

# Explanation and Interpretation in Social Science

An integrated view with specific reference to case studies

Erik Maaloe




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# **Explanation and Interpretation in Social Science**

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case studies



Explanation and Interpretation in Social Science  
An integrated view with specific reference to case studies  
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# 5 From Expretation Towards Explanation

**It would be a serious mistake to treat reasons  
offered in justificatory context as if they were causes**

R Harré & PF Secord<sup>313</sup>

## WHAT A WAR CRY: “LET’S OUST INTERPRETATION AND OPT FOR EXPLANTIONS!”

### 5.1 An alleged outside approach

People seem to have no problem finding reasons for strengthening their beliefs, – be it of the delights or the devious powers of capitalism, of liberalism or carefully engineered utopias. The social field is dominated by an array of different of convictions. This has since antiquity inspired empirically bent individuals to call for a Science founded on “data”, disengaged logical analysis. Theory development “ought” to be independent of whatever the beliefs some one insists we should adhere to.

Thus, any perception of the Godly, – any search for the essence and/or purpose of life, – efforts to idolize the rights of man and not the least after-the-fact speculations of what motivates whom, should veer away and make room for an approach, where statements – claiming to be scientific – have to be presented in a way that allows us all to test them.

So advocates of *explanatory studies* assert we should approach what we want to examine by “collecting data” either directly by sight, ref § 1.4 or indirectly by means of measuring instruments. “Data” must be based on publicly available evidence and not – as facts – be obtained by feeling, subjective sense making, imagination or what some “expert” or visionary may “sense”.

So let us take a look at how and why interpretations are rejected and what a full-blown explanatory approach to Social Science could entail.

#### *Reactions to the practice of interpretation*

Amongst other ideologies, “adherents of explanatory practices” are better than most to bolster their practices by degrading their alleged opponents. Hence the war cry: “Interpretations are fraught with ‘Subjectivism’ – while by implication it is assumed, explanations are not.

As a term of abuse to debase others, “*Subjectivism*” may be hard to define, yet in ordinary terms it entails a claim that:

- The perspective of the Other is grounded on intentionally selected facts as well as on analyses tainted by personal likes and dislikes. Not because people necessarily are malicious, they just give in to their *personal bias*, as it is called.  
Or in cynical and even more derogatory terms, really to defame the Other:
- The views of the Other are by intent tainted by economical interest, perspectivism, ideological partisanship or desire to please a powerful person as gatekeeper for one’s future, i.e. *agent bias*

When under attack for being – as in this case “subjective” – those touched may say: “Yes, certainly,” and then choose to redefine the term in a positive way. Thus, in philosophical terms, Subjectivism<sup>314</sup> may become a self-conscious and self-assured claim with a wide range of nuances. As such, it includes:

- An uneven array of idealist philosophies stretching from the claim that i) “all” that we can and do know is what comes to our mind, to ii) the admittance of no reality other than that of the thinking subject it self, who then iii) is perceived as a world creator.<sup>315</sup>

In this essay, though, I want to take a somewhat, if not different, then more specific stand:

First we should acknowledge that we do perceive the world in our own individual ways. So problems occur only in so far as we deny our potential for being biased. Thus we have aligned *subjectivism* with naive realism, ref § 4.3. In our context, *subjectivism* is expressed as a “taken-for-granted” belief that “I” immediately from the facial expressions, posture and actions, can sense, what is going on within an Other and perhaps even “see” why he expresses him self that way.

In this essay, subjectivity is thus related to the circumstances surrounding our life stories, and thus if you insist, linked to our biases. – Biases we may suspend if led to be aware of them, as some basic assumptions we have hitherto taken for ref § 4.3.

#### *The call for explanation*

*as a means of clearing up the mess of subjective beliefs of others*

Adherents of the objectivity claim can easily boost their stand and refer to a multitude of conflicting interpretations. There is hardly any limit to the number of interpretations some have taken to be true and which others have enjoyed to discard in disgust. It is as if any interpretation has a complementary scheme, see Figure 5.1 #1.

**Figure 5.1 #1 Int. COMPLEMENTARY INTERPRETATIVE SCHEMES**

Most interpretative schemes – if not all – seem to have their counterpart

Materialism	Spiritualism & Vitalism
Realism	Idealism
Structuralism: Our perceptions and thus acts are determined by language.	Existentialism: Man is, at least in principle, responsible for what he does and thus his own fate
Man is essentially, if not evil, at least sinful (Lutheranism)	Man is good (as claimed by social democratic exponents for the welfare state)
Man is driven by emotional drives, be it lust or greed	Man is rational/can make rational decisions
Hedonism: Man is driven by a quest for pleasure	Indulgence in pleasure is sinful; an ascetic lifestyle is to be preferred

Spokespersons for any of these positions seem able to identify illustrative samples of evidence to “prove” how acceptable their particular conviction is! Thus, we may well wonder what “subjective” and/or sociological drives may lurk beneath the defence for any of these classical positions. Or explore whether any choice of a scheme could illustrate man’s inclination – perhaps grounded in anxiety – to simplify rather than reach out for comprehensiveness?

With this mess of possible stances, it is hardly surprising that some opt for a cool explanatory approach as a means of coming to our senses!

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## A HISTORICAL LOOK ON THE ROLE OF EXPLANATION WITHIN SOCIAL RESEARCH

### 5.2 The “truest” cause

The Greek historian, Thucydides<sup>316</sup>, may not be the first to call for an “un-biased” explanatory approach, but certainly the first explicitly to spell out what it takes to identify why social events happened as they did.

Instead of envisioning that the Gods – as imagined by the poet Homer – interfere in human strife, Thucydides instructs us “1) to look for facts yet note 2) how eyewitnesses each have their own interests to defend as well as deficiencies of memory.

In order to commit ourselves to the future generations we should 3) avoid patriotic storytelling; even if this may be most enjoyable to our audience. Instead we should just 4) judge the evidence in accordance with human nature and how events occur and reoccur in similar and comparative ways.”<sup>317</sup>

Thucydides next recommends us to engage in 5) comparative analysis of otherwise similar cases to identify why something happens again and again. This outlines the entire explanatory traditional paradigm, including its implicit assumptions:

- a) Search for “data”, which thus by implication are assumed to be indisputable, ref § 1.5, page 13
- b) evaluate “them”, as we should be aware of how our informants might be biased as well as having a tendency to “forget”.

In our analysis we should then:

- c) Rely on our knowledge of human nature and
- d) compare what is similar and what differs in order to reach generalized principles for why events occur (causality).

This approach does, in fact, express what were to become accepted as the general ethos of explanatory rhetoric: a) “Data” are there to be picked and b) whereas the people involved may be biased, c) the social researcher is all the wiser as she knows human nature, just as the doctor knows best about health and sicknesses.<sup>318</sup>

Thus, knowledge of human nature, together with d) identification of what is similar in repeated events enables us to propose generalized principles – by induction as we say today, see § 1.5.

Yet there is more to it. The very first example Thucydides gives us, is an explanation of the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War – is one of deductive reasoning. After thirty years of peace, Athens and Sparta were at war again, – because as he tells us: “I consider the *truest cause* – and the one least openly expressed – to be that the increasing Athenian greatness and the resulting fear amongst the Spartans made their going to war inevitable.”<sup>319, 320</sup>

I leave it to the readers to struggle with the implicit meaning of “truest”<sup>321</sup>. It is more important to note that Thucydides does not state the principle of inference he applies, which may be something like: “Take two strong, yet weakly connected powers operating within the same environment. If one sees that the other likely to grow so strong that it could later defy herself, it would be best to attack the rival before it is too late.”<sup>322</sup> Like what Hitler told his countrymen in 1941: The attack on Russia was a preventive measure to forestall a later Sovjet assault on Germany.<sup>323</sup> A strategy launched as *pre-emptive war* or *strike*, by President Bush in 2002, after the September 11 disaster, in his call for war on terror.<sup>324</sup>

It is worth noticing, that Thucydides, in the paragraph alluded to above,<sup>325</sup> takes us even one step further, as he warns us that

- e) Social researchers should be aware of not only the biases of our informants, but also of our own biases, including the temptation to please our audience.<sup>326, 327</sup>

Thus, the only way to combat bias, defined as “subjectivity”, is not just to be observant of the Other, but to be constantly on the lookout for preferences, likes and dislikes which one has not yet recognized within one self.

### **Refusing to acknowledge interpretations.**

## **5.3 – Facets from the history of social research since Thucydides**

The growth of Industrialism relied on the creation of knowledge based on observation and a logico-mathematical treatment there of, – founded as it were on Chemistry and Physics. What mattered was *reliability*: Any researcher investigating the same matter should and must reach the same conclusion in order to be considered a scientist worthy of the name. Thus no room was given for what felt to be right. The ethos of interpretation was to be outright discarded.

This explanatory ethos was later transferred to social research by:

- The enlightened founders of Positivism, Comte and Durkheim in France;
- The more austere Austrian-Anglo-American Approach, Logical Positivism;
- Both being related to the Logical Empiricism of John Locke and, in part, to the logically structured thinking by John Stuart Mill.

So let us cast a glance on them:

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*Positivism according to Auguste Comte*

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) claimed *Positivism* to be the basis for empirical Sociology.<sup>328</sup> Yet, it is worth recalling how his authorship of ideas later reached far beyond the boundaries of Positivism as it was to be radicalized and narrowed down in the century that followed. Thus, it is with regret that we here have to confine ourselves only to touch his defining characteristics of a type of Social Research, based on the concept of the Natural Sciences as the ideal for the Social Sciences.

Comte envisions his time to be on the verge of a new era. He first recalls how natural and social phenomena hitherto have been explained as acts of God or by referring to the inherent nature of things.<sup>329</sup> Now, as he says, Science is to be grounded – not on wishful beliefs and rhetorical tricks – but on observation and reason alone. To underscore this break with the past, Comte introduces the term “*positive*”, as a rhetorical connotation, to emphasize the blissful, constructive spirit of this new era to come.

His new programme called for:

- *Observation* to be the foundation for all Sciences
- The aim of research to be the search for *invariable laws* for natural as well as social phenomena, including an acute awareness of circumstantial evidence,
- All Sciences are, as a whole, to be embedded in an all-encompassing, interdependent, hierarchical structure of *levels* – very similar to the approach already illustrated in Figure 4.7 #1 where as
- each Science has to – at least for the moment – be expected to have a *logic of its own*. Yet, the logic of those at a higher level must not contradict those at lower;
- An idea of *progress* of Science and, in consequence, society.

*Observation* is to be the starting point and foundation any Science. Only fact should count, not imaginary first principles. Real knowledge is based on observed “data”. Yet, he adds that it is equally true that “data” cannot be observed without the guidance of some theory.<sup>330</sup>

What we see – or rather make notes of – depends on what we already believe. Thus, the belief in the interventions of the Gods is self-fulfilling: If you believe in them, you shall see them. Positive philosophy is now going to break the spell of any such vicious circles of self-confirmation. In future, Science has to be grounded in the search for *invariable natural laws*. These will include laws of “Social Physics” that will prove themselves in action and through experimentation.<sup>331</sup>

In other words, scientific notions should be grounded entirely in the world of the real, beyond language. Measurements shall break the spell of “seeing what you believe”. Yet it would not be easy. “Statesmen still suppose that social phenomena can be modified at will, the human race being always ready to yield to any influence of the legislator, spiritual or temporal, provided she is invested with sufficient authority.”<sup>332</sup> As, for example, when the Norwegian Parliament – in order to settle a dispute within the state church two generations ago – decided that Hell no longer existed in Norway.



However well-meaning or authoritarian the regime, social phenomena cannot just be modified at the will of politicians, as Comte states. A lesson well learned, yet written in blood by those who have struggled under regimes of National and Soviet Socialism. Yet there are rules even rulers have to obey to ensure human dignity!<sup>333</sup>

*Science as organized hierarchy:* Comte envisions how the Sciences could emerge as a levelled unity. Social Science should build upon its antecedent, Biology, which in turn must build upon Chemistry etc.

Comte did not believe – as the logical positivists later did – that the more aggregated Sciences, level by level, could be reduced to “simpler”. Nor did he believe the same laws of performance to be applicable to any society. How a society is organized depends on climate, type of technology, religion etc. But he stressed that we should not admit any view on a higher level, e.g. at the sociological which would contradict known laws at the more simple level, e.g. laws of human nature.<sup>334</sup>

As for *logic*, there must be one common to all Sciences, Comte states. But it cannot be expressed in the same manner in every science. According to level of aggregated complexity, each Science must have its own way of establishing truth and rules of consistency.



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Physics deals with simple relations and may, as such, be subject to more simple mathematical treatments.<sup>335</sup> The fields of Biology and Social Sciences are too complex for that. Here, a comparative approach is more likely to be fruitful. Comparing one organism with another can show us which organs have similar functions and which do not – for instance how birds process food in comparison with reptiles and mammals. Thus, we may also learn to identify the key characteristics of differences between healthy and sick individuals and even learn to identify the causes of illness. Or we may, by cross comparison, observe how different societal structures develop under diverse geographical conditions,<sup>336</sup> as already illustrated in § 4.11, page 150, with regard to social revolutions. Or as Socrates said: “Most people would define knowledge as the ability to tell some characteristic by which the object in question differs from all others”.<sup>337</sup>

Making comparisons is something we all do. Yet, Social Science should do it explicitly and with the greatest attention to detail.

*Natural Science as the ideal for social research:* In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, social researchers were as adversarial to each other as they are today. This Comte predicted would come to an end. He believed that social research as a positive philosophy would progress and lead us to more specific insights founded as they would be – not on the opinions of individual “researchers” – but on systematic “data” collection and progressive comparison. Accordingly, one body of “Social Physics” of invariable laws – as for the Natural Sciences – would be expected to emerge as circumstances of societies were identified.

Thus, in order to improve Social Science, the training of social researchers should begin with courses in Natural Science, as is more than amply illustrated in *Cours de Philosophie Positive*.<sup>338</sup>

Whatever the virtues involved, we should always bear in mind that any idea that the methods of Natural Science may or should be transferable to social research is, in it self, only legitimized by the interpretation that it is possible as well as desirable!

*Positivism as shaped by the founder of Functionalism, Durkheim*

*Emile Durkheim* (1858–1917) – as much as his master Comte – believed in a Sociology grounded in observations with Natural Science as the ideal, in contrast to the lot of religious, romantic or unabashed personalized and un-testable interpretations by which clerks and philosophers had hitherto let themselves be ensnared.

Nor did he believe in the “unprepared mind”. Durkheim was painfully aware of how we are born into society and subsequently “most of our ideas and our inclinations are not developed by ourselves, but come to us from without.”<sup>339</sup> These, “our” conceptions of life and patterns of behaviour, are – as he stated – imposed upon us with a force we hardly recognize. It works by implication. First we are given and acquire an ordinary language; later the languages of law, politics and commerce.<sup>340</sup> –A moulding of our minds, which – regardless of social circumstance – is associated with learning! Thus, to free him self, the sociologist should “put him self in the same state of mind as the physicist”. – Place herself outside the prevailing thought schemes and thus language!<sup>341</sup>

Physicists approach nature with an open, inquiring mind, devoid of ideological or personal interests, he says. Thus “they” may introduce thoughts of their own, and leave it to the social to resist will full schemes of their own making. Thus, the to the real committed social scientist should be prepared for “discoveries, which will surprise and disturb him”.<sup>342</sup>

Social scientists in the Durkheimian sense, thus have to abstain from “top-down” reasoning and from perceiving anything through concepts given to us. Instead, we should base our analysis on “bottom-up” identification and comparison of “data” collected from the social domain. Replace ideological schemes with a Science grounded in realities! Or as he puts it: “Ideas and concepts, whatever name given to them, are not legitimate substitutes for (social facts as) things”.<sup>343</sup>

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Thus the *first rule* of Durkheim:

- o All preconceptions must be eradicated.<sup>344</sup> We have to emancipate ourselves from fallacious ideas that dominate the mind of the layman, from political and religious beliefs to moral concerns and emotional sentiment.

Whereas his first rule is negative, his *second* is positive:

- o Define social “data” in ways that are recognizable to others by appearance and not in moral terms. Thus, for instance, criminal acts are defined as acts which society will punish, just like chairs may be defined as man-made artefacts for sitting.

Positivism, for Durkheim as for Comte, is related to what we ostensibly can point at and measure.<sup>345</sup> And should we fail to get hold of what we are searching for, the “real” is expected to resist any inadequate, preliminary notions of ours. By contrast adherents of lofty metaphysical, idealistic and/or spiritual notions of reality do not lay themselves open to reality tests!

Yet, practice shows how difficult it is just to stick to what is directly noticeable. And Durkheim, him self, had a hard time doing so too. In his grand work on Suicide<sup>346</sup>, for example, he offered this definition of his subject matter:

The term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim him self, which he knows will produce this outcome.<sup>347, 348</sup>

This is hardly objective in the above sense: The dead cannot tell us why they died the way they did. We can only infer what happened – in this case an alleged suicide – from “data” we take as reference for evidence.

This objection should not lead us away from recognizing how his definition could be regarded as objective in another sense – that of no emotional involvement. According to the New Testament, Jesus – Blessed be His Name – knew his last acts would lead to his execution. Thus, according to the definition above, he committed suicide. A disturbing thought! If so, it would be wrong to let our own feelings of reverence for Christ colour or, even worse, shape the definition of suicide! According to Durkheim, the death of Christ would be an ideal example of what he calls an altruistic suicide.

This must suffice. Primarily because we have to turn to a most powerful lesson which Durkheim taught us, and which, regrettably, is all too often overlooked as the second carrying concept for Positivist studies:

*Functionalism 2<sup>349</sup>*

– *How an institution works and how it came to be*

Social institutions do exist. Why? Any child can tell you the fire brigade is there to put out fires, just as hospitals are there to cure the sick. The reason for the existence of social institutions is the very purpose they serve. So just like we attribute motives to men as the *raison d'être* for their acts, we attribute purposes to institutions.

There is just one problem, as Durkheim reminds us: We cannot expect everyone to agree on what function a given institution serves or should serve! For instance, what is the role of “putting criminals behind bars”? Revenge, punishment, calming the public, re-education, or...? I leave it to you to pick the interpretation you prefer. Thus, the sheer identification of a purpose is not enough to make Functionalism explanatory! Ref § 4.9.

Consequently – as demonstrated by Durkheim – we have to add another dimension in order to be able to accept Functionalism as an explanatory concept: We must account for:

- o Why an institution was set up in the first place.
- o Who set up it and how was its goals defined in a measurable way (operationalized)
- o What operational changes may since have occurred
- o This paves the way for any subsequent discussion of whether the goals of the founding fathers were later displaced and how, when and why.

Thus, according to Durkheim, in order to explain a social institution we need at least to search in two dimensions: analysis of processes and an historical clarification of *opus operandi*.

- *how<sub>function</sub>*, a quasi-static exposition of a structure and how it functions
- *why<sub>genesis</sub>*, a quasi-dynamic exposition of the historical process that leads up to the establishment of the institution in question and which changes may later have been introduced and why, e.g. the situation when, how and with which arguments the English poverty laws were established.<sup>350, 351</sup>

So, in order to explain, it is necessary, but not sufficient to describe how something functions. We also need to know why, as Socrates, too, taught.<sup>352</sup>

Today, organizational design draws heavily on functional principles. Take, for example, the functionalist recommendations by Ernest Hass for the reconstruction of a unified Europe after WWII: Cooperation between states is a great challenge, not least due to the political interests of the variety of nationally orientated politicians.<sup>353</sup>

Thus, his recommendation is to start with integration where it is the easiest: The more functional and less politicised institutions, such as the national telephone systems, super highways, customs etc. Here, the challenges are mainly practical and can therefore be left to technicians to solve. In so far as this is a success, the inspiration may spread to the politicians and the political elite in general, in the form of what is often called a “spill-over effect”.

#### *Logical Empiricism and John Stuart Mill*

Logical Empiricism is easily ranked as a historically most powerful epistemology expounding an explanatory stance. In practical terms it instructs us: First define what to observe, how to measure it and collect “data”. Then, by pure logical analysis, unravel whatever patterns of relations there might be between the entities referred to by the data. Then at least the analytical part of Science will be independent of man, his whims, emotions and/or political inclinations, – or as Mill expressed it: enable us to forego intuition. By resorting to measurement and logic, mind may operate independently of what the ‘data’ refer to.

In short, and this may amount to an implicit definition of *objectivity*: Researchers, looking for the “real truth”, have to employ a double strategy:

1. A principle of *publicly controllable “data” collection* – obtained by some well-defined measuring instrument open for others to use as well.
2. *Analysis* by logico-mathematical, including comparative examinations independent of one’s own mind and open for everyone to control.

The notion of anti-interpretation, expressed as a *call for “objectivity”*, can now be sharpened. It is a call first for a liberating yet negatively expressed principle, next a positive and finally a neutral one:

- 1.1) Reject the notion that some particularly powerful or enlightened people should be allowed to decide, what we should believe.
- 1.2) Instead opt for a more democratic view: We have no reason to accept anything as true, which we all cannot be brought to see.

