project of emancipation that draws from the Enlightenment's ideas and has the French revolution as a reference point.We can distinguish three elements in this project:

Marx accepts the importance of the nation state as op-possed to the monarchy it replaces and of the sovereignty it allows man;the possibility to determine the affairs of the state allows an **autonomy** compared with the **heteronomy** of earlier times:

"That which is a creation of fantasy,a dream, a postulate of Christianity,i.e the sovereighty of man -but man as an alien being different from the real man- becomes in

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35. Thus a "Hegelian" interpretation of Marx,as G.A.Cohen's ,is a perfectly legitimate one.Moreover,it can be claimed not only for the "Preface" but for the whole of Marx's work.
The same cannot be said,however,for similar but less sophisticated attempts to provide a "rational choice" model of action as the appropriate foundation for Marx's more substantive assertions and analyses.Writers such as J.Elster,J.Roemer, and others (see,for example,J.Elster Making sense of Marx,Cambridge:Cambridge University press,1985,J.Roemer,A General theory of Exploitation and Class, Cambridge,Mass:Harvard University Press,1982) disregard not only Marx's explicit anti-individualism but also the subtle -"hegelian"-way he retains a certain essentialism that cannot be captured by crude rational choice models.These authors are absolutely blind to whatever differentiates Marx from,say,J.S.Mill.It is therefore misleading to consider Cohen as arguing the same as Elster or Roemer under the label of "Analytical Marxism" (As for example in J.Roemer (Ed.),Analytical Marxism, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1986).

democracy tangible reality,present existence,and secular principle."[36]

But,and this is the first element,this autonomy is not enough for Marx.It does not affect men's life outside the sphere of the citizen:"The perfect political state is,by its nature,man's species-life as oppossed to his material life.All the preconditions of this egoistic life continue to exist in civil society outside the sphere of the state,but as qualities of civil society."[37]

In order to be really able to speak about autonomy,this "civil society" has also to come under the sovereignty of man.It is the social existence as a whole that has to become autonomous and not only a superficial,"political" sphere.

What is considered as the "natural" basis of the existence of man,i.e "civil society,the world of needs,labour,private interest,civil law"[38] is far from being indeed "natural" but instead are part of the field that man can -and must- control,the social field:

"Political emancipation itself is not human emancipation[39] ...only when man has recognised and organised his "forces propres" as social forces,and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of political power,only then will human emancipation have been accomplished."[40]

Since social existence is for Marx primarily production,these "forces propres" refer to the production sphere.Their social organisation,i.e their subsumption un-

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36. K.Marx,"On the Jewish Question" (1843) in K.Marx & F.Engels "Collected Works V.3",op.cit.,p.159,thereafter JQ.

37. JQ,p.153

38. JQ,p.167

39. JQ,p.160

40. JQ,p.168

der social control is impossible as long as there exists "the fixation of social activity,the consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us,growing out of our control..."[41].It is only through controlling the "multiplied productive force",i.e by establishing the sovereignty of man on the field of production that the "social being" of man can be said to be really autonomous.

This autonomy,is at the same time social and personal.As with political autonomy,personal emancipation is possible only through the establishment of an autonomous community:

"Only in the community is personal freedom possible...the illusory community in which individuals have up till now combined,always took an independent existence in relation to them...in a real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association."[42]

This rejection of the possibility of a purely personal emancipation -as in traditional ethics and in the christian dogma- constitutes the second element Marx's political ideal comprises of.

The possibility of a "real" community,an autonomous community,however,is for Marx,historically specific:It comes about,as a possibility,with the individuation the rise of the bourgeoisie brought about and the separation between man and his labour capitalist relations of production entailed.This individuation is,for Marx,a positive step.But is not enough.As long as production relations remain beyond man's social control,a "real" community is impossible.Marx sees the political ideal as historically specific in its possibility.And this historisation is the third element of his political project.

Thus Marx,while accepting the political ideal of emancipa-

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41. GI,p.54

42. GI,p.83

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tion and the importance of (political) democracy, recognising that individual emancipation is possible only in and through an autonomous community,he goes beyond these assertions which had already been pioneered by Enlightenment thought.He wants to widen the field of autonomy to include the whole of man's social life and he recognises the historical specificity of this quest for autonomy.

Marx's intervention constitutes therefore a **broadening** of the political ideal of 18th century,bringing in a conception of the social as something **more** than the political and a historisation of the whole possibility of emancipation.

One cannot avoid noticing,however,that the whole political project outlined above rests on the assumption of the existence of the **possibility** for actual political action.This possibility,though,is not theorised as such.Moreover,Marx's account of the individual as a product of the social and as simply an element in the structural whole of the capitalist production does not readily allow us to locate such a possibility.

The very reference to a political project implies that a social class -and correspondingly,the individual- can never be fully determined by the relations of production.In particular it implies that the proletariat has -at least potentially- the ability to conceive its "objective possibilities" and to fight for their realisation.Therefore something "more" than what a full determinacy allows has to exist.Social class -and the individual- cannot be seen as infinitely plastic.

But where does this "more" come about? A hidden element of human nature striving to liberate man? An imperfection in the determinacy of the production relations that induces struggle as well as subvidience? Within the theoretical framework provided by Marx we cannot readily tell.

Up to this point,we have outlined Marx's political project independently,as it were,from the underlying assumption of labour as the essence of man,i.e. from the essentialist

framework that underpins Marx's theoretical edifice.Once we recognise this framework,however,we cannot avoid noticing the consequences it has for Marx's politics.

If labour is seen as the historical "essence" of man,the control of the economic activity is not simply a broadening of the political project.It is the "liberation" of man's ultimate essence,a liberation which can only lead to a full self-transparency of society in an almost automatic way.

Since the field of political intervention ceases to be just the political and it comes to include what was hitherto considered as the "private" sphere,the relative self-transparency that the democratic state introduced in the political field is seen as attainable for the whole of social life.

The ideal society of Marx's political project -the communist society- is a society transparent to itself.Since man's "forces propres" are to be consciously controlled and since these forces represent the innermost kernel of man,their social control implies a self-transparency of each individual vis-a-vis him/herself and of the social vis-a-vis each of its members,a transparency inconceivable within the framework of the public/private dichotomy.(The close connection between this ideal of self-transparency and totalitarianism in the political practice of "socialist" countries has been emphasised by C.Lefort.[43])

Moreover,since production determines the whole of social life,the establishment of social control of production necessarily implies the autonomy of the whole of society,including the political sphere.The fact that Marx did not particularly deal with the political forms of a communist society, e.g. with the implications of the "withering away of the state",is indicative of his considering these forms as necessarily following the social

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43. see for example C.Lefort,"The Logic of Totalitarianism"(1980) in The political forms of Modern society,Cambridge:Polity Press,1986

control of production.

We can also venture the suggestion that,if labour is seen as an essence of man historically realised then the realisation of the political project,the transition to a communist society,does not so much depend on a certain -political- activeness of the proletariat beyond its determinacy by production relations.

The proletariat,if it is to struggle at all,can only struggle "to abolish the very condition of its existence hitherto,namely labour".Thus the political ideal of a communist society becomes the final link in a given development of history,requiring a minimum of self-consciousness from the part of the proletariat,and a simple -but fundamental- change in the relations of production from which all the requirements of the ideal will naturally follow.

Within this context,the historical specificity of the political ideal is closely linked with the assumption of its historical necessity.A necessity not in the sense that it will necessarily happen (although even this can be inferred from the more evolutionist writings of Marx as the "1859 Preface"),but in the sense that it is the only possibility of action open to the proletariat.Thus the "more" we have been referring to in respect to a full determinacy of a class by the relations of production exists only as the realisation of the transhistorical essence at a given point of historical development.

Therefore the "essentialist" assumptions of Marx neutralise to some extent the radicalness of his politics,significantly reducing the degree of autonomy of the classes as political actors,implying an automatic transformation of society once economy has been changed and in the ideal of a self-transparent society easily leading to totalitarian consequences.

MARX AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE

The above discussion,however cursory,brings into relief certain elements of Marx's account of the social,certain contradictions between these elements and opens up a number of questions.

Marx is definitely arguing for

-the existence of a social level irreducible to both nature and "consciousness" which,moreover,determines thought

-the denial of any transhistorical human nature as a foundational moment for this level

-an analysis of production as determinant of this level and as non reducible to individual interaction but rather as a structured whole that determines its elements,including persons

-the possibility of active political action in the broader sense aiming at the conscious social control of society at large and not only of the political.

However,when Marx is to provide a foundation for the specificity of the social level within which production is determinant,a specificity that differentiates this level from the -also social- "level of consciousness",it is to labour and production as a transhistorical essence of man that he resorts. Production is seen as the determinant instance of the social and the development of production provides an evolutionary theory of history.Finally,the analysis of capitalist production is founded on the existence of a measure of "pure" labour reflecting this "essence" and the passage to the highest stage of development,a communist society,depends precisely on the appearance of this essence as such,for the first time in history.

The assumption of transhistorically constant elements of human nature is not necessarily rejectable.It can be seen in a positive light and espoused either as a theoretical

principle or as an empirical generalisation or as both.[44]

It is,however,evidently contradicting Marx's own denial of transhistorical human attributes.

It neutralises Marx's critique of philosophy since it affirms that the social level that is presented as outside of and determining thought is itself ultimately rational -reducible to a rational essence.

It is not theoretically defensible as a foundation of Marx's own analysis of the capitalist mode of production in "Capital",as we saw above.

In so far as it supports a theory of history,as in the 1859 Preface,it presents a view of historical evolution based on a **necessary** and unidimensional development of productive forces that **cannot** be sustained in the light of empirical material.[45]

In so far as it implies a transhistorical determinancy of production as **a specific social instance** it simply projects to the past a situation valid only for capitalism.A close inspection of empirical material reveals it,therefore,to be also unacceptable.[46]

Finally it has consequences for the political project Marx advances,neutralising any real autonomy from the part of

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44. A recent example is G.A.Cohen's "defence" of Marx's theory of history as it is presented primarily in the 1859 Preface.

45. One has to distinguish between a certain development of productive forces throughout history and the **necessary and unidimensional** nature of this development Marx's argument requires.For comments see D.Dickson,Alternative Technology and the politics of Technical Change,London:Fontana-Collins,1974.Also C.Castoriadis "Marxism and Revolutionary Theory" (1965) in The Imaginary Institution of society,Cambridge:Polity Press,1987,pp.18-20.

46. The importance of production could be saved if we see it as a function operating within diverse institutional forms,intermingled with political or ideological operations.This is M.Godelier's argument who presents it as an empirically testable hypothesis.(M.Godelier,The Mental and the Material (1984),London:Verso,1986).In this formulation,however,the significance that Marx attributes to production disappears and the affirmation of its determinance becomes indifferent.

political actors and having possible totalitarian con-
sequences.

For all the above reasons we have to reject the
"essentialist" elements in Marx's thought.Indeed it is easy
to see this essentialism as reflecting dominant
philosophico-anthropological assumptions of the 19th cen-
tury regarding the attitude of man towards nature,the ul-
timate rationality of history,the positive role of technol-
ogy,etc.As J.Baudrillard remarks:

"Radical in its **logical** analysis of capital,Marxist theory
nonetheless is sustained by an **anthropological** consensus
with the options of Western rationalism,in the definite
form it acquired in eighteenth century bourgeois
thought."[47]

Marx's work continues to be important precisely because of
his efforts to break with these assumptions and to in-
augurate novel ways of conceiving social phenomena.One has
to admit,though,that these efforts,precisely because of
their originality,remained partial and incomplete within
Marx's work.

Marx insists on the historicity of human needs and
values,rejects Hegel's idealism and advocates the
"materiality" of the social.Yet when he is to provide a
foundation of these assertions he reverts to labour as
human essence and to an ultimate rationality of the social.

In so far as the coherence and foundation of his work is
concerned, Marx cannot avoid being a Hegelian.He breaches
new paths but he can not follow them sufficiently far.We
cannot,therefore,simply reject the "essentialist" elements
in his thought and "take out",as it were,the elements that
break with this essentialism.Because of the foundational
role of the former,the later -the elements that break with
19th century rationalism- cannot stand alone.They cannot be

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47. J.Baudrillard,The Mirror of Production (1968),St.Luis:Telos Press,
1975,p.32

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simply "taken out" from the the framework that supports them.

The example of Althusser's interpretation of Marx is instructive in this respect.Althusser explicitly wants to reject all the historicist and essentialist elements in Marx.To do so he discards the whole of early works and concentrates primarily on "Capital" which he considers as denying any "homogeneous space of given (economic) phenomena" defined by an "ideological anthropology" as in Classical Economics.Yet he retains the relevance of surplus value as the element that ties the capitalist mode of production together,as a structural causality "visible and measurable only in its effects".[48]

Althusser does not recognise that to define value -and consequently surplus-value - through labour necessitates a homogeneous,simple,abstract labour which can be introduced in Marx's description of the capitalist mode of production only as a Hegelian "inner essence",reproducing the "homogeneous space" of classical economists.Thus the elements Althusser wants to avoid creep up by the back door.A Marx "purified" of all essentialism seems an impossible project.

If certain elements of Marx's theoretical edifice are to be retained,therefore,while a stand is taken against the essentialist elements,an alternative theoretical grounding for the former has to be provided.Only thus can they acquire a theoretical significance.[49]

We can consider as the starting point of the present en-

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48. L.Althusser & E.Balibar,Reading Capital (1968),London:New Left Books,1970.For a more detailed reference to Althusser see the following chapter.

49. The above critique of Marx concerns his general theorisation of the social.The rejection of central elements of this theorisation does not,however, necessarily invalidate Marx's more substantive analyses,for example parts of his analysis of capitalism,class struggle,etc.These theses have to be separately addressed and evaluated.

quiry,the examination of such alternative frameworks:[50]

How can we retain the specificity Marx assigns to a level of the social as distinct from both "nature" and "forms of consciousness" without seeing this specificity as the reflection of a transhistorical essence of man developing throughout history?

Are we obliged to choose between a transhistorical human nature realised in history but independent of particular men's thoughts or ideas and a subjectivist account of the social? How can we conceive,on what anthropological model can we base ourselves to accept that human action can be separated from actor's own thoughts if it is not the expression of a more fundamental human essence?

How can we,in other words,retain the specificity Marx proposes,while adhering to his own denial of transhistorical human nature and his anti-individualism?

And if so,what kind of theory of history can we then propose?

Moreover,could such an alternative framework allow us to reconcile a structural determination of the individual with the necessary autonomy a political project requires?

These are the questions we start from.

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50. Unlike Althusser,we do not want to engage in some form of Marxian exegetics in order to retain a "Marxist" theory.We do want,however,to explore the questions opened.

II. A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

We can attempt now to situate our inquiry with respect to different approaches that have been developed to account for the social,as far as its foundational moment is concerned.

By necessity such an attempt will be very superficial regarding the discussion of the authors mentioned:its object is rather to delineate the broad lines of different approaches than to discuss in depth these authors,the diversity or the contradictions within their work.It is a sketch rather then a detailed map,providing simple bearings on a landscape of extreme variety and complexity.

1.THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF THE SOCIAL
Pre-enlightenment thought

The conception of the social -of "society"- upon which the social sciences are based,is a relatively recent one.Up to the 18th century,the social is seen as transparent and self-evident:It is relations between men,men in the given positions they occupy by birth and which are little expected to change in the course of their life: The serf is the serf and the lord the lord.Their relationship, in its asymmetry,its distribution of power and exploitation is known to both and accepted as natural.

The social is nothing more (or less) than what people do in their everyday action:exchange,fight,worship,etc.The actors' positions are fixed and so is the stage.As for historical time it is the circular time of the same, homocentric cycles around a fixed centre.

The etymology of the Latin "societas",corresponding to the Greek "koinonia", is revealing.The Greek "koino"(s)" and its Latin translation "socius" denote the fellow, the sharer, the partner, the comrade, the companion, the associate, a person in short that shares a common element or

project. Correspondingly the nouns "Koinonia" and "societas" denote a fellowship, an association, a union, a community, a "society" implying union for a common purpose.[1]

Enlightenment thought

The Enlightenment subverts not the transparency of social relations,but the naturality that legitimised them.This subversion operates on the level of the individual, which is portrayed not any more as a function of the social position he occupies,but as a transhistorical, immutable essence, a human nature upon which the different social positions are engraved.All persons partake of this nature, hence all persons are primarily the same .It is only as a result of differential social conditions that we have serfs and lords.

Thus for the 18th century the question of the social circles around the problem of order:since the individuals can exist as isolated,autonomous monads the question of how and why is their co-existence in society possible arises.The two poles of the spectrum was to consider this co-existence as necessary for the protection of all (Hobbes,Locke) or as a burden that prevents the happiness inherent in men's natural condition (Rousseau[2]).

For Rousseau the whole of "society" is a burden to man, introducing inequality, divisions and unhappiness to a natural state of much greater freedom and happiness.It is therefore through the restriction of power to the general will manifested in the "social contract",through the development of men's own inherent nature that the social

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1. See for example Lewis and Short,A Latin dictionary,Oxford:Clarendon Press,1945.

2. The classic text being Rousseau's "Discourse on the origin of inequality"(1755) as also his "Social Contract" (1762).Both in The Social Contract,London:Everyman's,1973.

institutions suffocate (as his "Emile" for example indicates), that the inequalities of civilisation can be tackled.

The Enlightenment reactivates the Christian dogma of an equality of all men at birth -a dogma that has been neutralised by the role assigned to the Church in Medieval times- secularises it, and combines it with a political philosophy drawn from Classical Athens.

An ontological position - that of the Christian dogma- is added to a theory of politics that did not presuppose it. (Aristotle's Politics , for ex, nowhere evokes a natural equality of men). Thus the political project is reinforced and the personal ethics of Christianity (also going back to the Stoics) are broadened to political ones.

The individual assumes therefore a fundamental position: he becomes, as embodying a transhistorical,unitary, autonomous and self-sufficient human nature,the foundation of the social relations he partakes into.In addition,for the critical approach exemplified by Rousseau, since these relations are ones of inequality,in contrast with the equality of "the state of nature",this human nature becomes the basis of a critique of society.

The legacy of the Enlightenment is still with us,in both its ontological assumptions and its critical function. But what mediates it is the emergence of a conceptualisation of the social that departs from the assumption of transparency of social relations Enlightenment thought shares with the earlier one.[3]

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3. There are approaches in social science and philosophy that go directly back to the Enlightenment's notion of individual. Ethical & Political Philosophy is often such a case.In his "Theory of justice", for ex, Rawls remarks "I have attempted to carry to a higher order of abstraction the traditional theory of the social contact as represented by Locke, Rousseau and Kant" (J.Rawls, A Theory of justice, Oxford:Oxford University Press,1972,p.viii).
These approaches disregard precisely the modern conception of the social and the body of though it has given rise to.Whether such a neglect is permissible is -at least- highly doubtful.

The emergence of the modern conception of the social

As with Enlightenment thought which was closely linked with the ascendance of the bourgeoisie,the emergence of the modern notion of the social is closely linked with the gradual but obvious increase in national wealth (linked to what was to be later termed the capitalist mode of production).[4]

From the middle of the 18th century already an "Inquiry into the causes of the Wealth of Nations" becomes necessary since this wealth appears as visibly accumulating[5].The crucial point was, however, that this accumulation was not an expected consequence of planned actions. It appeared as an unexpected result of actions seemingly unrelated and definitely having personal gain rather than any aggregate increase of wealth as their immediate aim.

In contrast to the transparency of social relations up to that point, a new phenomenon, obviously a social product but equally obviously not an anticipated one, appeared.[6]

Breaking with the Physiocrats, A.Smith inaugurates classical economics, seeing the increase in productivity as the result of the division of labour,in turn correlative to the extension of the market. The resulting accumulation of

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4. The "linkage" with changes on the sphere of the economy is not the only one.There are relevant changes also in the political field with the emergence of the modern nation-state as an entity founded on itself and not on some "external" source of legitimation as the Medieval and Renaissance kingdoms were.

Undoubtedly changes of a related nature can be located on other levels of social life as well.

Our only objective at this point is to establish the change in the conception of the social.Linkages as the above do not concern us directly.Even less can the formidable problem of directions of determinacy within these linkages be addressed.

5. A.Smith,An Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations (1784),Indianapolis:Liberty Press,1976

6. This is evident also in the meaning of the term "society".By the 18th century,the previous primary meaning of companionship or fellowship gives its place to a more general and abstract sense (R.Williams,Keywords,London:Fontana Press,1988,p.293)

capital is seen as the reason for the wealth of England and Europe.

Instead of exchange between classes, exchanges visible and known (in the Physiocrats),the internal coherence of a system that appeared without planning, that functions without the actual knowledge of the whole,by the participants and that, moreover, contributes to an increasingly accumulating wealth,comes into being.

Two of the central underlying assumptions of earlier thought are thus undermined:the transparency of social relations, and the circularity of time. In their place a systemic whole guided by an invisible hand and history as a cumulative development and progress emerge.

As M.Foucault remarks:"From Smith onward,the time of economics...was to be the interior time of an organic structure which grows in accordance with its own necessity and develops in accordance with autochtonous laws- the time of capital and production."[7]

A.Smith refers only to the economy and indeed it is the analysis of the economy that constitutes, for the better part of the 19th century -at least until Walras & the Marginalists- the most developed area of theorisation of the social. (Ricardo and Marx being the primary examples).

Soon however, the modality of systemness and internal

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7. M.Foucault,The Order of Things (Les Mots et les Choses,1966), London:Tavistoc,1974,p.226
Foucault sees the change in the conception of the time of economics as representing a general paradigmatic shift in the whole field of the Western conception of the world,a shift that replaced the taxonomic mode of conceiving of the classical era with a "modern" one.This "modern" structuring of knowledge is characterised by the postulation of autonomous entities with an internal time and dynamic:the time of capital in the economy,the concept of life in biology,the concept of language as a system.
Our presentation of the modern notion of the social owes much to Foucault.However it refers to the "social" in a more general sense,encompassing for example both "economics" and the study of language.It does not follow,moreover,Foucault's strange taxonomy of the "human sciences"(ibid,p.344ff.).

dynamic attributed to the economy, as well as its relative opaqueness in relation to the participating actors, were to be transported to a greater system, "society", of which economy was merely a subsystem.

Thus a certain rupture is introduced regarding both Pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment thought. Society, unlike pre-Enlightenment conceptions, is not the visible and natural association of men in their different functions,but it displays a certain opaqueness as well as a systemness and internal dynamic.

At the same time,unlike Enlightenment thought,society appears as something not directly based on the individual as a foundational autonomous entity predating it.

We can consider that the above constitute the two central assumptions that mark a new "object" of study,society in its modern meaning.These assumptions can be expressed as:

(1) "Society" as a structured whole is assumed to have an internal coherence and dynamic

& (2) This whole is seen as independent to what people consciously aim and thus a certain opaqueness of society exists towards its participating actors.

This formulation is a provisional one, serving as a guide to what follows from which it sought to be reinforced or modified. Yet the fact remains that it delineates the semantic borders of a "novel" object of study, covering phenomena which are either equally "novel" or hitherto went unnoticed.

THE SEARCH FOR A FOUNDATION

Evidently such a "strange" object of study,"society" or the "social" as the semantic area delimited by these two assumptions,created obvious questions regarding the theoretical foundation of its specificity.The questions concerned both the scientific status of such a study and the theoretical model that would account for the "modality" of this social.

We can say that,broadly speaking,epistemological claims,following already established currents of Western thought,alternated between an alliance to the methodology of (positive) natural science and an idealist tradition in which society appeared as the subject of history.Later,a hermeneutic approach was added and a rationalism/ objectivism replaced the early idealist approaches.

Parallely,accounts of what the social "is",primarily in relation to the individual (the concept of the person as an autonomous and in-dividual entity being a central and fundamental one in the up to then Western thought),took two main lines of differentiation: on the one hand different variants of individualism saw the social as produced by individuals; on the other, "holistic" approaches asserted the sui-generis and irreducible nature of the social.

In fact,epistemological and ontological claims were usually inextricably intermeshed,the ones seeking to reinforce the others and vise versa.Nevertheless the distinction can be seen as providing a convenient system of coordinates along the axes of which we can attempt to situate some of the main thinkers of the social.

2.POSITIVISM AND ITS VARIATIONS

INDIVIDUALISTIC POSITIVISM
We can thus define a first approach,aspiring to the methods and form of the already established natural sciences as a guarantee of scientificity,while at the same time seeing the individual as the foundational point of the social.Drawing upon the Enlightenment's assumptions in a diluted form,it presented society as a kind of emergent property of individuals put together,a system of relations between individuals,or the result of actions by individuals that had a bearing towards the others.

J.S.Mill

J.S.Mill can be considered as one of the earliest and yet most consistent and lucid exponents of this approach.

For Mill,there are certain given unalterable "laws of mind, whether ultimate or derivative,according to which one mental state succeeds another"[8].These general laws,considered to be constant,independent of society and determinable,produce,operating in different external cir- cumstances,through "character formation",different in- dividuals. (And it is "ethology" the science that examines this character formation).

Given these laws and the situations an individual faces in his development,we can deduce the character of persons.The aggregate of these results would give the laws of social phenomena:

"Society is ...the actions of collective masses of mankind...All phenomena of society are phenomena of human nature,generated by the action of outward circumstances upon masses of human beings:and if therefore,the phenomena of human thought,feeling,and action,are subject to given laws,the phenomena of society cannot but conform to fixed laws,the consequence of the preceding."[9]

However,given the enormous data necessary to make accurate predictions,it is impossible to expect from these laws the accuracy that is possible in natural sciences:"There is,indeed,no hope that these laws,though our knowledge of them were as certain and as complete as it is in astronomy,would enable us to predict the history of society like that of the celestial appearances,for the years to come."[10]

Mill draws the analogy between the sciences of society and

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8. J.S.Mill,A System of logic (1843),London:Longmans,1967,p.557

9. ibid.,p.572

10. ibid.

the "inexact" sciences as meteorology.Indeed,Statistical Mechanics and the Kinetic theory of gases which were developed at around the same time,provide a pertinent example: though the molecules of a gas have determinate qualities and follow fixed and known laws,it is only approximately,and in a statistical way,that we can describe the gas as a whole.

However,Mill does not actually develop the theory he proposes.He only indicates a direction towards which such a theory may be possible.His project is constructed around two hypotheses:

(i)that there are "laws of the mind" that have the modality of natural laws,i.e that they are constant and -given the same conditions- produce the same results,and which,moreover,are part of a human nature outside any "social" influence.

& (ii) that we can infer from these laws,in a suitable manner,laws for the whole of society,while acknowledging that the number of facts and conditions makes any accurate prediction,in the manner of natural sciences,impossible.

The internal coherence of these laws would account for the internal coherence the social exhibits.And their non-evident nature,plus the number of facts needed to infer any result,would account for the individuals' ignorance of the effects of their own actions on a societal level,i.e for the opaqueness of the social.

Thus the social can exhibit both an internal dynamic and opaqueness vis-a-vis the individual actors comprising it and be seen as ultimately reducible to these individuals.Mill's is an attempt to retain the individual as the foundation but,unlike Rousseau,Hobbes or Locke,also to account for the features of the novel notion of the social (while also drawing from the methodology of the natural sciences).

The above assumptions are implied in Mill precisely as hypotheses to be verified and corroborated by further

evidence and theoretical elaboration.However,Mill provides neither any real "laws of the mind" except some vague examples nor,more importantly,any connection between such laws and societal laws.In so far as he proposes any of the later,he more or less accepts Comte's scheme and a progress though stages,as self-evident:"It is easily seen,for instance,that as society advances,mental tend more and more to prevail over bodily qualities and masses over individuals...the military spirit gradually gives way to the industrial."[11]

Thus Mill stands at a crossroads.He wants to affirm a connection with both Enlightenment and Natural science and yet to theorise the social as a distinct level.He indicates what has to be assumed to do so.And he leaves the matter at that point.

His position,which can be called with justification "positivistic individualism",remains a well thought and plausible one.However,more than a century later,the two central assumptions on which it is based have not been reinforced or,even less,"verified".

Thus,proponents of individualism have either remained faithful to an insufficiently theorised "methodological individualism"[12],in fact an impoverished version of Mill's position,or they have turned to a kind of "interpretive individualism" which departs from Mill's positivistic assumptions (and which we shall discuss below under the heading of hermeneutic approaches), or,finally,they have put emphasis on the epistemological argument rather than on the actual explanatory one as in neoclassical economics,rational choice theory,etc. to which we turn.

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11. ibid.,p.603

12. see for example J.Watkins,"Ideal types and historical explanation" (1952),"Historical explanation in the social sciences" (1957) and "Methodological individualism:a reply" (1955) in J.O'Neil (ed.),Modes of individualism and collectivism,London:Heinemann,1973.

Neoclassical Economics,Rational Choice Theory,etc.

Behaviourism and "experimental" methods in psychology,rational choice theories,game theory,marginalist -neoclassical- economics and other approaches,all share a turn to a positivist epistemology -or even to an ultra-positivist one- as their justification.

They claim an absolute similarity of method with that of natural sciences (having in mind classical mechanics rather than quantum physics).Thus they present their assumptions as strictly of a hypothetical nature,not claiming any explanatory value as such,but leading to results which are empirical regularities,in the manner of physical laws,or to correlations between facts,and possibly even to predictions as to the future state of events.Because of these results a wider validity of the approach is claimed.

Marginalist economics,in particular,can be considered as the paradigmatic form of this kind of approach.Starting with Walras, Wicksell, Bohm-Bawerk, etc., marginalist economists abandon any inquiry into an ultimate measure of value,a concern that has occupied classical economists,as also any inquiry into the causes of wealth,and concentrate on short term analysis,mathematisation and definition of conditions of equilibrium.While they self-knowingly reject any "metaphysical" inquiry such as the question on the foundation of value that occupied their predecessors,at the same time they limit the scope of economics into providing management[13] tools for an economy whose emergence,long-term prospects,internal dynamic,etc. are taken for granted and as outside the purpose of their inquiries.

Given the specific nature of the capitalist economy a certain degree of success in describing micro-economic behaviour,making short-term predictions and an overall

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13. As S.Amin remarks in <u>Accumulation on a World scale</u>,Sussex:The Harvester Press,1974

management of the economy was generally possible.Hence marginalist economics came to be considered as economics tout court and any deeper inquiry as irrelevant.

Similarly,game theoretic or rational choice action models could also claim a certain suitability at describing specific -and limited- social and political phenomena.[14]

However,it is evident that the relative success of these approaches was possible only in limited and highly systematised systems (as,for example,the economy of advanced capitalist countries) and this only in periods of relatively little structural change.Results were not obtainable in long term predictions or in broader systems and no "laws" of any kind were actually established.

Hence the methodological stand could not validate the theoretical assumptions which remained operative only in small areas of the social nexus with specific characteristics and for limited time periods.

HOLISTIC POSITIVISM

While the individualistic approach to which Mill wants to base a positivist theory of the social has not been satisfactory,another type of approach towards a science of the social, still drawing from the example of (positive) natural science was also proposed.

The crucial difference was that the social is not seen any more as reducible to the individual,but is
posited as a sui generis reality which can be studied in a manner similar to natural science.

We can consider V.Pareto and E.Durkheim as typifying this kind of approach.

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14. The work of J.Elster is a prime example of rational choice approach.For   example,J.Elster,Nuts   and   bolts   for   the   social sciences,Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1989.See also note 33 of the previous chapter on "rational choice" Marxism.

V.Pareto

Pareto accepts the validity of "logico-experimental method"
for the study of society,a method which is subject to
"proof or disproof from the facts".He considers that
"economic and social laws as well as the laws of the other
sciences never suffer any genuine exception"[15],thus pos-
tulating an identity in the method of inquiry of natural
and social sciences.Unlike Mill,though,he does not at-
tribute these "laws" to the individual in order to
reconstruct society out of these "laws".

For Pareto,leaving aside external elements (such as
soil,climate,etc. as well as other societies),a society is
to be studied based chiefly on "residues",which are
"manifestations of sentiments or instincts".What people
think -what Pareto calls "derivations"- is only secon-
dary,since "human beings are persuaded in the main by sen-
timents (residues)".

These residues,however,are not individual ones.They are
rather broad social orientations of action which are
relevant only,and intelligible only,at the level of
society.They are propensities to act in a certain way,but
they are manifested only in actual social settings.Thus
they are not autonomously observable,but have to be
derived,post factum,from these settings.

By classifying the residues into five classes,Pareto can
present historical development as the growing or diminish-
ing importance of each class,concentrating mainly on the
first two (the one referring to "instincts for
combinations" and covering the ability for knowledge-
including scientific knowledge- ,the other referring to
"group persistence" and covering mainly relations between
people).He does not adopt an evolutionary or even a
developmental view;rather,at least in principle,he advances

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15. V.Pareto,The Mind and society:A treatise on general sociology
(1916),New York:Dover,1963,V.1,p.101

a circular one.For example,Pareto takes account of modernity by affirming that "class I residues and the conclusions of logico-experimental science have enlarged the field of their dominion" but he never implies any necessity or even irreversibility in this fact.

It is consequently on the level of residues that Pareto tries to establish uniformities or laws that would provide a theory of the social.But as the level of intelligibility of these residues is that of society,Pareto's "laws" have to appear directly on the social level.

However,Pareto is unable to establish any "uniformities of social facts",let alone "laws" in the manner of natural sciences.He simply presents,in his "classes of residues", a number of descriptive elements that can be distinguished in different societies as well as certain remarks on the variation of these elements in the development of history or between different social classes.

Since Pareto's own methodological aim -the establishment of social laws- is not fulfilled,his "positive" method that claims a methodological identity with natural science can be considered as inadequate for the social domain in the context of a non individualistic approach (just as in the context of individualist ones,as the case of Mill and his followers indicates).

What remains is Pareto's account of "residues" as being the primary "social" level,distinct from thought and yet influencing (individual) behaviour.But what is the modality of these residues? How can this level be approached if not through the establishment of laws as Pareto had hoped?

The questions remain open.

E.Durkheim

Durkheim follows,to an extent,a similar path to Pareto's.He wants to adhere to the maxims of positive natural science while approaching the social as an irreducible whole.

Durkheim considers that what he calls the "comparative method" and particularly its form of "concomitant variations" which is the most suitable to the study of social phenomena,is a kind of "indirect experimentation".[16] Moreover,he claims that as far as social phenomena are concerned,"to the same effect there always corresponds the same cause",thus considering that a strict line of causality can always be established.

However,he is forced to concede that even the method of concomitant variations gives results that always have to be interpreted,for example to establish whether two phenomena that correlate to each other are both caused by a third,or it is one of them that causes the other.Thus Durkheim does not claim,as Pareto,the possibility of establishment of fixed laws or uniformities.His positive method rests content with the possibility of simple inferences from correlative phenomena.

At the same time,Durkheim strongly stresses -much more than Pareto- the sui-generis character of the social,its irreducibility,its exteriority to the individual which it confronts as coercive (e.g.,the first of his "rules").Indeed,his whole work can be seen as first and foremost an attempt to establish this irreducibility.

Durkheim knows that to actually establish this irreducibility and specificity of the social his "positive" method is not enough,providing as it does a loose methodology.He attempts,therefore,to provide a theorisation of the social specific to this irreducibility.

Since the moral dimension of society has always been a point of departure for Durkheim,his first attempt for such a theorisation -in "The Division of Labour"- is to see society as the "conscience collective"[17].The "conscience

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16. E.Durkheim,The rules of sociological method (1901),London:The Macmillan Press,1982,p.147ff

17. On the translation of the terms as "conscience" rather than as "consciousness", see Parsons's remark,in T.Parsons,The Structure of

collective" is "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society that forms a determinate system of life of its own"[18].

In later work,instead of this "conscience", the term "representations collectives" is employed and a distinction between "individual" and "collective" representations is established,in a manner similar to the distinction between "mind" and "body"[19].

As with the "conscience" which refers not only to beliefs but also to sentiments,the "representations" are not seen as necessarily conscious or ideal;their collective character refers to the fact that they are "produced by the action and reaction between individual minds that form the society,though they do not derive directly from the latter and consequently surpass them."[20]

Durkheim does not deny the specificity of the individual -either as "conscience" or as "representations"- nor does he attempt to subsume the individual to "society".But he considers that there is a region of phenomena,both "conscious" and "unconscious",both "beliefs" and "emotions",that are the product of,and are intelligible only,on a "collective" level.The individual mind remains Durkheim's model for society,which -society- he sees as a kind of collective mind,as a "psychological type" similar to,but distinct from the individual one.[21]

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social action New York:The Free press,1968,p.309

18. E.Durkheim,The division of labour in society (1893),London: Macmillan,1984,p.39

19. E.Durkheim,"Individual and collective representations"(1898),in E.Durkheim, Sociology and Philosophy,London:Cohen and West,1953

20. ibid.,p.24

21. At certain points Durkheim considers that there is also a qualitative difference between individual and collective: "the states of "conscience collective" are of a different nature from the status of the "conscience individuelle" ("Rules",op.cit.,Preface 2nd edition, p.40).In general, however,at this stage he does not amplify on any

Thus society emerges as a super-individual entity,sharing in broad the modality of individual minds but existing at a superior level than these.Society is thus neither a "natural" level,nor the product of individuals,but a kind of human mind writ large.[22]

However,in his last major work[23],Durkheim develops his theorisation in a different direction.He establishes a distinction between concepts and categories of thought and the level of society.Concepts and categories are generated by society,by social "things" ("choses sociales") and they express them on the level of thought.Ideas have a social origin,they are "a natural product of social life".At the same time,social practice -as for example religious rites- is seen as embodying "meaning",a "meaning" that can be latter transferred to explicit "ideas" and "categories".

Thus "social life" appears as something meaningful and yet as not reducible to ideas,concepts,categories,which it generates.Hence social phenomena appear both as expressible on the level of ideas,as categories socially produced,and as determining this level.Since also "social life" is not reducible to "nature",a level specific to the social is implied.

The similarity to Pareto's "residues" is,at this stage,evident.A certain parallel with Marx can also be drawn:the social is neither nature,nor ideas,it determines categories of the mind and yet it is irreducible to "nature".Durkheim does not proceed further,like Marx,to reduce this specificity of the social to a transhistorical

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difference of this kind.

22. It is from this stage of Durkheim's work that Parsons draws,in order to present Durkheim in his "Structure" as a precursor of his own view of the social as a system of normative elements.

23. E.Durkheim,Elementary forms of religious life (1912),London:Allen and Unwin,1961.

essence,but he does not develop further his theorisation,either.

In the final moment,Marx has resource to a Hegelian essentialism to provide a foundation for both its object of study -production,economy and the whole of the social- and for his methodology.

Durkheim advocates a positive study,without resource to any foundational essence.Since,however,no strict regularities or laws can be established (as Pareto had hoped but as Durkheim himself had ruled out),the actual scientific approach depends on the elucidation of the modality of the object of study.

Precisely this modality,though,remains problematic.How can "social life" be neither "ideas",nor "nature"? What is the relation of this "social" to the individual?

We face,therefore,the same kind of questions that we encountered in Pareto,questions remaining open.

Positivism and Holism: some remarks

Pareto and Durkheim are unable to fulfil their promise of a positive study of society as a sui generis reality based on methodological grounds alone,because none of the robust methods of natural sciences seem to be applicable on the social field (uniformities,laws,strict causal inferences,etc.).

They indicate therefore,by default,that such a positive study has necessarily,to proceed,to clarify -besides its specific methodology which cannot be identical to that of the natural sciences- the specificity of its object -society- as a separate object of study.Far from being "metaphysical",such a theorisation is required if the possibility of any positive study is to be established.

Towards this direction,both Durkheim and Pareto offer a number of elements,with Durkheim making a more extensive attempt.These theorisations remain,however,tentative and incomplete.

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3.THE IDEALIST TRADITION I: FROM VICO TO MARX

The positivist attempts to provide a foundation for the study of the social in either individualist or holist variants,have been conceived always as an answer to the implicit alternative,that which followed the idealist current of Western thought.

This current sees the social not as the domain of regularities or laws but rather as the domain of manifestation of a (hidden) transhistorical essence(s).

Man as the embodiment of such an essence,man as a necessary "becoming" towards the realisation of this essence,is a common element from the Stoics on to the Christian view of the person.

It is to such a -natural- essence of man that Enlightenment can base its critique of the social relations impeding and hindering (or,for some,advancing) its development.

The end of the 18th and the 19th centuries saw the emergence of a notion of progressive historical development.The circular notion of time of the Middle Ages,still surviving in the Renaissance,fades away,giving its place to a view of history as developing in a unidimensional line,history as irrevocable progress.

Such a notion of history required a subject that could not any longer be the individual.The emergence of the concept of society,in its modern meaning,provided precisely that:society became the subject of history,developing itself trough historical time in a line of progress.Thus the approaches to the social that operate within this tradition are necessarily holistic rather than individualistic.

To the internal coherence and dynamic and to the independence of the social of what individuals consciously aim,the two central assumptions marking the modern conception of the social,as far as the idealist tradition is concerned,a third has to be added:history as a progressive development and society as the subject of history.

All the early accounts of society partake of this view of

history.Even before the modern notion of society emerged -in A.Smith's theorisation of the economy- Vico based his "science of history" on such a developmental scheme (age of Gods,of heroes and of men,succeeding one another[24]).Comte's three stages of human mind and the corresponding types of society (theological-metaphysical-positive/theological-military-industrial,respectively[25]) is a similar case,as also Spencer's principles of evolution[26].

What is not immediately apparent is that a notion of history as a progress necessarily implies a homogeneous plane upon which this progress can be charted,a plane in itself before and after history.A transhistorical constant is necessary to account for historical development,a constant that can be nothing else than a hidden essence providing the arche and/or the telos of history.

Thus Vico's,Comte's,Spencer's projects,necessarily require such a constant.It is the -fixed- laws of development of the human mind (and correspondingly of society) that provide it for Vico and Comte and it is the necessary attributes of evolutionary development that provide it for Spencer.These elements are not deduced from any facts,but they are posited in an a-priori way,even when,as in Comte,a "positivism" is advocated.They bear therefore the imprint of the idealist tradition.

Hegel and Marx

It is with Hegel,however,that the full philosophical implications of a move from the Kantian transcendental sub-

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24. G.Vico,The new science (1744),Ithaca,N.Y.:Cornell University Press, 1948

25. A.Comte,Physique sociale,(lessons 46-60 of Cours de philosophie Positive (1830-42),Paris:Hermann,1975

26. cf. H.Spencer,First Principles (1862) and Principles of Sociology,V.1 (1876) in Structure,function and evolution,ed. by S.Adreski, London:M.Joseph,1971 and in Principles of sociology,ed. by S.Adreski, London: Macmillan,1969.

ject to society as the subject of history are presented.Becoming,the realisation of man's inner essence is seen as operating simultaneously on the domain of the individual and that of history.A name is given to this essence: Universal Spirit.The process of history is seen as dialectical;and the end of history is explicitly posed as the self-realisation of this essence: Absolute knowledge,the Spirit reunited with itself.

With Hegel the fundamental assumption of idealism is explicitly presented:the invariable presence that has to support any evolutionary trajectory appears as having the form of ideal entities,as pure form or idea.It is precisely because of this that knowledge can discover it:it has the modality of man's own mind,it is a reflection of the same forms reason has.

Marx powerfully transfers the Hegelian approach to the study of society.As argued above,despite his denunciation of Hegel he remaihed,at the core of his theoretical enterprise,very much a Hegelian.

Society is determined by the economy within which it is the instance of production that is dominant.At the same time historical development is based on the accumulation of the results of man's productive labour (the forces of production).It is man's fundamental essence,therefore,man as a producer,that is both realised in history and determines society (which is the subject of this history).In addition,this determinant instance is a rational one since production is for Marx the rational activity of man par excellence.

The seeming denial of the individual,therefore,in favour of a "whole" that is the social,conceals nothing more than the rediscovery of the human essence of "production" -individual as well as collective- as the foundational moment of this "whole",and as the driving force of its (historical) development.

Of course,as argued in Chapter I above,Marx is by no means

only a Hegelian.He marks precisely an attempt to break with Hegel.But in so far as he proposes a coherent scheme,it is along the above lines that the scheme can function.

In general,the central assumption of the idealist tradition,that of an invariable essence behind the multiplicity of phenomena,guiding their development being the end and/or the beginning (the arche or the telos) of this development and being accessible to the rational mind,thus sharing the modality of ideas,found fertile ground in the sciences of the social.

Being rejected from the realm of natural science,it seemed that society,in the modern meaning of the term,was nothing more than the domain par excellence of the idealist tradition.This dominance was reinforced by the fact that the "positivist" method,which was conceived precisely as an answer to idealism,has been unable,in both its holistic and individualistic variants,to offer an alternative sufficiently solid to counteract it.

However,the earlier,most historicist forms of this tradition were to give their place to less extreme approaches.The overall historical pattern of societal evolution became a less pronounced feature while the reducibility of society and history to transhistorical,a-priori categories remained.We shall return to these approaches after an examination of the other major epistemological paradigm for the human sciences,that of hermeneutics.

4.THE HERMENEUTIC APPROACH

W.Dilthey

Dilthey is the principal pioneer of an attempt to establish a foundation of the possibility of social study different from both positivism and from the idealist tradition.

As Gadamer remarks,Dilthey's work can be seen as an im-

plicit response to book VI -"On the logic of the moral sciences"- of J.S.Mill's "Logic";Dilthey wants to disavow Mill's positivism and individualism,to reject the causal relationships of an empiricist positivism,while at the same time taking his distance from Hegel and idealism ("Hegel constructs metaphysically.We analyse the given."[27]).

Dilthey's approach,in contradistinction to the above,is based on the "objectifications of life"."Life" is for Dilthey not a realisation of spirit as in Hegel,but the primary and irreducible creative reality that replaces the notion of spirit:"life contains the sum of all mental activities".

The objectifications of life,which are the "subject-matter of human studies",cover "from the distribution of trees in a park,the arrangement of houses in a street,the functional tool of the artisan,to the sentence pronounced in the courtroom[28]...the objective mind embraces language,custom and every form or style of life,as well as the family,society,the state and the law[29]".

All these "objectifications of life" have a structural form which has to be constructed from the given historical reality in the process of "understanding":

"We cannot understand the objective mind through reason,but must go to the structural connections of persons,and by extension,of communities".[30]

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27. W.Dilthey,Selected Writings,ed. by H.Rickman (thereafter SW), Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1976,p.194
Dilthey's account of his "hermeneutic" approach to the sciences of the mind -Geisteswissenschaften,itself a translation of Mill's "moral sciences"- has to be reconstructed from his many works and fragments.More suggestive are the fragments collected in Vol.VII of his collected works,partly translated in English.Being not a systematic whole,they contain contradictions and unfinished arguments.They indicate,however,sufficiently clear,an overall direction.

28. SW,p.192

29. SW,p.194

30. ibid.

The understanding of these "structural connections" is coextensive with the establishment of a "meaning" to them:

"The totality of a life,or any section of the life of mankind can only be grasped in terms of the category of the meaning which the individual parts have for the understanding of the whole...the category of meaning designates the relationship inherent in life,of parts of a life to the whole"[31].

Thus Dilthey distances himself from the tradition of Romantic hermeneutics that had been primarily subjectivistic.As far as the social is concerned it is a **structural hermeneutics** that Dilthey advocates.

The structural wholes which can be seen as meaningful, are both individuals,as historical beings,but also relationships between individuals,referring to cultural and generally social products:

"It would be very wrong to confine history to the co-operation of human beings for common purposes.The individual person in his independent existence is a historical being.He is determined by his position in time and space and in the interaction of cultural systems and communities.It is the whole web of relationships which stretches from individuals furthering their own existence,to the cultural systems and communities,and,finally,to the whole of mankind,which makes up the character of society and history.Individuals,as much as communities and contexts,are the logical subjects of history."[32]

An individual life,a cultural system,a community,are all to be seen,for Dilthey,as structural wholes through the assignment of meaning to their constituent parts,a meaning that connects them and fuses them into a whole.The process of "understanding",that attributes this meaning, is the

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31. SW,p.235

32. SW,p.181

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distinguishing element of a hermeneutic approach.[33]

However,while the hermeneutic procedure seems to imply an inescapably relativity,since the process of interpretation is a relative one ,in fact Dilthey wants to claim the possibility of a final objectivity.The final aim of hermeneutics remains the objective and absolute knowledge of history:

"Our task today is to recognise the actual historical expression as the true foundation of historical knowledge and to find a method of answering the question how universally valid knowledge of the historical world can be based on what is thus given."[34]

"Life" is seen as "ordered towards reflection" and its objectifications as fully analysable by reason.The only residue of uncertainty in the understanding of history comes not from the modality of the "objectifications of life" but from the incompleteness of history.Just as "one has to wait for the end of a life",equally one would have to wait until "the end of history to have all the material necessary to determine its meaning"[35].Therefore the goal of objective and valid knowledge remains always a relatively incomplete one,but one in principle attainable.

Thus,while Dilthey rejects an empiricist positivism and its causal relationships,recognising a specificity in society and history,while also rejecting any a-priori definition of this specificity in the Hegelian fashion,he continues to consider a universally valid,an objective knowledge of society and history as possible and as the ul-

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33. It has to be remarked that despite his overall structural orientation,the model for this understanding remains for Dilthey the understanding of our own life,i.e autobiography:"the reflection of a person about himself remains the standard and basis for understanding history"(SW,p.218)

34. SW,p.195

35. SW,p.236

timate goal of the "Geisteswissenschaften".

Therefore,although he recognises a difference in the mode of knowledge of human sciences from the natural ones,Dilthey still holds a belief in an identity of aim between the two in the possibility of certainty,objectivity and universality.As Gadamer remarks,for Dilthey "historical consciousness was supposed to rise above its own relativity in a way that made objectivity in the human sciences possible"[36].And although Hegel's a-prioristic metaphysics is rejected,society and history continue to be seen as primarily rational:not as the expression of an essence but as fully accessible and analysable by reason.Moreover,the only kind of ontology of the social that could support his scheme seems to be an objectivist one,like ,say,Parsons's or Althusser's.

Thus Dilthey's intended break with both positivism and Hegelianism remains a partial one.However,his initial exposition of the "objectifications of life",as structural wholes constructed in the process of understanding,implies a constant relativity in this "construction",rather than a final "objectivity".Such a relativity,implying in turn a radical historicity,would require the social to be seen as always amenable to such constructions,i.e as a "field" embodying meaning,and yet as never fully reducible to them,i.e as not being of the same order as rational thought.If so,Dilthey can be seen as indeed opening a novel path,only that it remains an undeveloped possibility.

E.Husserl

Husserl did not explicitly concern himself with the problems of social science,nor did he seek a foundation for the social.Yet,within our context of inquiry, his work is of importance both directly and as interpreted by A.Schutz.

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36. H.G.Gadamer,Truth and Method,London:Sheed and Ward,1979,p.207

Husserl wants to transcend both empiricism and idealistic objectivism as a foundation for the possibility of (scientific) knowledge.To that aim,he posits an "ego cogito" as the "ultimate and apodictically certain basis for judgements,the basis on which any radical philosophy must be grounded."[37]

This ego cogito,this primary consciousness,however,is not a return to subjectivism and psychologism.It refers to a transcendental ego and to a primary level of intentionality which forms experience instead of being a residue of experience.

It is the "intentional morphe" that forms the material of the senses ("hyle") and that creates a "meaning of some sort"[38] that characterises this primary level,a meaning manifested in a paradigmatic form in the synthesis of internal time consciousness.

What Husserl posits is a level that precedes experiences,a level of intentionality that gives form and meaning to experiences and that can be used as the ultimate basis for a philosophy of knowledge.

(i) This level appears as having a similar modality to that of concepts and ideas to which it gives birth and of which it is the supporting substratum.It is,nevertheless, distinct from them, referring to a "meaning" of some sort,though not necessarily to the explicit meaning of logos.

(ii) This level appears initially in Husserl as generated in each individual,though in a transcendental way. Gradually,however,this assertion is seen as untenable.In the 5th "Cartesian Meditation" the notion of "transcendental intersubjectivity" appears,to give its

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37. E.Husserl,Cartesian Meditations,Dordrecht:Martinus Nijhoff,1960, p.18

38. E.Husserl,Ideas:Introduction to pure phenomenology (1913),London: Allen and Unwin,1931,p.257

place,in Husserl's later work,to the notion of "lifeworld" (lebenswelt).Thus Husserl moves from "consciousness" and "subjectivity" to "life" as the foundation of his phenomenology.

It is the lifeworld that becomes the "grounding soil of the scientifically true world".The lifeworld exists as the "horizon of all actual and possible praxis",as the pre-given and necessary "universal field"[39].

Husserl does not explicitly incorporate into the concept of lifeworld the totality of attributes of intentionality and primary "meaning" he earlier attributed to the transcendental ego.The lifeworld appears as a rather unspecified substratum out of which knowledge springs.There are,however,all the indications that the lifeworld can be seen as the origin of this meaning and intentionality as they are manifested in particular egos.

At this point Husserl's possible relevance to a theorisation of the social becomes obvious:

The level of intentionality and meaning that serves as the "apodictically certain basis for judgements" for Husserl can be seen as providing a theorisation of the primary level of the social,as that which transcends individual consciousness and action and yet is the origin of it.

The difference between what people think or consciously aim and the direction of social totalities can be seen as similar to the difference between this level and that of full consciousness and knowledge,thus satisfying the second assertion of the modern conception of the social.

If this level is seen,however,as originating from the individual and if the ambivalent status of Husserl's "transcendental ego" is seen as referring to more or less concrete individuals,then there is a problem in satisfying the first assumption,that of an internal coherence and

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39. E.Husserl,The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,Evanston:Northwestern University Press,1970,p.142

dynamic.How are we to pass from the individual monads to the whole that is society? How are we to account for the necessary coherence the social assumes, if we have only independent individuals? The appropriation of Husserl in a theory of the social faces at this point the traditional problem of a strict individualism.

If,though,we take late Husserl's notion of Lebenswelt into account,this problem does not exist any more:The lifeworld is by definition non individual and hence it can be certainly seen as the basis of a social theory satisfying both assumptions.