To these, we can now add an implication, which has been of particular relevance for the rejection of case studies: The importance of *non-involvement*:

- 1.3) Observation is King. Do not become engaged in or talk with the subjects of your study. Let the behaviour of others speak for it self in terms of the “data” gathered.

This attitude is well-pronounced by John Stuart Mill, in his outline of the classical experiment, ref § 1.5 and 2.3:<sup>354</sup>



Set up two equally composed groups. Introduce one – the Experimental Group – to a treatment; to the other – the Control Group – none! Then after a specific time, notice whether there has been a change in behavior of either group and which. Is there any difference of outcome of the two groups, we can accordingly – provided the experiment is carefully controlled to exclude all external influences – attribute the observed differential change to the treatment. Logically neat and tight: “Do something and leave it to circumstance to show us what might happen!

Thus, the “explanatory approach” should leave no room for anyone to refer to her own sense or feeling as an argument for what is going on.s

To these tenets, we may add two more for further safety:

- Formulate as exactly as possible what to identify and how it is to be converted into “data”: *Construct Validity*.
- Make sure that a report of what one has done is made open for everyone to see, so that others may replicate the experiment and a) check the results or b) challenge their robustness under somewhat different circumstances: *Reliability*.

The alert reader, however, may have recognized how the power of objectivity, as defined above, builds on a simplification:



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First: Only facts that can be subject to formalized logical operations, say capable of being processed in a computer, for instance, are allowed. Consequently, any form of analysis along lines like those referred to in Figure 4.2 #1 must be discarded from social research.

Secondly the experiments has to rely on using anonymous persons in order to bypass the potential impacts people who already know each other may have. This means that history has to be renounced, even it is exactly what makes the difference between science and social research, ref § 4.1.

#### *Logical Positivism (School of Vienna)*

Durkheim was a social researcher in his own right. And while his works were translated into English, his influence on the philosophy of right and wrongs for social research was, unfortunately, not to be as powerful as that of *Logical Positivism*, – which came out of Vienna. This type of thinking was later to be seen as a caricature as it insisted on – or was interpreted – as insisting on using only physical terms as the basis, not only of Natural Science, but for social research too – a position given the name Physicalism.<sup>355</sup>

Yet, before indulging in criticism, let us first pause for a moment and reflect on what the good people in Vienna were up against. Take, for instance, the following definition of magnetism by their German colleague Hegel: “Magnets exhibit in simple and naive fashion the nature of notion and the notion moreover in its developed form as syllogism. The poles are the sensibly existent ends of a real line; but as poles, they have no sensible mechanical reality but an ideal one, and are absolutely inseparable.”<sup>356</sup> While the second statement is not entirely incomprehensible, Hegel hardly defines magnetism even as well as the one presented by Aristotle as “having power to cause motion” as referred to in § 1.6 #1.

The logical positivists simply wanted to erase such nonsense. Only statements expressed in a form that could easily be *verified* should be regarded as scientific. In short, facts and statements in order to be scientific should have:

- o A form that respects *correspondence* as the primary principle of validity.

As we have already shown in § 2.3, this is impossible to achieve even given the primary function of language. Generally, there is not a 1:1 relationship between language and reality.

- o Secondly, Science should be built bottom up of simple, easily verifiable sentences – *protocol sentences*. These should then as “building blocks” be aggregated into greater whole
- o by logico-mathematical means.<sup>357</sup>
- o This then lays the foundation for a *unified science*. Thus, Psychology should build on Biology, which in turn should build on Chemistry etc. A more strictly defined vision of the ideas already presented by Comte!

History – constructed as it is from no longer directly verifiable facts, sentiment and common-sense judgment – was to be rejected. It was to be seen as an arena for mere anecdotic exercises. And so was Darwinism. “Mutations” just refer to “matter of chance”!<sup>358</sup>

Yet, rejecting “historical time” as a dimension in life may suffice for Physics and some other Natural Sciences, but it does not work for social research, as we have already referred – not even for explanatory studies, as Durkheim taught us!

But let us look at an example of how logic is supposed to serve as guidance for real Science: Feyerabend and his wholesale refusal of the psychoanalysis of Freud:<sup>359</sup>

Say, for example, that I dream, I insert a toothpick in a fork. Obviously, as “Freud” could “explain”, “I” must have a subconscious desire to have sex with my mother. To this I can either respond: “Oh yes, certainly”, or I can deny it vehemently. In the first case, psychoanalysis immediately gets the upper hand. And in the latter “Freud” may answer: “Oh, you do deny my proposition. Apparently, you will not even recognize your own inner desires”. Thus, my denial is taken as even stronger evidence of what the expert can see.<sup>360</sup>

Apparently, there is no room for counter-evidence! By accepting both affirmation and denial as confirmation of his own views, the expert will always be right. Thus, Psychoanalysis is laid dead in the arena of Science, as Feyerabend declares in triumph.

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Yet, the critique by Feyerabend as toreador is just as flawed. It is a simplification. Surely “I” may publically repress internal desires, which I do not want to known to everyone and thus make me vulnerable And sure a good observer may notice, how I suppress my self by observing how I express my self. Yet, this does not make it true that I always do so. The problem is simply to find out when, how and why – and this calls for dialogue, ref Chapter 6 to come.

*What a dream: A Science devoid of any reference to human values!*

According to the positivist idiom, values may have a place in life, but not in Science. Accordingly “One cannot” be both objective and emotionally devoted to visions of life, religion or nationhood. Thus, Science “cannot” be used to tell others what we ought to do.

Of course one could use a measure like “a good man is one who serves others well”. But a description of what is, does not allow us to state, what ought to be. And should we do so, we would be committing what G.E. Moore called *the naturalistic fallacy*.<sup>361</sup> What people believe is good is simply what they believe to be so. End of story! Further, what does “serve others well” mean? Is not just another word for “being good”? “Good” has no definition.<sup>362</sup> It is an expression of a belief.

Science must – out of respect for the ideal of objectivity and in denial of subjectivity – abstain from letting it self be used as a foundation for value judgements. What a calming assurance for, say, a marketing advisor to the tobacco industry!

## THE BLURRED LINE

### 5.4 “Do not let your self be beaten”

For one, “explanation” is a poly-semical word with a much wider range of connotations than we generally ponder upon. Let us look at an example: A woman is brutally beaten up by her husband after her napkin fell to the floor – or as he saw it, she dropped it. The beating was well deserved. She must be more careful, he claimed. “I might have taken it to wipe my mouth. I cannot do that with a soiled rag.”

Now, obviously as he sees it, the drop of the napkin triggered his rage. But I grant that not many people will accept this as an explanation. In our mind – as we interpret social behaviour – we need to search for the prepositions, the string of events that brought the poor sot into a state where even the tiniest of events would release his rage.

To arrive at an “explanation,” we have of the outline not just what happened but the underlying circumstances – to render a historical account, as emphasised by the founder of Functionalism, Durkheim. There are no short-term input-output relations in the Social Domain! Yet, all the time we hear how all sorts of rhetorical tricks parade as explanations: “Why are paintings by Edvard Munch stolen time and again?” the reporter asks. “Because they are in such high demand,” the expert answers, thus expressing he – unknowingly to himself – does not know. As if “to explain” is a question of just relating words to other words, – as the structuralist Sausurre pointed out, ref § 4.12.

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*Once in a blue moon*

For a more intricate example, let us look at the term “blue moon” – the name for the second appearance of a full moon within the same month. And two full moons do happen every 33rd month. Why this name? Oh, we may be told it is a phrase dating back to Shakespeare: “You will be rich the day the moon turns blue”.<sup>363</sup> But by this, he means that something is never going to happen. No, the phrase “blue moon” came to us through a series of misunderstandings:

In the 1930s, the “Maine Farmers’ Almanac” carried tables of astrological events and, whenever there were four full moons within a season, the third being highlighted in blue. Later, in 1946, the magazine *Sky and Telescope* introduced the above listed definition in accordance the printing practice of the Almanac. In 1980, a radio-programme *StarDate*, referring to *Sky and Telescope*, spread the notion even further. Finally, a few years ago, “blue moon” surfaced as a question in Trivial Pursuit. The concept intrigued the new editor of *Sky and Telescope*, who decided to find out why. By retracing the steps, he finally came to their own old editor.<sup>364</sup>

A fascinating story and an exception to the lost genesis for terms and thus such a good explanation! Right? Well, we will come back to that in four pages.

*What a muddle!*

Now, let us first recall how explanations and interpretations a like attempts to give an answer to a why question. And as Science has presently become the prevailing idiom of foremost excellence, the ability to explain has become more respected than interpretation and intuition.

Thus, some social researchers are tempted go to great lengths to convince us, and in turn themselves, that they explain, whereas they to others may just seem to bask in interpretations, perhaps due to their political views, etc. Marxism may serve us well here as an example

Thus, interpretations are often dressed up to appear as explanations in a format we already have referred to as *expretation*<sup>365</sup>. Therefore, it can at times be hard to see what is what. Take, for instance, the expression: “The strongest survive”. This may be

- o a tautology, claiming that those who survive must be the strongest.
- o an interpretation based upon a vulgarized analogy to Darwinism and transferred to, say, a social arena;
- o a rule based upon a series of investigations grounded in field-work, where “strong” and “survival” are measured independently of each other for several scores of individuals and then compared. Strong being defined by strength, eating and mating behaviours etc.; survival by length of life, number of offspring etc.<sup>366</sup>



Thus, we have to look at the context in order to determine whether an utterance like “The strongest survive” is just either a rhetoric exclamation, – an ideological statement or an explanatory scheme. Yet one is easily deceived, as the first two usages often masquerade as being of the latter kind.

Lastly, and no less confusingly, whether I interpret rather than explain, may not be a question of form at all, but of self-awareness. Say I – at a distance – hear someone present a cause for a social occurrence. Now it may, in my mind, just pop up as an interpretation, because I am aware of other potential reasons. As I see it, the other has – without further ado – just found an argument that makes sense to her. May be she just took a probable cause for the only one, committing the *fallacy of insufficient specification*?

But she may indeed have explored other possibilities, whereas she now in her presentation, only refers to the most important ones. Or even not the most important for her research, but to her present audience!

So as *interpretations often share the same form as explanations*, we may not always be sure what we face. Yet the format is easily recognized: When X happens, then, due to circumstances, Y will occur because of a given rule, e.g. the assumed dispositions of the powerful, the deprived, man’s drive for competence, lust or power.

Yet there is a *profound difference*: While the interpreter is looking back, trying to make sense of what has happened, the explicator is looking ahead, giving us, and especially the decision-makers, rules for identification of what actions to take in order to attain the desired goals. Let us look at an example:

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## 5.5 Towards rules for the social

Scientific practices are derived from our daily practices in general. So let us once more return to ordinary practice in order to get a better grip on “explaining” as reference to rules. Consider the following statement:

OEDIPUS WENT MAD AS HE FOUND HE HAD MARRIED HIS MOTHER.<sup>367</sup>

Assuming that we are already acquainted with the tragedy, the statement claims that their marriage explains his subsequent madness. Or, – if you prefer – that bedding with his mother is the cause of his madness. But many young men brought up by lonely mothers have been enticed to have intercourse with them without severe consequences. So the opus operandi need to be specified!

*Events cannot explain events*

But there is more to it. Stating the antecedent condition for an outcome is not sufficient for explaining. And in this instance no reason is even given. So let us rephrase the above statement as follows:<sup>368</sup>

OEDIPUS’S WENT MAD AFTER MARRYING THE WIDOW OF LAIUS

Most of us would discard such a claim as misleading, if not outright false. If so, the claim that “Oedipus went mad as he found he had married his mother” hardly explains anything. Attempting to do so is to commit the fallacy of confirming the adjacent by the consequence.

Secondly and worse: *Events simply cannot explain events*. Further more there should be a rule of inference to cover the incident, with a range of applicability beyond the case of Oedipus.<sup>369, 370</sup>

Thus, while some may have thought that, we a few pages back, explained how the current meaning of the term “blue moon” originated; we did not. We *told you* how it came into being. And it may have had made sense to you in so far as you recognized that it could have happened like that. Yet I did not refer to any rules in composing the account. But sure, we may be thrilled or even feel enlightened by good narratives, which we then – in ordinary life – may attribute explanatory value to. However, social research demands far more sharpness.

So, events cannot explain events. But then you might ask “Is it not true, that Kennedy died because Oswald shot him?” No, certainly not! I grant – as far as I know – it is a fact that Kennedy was shot. But it takes more than just being hit by a bullet to die. You have to describe where, how and with what velocity his skull was hit and by what type of bullet etc. To explain is not just to state a chain of subsequent events. Details do matter, but so do the rules by which we infer what happens.

And while a detailed medical account may clarify how Kennedy died, we still would not have explained how and why the event occurred as a social fact. Oswald – I assume – must have had his reasons for taking aim and fire. So, we need to present an account of the background, beliefs, state of mind and aspirations of the assassin as well as what he expected to get out of it.

Explaining is a tough job. It takes more than just surrendering our mind to some short-cut reasoning.

**Agents may act for a reason but always due to opportunity**

*“Explanation” as an act of giving reasons, referring to causes or to an opportunity?*

Let us say we ask someone to tell us why they, or someone else, acted in such and such a way: “Why did he get such good grades?” “Oh, he must have worked a lot for it.” A phrase, that hardly attribute Pete with a reason grounded in his psychological genesis!:

Such after-the-event statements purport to be explanations, but of course are not, – just some more or less drummed up phrases for the occasion.



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Attribution of motives, however convincing, is often fallacious in at least two further regards. Firstly, the potential propensity to act is muddled up with what releases it, committing a variant of the *fallacy of insufficient specification*, in the former case taking the incident of a falling napkin for the cause. Even Aristotle knew better, ref page 45!

*Secondly* we all nurture a multitude of desires and personal ambitions we would like to satisfy. But we can only do so much at any given time. Beliefs and personal cravings just set the stage. The release of any act depends on opportunity as much as potential. Thus, in a sense, the triggering impetus will always be something coming to us from the outside. *Agents may act for a reason, but certainly due to an opportunity*. So it would be better to see changes in behavior as related both to circumstance and inner tensions. But even that is not the whole story:

Anyone might, as we pass a bakery, feel tempted to buy a cake, – that is why they are put on display – and if not in a hurry, we might enter the shop even if we had promised our selves to stick to a diet. But what truly releases an act in any given situation, nobody knows – neither the onlookers nor the actor. It is not until the very moment that “we” buy the cake and start eating, we know what we really want.

Thus in a way we do not choose, we are led to choose and what we choose show what we want, regardless of what we might need. Then afterwards, yes we may always find and excuse and claim we bought the cake in order to reward our selves for having remained stuck to a diet for so long, – or some other bull shit. Thus we better rephrase the statement above to: *As agent we believe we act for a reason, – while it is as much due to an opportunity*.

Thus, the attribution of motives generally appears as examples of *expretation*, – interpretations masquerading as explanations.

“Explaining” as an interpretation is all the more evident when the attribution of motives is presented without any regard for circumstance, opportunity etc. as conditioning factors. Expretation works so far we allow our mind to – in hindsight – accept the implied logic for claim for a cause. It occurs as our mind by passive rationalization tries to adapt our thoughts to an apparent reality. Without any regard that any outcome may have many causes. We thus commitment our selves *to the fallacy of insufficient specification!*

For Science, though, explanation is about identifying rules for predicting what might happen, given a certain specific state of affairs. So let us now take a first step in that direction.

**A proverb at hand is worth a thousand words**

Popular saing

**There is no proverb without a grain of truth**

Russian proverb

*Proverbs: Everyday rules to express what one knows*

We will later in § 5.13 & 14 address the question whether social laws in the same strict sense as for science are possible. But let us first pay attention to a type of rule we often bring into play as a sense-making device. Say, we at lunch with delight remind ourselves about a long gone professor. Now someone says, “Out of sight out of mind”. And the rest of us nod in appreciation. It sums it all up. Then someone else – as he recalls how the institute was managed then – might with sarcasm – add “And absence makes the heart grow fonder”. This remark is met with even greater smiles of appreciation.

*Proverbs* are powerful tools for condensing lived experience into a short string of words. In their own neat way, they help us to place singular situations in a wider context. And the work all the better as – just as there is for grand level interpretations – there seems too to be a proverb for every situation, ref Figure 5.5 #1 PROV.

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**Figure 5.5 #1 PROV: EXAMPLES OF COMPLEMENTARY PROVERBS**

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A wrong decision made in time is better than the perfect taken too late	Haste makes waste
	Extremes meet
You can not both run with the hare and hunt with the hounds	Prevention is better than cure
Do not fix it unless it is broken	A good maxim is never out of season
Anything worth doing is worth overdoing	There is no place like home
The grass is always greener on the other side	The more, the merrier
You can easily have too much of a good thing	

Proverbs serve us well. On any occasion, and thus without any reference to circumstance, they aptly sum up experiences in “as-we-all-know” types of reference! So handy to use as minute-level theory statements, because they seem to express a general everyday truth or wisdom!<sup>371</sup>

---

And proverbs may not only just come in pairs, but like interpretative schemes, but even be flagrantly juxtaposed as “History repeats it self” versus “History never repeats it self”.

Not all pairs are contrary to each other like “Trust takes time” versus “Trust has to be earned everyday”, referred to in Figure 2.12 #1. They certainly do not express the same view, yet may each in their way emphasize a different aspect of social reality, – be it a spectator view versus a more existentialist stance.

Others may be made up for the occasion, like when your spouse tells you: “Oh, – in this house it takes only one cook to spoil the broth.”

*Maxims* are even more advanced “rules” as they include contradictions, be it naivety and reflection in one double stroke, as for example these by *La Rochefoucauld*: “If we had no faults, we would not find so much enjoyment in seeing them in others” or with a reference to the tensions between qualitative and quantitative approaches to social research: “We try to make virtues out of the faults we have no desire to correct.”<sup>372</sup>

So even proverbs are not supposed to be scientific, yet in practice they do function like rules summing up social experiences in law-like statements

*Could social laws have somehow the same standing as proverbs?*

As proverbs and maxims serve us well as rules for summing up human experience, so should social laws. – And conveniently they too apparently may come in complementary, juxtaposed pairs:

Some suggest, for example, that workers are only interested in earning as much as possible by doing as little as possible, while others state that workers first and foremost want an interesting job. Of course, both claims may be true according to circumstances, be it level of living standard, type of job and skills, degree of ownership and/or personal needs. Likewise, some producers claim that what matters is quality, whereas others state that consumers just want low prices. And yes, both claims may be true according to what product and what type of consumer we are talking about.

Thus – as John Elster suggests – it may be worth asking whether rules – expressed as theoretical statements – within social research have any further bearing than proverbs.<sup>373</sup> And sure, if the opus operandi are not stated, statistically grounded rules are indeed as trustworthy as proverbs. Of course, neither is untrue in the sense that evidence cannot be found, if traced for by exemplifying! Yet they may still be fictitious in the sense of being incomplete, as illustrated by the opening discussion in the book concerning the Blasi theorem, see § 1.2.

Of course, contradictory theorems are seldom found within the same school of social thought. In the above case, “getting as much as possible with the least investment” is a spill-over from a purely economic dogma, whereas the “taking interest” theorem is a spill over from Humanistic Psychology and its impact on Organizational Theory. For a brief review of other such complementary social “truths”, please see Figure 5.5 #2.

**Figure 5.5 #2: Sothe TWO EXAMPLES OF COMPLEMENTARY SOCIAL THEOREMS**

A

Revolution is due to elementary needs, poverty, illiteracy etc.

The Maslow Pyramid: the drive for self-realization does not occur until man's elementary need for shelter and food has been met. – The case of the interest of an enlightened bourgeoisie.

B

Revolution occurs only when situations have improved somewhat and aroused the hope of people for more.

Existentialism: Man is responsible for creating his own life, and is – if aroused – prepare to sacrifice his own well-being in order to help bring better social circumstances around for the group he identifies with. – The case of monks, freedom fighters or political activists.

Like proverbs, theories at any level can often be arranged in complementary in pairs. Any of the two claims may at times be unverifiable or false. In other instances, both claims may be partially true.

In the cases above, for the first of the two pairs A is the most popular but just the background for futile uprisings, whereas there is evidence for B.

For the second pair A may be true for some just as B may, – yet neither can be so in general but according types of personalities. So with sufficient specification of opus operandi, we would expect the apparent disagreement between them could disappear.

**There is always more to the social domain than can be said in words,  
 though it may be expressed through them  
 Where there is nothing. There is something. Emptiness!<sup>374</sup>**

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### *Paradoxes*

It is fascinating that contradictory social theorems do not arouse the debate one should expect. It is as if different schools of thought do not even bother to look across the fence! But there is more to it:

Case workers struggling with lower and mid-level research issues may very well identify how several apparently potential contradictory forces are active at the same time. Our ability to generalize with due respect for opus operandi is simply too limited to exhaust the potential sets of what might and is occurring. Or more precisely: Neither our imagination nor our languages are rich enough to equip us with a general rule for any occasion and thus honour the law of requisite variety.<sup>375</sup>

If so, we are more or less doomed to submit to the *fallacy of insufficient specification* of opus operandi. The paradoxes in Figure 5.4 #3 may illustrate this.

---

#### **Figure 5.5 #3 PADO EXAMPLES OF MANAGERIAL PARADOXES**

---

Paradoxes occur when

- a claim that seems reasonable enough in it self is brought in line with another equally reasonable and verified claim<sup>64</sup>
- and the two claims cannot – at least in their current formulation – be formally true at the same time

As an example, let me present five of eleven pieces of advice adapted from the manual of the Danish company LEGO:

Managers shall:<sup>65</sup>

- o Lead the way – and stay in the background
- o Show confidence in their subordinates – and supervise
- o Fight for their own unit – and make sure everyone sticks to the company objectives
- o Be direct in confrontations with employees – and restrain themselves
- o Be self-assured and remain humble

---

The contradictions inherent in these pairs are due to a mixture of reasons: lack of specification both vis-à-vis particular employees and with regard to processes, as well as a mix of first and second-order instructions. But as previously stated: “Our language is not rich enough for social researchers to honour the law of requisite variety”.

---

**Inquiry theoretically conceived  
never explains why, but limits it self to how something is.  
But when inquiry is directed towards the means for guiding our activity,  
it takes the contrary cause.**  
Auguste Comte<sup>378</sup>

## 5.6 Introducing weak and strong explanations

Interpretations tend to take a probable antecedent as the cause. Thus, the range and applicability of interpretations have to be uncertain. By contrast, explanations should identify when they are expected to be valid, – at least as a pragmatic demand. We shall later in § 5.11 discuss whether this is possible even in principle. But not all explanations have the same firm foundation, thus we have to distinguish at least between weak and strong:

- *Weak* explanations give us only a rule that enables us to infer *how* something will react to a given impulse under more or less specified modus operandi. Weak explanations are rules for expected reactions to given impacts
- *Strong* explanations also give information on *why the given rule works*. That means outlining the workings “beneath the surface”. Thus, we should know how to change our expectations as the environment changes. It is a question of confidence and to which degree a claim can be perceived as part of a greater coherent corpus of settled beliefs.

*In short*, strong explanations include a greater set of theoretical, historical and futurological dimensions, whereas the weaker ones are more or less bound within an often not too well recognizable context.

Weak explanations can be exemplified by the instructions we give children in order to read the time by looking at the face of the clock. A strong explanation would step-by-step describe how the inner mechanics of the traditional clock make the hands move. In the first case, we will hardly know what to do, should the clock stop, in the second instance, we should have an idea of how to repair it.

Strong explanations, therefore, may be used for planning. Engineers designing a new airplane will, from the first drafting stage, rely on strong explanations and on minute attention to the details of and interfaces between myriads of internal operating units.

Thus, behind strong explanations lurks what can be called the *engineering ideal*, first and most beautifully expressed in the mechanical universe of Newtonian mechanics as the bygone ideal for Science. Yet most phenomena are not known to a degree or depth to allow us to present images of their inner workings. Thus, in the case of the more intricate, like biological – including medical phenomena -, we are often just able to identify relations, which seem to appear with a certain degree of regularity. As for instance, when contaminated water was identified as a potential cause of typhoid fever long before anybody knew why. Any such correlations – or *superficially indicated relations*, as we will call them – act as indicators of where it could be worth digging deeper in order to unveil any, for now, hidden realities, – ref statistical generalization § 2.10.<sup>379</sup>

Thus, the Biological Sciences, too, keep the engineering model as the ideal, as should any social practice geared towards problem-solving! As money is involved, social explanations are all too often made up to appear as stronger than they really are as in case of managerial consultancies often oversell their suggested cures Thus, many alleged explanations function just like interpretations in disguise, expretations, as we here have chosen to call them. However, such ad hoc models may serve us well as guides for us to search beneath the surface.

*Explanatory tactics within social research and their conceptions of man*

Weak explanations are abundant within social research. So, let us look at the frames within which such studies may be set, be it in the shape of:

- o The simple so called “objectivist” approach, the Stimuli Response, SR, model
- o The rational choice model, or rat model, based on the double assumption that what we do relates to the imprint of our past experiences, as well as what we expect our action to lead to, be it beneficial or not
- o The more elaborate, yet also more fluffy, agency approach.

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According to the simple *objectivist* approach, man as a subject for study is seen as a *simple drive-driven object*, the behaviour of which is defined by *need and circumstance*, e.g. position in society. According to this, any worker is a worker who, like any other sociological stereotype, react as prescribed, like balls hitting another<sup>380</sup>, – the *It* model of man.

The most commonly referred to needs which are supposed to drive Western man, in particular, are 1) hunt for pleasure, which can be sought in many forms, good food, beautiful surroundings, sexual release, social status etc. And 2) if given the choice, “we” would avoid unsatisfied cravings, punishment or any other bewildering discrepancies.<sup>381</sup>

According to the *It* model, man can thus be led by threats of bereavement as well as expectations of rewards. Or even stronger: The model assumes that “man” can *be guided* or led by promises of rewards and inducement of fears – like promises of greater income or threats of being laid of. This is why this perception of man across types may be called the *SR model*, *a given Stimuli will result in a given Response*. Apparently, the *It*-Model opens the door for research in the natural science idiom, as it downplays the role, reflection and historical genesis might have.

Introducing history, we are led to the next model of man, which is both more elaborate and less specific. Man is driven all right, but he will not necessarily react in the same way to given stimuli. Imprints of our past experiences are accumulated in our bodies. We act on what we have come to see as signs of what might be coming. According to this, “we” are expected to evaluate what is going on around and within “us”.

Thus, we *learn* how to aim for and achieve pleasure and hopefully forgo pain. At least this is the case for all mammals. In deep respect for laboratory research on the inborn social inclinations of *rattus rattus*, we will christen this model with a name not necessarily all that flattering for man, the *Rat*-model.

The third explanatory model, the *Agent* Approach, brings us closer to how self-conscious people perceive themselves, and is, thus, far more difficult to work with. The agency model assumes that “we” are not just drive-driven, but able to pause before we act and evaluate how to cope with our inclinations. I may, here and now, sense how “I” want gratification; but as I recognize this, “I” may nevertheless decide not to indulge as the outcome might counteract some long-term goal to which I have committed myself. A model already referred to in Figure 2.4 #2.

In short: An *agent* is able to both evaluate what he has done and put his immediate inclinations to act on hold. He is able to cope with what he should do next. Thus, an agent tries to be aware of him self both as an it-driven object and a rat-subject at the same time.

Of course, man as an agent can still be led, but agents are seen as *driven by purposes*

- o which they can evaluate and
- o which may not necessarily all be hedonistic,
- o thus we are presumed to be able to forgo many immediate inclinations just to act

The It-model presumes the existence of simple universal rules; the Rat-Model that we may make rules of partial validity according to circumstance. The Agency-Model is trickier. Even though there may be rules – and I do expect there are – it may be so difficult to specify in sufficient detail when to apply these rules (the opus operandi), that it borders the impractical. This, of course, should be faced as a challenge rather than used as an excuse not to hunt for rules!

*Rat and agency, first and second-order models of man*

While both Rat- and Agency-models thrive on the idea that man can be seen as a rule-adapting entity, the latter is obviously more complicated. Or expressed in cybernetic terms: Man can, , be approached either as

- o *an It*, a plain physical thing-like entity, (no loop) whereas,
- o *a Rat*, according to which man as a one-loop<sup>382</sup> cybernetic entity, while
- o *The Agent* approach conceives man as a double-loop<sup>383</sup> feedback entity, with the ability to cope with and learn to choose between identified alternatives.

These conceptions are, of course, to be seen only as ideal types. In reality, all three models may be relevant, depending on the type of arousal and goals. Sure, the It- and the Rat-Model may offend our self-images as entities with a “free will”, regardless of whether we, in certain ways, do react as need-driven or not. They may even be so much more insulting, the more often we act un-knowingly.

Thus, social researchers face more than one challenge. As the Agent-Model may be too demanding to work with, it is nice that the It- and the Rat-Model have a beauty of their own: They can be made subject to statistical analysis! Whatever implications this may have for those studied – as agents – this should not be used as a means of rejecting either of the simpler models. It is absolutely recommendable to explore when and to what degree which people seem to act in foreseeable ways, as if governed by rules. Systematic empirical research may serve us well as a supplement or even a corrective to proverbs!

Reactions to advertising, consequences of inducement of fear are a most relevant study for the It-Approach, whereas arousal of angst and shame can be explored by the Rat-Model. The Agency-Model would be needed as an instrument to explore how we may learn or not learn to cope with stress, passions and other challenges according to the circumstances we encounter or have encountered. A dimension, to which we return in § 6!

### *Choosing a position as researcher*

Finally, let us look at the position of researchers. For the two simpler approaches the researcher puts her self a) at distance from the people she studies and subsequently b) categorise their reactions to stimuli in order later c) to predict how they will behave according a certain series of impacts. Information she may later d) sell to others in order for them to exploit the public.

This is often expressed as a *dualist* position: As a researcher of science, “i” place myself outside the domain of people I study. A super position for observation! Being an “invisible, supposedly free, passionless, neutral, analyzing entity”, while those studied is seen as driven by a thirst for gratification. Within this paradigm, researchers obviously set “themselves” above mankind at large! This assumed ability or inclination to objectify the social domain, just notice and reason as one self is a detached non-entity, can be heralded as the fulfilment of an old aspiration for achieving “spiritual freedom”: Placing one self outside the context of human bustle and without giving one self away to any emotions being able to evaluate what is really the case.<sup>384</sup>

The question is not only whether this is really possible, and if not what to do about it, as we shall see next. Then in § 6 we will look whether this is the most productive approach to the Other as well as one self.



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*Making your self up as a researcher in the explanatory style*

Explanations are the foundation for success for Science in creating our present wealth.

- o Thus, explaining has become a paradigm for several types of social research too.
- o Thus, we may often, though not necessarily by design but by habit, give interpretations a formal dress – mimic our research – as if we are working along an explanatory trail.
- o Thus, expretations<sup>385</sup> – while being sloppy about opus operandi – adapt the same logical format as explanations: Y will happen if x is induced.

However, social research has by necessity a personal dimension. We work for others, together with others and do subject others as objects to our investigations. Thus, social researchers, committed to Natural Science as an ideal, have to guarantee their readers that “they” pursue a practice of non-involvement. Thus the personal is seen not as a source of inspiration but as bias. To honour this idea all sorts of *rhetorical twists of de-personalization*, has to brought into play

- o Stay aloof, stay out, do not ever show anything but theoretical concern, and thus never use “I”!
- o Stick to objectified expressions and numbers, logical and/or mathematical expressions!
- o Do your best to convert what could be seen as an interpretative endeavour into the format of explanation, i.e. cause-effect sequences.  
Or worst of all:
- o Assume you are dealing with universal laws for human behavior, thus avoiding the calamities of having to pay too much attention to agency or other types of opus operandi.

Self-conscious, explanatory researchers thus never have to say, “It is my experience that...” or “I believe that...” Instead, one has to speak with alleged empirical authority, e.g. “‘data’ have already shown that...”. So do not write: “I searched through the library for a theory that could throw some light on my facts!” Instead, write something like: “According to the already well-proven theory, T,T, we know that...” For further and more detailed illustrations, see Figure 5.6 #1.

If so, you might say that the explanation ethos requires you to

- o keep it simple
- o never ever express your personal, joys or concerns nor anxieties
- o restrict your rhetorical efforts to neutral expressions.

If, as a result, your report becomes boring, like for example the B-side of statements listed in Figure 5.1 #1, don’t worry. It is meant to be. Social research in the explanatory idiom is not meant to amuse or please. What counts is to appear correct.

**Figure 5.6 #1: IN THE GAME OF EXPLAINING, YOU NEED TO DE-PERSONALIZE WHAT YOU STATE**

In order to impress the reader with your aptitude for explanation, you should present your results in a format that shows how well they mirror the world, as if your text – without any distortion or personal involvement – is in a 1:1 (isomorphic) relationship with the subject matter.<sup>74</sup>

SO INSTEAD OF E.G. WRITING:

USE AN EXPLANATORY FORMAT LIKE THIS

An experiment, – I was allowed to set up in spring 1956, at my father's plant, located in an isolated area on the outskirts of Middleville in Eastern Canada, – indicated that possibly...

It has already been demonstrated (reference to previous literature) that....

As I pressed the button, I observed – to my surprise – how “R” quickly changed its behaviour from...to...and then remained in this new state. How could that be? I had to search the Internet in order to get a feel and perhaps even find words for what I was dealing with and finally found an answer

As predicted by theory T, when induced by a stimulus of 3 Amp at 12 Volt, R in 5 seconds will change from...to...

After having explained my interest in teamwork, the manager for the maintenance group at plant N1 introduced me to some of his workers. Ten days later, the week before Christmas, I led the group into the first of my experiments. This caused some turmoil. Not everyone was really interested! Nor did they react in the same way. I was bewildered!

Repeated experiments indicate how people react differently when induced to a treatment T, depending on their family background. The following figures show how activism is related to having been raised by self-employed parents...

In late January I set up a new experiment, this time at plant N2. Again people acted differently. Yet I knew some of the participants personally, thus I had a hunch. Perhaps family background mattered? Thus, I wondered whether having grown up with a self-employed father or mother could be of importance for technical activism. It was! And this may even be more significant for factory employees situated in a rural area like....

In short: If you want to be taken seriously, do not show your hand, nor that it shakes. “Stay aloof, be cool, you are not a person, you are an impassionate, detached expert doing research!”

**There is only one problem with cause  
One can hardly explain what it is, only demonstrate it.**

## 5.7 Cause – A white dove or...?

Looking through textbooks, the call for “objectivity” in social research is generally supplemented with the notion that an explanation 1) consists, at least, in identifying causes as well as, even better, 2) deducing, what according to a set of already established theories, must happen, as indicated by Figure 1.6 #2 page 27. Formally true, certainly.

Yet, the call for cause is troublesome for at least two reasons – particularly if the advocacy for explanation should be a way to out do interpretation:

**“Man, the measure of all things...”<sup>387</sup>**

Protagoras

**The “original” of the notion of causation is in our inner personal experience,  
only there can causes...be directly observed and described**

William James<sup>388</sup>

*Cause – Primarily a concept not of Science, but of Jurisprudence*

If causes should exist, they are at least not observable, as Hume rightfully taught.<sup>389</sup> Causes are something inferred. We have already in § 1.5 referred to the undue claim that the red billiard ball causes the white to move as it hits it. A figure of speech, which – as we shall see – is adapted from our fondness for attributing motives to say “the girl next door”, as an act of sense-making.

Sure, the nail is driven into the plank as my hammer hits it. But it is not the hammer that drives the nail. Nor is it – as I have heard some say – gravity that makes apples fall. No, apples fall according to Newton’s second law of movement and the local rate of gravity the moment a gust of wind makes the apple sway so much that the weakened stem breaks. A potential released by circumstance! Likewise, the white billiard ball is set in motion, *not because* it is hit, *but when* it is hit. At the moment of impact, the “movement of energy” is transferred from one ball to the other.<sup>390</sup> Yet, this is not generally the case for all objects, ball-shaped or not. For example, balls of cloth do not behave that way. What happens depends on a) the angle of impact, b) the hardness of the balls, c) the surface underneath, etc.

The fact, that “heavy objects fall”, is a regularity, a most trustworthy rule on which to rely. Yet, there is a catch: Should an object not fall as I release it, it cannot be a heavy, but must be a light object! The very notion “to be heavy” means to fall, if released. Thus, nothing is explained. The statement just demonstrates the proper use of a certain string of words, – just as Saussure taught language works, see § 4.12. Yet giving one self away to the *Fallacy of rephrasing the obvious* is a well known feature of everyday life.

Natural Science needs rules for what to expect, not causes. Causes belong to the social domain, not the natural. Modern Science is not apt at bestowing powers on dead matter, but at searching for rules that may guide us to, say, a better living. “Cause” is an agency term and, in particular a term borrows from Jurisprudence, along such lines as: “Who caused this foul deed to happen? Find the culprit!”

Identification of causes is simply a linguistic mechanism transferred from the human to the material world, a metaphor, as if entities within “the realm of its” – i.e. things – may do something by themselves when set in motion. This is not how scientists perceive their world: “A physical law is a relationship between measurements that comes out the same every time”.<sup>391</sup>

And as we often may have a hard time with opus operandi, we better reject the term “cause” and opt for rules with all the conscious awareness of uncertainty associated with it. And not as an ontological claim, as much as a methodological!

Thus, we have once more to return to the Procrustes’ bed<sup>392</sup> for explaining: Explanations have to enable us to foresee what will happen when A is exposed to x at time T, under a given set of opus operandi, OP. Not just as interpretations to make sense of what did happen. Yet, even the ability to forecast, while a necessary condition, is not a sufficient condition for strong explanations, as we shall see next:

**Laws at higher level derive  
from the laws of lower-level building blocks.**  
Holland<sup>393</sup>

## 5.8 On the road from weak towards stronger explanations

### *Ability to forecast*

– *A necessary, yet not a sufficient, condition for explaining*

For thousands of years, the old Babylonians kept records of celestial events. They were thus able to forecast the eclipses of the sun without having the faintest clue of how this repetitive behaviour was possible. Likewise, we may successfully forecast rain by taking omens from the flight of swallows, without being able to elucidate whether they or something else has an impact on the weather to be, ref § 2.5.

Explaining in the weak sense is to give a rule for what to expect now. In the stronger sense we also have to know *why*.



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*Explaining as a multi-dimensional activity*

“Explanations” in ordinary life, though, are often synonymous with given reasons. As such they come in many forms, ranging from apparent, more narrow and local to highly integrated theories in the form of claims, from statements like:

- a) He did what his nature disposes him to do.
- b) This is what usually happens!
- c) The profile of an aeroplane wing is designed so that the air stream above the wings is led through a longer distance than the stream below. This creates a vacuum above the wing that sucks the plane upwards as it moves forwards.

All statements that purport to explain, yet

- a) is at least just in a glance tautological, while
- b) does state a rule yet with now more power than proverbs.  
Only the third
- c) sets us on the track towards a proper explanation as it refers to rules deduced from sets of already established theorems.

Yet people who know nothing about fluid mechanics may find it hard to accept that aeroplanes are sucked up in the air. If so, they may see my explanation as an interpretation. Yet aeroplane designers do work forward, ready to have their derived suggestions exposed to reality tests.<sup>394</sup> In short, the engineering approach is the epitome of *strong* explanatory power.

Strong explanations show us 1) *how* liquids, artefacts and persons behave under specified exposures as well as 2) what is at work “below the surface”. They contain references as to *why* a given rule is applicable. Whether we should believe any such modelling of the real depends on whether the claimant is able, 3) through constructive thinking, not just to *deduce* what we must expect will happen in any upcoming circumstance, but 4) is also able to create the means to *make it happen*.

So summing up: Rules applied on a lower level may be derived from upper-level generalized theories. Yet strong theoretically based explanations show how performance on a middle level is a result of a lower-level activity, – in this case the flow of air streams around the wing. The constructive approach explains performance on the phenomenological level by applying high-level theories to a level beneath the phenomenological.

Weak deductions will, at best, merely be grounded in temporary statistical evidence for occurrences of events. A *two-level* way of thinking: from the phenomenological level to rule and back. Thus deductions from an upper level and one down will show “only” something works, not why! Constructive thinking thus works across at least *three levels*. From an upper level, at first bypassing the phenomenological level, identifying the processes “beneath” it in order to forecast the phenomenological, as illustrated in Figure 5.8 #1.

*An example:* A strong explanatory approach to the stock market rather than sheer statistical analysis would, amongst other real-time factors, integrate:

- o Build-up of and draws from inventories of produced goods with
- o present orders for raw materials,
- o emerging international patterns of production and trade
- o current ecological, political , technological and financial developments around the world and, especially as well as with a
- o feel for the prevailing psychology of the market etc.