A.Schutz

The most important appropriation of Husserl's phenomenology in order to construct a theory of the social can be found in A.Schutz's work.

In his early "Sinnhafte Aufbau der socialen Welt" (translated as "The Phenomenology of social world"),Schutz distinguishes a primary,unmediated experience (which he calls "prephenomenal"),from "phenomenal" experience resulting if meaning is endowed upon a past experience through a retrospective glance thrown to it.For Schutz,"meaning is the way in which the Ego regards its experience".Thus Schutz interprets Husserl's primary level of intentionality and meaning as a primary level of experience.

To construct a theory of the social,Schutz uses only the second level of "phenomenal" experience as relevant:"Our starting point is intentional conscious experiences directed toward the other self"[40].He uses Weber's typology of social behaviour,social action,social relationship,etc.,but,unlike Weber,he does not accord any position to non-intentional experiences (like Weber's traditional or affective action,for ex.).These experiences can have no

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40. A.Shutz,The phenomenology of the social World (1932),London: Heinemann,1972,p.144

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meaning for Schutz and thus they are of no significance towards his theory of the social.

Social behaviour is thus seen as conscious and transparent to the actor.In order,however,for a social knowledge,i.e a social science to exist,the other's behaviour has to be understood,i.e the meaning the other ascribes to it.This can be done by postulating "ideal types" as the "existence of a person whose actual living motive could be the objective content of meaning already chosen to define a typical action"[41].Thus the social has a certain opaqueness,not towards the actor himself,but towards the social scientist trying to account for the others' actions.The understanding of the other is necessarily limited;the actor's understanding of his own social actions -as intentional conscious experiences-,however,is full and unproblematic.

Thus Schutz advocates,at this stage,a king of hermeneutic individualism,without any overall structuring categories as in Weber.In doing so,inevitably,he faces the traditional problem of individualism:The very existence of the social comes into question because there is no explanation as to why seemingly unconnected behaviour simply oriented towards the other would produce any structured society at all.Schutz finds himself facing the same problem as Hobbes or Locke:the question of an apparent order out of apparently unconnected individual activities.In fact,Schutz's theoretical scheme in "Aufbau" cannot account for either of the two central defining assumptions we attributed to the modern conception of the social,its structurality and its opaqueness.

As we will see,for Weber reason and rational action serve as a vehicle to reintroduce social structures to his initially individualistic scheme.Schutz is not willing to do so,and is left with no possibility of connecting individual action to a structured outcome.

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41. ibid.,p.189

Up to this stage,Schutz operates primarily within early Husserl's work (before even the "Cartesian meditations" which were published almost simultaneously with the "Aufbau") and therefore he is not yet concerned with the concept of lifeworld.Perhaps as an answer to the above problems,however,in his later work he uses the notion of lifeworld,prefiguring indeed Husserl's own use of it (which becomes known only after the posthumous publication of the "Crisis").

The concept of lifeworld provides Schutz with the opportunity to affirm the cohesiveness and structurality of the social which could not be deduced from his earlier scheme,without,at the same time,departing much from this scheme.

"Lifeworld" for Schutz represents "the natural attitude in which we,as human beings among fellow beings experience culture and society,take a stand with regard to their objects,are influenced by them and act upon them"[42].The "lifeworld" is not any more the grounding base for certainty in knowledge as in Husserl,but rather a first level,"common sense" interpretation of human action[43].It refers to a primary knowledge of the social world,necessarily existing in everyday action.This knowledge conditions the "subjective stock of knowledge" and determines,to a degree,the orientation of individual social action.

The social is not any more seen as the creation of individual action through isolated "intentional conscious experiences",but as already there,endowed with a cohesiveness and wholeness in the form of "lifeworld" which guides

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42. A.Schutz,"Some structures of the life-world",in Collected Papers III,The Hague:Martinus Nijhoff,1970,p.116

43. as is evident in A.Schutz,"Common-sense and scientific interpretation of human action" (1953),in Collected Papers I,The Hague:Martinus Nijhoff,1962

this individual action.The social is still seen,however,as pertaining to intentional and conscious experiences of individuals existing independently of this social which they "employ",as a system of concepts,only at the moment of action.

At this point Schutz faces a dilemma:

Since he considers that the primary lifeworld is a "stock of knowledge" and hence a system of concepts and ideal elements guiding action -however imperfectly conceived by the actor- the social scientific knowledge can claim the possibility of "objectivity":it can aim at "discovering" the central elements of this stock of knowledge in a total and unbiased manner,without being constrained by the creation of "ideal types" based on typifications of individual experiences.

If so,however,any "interpretive" claim,other than the always incomplete knowledge of this lifeworld due to its complexity,is abandoned and Schutz's scheme becomes very similar to Parson's in "Structure".The "lifeworld" closely resembles the "systems of norms",while the actor is by both writers seen as independent and outside these systems.[44]

Apart from the abandonment of an interpretive stance,another central problem facing the scheme is the possibility of conceiving individuals as definable "outside" the social,as also the limited sense in which individuals are portrayed as primarily cognitive beings,"cognizing" the "norms" or the "lifeworld".

As we will see,Parsons,in response to these problems,develops his own theory incorporating a social formation of the individual,including the motivational sphere.But in such a line of development any interpretive element,even that based on an incompleteness of scientific

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44. The few letters exchanged between Schutz and Parsons indicate that Schutz was aware of this similarity.See A.Schutz,The theory of social action:the correspondence of A.Schutz and T.Parsons,Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1978

knowledge of first-order concepts,cannot survive.

If Schutz wants to escape this objectivism and to retain a relativity in social knowledge -and hence a necessarily hermeneutic position-,as his original project were and as both his reservations for Parsons's unconditional objectivism[45] and his few late comments on social scientific knowledge indicate[46],he has no other way out than to return to his initial position in "Aufbau".But this in turn implies,as we saw,abandoning any pre-existing structurality of the social world and facing the Enlightenment's problem of order.

Schutz's dilemma indicates that if an interpretive approach is to be developed starting from "conscious,meaningful action",then the only way to retain its hermeneutic character is to remain within a -problematic- individualism.If this individualism is abandoned,as with Schutz's concept of lifeworld,the cognitive level of action involved necessarily leads to an objectivism,however qualified.

Thus Schutz's interpretation of Husserl is revealed to be a problematic one.If,however,Husserl's "lifeworld" is seen as referring to a level of intentionality and primary "meaning" which does not correspond to "intentional,conscious action",a level not coextensive with ideas,norms,or concepts,then Schutz's dilemma disappears.

The transportation of the concept of lifeworld to the field of social theory could retain and expand this difference between a primary level of meaning and the level of thought and ideas,rather than dissolving it in an sequential "order of concepts" as Schutz does.Of course,in this case,the question of actually accounting of the social as such a field,a formidable question,opens up.

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45. ibid.

46. "Common sense ...",op.cit.,p.34ff

However,it is towards this direction, -a direction that we argued is also indicated,though not developed by Dilthey - that Husserl's "phenomenology",in so far as it has any relevance to a theorisation of the social,should be seen as indicating the way.

G.H.Mead

An approach that runs a parallel course to phenomenology,even though it starts from a different tradition (that of pragmatism) is presented by G.H.Mead's theoretical work.

Mead wanted to accept the epistemological strictness of behaviourism while taking into account the peculiarity of the human world.To that aim he adopted as necessary the level of consciousness and of meaning.

The category of "meaning" has for Mead similar connotations with Husserl's original references.A series of important statements locate the notion of "meaning" Mead embraced:

"Meaning is thus a development of something objectively there as a relation between certain phases of the social act;it is not a physical addition to that act and it is not an "idea" as traditionally conceived[47]...The mechanism of meaning is thus present in the social act before the emergence of consciousness or awareness of meaning occurs[48] ...Meaning is thus not to be conceived fundamentally as a state of consciousness,or as a set of organised relations existing or subsisting mentally outside the field of experience into which they enter[49]...Meaning can be described,accounted for or stated in terms of symbols or language at its highest and most complex stage of develop-

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47. G.H.Mead,Mind,Self and Society,ed. by C.Morris (thereafter MSS), Chicago:University of Chicago Press,1962

48. MSS,p.77

49. MSS,p.78

ment (the stage it reaches in human experience),but language simply lifts out of the social process a situation which is logically or implicitly there already[50]."

"Meaning" is therefore for Mead the grounding soil of language and ideas.This meaning,moreover,is decisively and primarily embedded on social processes and does not exist "outside" them.

Out of this field of meaning in social experience arises the "self" as distinct from the biological organism:"The self ...is essentially a social structure,and it arises in social experience[51]...There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions.It is the social process itself that is responsible for the appearance of the self;it is not there as a self apart from this type of experience"[52].

The self,however,cannot be reduced to the social reaction in which it originates,it has a certain autonomy ,which for Mead is encapsulated in the concept of the "I" (as opposed to the "Me" representing the "generalised social other").The self interprets situations in which he exists and acts accordingly.Hence this action cannot be reduced to mechanical models of causality.

However,when Mead addresses the question of the social,he locates this social not on the whole of this "field of meaning" in which selves originate,but on the higher echelons of it,that of language and conscious communication between selves,seen as autonomous and independent actors.

In this way he produces a scheme similar to early Schutz's,and,he faces necessarily the same problem,that of accounting for the structurality of the social.

Mead himself implicitly recognises this problem and in his

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50. MSS,p.79,emphasis added.

51. MSS,p.140

52. MSS,p.142

brief statements on society at large,he introduces the existence of certain fundamental "socio-physiological impulses" as the "reproductive,the parental,the impulse of neighbourliness"[53] to provide a basis for society,which is seen as thus exhibiting certain "universals",as religion,economy,etc.[54]

These "impulses" and these "universals" are presented as scarcely connected to "conscious communication",rather as pre-ordaining the lines of this communication.Thus implicitly Mead recognises the insufficiency of this "conscious communication" as a foundation of the social.

However,his own formulations of meaning and the self,point towards a field of meaning that precedes conscious communication and even language,a field that participates in the formation of the "self" and yet is not necessarily conscious,a field that necessarily exists in every (social) interaction.

To see this theorisation of meaning as the primary basis for the social itself and to draw the consequences it would entail,remains thus the implicit alternative Mead offers,though,once again,this alternative remains undeveloped.

"Micro" sociologies of interaction

If the social is seen as the product of conscious,intentional,meaningful action as in early Schutz and Mead,and the hermeneutic element located on intersubjective understanding,no account of the structurality of the social out of individual,independent actions can be advanced.The problem of order that Enlightenment pre-sociological thought faced reappears.Moreover,the relative opaqueness of the social in relation to participating in-

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53. MSS,p.228

54. MSS,p.258

dividuals,which we identified as a constitutive element of the modern notion of the social cannot be taken into account at all.

Possibly because of this cul-de-sac,a number of approaches emerged,still broadly within the subjectivist hermeneutic tradition,but emphasising not any more individual action but interaction of individuals.

A substantial body of primarily empirically oriented work,within the broad labels of "symbolic interactionism", "phenomenology", "ethnomethodology",etc.,has been gradually accumulated,including the work of leading figures as E.Goffman and H.Garfinkel.

These studies in general focused on the active role the individual plays in contexts of everyday ("micro") interaction,"interpreting each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions"[55] and/or actively organising "indexical expressions and indexical actions"[56] and/or "presenting" himself in a performance like ("dramatourgical") way[57].In many cases it could be claimed that these individuals,in contexts of interaction,actually "produced" "patterned sequences of interactive relations" as social "structures"[58].

Though in principle the major researchers on the field have avoided general theoretical claims,it has been nevertheless claimed that these studies introduce a major theoretical paradigm:that the social at large can be seen as created by individuals -as critical,interpretive beings-

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55. H.Blumer,"Society as Symbolic Interaction" in A.M.Rose (ed.),Human behaviour and social processes,London:Routledge,1962

56. H.Garfinkel,"What is ethnomethodology?"(1967) in Studies in ethnomethodology (1968),Cambridge:Polity Press,1984

57. E.Goffman,The presentation of self in everyday life,New York: Doubleday,1959

58. J.Turner,A Theory of social interaction,Oxford:Polity Press,1988, p.149

acting in contexts of interaction.

Thus "macro events can be seen as made up of aggregations and repetitions of many similar micro events"[59] and social structure is "nothing other than large numbers of micro encounters repeated over time and actors' space"[60].

We are faced here with a variant on individualism based on a subjectivist hermeneutics.The individuals appear as relatively autonomous and self-supporting entities interacting in an interpretive way with others.The social at large is produced out of these processes of interaction.As for the (social scientific) knowledge of these processes,it has to be a hermeneutic one,necessitating the deciphering of individual interpretations.

In so far as the social can indeed be produced of interaction,the "problem of order" traditional individualism faces is overcome.As for the opaqueness the social may exhibit,it can also be accommodated within this account since the "emergent properties of interaction" are not immediately apparent to actors.The only problem the approach seemingly faces is its inability to account successfully for "macro" structures out of "micro" interaction.

This inability,though,is not accidental.In fact it points to the weak link in the chain of the above claims: the approach is based on a non legitimate generalisation.While it is true that the "micro" studies referred to indicate that certain micro situations can be successfully analysed through the assumptions of autonomous and actively functioning individuals in interaction,it is a false claim that all micro situations can be so analysed.

The types of micro situations these empirical studies

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59. R.Collins,"On the micro-foundations of macro-sociology"(1981), American Journal of Sociology,V.86,p.988

60. R.Collins,"Interaction ritual chains,power and property:the micro-macro connection as an empirically based theoretical problem",in J.Alexander (ed.) The Micro-Macro Link,Berkeley:University of California Press,1987

focus on are primarily ones separated from institutional restraints and concern action having no bearing on macro issues.Alternatively,the type of questions asked by the researcher is such that only elements of interaction not immediately related to "macro" structures are taken into account.

Even micro situations which can be successfully analysed through the assumptions of interacting autonomous individuals always operate within greater structural constraints which have to be taken into account before any theorisation of society in general is attempted.

In addition,however,many "micro" events cannot be analysed through these assumptions at all.They necessitate the introduction of "stocks of knowledge",of "lifeworld",or of some sort of "norms" guiding the individuals' behaviour,of a level,that is,beyond the immediate consciousness of the individuals and directly connected to greater ("macro") structural wholes.Certain "micro" studies have recognised it,and the late Schutz's introduction of the lifeworld is indicative in this respect.[61]

In both cases,Bourdieu's remark is valid:""interpersonal" relations are never,except in appearance,individual-to-individual relationships and the truth of interaction is never entirely contained in the interaction"[62]

And as Mouzelis remarks:"Face-to-face interactions by or with actors who have privileged access to the means of economic,political or cultural production may have intended or unintended consequences affecting a large number of

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61. D.Layder names structures within which interpretation and negotiations are important,"interaction" structures and distinguishes them from "contextual" structures which are pre-constituted and constraining. (D.Layder,Structure,interaction and Social Theory,London: Rout - ledge,1981).
He neglects,however,the second type of micro events which cannot be analysed through these assumptions at all.

62. P.Bourdieu,Outline of a theory of Practice,Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1977,p.81

people...Such encounters,even if they involve two persons only,are clearly macro-encounters"[63]

Therefore,despite a certain limited applicability,the social at large <u>cannot</u> be explained through the "interactional" individualism "micro" approaches advocate.Moreover,the appropriation of the term "micro" by these approaches is definitely unjustifiable since there are not the only ones trying to account for micro phenomena.

Consequently,the subjectivist hermeneutics that goes with them offers no viable epistemological foundation for the study of the social.

Hermeneutics and Interpretation

Hermeneutics,from Dilthey onwards,have been advanced as a mainly epistemological alternative to both positivism and idealism on the theorisation of the social.

However,they have not fared better than these approaches in providing a foundation for such a theorisation.

(a)In their subjectivist variant,when the hermeneutic element is located in inter-subjective understanding,the problem that individualism has traditionally faced reappears:the social in general cannot be seen as produced out of the action of autonomous individuals and this is not altered by a change of emphasis from "action" to "interaction".

The only way to avoid this problem is to introduce a system of social "knowledge",as "norms" guiding individual action,as Schutz does.But if so,the hermeneutic element also disappears,as necessarily this system of norms can be seen as a conceptual one,"objectively" knowable (as Schutz scheme's identity with Parsons's reveals).

(b) On the other hand,if a structural view of the social is retained, as in Dilthey's "objectifications of life"

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63. N.Mouzelis,<u>Back to sociological theory</u>,London:Macmillan,1991,p.83

without, however, according to this social field any specific modality that would differentiate it from conceptual thought, once more the social can only be seen as ultimately objectively knowable, refuting thus any nominal hermeneutic claim.

In a structural approach, it is only if a degree of non-correspondence and a differential modality between the interpreted element and its interpretation are assumed, with the corresponding necessary relativity, only in such a case can a "real" hermeneutic approach be claimed.

Plainly the authors discussed failed to offer the desired alternative foundation for a theorisation of the social.

Yet we saw that all three, Dilthey, Husserl and Mead, are suggestive towards a theorisation of the social as a structured field of meaning of a structural character, not coextensive with conceptual thought, though partially accessible to it. Such a conceptualisation would allow for a difference of modalities that could in turn account for an interpretive procedure really offering an alternative to objectivism.

However, since these remain precisely suggestions rather than a developed scheme, a question mark hovers above them.

5. THE IDEALIST TRADITION II:
OBJECTIVISM AND RATIONALISM

While initial approaches to the study of the social within the idealist tradition have originally seen society as the subject of history in an evolutionary perspective, subsequent theorists were less inclined to do so. What remained, though, in these theorists and what connected them with the idealist tradition, was the acceptance of certain constant and transhistorical categories which supposedly order the social. Although these categories were not always introduced in an axiomatic way and they were instead presented as empirical generalisations, in fact they were always a-priori ones. We can consider Weber, the late Parsons

and Levi-Strauss as falling within this category.

However,even the assumption of the existence of these categories was abandoned in certain cases,retaining only an assertion of the possibility of an objective and complete knowledge of the social,based on an ultimate accessibility of the social to reason.We can consider the early Parsons and Althusser as representing this case.

M.Weber

Weber remains a rich source of material for both theoretical and more substantive researches and,as with all great thinkers,is difficult to be neatly classified into a specific category.

His theoretical account of the social is in itself intriguing.Weber starts from individual action and an interpretative viewpoint.Yet,in fact,his theorisation can be seen as neither an individualistic nor as a hermeneutic one.

Weber constructs a typology of social actions,two forms of rational action ("Zweckrational" -instrumentally rational and "weltrational"-value rational) and two other forms (affective/traditional action)[64].He considers that the first two types of action can form the basis of an understanding of the social through the construction of a "purely rational course of action",an ideal type.

Weber introduces rational action,therefore,seemingly only as a methodological device,not considered as covering the whole of the social but as offering the only possibility of understanding social action in general.The social as a whole is not primarily rational but it is amenable to an analysis as if it were.Thus,in a neo-Kantian fashion,a distance is introduced between what the social is and its yielding to an analysis according to the laws of the

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64. M.Weber,Economy and Society (thereafter ES),Berkeley:University of California Press,1978,p.24

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intellect.[65]

But for this possibility to exist -the social to be amenable to rational analysis- either rational action covers the majority of social action,or other types of action are also amenable to a rational analysis.

Since Weber recognises that the "ideal type" can only be a marginal case,it is not the widespread nature or rational action that supports this assertion.It is rather the possibility of analysing non-rational action as if it were so.For Weber other types of action are to be treated as "factors of deviation from a conceptually pure type of rational action".

Therefore rational action and the ideal type ceases to be a simple methodological device;it becomes the basis upon which the whole of the social action can be constructed,as deviations from it.For Weber's notion of ideal types to be operative,the social has to be seen not only as amenable to rational analysis,but as **primarily** rational.

Thus a tension is introduced in Weber's account:on the one hand he explicitly recognises the existence and even the importance of affective and traditional action,i.e. of non-rational forms of action (his theorisation of charisma can be seen as an example of the importance non-rational features have for Weber).On the other,he introduces the notion of ideal type that in fact reduces all types of action to deviations of the rational type.

However,since Weber starts from individual (social) action,even the rational types of action do not necessarily imply a systematic character of the result of action,i.e of the social.

Weber proceeds by introducing broad social categories which are presented as **produced** by the aggregation of in-

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65. It is not,therefore,the understanding (Verstehen) that provides the basis of Weber's methodology,despite him claiming so.It is the amenability of the social to a rational analysis.

dividual actions.

For example,the economy is defined through "economically oriented" action which, "according to its subjective meaning is concerned with the satisfaction of a desire for "utilities"[66].But utilities are the "specific and concrete,real or imagined advantages of opportunities for present or future use as they are estimated and made an object of specific provision by one or more economically acting individuals"[67].

The definition of utilities,then,presupposses "economically acting individuals",and hence the economy, while they are were supposedly used to define it the later.Weber cannot escape from the fact that the existence of an economy is presupposed by the type of action it seemingly provides a foundation for.

A similar argument can be made for the other categories,of authority,of religion,of law,etc.These categories are not produced by any aggregation of individual social action,the attributes of which can be captured through "ideal types".Rather they are introduced in an ad hoc way,as the axes along which historical data can be ordered,axes transhistorically constant and immutable.

These categories could of course be presented independently of a theorisation of individual action,as empirical generalisations.However,the problem is that they are not in any way "empirically" deductible out of a mass of empirical material.In fact these categories are constructed through an extrapolation to the past of features of modern society,and in particular of the seemingly autonomous systemic function of the economy and the polity.

Consequently,since the past is seen through the categories of the present,the present appears as the culmination of

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66. ES,p.63

67. ES,p.68

the past.Thus when Weber refers to modern bureaucratic
authority and of capitalist economy as the most rational
forms of these categories,this is a **necessary** result of
the way authority and economy are in fact defined.[68]

Thus a notion of the social as primarily rational,implicit
in Weber's "ideal type",is reinforced by the introduction
of transhistorical categories that can be neither deduced
from individual social action,nor derived from empirical
generalisations.

Despite,therefore,his many contradictions and the alterna-
tive directions Weber simultaneously points to,if we are to
give a cohesiveness in his theorisation of the social we
can only consider it as a rationalist one.

Hence Weber shares a fundamental similarity with
Marx.While for Marx there is a single dominant human ele-
ment,that of production,an element that is the guiding line
to the development of history and the analysis of the so-
cial,for Weber there are several such lines: the economy,
authority, legitimation,etc. Marx's argument is therefore
generalised,his more extreme evolutionism is abandoned,but
the nature of it remains unchanged:the social is ultimately
founded on constant - rational- attributes of man
manifested and realised in history.[69]

As with Marx,however,we have to reject Weber's scheme.We
cannot theoretically justify his a-priori assumptions -of
"ideal types" as well as of the existence of the

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68. This is not to imply that Weber unequivocally and unambivalently
considers "modernisation" as positive.His notion of disenchantment of
the world and his account of the limits of formal rationality -loss of
freedom and meaning- indicate his reservations for the "modern".
However,within Weber's theoretical scheme it is difficult -if not
impossible- to see the present in any other way than as a culmination
of the past.

69. For any categories to transhistorically exist,they can only refer
to some transhistorically constant elements of human nature or intel-
lect,certain constant needs that have to be satisfied,some facets,in
general,of a human essence.It is these elements that pre-ordain his-
tory since they form the lines history and society follow.

categories- nor are these assumptions supported by concrete empirical material.[70]

T.Parsons

Parsons follows a path much influenced by Weber,while at the same time trying to generalise Weber's argument and to provide a more cohesive theory.

His first major work,"The Structure of social action" can be seen as roughly corresponding to chapter one of Weber's "Economy and Society".Parsons starts from a unit act,involving an agent(actor),an end,condition and means,and a normative orientation that allows choice between means.This classic means-end scheme is developed into what Parsons calls the "voluntarist theory of action" by making all parameters dependent upon a system of norms.

Thus it is not only the choice of means as in the traditional model that is a function of social values or norms,but also the "end" as well as the situation itself.In this way Parsons avoids the problems the individualist theories that employed the model had faced,in particular the problem of societal "order" if individuals are seen as independent entities posing disparate "ends".

While Parson's scheme allows also the actor's rational knowledge into the account,the social is for him primarily represented by the system of norms.Thus he is able to derive the level of society from individual action,not facing the difficulties Weber does being based exclusively on rational action.

Within this context,a norm is defined as "a verbal description of the concrete course of action thus regarded

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70. It is not a question of accumulated data disproving the transhistoricity of categories in a positivist manner.Since the central assumption is a metaphysical and an a-priori one,it is not subjectible to empirical testing and it cannot be falsified in the strict sense.However,a certain tension is introduced by this concrete material, since its assimilation to these categories was not as easy as would be hoped.

as desirable,combined with an injunction to make certain future actions conform to this course"[71].This "concrete course of action" is clearly distinguished from "non-subjective elements of action",such as heredity and environment,which are located on the level of biology and physical nature respectively.

There is no separation,though,for Parsons,between the "desirability and injunction" of the course of action,and the "verbal description" of it.Nor is there one between the latter and "symbolic expressions of it"[72].Thus the "norm" can be objectively -scientifically- known.

Therefore for Parsons the order of action,as norm oriented,is directly expressible by symbolic and scientific language.There is no "interpretation" to take place,as Weber holds;rather an unproblematic access -from the part of the observer- to the norms guiding action is assumed.

Since the level of norms defines also the result of social action -the level of "society"- Parsons's formulation poses society not any more as primarily rational as in Weber, but rather as fully describable through a system of normative elements which can be seen as coextensive with the ideal concepts referring to them.

There is no proper distinction,therefore,between the social and the ideal (although there is one between the social and cultural "systems").Society can be fully and comprehensively analysed through the systems of norms that guide the action of its composite members.[73]

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71. T.Parsons,The structure of social action (1937),New York:Free Press, 1968,p.75

72. ibid.,p.78

73. That Parsons refuses to admit that there is any level of the social,except externally defined factors such as heredity and natural environment,not reducible to the systems of norms and values an actor uses in the process of action,is evident also in the way he incorporates Pareto and Durkheim into his scheme:
In order to incorporate Pareto in the face of the latter's explicit distinction between "residues" and "derivations" (the second referring

The fact that the social is reducible to a system of norms does not necessarily imply that the actor fully "knows" these norms in a conscious way.The actor's knowledge of the norms may be partial[74],without this altering the pos- sibility of a full knowledge,especially by an outside scientific observer.However,in Parsons's "Structure", the actors themselves appear as defined outside and indepen- dently of any system of norms,i.e. outside any social in- fluence and as predominantly acting in a con- scious,cognitive way.Parsons retains this element of tradi- tional individualism,a tradition from which his means-end scheme also comes from.

However,the cohesiveness of Parson's theory does not require positing the actor as a cognitive being,so far as the objectivism of the scientific observer is not ques- tioned.Given this,and the difficulties inherent in assuming individuals formed outside society (especially in the light of psychoanalytic theories) Parsons gradually conceives of

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to the actor's thoughts while the first,distinct from and determining these thoughts,are for Pareto the subject matter of an analysis of action),Parsons transforms this distinction into one between symbols referring to statements of sentiments (subjective) and statements of facts (objective) (Structure,p.214-216).Since it is the sentiment that determines the ultimate end,it is the residue that is dominant and not the derivation (thought).Thus a difference in modality between the two,as posed by Pareto,is transformed to a difference in degree.

Similarly,Parsons appropriates Durkheim's late writings -principally the "Elementary forms of religious life"- in which Durkheim considers ideas,values,categories as social products.Parsons considers this sig- nals that the "social factor becomes a normative one" and that the only way Durkheim can avoid a full blown idealism is the "voluntaristic scheme of action" ,which takes into account external conditions in addition to the systems of norms and values.The fact that Durkheim also tries to distinguish the social which "produces" these categories,values,norms,etc.from the categories themselves,is not given any attention.

Finally,Parsons considers Weber's concept of "traditional action" as indicating a close connection with the "normative aspect of action" and not as referring to action not describable through the means-end scheme.

74. ibid.,p.75

the individual as formed within society.

In particular,the motivational sphere of the individual which was not discussed in "Structure" is analysed.An undifferentiated system of needs that are formed into "need-dispositions" by the social environment is posited:

"The child's development of a "personality"(or an "ego structure") is to be viewed as the establishment of a relatively specific,definite and consistent system of need dispositions operating as selective reactions to the alternatives which are presented to him by his object situation..."[75]

These need-dispositions are,in the process of socialisation,organised around role-expectations which the alter confronts the developing ego with.[76].The role-expectations are relative "to a particular interaction context,that is integrated with a particular set of value standards which govern interaction with one or more alters in the appropriate complementary roles".[77]Constellations of "roles" or "role-expectations",constitute "social systems".

The Freudian concept of the unconscious is also incorporated into this theorisation.Initially the "ego" is seen by Parsons as structured through a cognitive reference system,a common moral standards and expressive symbolism[78],i.e as primarily cognitive and as separated from an "id" representing the biological organism.Later,though,the ego is seen as the "precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes"[79]

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75. T.Parsons et al,"Some fundamental categories in the theory of action" in T.Parsons & E.Shills (eds),Towards a general theory of action (1951),New York:Harper and Row,1962,p.18

76. ibid.,p.154

77. T.Parsons,The social system,London:Routhledge,1951,p.38

78. T.Parsons,"Superego and the theory of social systems"(1952),in T.Parsons,Social structure and personality, London:Macmillan,1964,p.32

79. T.Parsons,"Social structure and the development of personality" (1958),in ibid.,p.109

and is recognised that "the categories of instinctual and learned components cut across the id,the ego and the superego"[80].It remained,however,the case,that these "instinctual and learned components" were directly and unproblematically knowable through their normative/ideal expressions.

In conjunction with the theory of role-expectations,this theorisation of the unconscious succeeds in incorporating the motivational sphere within the context of the social,without implying any alteration in Parsons's fundamental thesis in "Structure": that social systems can be conceived as coextensive with a system of concepts/ideal elements which fully describe them and which are amenable to objective knowledge.

We can consider Parsons's theorisation at this stage as representing the first phase of his theoretical trajectory.It represents an account of the social seen as reducible to and producible by systems of norms.Parsons provides a ("micro") theorisation of action that can satisfactorily take account of both the structurality and the opaqueness of the social.

This theorisation does not imply any transhistorically constant elements or any human "essence".Thus Parsons cannot be subjected to the criticisms addressed to Marx or Weber.However,the theorisation remains an objectivistic one.Implicit in the conception of the social as fully describable through -scientific- knowledge is the assumption of one transhistorical space:that of the rational human mind,expressions of which are both the social itself -as a system of norms- and rational knowledge.Thus the social may not be an expression of an essence,but it springs from a transhistorically present human mind.

In Parsons this rationalism is openly accepted and is not contradicting any other assumptions (unlike,for

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80. ibid.,p.110

ex.,Althusser).Yet it indicates his close links with the idealist tradition and it is open to a criticism from a hermeneutic standpoint.The more central criticisms Parsons is open to,though,are of a different nature:

Parsons considers the motivational level as fully determinable along role-expectations,as also the cognitive level.The individual is thus seen as fully determined by the social and as a harmonious "construction" with no internal conflict between the different roles involved (for Parsons there are only two alternatives:the "normal" individual or the "deviant" one).Thus any "voluntarism" that the earlier exposition in "Structure" may have entailed,disappears.Any activeness and independence from the part of the actor dissolves into an all determinant "social" system.

While for Parsons this passivity of the individual may not necessarily be seen as a problem,the second one is:Once fully closed "systems of norms" are assumed,no possibility to account for history,that is for change of these systems,exists.Since the individual is also incorporated within them,any change cannot come from the actors.But since these systems are fully closed,no internal reason for change exists.In "Social system" Parsons remarks that his theorisation cannot as yet account for change,but that future developments could allow that.The fact is that no theorisation of change is possible within the parameters of his scheme.[81]

Perhaps as a response to the impossibility to account for history within this scheme (but also possibly for other reasons),an important shift in Parsons's theoretical work occurs.Instead of simply exploring the nature of "systems of action",Parsons wants,in this new phase,to present fixed

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81. These problems we are going to encounter again and discuss at greater length in the analysis of Althusser that follows.The points made there are valid for Parsons as well.

patterns of systemic structuring and development.In his books and articles this phase runs parallel with the incorporation of the individual within the earlier scheme.In fact,however,it marks a new phase,analytically distinct from the first,and as such it is presented here.

In "Social System" these fixed patterns appear as the positing of "foci of crystallisation for social structure" and a classification of institutions into relational,regulative and cultural depending on their respective "function" is presented.

Later,this classification is expanded into the AGIL scheme which includes four phases "in the relationship of any system of action to its situation"[82].The phases are Adaptation,Goal attainment,Integration,Latent pattern maintenance.The scheme is initially derived from empirical observations in interaction contexts and Parsons considers that it reflects four fundamental functions of action systems in general.

The scheme is applied to the formation of personality and its subsystems[83] and replaces the older classification of social institutions.In later papers its four functional lines are taken to define also the direction of any societal development and indeed the development of any action system:"Action systems,like other living systems,tend to differentiate along functional lines"[84].

Finally the AGIL scheme is seen as also describing the relation of action systems to psycho-chemical and biological systems[85].

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82. Parsons et al.,Working Papers in the theory of action,New York:Free Press,1953,p.182

83. T.Parsons,R.Bales et al.,Family,Socialisation and interaction process, London:Routledge,1956,p.172ff

84. T.Parsons,"Some problems of general theory in Sociology" (1970),in Social systems and the evolution of action theory,New York:Free Press,1977,p.238

85. for example in T.Parsons,"A paradigm of the human condition",in

Thus Parsons substitutes a functional systemic theory including an evolutionary claim,for his earlier theory.The scheme covers the main lines of development of systems as well as the actual classification of subsystems in any given system.

Parsons tried to justify the AGIL scheme in a two-fold way:firstly by connecting it to his earlier action scheme and considering as deducible out of a fixed number of dichotomous choices any process of action involves,either in the development of personality,or in social action.These choices were limited to five,the famous "pattern variables".

However,despite many classification efforts by himself and associates,Parsons has not been able to actually establish either that the pattern variables cover the entire field of orientation of human action or that the AGIL system can be indeed deduced by them.[86]

The second way Parsons supported the introduction of the AGIL scheme was a functional argument:the scheme was presented as covering the fundamental functions any system of action must perform in order to be self-sustainable.This assertion marks Parsons's "structural-functional" approach.(Initially the approach is introduced,for the social system,in a modest way as the "need for a motivational integration of individuals to society"[87]and no explicit systemic needs are posed.As the scope of the AGIL scheme is expanded,however,the four functions it covers come to be considered as self-evidently and unquestionably central and determinant in any kind of system).

However,in order to sustain a functional argument of this

Action theory and the Human condition,New York:Free Press,1978,p.382

86. for an extended argumentation see S.Savage,The theories of T.Parsons, London:Macmillan,1981,p.162 ff.

87. T.Parsons,The social system,op.cit.,p.30

kind,the borders of the "system" under question with its environment towards which the functions of the system are addressed,have to be clearly drawn.

In the case of the social system,which is Parsons's central concern,neither the borders of the system nor the environment towards which its functions are performed,is ever clearly defined.What instead happens is that modern society is taken as the model of both these necessary functions and their differentiation,projecting into the past an incomplete image of the present and into the future a multiplied image of the present.The AGIL system can be supported by a structural-functional argument only by accepting that the present form of the social transhistorically defines the limits and functions of any social "system".

A similar case can be made for Parsons's account of character formation in terms of the AGIL scheme.

The AGIL system cannot therefore be justified by any of the two arguments Parsons advances.In fact,what the scheme does,is to pose a number of categories as central and determinant in an a-priori and axiomatic way.This kind of functionalism or systems theory[88] is only a more modern and sophisticated version of idealism's attempt to ground the social (and the individual) to a hidden essence manifested and developing in history.The AGIL scheme is no less metaphysical than Weber's categories or Marx's economism (or,of course,Hegel's universal spirit).As for the generality Parsons attributes to the scheme in his late writings,is indeed very reminiscent of the axiomatic generality Spencer attributed to his own scheme of evolu-

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88. Other functionalist arguments such as Merton's and other,open variants of systems theory such as Buckley's or Luhmann's are not subject to such a criticism.(R.Merton,"Manifest and Latent functions"(1948) in Social theory and social structure,Glencoe Illinois:Social Press,1963 W.Buckley,Sociology and modern systems theory (1967), New Jersey:Prentice Hall/ N.Luhmann,"The differentiation of society"(1977) in The differentiation of society,New York:Columbia University Press,1982)

tion (it is ironic to remember that Parsons begins his "Structure" with the question:"Who reads Spencer today"?).

Thus Parson's second phase marks a regression to an assumption of given categories determining both the structural make-up and the direction of development of the social.This phase is not incompatible with the earlier one,although it is not deducible from it.But if we consider this phase as an attempt by Parsons to account for history,something his earlier scheme alone was incapable of,the attempt is revealing:

It indicates that within a rationalistic objectivism only by the assumption of transhistorically constant categories can history be taken account of.

French Structuralism

Paradoxically, an approach that has many common elements with Parson's first phase can be found in 50's and 60's French structuralism and particularly in the work of Althusser.

It was the work of linguists,however, particularly of Saussure, that brought into attention a significantly novel notion of "structure". Saussure's "Course", recognised as the landmark of the movement, distinguishes language ("langue") from speech ("langage",parole) and makes the first its object: language is conceived as a structure, i.e. as "a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the other terms"[89] .

This system of terms that is language could be objectively attained and studied in contrast to speech which is "many-sided and heterogeneous" and of which the "unity cannot be discovered".

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89. F.de Saussure,Course in General linguistics,London:Fontana 1974, p.114

C.Levi-Strauss

In parallel to such a view of language as a distinct and knowable system behind the multifacity of speech, a notion of the social in general as similarly reducible, in principle, to such systems was developed.

It was C. Levi-Strauss who inaugurates this type of approach. As he recognises, he takes more from Troubetzkoy than from Saussure, seeking to establish relations between terms leading to the discovery of general and unconscious laws that guide social phenomena[90].

Levi-Strauss claims a general applicability of the approach and introduces it by a study of elementary structures of kinship. Kinship is seen as a definable social construction, in no way reducible to biology.The different types of kinship, however, are reducible to the combination of three "elementary structures" which as such "are always present to the human mind, at least in an unconscious form"[91].

The multiplicity of kinship structures is intelligible through the different combinations (the structuralist "combinatory") of these constant,invariable,elementary structures. Science's role is precisely to discover these "elementary structures" as well as the "laws of combination"[92].

The structures arising out of these combinations are by no means a product of the individual actor who is himself "a translation, on the plane of individual psyche, of a properly sociological structure"[93].Moreover, these struc-

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90. C.Levi-Strauss,"Structural analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology" (1945) in Structural Anthropology I (thereafter SA), London: Penguin,1968,p.33

91. C.Levi-Strauss,The elementary structures of kinship (1949),Boston: Beacon Press,1969,p.464

92. SA,p.40

tures are, like language, "built by the mind on the level of unconscious thought"[94].

They can, however, be objectively known since, like the laws of language, "the observer cannot modify the phenomenon merely by becoming conscious of it"[95], due to the capacity of the subject, even when studying itself, to "indefinitely objectify itself"[96].

Levi-Strauss does not provide any other analysis of a social structure similar to that of kinship. In later works he turns his attention to the modality of the "savage mind", to an analysis of myths, etc., and he partly regresses from the most extreme formulation of this early (roughly up to the 1950's) period.

Yet, these early formulations are substantial enough to delineate a specific approach (that could termed "structuralist" in a strict sense):

This approach emphasises the structure over the individual, the unconscious over the conscious, the social over the "natural", while retaining the assertion of a possibility of full objective knowledge of these structures, through a knowledge of their constituent, invariant "elementary structures".

We have here a variation of the rationalism of Marx, Weber, Parsons. We don't have a single essence (Marx), nor a given set of categories (Weber) nor a universal scheme (Parsons' second phase), but invariable "elementary structures" accessible to human knowledge.

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93. C.Levi-Strauss, "Introduction to the work of M.Mauss" in M.Mauss, Sociologie et anthropologie, Paris:Presses Universitaires de France, 1950, p.xvi

94. SA, p.34

95. C.Levi-Strauss, "Language and the analysis of Social Laws" (1951), in SA, p.57

96. "Introduction", op.cit., p.xxix

As with all these approaches,the invariant elements are not and cannot be properly deduced from empirical material,despite Levi-Strauss' assertions.[97]The "elementary structures" can be superimposed to such a material,for better or worse,but they are not empirical generalisations.They are a-priori categories which order the material in same way as Marx's labour,Weber's economic, political,etc. categories, or Parson's AGIL scheme.

Moreover,their knowledge is possible precisely because they have the modality of human mind,that of concepts,ideas and thought.[98]

The existence of a "combinatory" is possible only though the assumption of a transcendental subject,the "unconscious human mind" in which the different combinatories can operate and which is their linking element.[99]

What Levi-Strauss' structuralism presents,within such a rationalist/objectivist account,is a different way of conceptualising history,different,that is,from the evolutionist or teleological ones previous theorists offered.History appears as the play of the indefinite possibilities of combination of the invariable "elementary structures".Invariable elements and transhistorical categories are not seen as necessary lines of differentiation but rather as the stuff of innumerable combinations:there is no necessary teleology, no implied

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97. See the important criticism of E.Leach in chapter six of his <u>Levi-Strauss</u>,London:Fontana,1970

98. Levi-Strauss recognises that "the term social structure has nothing to do with empirical reality,but with models which are built up after it" ("Social Structure" (1952) in SA,p.279), but he does not consider that there is any residue between these "models" and the modality of the (social) empirical reality that would deny any absolute identity.

99. Ricoeur has characterised the Levi-Straussian project as "Kantianism without the transcendental subject"(P.Ricoeur,"Structure and Hermeneutics"(1963) in <u>The conflict of interpretations</u>,Evanston: Northwestern University Press,1974). Yet this subject does exist,only it is not any more an individual,but a social one (the "human group")́.

evolutionism in the structuralist scheme. A linear view of history is replaced by a combinatorial view of history.

Thus Levi-Strauss's structuralism represents the other possibility to an evolutionism within an objectivist context.He himself admits it:science,he writes,"can be either reductionist or structuralist"[100].

However,the fundamental assumption remains the same:history is predetermined,if only in potentiality.All the possibilities of history are already enclosed in the "elementary structures" of the -unconscious- human mind.(And these elementary elements are ultimately accessible to human knowledge).We may escape from a teleological view of history but not from determinism.

Once again,this kind of approach has to be rejected both for its implied theoretical presuppositions and necessary determinism but also,from another angle,for its inability to take account of empirical material in a non reductionist way.

L.Althusser

The initial definition of structure by Saussure,stressed its differential character,i.e. the inability to define its elements outside itself.Levi-Strauss's notion of "elementary structures" clearly violated this principle introducing transhistorical constants that could be defined outside and independently of any particular structure.

To reject any such transhistoricity was the stated purpose of L.Althusser.

Althusser positions himself against the Hegelian totality which is also a structure,but a structure with a centre that transcends the structure itself,that provides an "original essence" which "will produce the whole complexity of the process later in its autodevelopment,but without ever getting lost in its complexity itself,without ever

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100. C.Levi-Strauss,<u>Myth and meaning</u>,London:Routledge,1978,p.9

losing in it either its simplicity or its unity -since the plurality and the complexity will never be more than its own "phenomenon", entrusted with the manifestation of its own essence"[101].

Althusser wants to deny precisely any such "original essence" governing the unity and development of (social) structures.The negation of any such essence is also the negation of a homogeneous and contemporaneous historical time,time as the continuum in which "the dialectical continuity of the process of the development of the Idea is manifest[102]... a homogeneity Levi-Strauss's use of synchrony and diachrony in fact replicates[103]".

Instead of this unitary time,it is in fact a variety of times that we observe in history (as historians like Braudel have showed). And this variety of times refers to a variety of structures,structures which are not reducible to an "essence" beyond them, but which would "give its meaning to any simple category within them".Each "structure" is a structured unity not referring outside of itself,differentially defining all its elements,and exhibiting its own internal time.It is this notion of structure Althusser wants to establish as the basic theoretical concept for the social.

For Althusser this structured unity is the product of "theoretical practice" (of "true" science) and not the discovery of the "real part of the real object"[104] or of the "essential" as opposed to the "inessential" that the empiricist problematic poses.

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101. L.Althusser,"On the Materialist Dialectic" (1963) (thereafter MD),in For Marx,Harmondsworth:Penguin,1969,p.198

102. L.Althusser,"The object of Capital" (1968) in L.Althusser & E.Balibar, Reading Capital,London:New Left Books,1970,p.94 (thereafter RC)

103. RC,p.96

104. L.Althusser,"From Capital to Marx's philosophy",in RC,p.38

A "theoretical practice" combines "the type of object (raw material) on which it labours,the theoretical means of production available (its theory,its method and its technique,experimental or otherwise) and the historical relations (theoretical, ideological and social) in which it produces"[105].

However, once this theoretical practice involves a break with its raw material (mainly,in the case of social knowledge,ideology) and a rigorous (rational) procedure,it seems that for Althusser it can adequately describe the "real".Thus he embraces an objectivism incarnated in "true" science versus the fallacies of "ideological constructions".

Althusser and Marx

Althusser presents all the above as an interpretation of Marx. For him it is Marx that proposes,avant la lettre,the differential notion of structure: Marx does not simply invert the Hegelian dialectic while retaining its principle, "deriving successive moments not from the Idea,but from the Economy"[106] , but departs radically from this dialectic.

Althusser distinguishes between the young and the mature Marx,considering that it is the in the later phase in which Marx actually dissociates himself from Hegel.In his "mature" works, and especially in "Capital", Marx implicitly analyses precisely the kind of structure Althusser explicitly develops. The "capitalist and every mode of production" can be seen as such a structure, incorporating production and the economy as well as the superstructure.[107]

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105. RC,p.41

106. L.Althusser,"Contradiction and overdetermination" (1962) in "For Marx",op.cit.,p.108

107. This is the broad sense of the term "mode of production" used by Althusser in "Reading Capital".Balibar and Althusser in other writings use instead the term "social formation" retaining the term "mode" for production itself.

Althusser wants also to retain,alongside his definition of structure and his radical anti-historicism,the determinant role Marx assigns to the economy and particularly to production,as well as the transhistorical constancy of this determinancy.However,this task proves an impossible one:

(1)To support the argument that the economy remains determinant in historically distinct structural wholes -modes of production- which are differentially defined,the concept of the economic is considered by Althusser as not having the "qualities of a given and as having to be constructed for each mode of production"[108]i.e. as being the specific "structured whole which gives its meaning to the simple category (of the economy)".[109]Thus the economy can remain determinant, even if it is "determinant in that it determines which of the instances of the social structure occupies the determinant place"[110].

But how can a "category" or "instance" be considered as always determinant if each time has to be constructed anew for every structural whole? The very assertion of transhistorical determinancy requires certain constant and invariable elements (for ex a necessary function,man as homo laborans,certain categories,etc.) that would support this always existing determinancy? If the category of the economic has indeed to be constructed for every structural whole, then no a-priori determinancy can be assumed.

It is evident that no transhistorically constant categories or assertions can be assumed simultaneously with a rejection of any transhistorically homogeneous essence or time.Once Levi-Strauss's combinatory and any Hegelian type of essence is rejected,a transhistorical determinancy of the economy cannot be sustained.Althusser's formulations

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108. RC,p.183

109. MD,p.196

110. E.Balibar "The basic concepts of historical materialism" in RC,p.224

are simply an attempt for a **verbal** reconciliation between these contradictory elements,a reconciliation that does not stand up to close scrutiny.

Correspondingly,no general theory of production (of modes of production in the limited sense) can exist without a prior assumption of certain transhistorically invariable elements. Balibar's attempt to do so (in "Reading Capital") leads him back to a version of the structuralist combinatory of constant elements.[111]

(2)The same cul-de-sac is reached regarding a possible determinant instance within a given structured whole.In order to retain such a determinancy,Althusser introduces a number of terms: structure in dominance,principal contradiction,overdetermination.

The "principal contradiction" (that "of the forces of production and the relations of production,essentially embodied in the contradiction between two antagonistic classes") is,within a concrete structured whole (a "mode of production"),"overdetermined in its principle by the various other levels and instances of the social formation it animates"[112],producing thus a structure in dominance. Thus the economy is determinant "only in the last instance" while the "superstructure and other circumstances retain a specific effectivity"[113].

Althusser here wants again to reconcile two irreconcilable assertions: that of the "specific effectivity" of the superstructure,as well as that of the determinancy of the economy. It is once more obvious,however,that either the

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111. In a less strict reading, these elements can be taken to be each time determined by their specific relation, and hence as not invariable.But if so,Balibar can provide no theory at all since no specific meaning can be assigned to these elements outside the capitalist mode of production.(In this respect see A.Glucksmann,"A ventriloquist structuralism" (1967),New Left Review,72,1972).

112. "Contradiction and overdetermination",p.101

113. ibid.,p.113

economy defines a whole which includes the "superstructure",in which case the determinancy is assumed and the "relative autonomy" is meaningless,or that the two are distinct structures,relatively autonomous to each other.To assume that both a determinancy and a "relative autonomy" simultaneously exist,is logically unacceptable[114]

As we noted in Chapter one,Althusser's reading of "Capital" is also problematic:the "determination of either an element or a structure by a structure"[115],encountered in Marx's "Capital" in the form of the determinant role the notion of "surplus value" has,is seen by Althusser as reflecting not an essentialism but a "structural causality",in which the structure determines its elements because "its whole existence consists of its effects"[116].

Althusser considers that classical economics are based on "a homogeneous space of given phenomena and an ideological anthropology which bases the economic character of the phenomena and its space on man as the subject of needs -the giveness of homo oeconomicous"[117].

Marx rejects both the homogeneous space and the philosophical anthropology supporting it.But how can this rejection be reconciled with the essence-like notion of "surplus-value" which cannot be measured or "seen"? For Al-thusser it is because "the fact that surplus value is not a measurable reality arises from the fact that it is not a thing,but the concept of a relationship,the concept of an existing social structure of production,of an existence visible and measurable only in its effects"[118].

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114. See E.Laclau and C.Mouffe,"Post Marxism without apologies",New Left Review, 166,p.93

115. RC,p.188

116. RC,p.189

117. RC,p.162

118. RC,p.180

However,the fact is that surplus-value,in Marx's own exposition,can only be defined if there exists "homogeneous,simple,abstract labour" which in turn is possible only in simple commodity production with no technological change,and if there is a given "necessary labour" for the workers to survive on[119].These conditions cannot be satisfied within Marx's own description of the capitalist mode of production and can only be sustained if human labour is assumed as a transhistorical human essence.

Therefore to consider that "surplus-value" corresponds to "structural causality" cannot make this underlying essentialism disappear.

Within a strict structural scheme in which structures are differentially defined and not reducible to a homogeneous "outside",none of the notions Althusser proposes in his reading of Marx's work -overdetermination,determination in the last instance,structural causality- are necessary.Their need arises only if the structural scheme is to be made compatible with a theorisation that denies it,as Marx's notion of determinancy of production and economy does.

Even so,these notions cannot really reconcile the two theorisations.Althusser's attempt to retain the determinancy of the economy both within a social whole including other elements and as transhistorically existing,in other words his appropriation of Marx,can be seen as a failure in terms of his own declared objectives.

Althusser's "structure"

However,Althusser's own project,that of distinct "structures",differentially defined,not subject to an overall homogeneity and directly accessible to knowledge,remains a possible,alternative,approach,which retains some common elements with Marx's work.

Critics of Althusser have indicated this possibility.Hindess and Hirst,in particular,rejected any

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119. see the previous chapter on Marx.

general theory of modes of production which "can be realised only by reproducing the essential structures of the idealist philosophies of history"[120].They proceeded further to consider "social formations" as differentially definable structures,not as "totalities governed by an organising principle",but as a "definite set of relations of production together with the economic,political and cultural forms in which their condition of existence are secured".[121]

They have been in turn criticised that they still retain the "relations of production" along with the other "forms" as identifiable in general,irrespective of their specific structural whole[122].However,any such general definition of "forms" can be rejected and the theorisation being presented as referring to differentially defined structures only.

If so,Althusser's intention of a non essentialist theorisation seems to be realised.A theoretical possibility explicitly rejecting transhistorical invariables such as a human essence or a homogeneous historical time arises.

Such a possibility is not entirely without precedent:it bears a certain resemblance to Parsons's first phase.By employing,however,(Saussure's) notion of structure as a differential one,this theorisation marks a specific advance over Parsons's.Instead of systems of norms,roles,and role-expectations,systems comprising of elements that could exist independently of the system,the elements of a "structure" do not have any meaning outside the specific differential relation within the structure.Hence an anti-

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120. B.Hindess & P.Hirst,Pre-capitalist modes of production,London: Routledge,1975,p.7

121. A.Cutler,B.Hindess,P.Hirst,A.Hussain,Marx's Capital and capitalism today V.I,London:Routledge,1977,p.222

122. E.Laclau & C.Mouffe,Hegemony and socialist strategy,London: Verso,1985,pp.101-104

historicism,which is **possible** in Parson's scheme,becomes now **necessary.**

However,if Althusser's objectivism is retained,the two theorisations share a common belief in the possibility of an ultimate full and objective "knowledge" of the social. As we argued regarding/Parsons,the only way such an objectivism can be grounded is by assuming a transhistorical constant:in Althusser's theorisation what is implied is a rational kernel in human mind,always there,but obscured by "ideological" constructions.This rational kernel is accessible to a scientific "theoretical practice" but not to ideology.Thus a transhistorical invariant still remains:it is human rationality manifested in "objective social structures" and accessible as such through "science".

Althusser in his late work[123] denounces the science-ideology distinction as "theoreticism" and considers his project as still "objectively true" but as representing the -historically specific- position of the proletariat.In doing so,however,he faces a dilemma:

Either to see this position (and hence the corresponding theory) as historically privileged and correspondingly the theory as "true".But if so an evolutionary scheme of history into which such a privileged position can be grounded has to be again accepted.