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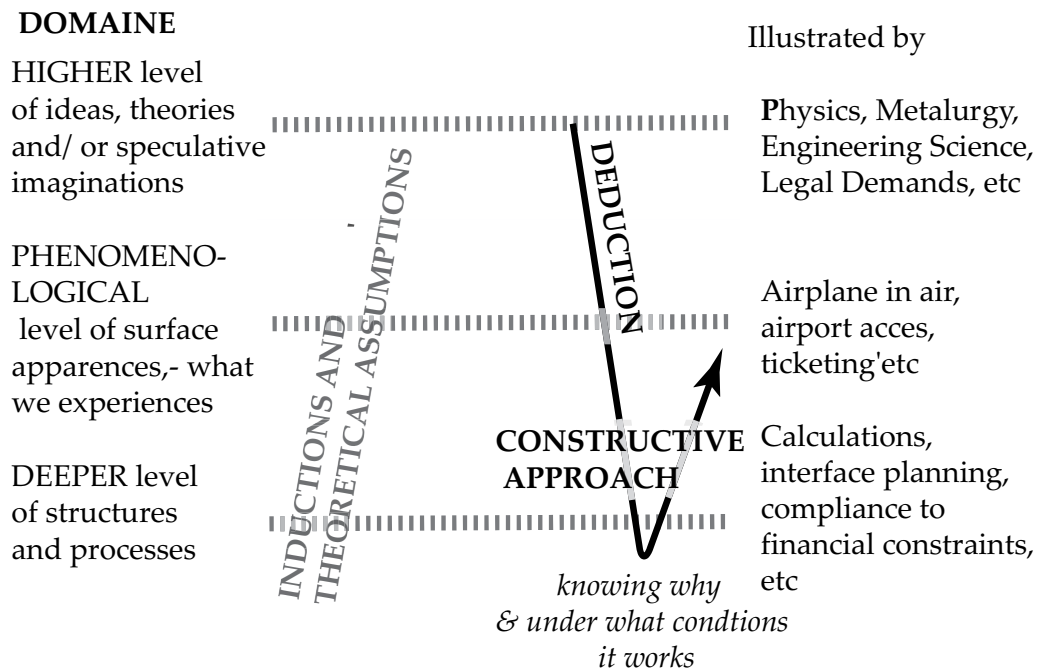
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**Figure 5.8 #1: FROM MERE ONE LEVEL DEDUCTION TOWARDS THE STRONGER IDEAL OF CONSTRUCTION**



The constructive approach derives the performance on the phenomenological level by applying high-level theories to a level beneath the phenomenological. Off course the upper level theories do not come out of the blue of course, but emerge out of repeated experiments, *induction* and theoretical modelling, ref § 1.5. And may thus be called statements we can rely on as "*justified true beliefs*".

*The challenge of multi-theoretical approaches to social research*

To span across several levels is often a greater challenge than most students of social research are able, or at least inclined, to take on. Many students seem just all too thrilled to finally – after having shopped around on the market of theories – to have hit on a “nice” one, which they intend to apply either a) as an interpretive effort of making sense out of already given evidence at hand or b) at best as a guide for fieldwork.

In the first case, the theory with all the prestige associated with its creator is accepted in advance as a given fact. So, what will be hunted for to be noticed as facts, is given by what the theory calls for! And thus the conclusion to aim for, too!

Such a deductive approach and use of an already given theory as an axiomatic base is generally seen as permissible, – not the least within the perspectivist ethos of! It has a further advantage: The researcher acting on faith need not – at least initially – concern him self with alternatives. Hopefully – in case b) she might during her investigations be ensnared by other aspects than what the theory points towards. These may wake her and at best, guide her to resort to analytical generalization to set things in order, ref § 2.12. Such a wake-up call is, of course, more likely to happen for case researchers than to sense-makers.

However, as long as most social theories are based simply on observations and facts tied together by co-variant analysis, wake up calls may be all too few! A sharp contrast to Science, as we saw! Nobel prizes within science are given only to those who have been able to detect the processes at work beneath relations, which until then may have just been indicated statistically.

Unfortunately, there are not many cases from social research in which, say, overall company performance is presented as an emergent outcome of minute personal as well as inter-personal activities. And even if such cases do exist, as for example *The Employee Owner*, which amongst most others – I have to admit – lack rigor.

*Differentiating characteristics  
between expretations, weak and strong explanations*

We have already demonstrated how explanation and interpretation are all too often muddled up. The sheer desire to erase the whims of interpretation is no guarantee of overcoming them. Quite the contrary! – as we shall illustrate later. However, I would first like to do a more formal exercise. Those who may be bored by this should skip the next five pages and go directly to the illustrations chapter.

As stated more than once, interpreters strive to be useful in terms of making sense and creating smaller or greater wholes of meaning out of what has happened. Explanations aim higher as they should furnish us with the rules in order to predict or even change what could happen, – be it by curing the physically unfit, by creating better workplaces, movies and/or cities etc. So, let us see whether we can identify some further differentiating characteristics of explanations. They consist of:

- Explanations are to be used as a means for reaching desired ends by means of
- A set of *inference rules* or – as they are sometimes called – “cause-and-effect” schemes for prescribing what new state of affairs to expect next given we do so and so.
- A set of rules for identifying *when and how* to apply the inference rules chosen, given whatever the initial state (opus operandi).
- Furthermore, explicatory inference rules often have a backlog of proven applicability.
- Consequently, the goal we have chosen to aim at has to be included in the initial state of affairs.

This should be sufficient to make the first outline of a more precise distinction between interpretations and weaker explanations.

Purpose of approach:

Whereas

- o Interpretations are geared to shape clusters of meaning by converting experiences, be they in the form of observations, arousals or other types of outcomes, into text, including speech, in order to make sense.
- o Explanations are used as rules of inference,

Thus, contrary to the belief of hardcore adherents of explanations, interpretations may – if not totally fictitious – be evidence-based, too.

Orientation in time:

Whereas

- o Interpretations are primarily backward-looking, making sense of what has happened by appealing to quotes, proverb-like statements, ad-hoc principles or even strong theories,
- o Explanations are forward-looking, concerned with what may happen or even constructively with making it happen.

The advertisement features a background image of a person in a red shirt running on a path during a sunrise or sunset. The GaitEye logo is in the top left, with the tagline 'Challenge the way we run'. The main text reads 'EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF FULL ENGAGEMENT...' followed by 'RUN FASTER. RUN LONGER.. RUN EASIER...'. A yellow call-to-action button says 'READ MORE & PRE-ORDER TODAY WWW.GAITEYE.COM' with a hand cursor icon.

Concern for opus operandi:

- o The operating interpretations of social researchers usually take the past as a given fact, as indeed it is. Thus, interpreters need not to care too much about stating opus operandi, leaving most of the circumstantial evidence unaccounted for.
- o Explanations have to strive for accuracy in terms of describing when, where and how we can expect an intervention  $x$  to lead to a desired outcome  $Y$ . Thus, opus operandi has to be stated to the best of one's abilities.

Concern for documentation:

- o Simply stating a necessary reason is often enough for the interpreter, while
- o Explanations have to build upon an established foundation for forecasting. Strong explanations, in particular, also call for an outline of the sufficient reasons for making something happen.

Reliability:

Future events may, of course, challenge the adequacy of interpretations and explanations alike:

Whereas

- o Interpretations only have to satisfy to be acceptable,
- o Explanations are to be used as a means of realizing certain ends. Thus they are much more likely to be tested for verification than interpretations. Thus, the prevalence of theory test designs for evaluating, say, proposed schemes for improved auditing, education, flirting etc.

From depicting how to explain why:

- o Weak explanations are rules for the observable related to induction from the same level to which it is later applied – the *how* approach.
- o Strong explanations are concerned with how events do happen or even may be made to happen, due to an underlying reality or construction of ours – the *why* approach.

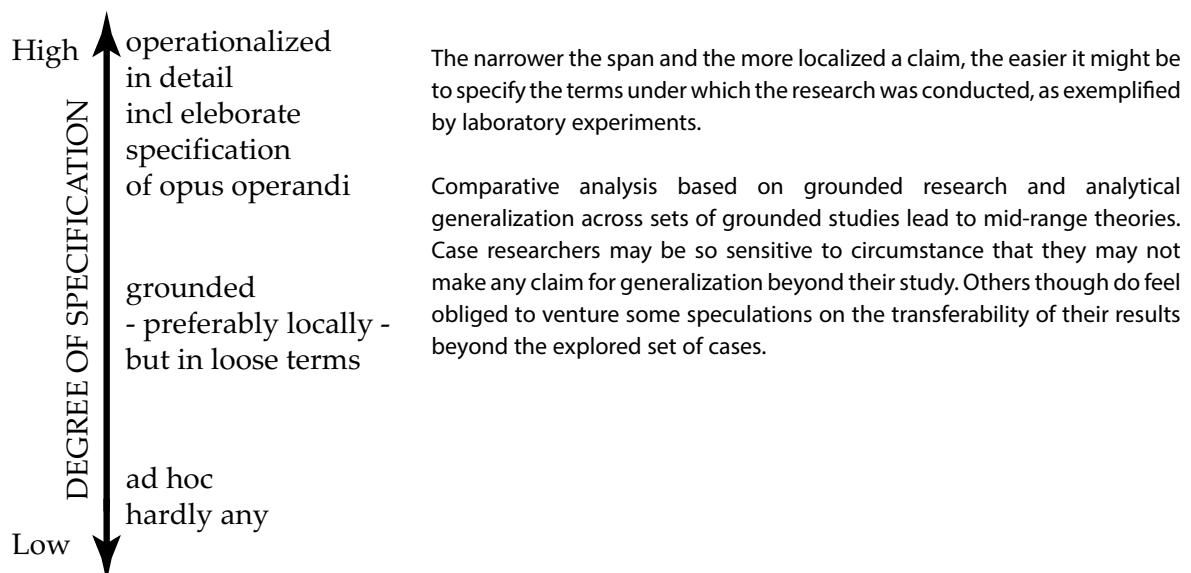
The call for full explanations:

Constructive thinking generally builds on a combination of several theories across domains. It takes more than knowledge of fluid mechanics to construct an aeroplane. Similarly, the case researcher must master several disciplines, including economics, production planning, accounting, marketing, social and individual psychology etc.

Figure 5.8 #2 : DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN ALLEGED, WEAK, STRONG AND FULL EXPLANATIONS

ITEM		IDEAL PURPOSE	OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS	CONCERN FOR OPUS OPERANDI
EXPRETATION				
	<i>Interpretations</i> dressed up as rules	Sense-making	Hardly specified	Ignored
EXPLANATIONS				
WEAK	<i>Phenomenological</i> rules induced from co-variances (amongst observational facts)	Prediction & control	Specified, yet constrained by field	Considered, but not sufficiently
STRONG	<i>Structural</i> rules for deducing performance from the inner workings of phenomena	Construction	Specified in integrated detail	Elaborate
FULL	Rules for identifying the <i>genesis</i> of structural and, thus, behavioural change	Sense of development	Awareness of decay, and emergent growth	Awareness of how rules may have to change

Figure 5.8 #3: EXPLANATORY RULES AND THUS THEORIES MIGHT BE MORE OR LESS SPECIFIED:



## ILLUSTRATIONS – FROM WEAKER TO STRONGER EXPLANATORY APPROACHES

Before introducing a sketch of constructive thinking – emergence in social research – let us take a look at a few notorious examples of explanatory approaches, – some faking it, others approaching it:

### 5.9 Behaviourism, statistical analysis and experiments

The explanatory approach as well as the attempt within social research to reject interpretation and believe one is committing one self to the idiom of Natural Science is no more pronounced than by the ideology of Behaviourism and the controlled experiment:

#### *Behaviourism*

Behaviourism became the foremost brainchild and practical illustration of Logical Positivism within Social Science. The idiom of Behaviourism consists of a negative and indeed forceful rejection of interpretation as well as a positive claim. First, the negative:

- o People are unreliable as informers about their own inner states and thus even less able to evaluate others. The attitudes they claim to nurture do not match their actions. So skip interpretations and personal reports, they are too unreliable for research.





Instead “we” should

- o View behaviour in terms of chains of stimulations and responses and, thus,
- o Stick to what is tangible: observational facts. Set up experiments. Expose people to a measurable impact and measure how they react.

Or, as the founder of Behaviourism, Watson, triumphantly claimed: “As newcomers to the field, we either “had to give up psychology (as an interpretative enterprise) or make it into a Natural Science”... Thus, we have to “sweep aside all medieval conception...all subjective terms, like perception, image, desire, purpose and even thinking and emotion as they were subjectively defined.”<sup>395</sup>

Psychological research should be executed along the lines of, say, a chemical experiment: State the initial condition of an organism; expose it to a stimulus, S; observe the resulting state, R. Example: Expose the palm of a relaxed person to an electrical impact, S, and observe, R, how fast his hand is withdrawn.<sup>396</sup> This, in it self, may be excellent within a proper setting. The challenge is whether and how you interpret what happens:

Observation seems to be neutral. And Watson, for one, believes him self to master the art of non-judgemental observance. To enlighten the reader –who wants to know how this is achieved – he furnishes us with the following account of a one year old girl:

“The infant is sitting up in her bathtub and in reaching for the soap accidentally touched the external openings of her vagina with her finger. The search for the soap stopped, stroking of the vagina began and a smile overspread the face.”<sup>397</sup>

The example allegedly appears as an objective, bias-free report of a child’s doings and her reactions. Yet, no one is necessarily “objective” just by declamation. In fact, a lot of interpretation is read into this observation. The child is seen *reaching* out for the soap. That is an interpretation of intent! Furthermore, the stroking of the vagina is seen as *accidental*. Without having a minute account of the child’s prehistory, how can we know whether the actual move is accidental? Could she not have fondled her self before?

The example shows purely and simply how difficult it is, if not impossible, to describe behaviour without attributing motives to our doings.

Never the less Behaviourism had its virtues too, as it moved behind the It-conception of man towards the Rat-Model! Thus it did at times show respect for the essential dimension of the social: That present behaviour is affected by the framework set by previous stimuli, – the trail of history!

Yet it found it self at loss to go further due to its initial rejection of mans ability to know of him self. Yes, there may be discrepancies between what we say and believe we do and what we actually do. And if noticed by others, it may indeed become a problem for some. – As shown by a lot of testimonies from people – including Christians – who struggle with this very issue! While others, – like managers as shown by Adizes, ref § 4.9 – may not always be aware that they do not act as they preach.

But that does not mean that declared intentions as well as reports of self-observation never fit with the overt behavior notified by others. Thus the initial fundamental negative claim of Behaviorism is an exaggeration. And certainly Watson him self did not belie what he believed him self able to do, as he stated: Man is shaped by environment and can thus be led. “Give me a dozen healthy infants and my own specified world to bring them up in. And I’ll guarantee to take any at random and train him to become any specialist I might select, doctor, lawyer, artist, thief...” he boasted<sup>398</sup>.

However, as agency was denied, Behaviourism acquired a bad name within social research as the usefulness of the SR model was questioned. So, it may be worth recalling that Behaviourism did enlighten our grasp for learning in general and organizational training in particular: Do not punish people for doing what you do not want them to do. Threats only lead to people trying to avoid being caught. It is far better to reward them for reaching out towards the goals you want them to pursue.

Behaviorism is founded on a simplification of man or a partial “truth”. Certainly, as referred to above “we” may pay lip-service to ideals we do not live by. However, that does not mean, that it is not worth to listen to people. Quite the opposite! Had Watson aimed for a fuller insight, he could have taken this crucial fact as a wake up call. It is indeed fascinating that what we say about our selves does not necessarily match what we do. So we better not rely on observation as the only fact-generating strategy. If we listen well, we may even learn how to create situations in which people will be more willing to look at themselves with greater honesty.

By virtue of its initial declamatory refusal to go beneath the skin and get in touch with people emotionally, Behaviourism excluded it self from reaching out towards fuller more integrated explanations. This was to change after WWII by the advent of Cybernetics, but that is another story<sup>399</sup>.

#### *Experiments – For better or worse?*

Behaviouristic research designs generally follow the outline of the classical laboratory experiment with people who do not know each other a forehand, as first suggested by Stuart Mill, ref § 5.3. Yet in terms of validity, such experiments are subject to a serious problem:

- *Ecological*<sup>400</sup> *validity*, the question of whether inferences drawn from an experimental situation may be applicable to life outside the laboratory. Here people who work in groups often do know each other a forehand. And in case of problem solving groups often for several years.
  - o Thus, opus operand becomes a central issue in case of transferring for any outcome of a classical social experiment.

However, the classical experiment has a simple beauty of its own. So even case studies are the method to choose when the environment is an integrated part of the reality studied, the ethos of the classical experiment may still inspire organizational studies of change in accordance with the history-matter-ethos. Case researchers may and certainly should i) take note of and compare performance before and after the occurrence of an event, – be it unforeseen or an intervention – and/or ii) compare the performance within one company – which has been subject to an intervention, for example introduction of a new administrative system – with otherwise similar companies which have not.

Given the effects of the market and the impact of new technologies, it is always uncertain whether any factor, such as employee ownership, can in it self explain differences in performance. Yet, provided the links between events leading to the change can be documented and confirmed by the participants, the case study is much more illustrative of what can really happen than any experiment carried out in the artificial environment of a laboratory. Furthermore, participants in the field may even help the researcher identify dimensions and links between events that he may not have envisioned. Thus, we are back to the question of the challenge of getting a good feel for dimensions, which “we” may best become aware through fieldwork.

**Do not look at the waves but for the current.  
Even a statistician may tell a truth, sometimes.**




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*Surveys and statistical analysis*

Non-involvement is one of the traditional calls for “objectivity” and seemingly fit for statistical surveys. Just relate the number and sizes into combines of numbers! But for social research in general, and for explanatory studies in particular, statistical analysis poses a great challenge. Let us suppose that the behaviour of a group of persons or institutions,  $B_Y$  according to circumstance  $C_T$  is believed to be presented as the outcome of a state of affairs by a string of variables  $X_n$ , thus:

- $B_Y = F(X_1, \dots, X_n, C_T) + \varepsilon,$

where the  $X$ s may account for age, sex, breed, educational background, alleged behavioural traits etc., while  $\varepsilon$  is the factor of uncertainty that should absorb factors which is not included.

Now statistical analysis may show the weight,  $a, b, c \dots w$ , with which the different variables – as measured – contribute to a given performance. Say whether and how the size of the “offspring” may relate to the diameter of the “mother pea” and the conditions of growth, – which was the initial experiment that led to the invention of regression analysis.<sup>401</sup> Or closer to home, how “good management” is related to an observed set of defined psychological traits of managers. If so, the function  $F$ , above, can be expressed in the linear formula as below, either directly or in a converted form:

- $B_Y = aX_1 + b X_2 + \dots w X_n + \varepsilon,$

This is, in it self, certainly nice to know. But please note such a sentence – like the “Oedipus went mad.” string – explains nothing, ref §5.4 page 203. The equation above – and let us certainly express our respect for that – shows us only the weight with which the variables chosen under a given set of circumstances have contributed to  $B_Y$  as an outcome. The analysis does not delineate why.

Experiments with rats may show us how fast different rats – with each their genesis – “learn” to find their way through a maze to the food basket. And we may very well pick the best of either sex and let them breed as well as with the most clumsy and then test the different groups of offspring. The outcome may very well show that “intelligence” is inherited from the “mother”. But still, such an analysis cannot tell us anything about why it is so, even if it is. However, it may indicate the level of certainty with which we can substantiate such a claim, which certainly could be of some further value if we allow ourselves to transfer the outcome to other mammals, including humans!

But the worst and most tragic aspect of the prevailing dominance of statistical analysis within the social domain is that entities – supposedly organized as first and second-order systems – cannot be depicted by lineary models:

Say that the temperature,  $T$ , in room,  $R$ , apparently remains constant over time,  $T_0-T_T$  just as some people,  $P_N$ , may seem to “always act alike” “ $B_D$ ”. Any such conclusion of partial “universality” would, even if it may be partially “true”, nevertheless belie a potentially far more interesting fact: that we may be dealing with a first-order cybernetic system: Yes, the temperature is constant. Not because it is just so, but because a thermostat is set to maintain a desired level of indoor comfort. Thus, it opens the valve to let in hot water when the room starts to cool down.

Likewise: A person who never seems to be engulfed by aggressiveness may, in fact, not be calm by inclination, but just the opposite. He may, of necessity, have learned to cope with his inner state in the face of a variety of different challenges!

Thus, if any such behaviour is subjected to statistical analysis, the resulting conclusion will be a betrayal of reality, which it so often is, when and if we rely solely on superficial observation.

*Taking a more formal look at the controlled experiment*

Finally, let us take a more formal look at the classical or controlled experiment:

Say behaviour,  $B$ , of a person is seen as a consequence of an intervention or treatment,  $Tr$ , the characteristics of the person,  $P(X_n)$ , prevailing sociological Circumstances,  $C_p$ , and that  $B$  can be calculated according to a formula,  $F$ :

$$R_p(B_{Tr}) = F(Tr, P(aX_1 + b X_2 + \dots w X_n), \text{ given } C_T) + \epsilon_0, \text{ where } \epsilon \text{ is an un-certainty variable}$$

When making a controlled experiment in the lab,  $C_T$  will be fixed as  $C$ , while  $P$  may vary across the sample of subjects involved. Thus – as life outside the lab is sheltered off – we are likely to assume

$$R_p(B_{Tr}) = F(Tr, P_N(aX_1 + b X_2 + \dots w X_n) + \epsilon_1$$

But now suppose we are dealing with agents. If so,  $R_p(B_{Tr})$  will not just be the result of the treatment, but of  $Tr$  given the state,  $B_T-\Delta_T$ , the organism was in before the treatment. Any foreshortening of circumstance is bound to lead to correlations that, at best, may only stick for a while. Indeed, the essential characteristic of a weak explanation! Thus, it is worth recalling that a driving virtue of Behaviourism is to illustrate what a trajectory of past experiences may mean to living entities.

This weakness of statistical analysis is all too often – as illustrated above – bypassed by an implicit assumption of *universality*. – A feature only achievable by means of shameless simplification and trust in the virtue of ignoring opus operandi at large. The universality claim is off course also the *raison d'être* for so-called intelligence tests. Sure they are useful, but how useful is debatable, not least considering that the earliest test set-ups by command from the US congress had to be revised in order to equalize the averages for men and women. The first test consisted mainly of logico-mathematical tasks, where women in general were not as good as men, which was perceived as undemocratic. Thus questions related to verbal abilities where women in general outperform men, were added. Since then numerous other forms of intelligence have been recognized which belies the assumed objectivity of the first suggested.

Yet under the assumption of universality of man, the formula is reduced to

$$R(B_{Tr}) = F(Tr) + \varepsilon_2$$

For every one of these steps of simplification,  $\varepsilon$ , must be expected to increase and thus  $\varepsilon_2 > \varepsilon_1 > \varepsilon_0$ .

The assumption of universality is a clear violation of the positivist idiom as outlined by Durkheim with his emphasis on how we need to be aware of historical conditions. Any significant outcome of a statistical analysis must thus be seen as a pointer, a first sign of what may be worth taking a closer look at. And even more to see if it holds true regardless of, say, different cultural backgrounds.<sup>402</sup>



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Thus, we – as social researchers – should treat “the uncertainty factor” less lightly. It could at times very well “be en an excuse for second-rate experimentation and a potential source of false claims”.<sup>403</sup>

*In what sense*

*can statistical “data” be said to refer to a reality, if opus operandi is ignored?*

Statisticians realize that circumstantial contingencies matter. Yet, by appealing to the “law of the great numbers”, they make a statistical virtue out of ignoring it. If you take a lot of cases into account, the array of possible more personal contingencies should neutralize each other and just pop up as deviations around a mean. But if opus operandi remains uncovered, we are left with the disturbing fact that statistical outcomes cannot be applied to concrete cases.

The use of statistics with its deliberate – if not outright ideological – “will to ignore” opus operandi is amazing as it undermines our possibility of forecasting the outcome of any concrete incident. The central criteria for explanation! Thus statistical analysis of human behavior may easily become a sort of corrupt induction, ref the first and sixth lesson of truth, as well as to § 0 and § 2.14.

Please recall the great Durkheim’s notion of “social fact”: At any given time “the statistically identified suicide rate” exemplifies a social fact, not the circumstances that make people kill themselves.<sup>404</sup> In this way, “fact” as data becomes a chimera, something claimed to be generally true for a time. Yet, a closer look reveals that the claim for generality is constructed on a base devoid of concreteness. Thus, the Durkheims idea that the causes of social facts are always to be found in preceding causes becomes obscure.

Statistical output-“data” do exist, but only by proxy, as does any other form of aggregated measurement.

Thus however a statement may be *statistically true*, it may very well be *false* for a chosen individual case. It is a question of level as referred to in § 2.14, page 98. What may be the case at an upper generalized level may not be so at the concrete (lower) level. Negative social heritage – that the children of poor, hardly educated parents will become so too – is a significant social fact. But there are those who break the pattern, and they are certainly far too interesting to be ignored by the law of big numbers!

*Confidence of output has to build on estimates of accuracy of input*

Some social researchers like to define themselves by claiming that they use the same methodologies and statistical approaches as the Natural Sciences. Yet, reliance on statistics is, as already pointed out, not at all the upper most idiom for Science. Yet there is at least one area of Science where statistics is heavily used:

- establishing the trustworthiness of measurements is of prime importance for Engineering and Physics:

As the Engineering Sciences are geared towards making things happen, the trustworthiness of, how rules are applied, is essential. This means that every measurement used as an input data is to be presented with an indication of the range for its reliability. Thus, statistics is used not as an output but as an input for evaluating the degree to which the result can be trusted.

Let us recall how Tycho Brahe made several – 10, I believe – measurements for each sighting of a celestial body. The accuracy thus achieved “forced” Kepler to opt for ellipsoid planet orbits rather the circular, he had preferred for ideological reasons. For Social Science, it is a curious fact that not even economic scientists try to establish the accuracy of the “data” on which they rely. With out concern for the accuracy of input, we are of course prevented from evaluating the trustworthiness of statistical results, too.

As with any other kind of research based upon measurements, statisticians ought to establish confidence measurements of their input “data”, just like criticism of sources is an essential base for History. And if they do not, we should wonder why.

*Statistical studies – A short cut*

*when you know you do not know, but want to test a notion*

Certain statistical surveys may be used to test ideas as a way of “fighting bias” by letting the numbers speak. They may give “reality” a “word” – a chance to make us aware of how insufficient our grasp of it might be. This may subsequently put us on the trail of case studies in order to identify the potential dimensions we have neglected to include.

Yet we have to remember always that any correlation of “data” is nothing but a correlation. It shows us an outcome; it cannot explain anything. Any co-variance between clusters of “data” thus has to be interpreted in order to make some sense of it. Numbers alone cannot do it!

## 5.10 Towards stronger explanations, – from linear to more complex rules

I am sure you, my dear reader, will look with sympathy at an approach for moving from i) weak and, in particular, linear “explanations” – or as we should say temporarily identified relations – to ii) explanatory systems, which attempt to link what we measure with the genesis of the phenomena studied in order to foresee its potential futures. However, I am also sure that you may easily be overwhelmed and feel an ache in your stomach at the thought of the sheer magnitude of such a task.

Thus, it is a challenge that is seldom met, if at all possible. But it is a task, which social researchers – with a regard for relevance – have to strive towards fulfilling. If not, how can we give sound advice to members of organisations as well as politicians?

*Towards stronger explanations – The challenge to be confronted*

As the social domain is conditioned by the historical, we must, in line with Durkheim, see both the present and the potential future as extensions of the past. This will include awareness, not just of change in terms of growth and decay, but of structural change. One may doubt whether this is possible to trace. Even if we in time did identify the factors that might initiate a potential for change, the outcome of, say a revolution or just a strategic business plan may still be difficult to foresee. Nor may we know to which degree those who initiate a change are driven by publicly expressed goals or hidden agendas.

### *Cybernetics and General Systems Theory*

As already stated, Behaviourists were not ready to let themselves be fooled by the reasons people might present as their intended goals, like those committed to laddering are.

The idea of goal-driven behaviour thus received a lot of bad press within the harder Social Sciences. Nor could statistical analysis itself identify the presence of goal-driven entities. This – as already hinted at – all changed with the breakthrough of Cybernetics, which by analogue to feedback-driven machinery paved the way for reintroducing purpose in research of human behaviour. Thus, a door was opened for the agency approach, and with the computer more intricate modelling of phenomena in the social domain.


As an example of the latter, J.W. Forrester's simulation technique, as depicted in his *Industrial Dynamics*, ref Figure 2.3 #1, which was a revelation to me as a student.<sup>405</sup> With sets of interlocking discrete differential equations, I could model the effects of change occurring in one place across all sections of a manufacturing company.

His modelling technique was widely accepted and transferred to other areas, as illustrated below.


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*Modelling the Tsembaga culture*

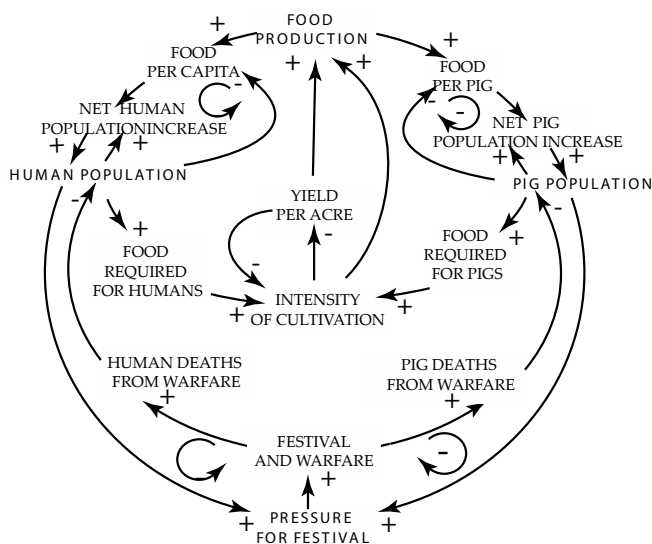
The example takes as its point of departure a classical tension within the social: The puzzle of whether man's beliefs and social life are shaped by biology, culture or Gods. For one, *Feuerbach* expressed the materialist ethos most eloquently with his "Der Mensch ist, was er isst" (Man is what he eats).<sup>406</sup> Man is a product of his material circumstances as his pupil Marx too taught.

This inspired *Roy A. Rappaport* to search for a functionalist relation between the religious rituals of the Tsembaga tribe in New Guinea and their ecological conditions.<sup>407</sup> Or, as he put it, rituals may not just relate to the internal constitution of a given society on its own terms as a culture, but even more importantly to external realities, as Comte too had envisioned, ref § 5.3.

The Tsembaga grew yams and sweet potatoes and used the pigs for uprooting and softening the soil and thus preparing the ground for planting. Thus there was a taboo against slaughtering them. But there as a problem, pigs and man shared the same food, and the area could either nourish around 400 people and very few pigs or far less people should the herd of pigs become too big. When this eventually happened, a *Kaiko* was introduced, a feast of warfare with neighbouring tribes, dances, mass slaughter of pigs, reconciliation, encounters with spirits, eating and mating games.<sup>408</sup>

Based on estimated values for input and output of food, given the number of people, pigs and the land cultivated, two students of J. W. Forrester developed a dynamic model for the interrelations between man and pigs, see Figure 5.10 #1 TSEMBAG 1.<sup>409</sup>

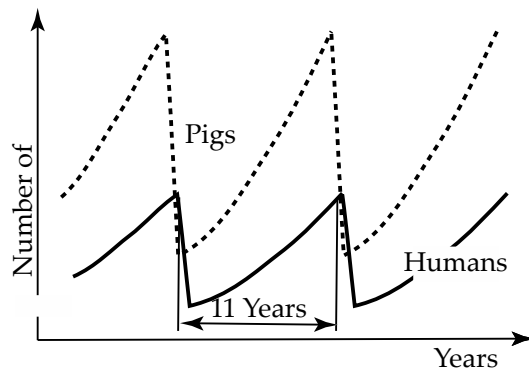
**Figure 5.10 #1: THE INTERNAL ECOLOGICAL FACTORS AT WORK WITHIN THE TSEMBAGA SYSTEM**



The model depicts the interrelations between the different ecological parts of the Tsembaga-pig system. How the growth of the "human population" and/or the "pig population" triggers an increased need for "intensity of cultivation", which in turn may increase "food production", although within certain limits as "yield per acre" consequently will fall. Thus, in the end, the "pressure" for a Kaido mounts and should be expected to be released in fixed intervals, as illustrated by the next figure 6.3 #2.

With the proper ecological values for the variables introduced, a computer produces the following simulated model of growth and decline of both Tsembaga populations, see Figure 5.10 #2.

**Figure 5.10 #2: WHEN TO EXPECT THE EMERGENCE OF THE KAIDO FESTIVAL**



The model depicts that – if the people are to survive – a Kaido will be needed approximately every 11th year, which in fact corresponded nicely with the actual figures. The model thus depicts how the pig festival and the subsequent warfare may emerge as something, – which a system analysts may call an “automatic control device”.

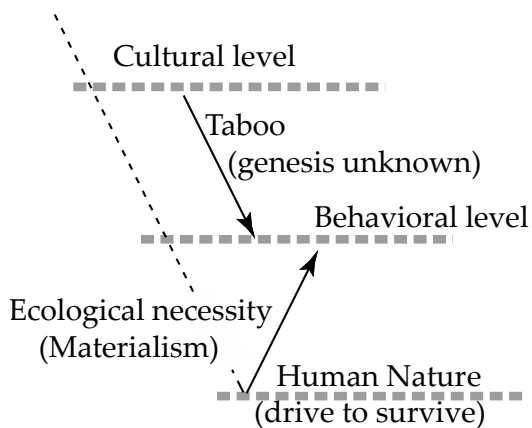
Yet for the people involved, the trigger of a Kaido is loaded with what outsiders would call religious meaning, including spiritual interventions.<sup>410</sup>

Obviously the model as here presented spans over three levels, ref Figure 5.10 #3:

- a) of ecological necessity – provided by the geography,
- b) a cultural, – taken as a given fact as we are not informed when and how the custom of tabooing a more modest on going slaughter came about in the first place, thus foregoing the second criteria for a full explanation, according to Durkheim: The genesis of function.
- c) By adding an implicit third level – the assumption of a drive for survival – this materialist analysis offer a seemingly strong explanation for the occurrence of the Kaido, which the Tsembaga themselves – according to the author – are unaware of – just as we may not be aware of the drives behind our doings! This though is a pattern a structural anthropologist may identify at work beneath the apparent modes of life for members of countless other traditional societies.

In contrast, reference to survival for the modern man – who have heard about Darwin – would be a ready at hand interpretation. Yet we too off course live by codes of life, we from day to day – like concepts shaped by language – do not attempt to identify, nor to explore. To do so one has to step outside as case researchers might in order to make the implicit, explicit.

Figure 5.10 #3: LEVELS INCLUDED IN THE TSEMBAGA MODEL



The Model explicates a tension between Nature, – mans drive however unconscious for survival – and culture, – a taboo.

The model is not complete by any means, as the genesis for the taboo are lost just as other religious forms associated with Kaido is are ignored

Nor does the model include the cult and rituals led them into the preparation for breaking the taboo. Nor is it rich enough to include, the potential threat posed by the arrival of the “white men” who with their bigot Christian outlook – by banning the warfare and sexual excitement associated with the Kaido – destroyed the culture. Thus, the functionalist model had only of temporary value. Just like a thermostat cannot close an open window through which cold air is streaming into the room!

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## Towards a definition of explanation in the strong sense

### 5.11 An extension of the Social Positivism of Durkheim

In its simplest form, explanation may be *defined as rules of inference for predicting the occurrence of concrete events given an outlay of opus operandi*. So, as circumstances do change, we have to expand our repertoire of explaining beyond the sheer lust for expretation of what did happen.

Let us repeat the premises.

- Explanation is associated with detection and subsequent formulating laws for behaviour or at least law-like behaviour.
- But it is not enough to “demonstrate” that Y, given a rule R forecast the outcome of  $f(aX_1, bX_2, \dots, wX_n)$ . Yet from an explanatory perspective certainly it is not enough to have found a set of probable, or necessary antecedent stimuli. Although this will do quite well for an interpretation, explainers also have to
  - o Establish what stimuli X – given opus operandi – are sufficient for Y to happen.
- Next we have to explore whether Y could also appear due to other stimuli  $(z_1, z_2, \dots, z_n)$ , and thus find whatever will make the difference, say by analytical generalization.
  - o This might indeed be difficult. For instance, disappointment may lead to anger, yet anger may be due to other antecedent arousals as well.
  - o So what “we” at least have to do is to ensure that we do know how to identify Y and X independently of each other.

Thirdly, we should always remember the positivist ethos of identifying how the social is conditioned and thus not the least revere the historical dimension. So to explain something in the strong sense within the social domain, we further have to identify

- The *structure* of
  - o what we look at and
  - o how it came to be (genesis), as well as we must have
- Rules that enable us to deduce behaviour from the structure at hand and thus describe (or explain as some will say) how it functions.
  - o Please notice: This definition is as relevant for social as it is for biological phenomena.

In short, explanations should not only allow us to predict how, according to circumstance, a person or an organization will move from “what” to “what”, but why and how. In consequence, *evolution* stands as the idiom for strong explanations<sup>411</sup>: Predicting when and how a given structure will change if exposed to a given set of environmental impacts.<sup>412</sup>

One question, though which we should not forgo is: Are we able to present full explicit explanations for events within the social domain. And the answer is – as we shall see next – not assuring:

*Theories are generally under-determined*

As we have already mentioned above refer to in Figure 2.4 #1.1, theories may be shaped on the basis of “data” which could purport several theories. In addition, as expressed by the Duhem-Quine thesis: “Theories are a corporate body<sup>413</sup> of assumptions, claims and measuring recepies, the reach of which we can hardly present in isolation. Thus any presentation of a specific theory will always be *under-determined*. There is always more than one theory consistent with a given cluster of evidence.

If this is a surprise, a counter example may be called for. Dreams are often over-determined, says Freud.<sup>414</sup> A dream is loaded with several elements, all supporting each other and thus pointing in the same direction. This though may only be true for interpreters who – after having struggled through trail and error – have “learned” to take their own implicit sense-making abilities for granted.

However scientific and social theories in particular, are – as said – under-determined. First, opus operandi are hard to state with sufficient clarity. Secondly more is hidden in support of a given theory than can be expressed, including back-up theories, foundations for measurement technologies etc. For an example please refer to our discussion of the hitting of billiard balls, § 5.17. So, statistical analysis must, implicitly and by definition, ref. § 5.9, always be under-determined, and so will snapshot- and even longitudinal case studies be.

Let us look at what this entails by means of a more structured example than our initial, ref § 1.2.

Let us say that “I” – after due research in a number of theoretically sampled companies – dare to state:

- o Claim 1: Conversion to employee ownership will initiate a trail of employee participation initiatives, as documented by the inner developments of Company  $C_1, C_2, \dots, C_N$  during period  $P_1, P_2, \dots, P_N$   
While you confront me with:
- o An observation A: One or several employee ownership companies did not introduce any particular participation initiatives from year  $Y_0$  to  $Y_N$

Thus challenged, “I” must – out of respect for the paradigm of analytical generalization, ref § 2.12, try to be more precise: Given your observation A, “I” may make the following theoretical amendments:

Given employee ownership companies without any particular participation initiatives may be found, I will still stick to Claim 1, but admit there might be exceptions:

- o Claim 1.2: Be it due to management having not yet seen how they could benefit from “joining hands with the employees” and relaxing their ideas about the need of management control, or
- o Claim 1.3: – due to the fact that the union does not want to give up its traditional role as being the party that speaks on behalf of the workers and thus does not want to hand over control to the employees, or
- o Claim 1.4: Both management and union may agree that they know best and thus they better come to terms with each other rather than having the employees running around fighting for their own half-baked ideas.

I may even have some evidence to support either claim, as well as a fifth:

- o Claim 1.5: Employees are not really interested,
  - o Claim 1.5.1: nor may they be sufficiently equipped for decision-making.

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In addition, “I” may have some mixed pros-and-cons, evidence-based claims:

- o Claim 1.2.2: Some managers may indeed try to stick to their old paradigm of keeping control as may some union leaders, while other managers may engage small groups of employees in trouble-shooting sessions without making much fuss about it, neither
  - o 1.2.2.1: telling the CEO, nor
  - o 1.2.2.2 the union about it.

Yet I will still stick to the initial claim although rephrase it:

- o Claim 2: In due time, activism will grow to become an integrated part of an ownership culture, – although I now have to make some reservations concerning the type of business, educational level of employees and the market served by the company.

Partial, contradictory evidence may either lead us to i) let our initial claim go or ii) send us on *an endless trail of “rescue missions”*, ref § 1.3, first identifying and next eliminating possibilities not contained in the original more far-reaching and generalized Claim 1.

Now you might say that the original Claim 1 should had specified, that it can only be expected to be valid on the conditions set by the supplementary claims listed above. True! And this is certainly attempted in the published text.<sup>415</sup>

But I am sure the present demonstration can also be taken to illustrate that

- a) The list of potential partial contra-evidence to a given claim may be endless and thus the whole point of stating what can generally be expected to be true will never be within our reach. But instead of giving up, I believe we should try
- b) to:
  - o be as precise as possible and
  - o careful not to make too sweeping statements and
  - o aware of the circumstances under which the original claim was formulated.

In short, try to honour the “who, when-where-how” and the “in-which-perspective” dimensions!

With these not very assuring statements, let us proceed and explore whether it is indeed possible, in practice, to honour the quest for stronger explanations within social research:

*Functionalism and Structuralism reconsidered*

Classical Positivism calls for functionalist descriptions of institutions as they originate, change goals, grow or wither away as the society around them changes. A mid-level model! Within such a framework, the feelings of selected groups of people involved will be laid bare as a generalized consequence.

Yet – according to the realist ethos, we have to acknowledge the relevance of structuralist thinking and acknowledge that with out us there would not be any social realities. We matter. “We” – as agents – are the makers and carriers of institutions.

So while functionalist “explanations” do try to unravel rules for predicting how, e.g., companies may change as their environment changes, they do not leave room for exploring how this is possible. The level of analysis remains at mid-level. Thus Functionalism and Structuralism in general, have the appearance of being weaker explanatory systems.

And that is exactly their value. They may make some implicit potential patterns explicit and thus help to sense or at least give us some ideas about what societal tendencies may be at work around, within as well as through us.

This finally brings us to a far more serious challenge to even the best practices of functionalist interpretations:

*“We can certainly make guesses and retort to intuition!  
But what we cannot do is to deduce structure from behaviour”.*

Sure, one may imagine a structure that can, in theory, release an identified trail of behaviours. Yet what occurs may have many other antecedents depending on circumstance.