Or to see it as one possible position of a specific class in a specific social conjuncture.But if so,a radical relativity denying any ultimate objectivity is introduced,thus subverting any "objectivism".

Althusser's objectivism therefore **necessarily** negates his anti-historicism either directly (by returning to an evolutionary view of history) or indirectly (by necessarily assuming a transhistorical terrain,a terrain on which

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123. cf."Lenin and philosophy" (1968),"Lenin before Hegel" (1969),in Lenin and Philosophy,London:New Left Books,1977 ,"Elements d'autocritique" (1974) in Essays in self-criticism,London:New Left Books,1976

"structures" are deployed and of which "science" is also a manifestation).

In addition to this contradiction,and perhaps more importantly,Althusser faces the two problems we encountered in Parson's first scheme:the impossibility to conceptualise change and active agency.

(i) Once a multiplicity of self-enclosed "structures" is assumed,no principle or indeed possibility of change can be seen to exist.

Since any homogeneity of historical time is denied along with any transhistorical "essence" and the subject -the individual- is also seen as the "product" of the structure,there is no "outside" which could force a change.At the same time,the Saussurian notion of structure as a differential entity is by definition a static,a synchronic one (to which diachrony is opposed).But since no outside "space" for the effects of diachrony exists any more,the structure can only be seen as necessarily being in equilibrium,reproducing itself and its elements.

The alternative would have been for change to be already implicit in the structure,not as an actuality but as potentiality,e.g in the existence of internal contradictions.If so,however,a transhistorical constant would have to be assumed,in the form of the unfolding of the kernel of initial potentialities already contained in that kernel in the moment of the beginning (as in Levi-Strauss' "elementary structures").

The dilemma -the assumption of an invariable "outside" and the possibility of a theory of history,of change,of transition from one structure to another versus the rejection of any such "outside"- is inescapable.Althusser recognises the problem but wishes it away[124] while Balibar invokes necessary "transition periods","modes of transition",etc., without however being able to justify their necessity and

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124. RC,pp.196-198

their coming about in respect to the "mode" itself.In fact,in a strict differential definition of structures,it is impossible to account for history at all.[125]

(ii)The second problem concerns the autonomy of social actor(s).

Unlike Marx or Levi-Strauss,Althusser recognises a field specific to the "construction" of individuals:it is that of ideology which operates an imaginary "interpellation" of the subject.In this one area -that of a theory of ideology- Althusser sees himself not merely as interpreting Marx but as advancing on him.

Ideology is seen as necessary,since it is the "lived relation between man and their world",a relation that does not operate on the field of consciousness but it is "imaginary" and "it appears as conscious on the condition that it is unconscious"[126].

The actual function of ideology is to constitute,to "interpellate","concrete individuals as subjects:[127]...the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing"[128].

Moreover (i) ideology exists "materially".i.e embedded in apparatuses and practices,not as abstract ideas cognised by the subject and (ii) it necessarily involves a misrecognition (meconnaissance) "in the very form of recognition"[129] it produces.

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125. The similar problem Parsons faced in his first phase perhaps promted him to invoke the generality of the AGIL system.With Althusser it is the inverse:Having rejected the Marxian model of the "Preface" he is left with no theoretical means to account for transitional periods or change.

126. FM,p.233

127. L.Althusser,"Ideology and ideological state apparatuses"(1970),in "Lenin and philosophy",op.cit.,p.160

128. ibid.,p.163

129. ibid.,p.170

Although,therefore,for Althusser the agent is nothing more than a support (trager) of the structure,it is not simply as a reflection of the structure that the individual is constituted as a subject.It is the imaginary field of ideology,embedded on material practices,that forms the link between the "structure" and the individual.The "construction" of the individual involves a specific field -of ideology- with a specific modality -of the imaginary- and a specific function -recognition/misrecognition.

However,despite this specificity Althusser attributes to the field of ideology,he ultimately reduces it to the underlying structure:ideology remains the main mechanism for the reproduction of the structure (the "mode of production") and thus its specificity is determined by this structure.

The "subject",therefore,remains a passive one,denied any activeness vis-a-vis the "structure".This conceptualisation of the subject,presented as it is within a theory claiming to be leading to political action (Marxism) was definitely problematic and fiercely attacked[130].Asserting simultaneously a (full) structural determination of the subject and the possibility of political action is obviously impossible.

If a certain autonomy/activeness of the subject could be asserted alongside the assertion of a structural determination of the subject,a possible way out of the dilemma might exist.But the definition of the structure as a fully closed and determined entity implies a full determination of the subject as well.

Indeed such a definition of structure does not even allow the possibility of theorising a determination of the subject by different structures,independent of one another.If

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130. see for example L.Goldmann, "Structuralisme,Marxisme,Existentialisme",Praxis,8/66 or E.P.Thompson,"The poverty of theory" in The poverty of theory and other essays,London:Merlin Press,1978

social structures are seen as fully closed entities then they can coexist only if they are compatible with and rein- force each other within a totality.Thus the subject has also to be seen as unitary and as been subjected,if not to one determinant structural whole,at least to a series of determinations compatible with and reinforcing each other.

It is not only,therefore,the question of historical change but also the question of the possibility of active agency that is closely linked with the modality attributed to so- cial structures,as fully determinable and closed entities.

Thus attempts to provide a theorisation of historical change through "class struggle" while the modality is still considered the same[131] are self-contradictory.If classes are fully determined the outcome of class struggle is also determined.On the other hand,for classes to be not fully determined and hence for class struggle to be significant,a different conception of "structure" is required.

The limits of rationalism

Althusser's work can be considered as the most advanced and sophisticated version of an objectivism and rationalism[132] that,having abandoned attempts to provide transhistorical constants for the social,retained however

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131. For example Balibar in a later text argues that it is class struggle commands the reproduction of tendencies within a "mode of production".Hence,it is through class struggle that a non- reproduction,hence a transformation,can come about.(E.Balibar,"Sur la dialectique historique" in Cinq etudes du materialisme his- torique,Paris:Francois Maspero,1974,p.245)

A similar thesis is advanced by Hindess and Hirst: "We must insist that transition (and non-transition) can only be understood in terms of certain determinate conditions of the class struggle and as a pos- sible outcome of that struggle."Transitional conjuncture" refers to a condition of the social formation such that the transformation of the dominant mode of production is a possible outcome of the class struggle."("Pre capitalist modes of production",op.cit.,p.278)

132. Along,it has to be added,with the early Parsons who provides in addition a "micro" theory of action much more developed than Althusser's comments on ideology and subjectivity.

the assumption of a fundamental identity between the social and the rational human mind.

For Althusser this attempt marks an impossibility:the desire of conceiving the social as a rational order,as fully determined,fully knowable structural wholes,while at the same time asserting the negation of any homogeneous "outside" (time,essence) upon which these wholes could be engraved and from which they could be determined.

The main problems this rationalism faces are the impossibility to conceptualise history and the impossibility to account for any form of active agency from the part of the individual.Both are closely related to the modality of social structures assumed.

A solution to the question of history may be the readoption of transhistorical constants,a way that Parsons follows in his later work,or Levi-Strauss's earlier work indicates.But this would be a regression to a much more problematic position,the problems of which we have noted.

In all probability,therefore,these problems indicate the limits of a rationalist,objectivist account of the social.The way forward,then,would be the rejection of the central assumption that supports such theorisations,that of the social being definable as fully determined and closed entities (and hence,also,as ultimately rational).[133]

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133. Althusser does provide a tentative step in this direction,although it is not presented as such,in his theorisation of ideology.
In this theorisation,an "imaginary" field existing "materially",that is embedded in social practice,and "constructing" individuals as subjects,is introduced.Althusser does not elaborate on the modality of this field,which he borrows from psychoanalysis,and he reduces it to an epiphenomenon in which men live their "real" conditions of existence.In so far as Althusser comments on psychoanalysis,the latter is seen as having a a specific object,the unconscious,that is,however,subjected to the "law of the symbolic",the "Symbolic order",i.e a fully and objectively definable order.(for example in "Freud and Lacan"(1969) in "Lenin and Philosophy",op.cit.).
If,however,the postulation of the "real" behind the field in which men live their conditions of existence is seen -as it is- as metaphysical and is rejected,i.e if a rationalism of this kind is rejected,then this "imaginary" field itself comes to the

6.THE POSING OF A "PROBLEMATIQUE"

From the above it is evident that attempts to provide answers to the questions the modern notion of the social has opened up have been diverse in direction and rich in insight.However,none of them offers a fully satisfactory account of the social,either from an epistemological or from an ontological point of view.

Individualism,in both its positivistic and hermeneutic forms, failed to produce what it sought :a theoretical account of how the social can be seen as "produced" out of the action or interaction of self-enclosed,autonomous individuals definable prior to and out-side this "social".

As for holistic approaches,they fared no better in general:having to assert the specificity and sui-generis nature of the social they had to base this assertion either on a methodological/epistemological basis or on a theorisation of the specificity of the "modality" of the social.

Positivism,an epistemology that could,through the establishment of causal inferences and invariable laws,allow a methodologically secure basis for the theorisation of the social without immediate concern for its actual modality,manifestly failed due to the "openness" of the social field that does not appear as amenable to any "laws" or even "regularities".

Another possible contender,idealism or rationalism that tried to impose one or more transhistorically constant organising categories to the social field and that claimed hence an ultimate assimilability of this field to the rational human mind,fared no better.The a-priori nature of these categories was questionable and their success in or-

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foreground.Could it be that it is itself the "real"? And if so,could this assumption allow us to overcome the problem of conceptualisation of history and of active agency? Althusser of course does not pursue the matter that far.But to his credit,he does open the way.

ganising the accumulated historicoempirical material limited.[134]

The main alternative was a structural objectivism continuing to assert the possibility of a full,objective and final "knowledge" of the social,without proposing any transhistorical categories but through the reduction of the social to fully definable structural entities.Yet this approach suffered from two major drawbacks:the inability to conceptualise change and the inability to take into account some form of active agency from the part of social agent(s),both closely connected with the way "social structure" was conceptualised.

Thus,after this summary theoretical overview,we are still faced with similar questions to the ones we posed after our reading of Marx.Starting from the objectivist theories we referred to as the most promising -though not,of course,satisfactory as they stand- we can enquire:

How can we offer an alternative to objectivism,avoiding its epistemological and concrete problems it faces if a return to individualism,positivism or evolutionism is ruled out?

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134. One has to be careful when dismissing specific approaches to the study of the social.Not only they explore possible alternative directions of theorisation,but they may be fruitful in particular cases even though they have to be rejected as general approaches.
For example,as we noted earlier there do exist "micro" social phenomena in which the individuals appear as consciously manipulating rules,norms or patterns of behaviour in order to achieve aims related to a social setting.Many everyday contexts,including micro-economic behaviour in capitalist societies,exhibit this character.
To analyse these phenomena certain micro approaches are perfectly suitable,however inadequate they may be for the study of "micro" phenomena in general or of the social at large.
In the present analysis,however,we are interested in "this social at large" which,in the context of this study,is defined by the opaqueness it exhibits towards its participating individuals (and correspondingly its non intentional character),as well as its internally structured form.These assumptions,marking the modern notion of the "social",remain the corner-stones delimiting the semantic borders of the field.And it is for this field that a theoretical foundation is sought.

More specifically,how can we account for the social in a way that supports its sui generis nature and yet can allow also a conceptualisation of history as a field of change and of the individual as "something" more than a "bearer" of this social?

Our inquiry,therefore,focuses upon three central and interrelated questions:the question of conceptualising the social in such a manner that (the question of) active individual agency and (the question of) historical change can be also adequately addressed.[135]

Of course,the opening lines of an alternative answer to these questions have been repeatedly written.Marx's rejection of both idealism and individualism,Durkheim's late scheme in "Religion" and Pareto's "residues",Dilthey's

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135. While the question on the modality of the social and that of history can be seen as emerging in an almost contemporaneous fashion and relatively recently,,the question about the limits of autonomous (individual but also collective) action,the question of morality and of politics in the broadest sense,long predates the modern notion of the social.

It goes back -at least- to the problematic on the limits of "free will" from the Stoics to Christianity as well as to the question of politics the Enlightenment produced.

The notion of the social,with its necessary opaqueness,seemed at first as reducing the limits of autonomous action as it introduced a sphere of "social" phenomena apparently outside the control of man and even determining him.In this sense,the real prehistory of the modern notion of the social lies in the theorisation of all these elements within "man" that were seen to escape his knowledge and will and to determine him.

Individualistic approaches within social theory sought to reinstate a sovereign individual by seeing the social as produced by individual action.However,as we saw,these approaches in general proved unsatisfactory.

Thus we were left with the other type of approaches,those of a structural or holistic orientation.Within these theories autonomous social action seemed at best very limited,at worst impossible.

To overcome the problem,the possibility of completely ignoring the social and returning to an Enlightenment view of the individual remains,of course,open.So called "political theory",especially in its Anglo-Saxon variants have usually followed this way.

However,it is obvious that the social as a range of phenomena cannot de simply ignored.If a satisfactory account of agency is to be produced,it has to start from a theorisation of the social.In a sense,it has to be internal to a theory of the social.

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Husserl's and Mead's treatment of meaning,Althusser's "imaginary",all indicate,alongside or even in contradiction to these authors' dominant themes,another possibility of conceptualising the social,namely as embodying meaning and yet as distinct from ideas,categories or norms -as also from nature.

Possibly such a direction of theorisation,if sufficiently developed,can allow also the theorisation of the emergence of the new in history and of a certain autonomy/activeness of social actor(s).

To further explore such an alternative is the aim of what follows.[136] .

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136. It will be noted that an important figure in modern social theory is not explicitly discussed.We refer to J.Habermas whose work,of an amazing breadth,is of an undeniable importance to social theory.
However,within the context of the analysis that follows,the discussion of Habermas' work is not,strictly speaking,necessary.This is so because: (i) As far as Habermas' actual social theory is concerned -as expanded in "The theory of communicative action"- it does not offer anything new.On the contrary,it very precariously tries to balance an action theory with a systems theory without addressing the problems each of the two approaches faces.
(ii) Habermas' main interest and focus is not so much in this theory of the social (which also appears relatively late in his work) as on a theorisation of rationality and of modernity.Without a detailed reference to both these subjects,any discussion of Habermas is bound to be deficient.However,neither the question of rationality nor that of modernity are directly addressed in the present study.Our concern is more with an underlying theorisation of the social that does have a connection to these questions but a connection that can not be made explicit without further expansion and amplification.Thus Habermas' theorisations exceed the limits of the present work.

PART II: STRUCTURATION,OPENNESS
AND THE MODALITY OF THE SOCIAL

(A). FROM "STRUCTURE" TO "STRUCTURATION"

Structural accounts of the social tended to neglect the theorisation of the individual,except to affirm his/her determined role in respect to the different structural wholes (apart from the early Parsons,this is evident in all such approaches discussed above).

However,it was obvious that any kind of social "structure" could only exist through the individual(s).How was,then,this "through" to be conceptualised?

It was in linguistic theory that the question was initially and most seriously posed just as it was from linguistics that the notion of "structure" was borrowed in a structuralist context.

Chomsky's work can be considered as marking the turn from structure to "rules" governing its emergence and reproduction,in other words the transition from a theorisation of the structure to a theory of "structuration".In respect to structuralist linguistics Chomsky had remarked:

"The real richness of phonological systems lies not in the structural patterns of phonemes but rather in the intricate system of rules by which these patterns are formed,modified and elaborated.The structural patterns that arise at various stages of derivation are a kind of epiphenomenon...It is the properties of the systems of rules,it seems to me,that really shed light on the specific nature of the organisation of language"[1]

Chomsky provided such sets of rules in his "transformational" grammar,rules that he considered given

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1. N.Chomsky,Language and Mind,New York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972,p.75

in an innate and predetermined way.

The question,however,of the transition from structure to the modalities of its existence and reproduction,was to be posed in the more general context of social theory.Already in 1967 Ricoeur,noting the shift Chomsky's direction of theorisation entailed for linguistics,had remarked:

"The philosophical interest of this new phase of linguistic theory is evident:a new relation,of a nonantinomic character,is in process of being instituted between structure and event,between rule and invention,between constraint and choice,thanks to dynamic concepts of the type structuring operation and no longer structured inventory.

I hope that anthropology and the other human sciences will know how to draw the consequences of this,as they are doing now with the original structuralism at the moment when its decline is beginning in linguistics".[2]

The very manner the question was posed indicated an allegiance to structural as opposed to individualist accounts and yet an attempt to provide a bridge between these two poles -the "structure" and the "individual"- that structural theories lacked.

It is in the writings of A.Giddens and P.Bourdieu,two theorisations that can justifiably be considered to belong to this type of approach,that we will turn to evaluate such "structuration" theories.

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2. P.Ricoeur,"Structure,word,event" (1967) in The conflict of inter-pretations,Evanston:Northwestern University Press,1974,p.91

(III). A.GIDDENS'S THEORY OF STRUCTURATION

A.Giddens terms his theorisation a theory of "structuration".[1] Within it he wants to provide mechanisms of production and reproduction of the structure within the individual: "Structures have at every moment to be sustained and reproduced in the flow of social encounters"[2].

Giddens aims,through his structuration theory,to overcome the inability of structural approaches such as Parson's and Althusser's to present an account of active agency.He states: "A de-centering of the subject must at the same time recover that subject,as a reasoning,acting being".[3]

At the same time he wants to avoid a lapse to subjectivism:

"In working out the theory of structuration I attempt to meet several desiderata:First,the demand for a " theory of the subject" ...(which) involves a defined break with positivistic standpoints in philosophy,and with the Cartesian cogito...Second,the demand that a theory of the subject which avoids objectivism should not slide into subjectivism."[4]

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1. Giddens's "theory of structuration" appears in 1976 in his "New rules of sociological method" to be further developed in "Central problems of social theory" in 1978 and finally in the "Constitution of society" in 1984.More recent books ("Modernity and self-identity",1991,"The transformations of intimacy",1992) built upon this theory to provide a theorisation of modernity.In our analysis we will focus mainly on the "Central problems" and on the "Constitution".
It must be noted that the theory of structuration represents part only of an extensive work,from theoretical critiques to substantive studies on capitalism and the nation-state.

2. A.Giddens,Central Problems in Social Theory, London:Macmillan,1979, p.86.Thereafter CPST.

3. A.Giddens,Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory,London:Macmillan, 1982,p.8.Thereafter PCST.

4. ibid.

To this end Giddens proposes a series of definitions for the structural side of the social,as well as a theorisation of the individual.He considers that these formulations allow a "duality of structure" to "transcend the dualism of individual and society or subject and object"[5].

The "duality of structure" refers to structure as being "both the medium and the outcome of the conduct it recursively organises:the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction"[6].

To evaluate whether Giddens' actual theorisation supports his aims and claims,we focus on the central concepts of Giddens' theory:his definition of structure and his theory of the subject.

THE DEFINITION OF STRUCTURE

Giddens defines structure as "rules and resources,recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems.Structure exists only as memory traces,the organic basis of human knowledgeability,and as instantiated in action."[7]Rules are seen as "techniques or generilisable procedures applied in the enactment /reproduction of social practices".[8]Rules do not have to be formulated:"Formulated rules,those that are given verbal expression as canons of law,bureaucratic rules,rules of games and so on,are codified interpretations of rules rather than rules as such".[9]

While in the definition of structure rules are accompanied

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5. CPST,p.5

6. A.Giddens,The constitution of society,Cambridge:Polity Press,1984, p.374.Thereafter CS.

7. CS,p.377

8. CS,p.21

9. ibid.

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by resources it is the concept of rules that primarily describes structure for Giddens.The concept of resources is introduced to emphasise the enabling aspects of structure.Giddens further elaborates the concept by introducing "allocative resources" referring to "forms of transformative capacity generating command over objects,goods,or material phenomena" and "authoritative resources" referring to "types of transformative capacity generating command over persons or actors"[10],a distinction he uses for his discussion of power.

However resources only operate within systems of rules and not independently of them.Giddens emphasises this point:

"Resources might seem to exist in a temporal-spatial sense in a way in which rules do not.But I want to say that the material existents involved in resources (a) are the content,or the "vehicles" of resources in a parallel manner to the "substance" of codes and norms and (b) as instantiated in power relations in social systems,only operate in conjunction with codes and norms."[11]

Therefore resources have to be conceptualised in a manner similar to rules and/or seen as operating within a system of rules.Consequently,in what follows we will mainly refer to rules as the defining element of the concept of structure.

In addition to "structures",Giddens introduces also the notion of (social) system,defined as "the patterning of social relations across time-space,understood as reproduced practices.Social systems should be regarded as widely variable in terms of the degree of "systemness" they display".[12]

At an intermediate level,between "structure" and

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10. CS,p.33

11. CS,p.104

12. CS,p.377

"system",Giddens considers "structures" in the plural to indicate the more enduring sets of structures:"rule-resource sets,implicated in the institutional articulation of social systems".[13]Correlatively,institutions are sub divisions of social systems created by structural sets.

The concept of rules

The concept of rules,a master concept for Giddens,being an ambiguous one[14],we may inquire about the precise meaning it has within Giddens' theorisation.

Giddens,in his discussion of different examples of rules,[15]considers that "the most germane of all (the examples) as a way of conceptualising "rule" is the example of a mathematical formula like $a(n)=n \exp 2+(n-1)$.The example is pertinent for Giddens not because of its mathematical character,but because "to understand the formula is not to utter it.For someone could utter it and not understand the series;alternatively,it is possible to understand the series without being able to give verbal expression to the formula"[16].The formula,therefore,is for Giddens an example of a "generalisable procedure" and he considers that linguistic rules are also like this.

This example reveals what Giddens has in mind when he refers to rule as techniques and generalisable procedures:while a rule can be understood without being formulated,it remains,as a rule,perfectly definable and determinable.The fact that the actor can perhaps "use" the series 1,5,11,19,29,... without knowing the formula behind

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13. CS,p.377

14. see for example the criticism on the concept of "rules" by J.Thompson in Studies in the theory of ideology,Cambridge:Polity press,1984,p.156 ff.In the next chapter we shall refer to Bourdieu's criticisms of the notion.

15. CS,p.17-25

16. CS,p.20

them does not change the fact that such a formula **does** exist and can be clearly formulated.

Thus a rule can be formally formulated and described independently of the particular context to which it applies.

THE THEORISATION OF THE ACTOR

Giddens's conceptualisation of rules is not independent of his theory of the actor,the two being complementary.Giddens distinguishes three levels in the actor:[17]

* discursive consciousness

* practical consciousness

* the "basic security system" (unconscious motivation)

These three levels are intended to replace the traditional psychoanalytic triad of ego,super-ego and id,and his model is described by Giddens as a stratification model.

Discursive consciousness corresponds to "awareness which has a discursive form"[18] while practical consciousness consists of "all the things actors know tacitly how to go on in the contexts of social life without being able to give them discursive expression"[19].No bar or repression protects practical consciousness,unlike the unconscious.[20]

The two levels of consciousness refer to the "cognitive" side of the actor.It is the "basic security system" that corresponds to the motivational level.

The "basic security system"

The moving force within this "system" is the establishment and preservation of "ontological security".This latter,a term Giddens borrows from R.Laing,corresponds to "confidence and trust that the natural and social worlds

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17. CS,p.7 & p.40

18. CS,p.374

19. CS,p.xxiii

20. CS,p.5

are as they appear to be"[21].

Giddens does not deny that this "ontological security" refers to a "social" setting,i.e. that the constitution of the subject is effected,in a spatial sense,within society :"...the generation of feelings of trust in others as the deepest lying element of the basic security system,depends substantially upon predictable and caring routines established by parental figures".[22]

But he argues that its establishment corresponds mainly to biological,and hence trans-social needs:

"I think it is important to affirm...(that)...the early period of the development of the child involves the formation of what Gardiner calls a basic security system:capacities of tension management in relation to organic wants,that form the first and most all-encompassing accommodations the child makes to the social and material worlds."[23]

This "basic security system" developed early in life,includes the "basic existential parameters of the self and social identity"[24],while it develops as "basic anxiety controlling mechanisms hierarchically ordered as components of personality".[25]

The basic security system is unconscious and,unlike practical consciousness,it is separated by bars and repressions from the conscious level discursive consciousness represents.

The quest for ontological security and the basic security system,operating on a deep unconscious level,provide the

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21. CS,p.375

22. CS,p.50

23. CPST,p.122

24. ibid.

25. CS,p.50

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general motivation for the monitoring of action that is performed by practical and discursive consciousness.

It is obvious that the "basic security system" is presented by Giddens as a mainly biological mechanism of homoeostatic adjustment.It indicates a central core of subjectivity that is independent of any "social" influence.

Giddens' appropriation of psychoanalysis is indicative in this respect.It is to the justification of his view of a socially independent and "given" level of subjectivity that Giddens uses ego-psychology,Freud and psychoanalysis in general.For example,Giddens accepts Lacan's "mirror stage" which provides a biologically determined model of primary subjectivity,while discarding the other elements of Lacan's theory:"I want to claim only that in respect of interpreting the emergence of subjectivity,Lacan's Freud can be drawn upon with profit.[26]M.Gane's remark seems justified:

"Giddens is attracted to elements of the analysis of Freud and Lacan only in so far as something can be taken in order to justify the primacy of the subject and the primacy for the subject of his "ontological security".[27]

Practical and discursive consciousness

If the "basic security system" is primarily non-social,the levels of discursive and practical consciousness correspond to the internalisation of the "social" by the individual.

For Giddens "memory" is the common origin of the two levels of consciousness:

"If memory refers to this temporal mastery so inherent in human experience,then discursive and practical consciousness refer to psychological mechanisms of recall,as utilised in contexts of action.Discursive consciousness connotes those forms of recall which the actor is able to

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26. CPST,p.121,emphasis added

27. M.Gane,"Giddens and the crisis of social theory",Economy and Society,V.12,N.3 (1983),p.379

express verbally.Practical consciousness involves recall to which the agent has access in the duree of action without being able to express what he or she thereby knows."[28]

What is the nature of the common origin of both forms of consciousness,of the "memory traces"? They are formed by perceptual residues,perception being understood as "a set of temporal ordering devices".In respect to the social what is perceived are the structural "rules".

As what are the rules perceived? We saw that despite the definition of rules as "techniques and procedures" it is a formal and abstract model that Giddens has in mind for the social "rules".Consequently for Giddens the rules can only be perceived as formal and abstract entities of an ideal nature which subsequently become memory traces.

Giddens makes no distinction between perception corresponding to practical consciousness and perception corresponding to discursive consciousness.It is the mechanisms of recall that differentiate the two levels of consciousness.

Consequently,a change of mode of recall,i.e. a transition from practical to discursive consciousness does not imply any change in the context (the "rules") recalled.Between the practical and the discursive level exists only a threshold of (higher) awareness.By becoming "discursive" the rules do not "change".Hence practical consciousness is only a less complete,an impoverished variant of the discursive consciousness.

Thus the notion of practical consciousness does not introduce a level of theorisation of the actor that has its own specificity or modality,different from that of discursive consciousness.Practical consciousness is simply an "incomplete" discursive one.

For the notion of practical consciousness to really introduce a new level of theorisation of the actor,a new

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28. CS,p.49

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modality of operation of this "consciousness",distinct from the one discursive consciousness refers to,would have to be presented.In other words, a level of "practical" knowledge of rules would be significant only if to know "practically" means something different than to know "discursively".

This in turn would require a different modality of the "rules" which are practically and not discursively used and reproduced.The "rules" of practical consciousness would have to exist in consciousness differently than the "rules" of discursive consciousness.

The transition between the two would then involve a "translation" or an "interpretation".Giddens in fact recognises this when he writes:"The discursive formulation of a rule is already an interpretation of it."[29]Yet his definitions of the two levels of consciousness and of memory do not allow any disjuncture between the two levels that would justify such an "interpretation".

Thus Giddens' theorisation of the actor introduces primarily two -rather than three- levels:
   - a biologically determined "basic security system" in the mechanisms of which the social has no influence or relevance
and - a level of primarily cognitive "memory traces" expressible either in practical or discursive consciousness,the difference between the two being one of degree rather than one of modality.The structural "rules" can be inscribed as such memory traces and be expressed in either mode of consciousness.

Structure and the autonomy of the actor
Giddens' theorisation of the actor poses the question of the relationship between this actor and the structure,as "rules" internalised in memory traces and recallable in either "discursive" or "practical" consciousness.Do these

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29. CS,p.23

rules form part of the make up of the actor,an inseparable element of the "self"? Or are they external to the individual,being manipulated at will by a subject definable independently of them?

Since the rules exist as "memory traces",they are in a sense internal to the actor.However,the central core of subjectivity lies beyond these rules,in the "basic security system",which as we saw develops independently of the social.The "deep" unconscious,as well as all motivation processes lie within this basic security system.Thus Giddens retains,in a modified form,one of the basic postulates of traditional individualism: a unitary,primary subject irreducible to any "social" determinations.[30]

However,since the structural "rules" do exist within the individual,the possibility remains that his/her behaviour is indeed determined -to a significant extent- by these rules.The actor can be,in other words,relatively less autonomous from the structure than individualist theories assert.

The theorisation of the actor as presented above does not allow us to judge the extent of this autonomy.Giddens himself,however,provides a direct and unambiguous answer on this matter.The actors are both "knowledgeable" about these rules and "capable" of using them in an active way:

The "knowledgeability" is defined as "everything the actors know (believe) about the circumstances of their action and that of others...including tacit as well as discursively available knowledge"[31].The practical knowledge that

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30. Giddens is not entirely consistent at this point.For example in a later work he does consider "ontological anxiety" as produced by lack of supporting (social) frames of reference.Yet,a few pages further,he refers to this anxiety as the expression of a purely subjective,irreducible,"existential" feeling in the manner of Heidegger or Sartre.(A.Giddens,Modernity and self-identity,Cambridge:Polity Press, 1991,Chapter two)

31. CS,p.90

operates along the discursive one consists of "knowing the rules and the tactics whereby daily social life is constituted and reconstituted across time and space"[32]

How extensive is this "knowledgeability"? Giddens admits that "social actors can be wrong some of the time about what these rules and tactics might be",but he stresses that "if there is any continuity to social life at all,most actors must be right most of the time"[33].

Moreover,this "knowledgeability" is supported by the "capability" of actors "of doing otherwise,generally exercised as a routine,tacit feature of everyday behaviour".[34] It is this "capability" that "marks the conceptual boundary of action".[35]Giddens insists that the actor's possibility to have acted otherwise exists even when "constrains so narrow the range of (feasible) alternatives that only one option or type of option is open to the actor"[36]

Therefore the actors not only "know" the rules,they are capable of either following them or ignoring them at will,of using them,that is,in an non restrained,active way.[37]

Hence the fact that "rules" are internalised as memory traces does not make them less external to the primal core

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32. ibid.

33. ibid.

34. PCST,p.9

35. CS,p.69

36. CS,p.309

37. This has been remarked by many commentators of Giddens.
For example,J.Thompson:"Giddens manages to preserve the complementarity between structure and agency only by defining agency in such a way that any individual in any situation could not not be an agent."(Thompson,op.cit,p.169)
and M.Archer:"The systematic underplaying of constrains artificially inflates the degrees of freedom for action" (M.Archer,"Morfogenesis vs. Structuration",British Journal of Sociology,V.33,N.4 (1982),p.464)

of subjectivity of the individual actor.Giddens,in his desire to stress the autonomy and activeness of the individual,in fact reproduces almost intact the traditional individualistic account of the actor.

A THEORY OF STRUCTURATION? A CRITIQUE.

Giddens superimposes to a theory of social structure as "rules",a theory of the actor in which,for all important purposes,the individual is independent of the social and can use these rules at will.

Giddens can thus with justification claim that he provides a theorisation of the subject as a "reasoning,acting being".He does so,however,by abandoning basic premises of structural approaches and by swinging too far into the assumptions of individualistic ones.

Thus he is open to the criticisms individualistic theories have faced:

First,can we indeed sustain that the social does not enter in the very constitution of the individual psyche in both a cognitive and a motivational way? Can we consider individuals as not influenced in a profound and permanent way from their social surroundings?

Second and more important,given the possibility of individuals always to "have acted otherwise",how can we account for the structurality and the relative permanence of the social? The question,the traditional "problem of order" is one that Giddens cannot avoid.

Giddens' theorisation represents in fact a regression to Enlightenment conceptions of man and society,conceptions that do not take into account the two fundamental defining elements of the modern conception of the social,its structurality and opaqueness.While Giddens can take into account a partial opaqueness with his notion of practical consciousness,he cannot do the same with the structural nature of the social.His attempt to go beyond the problems of structural approaches goes so far on the other side that

Giddens faces the same questions as Hobbes.[38]

Of course Giddens is too much of a sociologist to fully accept the implications of his theorisation of the actor.When he refers to society he does present certain "axes of structuration" through which he can produce constant categories of social structures and institutions (in a manner reminiscent of Weber).

These "axes of structuration" are considered to be signification,domination and legitimation.Through "modalities" of structuration upon which actors draw in the reproduction of systems of interaction,these basic structures appear on the level of interaction as communication,power and sanction as in the following figure:[39]

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structure        signification -- domination   -- legitima-
tion

                      |               |              |
(modality)       interpretive      facility        norm
                   scheme             |              |
                      |               |              |
interaction      communication ---- power ------- sanction
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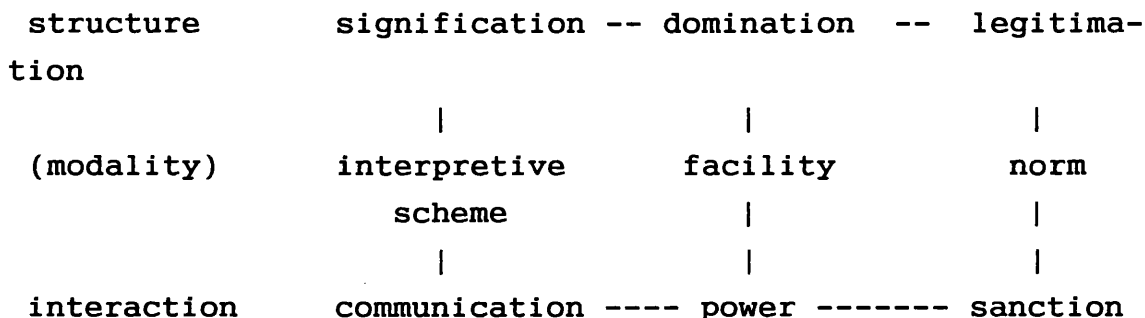
These three axes can be combined in different ways to produce the actual institutions of a society:[40]

S-D-L   Symbolic orders/modes of discourse
D(auth)-S-L   Political institutions

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38. We saw that properly "sociological" individualistic accounts such as Mill's do not consider the individual as "independent" of the social.Mill simply refers to given "laws" of character formation which,however,operate within a social environment.
Indicatively also,Parsons,who in his "Structure" presents a theorisation similar to Giddens' with "norms" instead of "rules",tried specifically to avoid a relapse to individualism by asserting that the actors necessarily have to use the social norms in order to act.

39. CS,p.29

40. CS,p.33

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D(alloc)-S-L     Economic institutions
L-D-S            Legal institutions
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Thus Giddens presents a theorisation of constant types of structures and institutions at a social level.But are these "axes" a structural/societal property,pertaining to structure or is it a necessary result of certain types of interaction (communication,power,sanction) ? In what sense are these "axes" always present?

Giddens does not provide any direct answers.It is evident,though,that the reference to axes of structuration and to institutions is not connected to his theorisation of the actor.The former are simply introduced to provide some "structural" account of the social in an otherwise individualistic theorisation.

Similarly,in his more concrete studies -as his study of the nation-state[41]- Giddens uses neither these "axes of structuration" nor his theory of the actor.Structural wholes (the nation-state,capitalism,etc.) are treated in a conventional way,as sui generis entities not necessarily traceable to actors.Indeed Giddens asserts that an "institutional analysis",placing "in suspension the skills and awareness of actors,treating institutions as chronically reproduced rules and resources"[42] is possible!

Of course the lack of connection between the two levels of analysis cannot simply be wished away through the introduction of new terms.Giddens' uneasiness on the matter is indicative, however,of the **impossibility** of deriving a plausible theorisation of the social from an account of the actor such as his.

We can justifiably assert,therefore,that,the kind of "theory of structuration" Giddens provides,despite his

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41. A.Giddens,The nation-state and violence,Cambridge:Polity Press, 1985

42. CS,p.375

claims,does not advance over structural theories nor does it provide a bridge between "action" and "structure","subject" and the "social",etc.It can take account of the subject as "reasoning and active" only by neglecting any deep,enduring determination from the part of the "structure".

In Giddens' theorisation the structure's reproduction rests entirely at the whim of the individual actor,an actor presented as independent of this structure.Far from introducing any "duality",Giddens' theory mirrors the traditional dualism of subject and structure.[43]

RULES,OBJECTIVITY AND DOUBLE HERMENEUTICS

Though the weight of Giddens' theory rests on his theorisation of the actor and structure,an examination of his epistemological approach in relation to his definition of structure is also instructive.

Giddens considers that the epistemological approach proper to the human sciences is what he calls "double hermeneutics".

He remarks that hermeneutics have tended to equate positivism with natural sciences.Newer developments in the philosophy of science,however,"have made it plain that (natural) science is as much about "interpreting" the world as about "explaining" it.[44]

Therefore Giddens does not consider hermeneutics as such

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43. Giddens could have followed the other path open to him and have asserted that the internalised rules do limit the actors' activeness.In other words to assert that,in most cases,the actor "could have not acted otherwise".
He would then of course have to indicate when,how and to what extent the actor is indeed active.But at least he would have retained a real structural determination of the actor and he would avoid the problem of order.(In fact he would be in the same position as Parsons after the "Structure".Parsons' subsequent theorisation could then be an indication of a possible development of the theory as well of the problems it would face.)

44. PCST,p.12

to be limited to the "human" sciences.To indicate the specific nature of the hermeneutics of these sciences Giddens uses the concept of "double hermeneutic".Unlike the hermeneutics of natural science which "has to do only with the theories and discourse of scientists analysing an object which does not answer back"[45],"double hermeneutics" refer to "the intersection of two frames of meaning as a logically necessary part of social science,the meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors and the metalanguages invented by social scientists".[46]

There is a constant "slippage from one frame of meaning to another involved in the practice of the social sciences".[47] The logical tie between first and second order concepts "depends upon the social scientific observer accurately understanding the concepts whereby the actors' conduct is oriented"[48]."Second-order concepts can become "first-order" by being appropriated within social life itself".[49]

The main emphasis in the concept of double hermeneutic is therefore the rejection of the positivistic method as describing natural sciences in general.Otherwise the relation between metalanguages and first order concepts is for Giddens identical to that proposed by Schutz and other "phenomenologists" under the name of (simple) "hermeneutics".

Therefore the concept of "double hermeneutics" does not introduce anything new regarding the epistemological claims of the hermeneutic tradition.

In relation to these claims,we have remarked that the type

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45. ibid.

46. CS,p.374

47. ibid.

48. PCST,p.13

49. CS,p.284

of non subjectivist hermeneutics -like the late Schutz's- if they refer simply to systems of concepts and ideal elements guiding action,they do not indicate any real discontinuity between these elements and their "scientific" knowledge.

Since these elements are coextensive with the concepts science uses,there is,in principle,no obstacle in their ultimate full and "objective" knowledge.Hence such approaches are not,except in name,different from "objectivist" ones.

Giddens adheres to such a structural hermeneutics,rejecting "to represent verstehen as a "psychological phenomenon"[50].However,in his theorisation we can distinguish,along the level of "discursive consciousness" which would correspond to Schutz's "first order concepts" (social science introducing "second order" ones),the level of "practical consciousness",a new possibility is introduced: If the level of "practical consciousness" has a modality different from that of discursive consciousness and of science,a hermeneutic procedure in the proper sense would have been required to have access to this level of "rule" knowledge.

However,although Giddens recognises that "the discursive formulation of a rule is already an interpretation of it",[51]we saw that his conceptualisation of practical and discursive consciousness recognises no "bar" between them.There is no real discontinuity between the two levels of consciousness,hence no necessity for any real "interpretation" between the two.

Giddens' three levels are simply divisions along a continuum, at the one end of which is the concept of rules and at the other end of which is their "accurate" knowledge.The intermediate levels are then simply imperfect modes of cog-

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50. PCST,p.7

51. CS,p.23

nition of the rules.

The introduction of the level of practical conscious-ness,therefore,does not imply any real differentiation with the traditional structural hermeneutic approaches.Hence the same criticism applies:this type of hermeneutics cannot avoid falling into an ultimate objectivism.

This is further reinforced by the way Giddens uses the concept of "rules".We saw that the structural rules,for Giddens,can be always formally and discursively formu-lated,irrespective of the specific content they refer to.Giddens in his very use of the notion of rules,therefore,anticipates a complete,formal and objective knowledge of them.

In fact Giddens explicitly recognises the possibility of such an objective knowledge:that "the sociologist has a field of study phenomena which are already constituted as meaningful"[52],does not inhibit him/her from "accurately un-derstanding the concepts whereby the actors' conduct is oriented"[53].An "accurate" understanding,hence,is both pos-sible and desirable.[54]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Giddens' intentions and criticisms of structural and sub-jectivist theories indicate a possible new path that would allow an escape of their impasses,as does the type of con-cepts he proposes,like the "duality of structure" or "practical consciousness".

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52. CS,p.284

53. PCST,p.13

54. Giddens' ultimate alliance to an objectivism is also demonstrated in his discussion of structuralism and functionalism: Giddens focuses almost exclusively on the neglect of the active role of the subject by these approaches (see for example CPST,pp.9-49 and A.Giddens,Studies in Social and Political Theory,London:Hutchinson,1979,pp.96-129),while he does not indicate that he considers their epistemological position as problematic.

However,Giddens,in his willingness to provide an account of the active role the individual actor plays,he simply regresses to a thinly veiled individualistic theory in which the actor is presented both as definable outside any structural/social influences and as capable of "always acting otherwise" than his structural position would impose.As for the "practical consciousness",it is nothing more than an incomplete version of full,discursive consciousness.

Thus the real question,namely the question of locating the level of the actor's "activeness" while accepting that this actor remains to a great extent socially constructed and constrained,is avoided.

The discussion of Giddens is useful both for the clarity with which he poses the aims of a theory of structuration and for the exhaustiveness of his theorisation which -unlike other authors- allows us to identify his actual assumptions in a precise way.We have to indicate,however,that Giddens' direction of theorisation does not offer a real alternative towards his aims.

(IV). P.BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE

P.Bourdieu has a similar starting point to Giddens'.He wants to go beyond the reification and objectification of the social that structural approaches usually imply,without accepting subjectivist assumptions.[1]

What objectivistic approaches do,for Bourdieu,is to equate the model an observer constructs to theoretically represent the social with the social itself.They transpose,in other words,"the reality of the model for the model of the reality":

"The "knowing subject"...in taking up a point of view of the action,withdrawing from it in order to observe it from above and from a distance,he constitutes practical activity as an object of observation and analysis,a representation."[2]

This withdrawal from social practice,however,inhibits one fromseizingthe specific modality of practice,a modality that is different from that of an ideal model.The result is the reification of the social,a reification which treats "objects constructed by science,whether "culture", "structures" or "modes of production" as realities endowed with a social efficacy"[3]

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1. Bourdieu's first statement of a "theory of practice" appears in 1972 in the "Esquisse d'une theorie de pratique" and further expanded in the 1977 English edition as "Outline of a theory of practice".The final development appears in 1980 as "Le sens pratique",translated as "The logic of practice" (sometimes the translation used below from the "Sens" is slightly modified than the english edition's).
Bourdieu's work covers an extensive field of studies,from analyses of education to the state,art,culture,etc.Indeed it is for his more substantive studies that Bourdieu is most well known.
Although we shall occasionally refer to some of these empirical studies,it is on Bourdieu's theoretical statements,primarily the "Outline" and the "Logic" that we shall focus.

2. P.Bourdieu,Outline of a theory of practice,Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1977,p.2.Thereafter OTP.

3. OTP,p.27

On the other hand,subjectivist approaches are equally unsatisfactory:

"To describe the process of objectification and orchestration in the language of interaction and mutual adjustment is to forget that the interaction itself owes its form to the objective structures which have produced the dispositions of the interacting agents and which allot them their relative positions in the interaction and elsewhere.Every confrontation between agents in fact brings together,in an interaction defined by the objective structure of the relation between the groups they belong to,systems of dispositions carried by "natural persons"..."[4]

Therefore,writes Bourdieu,"our approach is radically opposed to the interactionism which reduces the constructions of social science to "constructs of the second degree" as Schutz does,or like Garfinkel,to accounts of the accounts which agents produce.The opposition to subjectivism stems from the same route as that to objectivism:"second order" concepts or "accounts of accounts" already transpose a mode of being of scientific accounts,of social science,to the "first order" concepts of the actors.It replaces a causal link between hypostasized entities and practice,as in objectivism,by the supposition that these entities exist already within practice."[5]

To go beyond the "objective limits of objectivism" while avoiding the "imaginary anthropology of subjectivism",a theory of practice is required:

"We shall escape,writes Bourdieu,from the ritual either/or choice between objectivism and subjectivism...only if we are prepared to inquire into the mode of production and functioning of the practical mastery which makes possible both an objectively intelligible practice and also an ob-

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4. OTP,p.81

5. OTP,p.21

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jectively enchanted experience of that practice."[6]

It is this "theory of practice" -that to a large extent seems to have similar aims than Giddens' "structuration theory"- that we shall analyse.

THE NOTION OF "HABITUS" AND ITS ATTRIBUTES

Central among the concepts Bourdieu introduces is the notion of habitus which is proposed in order to account for the production of social agents by social structures:

"The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor".[7]

"...the habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception".[8]

The habitus is one of the primary "objectifications" of history:

"To the dualistic vision that recognises only the self-transparent act of consciousness or the externally deter-

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6. OTP,pp.3-4

7. OTP,p.72

8. OTP,p.86

mined thing we have to oppose the real logic of ac-
tion,which brings together two objectifications of his-
tory,objectification in bodies and objectification in
institutions[9]...an institution is complete and fully viable
only if it is durably objectified not only in things,that
is,in the logic,transcending individual agents,of a par-
ticular field,but also in the bodies,in durable disposi-
tions to recognise and comply with the demands immanent in
the field.[10]"

Only if these "durable dispositions" of the habitus exist
can the agents "inhabit institutions,appropriate them prac-
tically,and so keep them in activity,continuously pulling
them from the state of dead letters".[11]

The habitus,as internalised dispositions and as a set of
principles of structuration,is a central determinant in the
context of practice."It produces practices which tend to
reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective condi-
tions of the production of their generative principle".[12].

The homogeneity of a group,a class,a "society",can be ac-
counted for as the result of the structured character of
these dispositions:"The objective homogenising of group or
class habitus which results from the homogeneity of the
conditions of existence,is what enables practices to be ob-
jectively harmonised without any intentional calculation or
conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the
absence of any direct interaction or,a fortiori,explicit
co-ordination".[13]

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9. P.Bourdieu,The logic of practice (1980),Cambridge:Polity Press,
1990, p.57.Thereafter LP.

10. LP,p.58

11. LP,p.57

12. OTP,p.89

13. OTP,p.80

The production of habitus

The "durable dispositions" that constitute a habitus are gradually acquired as the child grows up within a particular environment:

"The structures characteristic of a determinate type of conditions of existence, through the economic and social necessity which they bring to bear to the relatively autonomous universe of family relationships, or more precisely, through the mediation of the specifically familial manifestations of this external necessity (sexual division of labour, domestic morality, cares, strife, tastes, etc.) produce the structures of the habitus which become in turn the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experience[14]...the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message) and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences,..and so on, from restructuring to restructuring".[15]

Earlier experiences structure to a degree the acquisition of later ones:

"Early experiences have particular weight because the habitus tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change trough the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information".[16]

A habitus is the product of the simultaneous effect of many "structures". Indeed the habitus is the "space" within

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14. OTP,p.78

15. OTP,p.87

16. LP,p.61

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which different structures co-exist and articulate with
each other."The unifying principle of practices in dif-
ferent domains which objectivist analysis would assign to
separate "sub-systems" such as matrimonial
strategies,fertility strategies,is nothing other than the
habitus,the locus of practical realisation of the
"articulation" of fields which objectivism lays out side by
side"[17].

The modality of habitus

The habitus does not consist of a system of ideas that a
person "internalises",but rather of a series of identities
the person acquires and "embodies".

For example,"the sexual identity is constructed at the
same time as the image of the division of work between the
sexes"[18].This identity is both perceived and expressed in
an embodied form:"The opposition between male and female is
realised in posture,in the gestures and movements of the
body,in the form of the opposition between the straight and
the bent,between firmness,uprightness and direct-
ness,and...on the other side,restraint,reserve and
flexibility".[19]

The habitus exists thus in an embodied form,as "a bodily
hexis":

"Bodily hexis is political mythology realised,em-
bodied,turned into a permanent disposition,a durable way of
standing,speaking,walking,and,thereby of feeling and
thinking"[20]...Every successfully socialised agent thus pos-
sesses,in their incorporated state,the instruments of an
ordering of the world,a system of classifying schemes which

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17. OTP,p.83

18. OTP,p.93

19. LP,p.70

20. ibid.

organises all practices,and of which the linguistic schemes (to which the neo-Kantian tradition -and the eth- nomethodological school nowadays- attribute unjustified autonomy and importance) are only one aspect".[21]

It is this em-bodied modality of habitus that accounts for its "durability":

"The principles em-bodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness,and hence cannot be touched by voluntary,deliberate transformation,cannot even be made explicit;nothing seems more ineffable,more incom- municable,more inimitable,and,therefore,more precious,than the values given body,made body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit peda- gogy,capable of instilling a whole cosmology,an ethic,a metaphysic,a political philosophy through injunctions as insignificant as "stand up straight" or "don't hold your knife in your left hand".[22]

Thus the habitus is "not something that one has,as a knowledge that one can keep in front of him, but something that one is".[23]

Bourdieu provides also empirical illustrations of his no- tion of habitus.For example in "Distinction"[24] he analyses the class differences in "taste" as precisely an indication of the deep individual differences differential (class) positions entail.Individuals belonging to the different classes are not simply endowed with different quantities of capital or power; they are different in their most "personal","intimate" characteristics: their tastes,their likes and dislikes,conceptions and beliefs.

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21. OTP,p.123

22. OTP,p.94

23. LP,p.73

24. P.Bourdieu,Distinction:A social critique of the judgement of taste (1979),London:Routledge,1984

The crucial difference between Bourdieu on the one hand and Giddens and the whole of the individualist tradition of the other is now obvious:Bourdieu **really** accepts the constructed nature of the "person",the "subject",the "agent" and his/hers determination by the structure.Bourdieu stresses the durable,unconscious and embodied character of this construction as oppossed to "ideas" or "rules" the person internalises.In accounting for the mode of existence of these structural determinations within the individual,moreover,Bourdieu advances over purely structural positions as well.

Bourdieu's notion of habitus should be seen as closing the possibility of a retreat to subjectivist/individualistic positions as a response to the impasses of structural/objectivist ones.

However,the question may arise,does not the notion of habitus negate any activeness and autonomy from the part of the actor?

"STRATEGIES" INSTEAD OF "RULES": THE ACTIVE SIDE OF AGENCY

The notion of rule presents,for Bourdieu,in its vagueness,a convenient solution "to the contradictions and difficulties to which the researcher is condemned by an inadequate or -which amounts to the same thing- an implicit "theory of practice".[25]

However,the concept becomes "the obstacle par excellence to the construction of an adequate theory of practice:by falsely occupying the place of two fundamental notions,the theoretical matrix and the practical matrix,it makes it impossible to raise the question of their relationship".[26]

For Bourdieu the notion of rule within structural approaches conceals the active role of the agent on the level

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25. OTP,p.22

26. LP,p.103

of practice:

"It is necessary,to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction,directly determined by the antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established assemblies,"models" or "roles" which we would,moreover,have to postulate in infinite number".[27]

For Bourdieu,the actor in the context of practice does not follow rules but s/he actually invents directions of action which are in no way reducible to a set of rules.Practice has always a temporal dimension within which the activeness of the actors is manifested and which cannot be captured in the "spatial" representations of objectivist approaches.

As an example,Bourdieu cites Mauss' theory of the gift as exchange,a theory taken up by Levi-Strauss.Bourdieu observes that if the relations of exchange are simply mapped in a spatial sense as in Levi-Strauss,what escapes the analysis is the (temporal) specificity of the time of the counter gift alongside the content of it.The timing of the counter gift is as important as its content.The gift exchange cannot be simply represented as a mathematical structure of exchange.What has to be incorporated in it is the notion of time and of the possible variations that may appear,which are not reducible to a formal underlying model.

But the timing rests entirely with the actor.It is the actor that has to decide the time of the exchange (as well as its content).The temporal dimension,therefore,a dimension not taken into account by formal structural models is an indication of the active role the subject has to play for any "rules" to actually operate in practice.

Another example for Bourdieu is his analysis of the way kinship rules are used by the Kabyles in Algeria.The genealogical rules (of parallel-cousin marriage) do not

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27. OTP,p.73

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operate neither as judicial rules nor as norms.These "rules" are simply elements within a complex strategy the actors use,for example to enhance their position within the group.In fact these rules cannot be approached in any "objective" way.They are presented in different ways by different actors.Depending on the point a genealogical lineage is taken to begin and on which relations are taken into account,as oppossed to those that are omitted,the permissible or not marriages can vary.The information obtained is always tied with the view the informant wants to present about a marriage:

"Informants constantly remind us by their very incoherences and contradictions that marriage can never be fully defined in genealogical terms,and that it make take on different,even opposite meanings and functions,according to its determining conditions".[28]

Genealogical rules are never fixed rules but rather elements in an overall strategy,a term Bourdieu considers that can take into account the active role of the actor:

"To substitute strategy for the rule is to reintroduce time,with its rhythm, its orientation, its irreversibility."[29]

Bourdieu affirms,consequently,both a social construction of the person -through the "structured dispositions" of the habitus and a certain activeness from the part of this person in the context of social practice -the possibility of the deployment of "strategies" instead of the determination of structural rules.