To explain and thus predict long-term structural change — e.g. within the IT industry – is complicated enough. But to predict how a certain company may react to the enactment of stricter regulations within the EU may be even harder. The outcome will depend not only on the position of the company within the market and its financial strength, but on how this is perceived by members of the board. For an illustrative case, see *Robert Miles and Kim Cameron’s* study of how differently the six major US tobacco companies coped with the tougher US laws for their market operations.<sup>416</sup>

Interpretation is, thus, just pseudo-explanatory in the sense that it derives the emergence of events from an inferred structure. When the result is known, anything can be “explained”, be it by referring to “real” or possibly imaginary causes through rhetorical juggling.

In contrast, explanatory models for, say, company and future political performance have to build on both structural insights and knowledge, or at least some trajectory of evidence of how key players might react to challenges, including a sense for when and how they might be replaced by others. An ideal that might seem too cumbersome to honour! Sure, that is why it is an ideal!

This leads us on to the upcoming section on Emergence, where we will explore whether it may be possible to sketc.h an outline for such a programme. But in order to do so, we first need to resume our presentation of some of the methodological demands to ensure the validity of explanatory studies.

## EXPLANATORY STUDIES AND THEIR VALIDITY

### 5.12 Arguments in favour of explanatory designs

#### *Theory test design*

Reductions, § 2.4, ref page 47-8, are backward-looking schemes by which we try to outline a reasonable background or even a set of alleged causes for “why” something appears or changes as it seemingly does. Explanations are forward-looking schemes by which we – given the prevailing circumstances – try to identify what is going to happen if we do such and such. Thus, interpretation is a challenge to make what we know fit, while explanation challenges us to test whether what we believe we know can be trusted.



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While interpreters are likely to opt for a favoured reductionist approach in the simplifying mode, strong explanations should try to identify what might be expected when several lower-level interactive flows merge.

Unfortunately, arriving at strong social theories is more an ideal than an established art. Generally we are only able to establish weak theories based on a mere phenomenological basis, educated guesses or just by conjectures. Realizing this, “theories” must be seen as an initial interpretative idea, which is then better put to the test in different well defined settings.

Yet, identified rules may always be subject to change as people may simply alter their performance as a counteractive protest to the sheer postulate that their behaviour seems to be rule-driven. However, this may, in some instances, be foreseen too; if so, then we are operating with a dynamic model<sup>417</sup>.

#### *The challenge of bounded insight*

One might even debate whether explanation is possible at all within social research, because 1) we cannot believe to have a sufficient overview of what is going on, certainly not from outside, nor even inside ourselves, If so, we have to question whether Social Science in principle is more than a phantom. Perhaps. We shall later return to this calamity.

For now, let us simply say that we cannot do without rules in practice. Farming, parenting etc. would not be possible if we could not identify recurring patterns of change and stability, as all ready the Greeks taught. Yet the weaker they are, the more we should expect them to be like proverbs.

Yet ideas may be hard to give up, not the least when they however scantily can be backed up by evidence. And certainly if a social rule works for us, what a temptation to take this as confirmation of what we do know! Yet, success may have been due to circumstances that remain partially hidden for us. And certainly many of the interpretative schemes with which we have dealt in the previous sections of the present essay may by some of their proponents be seen as explanatory.

Explanation, thus, has to be handled with a care unknown to sense-making, which mainly serves to bestow the speaker with a feeling of being knowledgeable. Not the least because explanatory schemes will not only contain rules for what to expect, but links to other theories! So what is tested is never – as stated by Duhem – not merely a proposition, but an agenda of supporting theories, including means for measuring the key components of the theory under scrutiny.<sup>418</sup>

Thus, the ideal of taking Science as the ideal for social research should not – as it all too often has been the case – be seen as a call for simplification of terms and methods, nor for objectification of man. Scientists and social researchers may both claim whatever they sense could be true. But with a difference!

Scientists – committed as they are to the Reality principle – have to subject their ideas to experiments whereby they run the risk of being “undercut” by nature. Social researchers though are – as Comte and Durkheim remarked – far more likely to get away with their particular views on the meaning of life, the inner workings of society, nature of man etc. To get along is thus partly a question of whom you might convince.

So, whereas natural scientists cultivate an idea of progress, social researchers are far more likely to keep on studying and discuss the old masters, including Aristotle, the Sceptics, Germanic Philosophers of the late nineteenth century as well as the great American psychologists of the early twentieth.

The wide and open arena of social perspectives may tempt us to believe we have to choose amongst them. So students may be guided, if not outright forced to take a given set of theoretical approaches for granted in order to, say, pass exams.<sup>419</sup> Thus, intensive fieldwork, based on respect for informant feedback is – if not the only – then at least a compelling antidote that could guide us unobtrusively to challenge our own thinking habits and lead us to sense what ought to be exposed to the structured discipline of reality testing.

In this light, the problem with interpretations is the inherent general evasion of their advocates set up experiments to check the range of trustworthiness for their schemes. Off course minute level interpretation is an integrated part of every day life, and best on mid-level some may be most fruitful in the sense of throwing light into a corner of human life, yet their adherents usually over-expand the range and depth of their convictions. The lesson from Science is thus a profound obligation for us to

- Establish a possibility for matter – and in the case of social research our informants – to respond and force us to revise and expand our initial preconceptions when they have been shown to be insufficient

With this final word on the inherent weaknesses of interpretative practices – however delightful they may be to commit one self to – let us now continue our presentation of the challenges of explanations.

#### *From “objectivity” or objectification to a call for completeness*

We have often in this chapter referred to objectivity as a proclaimed ethos for the social researchers, who try to present themselves as if they are as detached from the matter they study as our colleagues within the hard Sciences, ref § 5.3 page 192-3. We will now try to make sense of the term:

Yet, objectivity is generally not defined in a positive sense. The idea is usually illustrated metaphorically by impressions acquired through vision, ref § 1.4 page 8–10, rather than by corporal sensing such as smell, touch or even listening. The priority of sight might be stated as a call for “seeing things as they really are”, which by implication states “seeing what is, as things”.

Otherwise, the most common notion of “objectivity” is to define it *negatively* as not being subjective:

- Do not be emotionally attached to a particular theory or cause and thus – if attacked – avoid being tempted to go into a defensive mode, nor being caught up in attacks on other schools of thought.
- Do not orchestrate your work with particular interests in mind or as a service for powerful persons or institutions.
- Nor be deceitful or give your self away to convenience in your handling of “data”, for instance throwing those out which – however awkwardly and for whatever reason – stand out from the rest. Please refer to the inclusion dogma, § 2.12, page 81-3.

Although I am in favour of making whatever can be measured measurable, we have to admit that most events in the social domain cannot be expressed in the form of numbers. Yet in order to appear scientific, social researchers may be tempted to *objectify* social realities, for instance by looking at us and scientifically treat us as objects, as exemplified by Behaviourism.

In passing, we may note that some types of interpretative research have made a comparatively exaggerated claim: “*Subjectification*” according to which truth is basically rooted in the thinking of the individual (idealism) or the social domain in terms of language.

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Both approaches are – as exaggerations – of limited value and mainly formulated in order to reject approaches any opponent may have

“Objectivity” is further all too often linked to a sort of thinking, which could be called mechanical. In order to bypass your alleged subjectivity, opt for a perspectivist approach and let a chosen theory guide you! Thus what “you” have to consider, what to measured and how is given to you. Then gather your “data” accordingly and subject them to analysis, preferably by computer. Thus you have kept your distance!. Very well, indeed! But one does not forgo one’s own subjectivity by denying one’s responsibility for what one is doing, in case of committing one self to a given theory.

Instead it may be helpful to see the call for objectivity within the paradigm of being free and uncommitted to any particular idea.

Thus we may define “being objective” in a *positive* sense:

*To be objective is – as a positive guide for action – linked to being as realistic in the sense of searching for completeness, i.e.*

*Constantly striving towards perceiving an area chosen for study under as many perspectives, including angles of interest, as possible and do test them for range of application.*<sup>420</sup>

Thus, by implication, reductionism, ref § 2.4, page 47, is to be seen as being adversarial to the very idea of being objective as defined here, as is Perspectivism, ref § 4.14.

The idea being that the claim for objectivity as completeness should force us to be as specific as possible about opus operandi as to when and where we expect a rule to be relevant, as well as to respect, sense and measure as much as possible.

### 5.13 The call for reliability

As far as one relies on rules for construction explanatory systems have to be trustworthy enough to rely on.

Thus, the essential validity criteria for an explanatory study is:

- *Reliability*, the assurance that any other person doing the same work under the same conditions could arrive at the same results and thus has a right to know how the study was set up, where and when.

This – as an ethos – implies a denial of privileged access to truth, – and that “we”, rather than opt for object- or subjectification, should combine the ethos of both and thus train ourselves to:

- o be as sensitive as possible, striving towards completeness
- o make what can be measured measurable
- o try to make sense of and respect and include what cannot be measured
- o strive to see how we, ourselves, may be influenced by language and other structuralistic impacts and thus constantly differentiate between what may be and what merely may be beliefs
- o hesitate to accept the magic of words. That something has a name may, but does not imply that is has to have any existence beyond language, ref § 1.5, as well as
- o hesitate before accepting that what is not to be seen by all cannot be

and last but sure most importantly:

- o be aware of the challenge the Reality Principle and put what we are inclined to believe to test.

*Construct validity: Correspondence and operationalism*

One of the most striking differences between interpretation and explanatory approaches is the weight which the latter in order to identify imposes on definitions of how key terms are to be measured, (operationalization), ref § 2.5.



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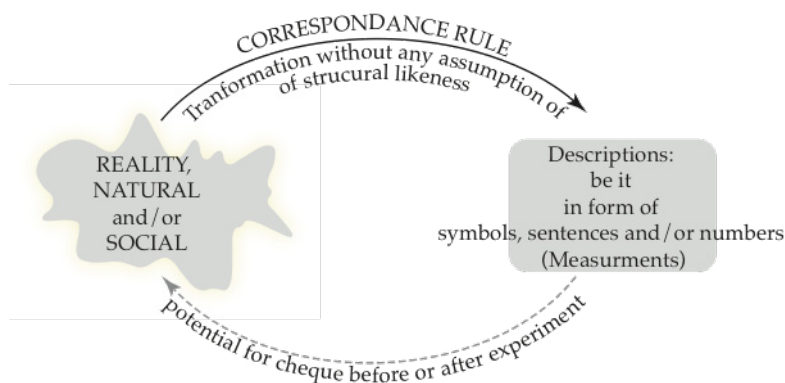




In order to be reliable, we are expected to go to the greatest lengths possible to state what we intend to notice, as well how we intend to identify “it”. If not, how can we expect others be able to compare our findings with theirs across distances in time and geography? Thus, with the presentation of our findings, we must do our best to outline the meaning of the central terms chosen. The demand for *constructive validity*!

Thus, the way forward is gradually to learn first to apply and perhaps later, to develop such schemes of “translation” as refined extensions of common language, see Figure 5.13 #1.

**Figure 5.13 #1: SCIENCE USES RULES TO TRANSFORM CHOSEN PHENOMENOLOGICAL INCIDENTS INTO LANGUAGE**



In research, rules for de-scription, including meas-urements, are needed along with cook-book like reci-pes listing what ingredi-ents to use, how and when. Yet as it is the case for cooking, you still have to have some experience acquired through train-ing to apply any rule with skill. Thus, we all have to learn gradually first to apply them and later to develop such schemes of “translations” our-selves as a refined extension of common language.

We can hardly expect expected to be a one-to-one relationship between measuring and reality, as documented in § 2.3. Our ways of measuring social phenomena can at best be seen as a matter of circling around a supposed occurrence and suggest ways of identifying it, – preferably by degree. Let us take an example:

**The tears of a stranger are only water.**

Russian proverb

*An example: Measuring “empathy”*

An investigation of managerial competences called for a definition of 15 factors chosen for identification of qualities of typical and excellent managers, respectively. One of them was *empathy*, for which the following operational definition was chosen:

“*Empathy*”, being the intent to “understand” others, is indicated when a person

- o Understands the strength and limitations of others, the spoken as well un-spoken reasons for other people’s behaviours, – knows what specifically motivates or de-motivates other individuals,
- o Accurately reads or interprets the moods, feelings, emotions or nonverbal behaviour of others, or
- o Listens to others by asking questions and waiting for their reply or taking the time to allow another person to describe something at her own pace and in her own manner.<sup>421</sup>



Please note that the above-mentioned indicators have to be identified by asking a) the people of whom the manager is in charge have noticed as well as b) what “we” may identify as she interacts with others. Thus the identification of “empathy” does not depend – like laddering – on what the manager says about her self.<sup>422</sup>

So, it is not by interviewing a manager, but through the fieldwork that the researcher must translate observations, feelings and experiences of individuals into text for cross-comparative analysis.

In this case, the research revealed, that “highly effective managers showed more interpersonal sensitivity than typical mangers did”.<sup>423</sup> If so, a preference for and the ability to try to “understand” others matter. Furthermore, listening as a for-runner for reflection is most likely to be a powerful antidote to group-thinking, ref Figure 1.6 #2.

Now if empathy is to be chosen as the major subject for an investigation in it self, the list of dimensions would have to be expanded, including

- a grounded exploration of who uses the word “empathy”, how, when and about which types of behaviors.

So, it is crucial to establish rules for translating observables into text in a way that is open for others to follow and check.

“Operationalists” even go so far as to make the exaggerated claim, that “the way in which entities are defined and thus measured defines their meaning”, ref § 1.5. – An idea which, however attractive, if followed would empty our language as an expressive tool for poetic vision, – as well as bar any attempt to come to terms with what we do not yet understand.

As already touched upon in the first chapter, words can only show us a direction. They cannot tell it all. Empathy is like love you know it, when it hits you. The social cannot fully be captured with words alone. It only gains reality as it is lived, ref the anecdote page 37.

Yet words give us at least an idea of what we are trying to talk about, thus the drive for precision still remains an important guideline in social research. Let me illustrate:

To define, say, temperature, as what you measure with a thermometer is pure nonsense as the following statement shows: “g-ness is what you measure with a G-meter”. Sure, but it does tell you what g-ness is.

We have to have an a priori feel for what is spoken about to make sense out of an operational definition. It is only because we already know from within our body of what temperature is and – as above – what empathy may entail as a social practice, that we can accept the definitions. Thus, it is a good analytical joke to define intelligence as what is measured by test batteries intended for the measurement of intelligence.

Construct validity is a call for adequate translations of our sense of the real into guides for measuring, and thus always debatable!

*Construct validity and the reality principle*

So construct validity is a question of a good fit between what you want to measure and the means you choose for doing so. Inside the lab you can define keywords as you find best, but when you enter the lived worlds of others, you cannot expect all and every one to follow your favourite definition of say “influence”.

Influence is not something that one just has. Thus, even if I – e.g. in a survey – state, yes “I” have influence – others will not have the slightest idea about what I have, – only what I feel “I” have – or just how I like to present myself. Thus, the “yes” is only indirectly about “my” relation vis-à-vis the world. It is primary an emotional response camouflaged as saying something about my relations to others.

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Thus a case researcher has to establish who means what, when others state they do or do not have influence. It is important of course to identify what people feel. But for the case researcher it is even more important to register what their feelings are about. Thus the informant should be encouraged to offer examples of when and how “he” may have contributed to a solution. Then the researcher can begin to establish her own scales for measuring influence according type and degree. Next she may explore whether others agree or who may simply live in their own worlds of make believe.

Thus, construct validity has to be supplemented with a realist ethos: one has to distinguish at arm’s length between

- o How we talk about something and
- o The “something” we claim to be talking about

#### *Internal validity*

When “data” have been generated – or gathered, as explainers prefer to call it in adherence to the myth of objectivity”- the facts have next to be presented in a condensed form, be it trough analysis and/or process. And this, like the measuring process, should ideally be a process, which others can see and control.

This is easy when we deal with selected data in the form of numbers, which can be easily processed step-by-step without any interference from the whims of the researcher This independence is what give studies based numbers a high score on internal validity, whereas case studies based on interviews, observation and texts do not.

In qualitative research, both the generation of facts and how we “process” them depends on

- o our sensitivity for the Other as we ask and observe,
- o the theories with which we are familiar and thus by inference those of which we are not aware and so on
- o our ingenuity to develop analytic generalizations. And
- o who knows where the ideas come from that captivate us as we work with the data?

Case analysis depends as much on inspiration as on experimentation with different interpretations and hard work. In these cases the call for transparency cannot be met and thus has to supplemented with the voices of our informers as feed back to us.

#### *External validity (1)*

Explanation is about establishing rules for inference. Thus the call for external validity: Can the results of a particular investigation be applicable to other domains? E.g. can the results from a study of “employee ownership” in the USA be transferred to other companies operating outside the USA, with a less prominent say, entrepreneurial culture?

The less attention that is given to opus operandi, the easier it is for proponents of explanatory studies to assume that an identified relation at a given level can be generalized. An expression of the belief that behaviour of man is not just law-like, but actually bound by law!

But external validity may work more levels than just a given phenomenal:

Helping people to identify their more or less automatic and at times dysfunctional reactions, learning to cope with them and facilitate them in trying to change their behaviour accordingly is exactly what physical healing is about. Increased awareness opens the door for change and personal growth. And the experienced therapist knows how!

Secondly, social life in general shows a lot of regularities. We have long learned to expect the daily newspaper or books ordered to be delivered, just as I expect my darling wife to kiss me “good night”. But, of course, any newspaper owner may decide for a lockout, just as the TV technicians may go on strike. And even though most of us are law-abiding, there will always be those who will turn to crime.

But we may learn to some degree to predict when deviations are likely to happen. Thus, we ought at least to take “the striving towards identification of laws for change” seriously as a social research ideal.

Thirdly, there may even be sets of universal, higher or – as we have termed it – upper-level dynamic, social laws for how beings like humans arrange each their social world under given circumstances. If so, the challenge is not the issue of universality per se. The challenge is the degree to which we can outline circumstance – in all its historical and geographical specificity – as to when a given structure is likely to emerge. Unfortunately, this call for specification of opus operandi is violated by most case studies, social experiments and statistical analyses. It is simply close to the impossible to state the contingent conditions for the emergence of any social world that surrounds us!

If so, we must learn when and how to trust our sense of reality, when and how we may use results uncovered by others as a guide for our own tentative attempts to improve the conditions we face.

#### *The validity scheme for explanatory studies*

Allow me to bring this brief presentation of validity issues together and present the traditional validity scheme, known to most students, see Figure 5.13 #2, based upon the former Figure 2.8 #2, depicting the prevalent notions of truth.

FIGURE 5.13 #2:VALIDITY SCHEME:  
STANDARDS FOR EXPLANATORY STUDIES/ THEORY TESTING

STAGES IN RESEARCH	ORIENTATION	
	THEORETICAL	RELATED TO OTHER DOMAINS
CREATING DISCRETE IMPRESSIONS OF WHAT IS	identification of what 1.1 BEING OBJECTIVE "data" generation, de- tached and non- emotional	generation of "data" 1.2 CONSTRUCT VALIDITY Operational definitions of concepts for identification
	SYNTHEZING, SEARCHING FOR WHOLES AND/OR CREATING MEANING	2.1 INTERNAL VALIDITY Results obtained by logical operations

#### 5.14 Generalization as a practical challenge, external validity

The final note in the previous section may, for some, be too loose to be acceptable. So let us take a further look at external validity expressed as a quest for generalizations in social research as in the Natural Science:

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*If there are rule or even social laws for the expected  
we may even foresee who might tend to break them, when*

As referred to, the challenge of external validity is not that people as well as institutions do change their behaviours, but to foresee how and when.

So let us first note that we are given guidelines for how we ought to behave as members of a state, just as we may be subject to conventions for proper behaviour. The first is given to us through law making, the latter through our playmates, parents, superiors and colleagues. Guidelines we may, either without much awareness, adapt to or more or less consciously struggle with. If so, we would have to identify the potential circumstances that make some “social laws” wither away and new ones emerge, – whether they be changed top down by parliament, at mid-level by the introduction of a new technology and/or bottom up as say social circumstances change. A challenge for constructing dynamic models!

*Generalization – as a lived practise...*

When generalizations are used for planning we should recall how the validity of any claim depends on the fit and range of opus operandi at the time the law was formulated and now.

If so, responsibility for the use of generalization is two-fold.

- The researcher providing the base for planners is responsible has to
  - o Make the foundation for her claim as lucid as possible and thus
  - o not over-extend the span of opus operandi for its expected validity.
- The researcher though cannot know who will use her results nor how and thus cannot be responsible for how her findings are used, even she should be aware of potential misuses.

Thus

- It is the responsibility of those who exploit lessons obtained from any site to evaluate whether the results can be transferred to other places in time, for instance from a hospital ward in Northern California to one in Jersey.

*...and according to philosophical rationality*

Finally, we should be concerned and never forget the challenge of the Duhem-Quine Thesis, ref § 5.11, page 239, which we may extend:

- The less respect that is paid to the inclusion dogma, the more rules and thus theories may be deduced from a given set of observations, – ref Figure 2.4 #1.1 page 51.
- Thus, empirical contra-evidence cannot be expected to *force* anyone – who wants to maintain a theory – to revise it!