This activeness,however,is a limited one.Bourdieu rejects approaches like Sartre's that "make each action a sort of unprecedented confrontation between the subject and the world": "Because the habitus is an endless capacity to en-

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28. OTP,p.49

29. OTP,p.9

gender products -thoughts,perceptions,expressions,actions-
whose limits are set by the historically and socially
situated conditions of its production,the conditioned and
conditional freedom it secures is as remote from a creation
of unpredictable novelty as it is from a simple mechanical
reproduction of the initial conditionings".[30]

Thus the habitus forms,in a way,the boundaries within
which the actor can deploy strategies and pursue "aims",the
limits of the activeness and autonomy of the actor.

HABITUS AND AUTONOMY: AN APPRAISAL

Though Bourdieu does not use the term,his notion of
"habitus" fulfils the basic requirements of a theory of
structuration.It allows the theorisation of structural ele-
ments internalised in the subject -and "constructing" the
subject- in a durable way as "structured dispositions" and
ensuring the reproduction of the structures through the
(inter)action of the individuals.The habitus is the actor
himself,produced in determined conditions and embodying
structured and durable dispositions.

Unlike structuralism,though,the "habitus" does not imply a
passive subject that is simply a bearer of a structure.For
Bourdieu the assertion that the actor is constructed within
a set of structures is separate from the assertion that
-therefore- his actions can be derived in a mechanistic
way from these structures.The actors do not follow
rules,they deploy strategies.

Thus Bourdieu seems to both accept the structural deter-
mination of the subject and to avoid falling into a
mechanistic theorisation of action.

However,it is obvious that the notion of habitus is a
generic one.It indicates the requirements of a theorisation
of the structural construction of the individual
-permanence,unconscious and non-ideal level of opera-

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30. OTP,p.73

tion,relevance to the motivational sphere,production trough the acquisition of a series of identities,etc.But it does not provide a proper and extensive theorisation that would support these requirements.

The attributes of the habitus are simply evoked,in an additive way,without for that being properly related to one another, without their level of operation within the individual being clarified and without the mechanism of their production being sufficiently theorised.Moreover the question of whether theoretical knowledge can provide a satisfactory account of the non ideal but "embodied" principles that constitute a habitus is not addressed at all.

Bourdieu's empirical illustrations of the relevance of the notion of habitus,although extremely useful in order to establish the need of such a concept,confuse rather than help towards a proper theorisation:

The notion is used to cover both fundamentally defining characteristics and dispositions (as the analysis of taste,for ex.,in "Distinction") but also more superficial and "external" to the individual elements (as when Bourdieu refers to an "academic habitus" in Homo Academicus[31]).

In fact Bourdieu uses habitus as a convenient vehicle to account for a number of assertions.Moreover,as DiMaggio remarks:

"We are told that the initial habitus (inculcated primarily by early childhood experience) is durable,but,since it is also transformable,we are never sure just what difference this durability makes,or under what circumstances it makes a difference for what phenomena.This question,that of the stability and plasticity of personality,is one about which Bourdieu has little concrete to say".[32]

31. P.Bourdieu,Homo Academicus (1984),Cambridge:Polity Press,1988, p.143

32. P.DiMaggio,"Review essay on P. Bourdieu",American Journal of Sociology,V.84-6,(1979),p.1468

Bourdieu has "little concrete to say about personality" because in fact he does not have a theory of personality proper.The notion of habitus is evoked in lieu of such a theory but evidently this is not enough.

The insufficiency of the theorisation of habitus becomes pronounced when Bourdieu simultaneously asserts the possibility of active agency.

Bourdieu's empirical illustrations of his concept of "strategy" as a way to assert the -limited- autonomy of the individual they cannot,by themselves do more than indicate that indeed a certain autonomy does exist.The theorisation of this autonomy,however, remains to be elaborated.

How is it possible to have within the subject and side by side both the structured dispositions of the habitus and the locus of an active agency? Do these two requirements refer to the same level within the individual or to different ones? How can the limits of active agency vis-a-vis the habitus be drawn? In what sense the structured dispositions are more "permanent" than the "reasoning" subject?

The habitus refers to the socially constructed individual.To assert a certain autonomy,as Bourdieu does,however bounded,a socially irreducible part of the person has to be assumed.For the "structured dispositions" to produce "strategies",they have to be supported by a certain individuality outside and non-reducible to the habitus.Bourdieu's theorisation of the habitus does not allow us to locate this "irreducible" individuality,its level,or its limits.

All these problems and questions cannot be overcome or answered unless the generic notion of habitus is supported with a more precise and detailed theorisation of the individual.

Bourdieu is indeed charting the necessary features of such a theorisation that would allow a move beyond objectivism and subjectivism.His evocative remarks,however,need further elaboration to become convincing.

THE MODALITY OF PRACTICE
AND THE "OBJECTIVITY" OF THE SOCIAL

Bourdieu proceeds further than his notion of habitus,in order to provide a "theory of practice":

The habitus,as internalised dispositions and as a set of principles of structuration,is a central determinant in the context of practice.The conceptual schemes it incorporates are "immanent in practice,organising not only the perception of objects,but also the production of practices".[33]The habitus "produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle".[34]

The structured dispositions of the habitus,as "schemes of perception,appreciation and action,which are acquired through practice and applied in their practical state without acceding to explicit representation,function as practical operators"[35].These "practical operators" are activated within the specific context of practice:

"An agent who possesses a practical mastery,an art,whatever it may be,is capable of applying in his action the disposition that appears to him only in action,in the relationship with a situation."[36]

This "practical mastery" is quite different from a theoretical account of it:

"Reflective explication converts a practical succession into a represented succession,an action oriented in relation to a space objectively constituted as a structure of demands (things "to be done") into a reversible operation performed in a continuous,homogeneous space.This inevitable transformation is inscribed in the fact that agents can

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33. OTP,p.118

34. OTP,p.78

35. OTP,p.97

36. LP,p.90,emphasis added.

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adequately master the **mondus operanti** that enables them to generate correctly formed ritual practices,only by making it work practically,in a real situation,in relation to practical functions."[37]

A theoretical account of practice neutralises the practical functions by presenting a synchronic model that denies the temporal specificity of practice:

"Practice unfolds in time and has all the correlative properties,such as irreversibility,that synchronisation destroys.Its temporal structure.that is,its rhythm,its tempo,and above all its directionality,is constitutive of its meaning...In short,because it is entirely immersed in the current of time,practice is inseparable from temporality,not only because it is played out in time,but also because it uses strategically time and tempo in particular".[38]

Thus the modality of practice is always different from a theoretical account of it,irrespective of whether it is the agent himself that gives this account or an external observer:

"As soon as he reflects on his practice,adopting a quasi theoretical posture,the agent loses any chance of expressing the truth of his practice,and especially the truth of the practical relation to practice...he cannot communicate the essential point which is that the very nature of practice is that it excludes this question (of its theoretical elaboration)".[39]

What is required,therefore,is a break with the whole rationalistic tradition which sees social practice as the product of ideal entities -norms,rules,or individual meanings- and hence as directly amenable to a theoretical

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37. ibid.

38. LP,p.81

39. LP,p.91

knowledge.Practice is not reducible to (objectivist) theoretical schemata.

For Bourdieu practice has a **specific** modality that **cannot** be theoretically represented and understood without a transformation,an interpretation that transforms it to a **discourse**.Practice as such **does not** have the modality of discourse.

This specific modality of practice Bourdieu indicates as "logic of practice",as "sens pratique",remarking at the same time that "The idea of practical logic,a logic in itself,without conscious reflection or logical control,is a contradiction in terms,which defies logical logic.This paradoxical logic is that of all practice,or,better,of all **sens pratique**".[40]

How are we,then to theorise this "practical logic"? Bourdieu analyses it further:

"Practical logic is able to organise the totality of an agent's thoughts,perceptions,and actions by means of a few generative principles,themselves reducible in the last analysis to a fundamental dichotomy".[41]

This organisation,which implies a loss of rigour for the sake of greater simplicity and generality,is the mode of operation of practical condition in general.Practical logic functions "as an analogical sense,a sort of "sense of the contrary" which gives rise to the countless applications of the few basic contrasts capable of providing a minimum of determination (a man is not a woman-a toad is not a frog) and cannot give any information about the relations it relates,because it is precisely their indeterminacy and fuzziness that permit it to operate".[42]

This "indeterminacy or fuzziness" can account,for ex.,for

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40. LP,p.92

41. OTP,p.110

42. OTP,p.113

"the application to the same objects or practices of different schemes (such as opening/closing,going in/coming out,going up/going down,etc.) which,at the degree of precision (i.e. of imprecision) with which they are defined,are all **practically** equivalent,is the source of the polysemy characterising the fundamental relationships in the symbolic system".[43]

Similarly,because practical logic functions through a simple generative scheme of oppositions,it is the specific universe of practice relevant each time that determines the meaning of a term:The house in the Kabyles,for ex.,"is globally defined as female,damp,etc.,when conceived from the outside,from the male point of view,i.e in opposition to the external world,but it can be divided into a male-female part and a female-female part when is treated instead as a universe -of practice and discourse- on its own right".[44]

A rite is an example par excellence of practical logic:"a rite,a performative practice that strives to bring about,is often simply a practical **mimesis** of the natural process that is to be facilitated.As opposed to explicit metaphor and analogy,mimetic representation links phenomena as different as the swelling of grain in the cooking pot,the swelling of a pregnant woman's belly and the sprouting of wheat in the ground,in a relationship that implies no spelling-out of the properties of the terms thus related or the principles applied in relating them".[45]

Levi-Strauss and others,who have noted this reliance on simple pairs of opposites which function in an analogical way have failed to note that it does not correspond so much to a different "mode" of thought,but rather to the modality

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43. OTP,p.111

44. OTP.p.110

45. LP,p.92

of practical logic,immanent in practice.They have passed "in silence the transformation leading from operations mastered in their practical state to the formal operations isomorphic to them,failing by the same token to inquire into the social conditions of production of their transformation".[46]

However,the analysis of practical logic in terms of opposing concepts, seems to remain very much under the spell of Levi-Strauss.This account of practice does in fact what Bourdieu claims to avoid:it reduces practice to concepts,its only difference from theoretical/formal logic being the use of the same oppositions in a variety of circumstances and its less developed form.The female/damp,male/female notions in the above example,are presented as concepts,only operating,in the case of practice,in a less explicit and less developed mode.Still they remain "objectively" knowable.

Moreover,Bourdieu in his more empirical analyses often presents schemata for the social in a purely objectivist way,completely disregarding the level of practice and its specificity.

An example is his definition of a social "field" as a "multidimensional space":

"The social field can be described as a multidimensional space of positions such that every actual position can be defined in terms of a multidimensional system of co-ordinates.Thus agents are distributed within it,in the first dimension,according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and,in the second dimension,according to the composition of their capital (Bourdieu distinguishes different forms of capital:economic,cultural,social and symbolic capital[47]) i.e according to the relative weight of

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46. OTP,p.117

47. for example,P.Bourdieu,"Social space and symbolic power", Sociological Theory,V.7-1 (1986),p.17

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the different kinds of assets within their total assets"[48].

According to this two-dimensional space,Bourdieu in his analysis in "Distinction" considers the different habituses that characterise classes as attributable,in the last instance,to the different quantities and compositions of capital,i.e to the different positions within this objective space the actors occupy.[49]

Within such a given "field" the agents are seen as trying to maximise their total capital or specific forms of it in constant power struggles.(This principle is used by Bourdieu whenever he attempts a "dynamic" analysis,as for ex. in his discussion of education[50] and of the May 1968 events[51]).

What we are faced with here is a type of analysis that combines a structuralist conception of the structure as an objective entity -the social space appears as immediately and unproblematically accessible to scientific knowledge,measurable and even graphically representable- and a utilitarian principle of motivation of agents,a motivation considered to be of the same kind in a number of different fields.On these grounds it is possible to comment both that "the utilitarian concept of social action is at the basis of Bourdieu's social theory and analysis of culture"[52] and that "the relationship Bourdieu eventually poses between "objective structures",the habitus and social practice becomes one of determination.The analytical em-

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48. P.Bourdieu,"The social space and the genesis of groups",Theory and Society,V.14-6,(1985),p.724

49. see,for ex.,the tables in "Distinction",op.cit.,pp.262,266,340,452

50. P.Bourdieu & J.C.Passeron,Reproduction in education,society and culture (1970),London:Sage,1977

51. P.Bourdieu,"Homo academicus",op.cit.

52. A.Honneth,"The fragmented world of symbolic forms:reflections on P.Bourdieu's sociology of culture",Theory,culture and society,V.3-3 (1986),p.58

phasis falls upon causes rather than reasons.Structures produce the habitus,which generates practice,which reproduces the structures,and so on."[53]

Thus Bourdieu not only does not provide a satisfactory theorisation of the "logic of practice" he introduces,but he completely disregards any relevance of such a "logic" in his empirical studies.In particular,it seems difficult for him to escape from some version of objectivism,despite his willingness to do so.[54]

A theorisation of practice that would support the differential modality Bourdieu attributes to it,therefore,and that would clarify its relationship with the agent,still remains to be elaborated.Only through such a theorisation the specificity of the level of practice and the irreducibility of this level either to ideal entities or to fully determined individuals can be fully supported.

BEYOND BOURDIEU

Bourdieu shares with Giddens the aim to transcend "subjectivism" and "objectivism".Unlike Giddens,he does offer certain promising steps towards this direction.

For the theorisation of the mode of existence of structural elements within the individual,he proposes the notion of habitus as "structured dispositions" that constitute the subject,"embodied" rather than "known",created out of participating in a given social environment is suggestive.

However,Bourdieu does not sufficiently elaborate the notion of habitus to provide a satisfactory theorisation of

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53. R.Jenkins,"Pierre Bourdieu and the reproduction of determinism", Sociology,V.31 (1982),p.273

54. Moreover,Bourdieu does not sufficiently clarify the relation between "practice", "habitus" and "strategies".If the specific modality of practice to which Bourdieu refers is the result of the manifestation of the "practical operators" of habitus then what is the connection of practice with the "strategies" agents employ? Do we have to distinguish two kinds of practice to take account of the two levels?

the individual.Thus,for example,he cannot really support his assertion for an activeness from the part of the agent **beyond** the structural determinations of the habitus.

Bourdieu also indicates the specificity of social practice -which he terms "logic of practice" ,"sens pratique"- as oppossed to theoretical schemes accounting for it and he stresses the irreducibility of practice to such schemes.Yet he does not provide a theorisation that could support this specificity,while in his more empirical studies he often uses the same type of objectivist theorisation he denounces.

Bourdieu,therefore,is suggestive but his concepts require further elaboration to become instrumental towards his aim.

(B).OPENNESS AND THE MODALITY OF THE SOCIAL

We identified a turn from "structure" to "structuration" -the theorisation of existence "within" and reproduction of social structures through the individual and his actions- which also wanted to affirm a certain activeness/autonomy from the part of the social actor.

Giddens,in his willingness to portray the actor as active,simply reverts to an individualism: he endows the individual with an externality to the social and an axiomatic independence from any structural determination.The question,however,is to both accept such structural determinations as operating and to assert a certain autonomy of the actor.

Bourdieu,rejecting any individualism,recognises the real problem,but does not offer any theorisation that would support the activeness he also claims for social actors.

None of these authors,however,indicated any connection between this activeness and the modality attributed to the social.However,the earlier discussion of structural/ objectivist approaches had indicated the close connection between a full determination of the actor and the modality attributed to social structures.Once these structures are seen as fully closed,determinable entities,and the actor as determined by them,then no autonomy of the actor can be claimed to exist.(The same holds about the possibility of conceptualising the emergence of the new in history).

It was precisely the assumption of full determination and closure,characterising structural approaches,that was challenged by a number of "post-structuralist" authors.

We shall discuss J.Derrida as exemplifying this approach in its general form before moving to accounts specifically addressing the modality of the social in the work of E.Laclau (& C.Mouffe) and,more significantly,C.Castoriadis.

These authors aim to theorise an alternative,"open" modality of the social that allows the conceptualisation of both the emergence of the new and of a certain autonomy of the social actor(s).

(V). J.DERRIDA AND DIFFÉRANCE

DERRIDA'S CRITIQUE OF METAPHYSICS
AND THE CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL THEORY

Derrida summarises his critical account of philosophy as a critique of the "metaphysics of presence" that have dominated Western thought.[1]The metaphysics of presence represent "the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as presence,with all the subdeterminations which depend on this generic form and which organise within it their system and their historical sequence:presence of the thing to the sight as eidos,presence as substance/essence/existence (ousia),temporal presence as point (stigme) of the now or of the moment (nun),the self-presence of the cogito,consciousness,subjectivity,the co-presence of the other and of the self,intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego,and so forth"[2].It is this whole tradition that Derrida characterises as phonocentrism or logocentrism (phonocentrism because phonetic writing considers words themselves as endowed with a meaning,referring to a signified outside any context,in opposition to writing modes,as ideograms or hieroglyphics,which acquire a specific meaning only within the context placed each time) :

"Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the

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1. We focus here on Derrida's earlier and more path-breaking work -up to the early seventies- which introduces his central concepts (we refer mainly to "Of Grammatology",the collections of articles in "Writing and difference" and "Margins of philosophy" and his interviews in "Positions").His later work does not introduce any significant differentiation in these concepts and becomes more esoteric in nature.

2. J.Derrida,Of Grammatology (1967),Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press,1976,p.12.Thereafter Gram.

being of the entity as presence."[3]

In the history of this "logocentrism","the most decisive separation appears at the moment when,at the same time as the science of nature,the determination of the absolute presence is constituted as self-presence,as subjectivity".[4]

Even when a naive anthropologism is criticised,as in Hegel,Husserl or Heidegger,the logocentrism remains.In Hegel and Husserl "the critique of empirical anthropologism is only the affirmation of a transcendental humanism"[5] with a transcendental telos: "The end of man (as a factual anthropological limit) is announced to thought from the vantage of the end of man (as a determined opening or the infinity of a telos)"[6].Even in Heidegger,"Dasein,though not man,is nevertheless nothing other than man.It is a repetition of the essence of man permitting a return to what is before the metaphysical concepts of humanitas"[7].

Within his critique,Derrida explicitly addresses the questions posed by structuralism,considering that it affords a first step towards a way out of this "logocentrism".

For Derrida a "structuralist method" is defined as "a method for which everything within the structural totality is interdependent and circular".What constitutes the decisive rupture is exactly this interdependence,i.e the relational character of the structure.

Although "structure -or rather the structurality of structure- has always been at work,it has always been neutralised or reduced,and this by a process of giving it a center or by referring it to a point of presence,a fixed

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3. ibid.

4. Gram,p.16

5. J.Derrida,"The Ends of Man" (1968) (thereafter EM),in Margins of philosophy,Brighton:Harvester Press,1982,p.123

6. ibid.

7. EM,p.127

origin"[8].This centre -an arche or a telos - has been the expression of the metaphysics of presence within structural thought.It was through this "centre",at once inside and outside the structure,that the structure was ordered by "telos,aletheia or ousia",or that a meaning was attributed to it.

The relational definition of the structure,in contrast,allowed the "determination of the possibility of meaning on the basis of a "formal" organisation which in itself has no meaning,which does not mean that it is either the non-sense or the anguishing absurdity which haunt metaphysical humanism"[9].

However this definition of structure as a relational one is in itself insufficient.As Derrida remarks a propos of Levi-Strauss,it is accompanied by a denial of time and history:"the respect for structurality,for the internal originality of the structure,compels a neutralisation of time and history"[10].The appearance of a new structure can be — described only "by omitting to posit the problem of the transition from one structure to another,by putting history between brackets"[11].

Derrida's -more general- critique of metaphysics can be seen as having many points of contact with a critique internal to social thought.Indeed social theorists can be seen as a specific instance of the "metaphysics of

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8. J.Derrida,"Structure,Sign and Play in the discourse of the human sciences" (1966) (thereafter SSP),in Writing and difference,London: Routledge,1978,p.278.

9. EM,p.134

10. SSP,p.291

11. ibid.Moreover,Levi-Strauss still aspires,for Derrida,in a romantic,Rousseaunist way,to a possible totalisation,to an absolute discourse,to a primal innocence,to "a sort of ethic of presence,an ethic of nostalgia for origins,an ethic of archaic and natural innocence,of a purity of presence and self-presence in speech" (SSP,p.292. Also in "Grammatology",p.97 ff).

presence" Derrida refers to:

The traditional individualistic paradigms are a direct continuation of the "great rationalisms of the 17th century in which the determination of absolute presence is constituted as self-presence,as subjectivity"[12].

Their opposing structural approaches substitute for the self-presence of subjectivity,society as the subject of history,a history determined and determinable,with a beginning and/or an end.It is the case of structural totalities neutralised by their reference to an outside centre that Derrida notes.

This "outside",being itself transhistorical,structures the successive structural totalities of the social: this is the case with Marx's forces-relations scheme as well as with evolutionary/functionalist accounts based on necessary social functions,such as late Parson's,as also with Weber's "categories".Moreover,this "outside" is directly accessible to reason:the real is considered to be fundamentally rational.We can justifiably define,along with Derrida,these approaches as "logocentric".

With structuralism and its presentation of a social structure as a system of differences which does not refer to an outside "centre",a beginning of a break with a metaphysics of presence is made.A "beginning" not only because Levi-Strauss' reference to elementary structures,for example,reestablishes a "centre" and an "outside",but also because a rationalism and objectivism remain,as we noted,even when such a "centre" is rejected as in Althusser.

Derrida locates also,as remarked,one of the principal problems of such a structuralism:the absolute denial of history that any definition of structure as fully closed to itself entails.

Thus Derrida's critique,although not specifically related to a theory of the social is directly relevant to

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12. Gram,p.16

it.Does,however,Derrida's alternative to the "metaphysics of presence" offer an alternative for social theory as well?

THE NOTION OF DIFFÉRANCE

The question of "openness",of alterity,is a central one for Derrida.Through the affirmation of a **necessary** openness,a totalising theory,a metaphysics of presence,can be rejected.

The possibility of openness exists,for ex.,in Husserl,as **genesis**.But this genesis is "logos produced in history which it differs from itself in order to re-appropriate itself"[13],it is the "infinite opening of what is ex-perienced,which is designated at several moments of Husser-lian analysis by reference to an Idea in the Kantian sense,that is,the irruption of the infinite into consciousness"[14].

What Derrida aims at is retaining this infinite opening without,however,accepting a metaphysics of atemporal and transcendental reason.

The notion of "différance" (a neologism in French coined by Derrida to indicate simultaneously in one term the double meaning of differing and deferring) is such an at-tempt.A structural totality is presented not only as a sys-tem of differences but as,at the same time,deferring it-self,opening itself in time:

"Différance will be the playing moment that "produces" -by means of something that is not simply an activity- these differences,these effects of différence"[15]

Différance is not to be seen as a new expression of an es-

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13. J.Derrida,"Genesis and structure" and phenomenology" (1959),in "Writing and difference",op.cit.,p.166

14. ibid.,p.162

15. J.Derrida,"Différance"(1968),in "Margins...",op.cit.,p.11

sence,reintroducing a new metaphysics of presence: "The différance that produces differences is not somehow before them,in a simple and unmodified -in-different-present.Différance is the non-full,non-simple,structured and differentiating origin of differences.Thus the name "origin" no longer suits it"[16].It has rather to be seen as a movement:"We will designate by différance the movement according to which language,or any code,any system of referral in general,is constituted "historically" as a weave of differences".[17]

"Différance" is "neither a word nor a concept",it does not have the modality of "being",but it is rather the "pre-opening of the ontico-ontological difference"[18].Différance is "the non-full,non-simple,structured and differentiating origin of differences.Thus the name "origin" no longer suits it".[19]

Derrida also uses the terms "trace" or "archi-trace" to indicate the modality of différance.This "trace" is one that does not lead anywhere,it is an "archi-trace" without any presence in its end:

"The (pure) trace is différance.It does not depend on any sensible plentitude,audible or visible,phonic or graphic.It is,on the contrary,the condition of such a plen-titude.Although it does not exist,although it is never a being present outside of all plentitude,its possibility is by rights anterior to all that one calls sign(signified/signifier,content,expression,etc.),concept or operation,motor or sensory".[20]

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16. ibid.

17. "Différance",p.12

18. J.Derrida,"Freud and the scene of writing" (1966),in "Writing and difference",p.198

19. "Différance",p.11

20. Gram.,p.62

Trace,différance has to be "thought before the opposition between nature and culture,animality and humanity,inside and outside: The outside,"spatial" and "objective" exteriority which we believe we know as the most familiar thing in the world,as familiarity itself,would not appear without the gramme,without différance as temporalization,without the nonpresence of the other inscribed within the sense of the present,without the relationship with death as the concrete structure of the living present".[21]

"Différance",the subject,writing,the unconscious

The opening différance designates cannot be seen as the result of a "need" or a "desire" within a consciousness because "the speaking or signifying subject could not be present to itself,as speaking,or signifying without the play of linguistic or semiological differance...The subject as consciousness has never manifested itself except as self-presence".It is this self-presence that presupposes différance:"thus one comes to posit presence -and specifically consciousness,the being beside itself of consciousness- no longer as the absolutely central form of Being but as a "determination" and as an "effect".[22]

In fact,"without différance there would be neither "subject",nor "history",nor the "symbolic"".[23]

"Différance" is manifested par excellence in "writing":

"If writing is no longer understood in the narrow sense of linear and phonetic notation,it should be possible to say that all societies capable of producing,that is to say of obliterating,their proper names,and of bringing classificatory difference into play,practice writing in general.No reality or concept would therefore correspond to

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21. Gram,p.71

22. "Différance",p.16

23. J.Derrida,Positions (1972),London:The Athlone Press,1987,p.88

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the expression "society without writing"[24]."Writing" for Derrida indicates the very possibility for signification,is another expression of différance,and as such behind the existence of language as such.

However,writing in the usual sense,in the sense of the text,is also the field par excellence of différance:the text is never closed,it always defers itself,it incorporates its "outside" as the limits of its "inside".The principle of différance consequently can also be used as a tool of textual analysis:this is what Derrida has called the deconstructive method.

The modality Freud attributes to the unconscious indicates also,for Derrida,the "existence" and function of "différance":

"A certain alterity -to which Freud gives the metaphysical name of the unconscious- is definitely exempt from every process of presentation by means of which we would call upon it to show itself in person.In this context,and beneath this guise,the unconscious is not,as we know,a hidden,virtual,or potential self-presence.It differs from,and defers,itself;which doubtless means that it is woven of differences,and also that it sends out delegates,representatives,proxies;but without that the giver of proxies might "exist",might be present,be "itself" somewhere,and with even less chance that it might become conscious."[25]

"There is no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue of having been written elsewhere.There is no text written and present elsewhere which would then be subjected,without being changed in the process,to an operation and a temporalization (the latter belonging to consciousness if we follow Freud literally) which would be external

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24. Gram,p.109

25. "Différance",p.21

to it,floating on its surface...The unconscious is already a weave of pure traces,differences in which meaning and force are united - a text nowhere present,consisting of archives which are always already transcriptions".[26]

Thus,by introducing the concept of différance,Derrida wants to affirm an always/already (the Heideggerian ja/schon) existing openness in any system of differences,an openness that is,moreover,the constituting possibility of the existence of any such system,without itself referring to a presence,or an essence.

"DIFFÉRANCE" AND THE THEORY OF THE SOCIAL

How,at what "level" of operation,are we to understand "différance"? Moreover,since Derrida's critique of a metaphysics of presence has a relevance to a critique internal to social theory,has the concept of "différance" anything to offer to a theory of the social?

A certain interpretation and appropriation of Derrida's work has been through his "deconstructive" method,indicating the openness of any "text",the play of différance within any "writing".

Derrida himself orients his work towards such a critical reading of major -philosophical mainly but also literary- figures both in the context of a critique of "metaphysics of presence" and in order to establish the concept of différance.Since it is through a reading of texts that he proceeds and since "the text" is for him the example par excellence of the intrusion of the "outside"(what is not said or written) to the inside (what is said or written),textual analysis -as "deconstruction"- occupies a central role in his work,which more and more has been oriented towards literary texts.The considerable influence deconstruction has had,especially in the U.S.,as a method of literary analysis is not without a firm grounding in

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26. "Freud and the scene of writing",p.211

Derrida's own work and project.

Within this context,Derrida is seen as primarily estab-
lishing the impossibility of any ultimate truth and as in-
dicating the necessary and unavoidable relativity of
knowledge and truth.As such,Derrida's work has been con-
sidered as a theory of knowledge, close to Godel's
theorem[27] and running a parallel course to Gadamer's her-
meneutics.

However,as P.Dews remarks,Derrida's account,taken at its
word,does not imply a relativisation of meaning,but its
destruction:"Just as the regress of reflection renders the
phenomenon of consciousness inexplicable,so -on Derrida's
account- there would never be an emergence of meaning:there
would be nothing but an unstoppable mediation of signs by
other signs...not the volatization of meaning,but its
destruction."[28]

Even if seen as only introducing a relativistic
framework,the relevance of Derrida's work and of his con-
cept of "différance" to a theory of the social is
limited.It may be seen either in indicating a general
theory of knowledge to which social theory is (also) in-
scribed or as a tool for a "deconstructive" analysis of
ideologies[29].

However,to indicate the openness or the lack of any final
closure of scientific thought does not imply anything about
the content of this thought and the assumptions it makes

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27. for example,M.Ryan,Marxism and deconstruction,Baltimore:Johns Hop-
kins University Press,1982,p.17 ff.
A similar interpretation is offered by R.Gashe,who sees Derrida as ad-
dressing the ultimate foundations of reflection and
reflexivity,"engaged in the construction of the "quasi-synthetic
concepts" which account for the economy of the conditions of pos-
sibility and impossibility of the basic philosophemes"(R.Gashe,The
tain of the mirror,Cambridge,Mass: Harvard University Press,1986,p.7)

28. P.Dews,Logics of disintegration,London:Verso,1987,p.30

29. As M.Ryan asserts,op.cit.

about its object -in our case the "social".

On the other hand,as a tool for a "deconstructive" analysis of ideologies,Derrida's theorisation does not offer much more than traditional critical analyses of these "ideologies".It can only assert the relativity of any "ideology" without specifying the source and origin of this relativity.[30]

Precisely regarding the source and origin of any relativity his theory indicates,Derrida has insisted that "différance" should be seen as "the pre-opening of the ontico-ontological difference",as the "primordial non self-presence".

Différance operates for Derrida at a more "fundamental" level,in the same manner,one could claim[31],as the Heideggerian "Dasein" (though différance does not,of course,refer to the subject in any way): not as an "essence" since it precisely denies any essentialism and yet -to play with Derrida's own words- as nothing more than a (negative) essence.Différance is supposed to negate essentialism and yet simultaneously to organise the whole question of being through its (non self-)presence.

What we have is a negation of traditional metaphysics while retaining a discourse and concepts that continue to function on the same level and with the same ambitions.In fact,the notion of différance (and all the other notions Derrida introduces to indicate the same) neutralises the radicalism Derrida's own critique of traditional metaphysics had entailed by re-establishing,albeit in an oblique way,precisely such a metaphysics.Derrida,in

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30. Derrida himself,when pressed on the relation of his approach to a theory of the social and especially his relation to Marxism,he referred to a "reading" of "the Marxist text",that is "still to come" ("Positions",p.62).But what would such a "reading" offer social thought?

31. as Habermas,for example,acknowledges in The philosophical discourse of modernity (1985),Cambridge:Polity press,1990,p.161 ff.

fact,reflects a nostalgia for an all encompassing
philosophical discourse he started from criticising.

Adorno's criticism of Heidegger is here pertinent:

"Whatever praises itself for reaching behind the concepts
of reflection -subject and object- in order to grasp some-
thing substantial,does nothing but reify the irresol-
vability of the concepts of reflection.It reifies the im-
possibility of reducing one into the other,into the in-
itself...It vindicates without authority and without theol-
ogy,maintaining that what is of essence is real,and,by the
same token,that the existent is essential,meaningful,and
justified."[32]

In this context,Derrida's theorisation has nothing to of-
fer to social theory since the latter refers to a level of
"positive" science,a positive science the "pre-opening of
the ontico-ontological difference" différance refers
to,pre-exists and defines.[33]

At the same time Derrida's theory implies an irrelevance
of history and society for the actual movement of
thought.As Habermas remarks: "He (Derrida),too (like
Heidegger),degrades politics and contemporary history to
the status of the ontic and the foregroung,so as to romp
all the more freely,and with a greater wealth of associa-
tions,in the sphere of the ontological and the
archewriting"[34].

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32. T.Adorno,The Jargon of Authenticity (1964),London:Routledge,1973,
p.121.Adorno's critique poses directly the connection between reflec-
tion and the thinking subject,with all his/hers socio-historical
determinations and hence the connection with a theory of the social
that would allow us to theorise these determinations.

33. Derrida indicates the need for a "deconstruction of the greatest
totality -the concept of episteme and logocentric metaphysics- within
which are produced,without ever posing the question of writing,all the
Western methods of analysis,explication,or interpretation"(Gram,p.46)

34. J.Habermas,op.cit.,p.181.Also Dews:"When Derrida speaks of the
"historico-transcendental scene of writing",he continues -like Husserl
and Heidegger before him- to erase the contingency of the historical
process"(Dews,op.cit.,p.43)

Yet,the insights of Derrida's work,and specifically the affirmation of a radical and necessary openness, seem too important to be lost in such an obscure metaphysics (as also in a sterile relativism).

We saw that Derrida himself considered structuralism as a starting point.But structuralism,in either the linguistic or its social theoretic versions,was referring to   positive (though not   positivistic) sciences and to a theorisation of their objects (language or the social).He also indicates the relevance of the openness "différance" refers   to   for   a   theorisation   of   the   unconscious.Moreover,his critique of metaphysics parallels an internal critique of social thought referring to the social as a positive object of study.

The possibility exists then,that the openness differance refers to can be located not on the "pre-opening of the ontico-ontological field" but within the level of the social in all its empirical/concrete nature.It could offer a way to reintroduce history in otherwise immobile structural theories.And it is such a possibility we shall investigate.

(VI).   E.LACLAU & C.MOUFFE:
MEANINGFULNESS AND OPENNESS OF THE SOCIAL

LACLAU AND MOUFFE'S THEORISATION OF THE SOCIAL

Unlike Derrida,Laclau and Mouffe[1] affirm a necessary open-
ness within a theorisation of the social,an openness refer-
ring to social structural totalities.

Laclau and Mouffe want to assert the relativisation of
"the ethical,political and intellectual values of
modernity"[2],to go beyond any "eschatological conceptions of
history"[3],without,for that,"dismantling the ground on which
a radical and progressive politics could be built"[4].

A starting point for Laclau and Mouffe is Marxism,as "one
of the traditions through which it becomes possible to for-
mulate a new conception of politics"[5].Within Marxism they
reject the determinant role of the economy or of any
"objective interests" and "objective destiny" of the work-
ing class,an objectivity that can be supported only within
a teleological conception of history.Instead they want to
stress "the logic of hegemony,as a logic of articulation
and contingency"[6].

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1. We refer mainly to E.Laclau and C.Mouffe,Hegemony and socialist
strategy,London:Verso,1985 (thereafter HSS) as also to their "Post
Marxism without apologies" (1987) (thereafter PM),New Left Review
166.Laclau's own "New Reflections on the Revolution of our time"
(1990) in E.Laclau,New reflections on the Revolution of our
time,London:Verso,1990 (thereafter NR) further advances the argu-
ment.(In the same volume is collected the NLR article.The references
will be,however,to the original publication of the article.)

2. NR,p.4

3. PM,p.84

4. NR,p.4

5. HSS,p.3

6. HSS,p.85

Laclau and Mouffe's project is ultimately a political one,i.e to present a new theorisation of politics based on the notion of "hegemony" as well as a project for "radical democracy".To do so,however,they have to propose a basic conceptualisation of the social,a theorisation in which "there is no sutured space peculiar to "society",since the social itself has no essence".[7]

They reject a simple "logical deconstruction of the Althusserian totality" (like Hindess' and Hirst's critique of Althusser) which "can only be implemented if the disconnected "elements" have a full and unequivocal identity attributed to them"[8].Instead they claim that the critique has to be directed against "every type of fixity,through an affirmation of the incomplete,open and politically negotiable character of every identity"[9].

Consequently,Laclau and Mouffe see a structural totality as established through an "articulation":articulation is "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice.The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice,we will call discourse.The differential positions,insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse,we will call moments.By contrast,we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated."[10]

A discursive articulation has the modality Foucault attributes to his "discursive formations",namely "regularity in dispersion".For Laclau and Mouffe an articulation has to be thought as "an ensemble of differential positions (which)...is not the expression of any underlying principle

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7. HSS,p.96

8. HSS,p.104

9. ibid.

10. HSS,p.105

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external to itself -it cannot,for instance,be apprehended either by a hermeneutic reading or by a structuralist combinatory".[11]

In a "discursive articulation,as a systematic structural ensemble,the relations are unable to absorb the identities;but as the identities are purely relational,this is but another way of saying that there is no identity which can be fully constituted".Every ensemble of differential entities is constantly subverted by the "surplus of meaning".This "surplus" is "the necessary terrain for the constitution of every social practice.We will call it the field of discursivity"[12].

The distinction between "elements" and "moments" corresponds to the distinction between the "field of discursivity" and its partial closures that are the discursive articulations.Within this field,and prior to their articulation within a discourse,"the status of elements is that of floating signifiers,incapable of being wholly articulated to a discursive chain"[13].As floating signifiers the elements have no real identity.Any identity,always partial,is constructed when they become moments,i.e when they form part "of a totality resulting from an articulatory practice".

Despite the terminology,Laclau and Mouffe do not see their theorisation as referring to "discourse" in the limited sense,i.e. to ideas or ideologies.They explicitly reject "the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices" and they affirm "(a) that every object is constituted as an object of discourse,insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence;and (b) that any distinction between what are usually called

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11. HSS,p.106

12. HSS,p.111

13. ibid.

the linguistic and behavioural aspects of a social prac-
tice,is either an incorrect distinction or ought to find
its place as a differentiation within the social production
of meaning,which is structured under the form of discursive
totalities"[14].

Accordingly,Laclau and Mouffe use the term discourse "to
emphasise that every social configuration is meaning-
ful...by discourse we do not mean a combination of speech
and writing,but rather that speech and writing are them-
selves but internal components of discursive totalities"[15].

Laclau and Mouffe denounce both the determinance of "an
objective field constituted outside of any discursive
intervention"(as is the case with the economy or the mode
of production in Marxism) and a "discourse consisting of
the pure expression of thought"[16].What a "discursive
articulation" refers to,therefore,is to the social in
general and not only to the (limited) field of language and
thought.

THE SUBJECT AND "HEGEMONY"

Within these structural wholes "subjects" are defined:
"Whenever we use the category of "subject" in this text,we
will do so in the sense of "subject positions" within a
discursive structure.Subjects cannot,therefore,be the
origin of social relations"[17].

However,precisely because the "structure" is always open
and never fully constituted,the subject is also never fully
determined: "every subject position,as a discursive posi-
tion,it partakes of the open character of every
discourse"[18].

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14. HSS,p.107

15. PM,p.82

16. HSS,p.108

17. HSS,p.115

Laclau is to further amplify in his later "Reflections": "The field of social identities is not one of full identities,but of their ultimate failure to be constituted[19] ...the location of the subject is that of dislocation.Far from being a moment of the structure,the subject is the result of the impossibility of constituting the structure as such -that is as a self-sufficient object".[20]

Thus the "openness" of the structure lies behind the lack of a "full" identity from the part of the subject.This lack seems to justify a certain degree of autonomy from the part of the subject.It is this autonomy that -presumably- allows the emergence of a "hegemonic subject".

Hegemony,for Laclau and Mouffe,is an articulatory practice that uses "elements" not yet crystallised into "moments" to form a new "discursive articulation".

Laclau has been proposing a theory of hegemony -mainly following Gramsci- in his previous work[21].In that work hegemony appeared as the result of a class -defined as a class in the field of production- manipulation and organisation of different ideological elements to form a unity that would allow this class a hegemonic position on the political/ideological field.Through a hegemonic articulation demands from other classes can be channelled in ways compatible with the interests of the hegemonic class.

A distinction was therefore made between relations of production which determine class relations and the ideological and political levels which are not reducible to class relations.In "HSS" hegemony continues to play a

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18. ibid.

19. NR,p.38

20. NR,p.41

21. E.Laclau,Politics and ideology in Marxist Theory,London:New Left Books,1977

central role.It still refers to political discourse,only
now is not seen any more as determined in the last instance
by the relations of production.It is not only classes with
defined interests on the level of production that can
hegemonise.A hegemonic agent can be defined in another
sphere of the social:

"The hegemonic subject,as the subject of any articulatory
practice,must be partially exterior to what it articulates
-otherwise there would be no articulation at all.On the
other hand,however,such exteriority cannot be conceived as
that existing between two different ontological
levels...both the hegemonic force and the ensemble of
hegemonised elements would constitute themselves on the
same plane- the general field of discursivity"[22].

However,"in order to speak of hegemony,the articulatory
moment is not sufficient.It is also necessary that the ar-
ticulation should take place through a confrontation with
antagonistic articulatory practices -in other words,that
hegemony should emerge in a field criss-crossed by
antagonisms".[23]

The term "antagonism" retains,in Laclau and Mouffe the
usual connotations of two antagonistic sides (classes or
persons).An antagonism appears as such in a full sense only
when it is articulated to a discursive articulation within
a hegemonic project:

"Every antagonism,left free to itself,is a floating sig-
nifier,a "wild" antagonism which does not predetermine the
form in which it can be articulated to other elements in a
social formation".[24]Thus antagonisms can be articulated to
different hegemonic projects and to different discourses.

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22. HSS,p.135

23. HSS,p.135

24. HSS,p.171

LACLAU AND MOUFFE: AN APPRAISAL

Laclau and Mouffe introduce,as necessary and inescapable,a lack of fixity -an openness,indeterminacy,lack of closure- of the social structural entities ("discursive articulations").These "discursive articulations" never manage to be "objectively" constituted and,therefore,"all social relations are always contigent relations"[25].The "openness" is introduced not as operating at a level beyond and "outside" of the social -as Derrida's differance does- but as existing within the social.

Thus the central assumption of rationalist/objectivist structural approaches,that of closed and fully determinable social structural entities is challenged.

Consequently,it seems that the problem of alterity and change that these approaches faced,can be overcome.A non fully constituted,open structure,can always alter it- self,and hence "becoming" can be introduced.

In addition,as a consequence of this openness the "subject" can be seen as structurally determined but never fully so,as never having a full identity.A political project of hegemony,based on a certain autonomy from the part of the subject,becomes thus possible.The other great problem of structural approaches, therefore,that of the conceptualisa- tion of some form of active agency,seems that it is also overcome.

Thus,by theorising the social as necessarily open and in- determinate,Laclau and Mouffe can provide an alternative to the modality of the social that structural/objectivist ap- proaches asserted and hence provide answers to the two central problems these approaches faced,the question of agency and the question of history.

However,while the general direction of their argument in- dicates a new path,the specific aspects of the argument are not properly worked out.

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25. NR,p.31

The autonomy of the subject

Laclau and Mouffe,operating on the level of a theory of the social,cannot avoid,as Derrida for example does,the necessity for a theorisation of the subject.

They justifiably assert that although they continue to see the subject as always created through a structure -through "subject positions"- the openness social structures ("articulations") exhibit,allows a non full determination of the subject -the lack of any "full" identity (something the structuralist definition of structure as fully deter-minable and closed did not allow).

Thus it is possible,first of all,to theorise the deter-mination of the subject by many structures,of a fusion be-tween them.They indicate that "overdetermination" should refer to its original meaning in Freud as "no ordinary process of "fusion" or "merger",bur rather a "very precise type of fusion entailing a symbolic dimension and a plurality of meanings".[26]

But they assert that the subject has a specificity over and beyond what a multiple determination would allow and hence a certain autonomy: "to insist on the dispersion of the positions from which "man" has been produced,constitutes only a first moment;in a second stage,it is necessary to show the relations of overdeter-mination and totalisation that are established among these.The non fixation or openness of the system of discur-sive differences is what makes possible these effects of analogy and interpretation"[27].

However,this autonomy is not unlimited:"the degree of autonomy may vary,but the concept of total autonomy is devoid of all meaning".[28]

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26. HSS,p.97

27. HSS,p.117

28. NR,p.38

What exactly this autonomy consists of,however,or what are its limits,is not clarified.At times Laclau and Mouffe refer simply to the contradiction generated by a simultaneous determination by more than one structures:"A fall in a worker's wage,for example,denies his identity as a consumer.There is therefore a "social objectivity" -the logic of profit- which denies another objectivity -the consumer's identity.But the denial of an identity means preventing its constitution as an objectivity".[29]The lack of a "full" identity in this case -and any subsequent "autonomy"- is simply due to the simultaneous determinations the worker is subjected to.

In other instances Laclau and Mouffe tend to imply an absolute rather than a "relative" autonomy,as in their discussion of hegemony.While a certain autonomy has to characterise any "hegemonic subject",the way this subject is presented seems to be beyond any structural limitations and constrains."Who" is the hegemonic subject and "why" it could pursue such a project are never clarified.

In fact Laclau and Mouffe's account of the subject,though suggestive,is very limited.They do not provide any theorisation proper of subjectivity,of the way the structure operates within the individual,or of social action.Consequently,they cannot adequately support their claims for the specificity and consequent autonomy of the subject.A more detailed theorisation of the subject would be the only way to properly delineate the meaning of autonomy and its limits.

The "meaningfulness" of the social and its "openness"

Let us focus now on the central element of Laclau and Mouffe's argument:the non-closure,the openness,the indeterminacy of the structural entities,the "discursive articulations".Their argument runs roughly as follows:

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29. NR,p.16

(i) The social is always "meaningful".Drawing particularly from Wittgenstein,Laclau and Mouffe consider that the totality of social practice includes both linguistic and non-linguistic elements ("the totality which includes within itself the linguistic and the non linguistic is what we call discourse"[30]) which cannot be separated:

"It has become increasingly accepted that the meaning of a word is entirely context-dependent"[31].Hence the two kinds of elements of a "discourse" cannot be separated and "the distinction between linguistic and non linguistic elements does not overlap with the distinction between "meaningful" and "not meaningful"."[32]

Moreover, (ii) "A number of contemporary currents of thought -from Heidegger to Wittgenstein- have insisted on the impossibility of fixing ultimate meanings"[33].To these currents Laclau and Mouffe include Derrida who "generalises the concept of discourse in a sense coincidental with that of our text"[34].There is then,an impossibility for any ultimate fixity of meaning -meaning is "open".

Since,therefore,meaning is "open" and the social is always "meaningful",the social is also necessarily open.The argument seems clear and persuasive.However:

(i) Laclau and Mouffe do not sufficiently clarify in what sense the social can be seen as "meaningful",except through a reference to thought and language.That the meaning of a "word" or a "rule" is context dependent does not alter the fact that it is the word or the rule that carry the meaning and not the "context".

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30. PM,p.82

31. PM,p.83

32. ibid.

33. HSS,p.111

34. HSS,p.112

They assert the "material character" of discourse in the sense of a "progressive affirmation...of the material character of ideologies,inasmuch as these are not simple systems of ideas but are embodied in institutions,rituals and so forth".[35]However,the "embodiment" of these systems of ideas to institutions or rituals does not change the fact that they are primarily "ideas" and it is as such that we should approach them.

Moreover,since Laclau and Mouffe do not offer any account of the interface between the "subject" and the "structure" -any theory,that is,of subjectivity- they cannot locate,within the individual,a level of "meaning" different from thought.As it is,their theorisation seems perfectly compatible with a scheme of action such as early Parsons'.

Finally,the political project of hegemony,referring,as it does,to political discourse in the narrow sense -even though the economy is not accorded any primordial role in determining the hegemonic subjects- is not helpful in locating any alternative level of meaning.

We saw that a number of authors,including Marx,can be seen as invoking a level of meaning beyond "nature" and yet not reducible to thought.Laclau and Mouffe also denounce "discourse" as consisting of the "pure expression of thought",but fail to specify such a level in any significant way.Unless,however,a level distinct from ideas and yet meaningful is conceptualised,any affirmation of meaning beyond ideas or ideologies cannot but ultimately refer back to these ideas.This is exactly what happens with Laclau and Mouffe's analysis.They can be,therefore,despite their intentions,justifiably accused of idealism.[36]

In addition,within their theorisation,any differentiation between "material" institutions or practices and purely

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35. HSS,p.109

36. as,for example,by N.Geras,"Post Marxism?",New Left Review,163 (1987) or E.M.Wood,The retreat from class,London:Verso,1986

ideal or ideological elements,any differentiation,that is,"within the social production of meaning",cannot be taken account of. Thus while it may be that "if the so-called non-discursive complexes (institutions, techniques,productive organisation,and so on) are analysed,we will find more or less complex forms of differential positions among objects,which do not arise from a necessity external to the system structuring them and which can therefore be conceived as discursive articulations"[37],the fact remains that these "complex forms of differential positions" are **different**,even if not "ontologically" so,from the "discursive"complexes in the narrow sense."Capitalism",to put it crudely,is a different **kind** of discursive articulation than,for ex.,populism.

Laclau and Mouffe **do** recognise the existence of the difference,as when they see capitalism engendering new forms of social protest: "Structural transformations of capitalism that have led to the decline of the classical working class,...the increasingly profound penetration of capitalist relations of production in areas of social life whose dislocatory effects -concurrent with those deriving from the forms of bureaucratisation which have characterised the Welfare State- have generated new forms of social protest"[38]. "Capitalism" in this case is to differentiated from the forms of social protest it has created and their corresponding "ideologies".

However,they **do not** provide any concepts that could be used to distinguish these different types.Thus,the fact that a difference between these levels is recognised,just as the non-reductionism of the social to the ideal is affirmed,is not enough to provide an alternative theorisation for the way the social is "meaningful".

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37. HSS,p.107

38. PM,p.80

(ii) If the "meaningfulness" of the social is not suffi-
ciently clarified,the actual way the social can be seen as
non closed,as open and indeterminate,necessarily remains
also unclarified.

The authors Laclau and Mouffe cite have all specifically
referred to the the lack of ultimate fixity in the meaning
of thought or language.Moreover,this openness was always as-
serted through a reference to "something" beyond thought:to
the motivations lying behind a perlocutionary act
(Austin),to the practice of application of the rule
(Wittgenstein),[39] or even to a pre ontico/ontological level
as that on which Heidegger's "Dasein" or Derrida's
"differance" are seen as operating.Thus,this "something"
either relates to a social or psychological datum or to the
postulation of an arch-level beyond the positivity of
"ontic" -as opposed to ontologic- being.

However,if we lack a theorisation of the way the social
can be seen as meaningful,except as a reduction to thought
(and it is difficult,if not impossible for such an account
to avoid a theorisation of the way a subject is constructed
and acts) how can we conceive the openness of the social?
One is only left to imagine it.[40]

Moreover,even if we do accept an openness through an anal-
ogy or even a reduction of the social to thought or lan-
guage,the "openness" assigned to these by the authors Laclau
and Mouffe appeal to cannot be transported,unchanged,to the
level of the social in its empirical specificity.

No empirical/concrete "outside" (of the type Austin or

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39. as also,though Laclau and Mouffe do not refer to it,to the
"subject" and its socio-historical determinations (Horkheimer's criti-
cal theory)

40. This unclarified nature of openess has led commentators to see it
as implying that "everything is an undifferentiated flux...and (hence)
is not clear how anything could be heuristically treated as more fixed
or determinate" (A.Hunter,"Post-Marxism and the new social
movements",Theory and society,No 17,1988,p.894),or as creating the im-
possibility to conceptualise durable institutions (N.Mouzelis,"Marxism
or Post-Marxism?",New Left Review 167 (1988),p.113-4).

Wittgenstein refer to) supporting this openness can be claimed.On the other hand Laclau and Mouffe do not indicate that they accept Heidegger's or Derrida's metaphysics.Instead,they seem to consider that the assertion of the openness of meaning as for example Derrida presents it is enough.However,the simple reference to developments within a theory of knowledge is not enough to make these developments directly applicable to a theorisation of the social.

In his later "Reflections",Laclau advances somewhat on the clarification of the lack of closure he attributes to the social.He considers it to refer to a "radical indeterminacy":

"Radical indeterminacy does not manifest itself through a cancellation of all determinations -this would consist of an operation that could only be conceivable on the basis of the fullness of the category of "determination" and would thus leave the latter intact- but through a subversion of all determination,that is through the assertion of its presence in a context that destroys its own possibility.That is precisely what we have termed dislocation"[41].

While the reference to a radical indeterminacy is more precise than a simple reference to "lack of fixity",the question of the way this indeterminacy emerges remains.What is its connection with the meaningful character of the social? More importantly,why this indeterminacy exists?

As to this "why",Laclau advances a theorisation of "antagonism" as the "outside" that subverts any fixity and as an alternative to the simple reference to a "surplus of meaning" in "Hegemony".

As we have seen the notion of antagonism had already been proposed as the necessary precondition for an hegemonic practice to be possible.Already it was seen as something

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41. NR,p.79

more than a "floating signifier": "antagonism constitutes the limits of every objectivity".[42]

In "Reflections",antagonism becomes the **principal** determinant of the openness of the social:"The crucial point is that antagonism is the **limit of all objectivity.**This should be understood in its most literal sense:as the assertion that antagonism does not have an objective meaning,but is that which prevents the constitution of objectivity itself.The Hegelian conception of contradiction subsumed within it both social antagonisms and the process of natural change.This was possible insofar as contradiction was conceived as an internal moment of the concept;the rationality of the real was the rationality of the system,with any "outside" excluded by definition.In our conception of antagonism,on the other hand,we are faced with a "constitutive outside".It is an "outside" which blocks the identity of the "inside" (and is,nonetheless,the prerequisite for its constitution at the same time).With antagonism,denial does not originate from the "inside" of identity but,in its most radical sense,from outside:it is pure facticity which cannot be referred back to any underlying rationality".[43]

What is this "pure facticity" of antagonism? Laclau advances through a discussion of the Marxist theory: "the contradiction between productive forces and relation of production is a contradiction without antagonism" while "class struggle is an antagonism without contradiction"[44]It is class struggle that presents the "constitutive outside" which "cannot be reintegrated into the forces and relations of production schema"[45]:

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42. HSS,p.125

43. NR,p.17

44. NR,p.7

45. NR,p.11

"The more the dogmatic rationalism of the primacy of the productive forces is abandoned and the more the conduct and abilities of the social agents become dependent on concrete circumstances and contexts which they have not determined,the more the effort to determine rational identifiable "interests" outside of those circumstances and contexts ends up being inconsistent."[46]

What,therefore,the concept of antagonism refers to is a certain indeterminacy of the actors -in our case classes- from the structure.It is a reference to the subject as an "outside" and to the autonomy of this subject that antagonism relies on.

However,Laclau and Mouffe had asserted that if the subject is "something more" than its structural determinations,if it has a specificity and autonomy,it is because of the openess of the structure.Hence it is not possible to claim also that the autonomy of the subject is the cause of the structure's openness.The argument would be valid only within some version of individualism in which the subject can be seen as external to the structure and the autonomy of the subject would be considered unlimited.[47]

Thus Laclau's reference to "antagonism" does not provide a better explanation for the openness the modality of the social is seen as implying.

Both the way the social is seen as "meaningful" and indeterminate and the actual explanation of this indeter-

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46. NR,p.15

47. S.Zizek tried to relate the "antagonism" Laclau and Mouffe refer to with the notion of the "real" in (late) Lacan as a "certain fissure which cannot be symbolised"(S.Zizek,"Beyond discourse analysis" in NR,p.249).
In what way can "antagonism" be seen as homologous to the Lacanian "real" is not clarified by Zizek.It is obvious,though,that as the notion stands in Laclau's argument it cannot provide the reason of the openess of the social.However,the indication of a relationship between the (open) modality of the social and the unconscious is important and will be examined more fully in the discussion of Castoriadis that follows.

minacy,therefore,remain insufficiently clarified.

A DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT

Laclau and Mouffe provide very interesting and suggestive directions of theorisation:

They assert the meaningful character of the social beyond any distinction between "material" and "ideal".

They assert,as a result of this character of the social,a necessary and inescapable openness and indeterminacy of social structural totalities and hence a break with objectivist accounts of the social.

Consequently,the emergence of the new in history and a certain autonomy from the part of the subject can be accounted for.

However,Laclau and Mouffe fail to specify in what sense this "meaning" can exist except as a reduction of the social to thought or ideas.Consequently,they fail to sufficiently clarify how the openness and indeterminacy exist on the level of the social.

They also do not provide a theorisation of subjectivity,of structuration or of social action that would support their claims for the subject.

Thus,while their theorisation is very evocative and inspiring,it indicates a direction of development rather than a mapping of this development itself.

(VII). C.CASTORIADIS' "IMAGINARY INSTITUTION"

THE MODALITY OF "MAGMAS"

AND THE "SOCIAL IMAGINARY SIGNIFICATIONS"

The social-historical has,for Castoriadis[1],"always been split into a society,related to something other than itself and,generally,to a norm,end or telos grounded in something else,and a history,considered as something that happens to this society,as a disturbance in relation to a given norm or as an organic or dialectical development towards this norm,end or telos.In this way,the object in question,the being proper to the social-historical,is constantly shifted towards something other than itself and absorbed in it".[2] Castoriadis wants to think "the being proper to the social-historical" in a novel way.To do so he has to break with the "inherited logic-ontology" within which the traditional conceptualisation of the social has been elaborated:

"For the past 25 centuries Greco-Western thinking has con-stituted,developed,amplified and refined itself on the basis of the thesis:being is being something determined (einai ti),speaking is saying something determined (ti legein)".[3]

For Castoriadis this thesis corresponds to what he terms **ensemblist-identitary** logic (logique ensembliste-

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1. We refer mainly to the later phase of C.Castoriadis' work,roughly from 1965 onwards,which culminates in the "Imaginary institution of society" (1975) (Part I,"Marxism and revolutionary theory" written in 1965) and includes three collections of articles under the general heading "Crossroads in the labyrinth".Castoriadis' earlier work,of a more Marxist and more grounded nature is by no means incompatible with this later phase (Castoriadis himself repeatedly traces the con-tinuities through references to this earlier work).

2. C.Castoriadis, The imaginary institution of society (1975), Cambridge:Polity Press,1987 (thereafter IIS),p.167

3. IIS,p.221

identitaire[4]): identitary because it posits each thing "as distinct and definite (which) implies,at the very least,that it is posited in its pure self-identity and in its pure difference with respect to everything that is not itself"[5].Within this logic "everything that exists is determinable ,in the sense that it possesses an immanent potential for being defined and distinguished"[6]

The most advanced and the richest achievement of this logic is mathematics.The definition of a set (ensemble) in its classic form by Cantor,as "a collection into a whole of definite and distinct objects of our intuition or of our thought" expresses exactly the identitary character of this logic that permeates the whole of mathematics.Thus a set represents a scheme of union that allows "distinct objects to be assembled into a whole,which is itself a distinct and definite object of a higher type"[7].

Castoriadis sees this logic as the expression of a necessary and always present modality of every society:

"If society is to exist,if a language is to be established and if it is to function,if a thoughtful practice is to develop,if people are to be able to relate to one another other than through phantasies,then,in one way or another,on a certain level,an a certain layer or stratum of social doing and representing,everything must be made consequent with what Cantor's definition implies...(because)...in order to speak of a set or an ensemble,or to think of one,we must be able to distinguish-choose-posit-assemble-count-say objects"[8].

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4. it has been translated also as set-theoretical/identitary logic in Crossroads in the Labyrinth (1978),Brighton:Harvester Press,1984,p.vii

5. IIS,p.224

6. C.Castoriadis,"Modern science and philosophical interrogation" (1973),in "Crossroads in the labyrinth",op.cit.,p.210

7. IIS,p.224

8. IIS,p.223

This identitary dimension of the social is manifested in social representing,or "legein" as well as in social doing,or "teukhein":

"Legein"(from the Greek logos) is defined as "distinguishing- choosing- positing- assembling- counting -speaking"[9] .The principal manifestation of legein is through language.It refers to the identitary/ensemblist aspect of language,language as a formal system,"to the extent that language organises itself in an identitary manner,that is to say,to the extent that it is a system of ensembles (or of ensemblisable relations)"[10].

Language is both a manifestation of "legein" and the means for further establishment of sets of significations that are subjected to an ensemblist-identitary operation."The vast majority of the significations that can be termed "rational"("concepts") are constructed by refining and developing the elements of this code of significations,involving exclusively operations of identitary,ensemblist logic".[11]

At the same time as manifested in social representing and particularly in language -as "legein"- the ensemblist/identitary logic is also manifested in social doing,as "teukhein":

"Teukhein"(making/doing in Ancient Greek) is defined by Castoriadis as "assembling-adjusting-fabricating-constructing.It is,therefore,making (something) to be as...starting from...in a manner appropriate to..and in view of...Teukhein separates "elements",fixes them as such,orders them,combines them,unites them into totalities and organised hierarchies of totalities within the field

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9. ibid.

10. IIS,p.238.It is this aspect of language that is analysed by structural linguistics.

11. IIS,p.243

of doing"[12].

Teukhein and legein are interrelated:"Teukhein intrinsically implies legein,is in a sense legein and vise versa.Legein is not legein if it is not an organised totality of efficacious operations with a "material" basis.Teukhein is not teukhein if it is not the positing of distinct and definite elements involved in functional relations"[13].

Legein and teukhein are thus the complementary manifestations of ensemblist-identitary logic: "just as legein incarnates and brings into being the enseblist-identitary dimension of language,and more generally,of social representing,so teukhein incarnates and brings into being the enseblist-identitary dimension of social doing of activity"[14].

However,this ensemblist/identitary level of social representing/doing refers only to one layer of the social.It is "surrounded" by/based on/transcended by/limited by a layer that cannot be fully subsumed under identitary logic,which cannot even be fully grasped since understanding operates through identitary logic.This other layer is what Castoriadis calls the "magma of social imaginary significations".It is what operates in the imaginary dimension,is presupposed by legein and teukhein and institutes the social.

This imaginary dimension implies a modality that is radically different from traditional schemata of the social,a modality that breaks with ensemblist/identitary logic and which is that of "magma":

"A magma is that from which one can extract (or in which one can construct) an infinite number of ensemblist or-

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12. IIS,p.260

13. IIS,p.261

14. IIS,p.264

ganisations but which can never be reconstituted (ideally)
by a (finite or infinite) ensemblist composition of these
organisations".[15]

The mode of being of significations is that of magma: "Any
signification,including those that do refer to the real or
the rational is essentially indefinite and undermined;when
we take into consideration the full being of significa-
tion,enseblist-identitary logic has no real hold on
it...Significations,if grasped in their fullness,are not
elements and do not compose sets"[16].

Thus a signification is "infinitely determinable without
thereby being determined"[17].What escapes determination is
the flow of meaning that surrounds every signification and
always allows a different determination to be added
without,for that,ever exhausting its "meaning".What has
been traditionally described as connotation (as distinct
from denotation) was referring to this infinitude of deter-
minations.However,since this distinction was established
within a traditional-essentialist framework,it introduces a
definition,an "essence" which can be grasped by
"denotation",a proper meaning as oppossed to the infinitude
of connotations.[18]Indeed an intuitive support for the no-
tion of magma can be "all the significations of the English
language or all the representations of one's life"[19].

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15. IIS,p.343.Castoriadis has also proposed a formal definition of
magma in a logico/mathematical way in "Logique des Magmas et Question
de l'Autonomie"(1981) (thereafter LM) in Domaines de l'homme,
Paris:Seuil, 1986,p.394-395

16. IIS,p.238

17. IIS,p.346

18. "The idea of denotation necessarily implies an ontology of
substance-essence,of ousia,of a being which in itself is definite and
distinct outside of language,complete and closed in on itself,to which
the word would be addressed" (IIS,p.347)

19. IIS,p.344

The social/historical is also,primarily,a magma,that of "social imaginary significations":

"The institution of society is the institution of a magma of social imaginary significations[20]...society is not a set,neither a structure nor a hierarchy of sets or structures:it is a magma and a magma of magmas".[21]

These social imaginary significations are manifested through "legein" and "teukhein",they are the "background" out of which legein and teukhein may emerge.

"Legein" in language -i.e. language as a code- is based on language as "langue,to the extent that it refers to a magma of significations"[22].

As for "teukhein","ends and significations are posited together in and through technique and teukhein -just as significations are posited in and through legein.In a sense,the tools and instruments of a society are significations;they are the "materialisation" of the imaginary significations of that society in the identitary and functional dimension.An assembly line is (and can only exist as) the "materialisation" of a host of imaginary significations central to capitalism".[23]

Thus the "magma" of social imaginary significations exists in the "materiality" of individuals and things:

"The institution of society is what it is and as it is to the extent that it "materialises" a magma of social imaginary significations,in reference to which individuals and objects alone can be grasped and even simply exist.Nor can this magma be spoken in isolation from the individuals and objects that it brings into being.What we have here are not significations that would be "freely detachable" from any

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20. IIS,p.359

21. IIS,p.228

22. IIS,p.238

23. IIS,p.361

material support,purely ideal poles;rather it is in and
through the being and being-thus of this "support" that
these significations exist and are such as they are"[24].

HISTORY AND RADICAL ALTERITY

The modality of "magma" is correlative,for Cas-
toriadis,with a denial of any ultimate determination of the
social,any reduction of it to an "outside".He uses the term
"institution" (of society) to stress the creative/ undeter-
mined character of the social both in relation to nature
and in the context of history.

For Castoriadis "society leans on nature.But to say that
the institution of society leans on the organisation of the
first natural stratum,means that it does not reproduce or
reflect this organisation,is not determined by it in any
way.Instead society finds in it a series of condi-
tions,supports and stimuli,stops and obstacles"[25].

The magma of social imaginary significations has always a
non-necessary character in respect to the
biological/natural stratum.The "natural" fact of being-male
and being-female is transformed into an "imaginary social
signification of being-man and being-woman which refers to
the magma of all the imaginary significations of the
society considered.Neither this transformation itself nor
the specific tenor of the signification in question can be
deduced,produced or derived on the basis of the natural
fact,which is always and everywhere the same"[26].

Thus the social "emerges as the other with respect to na-
ture,as the creation of the social imaginary"[27].

At the same time the modality of magma implies a similar

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24. IIS,p.356

25. IIS,p.234

26. IIS,p.229

27. IIS,p.354

indeterminacy in the emergence of the new in history.

Traditional thought,within an identitary/ensemblist framework, has conceived historical time through the schemata of "causality,final aim,or logical consequence".All three imply that "succession can only be thought from the point of view of identity (because) causality,finality and implication are merely amplified and unfolded forms of an enriched identity;they aim at positing differences as merely apparent and at finding,at another level,the same to which these differences belong"[28].

For Castoriadis,on the contrary,"what is given in and through history is not the determined sequence of the determined but the emergence of radical otherness,immanent creation,non-trivial novelty[29]...History is the emergence of the radical otherness or of the absolutely new".[30]

This "immanent creation and radical otherness" implies a different conception of time.If time is seen as a scheme of succession between already given entities,"if it is a return of the same either as the unalterable cyclicity of becoming -as in ancient cosmologies- or simply as repetition in and through causal determination...(then) the mode of co-belonging of its parts or moments is the same as the mode of co-belonging of the parts or points of space"[31].

This spacialisation of time,its reduction to extension,is impossible to be transcended as long as one "maintains the traditional determinations of being -that is,being as determinacy"[32].To avoid this reduction what has to be introduced is precisely "radical otherness,that is absolute

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28. IIS,p.172

29. IIS,p.184

30. IIS,p.172

31. IIS,pp.188-9

32. IIS,p.192

creation...What emerges (has to be seen as) not in what ex-
ists,not even "logically" or as an already constituted
"potentiality"...not as the actualisation of pre-determined
possibilities (the distinction between power and act is
only the most subtle and most profound manner of suppress-
ing time)."[33]

In this way "time is not simply and not only in-
determination but the springing forth of determina-
tions,or,better yet,of other eide -images-figures-
forms".And it is as "this time,the time of otherness and
alteration that we have to think of history".[34]

Thus while "there can be and,in fact,there always is a
persistence or a subsistence of certain
determinations",there never exists,in history,a
full,principal,or essential determinacy.Historical change
is characterised -for Castoriadis- by an essential
indetermination[35].

The way this indetermination appears in actual history is
through the "creative capacity of the anonymous collec-
tivity,as it is manifested clearly,for example,in and
through the creation of language,of family forms,of
morality,of ideas,etc."[36]

SOCIAL IMAGINARY SIGNIFICATIONS
AND THE INDIVIDUAL UNCONSCIOUS

The question may arise as to whether the social imaginary
significations Castoriadis refers to exist in any other way
than through the identitary formations of "legein" or
"teukhein" they produce.

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33. IIS,p.190

34. ibid.

35. IIS,p.199

36. C.Castoriadis,"Psychanalyse et Politique" (1987),in Le Monde mor-
cele, Paris:Seuil,1990,p.148

Castoriadis **does** indicate a level where these significa-
tions exist "as such".This is the level of the individual
unconscious which -the unconscious- has moreover the
modality of a magma:

Castoriadis stresses that for Freud,the unconscious "is
unaware of time and contradiction:the unconscious con-
stitutes a "place" where (identitary) time -as determined
by and as itself determining an ordered succession- does
not exist,where contraries do not exclude one another...on
the essential stuff of the unconscious,the repre-
sentation,we can say practically nothing if we confine our-
selves to our customary logic.The unconscious exists only
as an indissociably representative /affective/ intentional
flux"[37].

For Castoriadis the modality of this representative
flux,has all the qualities he attributes to the modality of
"magma".(Indeed it could be said thatitis the unconscious
that primarily serves him as a model for the notion of
"magma"):

"The a-logic of the unconscious is something quite dif-
ferent from the juxtaposition of several different ex-
emplars of the same logic.The unconscious does not belong
to the domain of identitary logic and determination.A
product and continuing manifestation of the radical im-
agination,its mode of being is that of magma".[38]

Having specified the identity of modalities between the
Freudian unconscious and his "magma",Castoriadis proceeds
to present a theorisation -based on Freud- of the develop-
ment of the psyche in the early years of life.

He considers that there is an inherent,and ir-
reducible,ability of the psyche for the creation of
representations:

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37. IIS,p.274

38. IIS,p.281

"Psychical life can exist only if the psyche is this original capacity to make representations arise,and,"at the start",a "first" representation which must,in a certain manner,contain within itself the possibility of organising all representations...hence in as embryonic a form as one may like,the organising elements of the psychical world that will later develop,with decisive additions coming from outside but which are,nevertheless,received and elaborated in accordance with the requirements posited by the original representation"[39].

This capacity to make representations arise,Castoriadis terms "radical imagination":"One must admit that originary phantasmatisation,which I term the radical imagination,pre-exists and presides over every organisation of drives,even the most primitive one,that it is the condition for the drive to attain psychical existence"[40].

This originary phantasmatisation precedes the emergence of an "I":"the unconscious intention is the global situation staged by the phantasy in the fundamental modality of the lack of distinction between the subject and the non-subject"[41].

In its initial,monadic state,the psyche is totally enclosed to itself."Unconscious desire is fulfilled ipso facto as soon as it arises,fulfilled on the only level that matters,that of the unconscious representation"[42].

However,this monadic state is soon breached.The break-up leans on somatic needs,mainly hunger: "An "outside" is created so that the psyche can cast off into it whatever it does not want,whatever there is no room for in the psyche,non-sense or negative meaning,the breast as ab-

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39. IIS,p.283

40. IIS,p.287

41. IIS,p.286

42. IIS,p.298

sent,the bad breast[43] ...At the same time,the other side of the breast,the present or gratifying breast,continues to submit to the schema of inclusion"[44].

These two sides are gradually "connected to a third entity which is the ground of both of them without being identical with either of them"[45].This third entity is the other person,usually the mother.

Through the "other",the whole world of social significations is transmitted to the child.The other "speaks to the child and speaks of himself both in his words and his behaviour,his corporeal manner of being and of doing,of touching,of taking and handling the child,he embodies,presentifies,figures the world instituted by society and refers to this world in an indefinite diversity of ways"[46].

At this stage identification "ceases to be autistic identification and begins to become transitive identification,the identification with something or someone (generally both at once)"[47].

Thus the "private objects" of cathexis of the psyche are replaced by socially instituted ones:"For the subject,"objects" no longer exist,but instead things and individuals;no longer private signs and words,but a public language"[48].The "proto-pleasure of the psychical monad",the "erotic" pleasure of the "body",are replaced by a "third pleasure",a social one:"the individual can (now) and must be able to find pleasure in modifying the "state of

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43. IIS,p.303

44. IIS,p.304

45. ibid.

46. IIS,p.306

47. IIS,p.307

48. IIS,p.313

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affairs" outside of himself or in the perception of such a "state of affairs".The "nature" of these affairs matters little -on the understanding,of course,that these are social affairs"[49].

This process by means of which the psyche is "forced to replace its "own" or "private" objects of cathexis (including its own "image of itself") by objects which exist and which have worth in and through their social institution,and out of these to create for itself "causes","means" or "supports" of pleasure"[50] is that of sublimation.

However,the "other" is still seen by the infant as a projection of the infant's own imaginary scheme of omnipotence.It is only when the other ceases to be the "origin and master of signification" and is realised that no specific person is,that the social reality as such is established.

This second break-up corresponds to the Oedipus complex,in its most general sense,i.e not only in the form it appears in Western familial institutions:"the encounter with the Oedipal situation sets before the child the unavoidable fact of the institution as the ground of signification and vice versa,and forces him to recognise the other and human others as subjects of autonomous desires,which can interrelate with one another independently of him to the point of excluding him from this circuit"[51].Thus the Oedipus for Castoriadis corresponds to the establishment of the social origin of meaning.

After Oedipus,sublimation and identification continue the socialisation of the psyche:"sublimation is in each case specific...the institution of society renders obligatory

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49. IIS,p.315

50. IIS,p.312

51. IIS,p.310

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for the innumerable individuals of society particular ob-
jects of sublimation to the exclusion of others,and these
objects are caught up in relations with one another which
not only give them their signification but make the life of
society possible as a relatively coherent and organised
life"[52].

The irreducibility of the social
to the individual and vice versa

The social imaginary significations are incor-
porated,thus,once the initial "monadic core" has been
breached,within the psyche.However,Castoriadis stresses
that these significations remain irreducible to the
individual:

"The world of instituted significations cannot be reduced
to actual individual representations or to their
"common","average" or "typical part".Significations are ob-
viously not what individuals represent to them-
selves,consciously or unconsciously,or what they think.They
are that by means of which and on the basis of which in-
dividuals are formed as social individuals...This entails
-and,to be sure,even requires- that part of the social im-
aginary significations has an actual "equivalent" in the
individuals (in their conscious or unconscious repre-
sentation,their behaviour,etc.) and that the other can be
"translated" into them,either directly or indirectly.But
this is something quite different from their "actual
presence" or their existing "in person" in the repre-
sentation of individuals"[53].

It is only because of the institution of society that the
complementarity of the individuals in society can be ac-
counted for:

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52. IIS,p.318

53. IIS,p.366

"There is no serf without a lord,and vice versa...this complementarity can exist only through instituted significations (it is an aspect of this signification or belongs to it).The instituted signification (here the relation of serfdom) is not the "sum" of these complementary significations;it is because the signification is instituted that these representations exist ...and that they are complementary"[54].

Thus,though social imaginary significations do exist within the individual psyche,they do so only in a fragmented way.To become intelligible,to acquire a proper meaning,they have to be posed in their totality,which refers to the social as an irreducible level.The social imaginary significations therefore,are not reducible to the (individual) unconscious.

On the other hand,the construction of a social ego does not imply that the individual becomes totally assimilable to his/hers social position or role:

"The institution of society can never absorb the psyche in so far as it is radical imagination -and,moreover,this is a positive condition for the existence and the functioning of society.The constitution of the social individual does not and cannot abolish the psyche's creativity ,its perpetual alteration,the representative flux as the continuous emergence of other representations"[55].

The social imposes as an organisation,a construction,a structuring within the pre-social flow of representations,of a social "ego".Yet the overall structure of the psyche remains irreducible to this structuring,and allows the emergence of radical alterity even within the social significations.

Thus,for Castoriadis,"society and psyche are inseparable

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54. IIS,p.367

55. IIS,p.321

and irreducible one to the other"[56]. Indeed, the relationship between the social and the individual is a complex one, "which cannot be thought under the categories of the whole and its parts, the set and its elements, the universal and the particular, etc. In and through its own creation, society creates the individual and the individuals in and through which alone can actually exist. But society is not a property of composition; neither is it a whole containing something more and different from its parts... (it is) a type of relationship which has no analogy elsewhere, has to be reflected upon for itself, starting from itself and as a model of itself."[57]

THE THEORISATION OF AUTONOMY

The above theorisation of the social and the individual is complemented by Castoriadis' theorisation of "autonomy".

"Autonomy" is defined, on the level of the individual, as "the possibility that the activity proper to the "subject" becomes an "object", as "the possibility of putting oneself into question".[58] "The autonomy of the individual consists in the instauration of an other relationship between the present and the history which made the individual such as it is. This relationship makes it possible for the individual to ...look back upon himself, to reflect on the reason for his thoughts and the motives of his acts guided by the elucidation of his desire and aiming at truth".[59]

This "objectification" and "putting oneself into question" represents the specificity of human subjectivity, which has

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56. IIS,p.320

57. C.Castoriadis,"Power,Politics,Autonomy"(1988) (thereafter PPA),in Philosophy,politics,autonomy,Oxford:Oxford University Press,1990, p.145

58. C.Castoriadis,"The state of the subject today"(1986)(thereafter SST),translated in Thesis Eleven,No 24,1989,p.26

59. PPA,p.165

to be distinguished from simple consciousness or self-referentiality:"mere "consciousness" is far from being able to do (this) on its own:one can perfectly well conceive of a consciousness that remains a simple spectator,recording the processes that unfold in individual life".[60]

"Self objectification" can also be translated into action: "I call capacity for deliberate activity or will the pos-sibility for a human being to make the results of his/hers reflective processes enter into the relays that condition his/her acts"[61].

The connection between the mode of being of a "magma" and the theorisation of autonomy is that the former provides the possibility of the latter:"If ensemblist-identitary logic totally exhausted what exists,there could never be any question of rupture of any kind,and even more of autonomy.Everything would be deductible/producible from the "already given"...A subject existing totally within a ensemblist-identitary universe,not only it could not change anything,it could not even know that it exists with such a universe[62]...It is because the human being is imagination (non-functional imagination) that it can posit as an "entity" something that is not so:its own process of thought".[63]

But this possibility of individual self-reflexivity is so-cially and hence historically specific:"Individuals aiming at autonomy cannot appear unless the social-historical field has already altered itself in such a way that it opens a space of interrogation without bounds (without an instituted or revealed truth,for example)".[64]

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60. SST,p.37

61. SST,p.28

62. LM,p.412 (my translation)

63. SST,p.27

64. PPA,p.166

It is only with societies that "put into question their proper institutions and significations"[65],i.e autonomous societies,that autonomous individuals can emerge.

Such societies have appeared only twice in history: "in Greece from the eight century B.C. onward and in Western Europe from the twelfth to thirteen centuries onward".[66]

The political project of autonomy,consequently,is for Castoriadis to "create the institutions which,by being internalised by individuals,facilitate most their accession to their individual autonomy and their effective participation in all forms of explicit power existing in society".[67]

However,autonomy can never lead -either on an individual or a social level- to full transparency: "No society will ever be totally transparent,first because the individuals that make it will never be transparent to themselves,since there can be no question of eliminating the unconscious.Then,because the social element implies not only individual unconsious,nor even simply mutual intersubjective inherencies,(but also) the relationships between persons,both conscious and unconscious,which could never be given in its entirety as a content to all,unless we were to introduce the double myth of an absolute knowledge possessed equally by all:the social implies something that can never be given as such".[68]

Castoriadis discusses also historical instances when autonomy is manifested,through the interrogation of past and creation of new institutional features by the community,as the Paris commune,the 1905 creation of Soviets in Russia as also the 1917 factory committees,the 1956 Hungarian revolution.These new institutional features were

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65. LM,p.411

66. PPA,p.167

67. PPA,p.173

68. IIS,p.111

neither theorised "beforehand" nor could have been predetermined.[69]

CASTORIADIS' FUNDAMENTAL CONTRIBUTION
AND QUESTIONS OPENED

Castoriadis provides an exhaustive theorisation (from a formal ontological point of view) of the kind of modality a radical openness indeterminacy of the social entails.This is the modality of magma allowing the theorisation of the emergence of "the radically other,of immanent creation,of non-trivial novelty"[70] and hence providing an answer to the question of history.

The modality of magma allows also the possibility of non determined individual agency.Castoriadis provides,in addition,a specific theorisation of what autonomy would entail at both an individual and social level.

Thus Castoriadis challenges the central assumption behind rationalist/objectivist structural theories,that of closed,fully determinable social structural entities and provides an alternative which also answers the questions of agency and history.His contribution is,hence,fundamental.[71]

However,once the general lines of Castoriadis' theorisation have been accepted,certain questions emerge.

The question of totality

Castoriadis continuously refers to a society,considering the magma of imaginary significations as determining one totality,that of society.

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69. Interview in Esprit,Feb. 1977

70. As also the theorisation of time as not reducible to a spatiality.

71. As we saw,Laclau and Mouffe also indicated a similar approach.However, Castoriadis' theorisation of the modality of magma is much more exhaustive than a simple reference to the "meaningful" nature of the social and its consequent "openness";moreover Castoriadis does offer a theorisation of the subject and of "autonomy".

Although he does not particularly dwell on this point,he nowhere recognises a possible existence of different magmas of signification within a particular spatiotemporal co-ordinates,or,to put it differently,he does not consider "partial" structures of a "society" to correspond to distinct "magmas".

For example,the economy in capitalism is seen as "representing the economic signification which in certain societies had emerged first as important and then as central and decisive."[72]Capitalism,then,is not a magma of significations in its own right,is not a relatively autonomous totality but represents the economic signification of a greater totality,of a society.

However,a "society" can be defined as such only in the presence of a degree of closure vis-a-vis "other" societies,a closure that cannot be assumed but has to be demonstrated.

A "society" can be defined generally,i.e transhistorically,only in the context of transhistorical constancy of certain elements (as the "functions" in functionalist approaches are,for example) and Castoriadis,as we saw,explicitly denies the presence of any such elements.

Moreover,a reference to a society as a general totality implies a pre-established harmony between its different parts,which makes difficult the conceptualisation of contradictions and conflict (as also the possibility of having structures more dominant than others) and Castoriadis would be the last to deny their existence.

One of the important contributions of structuralism was the emphasis it placed on the possibility of analysing the social through a reference to many structures,irreducible to one another and not necessarily belonging to a greater totality.

Castoriadis does not have to depart from this position but

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72. IIS,p.362,emphasis added

simply to improve it,theorising also,as he does,structures as open.

Therefore it may be that particular "segments" of a world of significations represent relatively autonomous and self-sustainable magmas of significations,not necessarily belonging to a greater totality.Indeed,the modality of magmas implies that any cohesiveness and closure has to be established in every particular case.

Moreover,the theorisation of magmas and the recognition that the unconscious also has such a modality allows precisely the possibility of theorising a simultaneous determination of the subject by a plurality of magmas.Many magmas of social imaginary significations (not necessarily in harmony with each other) can be seen to operate on the individual psyche and to fuse with one another on the level of the unconscious.Such "fusion" becomes possible only because a magma is never fully closed.

Thus we can consider the magmas of social imaginary significations as corresponding to partial social structures rather than to an overall "society",without this changing anything for the theorisation of a magma of significations,nor the implications drawn out of it.

The question of the locus
of social imaginary significations

If Castoriadis' reference to a totality can be seen as a simple lack of precision,the case of the level we are to understand the magma of social imaginary significations as operating is not so straightforward.

Social imaginary significations are presented by Castoriadis as operating behind and beyond the identitary aspects of social doing/representing ("legein" and "teukhein"),behind and beyond individuals and things,assuring the always indeterminate and open nature of this doing and representing.

In his discussion of the "institution" of society,

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however,Castoriadis is not very forthcoming about the level of operation (of "existence") of these significations as such.[73]

The reference to the institution of society,to the instituting instance,could be taken to introduce something like Derrida's différance (or the Heideggerian Dasein),subverting any closure but as such not existing,a kind of negative essence,or,in Derrida's words,as "the preopening of ontico-ontological difference".If so,we are faced with the application of a transcendental ontology of the Derridian/Heideggerian type within the field of the social.

It is doubtful,however,whether Castoriadis would endorse an explicitly Derridian stand.Moreover,as we saw he does indicate at least one level at which the SIS exist as such -i.e. as a magma:the level of the (individual) unconscious which also has the modality of magma[74].

Could it be,then,that it is because the social imaginary significations exist -in some way- within the unconscious and because the unconscious has the modality of magma that significations and the social in general also has this modality?

Could it be,in other words,that the openness the modality of the magma introduces to the social,passes through the mode of existence of the social within the individual and specifically within the level of the unconscious?

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73. For example,Castoriadis writes: "The world of social significations is to be thought of not as an irreal copy of a real world;nor as formed by that which is "expressible" in individual representations...not,finally,as a system of relations which would be added onto subjects and objects which themselves are given fully and which would modify,in this or that historical context,their properties,effects or behaviour.We are to think of the world of social significations as the primary,inaugural,irreducible positing of the social-historical and of the social imaginary as it manifests itself in each case in a given society."(IIS,p.368)

74. though,as we saw,Castoriadis insists that "the world of instituted significations cannot be reduced to actual individual representations"

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Castoriadis does indicate the possibility of such an interpretation.He does not,however,commit himself to it.

Is the social primarily significations?

Even if this interpretation is accepted,though,further questions remain:

Can we confine the indeterminacy and openness the mode of being of magma postulates only to "significations"? Correlatively,is the social "open" only because social imaginary significations have the modality of magma?

Referring to the psyche,Castoriadis recognises that the unconscious is an "indissociably representative/ affective/ intentional flux" and accepts that "I have spoken mainly the language of representation because...it is the aspect about which we can more easily and directly speak."[75]Yet he does reduce the social determination of the unconscious to the incorporation of the social imaginary significations alone.

Indeed Castoriadis often gives the impression that for him the social is simply the actualisation of some "central imaginary significations",which however "imaginary" and "materialised" in practice they may be,they remain a kind of ideas,a weltanschaung.[76]

The possibility exists,though,that the social may operate on the structuring of the psyche in general and of the unconscious in particular in some other way as well.Social determinations may exist which,though expressible through

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75. C.Castoriadis,"Fait et a faire" in G.Busino et al,Autonomie et Autotransformation de la societe:La philosophie militante de C.Castoriadis,Geneve:Droz,1989,p.476

76. This for example is the case in his presentation of significations "giving a meaning" to the social world,this being the "religious core" of institution of society ("Institution de societe et religion" (1982),"Domaines de l'homme",op.cit.,p.369) or his reference to capitalism as corresponding to a central core of significations indicating "the unlimited expansion of the "rational" matrix" ("Le regime social de la Russie" (1978),"Domaines...",p.197).

representations on the level of the individual psyche,in their "social" form do not originate from and are not transmitted as representations.

Correlatively,if we want to theorise social practice and social action and its specificity -a specificity that Bourdieu,for example,indicates- within Castoriadis' scheme we can only see it as the actualisation of social imaginary significations in practice.

Castoriadis does not present a detailed and elaborated account of the ways in which the social "operates" on the individual psyche -and hence the ways in which the social is reproduced through individual action in practice.He limits his analysis to the very first years in life.Beyond these he simply refers to the "psyche's capacity of sublimation" and its consequent more full socialisation.But whether these processes involve something more than simply an internalisation of social imaginary significations to a greater degree is not clarified.

The possibility exists,therefore,that a more detailed theorisation of the ways in which the social determines the individual and a corresponding theorisation of social practice and social action could expand Castoriadis' reference on significations and allow a more comprehensive theorisation of practice.

The question of activeness and autonomy

Castoriadis provides a theorisation of autonomy as the possibility of "putting oneself into question",a possibility linked to society itself being able to question its "institution".

However,this theorisation of autonomy seems to refer to the highest possible degree of self-reflectiveness and self-objectification (in the sense that this reflectiveness addresses the greatest possible number of determinations) both at an individual and at a social level.

The "activeness" of the social actor which hermeneutically

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oriented micro sociology highlights (and which Giddens and Bourdieu have tried to theorise) seems to refer rather to a self-reflexivity of a more instrumental type,one that does not imply any "putting into question" but rather the successful use of the existing norms or rules.Castoriadis' own earlier work repeatedly focuses on creativity at a "micro" level,as for example in the case of the workers in a factory creating new forms of organisation or resistance.This "creation",though it presupposes some degree of "putting into question",it doesn't obviously refer to a questioning of the totality of instituted society.

Thus we have to distinguish "degrees of autonomy",besides autonomy in the strict sense that Castoriadis theorises,and to theorise these degrees,something that remains to be elaborated.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Castoriadis theorises in an exhaustive way a modality of the social,alternative to fully determined,closed structural entities.He indicates the consequences of this theorisation for the conceptualisation of the emergence of the new in history and for the theorisation of autonomy,which he also provides.

Thus the move beyond structural/objectivist accounts of the social that Derrida may be seen as indicating and Laclau and Mouffe are also proposing in a less developed way,is further advanced.

However,the mode of existence of the "magmas of social imaginary significations" and the limitation of the social to these significations remain problematic.How do social imaginary significations exist if not as a kind of negative essence behind the possibility of the social? In addition,is the openness of the social limited to the mode of being of these significations?

Moreover,a full account of the ways the social determines the individual; a theorisation of social action that would

allow to conceptualise how the openness the modality of magma implies is manifested; and a theorisation of activeness -i.e. not of autonomy in the strict sense- from the part of the actors,all these remain to be further elaborated.

Regarding the way the magmas of social imaginary significations exist,Castoriadis himself offers a possible interpretation in his recognition that the individual unconscious also has the modality of magma.It could be argued,then,that it is because the social exists on this unconscious level that it can be said to have this modality,thus avoiding any transcendentalism.

It is possible then,that,if we explore more fully the ways in which the social interacts with the individual unconscious,we could both support this interpretation and address also the other questions Castoriadis' theory generates.

A DIRECTION FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The path from Derrida to Laclau & Mouffe to Castoriadis indicates a move from a general theorisation of openness" and indeterminacy to the affirmation that it is the social as such that is characterised by this openness.This affirmation corresponds to a theorisation of the modality of the social as **different** from that of fully determined and closed structural entities.

Once such an alternative modality has been theorised -in its most developed form by Castoriadis- and its necessary implications for the emergence of the new in history and the autonomy of the subject have been recognised,the break with structural/objectivist theories of the social and their problems can be considered as complete.(Structuration theories which identified the problems but did not address the question of the modality of the social have been unable to effect this break.)

However,the authors we refer to have neglected somewhat the theorisation of the ways in which the social determines the individual and is reproduced by individual (social) action,i.e. precisely these aspects the theories of structuration have focused on.

Moreover,the way in which this alternative modality is to be seen to operate -to "exist"- in "reality",remains unclarified.How is the social to be seen as "meaningful" as Laclau and Mouffe assert or as "a magma of imaginary significations" as Castoriadis asserts,without its reduction to ideas? How can the openness",the "radical indeterminacy" be seen to operate if not at some transcendental level,behind the positivity of social phenomena and yet somehow determining these phenomena?

If a resort to a transcendental level is to be avoided as also any reification of the social and if the social is seen as primarily existing within and through the in-

dividuals,then maybe the above questions can be answered precisely through a more detailed elaboration of a theory of structuration,i.e. of the modalities of production and reproduction of the social through the individuals.If we want to theorise a certain "openness" and indeterminacy in a non transcendental way,it has to be located within the reproduction of the social through individual action.

Obviously,such a theory of structuration cannot be like Giddens': it has to acknowledge the social construction of the individual.More importantly,it has also to be oriented towards the conceptualisation of the modality of the social as "open".

Castoriadis indicates a possible path such a theory may follow:it is by addressing the question of the unconscious,its modality and its social -or not- nature.

To pursue this path,we turn to the actual psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche in general and of the unconscious in particular,from Freud's original formulations to later developments.

PART III: FREUD AND PSYCHOANALYSIS:
FROM A THEORY OF THE PSYCHE TO A THEORY OF THE SOCIAL

The psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche has,as we
will argue,specific insights to offer to a theorisation of
the interface between the individual psyche and the social.

This is not an uncontroversial assertion: psychoanalysis
has repeatedly proclaimed its uniqueness,its irreducibility
to a sociology and its indissociable link with analytic
practice.However,if the psychoanalytic approach allows   a
theorisation of the psyche in general,as it claims,it can-
not avoid facing,sooner or later,the question of the social
(no doubt within analytic practice as well).

In what follows we shall concentrate on these elements of
psychoanalytic theory that are of interest in the context
of the interface of the individual and the social (before
proceeding to theorise precisely this interface).The ac-
count of psychoanalysis presented is,therefore, a limited
and partial one,geared to a particular aim.

Freud's own writings will be used as the base reference
throughout not only because of his being the founder of
psychoanalytic   discourse   -of   an   immense "field of
discursivity" in Foucault's words- but also because his
work remains the most comprehensive and profound account of
psychoanalytic theory and its implications.While others
have made important contributions to particular areas (and
we will refer to such contributions that are of interest to
the   present   analysis) none has matched the amazing
breadth,insight and profundity of Freud's own work.

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(VIII). ELEMENTS FROM THE PSYCHOANALYTIC
THEORISATION OF THE PSYCHE

(A). THE SPECIFICITY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

If we were to indicate in one word Freud's most important contribution,this word would undoubtedly be the "unconscious"[1].

The notion of "something" beyond consciousness,of an unconscious,is not alien to the history of Western thought.Specifically in the modern period,from the 18th century onwards,many references to an unconscious can be found[2].Indeed,we noted above that the modern notion of the social necessarily introduces a level of phenomena that,though produced by individuals,are nonetheless to a certain extent opaque to them.The modern notion of the social necessitates,therefore,a certain notion of the unconscious.[3]

However,Freud sees the unconscious as a specific and irreducible level of human psychical functioning.It is the theorisation of this specificity and irreducibility that forms Freud's particular contribution.

1.THE PSYCHE AS ALWAYS REPRESENTED

Freud introduces the unconscious as one of three levels of psychical functioning,the other two being the Preconscious and Consciousness or the Conscious (Ucs,Pcs,Cs).This distinction came to be known as the first Freudian topography

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1. J.Laplanche & J.B.Pontalis,The Language of Psychoanalysis (1967), London:Karnac Books,1988 (Thereafter LP),p.474

2. a detailed account can be found in L.Whyte,The unconscious before Freud,London:Tavistock,1962

3. Foucault has remarked that "the unconscious and the human sciences are,at an archaeological level,contemporaries" (M.Foucault,The Order of things,London:Tavistock,1974,p.326).

of the psyche.

The central distinction,however,is between the Unconscious and the Conscious,the Preconscious "sharing the characteristics of the system Cs"[4].

Consciousness

For Freud "the process of something becoming conscious is above all linked with the perceptions which our sense-organs receive from the external world"[5].But "in men internal processes in the ego also acquire the quality of consciousness.This is the work of the function of speech,which brings material in the ego into a firm connection with mnemic residues of visual,but more particularly of auditory perceptions"[6].

Hence consciousness is necessarily linked with perception,either external or internal and the residues of perception.Consciousness is always connected,in other words,to a certain kind of "representatives".

The unconscious

The unconscious is presented by Freud as primarily a field of energy in continuous movement,a field of force.It is the field of the energy of the instincts,of the drives (triebe): "The chief characteristic of these processes (of the primary process in the dreamwork) is that the whole stress is laid upon making the cathecting energy mobile and capable of discharge;the content and the proper meaning of psychical elements,to which the cathexes are attached are

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4. S.Freud,The Unconscious (1915) ,Penguin Freud Library (P.F.L.) 11, Harmondsworth:Penguin,1984 (thereafter Unc),p.175. Edition used for Freud's works:Penguin/Pelican Freud Library (P.F.L.),fifteen volumes, which reprints the Standard edition in a paperback form.

5. S.Freud,An outline of psychoanalysis (1938),(thereafter Outline), P.F.L. 15,Harmondsworth:Penguin,1986 ,p.395

6. ibid.

treated as of little consequence."[7]

Even this field of energy,however,Freud insists that should be always seen as connected with "representations".He uses the term "Reprasentanz" (representative/representation) and the term "besetz" (to cathect;literally to occupy,with a connotation of force,as in military occupation) to indicate that the instinctual energy is always connected with "ideas,objects",that it employs "presentations" deriving from memory traces,as its "inhibited energy strives to find an outlet"[8]:

"An instinct can never become the object of consciousness -only the idea that represents the instinct can.Even in the unconsious,an instinct cannot be represented otherwise than by an idea.If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state,we could know nothing about it.When we nevertheless speak of a repressed instinctual impulse,the looseness of the phraseology is a harmless one.We can only mean an instinctual impulse the ideational representative of which ("den Trieb reprasen-tierende Vorstellung") is unconscious,for nothing else comes into consideration".[9]

Thus,despite the fact that the unconscious is energy,it operates always through a connection with "representatives" (reprasentanz).As Ricoeur remarks:

"At a certain point the question of force and the question of meaning coincide;that point is where instincts are indi-cated,are made manifest,are given in a psychical repre-sentative,i.e. in something psychical that "stands for" them;all the derivatives in consciousness are merely trans-formations of this psychical representative,of this primal

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7. S.Freud,The interpretation of Dreams (1900),P.F.L. 4,Harmondsworth: Penguin,1976 (thereafter Dreams),p.765

8. Dreams,p.765

9. Unc,p.179

"standing for".To designate this point,Freud coined the ex-
cellent expression Reprasentanz.Instincts,which are
energy,are "represented" by something psychical.But we must
not speak of representation in the sense of Vorstel-
lung,i.e. an "idea" of something,for an idea is itself
derived from this "representative" which,before repre-
senting things -the world,one's own body,the unreal- stands
for instincts as such,presents them purely and simply."[10]

Castoriadis,as we saw,also stresses this point:"the uncon-
scious exists only as an indissociably representative/
affective/ intentional flux"[11]

Affects

There is,however, a case in which psychical energy seems
to appear as such,i.e. without a "representative".It is the
case of "emotions","feelings","affects" which are
manifested in consciousness.

These affective states are manifestations of the instincts
in the same way that "ideational representatives" are,the
difference being that "ideas are cathexes -basically of
memory traces- whilst affects and emotions correspond to
processes of discharge,the final manifestations of which
are perceived as feelings"[12].

However,even in the case of affects Freud refers to

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10. P.Ricoeur,Freud and philosophy,New Haven:Yale University Press,
1970,p.135
The term Reprasentanz -which has been translated as "representative"
or "presentation" - indicates precisely this necessary representation
of an instinct in the psyche,even in the unconscious.The term Vorstel-
lung -a term with a philosophical past,for example in Kant or Schopen-
hauer,usually rendered as "ideational" or "idea" - is reserved for
elements derived from memory traces,i.e from perception, elements
which can also form the representatives of the instincts.As Ricoeur
indicates,however,the instinct,even in the absence of such a Vorstel-
lung cannot be present as such but only through a Reprasentanz.

11. C.Castoriadis,"The imaginary institution of society" (IIS),
op.cit.,p.274

12. Unc,p.181

"representatives" connected to them.Affects are connected to representatives in both consciousness and the unconscious (though in a different way than ideas being directly cathected).Indeed one possible difference between conscious and unconscious affects is the repression of the "proper representative" of an affect and the connection of the affect to another "idea" in order to become conscious.

We can conclude that the psyche,both on the level of consciousness but also -and more importantly- on the level of the unconscious,is always -and unavoidably- represented.

The origin of representations

Where do representations come from? Where does psychical energy find the "representatives" it employs?

We saw that Freud uses the term "Reprasentanz" to denote representation in general.He uses,however,also the term "Vorstellung",which he reserves for "ideas" derived from memory traces.He distinguishes further between "sach-vorstellung" and "wort-vorstellung",rendered as thing presentation and word presentation respectively.Both are seen as originating out of cathexis of memory traces (erinerungsspuren) which in turn originate from perception.In the case of word presentations these traces are connected with words as well as with "images" of objects,while thing presentations are connected only with "images".

Freud is not explicit about the nature of the perceptual engraving on the surface of the memory.It seems that there are grounds to suggest,though,that even in the case of thing presentations he does not uphold an empiricist notion of direct,immediate and unproblematic engraving of outside "objects" on the "inside" of the psyche[13].

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13. Laplanche and Pontalis,for ex.,argue that for Freud,"the memory trace is simply a particular arrangement of facilitations,so organised that one route is followed in preference to another"(LP,p.248)

However unclarified the actual mechanism of creation of memory traces or the precise form of a "sach-vorstellung" may be, it is clear that for Freud both thing and word presentations come from the "outside" of the psyche through perception, even when they refer to the unconscious.

Do we have to infer that, consequently, at the beginning, before any Vorstellungen can be supplied by memory, the unconscious and psychical energy in general exist in a state of pure energy, as a "pure" field of energy?

The same question about the original state of the unconscious faced Freud regarding repression. For repression to operate, "something" to attract the contents of consciousness which are to be repressed is needed. Therefore the unconscious has to be already "there" before any operation of repression.

Freud considers, therefore, that in order to make subsequent repressions possible, there has to exist "a primal repression, a first phase of repression, which consists in the psychical (ideational) representative of the instinct being denied entrance into the conscious."[14]

In this primal repression "we are dealing with an unconscious idea which has as yet received no cathexis from the Pcs. and therefore cannot have that cathexis withdrawn from it". It is "an anticathexis by means of which the system Pcs protects itself from the pressure upon it of the unconscious idea"[15].

Thus the possibility of an "unconscious idea" which does not originate in consciousness, but it is already there in the beginning is introduced. Indeed the notion of primal repression has no other function in Freudian theory than to denote precisely this fact. In itself it caries no explanatory content other than to indicate that the uncon-

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14. S.Freud,Repression (1915),P.F.L. 11,p.147

15. ibid.,p.184

scious exists as repressed before any elements perceived through consciousness are repressed.

Therefore the unconscious can be said to be "represented" in the psyche even before memory traces are cathected to provide thing or word presentations.As Ricoeur remarks:"primal repression means that we are always in the mediate,in the already expressed,the already said"[16].

The same assumption is made by Freud when he refers to primal phantasies (primal scene,castration, intra-uterine existence) as phantasies operating "regardless of the personal experience of different subjects".

Thus we are faced with two kinds of "representatives" in the unconscious.On the one hand the ones deriving from memory traces,either sach or wort vorstellungen.On the other the "primal" representatives,those operating in the origin,the very beginning,manifested in primal phantasies or primal repression.

Yet within Freud's discussion of the representatives of the instincts there is nowhere established a distinction in quality between representatives operating through memory and the ones "already there".It is as if the innate "representatives" of the psyche are of the same nature as the ones acquired through memory traces.If the two categories can be distinguished, is not because of a qualitative difference but because of a difference in origins.

In fact we are nowhere faced with any primal representatives as such.The representatives of the instincts as manifested through consciousness can almost always be seen as coming through memory traces,attributable to some past experience,however early.Even the case of primal phantasies can be seen as referring more to a specific structure organising the contents of the unconscious,rather as having specific contents[17].

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16. Ricoeur,"Freud and Philosophy",op.cit.,p.141

Jung,Klein,Lacan,Castoriadis on representations

To further clarify the question of primal representatives we shall briefly refer to the contributions of Jung,Klein and Lacan and Castoriadis in this respect.

Jung takes up this primal stratum and accords it a much more extended role.He considers it a "collective unconscious" beneath the personal unconscious,in which past experiences of the human race are "stored".The collective unconscious is the source of the "archetypes","inborn forms of intuition,of perception and apprehension,which are the necessary a priori determinants of all psychic processes"[18]

These archetypes are connected with the instincts,they are "simply the forms which the instincts assume"[19].

For Jung these archetypes continue to have the structural character that can be attributed to Freud's primal phantasies.They define the structure of representations rather than the representations themselves:

"The archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such.They are very varied structures which all point to one essentially "irrepresentable" basic form.The latter is characterised by certain formal elements and by certain fundamental meanings,although they can be grasped only approximately"[20]

Jung,however,extends the scope of these archetypes to cover almost the totality of the psychic dispositions,the

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17. J.Laplanche & J.B.Pontalis,"Fantasy and the origins of sexuality", The international journal of psychoanalysis,V.49 (1968),p.17

18. C.G.Jung,"Instinct and the Unconscious"(1919) in Collected Works V.8, London:Routledge,1960,p.133

19. ibid.,p.157

20. C.G.Jung,"On the nature of the psyche"(1947) in "Collected Works" V.8,op.cit.,p.213

development of the sexes (in his concept of the "anima"), birth,death,parenthood,God,as well as conceptual elements such as "chaotic multiplicity and order","duality",the opposition of light and dark,upper and lower,right and left,the union of opposites in a third, the quaternity (square,cross), rotation (circle,sphere) and finally the centring process and a radial arrangement"[21].In fact,in his own words,"there is not a single important idea or view that does not possess historical antecedents.Ultimately they are all formed on primordial archetypal forms whose concreteness dates from a time when consciousness did not think,but only perceived"[22].

Obviously,this assertion is far removed from Freud's own,who even in the case of primal phantasies was reluctant to assume an outright pre-perception origin.It provides a conception of human psyche as predetermined in its essentials and its development which contradicts the plasticity Freud saw the drives as having,as well as the importance of acquired presentations for the representatives of the instincts.Yet,it rests on enough material to emphasise the existence of certain innate structures and symbolic predispositions of the psyche.

M.Klein,investigating the very first years of life,indicates that there may be "private symbols",before the actual acquisition of socially derived ones.The infant is seen as having an innate capacity to produce unconscious phantasies,related both to external situations (the breast,the mother,etc.) and to internal ones coming from the function of the organism.These phantasies form the basis on which symbol formation develops as the child grows up.Externally acquired symbols gradually take the place of the earlier,"private" symbols of the phantasies.Even these

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21. ibid.,p.203

22. C.G.Jung,"Archetypes of the collective unconscious" (1954) in Collected Works V.9,Part I,London:Routledge,1959,p.33

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earlier symbols,though,are not entirely arbitrary from individual to individual since they relate to essentially the same type of experiences.

In an attempt to systematise the position of the Kleinian School,S.Isaacs considers phantasy to be in general "the mental corollary,the psychic representative of instinct.There is no impulse,no instinctual urge or response which is not experienced as unconscious phantasy".[23]

Initially phantasy is not derived from reality but "enters into the earliest development of the ego in its relation to reality and supports the testing of reality and the development of knowledge of the external world".[24] Gradually,however, the material of phantasy does become derived from reality:At the beginning the reality elements are visual ones[25], to be later expanded to symbols of all kinds.

Symbol formation is for Klein a fundamental step in the development of the human child:"Symbolism is the foundation of all sublimation and of every talent,since it is by way of symbolic equation that things,activities and interests become the subject of libidinal phantasies"[26].

Klein and her followers,therefore,attribute a greater importance to innate,primal capabilities of symbol/phantasy formation as the psychical representative of the instinct than Freud does.Along with Freud,though,they see the content of these phantasies as being smoothly replaced by external elements,symbols or representatives in general.