So we better play it safe and assume that social theories at any level cannot be taken for more than rules of thumb, – although hopefully the best are more valid than proverbs! This finally leads us to back to the former positive definition of objectivity, ref § 5.12 page:

- *Objectivity*: A sophisticated, self-conscious awareness of the plurality of circumstances, which may have led to the emergence of what we look at, coupled with
- a playful ability to place what we look at within different sets of specific perspectives.

In order to awake our sense for the real, “we” need through listening and reflection to increase our sensitivity to circumstance, as well as our inherent tendencies to distort through exaggerations a simplification.

Whether and how this may be achieved will be the subject of § 6. First, we have to admit the inadequate treatment of the potential circumstances that make some “social laws” wither away as bottom up as say social circumstances change” earlier in this chapter.

Thus we have to try to see how well we can pay our respect to a fundamental dimension of social research: The need to integrate the present with the conditions set – and thus to integrate the historical dimension with day to day agency!

## EMERGENCE

### 5.15 A most breath taking challenge

Durkheim as founder of Functionalist idiom of a social science left us with a challenge: Not just to identify the ways our social institutions function but how and why they a) were set up, but also what later b) made them change.<sup>424</sup>

For social research there is hardly any more challenging tasks, than to describe or even forecast how circumstance set the stage for interactions of people (lower level), which as they sum up may lead to structural changes (upper level). Resulting in a new order that will endure for a while and provide us with new opportunities within a frame of new constraints! So in terms of this essay: *Is it possible to combine a bottom-up level of agency with a top-down setting of circumstance in order to forecast the impact on mid-level of a thus emerging local culture?*

Phd students are often told that one cannot combine theories at different levels, e.g. mid-level with lower one's, as their ontologie's are bound to differ. And on paper they are right. Comte was the first to state, ref § 5.3: We cannot expect to be able to integrate theories at different levels into one whole.

Yet this is nevertheless what constructivism is about. Engineers and planners have to integrate a plethora of systems, ref Figure 5.8 #1. Sure a lot of unforeseen challenges and feed back corrective actions will have to be considered too. Thus we cannot in hindsight rely on reductionist interpretations of how the phenomenal is an outcome of high level directives and/or lower level processes. One cannot in hindsight derive the process that lead to the establishment of a given structure.

So we have to move forward! And indeed “emergence” – as an integrated, forward looking approach of top-down scene setting and constructive bottom-up agency – has been with us long before the concept it self “emerged”. So let as a start recall a few historical examples.

*Early historical references to emergence a concept of the Natural Sciences.*

*Democrit* – a Greek philosopher from around 450 BC – was the first to suggest a solution to the fundamental challenge of early Greek philosophy: The real must be everlasting! But how is this possible in a world of constant change! His suggestion was what we to day call atomic theory. The world consists of a limited number of elementary particles that in combination – like the letters of the alphabet – can be combined into myriads of greater wholes.<sup>425</sup> How this is possible was not for him to tell. Yet his vision was that nature, man and our world is constructing it self, bottom up.



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As for the second example, allow me to refer to a crucial moment in my early days. At high school I was struck with awe of how *Balmer* purely by mathematical iteration had derived the complex formula for the spectral emission lines of hydrogen. Thus I had a golden moment at University when a lecturer at the black board showed us how Bohr in 1913 by means of his indeed simple conception of the Hydrogen atom and a revolutionary concept of quantum leaps had derived Ballmer's formula. Apparently Bohr could from the chaos at atomic level deduce occurrences in our ordinary macroscopic world. From that day I was sold to a vision of, what I later was to know under the name of emergence.

Until then Boyle's law had stood as a prime example of emergence. It was already known that the pressure of a gas held in a closed container increases with temperature, but not why. Now Boyle suggested that gasses consist of atoms that move back and forth, bumping into each other and the walls of the container. When heated, the movements increase and the atoms bump more often into each other as well as the walls. Consequently, the pressure on the walls of the container increases with the temperature.<sup>426</sup>

So despite the chaos on the lower level of atoms, *order* – here expressed as pressure – emerges on a higher level. Just like our macroscopic world seems so orderly, despite that the atomic world ultimately carrying it is dominated by un-predictability. So, as the Nobel laureate B L Laughlin says about emergence: "In a world with huge numbers of parts, the usual thing is not complexity, but its absence".<sup>427</sup> Look around and see how organized nature is with its layers of earth, bi-sexual animals as well as flowers, and how the skeleton structure of mammals correspond to those of birds, reptiles and even the long bygone dinosaurs.

As a last historical incident we may return to the debate around the characteristics of living and dead matter, ref § 4.11 page 164-6. The so called, *Physicalists* – as materialists – claimed that the living – including the mental processes – are an outcome of "nothing but" physical processes. However, the physicalists could not demonstrate how the mental emerges from the physical. They just stated that the mental is dependent on – or as we say emerges from – the physical. *Supervenience* they called it. An other – as I see it – example of a conceptual cover-up!

Nevertheless, the Physicalists claimed their position was acceptable, as natural scientists could not derive the transparency of water, H<sub>2</sub>O, from its components. The reference to water though was a poor pick. Atomic Theory has now reached a level that allows "us" to derive the colour of metals from their atom structure and, as is the case too, the transparency of water from the H<sub>2</sub>O atom. Yet, we have still to see, whether they will come up with a structural explanation for the unlikely puzzle of why water expands as it freezes, ref § 1.5.

Vitalist's in contrast claimed the living to be imbued with something unique, called soul or spirit. They too were in trouble, as they could not substantiate their advocacy for the existence of spirits or souls. Thus the materialist felt that could discharge their position as make-belief. Yet Vitalism needs not to be without sense, though! It does express something important: A sense of awe for the living in contrast to stones and dead meat.

The debate between the two positions rolls on in different disguises as exaggerated simplifications, – leaving no room for middle positions, integration nor recognition of cybernetics and robotics.

*Emergence* is thus a bottom up forward moving process, describing or even given rules for how interaction of rather similar parts on a lower level results in an order on a higher level. As it is an ideal we can hardly blame theorists for trying in hindsight to create coherent images of how already know structures came into existence and then seem to endure through longer periods.

### *Structure*

*emerging from bottom-up close-range action, – some socio-biological examples*

Americans speak of *queen bees*, the girl who is the “leader of the pack”, emanating a confidence of her own, which sways the other girls in her circle to follow her whims. An interesting metaphor, which says a lot about how we perceive each other and nothing about the behaviour of social insects in general, – nor of queen bees in particular.

Amidst all the orderly conduct of the swarm of labourers, the queen has absolutely no say. Oh yes, worker bees continuously “nurse” her with nectar, pollen and water. But she “her self” is “just” like an “organ” laying about 2,000 eggs per day in the high season, re-producing her own weight in eggs within a couple of hours.

In comparison, the life of the worker bees is far more “interesting”. As the worker-bee matures, it will maintain more than a dozen jobs, starting with cleaning cells for a day or two, next begin to feed the larvae for a week, then produce wax etc. After three weeks it will leave the hive to become a foraging bee for another three weeks until it finally – after a short stint as a guardian of the hive – is worn out and dies.

Of course, the worker bees are just as “pre-programmed” as the queen is. But that is not the whole story. The jobs undertaken by “individual” bees may change – not just during their lifetime – but during the day. Should, say, a disaster arise, like a sudden bout of heavy summer rain destroy a lot of the forager bees, some of the younger bees will jump ahead in their programmed life cycle and replace them. Just as older bees may go back and clean cells, if required.

How is this change of jobs possible without any forum for central consultation, or any overseer? Well, the worker bees “watch” or rather sense what “needs” to be done as well as, what the workers next to them in the hive are doing. Thus, every single bee reacts to the immediate internal need without having even the slightest means to sense the overall situation.<sup>428</sup>

Thus, the seemingly organized behaviour of a swarm or rather a body of bees – like colonies of ants – is the outcome of a dozen lower-level composite rules guiding the “acts of individual” members.

Or as *John H. Holland* states: “The rules describing an individual ant’s repertoire may be few, the complexity of the colony emerges from the large number of ants and their coupled interactions with each other and the environment”. A concept he expands to include our own inner workings, too: “In this, the ant colony has much in common with a neural network, where the flexible behaviour of the whole depends on the activity of a large number of neurons, described by a relative small number of rules”.<sup>429</sup>

Furthermore, *Mitch Resnick* developed the StarLogo program of mathematical equations mimicking the organization of groups such as ant colonies and the v-shape of flocks of birds, traffic jams etc.<sup>430</sup> These ideas led to the programming for the behaviour of avatars and the endless interactions them between.<sup>431</sup> Just like the ten rules for moving the six different chess pieces enable us to produce endless variations of games.

Like “the invisible hand” of Adam Smith is not just hidden, the “hand” does not exist. The emergent order of liberal society is not due to any ghostly principle, but due to the diligent behaviour of individuals, who – as they observe what their fellow beings are doing, including not doing – detect needs and opportunities.

### 5.16 Examples of emergence – however speculative – in the social domain

As an example of emergent theory-building committed to an explanatory paradigm, – how ever backwards looking – let me to refer to Holbach and his charmingly naïve claim for enlightened egoism.<sup>432</sup>



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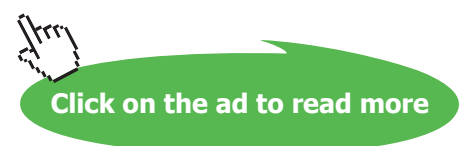
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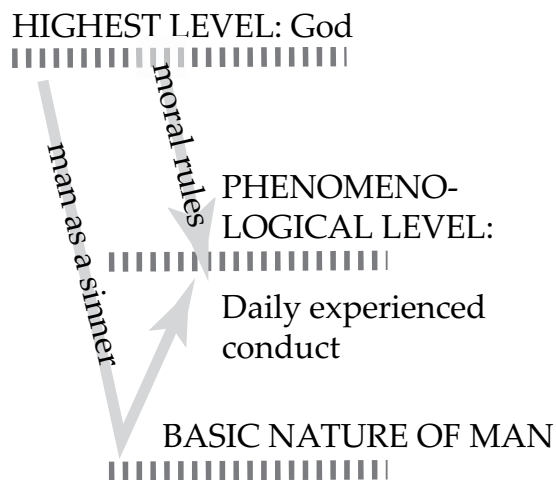
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The baron starts his oeuvre by refuting all prevailing social ideologies: “All too many despise realities and will rather give themselves away to all sorts of imaginary interpretations”. So it is no wonder that the man is unhappy.<sup>433</sup> We may even be guided by wrong ideas to counteract our own interests, as e.g. soldiers are led to act on the belief that the honour of their nation is worth the potential sacrifice of their own lives.

The problem is that we do not look for what triggers our inclination to act, he states. And we certainly should not trust traditional authorities, be it the church or governmental figureheads! And there is one model he particularly wants to warn us about is described in Figure 5.15 #1.<sup>434</sup>

**Figure 5.15 #1 THE MODEL OF MAN CONTESTED HOLBACH**



According to Holbach spokespersons for Christianity conceive man as a potentially evil, passionate disorderly creature that should adapt him self to follow the 10 commandments of Jehovah and the love-thy-neighbour-message by Jesus in order to reach the gates of heaven.

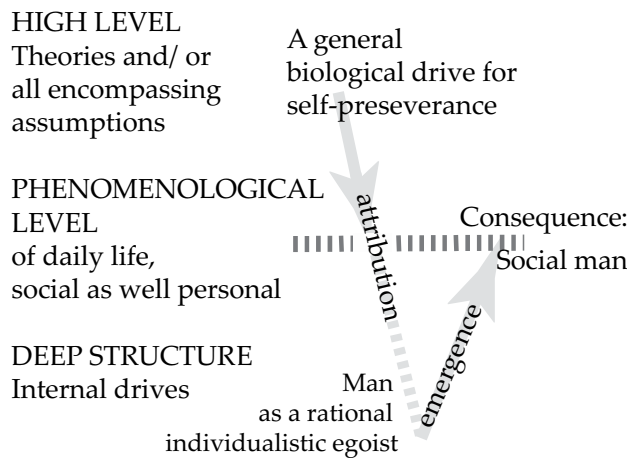
In contrast, Holbach claims, we should be honest and readily acknowledge that we are selfish, rational “thinking machines”<sup>434</sup>

Although some think they know better, man is no different from *any-thing* else, Holbach states. Committed as he has chosen to be to the emerging ideal of Newton Mechanics, he claims: “All that exists, man and beast included, is just “matter in movement”. What we do is the result of an inter-play of laws acting on and within us. I may assert that I have a free will. Yet what “I” want is determined by my constitution, like apples fall when the stem breaks.<sup>435</sup> And what drives man is his *egoism*”.<sup>436</sup>

But as he says next: If we reflect a moment, we have to acknowledge we need others to get along. Consequently, the *enlightened egoist* must realize that we all are better off, if we all help each other, as referred to in Figure 5.15 #2. Apparently, Holbach – as a spokesperson for the Enlightenment – wanted to replace the power of the clerics with a rationally balanced judgment conceived in the idiom of Mechanical Science.<sup>437</sup>



**Figure 5.15 #2. EMERGENCE, AS HOLBACH CONCEIVED IT**



Holbach's line of thought is based on the idea that man, as a biological being is an egoist. A view in line with those who today see our behaviours as driven from a concept of the "selfish gene"!

Yet – according to Holbach – we are also rational. Thus, if we reflect, we might acknowledge, it is in our own best interest to be decent to others and thus help foster a civil society. A conception in accordance with present-day "rational choice theory"!

Holbach was committed to the dominant natural philosophy of his age, Newtonianism. His arguments *explicitly* thrive on mechanistic metaphors like attraction etc.<sup>125</sup> Yet in passing we recognize that this conception of the "rational" by implication presuppose that "thinking" can, if not directly overrule nature, then at least influence behaviour.

Finally, we ought to mention 1) that although Holbach in principle was a determinist – as a physicist had to be – he does not believe that man is necessarily able to foresee what will happen. The tiniest events, he says, may lead to unforeseeable and significant consequences. Nor do we necessarily sense all that acts upon us, when it does.<sup>438</sup>

Unfortunately for Holbach, he did not realize that 2) a trail of thought is not explanatory just because it refers to a Science, be it explicitly or metaphorically. The endeavour of Holbach is as expretative as other any model of the same family, including the drive for sex as the mean for procreation developed by Freud. Man is neither just rational nor driven solely by a chosen inner force!

Yet both the ego- and the sex-drive model contain a kernel of the same truth: In order to be accepted socially, "we" have to curb some of our inner impulses to take short cuts, to keep information back, steal or given in to lusts, etc. Both models, partially true as they are, simplify. Thus, it is hardly surprising that their respective emergent views of society differ. Freudians are led to view "society" as a *suppressive* force opposed to our alleged appetite for gratification, sexual and otherwise, while Holbac opts for the emergence of a civil society, which we all ought to support as a potential *benevolent* source of self-gratification.

What interests us here though is not the inadequacy of Holbach's model, but that it so beautifully exemplifies the very idea of emergence, that society may be modelled bottom up by rule-driven individual actions, released as agents cope and act with each other.

**...there is something in the sperm and egg  
that affects the language ability to grow out of their union.**

Steven Pinker<sup>439</sup>

## 5.17 Models of emergent social behaviour

Realizing how seemingly complicated worlds can be constructed out of a limited set of lower level rules, be it the bee hive, ant colony or a make-believe worlds, one may wonder to what extent social behaviour, too, can be modelled bottom-up based on a few rules.

Allow me, first, to present an early, however crude sociological sketch of emergence in principle. And to finish of with a few concrete observations from companies as they become employee-owned.

### *Segregation of neighbourhoods*

The following illustration, of how cities may evolve, is indeed a simplification – and even more simple than those describing the behaviour of bees and ants. A generation ago the American T C Schelling set out to explore how segregation or integration can result from individual choices. So he “constructed an neighbourhood” within which “grey” and “white” agents through time react to each other’s choices given various initial mixtures of them.<sup>440</sup> One result is shown below, see Figures 5.16 # 1 & 2.

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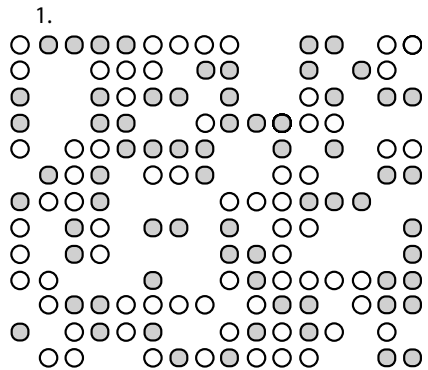
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Models – like Schelling’s – can be expanded in assigned complexity. The mutual influence of the agents on each other may be made depended on the distance between them. Or stochastic variations in intensities of drives may be introduced etc. Or outcomes may be made depended on minute variation of weight assigned to influences.

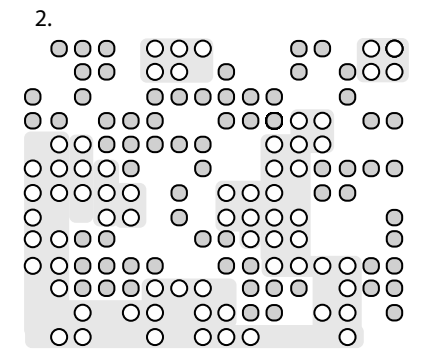
**Figures 5.16 # 1 & 2 EMERGENT SETTELING PATTERN RESULTING FROM A SERIES OF INDIVIDUAL ACTS**



*An initial random distribution of lots*  
The white and grey dots represent lots of land occupied by either W or G agents.

Now suppose we introduce 1) sets of different preferences of W or G for living close to some of their own kind. And 2) that “we” allow the individual agents to move according to their own preference.

As an example, suppose all Gs and Ws prefer that at least half of their neighbours ought not to be some of the other kind. Thus, at least 46% of the Gs and 53% of Ws in figure 1 will be unhappy with their lot.



The *adjoining figure 2* shows the emergent patterns formed after one string of moves, starting at the centre, allowing one agent after another to move and settle in accordance with their preferences. At the end, when everybody has done one move, not all, but at least 90% will now be living with the type of neighbours they prefer.

Should allowance be made for a second move, an even more rigidly structured pattern would emerge.

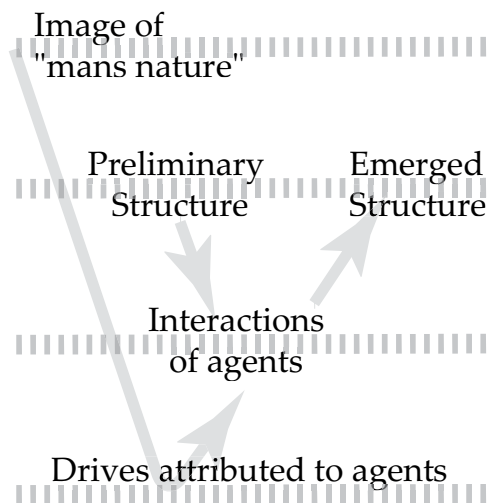
However simple, the model illustrates how an apparent order may grow out bottom-up rather than due to top-down conscious planning.

According to the emergence idiom, laws at an analytically higher level are demonstrably derivable from laws at a lower level.

Multi-agent simulation combines structure and behaviour. So what emerges is a combined outcome of 1) an initial structure, which sets the stage for the supposedly 2) rule-driven agents, who 3) as they interact un-knowingly to each other create a new, temporary, rather stable structure.<sup>441</sup>

With reference to the previous Figure 5.15 #2 page 255, the model for the Schelling simulation may be depicted as in Figure 5.16 #3.

**Figure 5.16 #3: MODEL OF A MULTI-AGENT SIMULATION**



The flow of emergence due to interactions of rule-driven agents and groups may be depicted in a multi-level structure, – like the one presenting the societal consequences of Holbach's simplified notion of man's "nature", ref figure 5.15 #2.

If so, man is seen as a driver of changes as new opportunities set in within a given preliminary structure.

After a period of interactions has had their run, a new stable structure emerges. Man has recreated his world. Yet, while periods of stability may occur, they must be expected only to be temporary.

**Is society prior to the individual...so the individual does not exist at all?  
Or...is it the individual alone that exists and the social...a mere abstraction?**

Alfred Schutz<sup>442</sup>

## 5.18 Emergence as an analytical tool for social research

The emergent patterns, like those shown in the previous figures, are gross simplifications of social action.<sup>443</sup>

In contrast to bees, ants and enduring traditional cultures, modern man is supposed to act along with, as well as react to, his neighbours, colleagues and relatives, due to a multitude of dimensions, e.g. his upbringing, work experience, the cultures of which he is or has been part and, thus, the framework provided by languages, technologies, visions of the godly and the historical events surrounding us.