The distinction between the two levels of representation

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23. S.Isaacs,"The nature and function of phantasy" (1948) in Klein et al,Developments in Psychoanalysis,London:Hogarth Press,1952,p.83

24. ibid.,p.107

25. ibid.,p.105

26. M.Klein,"The importance of symbol-formation in the development of the ego" (1930),in M.Klein,Love,guilt and reparation:works 1921-1945,London:Virago,1988,p.220

has been presented by J.Lacan as that between the imaginary
and the symbolic.The imaginary refers to primary "imagos"
and specifically to the imago of the self which the child
recognises "from the sixth month in its encounter with his
image in the mirror"[27].This marks the "mirror stage" at
which a pre-verbal,pre-symbolic individuality is con-
stituted.To this primary "I"("Moi") operates subsequently
the "symbolic" -the symbolic order mediated through
language- through the "discourse of the other" and creates
a "subject".

Lacan sees the imaginary order as having certain common
elements with processes of identification with a Gestalt in
animals (to which ethological studies refer); yet at the
same time he considers this order as having a specificity,a
"prematuration", in human beings:"the gap opened up by this
prematuration of the imaginary and in which the effects of
the mirror stage proliferate...(allows)... the symbiosis
with the symbolic to occur"[28].

For Lacan the symbolic order is mediated through lan-
guage.Language is not seen as a code but as evoking sub-
jects through meaning:"The function of language is not to
inform but to evoke.What I seek in speech is the response
of the other.What constitutes me as subject is my
question"[29].Language totally shapes the unconscious so
that,for Lacan,the unconscious has the structure of
language: "(for interpretation is based on the fact that)
the unconscious is structured in the most radical way like
a language,that a material operates in it according to cer-
tain laws,which are the same laws as those discovered in

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27. J.Lacan,"Aggresivity in psychoanalysis" (1948) in Ecrits: A selec-
tion (thereafter Ecrits),London:Tavistock,1977,p.18

28. J.Lacan "On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of
psychosis"(1958),Ecrits,p.196

29. J.Lacan,"The function and field of speech and language in
psychoanalysis"(1953),Ecrits,p.86

the study of actual languages"[30].

Lacan is thus the first to draw specific attention to the non-natural but social origin of the externally acquired symbols,i.e to the fact that these symbols do not naturally exist embedded in "things" but that they are constructed within the human community and primarily expressed as language (his attention only to language to the exclusion of other possible symbolic systems does not invalidate this fundamental insight).

It is the symbolic order,therefore,acquired through language,that actually structures the unconscious.The imaginary origins of representations give their place to socially constructed symbolic systems.This transition is,as with the Kleinians,in principle smooth and unproblematic.Despite the difference in names,the two orders,the imaginary and the symbolic,do not represent for Lacan different modalities.

Castoriadis also insists on a primary,innate "capacity to make representations arise",an "originary phantasmatisation (which)...pre-exists and presides over every organisation of drives,even the most primitive one,that it is the condition for the drive to attain psychical existence"[31].This capacity predates therefore also the emergence of an "I",however elementary.Thus it cannot be attributed to a "lack" (against Lacan) or "desire" (against Deleuze and Guattari) since any lack or desire presupposes precisely a subject.Even Freud's primal phantasies,remarks Castoriadis,cannot be really "primary" in the sense that they already presuppose a certain organisation and the distinction between "contents","characters" and "acts" to operate.[32]

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30. J.Lacan,"The direction of treatment and the principles of its power"(1958),Ecrits,p.234

31. Castoriadis,IIS,p.287

32. IIS,p.286

As we saw,Castoriadis also stresses that the representations which replace these original ones are the "social imaginary significations",socially constructed and originating ones.[33]

Freud's reference to primal repression and primal phantasies,Jung's archetypes,Klein's and her follower's primal phantasies,Lacan's imaginary,Castoriadis' original phantasmatisation,all indicate that certain primal representatives of the instincts,lying beyond individual experience and perception do exist.They also indicate that even in the most original,primary state,the field of energy of the (unconscious) psyche is presented through representatives and never "as such".

These primal representatives though,are seen (with the exception of Jung who gives them greater weight) as readily being replaced by ones acquired through perception and the (external) environment.The two levels of representatives are considered as sharing essentially the same modality.As Lacan and Castoriadis have noted,moreover,the environment at the origin of the second category of representatives is not a natural one,but a humanly constructed,a social one.[34]

It can be safely considered,therefore,that

(i) the field of force of the unconscious is always,even in the earliest stages of development,represented in the

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33. For Lacan and Castoriadis the passage from the early,innate representations to the later,socially originating ones,is associated with the Oedipus complex which acquires thus a more general meaning.
Lacan,drawing upon Levi-Strauss' "universal law" of the prohibition of incest,sees the Oedipal crisis as lying "at the origin of the whole process of the cultural subordination of man"(Ecrits,p.24).Similarly Castoriadis considers that "the encounter with the Oedipal situation sets before the child the unavoidable fact of the institution as the ground of signification and vice-versa"(IIS,p.310).

34. It is not possible,outside analytic practice or specific research,to actually delineate the limits of primal versus acquired representatives.Yet it is indicative that Freud himself did not place too much weight on the primal phantasies while most of his followers consider the early,"innate",representatives as being almost wholly superseded by the externally acquired ones.

psyche.There is no -original or otherwise- state of "pure energy".We could say that the unconscious is **always/already represented.**

and also that (ii) the representatives of the drives gradually come to be almost totally derived from the outside environment.Freud,Klein,Lacan and Castoriadis are all in agreement at this point,while Lacan and Castoriadis emphasise also the human/social nature of this environment.

2.THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN
CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

If the unconscious can be seen as psychical energy tied to "representatives" what then is the distinction between these representatives and those of consciousness (which can also be assumed to be connected with some form of psychical energy) ? More generally,what is the specificity of the unconscious as a level within the psyche?

Repression

The unconscious is introduced by Freud as repressed,i.e. as separated from consciousness by a barrier that has to be lifted in order for the unconscious representatives to be able to become conscious.The lifting of repression is in principle possible:indeed this is the task of analysis.Thus repression does not indicate an impassable barrier,only a removable one.

However,the repressed is not to be equated with the unconscious in general.Initially Freud held this view,but he was forced to admit that "the unconscious has the wider compass:the repressed is part of the unconscious".[35] Thus,while the repressed is necessarily unconscious,the unconscious as a level of the psyche is not necessarily repressed.

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35. Unc,p.167

Type of representatives

Freud tried also to differentiate the kind of representatives consciousness and the unconscious use.He considers that the distinction between thing and word presentations corresponds to the distinction between conscious and unconscious.

For a "representative" to advance to consciousness,it has necessarily to be a "wort vorstellung", i.e. it has to be connected with words.This connection usually happens in the Preconscious.On the contrary,on the level of the unconscious the instinct is represented usually by thing presentations:

"The conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it,while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone.The system Ucs. contains the thing-cathexes of the objects,the first and true object-cathexes;the system Pcs comes about by this thing-presentation being hypercathected through being linked with the word-presentations corresponding to it"[36].

However,thing presentations are not restricted to the unconscious:Preconscious phantasies,preconscious "thinking in pictures"[37],for example,use also "images" rather than word presentations.On the other hand,the unconscious can also use word presentations as is the case in schizophrenics:

"In schizophrenia words are subjected to the same process as that which makes the dream-images out of latent dream-thoughts -to what we have called the primary psychical process"[38].In dreams,also,"we find associations based on homonyms and verbal similarities treated as equal in value

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36. Unc,p.207

37. S.Freud,The Ego and the Id (1923) (thereafter EI),P.F.L. 11,p.359

38. Unc.,p.204

to the rest"[39].

Freud insists that consciousness is necessarily linked with word presentations and that any presentation coming from the unconscious to consciousness has,in the preconscious,to be "brought into connection with word presentations"[40].Yet it seems that there is no specifically unconscious presentation.In later writings,indeed,Freud refers to an idea carried out in the unconscious "on some material which remains unknown"[41].

Thus the distinction between thing and word presentation is only partly useful to differentiate between the conscious and the unconscious.

The mode of functioning of the unconscious:
the primary process

While neither repression nor the limitation to thing presentations are sufficient criteria of differentiation of the unconscious,there is another difference between the two levels as the examples of unconscious use of words indicate:even when the "presentations" used are of the same kind,within the unconscious they are subjected to a specific way of operating,different from (conscious/ rational) thought.The analysis of dreams confirms this: Due to the relaxation of overimposed logical functions during sleep,dreams allow the specific way of unconscious operation to appear,in the "dream work",characterised by "condensation,displacement,absence of contradiction".

It is worth,at this point,quoting Freud in full:

"The nucleus of the Ucs. consists of instinctual representatives which seek to discharge their cathexis;that is to say,it consists of wishful impulses.These instinctual

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39. Dreams,p.755

40. EI,p.358

41. ibid.

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impulses are co-ordinate with one another,exist side by side,without being influenced by one another,and are exempt from mutual contradiction...

In this system there is no negation,no doubt,no degrees of certainty...

The cathectic intensities (in the Ucs.) are much more mobile.By the process of **displacement** one idea may surrender to another its whole quota of cathexis;by the process of **condensation** it may appropriate the whole cathexis of several other ideas.I have proposed to regard these two processes as distinguishing marks of the so-called **primary psychical process.**In the system Pcs. the **secondary process** is dominant...

The processes of the system Ucs. are **timeless;**i.e they are not ordered temporally,are not altered by the passage of time;they have no reference to time at all...

The Ucs. processes pay just as little regard to **reality.**They are subject to the pleasure principle;their fate depends only on how strong they are and on whether they fulfil the demands of the pleasure-unpleasure regulation.

To sum up:**exception from mutual contradiction,**primary process(mobility of cathexes),timelessness[42],and **replacement of external by psychical reality**-these are the characteristics which we may expect to find in processes belonging to the system Ucs."[43]

The unconscious is characterised,therefore,by a number of characteristics that indicate a way of psychical function-

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42. How are to understand this timelessness? While the other characteristics of the unconscious Freud proposes are relatively clearly defined,"timelessness" is not.Derrida proposes that "timelessness is no doubt determined only in opposition to a common concept of time,a traditional concept,the metaphysical concept:the time of mechanics or the time of consciousness"(J.Derrida,"Freud and the scene of writing", op.cit.,p.215)

43. Unc,p.190-91

ing not only different from but even oppossed to that of consciousness/ logical thought.Thus,though the unconscious operates through representations just as consciousness does,the mode of this operation has a specificity.

We can consider this mode of operation,the manner presentations are used,as the **primary** distinguishing characteristic of the unconscious.Thus the specificity of the Freudian notion of the unconscious can now be established: While the system Cs comprises all the characteristics that have been traditionally attributed to man (rational/logical thought,perception,etc.),the unconscious has a completely unique mode of functioning.[44]

3.THE UNCONSCIOUS AND CONSCIOUSNESS: POSSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATION AND THE HERMENEUTIC NATURE OF THIS COMMUNICATION

The unconscious is a level of psychical functioning to which we have no direct access. "How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious?" Freud asks."It is of course only as something conscious that we know it,after it has undergone transformation or retranslation into something conscious"[45]

We can recognise the existence of the unconscious in

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44. Therefore if Lacan's argument that "the unconscious is structured like a language" is taken to imply that the unconscious can be formally analysed in the way language to a certain extent can,it is definitely misplaced.The representatives of the unconscious as such are neither formalisable nor indeed are they approachable without their being "interpreted" and transposed to consciousness.
As Laplanche and Leclaire remark:"as to the ontological status of the unconscious...need we recall that,if that system is linguistic,such a language can by no means be assimilated to our "verbal" language?"(J.Laplanche & S.Leclaire,"The Unconscious:A psychoanalytic study" (1961),Yale French Studies N.48,1972,p.162).Similarly,Ricoeur considers "that the universe of discourse appropriate to analytic experience is not that of language but that of image").And the "image" is "semiotic" though not "linguistic" (P.Ricoeur,"Image and language in Psychoanalysis" (1976) in J.Smith (ed.) Psychoanalysis and language:Psychiatry and the Humanities V.3,New Haven:Yale University Press,1978,p.293 & p.311).

45. Unc,p.167

everyday life (Freud gives the example of "parapraxes"),in analytic practice,or in dreams (the "royal road to the unconscious" for Freud since it was the analysis of dreams that provided him with an indication of its specific modality).Even dreams,however,are not directly observable.They have to be "recalled" and "remembered" and,moreover,"translated" in a verbal form,in other words,they have to be made conscious.

Thus what Freud and psychoanalysis are offering us are inferences on a level of psychical functioning whose existence and operation we can recognise in its effects only,always mediated through consciousness.

The possibility of this "transformation" or "retranslation" to consciousness has been established:representatives can operate in both the unconscious and consciousness,thing presentations can be connected with word presentations,repression can be lifted.Indeed the whole therapeutic structure of psychoanalysis rests precisely on the existence of this possibility which we can attest -for example- in the analysis of dreams,or analytic practice in general.

However,the passage from the unconscious to consciousness is not immediate or direct.While the common origin of presentations as memory traces and the possibility of them being used by both consciousness and the unconscious establishes a continuity,a possibility of communication between the levels of the unconscious and consciousness/ preconscious,the different modality of the unconscious implies that the way these presentations exist in the two levels is radically different.Hence a change of state, a certain "translation" is necessary for the unconscious representatives to become conscious.(In addition to overcoming the barrier of repression,when it exists).

For example,Freud indicates that even for representatives that were initially connected with words,once they have been incorporated within the unconscious,they cannot simply

be reconnected with their own word presentations:

"The question might be raised why presentations of objects cannot become conscious through the medium of their own perceptual residues [instead of requiring word presentations which are also derived from sense presentations]. Probably,however,thought proceeds in systems so far remote from the original perceptual residues that they have no longer retained anything of the qualities of these residues,and,in order to become conscious,need to be reinforced by new qualities."[46]

Despite the existence of their own word presentations,therefore,unconscious presentations cannot pass smoothly into consciousness by simply "recalling" them.They have "no longer retained anything of the qualities of these residues",they exist in a state where a change of "quality" is necessary in order to become conscious again.A "retranslation" of these presentations onto conscious material is necessary.

The need for a "translation",an "interpretation",is more evident when an unconscious "thought" (which,as we saw,is subjected to the specific modality of the unconscious: primary process,lack of contradiction,timelessness,etc.) is to become conscious.Such is the case,for example,of the interpretation of dreams,where a conscious/rational account of the dream is sought.

Freud indicates,moreover,that such an interpretation can never be final or fully completed: "I have already had occasion to point out that it is in fact never possible to be sure that a dream has been completely interpreted.Even if the solution seems satisfactory and without gaps the possibility always remains that the dream may have yet another meaning."[47]

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46. Unc.,p.208

47. Dreams,p.383

Castoriadis remarks that in the "Interpretation of dreams",Freud "begins by saying that even in dreams that are the most completely interpreted,one must frequently leave a part obscure,and he concludes by affirming that the incompleteness of the interpretation is a universal and essential necessity"[48].

The process of analysis itself is also an interpretive one.As Castoriadis remarks:"The correspondences established by the analysis between the representation and its meaning are valid only within the context of analysis;they are neither generalizable nor transportable;they are not even verifiable in the usual acceptation of this term"[49].

In addition to its necessarily partial character,an interpretation does not somehow replace the original -unconscious- registration.Freud writes:

"What we have in mind here is not the forming of a second thought situated in a new place,like a transcription which continues to exist alongside the original;and the notion of forcing a way through into consciousness must be kept carefully free from any idea of a change of locality."[50]

The two systems -that of consciousness and that of the unconscious have to be thought as standing side-by-side in a double inscription:

"An idea may exist simultaneously in two places in the mental apparatus and,if not inhibited by the censorship,it regularly advances from the one position to the other,possibly without losing its first location or registration"[51].

Laplanche and Leclaire remark:"What is unconscious is in relation to the manifest not as a meaning to a letter,but

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48. Castoriadis,IIS,p.279

49. ibid.

50. Dreams,p.770

51. Unc,p.177

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on the same level of reality."[52]

The necessity of a "change of state" of representatives is valid in the case of affects as well.For affects to become conscious they have to be connected with "new",conscious representatives.In the case of repressed affects the lifting of repression connects them with their "proper representatives" which had been repressed.[53]

Therefore we can say in general that the transition from the unconscious to consciousness,though in principle possible,is neither direct,nor immediate.It necessarily requires a certain alteration of modality,a "translation",a certain "interpretation".And this interpretation can never be a full,final one nor does it replace the unconsious transcription.It represents a "hermeneutic process" in the most radical sense of the term.

The always/already represented character of the unconscious,therefore,though it does establish a path of communication with consciousness,it does not annul the specificity of this character.The existence of unconscious representations does not imply a simple transposition of (conscious) symbolic systems within the unconscious.

We have indicated certain elements that establish,within the Freudian/psychoanalytic account,the specificity of the unconscious as a level of psychical function:

The unconscious is characterised by a specific modality,different from and opposed to that of consciousness.It can be seen as a field of energy,that of drives,yet this energy is always/already represented within the

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52. Laplanche and Leclaire,"The Unconscious...",op.cit.,p.126
Of course,a certain alteration of the unconscious content is possible when it becomes conscious as well.This is,for ex.,one of the tasks of analysis.But this alteration is only that -an alteration- and not an effacement of the unconscious transcription.

53. A repressed affect may also have been one one that had been prevented from developing.In this case the lifting of repression "restores" the affect.

psyche.These representatives have,after a certain stage of psychical development,mainly an external and indeed social origin and they allow a line of communication between consciousness and the unconscious.However,within the unconscious these representatives are subjected to its specific modality and in order to become conscious they require an alteration of modality,a "translation".This translation has necessarily a hermeneutic nature,is never complete nor does it replace the unconsious transcription.

The above establish a theorisation of the unconscious in spatial terms,providing an essentially static description.Freud was,however,to proceed to a theorisation of the ways the field of the unconscious is structured,a theorisation that gradually led him to the presentation of his second topography of the psyche.

(B).THE STRUCTURING OF THE PSYCHE:
FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND FREUDIAN TOPOGRAPHY

The development of psychical structuring,of the structur-
ing of psychical energy,is approached by Freud in two in-
terlinked ways:initially mainly as the development of the
drives (triebe) but gradually more and more as the develop-
ment of specific agencies within the psyche.These agencies
were theorised fully in "The Ego and the Id" (1923) which
is considered to introduce what was termed the second
Freudian topography of the psyche.

1.A THEORY OF DRIVES

For Freud the energy of the psyche is that of drives
("trieb", also translated as "instinct").Freud 's terminol-
ogy is important here.He chooses the term "trieb" and not
the available "Instinkt",which he reserves for explicit
references to animal instincts.[54]The choice of term there-
fore implies an initial attempt to differentiate the energy
of the human psyche from that of animal in-
stincts.Moreover,the term "trieb" has a connotation of
forceful pressure well suited to the description of psychi-
cal energy.[55]

For Freud,drives originate within the organism:the

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54. For example:"If inherited mental formations exist in the human
being -something analogous to instinct ("Instinkt") in animals- these
constitute the nucleus of the Unconscious".(Unc,p.200)

55. The Standard Edition has translated "trieb" with "instinct" thus
making Freud's distinction intranslatable.However,"Trieb" can be
rendered as "drive" in English,retaining some of the connotations of
the original term,though the long established use of "instinct" makes
it unfamiliar.We shall use "drive" when the specificity of the term
needs to be emphasised,but "instinct" and its derivatives -e.g.
instinctual- otherwise.All the extracts from Freud,as there are from
the Standard Edition,use "instinct".

"source" of a drive is "the somatic process which occurs in an organ or part of the body and whose stimulus is represented in mental life by an instinct"[56].

While,however,the "source" of the drive is biologically given,the "object" of a drive is not:this object,i.e "the thing through which the instinct is able to achieve its aim" (which is in every instance satisfaction) ...is what is most variable about an instinct and is not originally connected with it"[57].Thus a level of plasticity of the drive that would be inconceivable within the traditional notion of (animal) instinct is assumed.

The sexual drives

The sexual drive(s) is the only kind of drive Freud explicitly theorises as such:

Despite the impression of the given nature of sexual objects,the "object" of the sexual drive is indeed most variable.Sexuality in the infant may "attach itself to other somatic functions"[58] before attaching itself to the genitals (thus we can have an oral and then an anal sexual organisation).In addition,it has an "external" object choice:"the choice of an object,such as we have shown to be characteristic of the pubertal phase of development,has already frequently or habitually been effected during the years of childhood:that is to say,the whole of the sexual currents have become directed towards a single person".[59]

After the latency period,puberty brings forcefully again the need of an object choice which this time is exclusively

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56. S.Freud,Instincts and their vicissitudes (Triebe und triebschick-sale,1915),P.F.L. 11,p.119

57. ibid.

58. S.Freud,Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905),P.F.L. 7, Harmondsworth:Penguin,1977 (thereafter TES),p.102

59. TES,p.118

a person."The resultants of infantile object choice are carried over ..(but)..the object choice of the pubertal period is obliged to dispense with the objects of childhood and to start afresh ...focusing all desires upon a single object".If the "two currents fail to converge,the result is often that one of the ideals of sexual life,the focusing of all desires upon a single object,will be unattainable"[60].

Thus we do have a process of development of the sexual drive.However,it does not follow a predetermined path,but one at which "every step can become a point of fixation,every juncture in this involved combination can be an occasion for a dissociation of the sexual instinct"[61].

Although the type of object choice available to libido and the temporal sequence of these types seems to be predetermined (from the early autoerotic and somatic ones to the person-objects of infantile sexuality to the person-objects of puberty),the actual object choice each time is not.Consequently,the actual development of the drive,the specific path it has followed,remain non determinable.The development of the sexual drive is always "the precarious result of a historical evolution"[62].

A certain indeterminacy vis-a-vis the biological order,therefore,exists.Moreover,the development of the sexual drive presupposses a register onto which object choices are engraved and retained.It is this register that will be later theorised as the Ego.

Ego-drives and Ego-libido
To the sexual drives Freud opposed the ego drive(s).The postulation of the existence of ego drives is seen as

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60. TES,p.119

61. ibid.

62. J.Laplanche,Life and Death in psychoanalysis (1970),Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,1977,p.15

necessary "from the study of transference neuroses"[63].

Freud initially theorises ego-drives as identical to self-preservative ones.He recognises though,that this is not a deduction from analysis but a biologically oriented assertion: "The individual does actually carry on a twofold existence:one to serve his own purposes and the other as ...the mortal vehicle of a (possibly) immortal sub-stance...The separation of the sexual instincts from the ego-instincts would simply reflect this twofold function of the individual...The hypothesis of separate ego-instincts and sexual instincts rests scarcely at all upon psychologi-cal basis,but derives its support from biology"[64].

Freud does not advance further than this preliminary argu-ment,nor does he distinguish to which actual functions of self-preservation he refers to (except passing references to "hunger").It has been remarked,moreover,that he never actually used the notion of ego-instincts qua self preserv-ative ones in case studies and that the actual analysis of transference neuroses justifies nothing more than a certain "conflict between the claims of sexuality and that of the ego"[65],i.e not necessarily a qualitatively different category of drives.

Already by the time Freud referred to the distinction be-tween ego and sexual drives,he had proposed the concept of ego-libido.Ego libido is distinguished from ego instincts both in its origin (related to sexual and not self-preservative functions) and because it pre-exists the ego.The ego appears as a "reservoir of libido"[66] and it can orient this libido to external objects.The object choice

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63. "Instincts...",op.cit.,p.120

64. S.Freud,On Narcissism:An introduction (1914),P.F.L. 11,p.71

65. LP,p.148

66. S.Freud,Beyond the pleasure principle (1920),P.F.L. 11(thereafter BPP),p.324

and cathexis,however,depend only on the ego and not on the -originally- libidinal nature of this energy:

"We form the idea of there being an original libidinal cathexis of the ego,from which some is latter given off to objects,but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexes much as the body of an amoeba is re-lated to the pseudopodia which it puts out"[67].

Freud continues to hold to a parallel existence of ego-instincts separate from ego-libido,but he is obliged to ad-mit that "psychoanalysis has not enabled us hitherto to point out to any [ego] instincts other than the libidinal ones.That,however,is no reason for our falling in with the conclusion that no others in fact exist"[68].

Gradually the references to non-libidinal ego-instincts cease and it is acknowledged that the notion of ego-libido can satisfactorily accommodate the opposition between ego and sexual instincts as a cause of psychoneuroses without postulating a qualitatively different origin of psychical energy:

"The distinction between the two kinds of instinct which was originally regarded as in some sort of way qualita-tive,must one be characterised differently- namely as being topographical"[69].

Thus the second great category of drives postulated by Freud is eventually admitted to be directly linked and emanating from the agency of the ego.Freud does not pursue any theorisation of self-preservative drives as such (he vaguely considers them as still connected with ego-libido)[70].Instead,alongside the introduction of his second topography,he introduces a new instinctual dualism:that of

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67. Narcissism,op.cit.,p.68

68. BPP,p.326

69. EI,p.325

70. LP,p.221

the life (Eros) / death drives.(It is ironic that just as Freud is prepared to accept a certain instinctual monism in respect to the ego,he introduces a new dualism!)

The life/death drives dualism.

Death drives are seen as "representing an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things"[71] while life drives "work against the death of the living substance and preserve life itself for a comparatively long period"[72]

The new dualism retains two essentially opposed groups of instincts,but this opposition is one between very abstract principles of overall orientation and not any more between specific groups of drives (as the libido/ego instincts dualism was).

The distinction between life/death drives allows Freud a satisfactory answer to the question of emotional am-bivalence,of transformation of love into hate and vise versa.He had posed this ambivalence as a characteristic,a vicissitude of drives and had given a theorisation of it based on the ego[73] .

He is now,however,in a position to offer a better answer:that of fusion between the two categories of instincts:"Both kinds of instinct would be active in every particle of living substance,though in unequal propor-tion,so that some one substance might be the principal rep-resentative of Eros"[74].Such a fusion is possible because "for purposes of discharge the instinct of destruction is habitually brought into the service of Eros"[75].

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71. BPP,p.308

72. BPP,p.313

73. In "Instincts and their vicissitudes",op.cit.

74. BPP,p.381

75. BPP,p.382

Ambivalence can be accounted for either as a defu-
sion,or,since it is a "fundamental phenomenon",probably as
"an instinctual fusion that has not been completed".

Thus the actual manifestation of the death drive,as a
destructive and aggressive drive,is always tied with the
life drives.The existence of two classes of drives
is,therefore,only a postulate for purposes of theoretical
analysis.The two categories of drives can be conceptualised
as distinct only "as an extreme situation of which clinical
experience can furnish merely approximations".[76]

J.Laplanche has argued that,given the fused nature of
drives,the death drive should be considered as "not pos-
sessing its own energy",but as being "the constitutive
principle of libidinal circulation" in the sense that it is
oppossed to the "bound and binding form" of libido which is
Eros,the life instinct.[77]

Thus the opposition between life and death instincts can
be seen as an opposition between bound and unbound forms of
psychic energy.Life instincts are destined to create
bounded forms and to this death instincts are oppossed.[78]

Even if the precise form of Laplanche's argument is not
accepted,the necessarily fused nature of the two types of
drives has to be accepted.Indeed,we can consider the asser-
tion of the fused character of instinctual energy to be the
most important corollary -and possibly even the justifica-
tion for- the life/death instincts dualism.In any case,this
dualism,despite its primarily biological justification,does
not have any implications for the actual structuring of

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76. LP,p.181

77. Laplanche,"Life and Death...",op.cit.

78. However,as Laplanche remarks,"This does not mean that we have to
promote binding,or that we have to conclude that binding always works
to the advantage of biological or even psychical life;extreme binding
means extreme immobilization" (J.Laplanche,New foundations for
psychoanalysis, Oxford:Basil Blackwell,1989,p.148)

psychical energy.It refers to a distinction of **kind** of such energy but not to a path of development or structuring.

We can conclude that in so far as Freud presents a theorisation of psychical energy,its development or structuring through a theory of drives,he is limited to a theorisation of the sexual drives.These are presented as indeed following a path of development though with few constants (namely the type of sexual objects and the temporal evolution of these types).

Otherwise,once the notion of ego drives is abandoned,the notion of ego libido that replaces it seems to have no predeterminations at all apart from the fact that it emanates from the ego.

As for the life/death drives distinction,it is primarily targeted to indicate the fused nature of instinctual energy and does not refer to the actual structuring of psychical energy.

It is the ego,therefore,that emerges as a determining factor in the structuring of psychical energy,which leads us to an examination of the second Freudian topography of the psyche.

2.THE SECOND FREUDIAN TOPOGRAPHY:THE EGO
AND SUPER-EGO AS ORGANISED PSYCHICAL AGENCIES

Though the roots of the second topography of the psyche go back to the beginning of Freud's writings,it is presented as such only relatively late (in 1923).It distinguishes between the Ego (Ich),the Super-Ego (Uber-ich),and the Id (das Es).

The Id is seen as "chaotic" instinctual energy,"open at its end to somatic influences"[79].In the Id the "pleasure principle ... reigns unrestrictedly "[80].

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79. S.Freud,New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis (1933),P.F.L. 2,Harmondsworth:Penguin,1973 (thereafter NIL),p.106

80. EI,p.364

In contrast,the ego is seen as the bearer of the "reality principle".The ego operates "by becoming aware of stimuli,by storing up experiences about them (in the memory),by avoiding excessively strong stimuli (through flight),by dealing with moderate stimuli (through adaptation) and finally by learning to bring about expedient changes in the external world to its own advantage (through activity)"[81].Thus the ego is the bearer of rational/conscious processes necessary for the organism.

Finally,in the notion of the Super-ego Freud synthesises that of ego-ideal (presented in 1914) and of an aggressive agency within the psyche,its aggression directed towards the ego.

The construction of the ego and super-ego

The ego is "constructed" as the "precipitate" of abandoned object cathexes:

"When it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object,there quite often ensues an alteration of his ego which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego,as it occurs in melancholia;the exact nature of this substitution is as yet unknown to us.It may be that by this introjection,which is a kind of regression to the mechanism of the oral phase,the ego makes it easier for the object to be given up or renders that process possible.It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects.At any rate the process,especially in the early phases of development,is a very frequent one,and it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object-choices."[82].

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81. Outline,p.377

82. EI,p.368

Thus the ego constitutes a **register** within the psyche of its own history.[83]

A similar process constructs the super-ego.It is the out-come of the Oedipus complex,in which the boy identifies with the father while at the same time directs a certain aggression towards him as an opponent in his love for the mother,with a similar case for the girl.In fact there is a double identification involved here,with both parents:

"The broad general outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex may,therefore,be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego,consisting of these two identifications [with the father and the mother] in some way united with each other.This modification of the ego retains its special position;it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or super-ego."[84]The super-ego retains "the character of the father" and "dominates the ego".

Thus both the ego and the super-ego appear as registers of abandoned object-cathexes.

The ego (and super-ego) as organisation and source of psychical energy

The ego and super-ego are not,however,only passive agencies.They also function as **sources** of psychical energy.The super ego behaves aggressively towards the ego,while the ego itself is a source of psychical energy towards external objects:

"Throughout the whole of life the ego remains the great reservoir from which libidinal cathexes are sent out to

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83. Freud had already made a preliminary reference to such a mechanism in a passage of the "Three essays" added in 1915: "The sexual aim (in oral pregenital sexual organisation) consists in the **incorporation** of the object -the prototype of a process which,in the form of iden-tification,is later to play such an important psychological part"(TES,p.117)

84. EI,p.373

objects"[85].

What is the origin of this energy?

We saw that Freud had introduced the notion of ego libido,which he opposed to sexual drives despite the common origin of the two.The introduction of his second topography was accompanied with a characterisation of this energy as "an indifferent and displaceable" one,which can be added "to a qualitatively differentiated erotic or destructive impulse and augment its total cathexis"[86].This energy,since it is "uniting and binding",has the characteristics of Eros and functions "through the mediation of the ego"[87].Hence the ego becomes the locus of an energy that has the uniting and binding characteristics of the life instincts.

Since the only determinant of this energy seems to be the ego itself,we can suppose that its direction,its object choices,can only be determined by the past history of the ego,i.e by the already internalised abandoned object cathexes.

As for the energy of the super-ego,Freud remarks:

"The super-ego arises from an identification with the father taken as a model.Every such identification is in the nature of a desexualisation or even a sublimation.It now seems as though when a transformation of this kind takes place,an instinctual defusion occurs at the same time.After sublimation the erotic component no longer has the power to bind the whole of the destructiveness that was combined with it,and this is released in the form of an inclination to aggression and destruction"[88].In this way the super-ego

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85. Outline,p.382.Freud makes this assertion in "Beyond the pleasure Principle" (1920).In "the ego and the Id" he considers the Id as the principal such "reservoir".He insists,though,in his earlier assertion as well,as is evident in this extract from the late "Outline" (1938)

86. EI,p.385

87. ibid.

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can become the locus of aggression and guilt directed towards the ego.In extreme cases,such as melancholia,the super-ego can even become "a pure culture of the death instinct"[89].

Freud's remarks on the super-ego indicate that the abandoned object cathexes internalised within the ego and the superego are not instinctually neutral but charged with psychical energy.The energy investing the internalised elements within the ego can be considered of an overall libidinal nature,while that of the super-ego of an overall aggressive nature.

We saw that the life/death drives dualism indicates the always fused nature of psychical energy.Usually the erotic binding of the energy directed to objects that are later to be internalised through identification,is such that the aggressive impulses are of no particular importance.In this case these elements are internalised within the ego.If,however,the aggressive impulses are significant,the process of identification can introduce within the ego an important aggressive component which results precisely in the formation or reinforcement of the super-ego.

Thus the ego in the very process of its "construction" is already traversed by the two opposing categories of drives,manifested as investing distinct sub-structures,the ego proper and the super ego.

We can understand now why the super-ego and the ego itself can be seen as sources of psychical energy:it is because they represent an organisation of such energy,in the instinctual investment of the internalised elements.Consequently,the energy emanating from the ego is a primarily libidinal one,while that of the super ego a primarily aggressive one.[90]

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88. EI,p.396

89. EI,p.394

90. "Primarily",because psychical energy has always a "fused" nature

From the above it is obvious that the introduction of the agency of the ego (and of the super-ego),does not refer only to the theorisation of a rational/conscious agency within the psyche.It has a much more fundamental function.

It complements Freud's theorisation of drives providing an account for a **structuring** of psychical energy.As a consequence the ego and the super-ego function also as a **source** of such energy (towards external objects in the case of the ego;towards the ego in the case of the super-ego).The only determinant of the direction,the intensity and the nature (libidinal/aggressive) of this energy (emanating from the ego and super-ego) is the actual construction of these agencies,i.e the objects internalised and their instinctual investment.

Type of objects internalised and
determinants of their instinctual investment

We turn now to the **kind** of object choices that can become subsequently internalised within the ego and super-ego.

In the case of the sexual drives we saw that the type of objects is partially predetermined:initially the autoerotic objects of the oral and anal phases,alongside them a parental object choice,and,after the latency period,the sexual object choice of puberty.

However,other "objects" may be incorporated within the ego as well.Even before the introduction of his second psychical topography,Freud had presented such a case in "Mourning and Melancholia"[91]:the possibility of identification with and incorporation of certain characteristics of the loved person which are not considered of a directly sexual nature

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and can never be "purely" libidinal or aggressive.Thus,when we refer to the Ego as a source of instinctual energy,we have to consider this energy as a necessarily fused one with the Erotic impulses predominating.In this way,the ambivalence towards "objects",which Freud emphasised,can be taken account of even in the case of an ego originating psychical energy.

91. S.Freud,Mourning and melancholia (1915),P.F.L. 11,p.257

is admitted.

Freud does not provide any extensive account of these other types of objects in respect to the ego.He does so,however,for the super-ego:

The super-ego,as the outcome of the "complete" Oedipus complex,represents a **double** identification both to the father and to the mother.For both identifications to simultaneously exist,though,("in some way united with each other" as Freud presents it),it is necessarily implied that they are identifications not with "complete" persons,or simply with the parent's sex,but with **elements of behaviour** related to this sex.

Freud is to further enlarge the "contents" such identifications may comprise of.Identifications are seen as related not only to "natural" characteristics related to the parent's sex,not only to "natural" positions -as father or mother- within the family,but as related to social features as well:

"Is not only the personal qualities of these parents that is making itself felt,but also everything that had a determining effect on them themselves,the taste and standards of the social class in which they lived and the innate dispositions and traditions of the race from which they sprang."[92]These elements are again to be seen as covering a variety of modalities,from patterns of behaviour to norms and rules.

Thus the super-ego is presented as the potential vehicle through which a whole host of features,of the most diverse nature and including elements of a specifically social origin,can be incorporated within the individual.

However,the super-ego is only a part of the ego,a part behaving aggressively against the ego,being the source of guilt and consciousness,the bearer of aggressive impulses within the psyche.All the above identifications,therefore,

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92. Outline,p.442

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in so far as they are limited to the super-ego,operate in a negative,aggressive way within the psyche.There is no reason,however,to deny the possibility of similar identifications operating in a positive way,i.e within the ego proper.Indeed the theorisation of ego construction points towards this possibility.[93]

What can be considered the determinants of the instinctual investment of internalised elements regarding the type (aggressive/libidinal) or the intensity of this investment?

Freud had provided an answer relevant to the Oedipus complex and the creation of the super-ego.The strength of the aggression of the super-ego against the ego,the strength,in other words,of the super ego itself,depends on the actual relationship of the child with the parents,the relation between the relative strength of the aggressive and libidinal components simultaneously directed towards the father and the strength of the libidinal ties with the mother.[94]

Therefore the instinctual **investment** of the elements of the super ego depends on the relational context of the family,i.e on the child's relational position vis-a-vis his parents.

We can generalise these remarks and consider that,in general,the child's **relationship** to the significant others is what determines the **kind** and **intensity** of instinctual

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93. While Freud does not explicitly address the question of the type of objects internalised within the ego,his comments on "civilisation" indicate that he considers civilisation,i.e society in general,as operating primarily through a sense of guilt,i.e primarily through the super-ego.Hence his "omission" to extent these elements to the ego itself is in accordance to this assumption.However there is nothing in the actual theorisation of the ego/super-ego construction that would support this assumption.It appears rather as an axiomatic,aprioristic one.(In the next chapter Freud's argument on civilization is examined at length).

94. In the case of boys.A similar account is provided for girls.(Cf. "The dissolution of the Oedipus complex" (1924) and "Some psychical consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes" (1925) both in P.F.L. 7)

investment of the elements internalised within the ego and the super ego.

In the above,we have the main lines of Freud's account of a certain organisation,a certain structuring of psychical energy that his second topograghy introduces:

It is primarily through the agencies of the ego and the super ego that this structuring appears and operates and not through biologically determined instinctual paths of development.

The actual mechanism of structuring consists of the internalisation within the ego and super-ego of external objects whose instinctual cathexis is abandoned.These objects remain instinctually invested and thus the function of the ego and of the super-ego as a source of energy (towards external objects and the ego respectively) can be -partly-explained.

The kind and intensity of instinctual investment of these objects seems to be determined by the relations of the child to the significant others.As to the kind of internalised elements,they cover a variety of modalities and types,which have been explored by Freud primarily for the super-ego but which seems possible to expand to the ego as well.

3.POST-FREUDIAN DEVELOPMENTS

To amplify on Freud's account on psychical agencies,we turn to a number of post-Freudian developments on the subject.The focus will be on authors who emphasised the importance of (external) object relations for the development of the psyche and of psychical agencies.

The object choices of sexual drives

M.Balint,already in 1935,noted that analytic practice disproved Freud's assertion that the early autoerotic libido choices were (biologically) predetermined.Instead,Balint

claimed these choices can be traced back to earlier object choices external to the psyche:

"Pregenital object-relations,the pregenital forms of love...can no longer be explained biologically[95]...they do not succeed one another according to biological conditions,but are to be conceived as relations to actual influence of the world of objects- above all,to methods of upbringing"[96]. There is only a biological basis for such primary object relations,in "the instinctual interdependence of mother and child"[97].

Balint thus undermines the only element in Freud's theorisation of drives that could still be seen as biologically predetermined -the type and sequence of object choices of the sexual drives,especially the early ones,and indicates the importance of "external" objects even for the early psychical development.

The development of the ego:mechanisms and innate dynamic

Melanie's Klein pioneering work,focused on the early months and years of life provided a more detailed account of the mechanisms of object internalisation and ego construction than Freud had provided.

Emphasising the anxiety facing the newborn,Klein introduced the notion of splitting of external objects into part-objects,"good" or "bad".The "good" part-objects are incorporated within the psyche through introjection while the neutralisation of the "bad" ones operates through projection of them to the "outside" of the ego.(This period has been termed the paranoid-schizoid position).

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95. M.Balint,"Critical notes on the theory of pregenital organisations of the libido" (1935),in Primary Love and psychoanalytic technique,London:Hogarth Press,1952,p.53

96. Ibid.,p.58

97. M.Balint,"Early Developmental states of the ego.Primary object-love" (1937),in "Primary love...",p.85

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Gradually,as the infant grows,"the various aspects -loved and hated,good and bad- of the objects come close together,and these objects are now whole persons"[98].The ego becomes more integrated and the mother and father can now be introjected as "whole" persons.(This is the infantile depressive position).

Klein sees the life and death instincts operating from the very beginning as independent entities,attached to the good or bad objects respectively.Along with the ego developing primarily through the introjection of "good" objects,the super-ego is seen as having an equally early origin through the introjection of the "bad" objects.

Klein enriches the Freudian account of internalisation mechanisms and locates these mechanisms at a much earlier stage.Her notions of part-objects,splitting,the importance of introjective and projective identification have gained wide acceptance.

However,her use of the life and death instincts appears very inflexible.She considers these two classes of instincts as given,innate ones.Moreover,as has been remarked, "the dialectic of good and bad,partial and whole,the introjected and the projected,is inconceivable without the first boundary of an ego -however rudimentary it might be- defining an inside and an outside"[99].

As a possible alternative to the Kleinian model,R.D.Fairbairn proposed precisely that an ego has to be considered as existing in a first,undifferentiated form from the very start and that libido,instead of "pleasure seeking" has to be seen as "object seeking".

Fairbairn proposes,in accordance with Klein,that the ego indeed splits the "figure of his mother into two objects -a satisfying("good") one and an unsatisfying("bad") one"[100]

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98. M.Klein,"Some theoretical conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant"(1952),in **Envy and gratitude**,London:Virago,1988,p.72

99. LP,p.81

but he adds that it internalises the "bad" object in an attempt to neutralise it,it further splits this internalised object into two -an "exciting" and a "rejecting" object-and finally represses both objects along with parts of the ego that remain attached to them.

Thus "the basic endopsychic structure" includes the "central" ego,the "libidinal" ego (attached to the exciting object) and the "internal saboteur" (attached to the rejecting object).[101]The role of the "internal saboteur" is similar to that of the super-ego.

Fairbairn considers that this theorisation allows him to dispense with any pre-given life and death instincts as Klein accepts and also to provide an initial existing structure in the psyche -in the form of the central ego-from which the mechanisms of introjection and splitting can emanate.

While both points are valid -the necessity of an initial agency and the need to use the life/death instincts in a less deterministic way- Fairbairn goes too much on the other side.The assumption of an ego existing in some way already in the beginning and as not being gradually formed, goes against not only Klein but also Freud and is difficult to sustain.

Moreover,the Freudian assertion of libido as pleasure seeking does not,by itself,imply any biologism.Freud's theory of ego-construction implies precisely that the libido is "object" seeking both in the case of sexual drives and in the case of ego-libido.

Similarly,Fairbairn's criticism of Klein regarding her use of life and death instincts cannot be applied to

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100. R.D.Fairbairn,"A synopsis of the development of the author's views regarding the structure of the personality" (1951) in Psychoanalytic studies of the personality,London: Routledge,1952,p.172

101. R.D.Fairbairn,"Object relationships and dynamic structure" (1946) in op.cit.,p.147

Freud.Klein considers the two categories of drives as differentiated forces already there in the beginning,which are subsequently embodied in the agencies of the ego and the super-ego.In contrast,Freud's use of the life/death dualism is -as we saw- intended primarily to indicate the ambivalent and fused nature of psychical energy rather than to affirm and independent status to these two forms of instincts.

As for the specific mechanisms Fairbairn proposes -a series of splittings within the ego- they cannot be evaluated outside analytic practice itself.It can be remarked,though,that they introduce a divergence from the Freudian account that is not justified by Fairbairn's criticisms of Freud and Klein.Unlike Klein's theorisations which can be easily appended to Freud's, Fairbairn's cannot.

In parallel to attempts such as Klein's and Fairbairn's to describe the actual mechanisms of early ego formation,other analysts focused more on the **independent dynamic** of this formation:

A certain innate tendency of ego formation,operating from the very beginning has been stressed by ego-theorists,notably Hartmann,Kris,Lowestein,Rapaport,etc.

For Hartmann "the ego may be more-and very likely is more-than a developmental by-product of the influence of reality on instinctual drives;it has a partly independent origin...we may speak of an autonomous factor in ego-development in the same way as we consider the instinctual drives autonomous agents of development"[102].

It was recognised,though,that this dynamic could not operate autonomously within the developing infant,but that it had to be seen in relation to the significant

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102. H.Hartmann,"Comments on the psychoanalytic theory of the ego" (1952) in <u>Essays on Ego Psychology</u>,London:Hogarth Press,1964,p.119

other(s),which in the early stages is primarily the mother:

D.W.Winnicott stressed the importance of mother-child relationship.While he accepted that some form of ego exists from the very beginning ("there is no id before ego"[103]),he considered that this ego initially exists in an undifferentiated relationship with the mother.

Only gradually the infant can conceive of itself as separate from the mother and from other "objects",having passed through a stage of "transitional" objects.[104].The "maturational process" of the ego depends on a "good enough mother" and a generally facilitating environment.

M.Mahler and her collaborators have specified,through observation,certain stages in the process of ego development,in the process they call the Separation-individuation one:

" the initial symbiotic phase (up to 5 months).

the differentiation subphase (dawning awareness of separateness,awareness of separateness)

the practising subphase (attention directed to new motor achievements,seemingly to the near exclusion of mother,10 to 15 months)

the rapprochement subphase (renewed demand upon the mother but as separate and continued growth of autonomous ego apparatuses,15 to 22 months)

and,finally,consolidation of individuality and gradual attainment of libidinal object constancy (22 to 36 months)"[105]

These phases towards individuation are seen as powered by

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103. D.W.Winnicott,"Ego integration in child development" (1962) in Collected papers II (The maturational process and the facilitating environment), London:Hogarth Press,1965,p.56

104. D.W.Winnicott,"Transitional objects and transitional phenomena" (1951),in Collected papers I (Through paediatrics to psychoanalysis), London:Hogarth Press,1975,p.229

105. M.Mahler et al,The psychological birth of the human infant, London:Hutchinson,1975,p.260

"the drive for and toward individuation (that) in the nor-
mal infant is an innate,powerful **given**,which,although it
may be muted by protracted interference,does manifest it-
self all along the separation-individuation process".[106]

The above developments indicate that a certain innate
dynamic of ego emergence and development has to be ac-
cepted.This dynamic can be seen as operating alongside
of,and as complementing the **mechanisms** of ego construction
Freud and Klein proposed.Thus the necessity of some form of
(early) ego for the Kleinian mechanisms to operate can be
met without a radical revision of the Freudian scheme of
the type Fairbairn advanced.

The existence of an innate dynamic does not invalidate the
importance of the environment in the actual make up of the
ego through the internalisation of external objects.Both
Winnicott and Mahler see such a dynamic as complementing
the theorisation of mechanisms of object internalisation,of
the kind Klein and Freud proposed.Even the ego theorists
indicate the importance of the environment,though in a more
general way.Thus the emphasis on the existence of an innate
dynamic behind the emergence and consolidation of the ego
has to be seen as **complementing** the other theorisations and
not as a reinstation,within psychoanalytic theory,of some
form of subjectivity independent of the environment.

An attempt to bring these two lines of theorisation
together in a fruitful synthesis,is exemplified by Edith
Jacobson's work.

Jacobson accepts the Kleinian mechanisms of ego construc-
tion as gradually building up the ego but she also sees an
innate dynamic in this gradual emergence:

"Regarding the earliest types of identification I repeat

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106. ibid.,p.206
One would have also to mention,in this context,J.Lacan's emphasis on
an independent dynamic in the emergence of the ego,a dynamic
manifested in the mirror phase.

that,magic as they are by nature,they are founded on primi-
tive mechanisms of introjection or projection corresponding
to fusions of self and object images which disregard the
realistic differences between the self and the object"[107]
Later though,"a concept of the self as an entity that has
continuity and direction is formed"[108].

Jacobson rejects Klein's rigid distinction between life
and death instincts in favour of a more plastic conception
of psychic energy while retaining the emphasis on the early
internalisation of aggressive elements as precursors of the
super-ego:

"At the very beginning of life,the instinctual energy is
still in an undifferentiated state;but from birth on it
develops into two kinds of psychic drives with different
qualities under the influence of external stimulations"[109]
Both the ego and the super-ego are seen as created out of a
combination of libidinal,aggressive and neutralised
forces,while the super-ego is considered as slowly emerging
as a separate structure within the ego through the combina-
tion of earlier disconnected elements (an "archaic imagery
referring to castration fears,imagery relating to parental
prohibitions and demands,and imagery derived from the
child's narcissistic/moral-perfectionist strivings"[110]).

Jacobson's synthesis incorporates most of the novel
developments (related mainly to the dynamic and mechanisms
of early ego-development) in a scheme that does not depart
much from Freud's own,while she avoids the most challenge-
able assertions of others (as for example Klein's use of
life/death drives or Fairbairn's "basic endopsychic

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107. E.Jacobson,The self and object world (Thereafter SOW),London:
Hogarth Press,1964,p.46

108. SOW,p.53

109. SOW,p.13

110. SOW,p.119

structure").[111]

Type of objects internalised and
determinants of their instinctual investment

Post Freudian developments allow a greater clarification of the **type** of objects internalised within the ego (and super-ego).

The Kleinian school admits a certain immediate capacity of perception of objects related to "the child's parents' bodies and to his own"[112] which can be split and internalised with no separation between the object and the still undeveloped ego,a separation that is only gradually effected.

These early internalised elements should be considered,as Jacobson remarks,as "multiple,rapidly changing and not yet clearly distinguished part images of love objects and body part images (which) are formed and linked up with the memory traces of past pleasure-unpleasure experiences and become vested with libidinal and aggressive forces"[113].

As the child grows,a separation between the ego and the internalised objects is established:

"When the depressive position has been reached,the main characteristic of object relations is that the object is felt as a whole object.In connection with this there is a greater degree of awareness of differentiation and of the separateness between the ego and the object"[114].

Along with this separation the growing exposure of the child to language and other symbolic systems and the in-

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111. The example of Jacobson has been followed by others as well,for example O.Kernberg who proposes his own series of stages of ego development (O.Kernberg,Object relations theory and clinical psychoanalysis,New York:Aronson,1976)

112. H.Segal,"Notes on Symbol formation" (1957) in The work of Hanna Segal,New York:Aronson,1981,p.51

113. SOW,p.53

114. Segal,op.cit.,p.55

creased capability of cognitive perception,gradually expand
the world of objects that can be internalised:

"As the child learns to walk and talk...the object imagery
gradually extends to the surrounding animate and inanimate
world...(as the latency period begins)..increasingly
realistic preconscious representations of the animate and
inanimate,concrete and abstract object world are formed,and
can be stabilised by their firm and lasting cathexis with
libidinal,aggressive and neutralised elements"[115].

Thus the early,innate ability of the infant to recog-
nise,however imperfectly,and incorporate by splitting cer-
tain features of bodily parts of himself and the
parents,accompanied by a the emergence of innate repre-
sentatives in phantasies,is to be contrasted with the later
phase.In it,a certain cohesiveness of the ego and
conceptual/perceptual maturation,allow a much greater range
of objects to be perceived,instinctually cathected and in-
ternalised.It is in this later phase that the mechanism of
identification proper Freud described can be said to
operate.

The acquisition from the psyche of an externally
originating and indeed social corpus of "psychical
representatives" (to which we referred in the first part of
the present chapter),has therefore to be seen as coexten-
sive with the transition from early predetermined and
limited objects to a broader universe of "objects" that can
be internalised.The existence of a symbolic universe from
which the child can borrow the means for the perception of
"objects" is the sina qua non for such a transition,and we
referred to Lacan's and Castoriadis's emphasis on the so-
cial character of this universe.The two processes -that of
acquiring an "external" symbolic universe and that of the
transition to a wider world of objects cathected and
internalised- have to be seen as gradually developing

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115. SWO,p.53

together,along with a certain maturation of the perceptual/cognitive apparatus which is necessary for both processes to evolve.[116]

The object relations that can be significant for the construction of the ego and the super-ego can be said,therefore,to be dependent -after an initial relatively predetermined stage- upon:

(i) a satisfactory initial integration of an ego structure,

(ii) the development of cognitive perception

and (iii) the symbolic/social universe available to the child (the acquisition of an "external" universe of significations can be seen as simultaneous and interwoven with the internalisation of "objects" these significations define).

It is the interrelation of all these factors that allows the gradual built up of the structures of the ego and super-ego.And it can be affirmed that "cognitive development,affective development and the development of structures representing internalised object relations are intimately linked"[117].

As to the type of these objects,Freud's remarks have been amplified and extended:

"Children,at different stages of their development identify with those part aspects of people by which are most immediately affected,whether in reality or phantasy.These part aspects are favoured not because of their social acceptability (they often are everything but the parent's most adjusted attributes) but by the nature of infantile phantasy which only gradually gives way to a more realistic anticipation of social reality"[118].

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116. J.Piaget and his school have theorised the stages of development of this perceptual/cognitive apparatus.These theorisations,far from being oppossed to the psychoanalytic one,actually complement it.

117. Kernberg,op.cit.,p.69

Thus we move from the early "introjection of an object,an act modelled on a bodily process" to "identifications with character traits,or even with a particular flash of personality,which is quite localised in time or space and often caught in flight,as it were,precisely because of its artificial and bizare character" or "partial identifications with an act of speech,notably an interdiction" (mainly for super-ego identifications) or "a type of identification referring explicitly to structure:an identification with the position of the other,which consequently presupposes an interpersonal interplay of relations and,as a rule,at least two other positions coinciding with the vestiges of a triangle:clearly,such would be the case for Oedipal identifications"[119].

At an even later stage we can have identifications with explicit social norms or rules,identifications which presuppose the ability to perceive them as such an ability that only gradually appears (as Piaget remarks,concepts such as "native land","social justice" and rational aesthetic or social ideals do not acquire adequate affective value until the age of twelve or over[120]).

A certain growing complexity is revealed,therefore,to characterise the possible internalised elements:from part objects to whole objects to patterns of behaviour and elements of character to interpersonal relations to norms and ideas.

In all the above discussion there was no distinction between the objects that can be internalised within the ego and those within the super-ego.Indeed an important con-

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118. E.Erikson,"The problem of ego identity"(1956) in Identity and the life cycle,New York:Norton,1980,p.121

119. Laplanche,"Life and death...",op.cit.,p.80

120. J.Piaget & B.Inhelder,The psychology of the child (1966),London: Routledge,1969,p.151

tribution of all these post Freudian developments is the extension of the diverse nature of possible objects of internalisation -including "social" objects- to the ego.Thus Freud's limitation of certain (primarily social) elements only to the super-ego can be discarded and these elements can be considered as operating positively -through libidinal identifications within the ego- as well as negatively -through aggressive identifications- within the super-ego.

Regarding the dynamic aspect of the internalised elements,the above developments affirm that internalised objects are instinctually invested with either predominantly libidinal or predominantly aggressive energy already in the very early processes of introjection and projection.

As for the determinants of the kind and strength of instinctual investment of internalised objects it is confirmed that even in the early years it depends on the relationship of the child with the significant other(s).

At the beginning,this relationship cannot be properly called an interpersonal one,the ego not having developed enough.It is only gradually that the child begins to experience the others as separate and to direct to them libidinal or aggressive impulses which influence the investment of elements s/he internalises from these others.The case of the Oedipus complex that Freud had analysed,therefore, can be considered to be only one stage in a series of similar processes.

Thus Freud's theorisation of a certain organisation,a certain structuring of psychical energy his second topography refers to,is amplified and enriched by the Post Freudian developments we referred to.[121]

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121. Of course,differences between the authors discussed do remain.Outside analytic practice it is not possible to decide for or against a certain author.There are,however,certain commonly accepted elements and it is to these we refer.In the context of the present analysis this level of generality has to be considered as acceptable.

The importance of (external) object relations for the development of sexual drives is recognised,against Freud's account of early autoerotic choices.

An innate dynamic of ego development (implicitly present in Freud's theorisation) is explicitly theorised.

New mechanisms of object internalisation (splitting of objects,projective,introjective identification of part objects,etc.) at the early stages of ego and super-ego creation are introduced.These complement the central mechanism of identification that Freud had proposed[122] and confirm the instinctual investment of internalised elements,even at the very early stages.

It is also confirmed that this instinctual investment (its kind and intensity) depends on the relationship of the child to significant other(s).

A much earlier origin of super-ego components is recognised (though in Jacobson's view the super-ego as a structure emerges at the stage Freud had proposed).

The type of objects that can be internalised is more extensively theorised:from early relatively predetermined

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It has also to be remarked that the authors we refer to (usually identified,in different combinations,as "object relations" theorists) do not present a "non-biologistic" version of psychoanalysis as opposed to the Freudian one.(This is the opinion,for example,of H.Gunthrip opposing Freud and Klein to Fairbairn (H.Gunthrip, Personality structure and human interaction,London:Hogarth,1961) or N.Chodorow who shares Gunthrip's views (N.Chodorow,"Beyond drive theory:object relations and the limits of radical individualism",Theory and society 14 (1985),p.306).
The only such case is Balint's attribution of early libidinal object choices to the relation with the mother which removes the given nature of autoerotic object choices Freud postulated.Otherwise,Freud's account is,as we saw,as free of biologism as any of the above authors.This is because Freud does not,at least since the introduction of his second topography,base his theorisation of psychical structuring on (biologically predetermined) drives but rather on the agencies of the ego and the super-ego.

122. The connection of the processes of identification with the internalisation of a social symbolic system is also noted

bodily parts/part objects to whole objects,patterns of behaviour,elements of character,etc.Thus Freud's limitation of "social" elements internalised only to the super ego -as was already obvious from Freud's own account- cannot be maintained.

In the light of the above,we can consider that we have a quite detailed theorisation of the development and mechanisms of construction of the agencies of the ego and super-ego.These agencies correspond to an **organisation**,a **structuring** of psychical energy.It is,therefore,a theory of psychical structuring that we refer to.In what follows we shall focus on certain aspects of this theory.

4.PSYCHICAL STRUCTURING AS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

Psychoanalysis,Freud included,has traditionally paid little attention to post-Oedipal,adolescent or adult processes of psychical structuring relating to the ego or super-ego.Within the purposes of analytic practice,emphasis on the early years may be justified,since most neuroses can be traced back to these years and thus successfully treated.Psychoses also seem to require a return to even earlier formative stages of the ego.It can be said that for analytic/clinical practice in general it is the early years that are the most significant ones.

However,the mechanisms postulated in ego and super-ego construction are not in some way limited to the early years but they appear to have a certain generality.Freud himself accounted for group ties by postulating the existence of "partial identifications",based on the perception of a common quality shared with some other person who is not an object of the sexual instinct"[123].These partial identifications,functioning in a positive way and employing libidinal impulses,provide the main mechanism of group ties.

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123. S.Freud,Group psychology and the analysis of the ego (1921), P.F.L. 12,Harmondsworth:Penguin,1985,p.137

We have to accept,obviously,that earlier identifications are more formative since they create the basic structures of the ego and super-ego and thus that the impact of any later structuring on the economy of the psyche is relatively smaller.Also,that "after adolescence,ego development proceeds less and less along the lines of identification and grants increasing room to independent critical and self-critical judgement and to the individual,autonomous trends of the ego and its Anlage"[124].This does not imply,however,that the process of identification ceases to operate after adolescence.This process has to be seen as continuing throughout life.

There is an obvious need for further theorisation of psychical structuring through identification in adulthood.As it is,psychoanalysis does not offer any theorisation specifically oriented to these processes (with the exception of sexual maturity at adolescence and the establishment of a final sexual identity),that would -for example- allow us to infer the relative weight of such identifications vis-a-vis the "critical and self-critical judgement" of the ego.

5.THE PARTIAL CLOSURE OF PSYCHICAL AGENCIES

The inherent anthropomorhism in the notions of ego and super-ego may be taken to imply that these agencies are fully delimited and homogeneous ones.This is not the case,though.

The ego and super-ego are never fully distinguishable from each other and from the id.The lines of demarcation are never fully drawn:

"The ego is not sharply separated from the id;its lower portion merges into it...[the super ego] is a grade in the ego,a differentiation within the ego,...a part of the ego."[125]

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124. Jacobson,SWO,p.194

Moreover,even within a single agency,that of the ego,we do not have a homogeneous and consistent structure.Freud recognises "contrary attitudes" existing within the ego.[126]

Hartmann,generalising the remark,considers that "the many ego functions not only they have different strengths but they actually oppose each other"[127].

It is not only in respect to attitudes and functions that the ego is not a homogeneous structure.We already stressed that although the distinction between the ego and the super-ego is the great dividing line within the psyche between libidinal and aggressive instinctual investment of internalised elements,the ego is never purely libidinal and the super-ego never purely aggressive.Due to the always fused nature of the instinctual energy investing any internalised element,this element is invested also with a certain degree of the opposing kind of psychical energy.Thus the ego and super-ego are not homogeneous structures from an instinctual/dynamic point of view as well.

The same lack of homogeneity exists in relation to the objects internalised.Freud had remarked,a propos the ego-ideal,the precursor of the super-ego within which it was to be subsequently located:

"Each individual is a component part of numerous groups,he is bound by ties of identification in many directions,and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models[128].

Certain writers had tried to impose a coherence on the diverse identifications of the ego,such as Erikson claiming that in adolescence an integration of past identifications

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125. EI,p.367

126. Outline,p.440

127. Hartmann,op.cit.,p.139

128. "Group Psychology...",op.cit.,p.161

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is effected:"a fixed identity is superordinated to any single identification with individuals of the past:it includes all significant identifications,but it also alters them in order to make a unique and a reasonable coherent whole of them".[129]

However much a certain cohesion between these identifications is needed in order for them to coexist within the ego,their fusion into "a unique and coherent whole" has to be seen as an ideal rather than as the norm.[130]

We can conclude that while the broad labels of ego and super-ego do represent a structuring and organisation of psychical energy,this structuring should not be taken as producing fully homogeneous and closed wholes.Rather the ago and super-ego are composed by potentially or actually contradicting elements,contradicting impulses,and they may pursue contradicting functions.Moreover they are never fully distinguishable from one another and from the id.

Since the self as a whole ,the individual as such,is composed by these agencies as well as from the Id,we can easily see the deconstructing effect psychoanalytic theory has to any claim for the individual as a homogeneous,coherent entity.Although we have to accept a certain closure and cohesiveness within the psychic structure,we have also to consider any such closure as representing a multiplicity of entities in dynamic equilibrium rather than an autonomous single agency.Hence psychoanalytic theory is radically different from any attribution of an "essence" to the individual.

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129. Erikson,op.cit.,p.121

130. We have to distinguish any psychologically necessary closure of the ego as a structure from the **historically specific** notion of the person as a self-sufficient entity (for example see M.Mauss "A category of the human mind:the notion of person;the notion of self" (1938) in M.Carrithers et al (eds),The category of the person,Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1985).It has also to be recognised that the actual closure of the ego may vary historically through more or less intense processes of individuation.

6.THE EGO AND SUPER-EGO AS ALSO UNCONSCIOUS:THE RELATION BETWEEN THE FIRST AND THE SECOND FREUDIAN TOPOGRAPHIES

The theorisation of certain organised,structured agencies within the psyche invariably poses the question of the relation between this theorisation -of the whole of the second topograghy- to the first topography,and specifically to the fundamental Freudian concept,that of the unconscious. Freud has been ambiguous as to the exact connection of his second topography with his first one.

In the second topography,the id is presented as "open at its end to somatic influences...filled with energy reaching it from the instincts..striving to bring about the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle"[131] and as following the specific modality previously attributed to the unconscious (primary process,timelessness,etc.).The id is "a chaos [and] has no organisation"[132].Thus the id could be easily identified with the unconscious tout court.

Is it the case,then,that the agencies of the ego and the super-ego fall wholly within consciousness? If so,given the important functions assumed by these agencies,the notion of the unconscious becomes a marginal one and the specificity of the unconscious the first topograghy focused on becomes unimportant.

However,this is not so.

The unconscious function of the ego and super-ego

In fact the ego and the super-ego straddle the conscious/ unconscious distinction,operating at both levels:

We saw above that Freud considers the super-ego as "merging" with the id: "the super-ego merges into the

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131. NIL,p.106

132. NIL,p.100

id;indeed,as heir to the Oedipus complex it has intimate relations with the id;it is more remote than the ego from the perceptual system".[133]Freud notes also that the dream-censorship attributed to the super-ego operates uncon-sciously.The same can be said for the sense of quilt in ob-sessional neurotics: "We may say that the sufferer from compulsions and prohibitions behaves as if he were dominated by a sense of guilt,of which,however,he knows nothing,so that we must call it an unconsious sense of guilt"[134].

Thus the super-ego can be seen as operating unconsciously (as well as consciously).

The case of the ego is more complicated.The ego is the agency that includes the conscious/rational functions of the organism: "The ego can be seen as what may be called reason and common sense,in contrast to the Id,which con-tains the passions"[135].In contrast to the id which has "no organisation",the ego is "organisation"[136].In contrast to the unbound and freely mobile energy of the Id the ego rep-resents bound energy[137].In contrast to the Id's following the "pleasure" principle and the primary process,the ego is seen as functioning through the reality principle and as following the secondary process.Indeed,in his late "Outline" Freud considers that the ego functions primarily on a preconscious level.

However,the ego does not cease to be a "part" of the id:[138]"the ego is not sharply separated from the id;its

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133. NIL,p.111

134. S.Freud,Obsessive actions and religious practices (1907),P.F.L. 13,Harmondsworth:Penguin,1985,p.37

135. EI,p.364

136. S.Freud,Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety (1926),P.F.L. 10, Harmondsworth:Penguin,1979,p.250

137. Outline,p.395

lower portion merges with the id"[139].

Moreover,in his sketch of the "mental personality" Freud presents the ego as extending within the unconscious.[140] Part of the ego is considered,therefore,as unconscious.Freud explicitly recognises this: "large portions of the ego,and particularly the super-ego,which cannot be denied the characteristics of preconsciousness,none the less remain for the most part unconscious in the phenomenological sense of the word"[141].

But it is not only in the "phenomenological sense" that the ego is unconscious.It operates at an unconscious level as well.This is the case of the ego-defence mechanisms: "We have come upon something in the ego itself which is also unconscious,which behaves exactly like the repressed -that is,which produces powerful effects without itself being conscious and which requires special work before it can be made conscious".[142]

As has been remarked,these mechanisms "are not just unconscious in the sense that the subject is ignorant of their motive and mechanism,but more profoundly so in that they present a compulsive,repetitive and unrealistic aspect which makes them comparable to the very repressed against which they are struggling"[143].More generally,it has been remarked that the ego can follow the primary process[144].

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138. A part "which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of Perception/consciousness" (EI,363)

139. EI,p.367

140. NIL,p.111

141. Outline,p.394

142. EI,p.356

143. LP,p.139

144. Hartmann,op.cit.,p.131

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The make up of the ego and super-ego as unconscious

The mechanisms of ego (and super-ego) construction,i.e. identification and the other internalisation processes,operate unconsciously.Indeed at the early stages of ego construction there is no ego that could become "conscious" of these mechanisms.Even in the case of later identifications,however,the process of identification remains an unconscious one (adult identifications of the type Freud describes in group formation,for example,are also unconscious).

As for the actual configuration of the ego and the super-ego,i.e. the objects internalised and their instinctual investment,we have no direct access to them.We can deduce this configuration from endopsychic operation,from manifestations in consciousness as thoughts or affects (or from consequent manifestations in behaviour) but we cannot approach in any direct or unmediated way the ego and the super-ego.

That the origin of identifications are external "objects" does not imply that these objects are replicated within the ego or the super-ego as such.However,we cannot know exactly "how" identifications exist within these agencies.Do they retain,and to what extent their perceptual characteristics? How do they coexist with each other? We cannot offer an answer to these questions any more we can for unconscious processes in general.In fact we cannot really theorise the mode of being of internalised elements as they exist within the agencies of the ego and the super-ego.Only after the identifications constructing the ego have been manifested -in one way or another- on the level of consciousness can we identify their existence.

It is not only,therefore,the operation of the ego and super ego as endopsychic agencies that can be described as unconscious.The actual make up,the configuration of these agencies have also to be seen as unconscious.Not only is produced unconsciously,but is also inaccessible to con-

sciousness as such.

Thus (parts of) the ego merge with the id,operate on an unconscious level,and exhibit features (primary process,source of psychical energy) that have been explicitly attributed to the unconscious in Freud's first topography.Moreover,the actual construction of the ego is unconsciously produced,remains unconscious and can only be indirectly deduced.It can be concluded,therefore,that the ego is -also- unconscious.

Hence a simple contrast between the Id as unconscious,referring to unbound energy,primary process,irrationality and passions and the ego as preconscious/conscious following the secondary process and being the embodiment of reason cannot be sustained.Rather the ego (and the super-ego) should be seen as straddling the previous dichotomy of conscious/unconscious and as existing in both these "areas".

On its "upper" regions the ego includes consciousness and rational thought while its "lower" ones participate in the modality of the unconscious.The unconscious/conscious polarity is not replicated as the Id/Ego one but it exists within the ego.The ego has to be seen as covering the whole spectrum from consciousness to the unconscious and the same,to a lesser degree,can be said for the super-ego.

The unconscious as structurable

But if so,the difference between the unconscious ego and the unconscious Id can be none else than a difference between unstructured unconscious and structured unconscious respectively.A difference between bound energy and unbound one is not to be seen as referring only to the unconscious and the conscious,but as existing also within the same level,that of the unconscious.The unconscious itself is also structurable.

Thus it could be argued that the second Freudian topog-

raphy introduces the concept of structured psychical energy within the field defined as unconscious in the first topograghy.

The actual "construction" of the ego and the super-ego can be seen as "the synthesis in the course of which free energy is transformed into bounded energy"[145].The emergence of these agencies corresponds to a structuring of part of the undifferentiated instinctual energy of the id,without this structuring implying an ipso facto change of register.

Freud's ambivalence over the exact location of the ego could be indicative of the difficulty he had to acknowledge the full implications his later phase of thinking (the one roughly starting with "Beyond the pleasure principle") for his earlier notion of the unconscious.Yet the admission of the possibility of structuring within the unconscious is unmistakeably present in this later phase.

In the light of the above,Lacan's famous remark that the "unconscious is structured like a language" can be seen with the emphasis on the "structured" rather than on "language",i.e precisely as an affirmation of the structured character of the unconscious.

As O.Kernberg remarks:"The repressed portion of the id would possess an internal organisation as well as specific structures composed of self-image,object image and unacceptable impulse components"and V.der Waals:"we would have to conclude that the repressed portion of the id is not pure id,but an ego id"[146].

However,as we saw,this structuring does not produce fully closed,fully homogeneous entities.Since the elements internalised within the ego and the super-ego are invested with psychical energy (primarily libidinal in the ego and primarily aggressive in the super-ego) the lack of

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145. Outline,p.395

146. Kernberg,op.cit.,p.43

homogeneity implies that these agencies are to be seen as dynamic equilibria in flux in which conflicting, contradicting impulses coexist in a precarious balance rather than as unitary entities.

Moreover, as we noted, the ego and the super-ego are not fully distinguishable from the id and cannot be fully differentiated between them, either.

Thus the "structuring" of the unconscious the agencies of the ego and super-ego represent has to be conceived as a partial and never fully completed one. It could be said that the ego and super-ego are only lines of partial differentiation and organisation, dynamic equilibria in flux, surrounded by and merging with the "mass" of chaotic instinctual energy of the Id from which they can never be fully distinguish.

The partial and incomplete nature of structuring seems to be in accordance with the chaotic modality attributed to the id and the unconscious in general. Even though it does admit a certain structuring, unconscious psychical energy is not amenable to a full organisation, a full structuring, a complete "binding".

The psychoanalytic theorisation of psychical structuring, therefore, corresponding to Freud's second topography, can be considered as an affirmation of the structurable nature of the unconscious, and hence as further advancing the theorisation of this fundamental concept. It is an extension and enrichment of the first topography rather than a substitute for it.

7. INDETERMINACY AND OPENNESS IN THE PROCESS OF STRUCTURING

The process of structuring of psychical energy that the emergence of the ego and super-ego represent, has to be considered to exhibit, to a significant extent, elements of indeterminacy.

(a) The construction of the ego and super-ego depends on the internalisation of elements from the significant en-

vironment.The type of objects internalised becomes more and more indeterminate encompassing a growing variety of objects as the child grows.

However,even if the general **type** of possible internalisable objects is known, **the actual choice** of object and hence the actual configuration of the agencies cannot be deduced from their general type (and this is true even in the earlier stages of psychical development).

Consequently the history of object choices as it is internalised in the ego and super-ego,and hence the actual make up of these agencies can be said to be non deducible in any mechanical way from the significant environment.The actual objects internalised are always individually specific,constituting,in this way,the **individuality** of the person.

This indeterminacy holds,in a more pronounced way,for the investment of these objects with instinctual energy.The level of this investment as well as the degree of aggressive/libidinal elements it incorporates are influenced by the relationship of the child to the significant environment (the significant other(s)).Thus the instinctual investment of these elements depends on a **dynamic** process of interaction.

Even at early stages when the significant environment is limited to the mother and the type of object choice is limited,the actual investment of these objects -as "good" or "bad"- and the level of this investment,cannot be deduced from the mother's behaviour (as Mahler's study indicates).

At later stages,once the basic ego-structure has been developed,the interpersonal processes of interaction between the child and the significant others are the determinants of the instinctual investment on internalised elements.Thus it is not the case of a simple reproduction of the significant environment within the psyche.

Freud's remarks on the severity of the super-ego are here

pertinent:"the original severity of the super-ego does not
-or does not so much- represent the severity which one has
experienced from it [the object],or which one attributes to
it;the severity of the former seems to be independent of
that of the latter"[147].The strength of the super-ego is
not,then,a replica of the environment facing the child,but
it is only influenced in an indeterminable degree by this
environment.It cannot be deduced in any immediate way from
this environment.

Thus the actual make-up,the specific configuration of the
ego,regarding both the type of internalised objects and the
type and level of instinctual investment is not deducible
in any mechanical way from the significant environment.Even
when growing up in the same environment,every person
remains unique because different "objects" and in different
ways are internalised.

This assertion is not invalidated by a parallel affirma-
tion of an innate dynamic in the development of the ego,a
dynamic that can be considered to include given stages in a
fixed sequence (of the type Mahler or Kernberg propose).The
fixed sequence regards only the necessary and gradual emer-
gence of the ego and super-ego as agencies but not the ac-
tual objects internalised nor their psychical investment.

The agencies of the ego and super-ego are the same for
every individual and define the individual as a
specific,separate entity.However,the actual configuration
of these agencies is not universal but personal and it is
this configuration that gives to every individual his/hers
individuality.

(b)Besides the indeterminacy arising from the impos-
sibility to decide which elements from a given environment
will become important for the psyche,there is another,more
radical,level of indeterminacy.It stems from the partial

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147. S.Freud,Civilization and its discontents (1929) (thereafter
CD),P.F.L. 12,p.323

closure of psychical agencies and from the unconscious
level the construction and the configuration of the ego and
the super-ego operate on.

The internalisation of external objects in the process of
ego and super-ego construction is definitely not the
reproduction of these objects within the psyche (as is true
of any unconscious element).

Moreover,the actual configuration and make up of these
agencies as it exists within the unconscious is not ap-
proachable in any direct or unmediated way.Representatives,
ideas and affects originating within the ego and the super-
ego have to be -and always are- subjected to a change of
state to become conscious.

Since,however,these psychical agencies represent dynamic
equilibria in flux,and not unitary and homogeneous
agencies,even these manifestations in consciousness are
never unidimensional.Conflicting affects or ideas -which
may also change over time- can stem from the (same) ego.Yet
these manifestations are all we have to deduce the exist-
ence and actual make up of the ego and super-ego.

Thus even if we knew (which of course we don't) the ob-
jects that have been internalised within the ego and the
super-ego as well as their instinctual investment,we would
not be able to know how these objects exist within the un-
conscious or deduce the way they may appear in conscious-
ness.We cannot know as what thoughts or affects the ego or
super ego may manifest themselves.

We cannot,therefore,consider that any causal lines of
determination can be drawn as to the actual configuration
of these agencies or the manifestation of this configura-
tion.Given a specific environment,the configuration of the
endopsychic agencies of the ego and the super-ego cannot be
determined.Not only because the actual objects that will be
internalised and their instinctual investment is not
deducible from this environment,but also,and more impor-
tantly,because these agencies are never fully

closed,determined or homogeneous ones:they are rather lines of partial structuring surrounded by and merging with the mass of the chaotic instinctual energy of the id.Moreover,since they operate on the unconscious,they are never fully approachable as such.

We are faced here with a strange phenomenon: a theory of psychical determination that retains a radical indeterminacy so that we can never say what exactly the results of this determination are.Indeed there are no "results" in any strict sense:only a certain fluid and never fully delimited structuring of a flow of psychical energy.

Psychoanalytic theorisation reaches its limits at this point (as also in the attempt to present a theoretical account of the unconscious).It pursues a theory of determinacy and a rational account of endopsychic agencies as far as it can go.But it cannot fail to admit that the objects analysed ultimately escape any full account of them;they are not fully analysable in any coherent and rational way.And this is because they operate on the level that precisely escapes any full rational account: the level of the unconscious.

In this context,we can admit Castoriadis' claim of "radical imagination": "The representative flux is,makes itself,as self alteration,the incessant emergence of the other in and through the positing of images or figures"[148]

In other words,radically new images or representations can emerge within the psyche,despite the fact that both the initial origin of representations the psyche uses and the internalised objects within the ego and the super-ego are determined by the environment.The indeterminacy that characterises the conditioning of the psyche from the part of the environment is such that a radical creativity within the psyche can be admitted.[149]

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148. Castoriadis,IIS,p.329

149. A note may be added here concerning Lacan's theorisation related

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8.SUMMARY

Freud's second topography of the psyche and the post-Freudian developments we referred to present a theorisation of structuring of psychical energy through the agencies of the ego and the super-ego.

The emergence and early development of these agencies seems predetermined and can be said to follow certain stages.However it is the incorporation of "external" objects within them that actually "constructs" these agencies.

The mechanisms of internalisation are those of introjec-

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to the indeterminacy noted above.

Lacan refers to "orders",the imaginary and the symbolic,through which the psyche operates.For the symbolic order to become internalised,a certain breach in the imaginary order is required, a "gap opened by a prematuration of the imaginary".This gap signifies a lack - the "manque-a-etre" (J.Lacan,"Remarque sur le rapport de D.Lagache"(1961),Ecrits,Paris:Editions du Seuil,1966,p.655)- traversing the imaginary and -presumably- the symbolic order as well.The "manque-a-etre" inhibits any full closure of the psyche.

The "manque-a-etre" can be considered to refer precisely to the impossibility of full structuring of the unconscious and hence to the necessary openess of the psyche.However,the way the impossibility is presented is different,and this difference is a significant one.

For the psyche to require the assumption of a "lack" to denote its openess,the implication is that it could otherwise be conceived as a closed entity that only the existence of this "manque" prevents from being fully closed.

(The very reference to "orders" -the imaginary and the symbolic- has also an implied connotation of closed universes,which,in principle,can be seen as self-enclosed,self-sustainable ones,unless something external inhibits this closure)

The "I"("Moi") is correlatively seen as it could have been a closed,homogeneous entity if only the lack("manque") didn't exist.The "manque" functions like a kind of negative essence that inhibits the full closure of the self.Thus while we have the denial of a closed,self-sustainable I,this denial is effected only through the postulation of the mysterious "manque" qua essence,operating on the otherwise closed entity of the psyche and the self.

Lacan's account therefore retains a kind of metaphysics,even if it is in a negative form.On the contrary,Freud's account and the implications we have derived from it do not,nor do they need to:

The unconscious is not originally,or even potentially,a closed entity.It is simply an entity that is never fully structurable.Hence,a certain necessary openess of the psyche is implied.

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tion,projection and -at a later stage- identification.

At the early stages the type of these objects is limited and apparently predetermined to bodily parts of self and parents.The establishment of a primary ego-structure along with a cognitive maturation that allows the gradual internalisation of an externally provided -and social in origin- universe of representations,mark the transition from these limited objects to a vast array of elements,including patterns of behaviour,elements of character,social norms, interpersonal relations,etc.

These elements retain an instinctual investment as they become internalised.This investment is principally of a libidinal/Erotic nature for the elements internalised within the ego and of an aggressive nature -related to the death drives- within the super-ego.The determinants of the kind and intensity of this energy is the relationship of the child to significant other(s) (initially the mother).These relationships become more and more interpersonal ones as the child's ego develops and "whole persons" are conceived as such.

The ego and super-ego represent therefore a certain organisation of instinctual energy.But they are more than that: they behave as sources of instinctual energy as well,the super ego of a predominantly aggressive one directed towards the ego and the ego of a libidinal one directed to external objects (and of course the ego is also the bearer of conscious/rational thought).

Thus the development of the agencies of the ego and super-ego can be considered as a structuring of instinctual energy,a structuring interwoven with cognitive and affective development and necessitating a facilitating and supportive external environment.However,the mechanisms of this development and primarily that of identification,have to be seen as continuing throughout life,though with a decreasing importance (alongside adaptation processes through the conscious/ rational ego).

However,the agencies of the ego and the super-ego are not fully delimited and homogeneous ones.They merge with the id and with each other,and they may contain contradicting elements.Moreover,both the construction of these agencies and part of their operation remains unconscious and there is no direct access to their actual configuration.Thus the second Freudian topography can be considered as introducing the possibility of a -partial- structuring of the unconscious,a structuring represented precisely by these agencies.

As a consequence,points of indeterminacy are introduced within the theorisation of psychical structuring.Given a specific environment,the actual objects that will be internalised within the ego and super-ego and their instinctual investment are not deducible from this environment in a mechanical way.Besides,because these elements exist within the unconscious,they can never be directly approached.Finally,since the ego and super-ego are never fully closed or homogeneous agencies their manifestations in consciousness are not unidimensional.

Thus no fully causal theory of psychical structuring can be advanced.As a corollary,the possibility of the emergence of the non determined,of the radically new,within the psyche has to be admitted.

The elements of psychoanalytic theorisation indicated above,however limited in respect to the whole of psychoanalytic theory,are enough to allow us to pose the question of the relationship between the psychical and the social.

1.HUMAN AND ANIMAL PSYCHICAL DEVELOPMENT

The above outline of psychical structuring that psychoanalytic theory introduces allows a brief note on the relationship between human and animal psychic development.

It has to be admitted that much within the human psyche have to be seen as operating on the same level as that of higher animals.This is,primarily,the case of self-preservative instincts that Freud never really occupied himself with.Of course these instincts have to be seen (as recent research,mainly in the field of ethology and neuropsychology,has indicated) not any more as "givens changed by the environment",but as "organisations which,through learning,integrate various inborn patterns ("building blocks") into flexible overall plans".[1]

Even a certain form of "ego" and mechanisms of ego formation through identification and similar processes are likely to exist in higher mammals.[2]

The particularity of the human psychical structuring through ego development seems to lie in the plasticity and indeterminacy the process exhibits.

Ego development in humans has very few biologically

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1. Kernberg,op.cit.,p.86

2. One can recall,in this context,Lorenz's mechanism of "imprinting" relative for even "lower" animals (for example K.Lorenz,On Aggression,London:Methuen,1976).

predetermined constants.These (stages of ego development,of ego development,type of early internalisable elements) are very few and limited to the early years of life.As the child grows up,the importance of the environment as the source of internalised objects and their instinctual investment becomes predominant.Even within this environment,though, -an environment which is a specifically human/social one- the actual path of psychic development exhibits an extraordinary plasticity and indeterminacy.

Thus an extraordinary variety of objects can be internalised within the ego,a variety connected also with the superior cognitive and rational capabilities of the human mind (capabilities which,for example,after a certain stage of psychical development allow the internalisation of elements of a purely conceptual or ideal nature).

Thus,while we should speak of a continuum rather than a sharp differentiation between the "animal" and the "human",there is a certain specificity that characterises human psychical development.And psychoanalytic theory allows us to theorise precisely this specificity.

2.THE SOCIAL NATURE OF THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL

If such a specificity of the human psyche exists,however,it is closely connected with the origin of the internalised within the psyche elements and the type of the significant environment.Any analysis of either cannot fail to reveal that we are referring to social objects and to a social significant environment.

(a) THE UNCONSCIOUS INTERFACE
BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIAL
The deep,foundational level
of social environmental influence

We can distinguish three ways in which the environment influences the psyche in the early,formative stages of self-development:

(i) As the origin of the representations the psyche -both on the conscious and unconscious level- gradually comes to use,abandoning any inborn or "private" earlier ones.On the level of the unconscious,there is a continuity in modality between the early and the externally acquired representations but the latter are not predetermined as to their content,unlike the earlier ones which indicate certain common themes (Jung's archetypes,Klein's representations of bodily parts or Freud's primal phantasies).

The externally acquired representations depend on and are intelligible only within the symbolic/meaningful universe the child is gradually enmeshed at,the human universe of meanings and significations.This universe is the "symbolic order" Lacan refers to or the "world of representations" of Castoriadis'.These representations can only be described as "social".

It has to be noted here that in so far as representations or symbols enter the unconscious we do not have a simple transposition within the psyche of a system of symbols or representations.The socially originating representations are subjected to the specific modality of the unconscious and they need a change of state to become conscious again.They do not exist,therefore,as systems amenable to full formalisation within the psyche,as Lacan's theorisation may be taken to indicate.It is primarily Castoriadis,as we saw,who stressed the non-logical,non-rational modality of social representations within the unconscious.

At a different level,the social symbolic universe supports also the cognitive development of the psyche,operating through the conscious ego (Piaget and his school have analysed the stages of this development).Once the cognitive maturation has reached a certain stage,explicit social values and norms can be internalised either at an unconscious,or at a conscious/preconscious level.

(ii).Concurrently with the "representations",the sig-

nificant environment is the source of objects of iden-
tification or of internalisation in general within the
agencies of the ego and super-ego.

In early phases of ego development the type of objects
that are internalised is,as noted,restricted and predeter-
mined (referring mainly to child's own and to parent's
bodily parts and functions,passing gradually from part ob-
jects to whole objects and to whole persons).

Even at these stages,though,at which the biological
predeterminations seem most important,the "source" of these
objects -the parents and especially the mother- do not
cease to be overdetermined as persons by social factors
which,though not directly perceivable by the infant,have a
certain influence on the features and objects the infant
does conceive.

As Mahler remarks (and it has to be remembered that these
remarks are to be found within a work primarily oriented
towards the affirmation of innate givens in ego
development):

"Three variables involving the mother are of particular
importance in shaping,promoting,or hindering the individual
child's adaptability,drive,and ego,development and the
beginning structuralisation of precursors of his super-ego:
 1.The mother's personality structure.
 2.The developmental process of her parental function
 3.The mother's conscious,but particularly uncon-
scious,fantasy regarding the individual child."[3]
We could say that even the early,semi-biological,"objects"
of identification are overdetermined by a series of
"social" factors through the medium of the mother.

At a later stage,with the broadening of the type of ob-
jects internalised,character traits,personality
flashes,behaviour patterns,interdictions and moral
values,"elements of class,race,nation",and later abstract

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3. Mahler,op.cit.,p.202

concepts and ideologies,are internalised.

Most of these "objects" of identification refer to greater social structural wholes within which they become intelligible.Some of these,indeed,can only be described through the reference to such a greater whole,as for example Freud's "elements of class,race,etc.".

Even when the internalised objects are character traits,behaviour patterns and the like,these traits and patterns are themselves the result of (i) a similar process of psychical structuring of the significant other(s) and (ii) of the current position and function of these others within social networks.To a significant extent,therefore,they are also social ones.

The internalised elements,therefore, may be transmitted through the individuals more close to the child -initially the parents,later other significant individuals- but they refer not only to these individuals or only to the contexts within which the growing child actually encounters them,but to broader contexts.Only within these latter can some of the internalised elements become intelligible.They are,therefore,inescapably social.

It has to be remembered that,as with representations,the internalisation of elements within the ego and super-ego does not imply a replication of them within the psyche,but the production of certain bounded lines of instinctual energy,of a certain instinctual structuring,that somehow corresponds to these objects.As Adorno remarks:"If there is any truth in Freud's notion of the archaic and indeed "timeless" nature of the unconscious,the concrete social circumstances and motivations cannot enter it without been altered and "reduced"[4].

(iii).Finally the relationship of the growing infant and child with its significant environment (a relationship that can be called "interpersonal" only after the ego has

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4. T.Adorno,"Sociology and psychology",New Left Review,47 (1968),p.80

developed to a certain degree of cohesiveness) influences,as we saw,the level and kind of instinctual energy directed to cathected objects and,correspondingly,the strength and kind of instinctual investment of internalised elements (or of whole agencies as the ego and super-ego).

Obviously the **form** of both early and later such significant environments (the nuclear or extended family or its absence in the case of primitive societies,the modes of education,etc.) are historically specific and socially determined.

Besides,the psychical make up of the persons that form these environments and enter into relationship with the child,a make up that is bound to influence the relationship itself,is the result of these persons' own psychical development which had also been socially influenced.

It is not only,therefore,the type of objects internalised but also the actual **dynamics** of instinctual energy investing these objects (and,at a larger scale,the agencies of ego and super-ego themselves) that is socially influenced.

These three "modes" of environmental (social) influence on the functioning,development and structuring of the individual psyche obviously operate in a simultaneous and intermeshed way and it is only for analytic purposes that we distinguish them as such.

They reveal,though,referring as they do to a deep, foundational,and mostly unconscious level of environmental influence on the psyche,that the **very constitution** of the psyche is a function of elements and influences that can only be described as social.

The objects which are at the origin of internalised elements,the representations that the psyche uses,the significant environments which influence the instinctual investment of endopsychic elements and structures,all depend -to a great extent- on specific social context(s).

In its contents,therefore,in its dynamics,in its way of

"expression",the psyche is inconceivable without a reference to such context(s).

The continuous character of this influence

The modes of social environmental influence we referred to are not limited to the early years of life.

As noted in the previous chapter,symbol internalisation depends on cognitive maturation which is a long process (stretching at least to adolescence) and object internalisation through identification continues throughout life.

Though we can expect that the role of the rational/cognitive apparatus and of critical and self-critical judgement increases as the child enters into adolescence and adulthood,unconscious identification processes never cease to operate.

Naturally,the early influences are the most significant in terms of psychical economy.Later influences,though,may be equally significant within a theorisation of the **social** individual and his actions.

For post-oedipal stages,the correlation of the modes of social influence we referred to with theories of education is obvious.However,the actual connection between the two remains to be worked out.[5]

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5. To give an example:I.Illich,among others,has remarked that the participation of a child in the everyday practice of the -modern-school,makes the child internalise and accept certain values, irrespective of the content of what is actually taught:
"School initiates young people into a world where everything can be measured,including their imagination,and indeed,man himself".Knowledge and values are presented as "institutionalised, measured,packaged". Progress also is seen as "measured by the degree of consumption of services" (I.Illich, Deschooling society (1971),Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1976,p.45).
All these the child comes to "know" not as explicit values but as implicit ones,incorporated within the very organisational order of the school into which the child is enmeshed and within the practice of the school that he follows.We cannot refer to this "knowledge" as a conscious/cognitive development,but we don't know either how mechanisms of identification or unconscious symbol internalisation could be used to explain it.

As for adulthood, many authors have referred to operations of the social within the individual which function unconsciously -at least in the phenomenological sense- and which do seem to have an effect in influencing the structure of the psyche in a relatively permanent way (as it can be judged from subsequent behaviour or thought).

To give some examples: Such a case is Foucault's reference to "disciplines", as "the methods which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility"[6], methods operating through a "meticulous control of activity in space and time" and which are evident in the army, the school, the hospital and the prison as they become organised at the end of the 18th century.

Foucault indicates the analogy between these "disciplines" and the capitalist organisation of work in modern factories, an analogy already stressed by Marx.

What we have here is a series of techniques that are aimed in changing the individual's behaviour, techniques operating on the body and its activities, without apparently passing through a cognitive operation. The only way these techniques could have an effect on behaviour as they seem to do would be if, in psychodynamic terms, they effected a certain structuring of the psyche. This structuring is effected and operates at an unconscious level, at least in the phenomenological/descriptive sense.

We cannot really say what is the connection between these "disciplines" and the processes of social environmental influence on the psyche we referred to above. How, for example, can the function of the "disciplines" be assimilated through the identification processes?

In a more generalising vein, Althusser remarks that

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6. M.Foucault,Discipline and punish (1975),Harmondsworth:Penguin,1979, p.137

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"ideology" is the "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"[7].Ideology exists "always in an apparatus,and its practice,or practices",i.e in a "material" way:

The participation of the subject in certain practices ("material practices governed by material rituals",just as Pascal's advice to the unfaithful :"kneel down,move your lips in prayer,and you will believe"[8]) has a certain effect on the individual,an effect manifested on the "imaginary" sphere and only subsequently on the cognitive sphere.

S.Zizek takes up Althusser's point in referring to "ideological phantasy" as the "illusion which is structuring our real,effective relationship to reality"[9].He further refers to A.Sohn-Rethel who has insisted that certain concepts of abstract thought (for example solipsism,abstract quantity,abstract time and space) have originated not in thought itself but in the realm of social practice and particularly in the exchange through money in the market.

Althusser,Zizek and Sohn-Rethel refer to certain structural effects the participation in specific social practices has,effects that can be manifested in "phantasy",in the "imaginary dimension",and be at the origin of conscious thought.

Zizek remarks that when Sohn-Rethel claims "the exchange abstraction is not thought,but it has the form of thought (before it can be transformed to actual thought) he indicates precisely the level of the unconscious,as that "form of thought whose ontological status is not that of thought"[10].

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7. L.Althusser,"Ideology and ideological state apparatuses",op.cit., p.153

8. ibid.,p.158

9. S.Zizek,The sublime object of ideology,London:Verso,1989,p.33

10. ibid.,p.19

The "phantasy" or the "imaginary dimension",then,can be taken to refer to the unconscious itself,and hence to a certain structuring,a certain influence of the unconscious through the participation in social practices.This structuring may,subsequently and as would be expected,manifested as conscious thought.Though no specific indication of the actual endopsychic processes this structuring operates through is made,the **existence** of this structuring,its level (that of the unconscious,and not only in the phenomenological sense) and its origin (through participation in social practices) are persuasively asserted.

These examples -among many other possible ones- indicate that social influences on the level of the adult individual unconscious **do** exist.The unconscious of the adult is not only,therefore,populated by infantile remnants but it is also an active layer of functioning of the mind into which the social environment can operate.

No theorisations have been advanced as to the mode of endopsychic operation of this structuring and its relation to the earlier modes we referred to,though the relevance of the participation in social practices has been indicated.Explicit and detailed links between the social influences these studies indicate and the mechanisms psychoanalysis theorises remain to be elaborated (Freud's pioneering work on group identifications is one of the few studies that have addressed this question).[11]

However,there can be no doubt about the **existence** of these social influences operating on the unconscious of adults nor about their importance from the point of view of a theory of both the individual psyche and the social.

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11. The relevance of "practice" should not be taken as annulling the importance of other ways the social influences psychical structuring,Freud's "partial identifications" being a case.Indeed a question arising is whether there can be a case of **unconscious** -and not cognitive- influence of systems of ideas/symbols (The questions Barthes' "Mythologies" raise,for example. R.Barthes,Mythologies (1957),London:Paladin,1973,p.117ff.)

(b) THE CONSCIOUS/RATIONAL ADAPTATION
TO THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Alongside the deep and/or unconscious processes we referred to above,psychoanalytic theorisation allows us to distinguish one more: that referring to a conscious/rational adaptation to the social.

This is,in a sense,the most obvious level,being theorised long before psychoanalysis.The important in the present context is that it does not get dissolved once the existence of deeper unconscious processes of social operation on the individual have been asserted.It retains its specificity and significance.

It is the conscious/rational ego -as the bearer of the reality principle- that functions as the agent for this adaptation.

This adaptation refers to specific ways the individual consciously and rationally adapts to the environment.To do so,the individual needs a certain "knowledge",a system of concepts and ideas that he/she can use to rationally conceive his situation,aims and means.This system is itself a social/historical creation,the accumulation of past knowledge.Moreover,the individual also needs a system of norms and values to evaluate aims and choose means to attain these aims.These norms and values are obviously also social ones.[12]

Thus in a conscious/rational adaptation to the social environment the social is the objective environment itself while at the same time it provides the (intellectual) means by which the process can be accomplished.

Since in a significant development of the conscious/ cognitive apparatuses is necessary before these processes can operate,it is only at a relatively late stage that they be-

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12. It is to this adaptation that the early Parsonian model in "Structure" refers to.Giddens's model is also -at least to a large extent- a similar one.

come significant.Their significance grows in adolescence and adulthood.

It has to be remembered,therefore,that even before this kind of adaptation to the social environment becomes sig- nificant,the individual is already socially "adapted" through the processes of "deep" structuring of the psyche.Moreover,the maturing of the individual,while allow- ing an increased role to rational/conscious adaptation,does not make the other -unconscious- modes of adaptation cease to operate parallely.

To summarise: The social operates on the psyche on a variety of levels:

(i) at a deep,foundational level of psychic structuring referring mainly to early years.We distinguished three dif- ferent,though interrelated,modes of this operation,the in- ternalisation of social representations and symbols,the in- ternalisation of "objects" of identification and the inter- nalisation of the instinctual investment of the latter.

(ii) in processes identical or similar to the above which continue,with diminishing importance,throughout the individual's life.

These two cases refer primarily to an unconscious level,both in the "phenomenological" and in the "dynamic" sense.

(iii) in a cognitive/rational way both by determining the symbolic universe the individual has access to and by providing an "objective" environment to which the in- dividual consciously and rationally adapts.

We can agree,therefore,with Hartmann that "the crucial adaptation man has to make is to the social structure".[13]It has to be emphasised,however,that this "adaptation" is to be seen as referring to all the three above levels.To ig-

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13. H.Hartmann,Ego psychology and the problem of adaptation (1938),New York:International Universities Press,1958,p.31

nore any of these levels,or to present an one-sided account of any of them can only present a limited view of both the individual and the social.

3.AGAINST MISINTERPRETATIONS

At this point,we can address a number of interpretations of psychoanalytic theory relevant to a theory of the social -including Freud's own- which are different from or opossed to the one presented above.

On the fallacy of the pre-social individual (and on the romantic opposition between happiness and civilisation)

The impossibility to conceive the individual psyche without a reference to social contexts is one of the most profound insights of psychoanalysis.Yet,though as we saw,it is necessarily derived from the psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche,it has not been articulated,or even accepted by most psychoanalysts,Freud included.

Very few of Freud's followers and successors posed the question of the "origin" of the elements "discovered" within the psyche through analytic practice,being content with taking these elements as given and historically constant (and/or as referring to contexts -for ex.the family- that could also be taken as given).

Though it is possibly not necessary to pose such questions within the limits of analytic practice,it becomes so when we consider psychoanalysis as not only a theory of a technique -that of analysis- but,in addition,of a theory of the psyche in general.

Yet,even when such questions have been posed,the social origin of the elements of the psyche has been discounted and the assertion that the individual psyche is conceivable outside the social has been -implicitly or explicitly- advanced.

This is most obvious in Freud himself,despite the profundity of his -own- theorisation.And is nowhere more evident

than in his attempt to oppose the individual to "civilisation".

Such references indicate a kind of Rousseaunesque romanticism for the pre-civilisation state of nature when man was "free" without burden:

"Every individual is virtually an enemy of civilisation,though civilisation is supposed to be an object of universal human interest."[14]

or "The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilisation.It was greater before there was any civilisation,though then,it is true,it had for the most part no value,since the individual was scarcely in a position to defend it."[15]

Indeed Freud advances ways of psychically "binding together" already formed individuals which thus come together to form a society.These ways operate through both the libidinal and the aggressive impulses:

"[Civilisation] favours every path by which strong identifications can be established between the members of the community,and it summons up aim inhibited libido on the largest scale so as to strengthen the communal bond by relations of friendship."[16]

and "It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love,so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness"[17].

These processes are,of course,important ones and their significance for the social cannot be denied.Freud himself,though,is not considering them as the only ones

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14. S.Freud,The future of an illusion (1927),P.F.L. 12 (thereafter FI), p.184

15. CD,p.284

16. CD,p.299.Here Freud draws on his argument in "Group psychology"

17. CD,p.305

"binding" individuals together.As we saw,he considers also a deeper level of social formation of the individual:the one operating though the super-ego,which is seen as the specific vehicle of civilisation:

"As a child grows up,the role of the father is carried on by teachers and others in authority;their injunction and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue,in the form of conscience,to exercise the moral censorship."[18]

The aggresivity of the super-ego towards the ego is equivalent with the "sense of guilt",with conscience:

"If civilisation is a necessary course of development from the family to humanity as a whole then...there is inextricably bound up with it an increase of the sense of guilt."[19]

Thus Freud can argue,in agreement with a Rousseaunist view of civilisation:

"The sense of guilt (is) the most important problem in the development of civilisation and... the price we pay for our advance in civilisation is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt"[20].

Yet,once "civilisation" is seen to operate within the psyche -in the super-ego- Freud's assertion for a pre-civilisation "happiness" or "freedom" can be sustained only if it is possible not to have the super-ego as a psychical agency.Indeed this is what Freud argues:

"External coercion gradually becomes internalised;for a special mental agency,man's super-ego,takes it over and includes it among its commandments"[21].So,for Freud it is possible to refer to an emergence of the super-ego.

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18. EI,p.377

19. CD,p.326

20. CD,p.327

21. FI,p.190

However,as Freud had to admit in "Totem and Taboo",the super-ego does exist in primitive societies,though organised alongside totemic lines and not familial ones.Freud attempted in fact to attribute the similarity between the ambivalent relationship to the totemic animal and that towards the father,to an actual killing of the father in the primal horde,"a memorable and criminal deed which was the beginning of so many things -of social organisation,of moral restrictions and of religion"[22].

Thus the "pre civilization state of happiness" does not exist in actual primitive societies but in a supposed "primal horde".

However,the mechanism Freud himself had advanced for the emergence of the super-ego (the ambivalent attitude towards the father during the Oedipus complex:the identification with the father is accompanied by a defusion of instincts and the internalisation of the aggressive component within the super-ego) would hold in any form of familial setting,even in the "primal horde".

It is inconceivable to imagine any way of developing of an individual that would not involve a certain relationship to other(s).And it is equally inconceivable,given the Freudian theorisation of the fused nature of instinctual energy,to consider that any such relationship would not produce,at one stage or another,an aggressive agency within the psyche,even if this agency does not have the cohesiveness Freud attributes to the super-ego.

Freud himself is obliged to remark that "the mere hostile impulse against the father,the mere existence of a wishful phantasy of killing and devouring him,would have been enough to produce the moral reaction that created totemism and taboo"[23].It is not possible to think of a course of

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22. S.Freud,Totem and Taboo (1913),P.F.L. 13,Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1990,p.203

23. ibid.,p.222

human psychical development that would not include the existence of such impulses -at least within the Freudian theorisation- and thus that could avoid the emergence of an agency like the super-ego.

Even if the problematic existence -an existence no ethnographic material corroborates- of a "primal horde" is granted, therefore, it would be impossible to sustain that it could consist of individuals without a psychic agency comparable to the super-ego.

Thus the existence of a stage of primitive happiness, of no aggressive agency within the psyche, seems hardly sustainable in the context of Freud's own theorisations. Such a stage would be tantamount to a denial of the fused nature of instinctual energy, the life/death drives dualism and indeed any existence of aggressive elements.

Freud's Rousseaunist/Romantic view of civilisation, therefore, cannot be supported by his own theory of the psyche which points to the opposite direction. Post-Freudian developments, by indicating the early origin of super-ego components and the composite character of the super-ego -instead of seeing it solely as the result of the Oedipal phase- further exposed the arbitrary and unsustainable claim of a "pre-civilisation happiness" through the absence of the super-ego.

If such a possibility is excluded, what remains of Freud's "Rousseaunist" argument is that civilisation does indeed function oppressively, i.e only through the medium of the super-ego and that the advance in "civilisation" is marked by an increased "sense of guilt".

Freud nowhere actually offers an argument to support this thesis. He retains it axiomatically and at the cost of not specifying the type of ego-identifications (such identifications would have to be shown to be of a non-social kind to support his thesis).

As remarked in the previous chapter it is not consistent to consider socially relevant identifications as operating

only "prohibitively" through the super-ego and not also "positively" through similar identifications within the ego itself.Indeed,post-Freudian research shows that the same kind of identifications operate in the ego and the super-ego,though of course charged with different kinds of psychical energy.

As for the actual severity of the super-ego,Freud himself had remarked that there is no **necessary** connection between a specific pattern of upbringing and the "sense of guilt" one feels:

"The original severity of the super-ego does not so much represent the severity which one has experienced from it [the object] or which one attributes to it...the severity of the former seems to be independent to that of the latter."[24]

Indeed,as C.Lasch has shown,modern day "permissive" upbringing often results in a much more severe super-ego than the traditional authoritarian one.[25]

Thus not only the notion of a non social and pre social individual is a fallacy.But,in addition,the social functions positively as well as negatively within the psyche -i.e through the ego as well as through the super-ego; and there is no evidence that advance in civilisation indeed produces and/or requires more "guilt" or a stronger super-ego.A pre-civilisation state of happiness or freedom,therefore,is also to be rejected.

All these are conclusions that,for the most part,can be drawn directly from Freud's own work.We could say that it is only his implicit -and axiomatic- alliance to a Rousseaunist/Romantic view that inhibited Freud from actually drawing them himself.

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24. CD,p.323

25. C.Lasch,Heaven in a heartless world:the family besieged,New York: Basic books,1977.Also The culture of narcissism,New York:Norton, 1979

If Freud's own attempt to retain a pre-social or a-social individual and to oppose him to civilisation fails within the context of the theorisation of the psyche he himself had proposed -and which he does not disavow to advance his argument on civilisation- interpretations of Freud of a much more rigid -and questionable- nature are even less capable to sustain a similar argument.

At the extreme,we have interpretations based on a primary -and biological- incompatibility between civilisation and the development of libido such as a main thread of W.Reich's thought is.The argument is that libido,seen as limited to the sexual function,needs to be liberated from constrains upon it in order for the individual to become really emancipated.

Such a view loses all the complexity of Freud's theorisation on both sexuality and civilisation,reducing the individual to a biological being,against which his social existence operates.[26]

Equally misguided are approaches such as E.Fromm's or K.Horney's -labelled,along with others,as "culturalists"- which are in fact attempts to reintroduce a kind of "essence" of the individual,an "essence" which becomes "lost" or "alienated" by modern society.We argued above that the Freudian account stands in sharp contrast to any such "essentialism" of the psyche.While the social criticism of these authors may be perfectly justifiable,its ontological basis as it is presented,requires a kind of existentialist psychology from which the Freudian account is radically different.There is no way to determine,through a reference to the psyche's "true being",a "sane" from an "non-sane" society[27].

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26. The same could be said for biologistic interpretations of opposing aims,that use Freud as a vehicle for the reduction of the social to biological and through this reduction to affirm the natural/unalterable character of the social.

27. The reference is to E.Fromm,The sane society,London:Routledge,1956

What remains are approaches of a more sophisticated nature, such as, for example, Marcuse's who does accept the socially constructed nature of the psyche but considers that apart from unavoidable repression proper, there is also "surplus repression" supporting and instilled by social domination. He argues that this repression can be removed and thus a non-repressive civilisation can exist.[28]

Marcuse considers Freud's account of the primal horde as one of actual domination by the father that was transformed to repression, i.e to a suppression of the libidinal drive by the sons. He further argues that repression, supported by actual domination, has been a central feature of all civilisations, made necessary by scarcity. In modern society, however, due to technological advances brought about precisely by this domination, scarcity is not any more an issue and therefore neither domination nor repression are necessary. A "repression free" libido can be used for a "transformation of sexuality into eros" for the "erotization of the entire personality"[29] which could also bind the death instinct.

While Freud's view of civilisation rests on the very existence of the super-ego, Marcuse's position is unclear: If surplus repression is removed, will there be a super-ego? If no, then we have the original form of Freud's argument which we showed to be flawed. If yes, will the severity of the super-ego be less? Freud's own remarks do not indicate such a possibility. Marcuse himself does not provide any justification for either position, as he does not provide, in the first place, any actual connecting mechanism that would "translate" domination on a social scale to a strong super-ego. Indeed his use of the term "repression" makes it dif-

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28. Marcuse uses "repression" in a non-technical sense to indicate "processes of restraint, constraint and suppression", (H.Marcuse, Eros and civilisation (1956) (thereafter EC), London: Routledge, 1987, p.8)

29. EC, p.202

ficult even to refer to the super ego as the vehicle of suppression of libido.

In fact, Marcuse works with an implicit theoretical model of the psyche of a simplistic nature. He reduces the psyche to a simple instinctual drive -the libido- which is repressed by civilisation but which can be set again free for greater individual happiness and fulfilment. Thus his critique of society and utopia are based on assumptions that scarcely do justice to Freud's theorisation of the psyche.

This is not to imply that Marcuse's critique and ideal are to be discounted (though it has been pointed out that his utopia is essentially an individualistic one involving only individual gratification[30]). But such a critique and ideal cannot be based on the Freudian account of the psyche without reducing it to a simplistic opposition between instinct and repression.

Marcuse's theory represents a sophisticated attempt to base a critique of society and a possible alternative on the demand for greater (individual) happiness. However, only if we reduce the Freudian account to a caricature of itself, is it possible to have "happiness" as the basis of a social critique.

Freud had remarked: "Happiness in the reduced sense in which we recognise it as possible, is a problem of the economics of the individual's libido. There is no golden rule which applies to everyone..."[31].

Once the social influence on the very construction of the psyche has been asserted, this statement can be read in a different way than Freud intended it: namely, as indicating

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30. N.Chodorow,"Object relations and the limits of radical individualism", Theory and society 14 (1985),pp.271-319
For the individualism that underpins Marcuse's work in general -as well as that of Horkheimer's- see P.B.Miller,Domination and power,London:Routledge,1987

31. CD,p.271

that there is no way to suppose that within any social or-
der,the possibility of a certain "happiness" does not exist
(And of course that,since there can be no pre-social or a-
social individual,no degree of "happiness" or "freedom"
can exist for such an individual).

An alternative society can offer alternative ways of
libidinal satisfaction or can offer already existing ways
to a greater number of people.There is no way,however,to
judge whether this will produce "happier" individuals in
general and to base the critique or ideal on a higher level
of happiness.There is no single measure of happiness which
could provide an ultimate criterion.Social critique and al-
ternatives can be rationally defended and sought after,but
not in the name of "happiness" as such.[32]

Thus,despite Freud's own and later attempts to assert a
fundamental opposition between the individual and the so-
cial -an opposition that would necessitate the existence of
a somehow pre-social individual- the very theorisation of
the psyche psychoanalytic theory offers precludes such an
opposition,as closer study reveals.On the contrary,it indi-
cates that the social is unavoidably included in any in-
dividual psyche and that it cannot be,in any simple
way,contrasted with it.

On a certain opposition between
the psychical and the social

There is a way,however,to preserve Freud's insight of a
certain opposition between the individual psyche and the
social,though in a quite different form than Freud

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32. All this reference to "happiness" has to be seen as over and above
a certain integration of the ego and super-ego that would allow a
"normal" functioning of the psyche.However fuzzy the line of differen-
tiation between "normal" and "in need of therapy" (let alone
"pathological"),cases usually seen as in need of analytic/clinical at-
tention fall below this minimum requirement for an adequate function
of the individual.Obviously the above argument does not refer to such
cases.

presented it.

The structuring of the unconscious can never,as we saw,be considered a full one.It never covers the entirety of the (unconscious) psychical energy.The Id remains outside and beyond such a structuring,as "the great reservoir of psychical energy".

Moreover,we can indicate a certain tension between the structured and unstructured parts of the unconscious,precisely the tension between the reality and the pleasure principle.The psychical energy as such can be considered as resisting any structuring.However,this is not to say that an individual psychical apparatus can emerge without such a structuring.

Freud's references to the unconscious (in his first topography) and to the Id (in his second) indicate such a tension,though it is presented as one between the "irrational" Id and the "rational" ego.It can be understood,though,as one between the structured unconscious and the unstructured one,as the resistance of the primary psychical energy to any structuring.

In so far as this structuring is a socially influenced one we could say that it is only a "part" of the psyche that becomes -however indeterminately- "socialised",that the social never engulfs the psychical and that in a sense the social -as referring to the structured agencies of the ego and super-ego- is opposed to the "unbound","free" energy of the Id.

Freud's opposition between the psyche and civilisation can then be understood as indicating not that the psychical is not,also,social or that this social operates solely through the super-ego,but as simply emphasising the never fully structurable nature of the psyche and hence its always inherent "opposition" to any such structuring.This opposition,however,exists not between the individual and "civilisation" but within the individual's psychical apparatus and in no way diminishes the inescapably social na-

ture of the individual.[33]

Features of the social
corresponding to infantile needs

Since the social is a **precondition** of psychical develop-
ment,it cannot be **derived** from a theorisation of this
development,as the psychoanalytic one,against what Freud
himself had occasionally asserted: "Sociology...dealing as
it does with the behaviour of people in society,cannot be
anything but applied psychology.Strictly speaking there are
only two sciences:psychology,pure and applied,and natural
science."[34].

However,there is an insight of Freud's that remains
important:it concerns the persistence of needs primarily
related to early phases of psychic development into adul-
thood and the correspondence to these needs of societal in-
stitutional features.

This is the case of religion that Freud discusses: animism
and magic of primitive societies can be seen as reproduc-
ing,at a societal level,the infantile belief in the
"omnipotence of thoughts" which persists in the uncon-
scious in the adult as well and is manifested in dreams.

Similarly religion at large can be seen as corresponding
to the infantile psychological needs for protection which
are "the oldest,strongest and most urgent wishes of
mankind"[35].

It has also been remarked that the attitude to the
monarch/king has many common features to that towards
God,the monarch taking the place of (or the earthly incar-
nation of,or the representative of) the God[36].The analysis

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33. As Castoriadis also remarks: "the institution of the social in-
dividual is the imposition on the psyche of an organisation which is
essentially heterogeneous with it" (IIS,p.298)

34. NIL,p.216

35. FI,p.212

of politics,therefore,can be seen as linked with early in-
fantile needs as well.

The fact that these "needs" are "infantile",should not be
taken as indicating that they correspond to an atavistic
return to stages long past in the individual's history.As
Freud had repeatedly emphasised these early stages continue
to function alongside the later ones,all the more so since
they do so in the unconscious within which the linear no-
tion of time does not hold.

The importance of the psychical "needs" to which these so-
cial institutions respond and correspond should
not,therefore,be underestimated,nor should these needs be
considered as being necessarily "overcome" by societal
development.It is most probable that some form of social
institution would always have to take account,in one way or
another,of these needs.

It should be noted,however,that the "correspondence" of
social institutions/features to early or archaic psychical
needs and processes does not imply that the former can be
derived from the latter.They have a considerable degree of
variation and difference.Moreover,the social institutions/
formations to which the above refer represent only a small
part of an overall society or social formation.The social
as a whole cannot be seen as necessarily relevant to these
needs.

On one-sided accounts of social influence

The reference to an a-social individual is the fallacy
psychoanalytic thought allows us -sometimes despite itself-
to uncover.However,the acceptance of the foundational role
of the social in the very construction of the psyche is not
enough.In so far as some of the modes the social operates

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36. For example,G.Deleuze & F.Guattari,Anti-Oedipus (1972), London:
Athlone Press,1984.
Also C.Lefort,"The image of the body and totalitarianism" (1979) in
"The political forms of modern society",op.cit.

on the psyche -principally on the level of the unconscious-
are emphasised at the expense of others,a one-sided view of
psychical social influences (and,indirectly,of the social),
is presented.

Emphasis on representations

One such case is the emphasis on the "symbolic" that
characterised structuralism and the writers influenced by
it,an approach that can claim Lacan as its major proponent
in psychoanalysis.The emphasis is on the representations of
the psyche,the social origin of which is recognised and
stressed.The role of the significant environment as a
source of internalised objects and of their instinctual in-
vestment is sidelined.

Such approaches need not take the "structuralist" line
that Lacan can be considered as taking,namely the pos-
sibility of a formal approach to the structuring of the un-
conscious.Castoriadis,for example,stresses the open and in-
determinate modality of these representations within the
unconscious.Yet,as we saw above,though he acknowledges that
the "unconscious exists as an indissociably representative/
affective/intentional flux" he concentrates on the
"representations" for all his references to the social: the
social,for Castoriadis,is primarily a "world of
representations".

That the very conception of the internalisable objects
passes through "symbols" and representations and hence
through the "symbolic" or through a "world of
representations",does not obliterate the fact that the in-
ternalisation of these objects corresponds to a **structuring**
of psychical energy through the agencies of the ego and
super-ego,a structuring that has a permanence and produces
effects,irrespective of the indeterminacy we associated
with it.To this dynamic aspect of structuring a preoccupa-
tion with the "symbolic order" alone is completely blind.

Consequently,the social is presented in a one-sided way as

well,solely as systems or universes of significations.

Emphasis on the (social) environment

On the other hand,more "sociologically" oriented inter-
pretations of Freud tend to refer only to the influence of
the environment in respect to the structuring of the in-
dividual psyche.They neglect the importance of the universe
of (social) representations,symbols and meanings which are
also internalised within the psyche and which are indis-
sociably connected with the internalised objects.

Such cases can be considered Parson's appropriation of
Freud on a general theoretical level and the more specific
studies of N.Chodorow[37],D.Dinnersten[38] ,C.Lasch[39].The lat-
ter studies concentrate on the influence of the (early) en-
vironment on the dynamic make-up of the psyche and take
little interest in the symbolic/representational sphere.As
for Parsons,he limits the social influence on the early
years which he presents as producing a set of "motivational
forces" involved in "the maintenance of,and alteration
of,the structure of a social system"[40].The
symbolic/representational universe operates for Parsons
mainly on the conscious/ cognitive level.

Apart from the one-sided presentation of the influence of
the social on the psyche,these approaches -especially the
more theoretically oriented ones such as Parson's- usually
ignore the specific implications of the psychoanalytic

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37. N.Chodorow,The reproduction of mothering,Los Angeles:University of
California Press,1978

38. D.Dinnerstein,"The rocking of the cradle and the ruling of the
world",London:The Women's Press,1976,(U.S. Title:"The mermaid and the
minotaur")

39. C.Lasch,"The family besieged","The culture of narcissism",op.cit.
Also The minimal self,London:Pan,1985

40. T.Parsons,"Psychoanalysis and the social structure" (1948) in Es-
says in sociological theory,New York:Free Press,1954,p.340

theorisation of the psyche for the social, presenting a linear causal account of social determination (we shall refer to these "specific implications" in part 5 below)

In general, there is nothing that can allow us to give a certain priority to one of the modes of social influence on the psyche at the expense of the others. They are equally necessary for the functioning and structuring of the human psychical apparatus and, in fact, cannot be distinguished otherwise than in an analytic sense. Hence, only an equi-proportional reference to all three modes and a recognition of their interlinked nature can offer a balanced account of the relationship between the psyche and the social.

On the importance of social structures
corresponding to early psychic development

Some of the theorisations that focus on the importance of the social environment, tend to assert also that the social organisation(s), agency(ies), structure(s) corresponding to earlier, more fundamental levels of psychical structuring are also more fundamental on a societal level.

As a hypothesis, one could reasonably state that the more entrenched social functions/features are, the more they would be expected to operate -directly or indirectly- on the deep, fundamental level of psychic development, the one related to early years.

Even if this assertion is accepted, -and it needs evidence to be so- it does not imply that the agencies/institutions/features corresponding to social in-fluence at this fundamental level reflect and are reflected on the whole of society.

A usual form this argument has taken is that the mode of familial organisation, or the mode of the mothering process, can explain the organisation of other spheres of social life (politics, for example).

The arguments of certain feminist writers such as D.Dinnersten and N.Chodorow[41] fall within this

category.They both consider the mothering relations as determinant of the different characterological elements of the sexes and hence of the whole of the gender divisions.Dinnersten adds to that the determination of a certain attitude towards the physical environment and of the nature of domination that characterise modern society.

Even if we limit ourselves to the dynamics of the individual psyche,however,the preceding analysis indicates that despite the great emphasis analytic practice places on the early developmental stages,there is no claim -in Freud or his followers- that these stages determine subsequent ones.

Though the past history and configuration of the ego influence future object choices,they do not determine them.The indeterminacy that we have noted with respect to the external environment,holds equally for the influence of the existing ego at any moment.And though earlier object choices and environmental influences play a more important role in the economy of the psyche than later ones,it cannot be said that the latter are without their own specificity.

If the early structuring of the psyche cannot be considered determinant for the future development of the psyche as such,it can even less be considered determinant for complex social phenomena such as politics,domination,the relation of sexes,or the relation to nature.Though a certain correspondence between these phenomena and the modes/institutions/ features of early societal influence may exist -though not necessarily so- to consider them as determined by the latter is a kind of psychoanalytic psychologism that cannot be supported in the context of psychoanalytic theorisation.

This theorisation does indicate certain levels of social structures or agencies,relative to the different stages of

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41. Dinnerstein,op.cit.,Chodorow,op.cit.

psychical development,but it does not privilege any of these levels.

4.THE LACK OF FULL DETERMINATION
AND THE SPECIFICITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The fact that the individual has to be seen as inescapably,and in a profound way,socially influenced,should not be taken as implying that the individual can be "dissolved" within this influence.This is because the social environment operates in conjunction with other factors;and,in addition,because the social determination is never a full or complete one.

The social influence as one among many

The social influences on the psyche are limited to the internalisation of representations and to the construction of the ego and super-ego on the level of the unconscious and to the internalisation of symbolic systems,"knowledge" and norms on the level of consciousness.These influences,therefore,represent only part of the factors determining psychical development.

To begin with,we saw that the emergence of the agencies of the ego and super-ego has to be seen as supported by a certain internal -and biologically given- dynamic which gradually creates these agencies.The recognition of the existence of such a dynamic has been implicit in Freud and was explicitly theorised by a number of researchers (Hartmann and the ego-psychologists,Mahler and her collaborators, Kernberg,etc.).This dynamic produces the individual as such and assures a certain closure of the "self" as a whole.

As it has been stressed above,such a closure does not imply either fully homogeneous structures/agencies (the ego and super-ego) or lack of internal conflict within these agencies and hence is radically opposed to any affirmation of an individual "essence".The ego and the super-ego never

form fully coherent wholes.Yet a certain integration does exist,and a certain dynamic pointing towards such an integration is in operation.

The emergence and relative closure of the agencies of the ego and super-ego,therefore,are not a function of the social environment.

Moreover,the agencies of the ego and super-ego are not the only forms of organisation of psychical energy.Other modes of such organisation can be considered to exist.The development of sexual drives that Freud theorises is such a case.We have to add biologically determined instinctual modes influencing behaviour,of the type Freud considers falling within the "self-preservative" ones.Psychoanalysis does not theorise these instincts and their development but does not deny their existence,either.

Finally,it has to be remembered that any structuring of psychical energy on the level of the unconscious is a partial one.The id remains a reservoir of "free" and unbound psychical energy which can never be totally bound.

Thus the social determination of the psyche concerns part only of its total organisation and development.

Points of indeterminacy within
the social influence on the unconscious

Even the actual influence of the social on the psyche,however,remains precisely always an influence and never a determination.The psychoanalytic theorisation of social influence indicates points of indeterminacy along the processes it theorises.

As we indicated in the previous chapter,a first degree of indeterminacy is implied in the impossibility to predefine the actual "objects" that are to be cathected/internalised out of the available objects within the significant (social) environment.Similarly,the intensity and type of instinctual investment of these objects cannot be deduced in any mechanical way from the social environment.Thus the

actual configuration and instinctual dynamics of the ego
and super-ego cannot be predefined,even if all the details
of the significant environments at all times were given.

The same environment can produce different structural ef-
fects on different individuals according to the choices the
psychical apparatus may make,and this is true even for the
early,semi-biological stages of ego-development.

At the stage of adolescence or adulthood the importance of
the already established ego in determining object choices
is such that any prediction as to the direction of further
structuring is,strictly speaking,impossible.

In so far as the internalisation of objects,significations
and their instinctual investment operate within the uncon-
scious,however,a more fundamental level of indeterminacy
can be discerned.

We indicated above that the internalisation process refer-
ring to the unconscious is not a replication of the objects
within the psyche.In fact we cannot know as what the inter-
nalised representatives or objects exist within the uncon-
scious.Thus even if we somehow knew the actual objects
cathected and internalised -and their instinctual
investment- it would be impossible to know exactly how they
"exist" within the unconscious.

We can only consider that the internalisation of these
elements involves a certain modification within the uncon-
scious,a modification the exact nature of which we do not
know and which refers to a certain structuring of otherwise
unbound psychical energy within agencies (ego,super-ego),as
well to the substitution of socially originating repre-
sentations for the early innate ones.We can also indicate
the "semiotic" nature of the unconscious as oppossed to the
"symbolic" one of consciousness (in Ricoeur's
terminology;[42]in Freud's terminology,the use of thing
rather than word presentations),the primary process,the in-

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42. P.Ricoeur,"Image and language in psychoanalysis",op.cit.

stinctual investment of objects internalised within the ego
and the super-ego,making these agencies dynamic equilibria
in flux.

However,all these remain approximations,since we cannot
have any direct or unmediated access to the level of the
unconscious as such.Only through the manifestation in con-
sciousness as thought,ideas,or affects (or motives guiding
action) can these elements be "known".Even so,any passage
from the unconscious to consciousness,even if the origin of
the representation or the object is an external
one,involves a change of state,a "translation",an
"interpretation" that is never final or unidimensional.The
same unconscious content (or the same ego) can produce dis-
parate or even conflicting thoughts,affects or ideas.

Thus no precise theorisation of the actual impact the so-
cial environment has on the psyche can be aspired to,at
least in so far as we refer to the unconscious.Only a cer-
tain insight as to the importance of environmental in-
fluences for the construction of the psyche is possible
-and this is what sustains the field of socio-psychological
investigation.But a full causal theory of the social con-
struction of the human psyche has to be ruled out.

This level of indeterminacy that is due to the ontological
status of the unconscious,a radical one,is the specific
contribution of psychoanalytic theory since it alone
theorises the modality of the unconscious.

We can consider,as argued also in the previous chap-
ter,that this level of indeterminacy justifies Castoriadis'
notion of "radical imagination",indicating the possibility
of the emergence of the radically new,of the non determined
within the psyche.The psyche,though influenced in a founda-
tional way by the social environment,has to be considered
as retaining the possibility of the emergence of the radi-
cally new.

Thus,if we consider psychoanalytic theorisation as in-
dicating a process of socialisation,we have to see this

process as involving,necessarily,points at which no full causal theory is possible.We do not have one more variant of a socialisation theory in which the individuals appear as perfect clones of "roles" or structural positions.While these roles and positions do influence the individual at a fundamental level of psychical development and operation,the precise outcome of this influence remains indeterminable.To put it differently,there is a wide degree of variation over any such influence.

The conscious/rational ego and its autonomy

The conscious/rational ego has itself an innate dynamic of emergence and a certain closure as a psychical agency.It retains,moreover,a certain autonomy.

The rational processes of thought are conditioned by the unconscious ego and the id as far as motivational forces guiding logico/rational operations are concerned.In addition,the system of concepts and ideas rational thought requires,as also the norms and values guiding action are also socially determined.

However,the multiplicity of possible motivations coming directly from the id and the possibility to have multiple and even conflicting motivations coming from the ego (because of the indeterminacy that is,as we saw,inherent in ego construction),allow a range of possible directions of motivation.

Moreover,in so far as the individual "adapts" to the environment in a conscious/rational manner,the result of this adaptation is also indeterminate since there is usually a number of alternative ways to rationally/instrumentally adapt to the same environment,even given the same "knowledge" and "norms" or values.

Thus the conscious/ rational ego retains a certain autonomy regarding any instrumental adaptation to a given social environment.A social actor is in a position to pose aims,to choose means to attain these aims,to deploy

strategies,to exhibit,in short,all the characteristics the traditional means-end model attributes to the individual.The actor is by no means reduced to a mechanistic and passive behaviour determined by his "position".

Finally,there is one further degree of autonomy open to the conscious/rational ego: it is that theorised by Castoriadis as "autonomy" in the strict sense,concerning the possibility to put oneself and the social into question.

Castoriadis observes that this possibility would be meaningless "if enseblist -identitary logic totally exhausted what exists".We can now interpret this assertion: no possibility of such an autonomy would exist if the underlying social influences on the psyche were determining it in a full way.It is only because the influences of the social on the level of the unconscious entail points of indeterminacy,are never final and full,that "autonomy" in this sense is really possible.Only if the possibility of the emergence of the non-determined,the radically new,within the psyche is affirmed,such a level of autonomy can be also possible.

Thus the conscious/rational ego can exhibit a level of autonomy that is more than simply an instrumental adaptation to the social environment.It can become the vehicle through which the "radical imagination" can be reinforced and amplified to orient action and thought.

The actualisation of this possibility,however,remains -as Castoriadis remarks- a historically specific event.Autonomy in the strict sense remains a potentiality rather than an actuality.

Moreover,even this autonomy can never lead to a fully transparent individuality (or,correlatively,to a self-transparent society) because neither the unconscious can be eliminated nor can the totality of (explicit) social values,beliefs,norms,etc.,be questioned.The psyche as a whole,as also the social will always remain something "more" than we can reflexively know,understand or con-

sciously create.

To conclude:the conscious/rational ego,however conditioned it may be by the underlying -unconscious- structure of the ego or the id and by the social origin of the symbolic universe it uses,retains an important capacity for critical function,conducive to an irreducible individuality.Moreover, the inherent indeterminacy social influences on the level of the unconscious entail,allow the possibility of a potentially even higher degree of independence and autonomy.

The question of agency and
the autonomy of the social individual

As the analysis in parts one and two of the present study indicates,all of the following assertions have to be seen as justified:

(i) the recognition of the necessary and unavoidable social determination of the individual (emphasised by all structural theories of the social).

(ii) the existence of a certain autonomy and activeness from the part of the (social) individual (emphasised by the individualistic tradition,"micro" theories of interaction,as also by Giddens' and Bourdieu's reference to the social actor's "activeness").

and (iii) the necessity of the possibility of an even higher level of autonomy,if political action in the broad sense was to be theorised (indicated for example by the political theorisations within the Marxist tradition).

The problem facing social theory,therefore,is not to (re)affirm one of those positions at the expense of the others,but to reconcile them to one another,recognising the necessity for all of them.

The preceding analysis allows us to affirm that the psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche,once its social relevance has been recognised,indicates the way precisely towards such a reconciliation.

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Psychoanalytic theory indicates,as we saw,the deep, foundational level of social influences on the psyche,both on the level of consciousness and,more importantly,on the level of the unconscious.The continuation of these influences throughout the individual's life is also indicated.Thus the central argument of structural theories is supported.

However,psychoanalytic theory indicates also the **limits** of this social influence.Limits relating to the unstructured unbounded psychical energy or biologically determined instinctual modes that also influence behaviour.Limits due to the innate and independent dynamic of ego development and ego closure.But also limits due to the essentially indeterminate nature of social influence that rules out the possibility of a fully causal theory of social determination of the individual and allows the possibility of the emergence of the new,the non-determined within the psyche.And finally limits due to the capacity of rational reflection the conscious ego always possesses.

Thus,while it is impossible to conceive of the individual psyche outside social context(s),it is equally impossible to conceive the individual as simply the reflection of the social,or as simply the empty locus of social structural wholes.The "self" is indeed such a reflection and such a locus;but it is also much more than that.

Consequently,the insight of individualist theories concerning a certain irreducibility of the individual to the social can be seen as supported by the closure and internal dynamic of the individual ego psychoanalysis affirms.

The corresponding "activeness" of the social actor is supported by the relative autonomy of the conscious/rational ego to instrumentally adapt to a given social environment,posing ends and choosing means to attain them.

The higher level of autonomy a **political** project of a large scale requires can also be theorised as the possibility for autonomy in Castoriadis' sense,i.e the pos-

sibility to question the very ends aimed at and to pose oneself and the social into question.This is autonomy in the strict sense and it is possible only because the social influences on the level of the unconscious retain points of inescapable indeterminacy.

Thus a certain activeness and autonomy of the individual can exist simultaneously with the acceptance of a social determination of the individual.Moreover,degrees of autonomy can be theorised without be seen as coextensive with one another (i.e. without deriving a high level of autonomy from the existence of a certain instrumental activeness of the social actor).And it is only the specific modality of the unconscious as theorised by psychoanalysis that allows autonomy in the strict sense to be theorised.

All these levels of autonomy,though,remain bounded.They can never lead to a self-transparent individual or an unlimited capacity for free agency leading to a transparent society.Just as we escape from the full determination of the individual by the social structural theories claim,we also escape from the more extreme claims of the opposing theories.The individual cannot be dissolved within the social;nor can the social,however,ever be surmounted by a sovereign individuality.

5.AN OPEN THEORY OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

A comprehensive theorisation of social reproduction

The psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche provides us not only with an account of the unconscious and its manifestations in consciousness,but also with an account of action and behaviour.

Thoughts,ideas or affects are not only detectible in consciousness as products of psychical/ cognitive functioning.They may induce or influence a certain behaviour,a course of action from the part of the individual.[43] The two

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43. That a theory of action is included in psychoanalytic theory is not usually emphasised.The focus of psychoanalysis is towards the

central categories of determinants of such action are:

(i) motives (as affects) and ideas deriving from the un-conscious and manifested in consciousness.These may originate within the agencies of the ego and super-ego but they may also originate within the id.

(ii) the conscious/rational ego which,using a stock of knowledge and systems of norms and values,determines a way of action.

These two categories of determinants may operate in ac-cordance with each other (for example when the conscious ego carries out motivations coming from the unconscious) but they may also be contradicting each other: the con-scious ego,for instance,may be able to resist impulses com-ing from the unconscious and to influence behaviour in op-position to internal motivational pressure.

The social influence on the psyche can be manifested on the level of consciousness: the unconscious internalisation of (socially originating) significations underpins the very possibility of thought and operates in conjunction with the conscious internalisation of symbolic systems,language, knowledge,etc.As for the (unconscious) structuring of the ego and super-ego,it can be manifested in thoughts,ideas or affects on the level of consciousness.
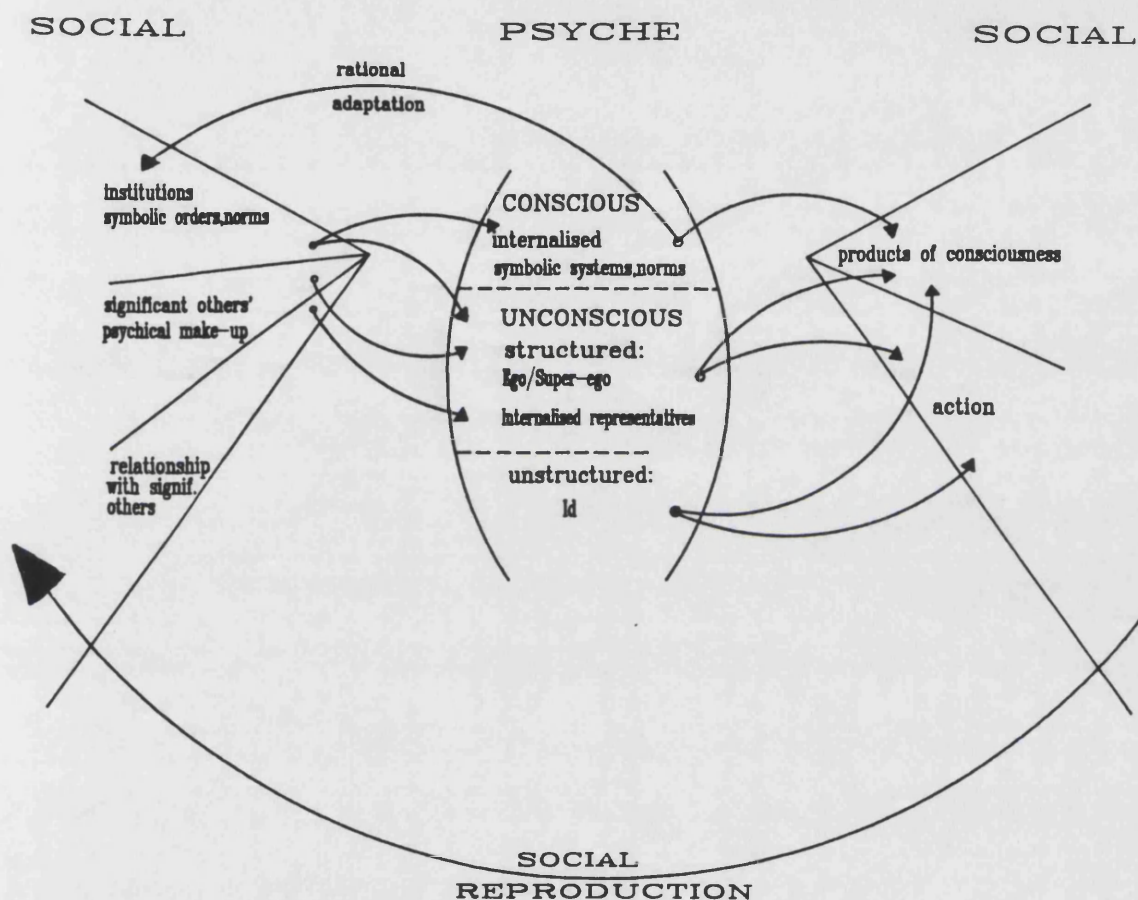
As the above indicate,though,these social influences can be also manifested on the level of (individual) action: as motives guiding action and/or as knowledge and values the conscious ego uses to monitor action.

Psychoanalytic theorisation,therefore,can be seen as in-dicating not only the ways in which the social influences the individual psyche but also the ways in which these in-fluences may manifest themselves through the individual's products of consciousness and action.

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manifestations of the unconscious in consciousness,as revealed mainly in analytic practice and not towards the exploration of be-haviour.However,it is evident that the detailed account of psychical functioning we referred to covers also a theory of action/behaviour.

We have,hence,an analysis of **social reproduction** on its
most elementary level,the level of the individual.As the
multifacity of the social influence on the individual indi-
cates,this process is a complex one.It is also a continuous
one,never ceasing even for the adult.

If we could present a static snapshot of it,it could have
the form of the graph below:

SOCIAL   PSYCHE   SOCIAL

rational
adaptation

institutions
symbolic orders,norms

CONSCIOUS
internalised
symbolic systems,norms

products of consciousness

significant others'
psychical make-up

UNCONSCIOUS
structured:
Ego/Super-ego
internalised representatives

action

relationship
with signif.
others

unstructured:
Id

SOCIAL
REPRODUCTION

This is an exhaustive and detailed theory.It provides a
theorisation of production and reproduction of social
structures through the individual,a "theory of
structuration".It accounts for both the irreducibility of
the individual to the social and for a deep,foundational
way the social influences the individual.It
satisfies,therefore,Giddens' aims without relapsing to an

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individualism as he does.

It allows us to conceptualise what Bourdieu's "habitus" and its "structured dispositions","embodied" rather than "known",may refer to: the structuring of the unconscious through the construction of the agencies of the ego and the super-ego and the manifestation of this structuring in social practice (alongside the incorporation of representations on the level of the unconscious and of symbolic systems on the level of consciousness Bourdieu does not refer to).

It provides a theorisation of the "subject" and of social action and reproduction that is lacking in Laclau and Mouffe's account.

It builds upon Castoriadis' emphasis on the unconscious.At the same time,it expands his theorisation by indicating that the internalisation of social imaginary significations is not the only way the social operates on the psyche and that social action and reproduction cannot be limited to an actualisation of these significations in practice.

The openness of the social and the question of history

This (psychoanalytic) theory of social reproduction,however,is not only a comprehensive one.As the preceding discussion of the specificity of the individual indicates,it also allows us to theorise the points of indeterminacy that exist within this process of social reproduction,to theorise,in other words,the openness of the social.

We indicated that the factors determining the individual and therefore his behaviour and thought are not only social ones.There are elements of the psychical make up of the individual which cannot be traced back to a social influence: for example impulses coming from the id,biologically determined instinctual modes of behaviour,the internal dynamic and closure of the ego.

Moreover,even for those determinants that do have a social origin,certain points of indeterminacy exist.

We referred to the impossibility to derive from the (social) environment, in a mechanical way, the actual "objects" that will be internalised in the process of ego and super-ego construction.

In addition, in so far as the social operates on the level of the unconscious no possibility to directly approach the effects of the social exists.Even we these affects are manifested on the level of consciousness and action they are never unidimensional and hence they can never indicate in any precise way the actual structuring of the unconscious.No fully causal theory of social determinations on the level of the unconscious can exist.

Finally, though the conscious ego uses socially originating symbolic systems, knowledge and norms and is influenced by the unconscious ego and id, it retains a certain, limited autonomy in its capability to rationally/ instrumentally orient action or thought.

Moreover, there is a further degree of autonomy of the conscious ego, the possibility to question the very determinations that shape it.This autonomy, theorised by Castoriadis, can exist only because the modality of the unconscious does not allow any full and final determinations to operate.And this autonomy, though not always actualised, always remains a potentiality.

Hence there is an inherent "openness" implied in the reproduction of the social through individual action and thought, an openness due to the lack of full determination of the individual and to the plurality of factors influencing action and thought.This social reproduction cannot be seen as a mechanical, given one.No strict line of causality between the social environment influencing the individual and the individual's actions or thoughts can be established.

Of the factors assuring this openness, the relative autonomy of the conscious/ rational ego has been usually emphasised by individualistic theories which saw the individual as "outside" the social and hence as able to

produce changes within the social.As for the importance of biologically given elements of human behaviour it has been emphasised by biologically influenced accounts of the social.

The psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche allows the recognition of these two factors,but it adds one more: the indeterminacy relating to the specificity of the level of the (individual) unconscious,a radical indeterminacy that cannot be reduced to the other two factors (and thus,also,the possibility of an autonomy in Castoriadis's sense).The addition of this last factor and the possibility it offers to theorise it alongside the other two,represents the specific contribution of psychoanalytic theory to a theory of social reproduction.

It is primarily as connected to this last level of indeterminacy,related to the unconscious,that we can see Laclau & Mouffe's and Castoriadis' theorisations of the openness of the social.

Since the unconscious is always represented and hence meaningful,we can justify Laclau's connection between the "meaningfulness" of the social and its openness while providing a full theorisation of it.

Castoriadis has already indicated,as we saw,that the (individual) unconscious has the modality of magma that the social imaginary significations also have.We can now slightly modify his argument: It is because the social exists on the level of the unconscious and because the unconscious has the specific modality it has,that the social can be conceived as open.The openness of the social is due to its existence and reproduction through the individual unconscious.Thus we avoid any recourse to a transcendental level to theorise the openness of the social.[44]

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44. The same assertion is valid for attempts to transpose a Lacanian theorisation of the openess and indeterminacy of the unconscious directly on the level of the social.
This is,for example,the case in S.Zizek's affirmation of a radical openess of the social as "symbolic order" due to the operation of a

Once the openness of the social has been theorised, the question of the emergence of "radical otherness, non-trivial novelty", of the "absolutely new", the "non determined" in history can be addressed.

This emergence may be the result of conscious action specifically aiming at social transformation. Such action, connected with autonomy in the strict sense, is possible, as we saw above, at least potentially.

However, such action is not always present. Castoriadis indicated the historical specificity of autonomy in the strict sense. Similarly, P.Anderson has remarked, "public goals...in their overwhelming majority have not aimed to transform social relations as such...collective projects which have sought to render their initiators authors of their collective mode of existence, in a conscious programme aimed at creating or remodelling whole social structures are relatively recent..."[45]

Even in the absence of this type of action, though, the emergence of the new in history can be theorised. Since the reproduction of the social through the individual is never fully determined, it always carries the possibility of a smaller or larger change. The "creative capacity of the

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lack (Lacan's "manque-a-etre"): "The most radical dimension of Lacanian theory lies ...in realising that the ..symbolic order itself is also barre, crossed-out, by a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible/traumatic kernel, around a central lack" (S.Zizek,"The sublime object of ideology",op.cit.,p.122)
If the openess of the unconsious the Lacanian concept of lack refers to (and we argued in the previous chapter against this way of conceptualising the openess of the unconscious) is simply transposed to the social without any connecting mechanism, it introduces a metaphysical concept, that of "lack", which is misleading.
To assert the openess of the social, the postulation of a "lack" is not necessary. The reproduction of the social through the individual unavoidably poses such an openess and at many levels, including the radical openess stemming from the unconscious.

45. P.Anderson, Arguments within English marxism, London:New Left Books, 1980,p.20

anonymous collectivity,as is manifested in and through the creation of language,family forms,morality,ideas,etc."[46] that Castoriadis refers to,is manifested in precisely this way.

Thus the emergence of the new in history ceases to be necessarily linked with human action specifically aimed at its emergence,without for that ceasing to be linked with the necessary indeterminacy the social influence on the individual entails.

It has to be noted that the above remarks refer to the mechanism of the emergence of the new in history.However,the theorisation of how new forms (for example the state and class societies or capitalism) may emerge,does not imply anything about the ability of these forms to historically survive and/or become significant.We cannot deduce from the above theorisation why certain such forms retain a permanence while others do not.This would require a specific enquiry.

Similarly,the recognition of the always present possibility of change does not imply anything about the rate of this change,which can vary significantly.The difference,for example,between "primitive" and modern societies,is precisely a difference in rate,not a difference in modalities.

6.THE UNCONSCIOUS AS A LEVEL OF SOCIAL OPERATION

Since the level of the unconscious is,to an significant extent influenced by the social (as we saw,in the internalisation of representations and the elements that construct the agencies of the ego and super-ego) and in turn lies behind the individual's products of consciousness and action,it can be considered as a level at which the social "exists" and through which it is necessarily reproduced.We can refer,hence,to an unconscious dimension of the social.

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46. C.Castoriadis,"Psychanalyse et Politique",op.cit.,p.148

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The question emerges what is the extent of this "unconscious dimension",in other words to what extent can we consider the social as "existing" and being reproduced through the level of the (individual) unconscious.

From the point of view of a psychoanalytically influenced theorisation of the social as the one we have referred to,we can only attest the social origin of the representations the psyche uses or of the elements used in the construction of the ego and super-ego and of their instinctual investment, i.e. the social origin of a certain organisation of the unconscious.

Since the psyche cannot develop without these social elements and the corresponding social environment,the unconscious "dimension" is a necessary and inescapable one.

However,this does not imply that the level of the unconscious is exclusively social (we indicated that social determinations on the unconscious are just one level of influences among many).

Moreover,the affirmation of the necessity of this level does not imply that the social does not operate on the level of consciousness as well.It is possible that there are functions or structures of the social that operate wholly on the unconscious level and others wholly on the level of consciousness (in the latter case,though,they would still have to be supported by a certain -unconsciously formed and operating- motivational matrix).

To indicate which social structural wholes can be considered as operating on the one level and which on the other specific studies are necessary.In the context of a general theorisation like the present one we can only affirm the relevance of the level of the unconscious for the social as a whole.

This affirmation introduces a new level of social operation.Outside psychoanalysis,the only way to conceptualise "meaning" has been that of conscious meaning:ideas,thoughts, conscious representations,products

of consciousness in general.The non "meaningful" could be attributed to a "nature" or to "biology" and analysed in the manner of the natural sciences.

The psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche,however, introduced the level of the unconscious as neither consciousness and yet nor as pure psychical energy.We saw that the unconscious has to be seen as always/already represented and hence as always carrying a "meaning" of some sort.Thus the level of the unconscious is reducible neither to biology nor to consciousness and,as always "represented",is always "meaningful".It allows thus a possible theorisation of a level of the social that has been repeatedly indicated in the history of social thought without ever been fully theorised.To provide just a few examples:

The concept of the unconscious allows a possible conceptualisation of the "material" level Marx refers to,a level that is neither nature nor thought,but it determines the "forms of consciousness",that is specifically human and connected to social action,without any recourse to a transhistorical human essence as Marx does.

Late Durkheim's "social life" that can generate ideas,concepts,categories without being coextensive with them,or Pareto's residues can also be seen as connected to the level of the unconscious,as also Weber's "affective" and "traditional" action which can thus be theorised differently than as deviations of rational action.

Moreover,the "meaningfulness" of the social the hermeneutic tradition refers to can be theorised without a reduction to conscious ideas and thought.And so on.

Thus the theorisation of the unconscious as socially relevant corresponds to a long standing open question within social theory.The importance of this theorisation,however,depends on the specific insights it can allow.We indicated above the relevance of the unconscious to the question of the autonomy of the social individual and to the openness of social reproduction.We shall focus now on

the question of the knowledge of the social and on the question of the meaningfulness of social practice.

The question of objective knowledge

We already indicated the radical indeterminacy the unconscious level of social reproduction implies.This indeterminacy is due to the impossibility to directly approach the unconscious and hence to know as what the social elements internalised exist there; also to the lack of any unidimensionality in the manifestations of the unconscious in consciousness.

Within this assertion are obvious implications for a theory of the social "knowledge".When we refer to conscious thoughts,ideas, representations or affects as manifestations of a certain unconscious structuring,these manifestations are only one possible expression of the unconscious content.Variable thoughts,ideas, or actions,possibly conflicting between them,may originate from the same unconscious content.Moreover,these elements do not represent a transposition of this content in consciousness,merely a manifestation of it.

It is only an interpretive procedure of these products of consciousness or actions,therefore,that provides a way of approximating the unconscious content.But these interpretations are never final or complete.Many interpretations of the same elements can exist,depending on one's starting point and intention.The "meaning" of the unconscious,therefore,is not coextensive with a conscious/ rational meaning.[47]

Thus any "knowledge" of the social,to the extent that it refers to the unconscious,can only have a specifically her-

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47. Thus Castoriadis' attribution to the unconscious of the modality of "magma" as "that from which one can extract an infinite number of enseblist organisations but which can never be reconstituted by an enseblist composition of these organisations" (IIS,p.238) can be seen as fully justified.

meneutic character.

This hermeneutics,however,has to be distinguished from any subjectivism.The social elements that can be located within the (individual) unconscious are intelligible and meaningful only within larger structural entities of a social nature.By themselves,they usually do not "mean" anything.The complementarity of the "serf" and the "lord",for example,is not to be found in the serf and the lord as such,but in their complementary behaviour in a context of practice -that of "feudalism"- which is not reducible to individual serfs and lords.

It is not,therefore,an "empathy" to a subject enclosed to itself we refer to,but a procedure of locating elements of social structure operating within the individual unconscious,but being meaningful (as manifestations of this unconscious in consciousness or action) only within a social context.It is a structural and social,rather than a subjectivist hermeneutics we indicate.

On the other hand,we have to distinguish this hermeneutic procedure from a type of "hermeneutics",that of late Schutz for example,which reduce the interpreted elements to the order of ideas,thoughts,etc.,as "first order" concepts.This approach ultimately leads to an objectivism since there is nothing that inhibits the "first order" concepts from being,at least in principle,fully accessible to knowledge.There is no "change of state" involved,since both "first" and "second order" concepts refer to conscious thought.

Unlike this type of hermeneutics,the interpretation of the unconscious can never lead to any final or full theorisation of the unconscious content,as it remains always at a different level not directly approachable nor fully determinable.In so far as the unconscious content is concerned,even "first order" concepts are already an interpretation.

We refer,therefore,to a hermeneutics in the radical

sense,a "true" hermeneutics.Since the social can be said to include the level of the unconscious,therefore -and there is no way to avoid either the existence of the unconscious nor the social influence on its structuring- the social cannot be claimed to be fully,objectively knowable.It has to be seen as including a level of operation that necessarily escapes any full theorisation and can only be approached hermeneutically.

Consequently,objectivist accounts of the social that claim the possibility of a full knowledge of the social cannot be sustained.In order to theorise the social we can -and we cannot avoid doing so- refer to logically constructed systems of concepts but we cannot assume an identity between this theoretical model and its "object".We cannot,in Bourdieu's words,substitute the "reality of the model for the model of the reality".Vico's "verum et factum convertuntur" ("truth and (human) deeds/facts are interchangeable",or,in Castoriadis' rendering, "only that we have done is intelligible and everything that we have done is intelligible"[48] has to be seen as applying only partially to the social world.[49]

Thus social structural entities that can be seen to "exist" within the (individual) unconscious,can never be fully determined or objectively known.Hence these structures,even if seen in a "static" way,they can never be considered as closed or fully determined ones.To the "dynamic"

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48. C.Castoriadis, "Individual, society, rationality, history" (1988) in "Philosophy,politics,autonomy",op.cit.,p.56

49. Thus interpretations of psychoanalytic theory that integrate it within an overall objectivist account simply ignore the specificity of the former.
In Parsons' interpretation,for example,the indeterminacy inherent in the social structuring of the psyche is simply ignored.Indeed,the unconscious is for Parsons a purely descriptive category.The socialisation of the individual through the creation of "need-dispositions" and "motivational forces" appropriate to the social system is considered straightforward,passing through no register with the specificity of the Freudian unconscious.

openness the points of indeterminacy in the process of so-
cial reproduction imply,therefore,a "static" one has to be
added,an openness due solely to the modality of the uncon-
scious.

The meaningfulness of social practice

Since the unconscious is always represented and hence
"meaningful",and since the unconscious content can be
manifested in action as well as in consciousness,even in
the absence of a rational/conscious monitoring of one's ac-
tion,this action cannot be considered as "meaningless".

Outside psychoanalysis,action that appeared as not guided
by explicit,conscious meaning -a meaning that the in-
dividual could identify as such- was considered as
"meaningless",guided perhaps by intentions or motives of a
pure (psycho)dynamic nature.

Once,however,the psychical is seen,even on the level of
the unconscious,as always/already represented,any
"motivation" or "intention" necessarily is also a carrier
of meaning,in the sense that it refers to a psychical
structuring that is always "meaningful".Hence any action is
also meaningful.

This "meaning",though,in so far as it refers directly to
the unconscious,is never directly knowable and can only be
approached in a hermeneutic way.The impossibility of objec-
tive or direct knowledge of any unconscious content and the
necessity of a hermeneutic procedure to approach this con-
tent applies to (social) action as well as to products of
consciousness.To the interpretation of the "text" (of ex-
plicit ideas,thoughts,products of consciousness) the inter-
pretation of action and practice can be added.

Thus a specific theorisation of social practice,as always
meaningful,even when not guided by explicit thoughts or
ideas,but also as only hermeneutically approachable (in so
far as this "meaning" refers to an unconscious content),
becomes possible.

The possibility of theorising practice without reducing it to a cognitive model of the actor and the means-end scheme is important.We can consider that it is towards such a theorisation that Giddens's "practical consciousness" was oriented.

It was mainly Bourdieu,though,that explicitly aimed his "theory of practice" towards such an alternative.He indicated,as we saw,the specificity of the level of practice and its irreducibility to "formal operations".He remarked that to pass from practice to a theoretical account of it constitutes an operation of knowledge that transforms its object to theoretical concepts.However,Bourdieu ultimately reduced the "logic of practice" to an imperfect variant of full/discursive logic.Thus a theorisation of practice that would indeed satisfy his aims was lacking.

The psychoanalytic account of the unconscious provides precisely this theorisation.Practice can be seen as referring to a "field of meaning",that of the unconscious,and both its irreducibility to concepts and its "translatability" to them can be accounted for.Thus practice can be meaningful without necessarily implying a discursive/cognitive operation from the part of the actors,yet as never being totally outside such an operation.

Similarly,the problem of the distinction between "discursive" and "non-discursive" structures that we encountered in Laclau and Mouffe can be fruitfully addressed.We can conceptualise the "so called non-discursive structures" as corresponding to the level of practice and as indeed different from discourse in the limited sense (as "concepts" or"ideas"); and yet as not implying a reduction to an ontologically privileged level.The "differentiation within the social production of meaning" which Laclau and Mouffe are unable to actually conceptualise,becomes possible.Social structures can be seen as existing in "practice" without assimilating the modality of these structures to that of ideas.

7.CONCLUDING REMARKS

The psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche,if inter-
preted in a non-biologistic way as we indicated it can
be,offers valuable insights for a theory of the social.To
summarise the main points of these insights:

    - The individual is inconceivable as an entity outside a
social environment.

This environment operates both

at (i) a deep,unconscious level,producing a structuring of
the unconscious through the agencies of ego and super-
ego.The elements these psychical agencies are made of and
the instinctual investment of these elements are linked
with the social environment.The social provides also the
"representations" the psyche uses,even on the level of the
unconscious.

and at (ii) the level of consciousness,providing the cog-
nitive systems of concepts ,symbols and norms conscious
thought uses,as well as the objective environment to which
the individual can rationally adapt.

The social influence,on both levels,is not limited to
childhood,but continues throughout the individual's life.

    - However,the individual is not reducible to these so-
cial determinations.

There are,besides the social ones,other influences deter-
mining the structure and make up of the psyche,as for ex-
ample a certain innate dynamic and closure of the ego (both
conscious and unconscious),or biologically given in-
stinctual modes of behaviour.

Moreover,the influence the social exerts is characterised
by points of indeterminacy: the actual choice and the in-
stinctual investment of objects internalised within the ego
and the super-ego cannot be mechanically deduced from the
(social) environment.

More importantly,the fact that the internalisation of

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these objects (as well as of representations) operates at an unconscious level,implies that it is impossible to directly approach or objectively know how these elements exist within the unconscious.They are recognisable only through their effects in consciousness or action but even these are not unidimensional (these assertions derive from the psychoanalytic theorisation of the modality of the unconscious).

Therefore,even when the social environment is given,we cannot have a fully causal theory of the effects it will produce on the individual.

Finally,the conscious/rational ego,though conditioned by unconscious motives and by the social origin of the symbolic universes it uses,exhibits levels of autonomy. Indeed,the points of indeterminacy within the social influences allow the possibility of autonomy in the strict sense (as theorised by Castoriadis).

Hence,while accepting the inescapably social nature of the individual,we can theorise the autonomy of the social actor as well as its limits.We can address,therefore,the question of agency,a central one in social theory.

- Since the social determinations on the individual are manifested as products of consciousness and as action,the above theorisation introduces also a theory of social reproduction.

Due to other factors influencing individual behaviour besides social influences and also due to the points of indeterminacy within these influences,this reproduction is never fully determined.

This theory of reproduction allows,therefore,the theorisation of the emergence of the new,of the non determined,in history as always implied in social reproduction and not only as a possible result of intentional action specifically aimed at social transformation.A central problem faced by theories based on a conceptualisation of the so-

cial as fully closed structural entities can thus be addressed fruitfully.

- Since the social is reproduced through the individual and part of this reproduction functions through the unconscious,it can be claimed that the (individual) unconscious is also a level of social operation and existence.Thus a level of social operation reducible neither to nature nor to consciousness can be introduced.

However,the unconscious is not directly accessible.Its modality necessitates a change of state,a radical hermeneutics,for any "content" or structuring to be manifested as such.Even so,these manifestations are never unidimensional.Hence,there can be never be a fully objective knowledge of the social influence on the unconscious.Correspondingly,we could say that the social can never be fully objectively knowable.

Thus the possibility of a radical hermeneutics related to the knowledge of the social elements existing within the unconscious is introduced.

- Unconscious motivations can be manifested in action,i.e in social practice rather than as products of consciousness.The always meaningful nature of the unconscious implies that such practice,even when not directly associated with conscious thoughts or ideas,is always "meaningful".This meaning,however,has to be approached,as all unconscious contents,in a hermeneutic rather than in any direct way.A direction for a "theory of practice" is,therefore,indicated.

- Certain of the above assertions (namely the impossibility of objective knowledge,a certain type of indeterminacy and openness in social reproduction,the meaningfulness of practice) concern the reproduction of the social through the level of the (individual) unconscious and hence

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are valid only for those social structural entities that do operate on this level (though exactly which structures are such cannot be indicated within a general study as the present one).Other assertions,however,(as a level of in-determinacy and openness in social reproduction due to the autonomy of the conscious ego) are valid for social operation through the level of consciousness as well.

To conclude: the psychoanalytic theorisation of the psyche can be seen as offering a theorisation of the autonomy of the social individual and thus a way of addressing the question of agency; as offering a theorisation of the open-ness of social reproduction and thus a way of addressing the question of history; as offering a way of addressing the question of the knowledge of the social and of affirm-ing the necessity of a radical hermeneutics; and finally a way of asserting the meaningfulness of social practice.

All these questions,of course,are far from being "solved".Simply a more fruitful way of posing them and hence of exploring them,is indicated.

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