Consequently, if emergence is to be developed as a tool for social research, we need to aim to develop a synthesis of 1) *structuralist perspective* – that the individual is a pawn of socio-cultural conditions, etc. and 2) an *integration* paradigm, – the view that social reality is shaped by agents, seen as 3) *individual actors* in social interaction and 4) of which at least one is triggered to break a customary habit and inspire others to follow up.<sup>444</sup>

It is to this breath-taking task we will now turn. But let me in passing mention that Emergence stands out as a stepsister to our treatment of Construction, ref § Figure 5.8 #1, page 219. The latter being the engineering ideal of a planned approach, while emergence as a natural phenomena is created from below. Just as the initiation of a Kaido – according to our presentation of the Tsembaga culture – was depicted as a reaction to the nuisance caused by the increasing number of pigs and the taboo, rather than planning, ref § 5.10 page 234.

*Bounded emergence*

Emergence may be as a beautiful guide for social research, as a claim that we should strive to

- a) foresee the range of emerging technological opportunities by technological forecasting as well as
- b) by futurology identify a range of agents that might be alert enough to look into them.

Yet it is still hard to believe we would

- c) be able to predict who will try to exploit new a new opportunity as well the even fewer who will succeed and how.

Not even Bohr could foresee the enormous consequences of his work as he set out to integrate Newtonian Mechanics with the idea of discrete orbits of electrons to the Hydrogen Atom.

Thus, we have to be humble. We may be able to see a range of the challenges facing us at any time, but not necessarily who, how and when they will be met and thus what will eventually surface. A position we may call *bounded emergence*.



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Bounded emergence thus combines

- o A top-down awareness that our acts are conditioned, but not necessarily pre-determined – the *structuralist* thinking and
- o A bottom-up perception that reflection and/or a sudden impulse set some individual in motion and in interplay with others, succeed in shaping some aspects of their future and thus, in turn – if a like initiatives sum up – partly ours too – the *agency angle* with
- o An awareness that our ability to explain, and thus foresee, is restricted due to our limited sensitivity as well as restricted insights and oversights – the *limited foresight angle*.

People react to large-scale events, as well as being bound by and absorbed in daily activities. To develop a full-blown complex, adaptive systems theory of man is thus beyond our present means. But we might at least try to develop structured guidance for how to handle emergence within the social arena. The task we now turn to:

*Towards (bounded) emergence in the social domain*

With reference to Comte, ref § 5.3, as first referred to by Figure 4.7 #1 we usually operate with at least three major social levels:

- The cultural level, the resource from which language, the trail of history, the world of infrastructure, etc. are given to us at birth.
- The institutional level, which shapes the opportunities we may pursue as well as sets limits for what we can do without fear of retributions.
- The personal level, our private life – as we experience, shape and recall it.

First the *cultural* level sets a scene for the prevailing sense of history, “our” undisputed acceptance of a limited form of democracy, the representative, – the technologies surrounding us, – the array of given languages with their possibilities for expression of what can be stated through a given vocabulary for feelings, emotions and/or passions.

The *institutional* level sets a scene of prevailing law, institutional behavior and ritual patterns – like international trade agreements down to fees for speeding, regulations of official exams or good manners for eating. Some of these may be perceived as inherent in the cultural. Yet one may within cultures, that otherwise look quite similar, find a variety of norms, like different marriage customs in Hindu societies. Thus, culture sets a stage of options for the institutional level, but it may not determine what a given society or organization opt for.

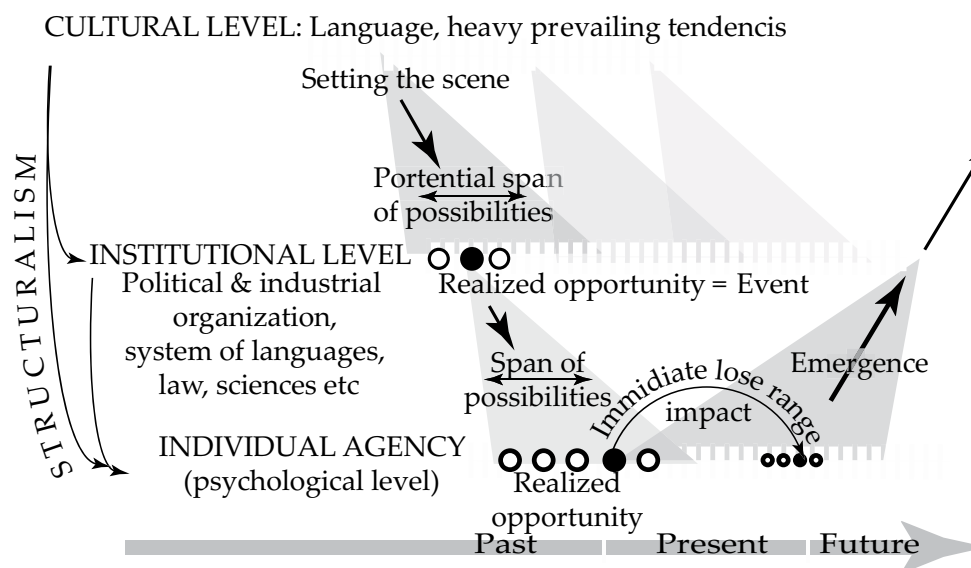


Likewise the institutional level only sets the stage for individual *agency*. How to act is partially up to the individual, shaped as she may be by temperament, physical features and upbringing. Thus, prevailing laws – implicit or explicit – for acceptable behaviour do not prevent neither crime, disruption of marriages, unfulfilled expectations, etc. Awareness of the institutional arena just allows us to predict what could happen to someone is caught breaking a code.

This perception of our situation may, in principle, be seen as at least partially deterministic as it respects the ethos of structuralism, but in practice it is open, as we have to recognize that

- o Individual agency may in turn lead to changes at the institutional level
- o Due to limited foresight we will at best only be able to see a few steps ahead
- o As institutional changes accumulate, they can in due time have an impact on the cultural level, ref Figure 5.17 #1.

**Figure 5.17 #1 “EMERGENCE” AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**



Our perceptions are conditioned by conceptual images given us as “railing programs” (ref § 4.12, page 160) by the languages of different professions we learn to master (Structuralism), as well as how other agents may act and shape their immediate environment and thus in consequence our institutions.

Social developments, driven by men as opportunities occur, cannot be predicted in detail, as we cannot foresee when, nor how, who will jump to and achieve what kind of success by taking advantage of one of several options as they appear. So we should be somewhat modest in our claims regarding how much we can explain and what we must leave open.

Nor should we claim to able us explain anything before we have evidence for our claims at the 1) institutional level, 2) individual level with a respectful regard for 3) opus operandi at the cultural level.

*Mans "nature"*

Whether man has a "nature" or not is debatable and even more so the more should if we adhere to a simplified image as e.g. Holbach did. How any one is inclined to act depends on our biological heritage, our social upbringing and experiences. Our propensity to act is in it self an emergent phenomena set in a frame of biological, social, cultural and conditioned by our abilities to adapt, reflect and cope. We are shaped from the same fabric, but not shaped alike. Thus as we study emergence in the social domain we have to take account for the personal. However important this may be in theory, in practise this is hard to achieve, as we only can deduce any ones propensity to act in retrospect.

So we should not forgo how we all are a mix of the rational, the social – embedded as we are within the groups we identify our selves with – as well as driven by a search for wholeness, compassion, enthusiasm, lust or an evil inclination to hurt others.

What counts for tracing development though is not, why agents act as they do, but how, when and with what identifiable consequences. Thus we have also – however we like it or not – to reserve some room for the ethos of Behaviourism.



"I studied English for 16 years but...  
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons"  
Jane, Chinese architect

ENGLISH OUT THERE

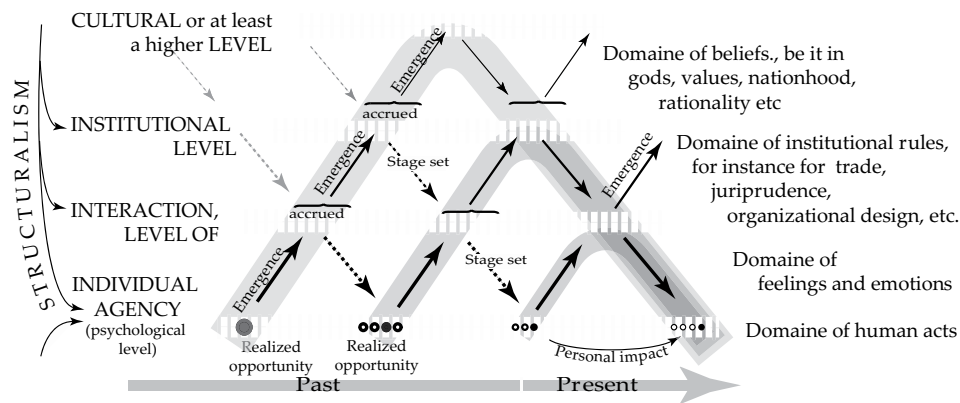
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*Three or more levels?*

The idea of three levels, cultural, institutional and individual, as suggested in the previous figures is a gross simplification. The internal cooperation within institutions/organizations can be structured in many different ways, both officially; – and as practises, employees will be more or less bound to follow; – or, if driven by their own sense of reality, be forgiven for breaking if the result proves it worthwhile.

If so, we may – according to focus chosen – have to introduce at least a mediating level that allows us to distinguish between i) personal close-range and ii) socially organized impacts, due to prevailing patterns of cooperation. On the personal level, hardly anybody can achieve much without the interacting support of and inspiration from others. Even dictators have to act in consort with some others. Thus, we have to inject at least an additional level – *social-psychological level of interaction*. The Figure 5.17 #2 shows the insertion of this fourth level.

**Figure 5.17 #2: THE INTER RELATED CONNECTION BETWEEN LEVELS AND SCIENTIFIC DOMAINS**



With the type of number of levels here chosen for illustration, we see how each level is the domain for a particular branch of social activity.

The appropriate number and types of levels needed is to be analytically determined and will thus in any case depend on what you set out to explore. The number of levels may at times have to be sliced up differently:

For organizational studies, “cultural level” as described above would certainly need to be broken down further in cases of e.g. cross-national studies, as economy and culture in general are partially independent. Just as agency often is not relevant for marketing studies! Just like institutional studies could be orchestrated in levels like state, local communities, industry and trade unions etc.

*Level, domain and different degrees of reality*

We can now – with reference to Figure 4.7 #1 and Comte’s idea about science as an organized hierarchy § 5.3 – attempt to present an illustration of the inter-relatedness of the social sciences appropriate for the levels here chosen.

We are railed by beliefs, dominated by rules, controlled by institutions and bound by the feelings and emotions by the interchanges we have with others. Yet the web of impacts of beliefs and rules never the less only exist so far, – not just “I” but we carry it along from day to day.

Beliefs “are” only real in the sense that people pay homage to them. And certainly not taken for granted by all. But “we” have to adhere to rules even we see them as unfair. So their realness is conditioned! It just that going against them do have consequences as real as our acts and emotions rumbling around within our body like other phenomena born out of nature.

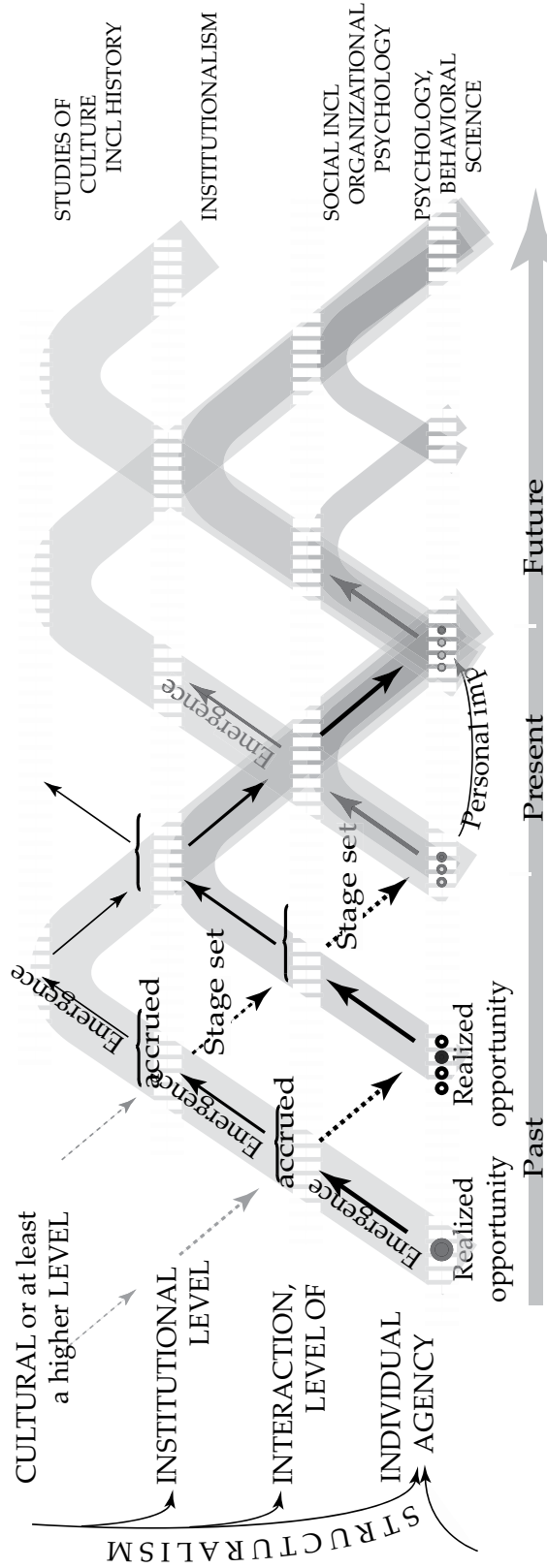
*Emergence as a process*

The final Figure 5.17 #3 should illustrate how what emerges at the agent level

- is conditioned by the prevailing circumstances and the initiative taken by an agents as well as
- the subsequent bounded formation she personally makes with others
- which further may lead to a more permanent partly formalized cluster of people acting in concord, which
- may – when accrued (combined) with other initiatives – emerge as a new practice of interaction within an organization, which further –
- when accrued and combined with other processes of interaction, may – emerge “*upwards*” to become an institutionalized practise throughout the organization
- or if in accordance with similar events elsewhere they may even – as they accumulate – become a facet of a local cultural practise with the potential of becoming worshipped as a value
- all of which when seen downwards sets the stage for future developments

We shall soon in § 5.18 in detail illustrate this inner dynamics of emergence by an example. But please let me first continue with a few general notions of what the initial impulses may be.

Figure 5.17 #3: A FOUR-LEVEL STRUCTURE FOR TRACKING OF EMERGENCE WITHIN ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS



For organizational as well as social-psychological research, it is necessary – although not always sufficient – to introduce “forms of interaction” as a supplementary level between the personal and the institutional levels.

- So what emerges within organizations thus at least depends on
- o The immediate action taken by an agent and his ability to bound with others (agency level)
  - o The prevailing patterns of cooperation and joint problem-solving skills (level of interaction) as well as
  - o the general administrative practices, including customer relations (institutional level, as set within
  - o the prevailing industrial climate, technological stage, laws of governance etc. (cultural level).

The *initial impact* for change may be of many kinds. It may span from

- o a sudden dramatic and thus crucial upper level event – like the outbreak of a major conflict that exposes the vulnerability of society as a whole
- o a new set of government regulations imposed on a certain industry – like the legitimacy crisis imposed on the tobacco industry in US since the seventies<sup>445</sup>
- o introduction of new technology – like the electric car in an infra structure running on gasoline; or a threat, like a sudden aroused need for new vaccine
- o a managerial decision, including a response to the market
- o an initiative taken on mid-level<sup>446</sup> or on the work floor or
- o a person “seeing the light”

The train of events may thus be introduced at a certain level but conditioned by the impacts and reactions throughout all levels.

So even though we, like structuralist’s teach, are engulfed by the past, we need not be utterly swallowed up by prevailing technologies or mores for expressing ourselves. Our interaction with others, personal background, ingenuity, emotions and sub-linguistic acts and reactions matter too.

The scene is “always” set not just for one outcome, but several. The Danish Parliament may wonder whether to adopt a system like that of the United States of punishment and isolation of persons or the Canadian approach of improving the “self-awareness and socialization” of the inmates. The choice will be up to the MP’s and thus, in turn, hinge on 1) the arguments and experiences referred to by experts, as well as on 2) how Parliament is presently composed and thus on a lot of other issues which guided different groups of Danes to vote in the previous election etc.

The law enacted for a reform for treatment of prisoners will therefore be set 1) on a stage shaped by a rumble of issues utterly unrelated to prisons reforms. It will hinge on how 2) all sorts of concerned agents will be able to join together and present their visions and perhaps appeal to cultural values. Off course the prisoners will have no sense of emergence, they will just have to adjust to the result.

The track histories of institutions matter, but so do individuals. Yet, neither “heroes nor villains” operate in their own vacuum. Of course, their ideas may run counter to prevailing customs (institutional level) – just as what they try to accomplish may be stimulated by reading (images of alternative cultural set-ups) – examples set by others as well as experiences encountered elsewhere (interactive and/or personal level). In short, “pattern-breaking” may simultaneously be influenced by the push and pull from levels above the institutional, across it as well as from the personal domain.



For the empirical researcher, the challenge is thus not only to untangle what drives the individual, but also when and how, as well as to determine which people are able to guide others to set and reach new shared standards – i.e. action research.

Thus, whatever emerges within the scene set for the possible, will emerge 3 depends on what occurs at the levels below and thus ultimately on agency, cultural values as well as the inclusion of the skills of individual people in presenting their ideas, and thus implicitly on language.

*Examples:* Allow me to refer to two examples of the interplay between the personal and a scene set at the cultural level that made new institutions break through. Hitler is generally depicted as an isolated villain, yet he came to power as he, as a “political activist”, gave voice to wounded sentiments of the German people who felt and indeed were betrayed at the peace conference particularly due to French insistence. WWII may never have happened had the Europeans allowed Woodrow Wilson to pursue his quest for national self-determination!

Nor was the success of Luther due solely to his theology, if at all, but rather to his ideological support for the ruling dynasties of Northern Europe to secure the vast riches of the Catholic Church to which they for long had turned their eyes.



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*The higher the level, the more stable – usually*

It is generally assumed that structures at the cultural level are rather stable while those at the institutional level are more apt to change. The French Revolution did add words to the French language, yet it did not change the French nation to the degree Napoleon later changed her administrative practices, civil law and life.<sup>447</sup>

Societies, like most Western democracies are for now – like nature – dominated by order rather than chaos. So we “naturally” invest money in pension schemes, post letters and plan for holidays to come. An order attributable to a certain degree of coercion! Postmen cannot sleep as long as they might like, just as we have to honour prevailing norms in order to pass exams to obtain a desired diploma and thus hopefully desirable jobs. Just as we, in order to stay out of jail, must learn to avoid being caught stealing. Control is an ingrained feature of civil society and thus directs us.

There are rules of custom we better follow day in and day out. So we button our pants, wash our hands, bring our beloved flowers and bestow her with other customary signs of devotion, just as we try to spell words as correctly as we can.

Yet great disruptive changes do occur as WWI and WWII. The Russian Revolution was a “tidal wave” which at least formally persisted for close to a hundred years before it broke down, – as expretated by Eisenstadt, ref § 4.11. Now hopefully a new state of affairs resembling a civil society may emerge,

Allow me here to make a personal remark as a philosopher of ideas: As much as we may be guided by linear thoughts of change, I do believe it may be of benefit too to think in terms of occurrence and re-occurrence. There is hardly any philosophical or political idea, hardly any concept of the good life or any idiom of the purpose of science that has not been with us since at least Ancient Greece. What changes is not the necessary the realm of ideas, but often the circumstances under which some are more apt to be given voice and accepted by particular classes of society. Circumstance matters, as much as, if not more than, substance!

*The lower the level, the more short-lived the occurrences we expect or...*

The top down structuring force of institutions, like the prisons and traffic laws, is obvious. The upward dynamics from lower level is far more tough to trace and thus even more difficult to foresee. We may not even aware how changes in our daily patterns of interchange came about, nor the part we may have played in establishing new practices of teamwork

But individual personal close range eruptions do occur and may be noticed as *significant events*. Say, the arrival of the first child for a couple, the changes of emotional life after a religious conversion<sup>448</sup>, or being mobbed. Incidents or events that have be several given names, be it

- critical(causing some consternation)
- crucial (enlightening, break trough)
- decisive (experiment)
- traumatic (personally destructive)

Such events is experienced as unique both in their own right due to their suddenness as well as their long term on going consequences. Whether they really are unique when viewed across incident after incident is worth a study in it self. It may very well be, that a given change follows patterns, which we share with many others in the alike situations. Or that changed ways of acting may “just” be due to a biological root we share with some other mammals. Yet what counts to us is still what it means for us, – it’s significance.

So perception of change is a matter of perspective and degree. With the sheer multitude of conditional elements, it all depends on what we are able to contain. Further more, the closer and more involved we are, the more should we be aware of minor changes, – say in the way new generations of girls behave, new forms for recreational life or religious, administrative practices or IT technologies etc.

In any case though, researchers should be careful not to overemphasize and make a tidal wave out of what, in hindsight, will be seen as a ripple.

*Emergent schemes of interaction, as a quasi-independent reality in themselves.*

Prevailing patterns of cooperation encourage the people to organize their interactions in certain ways as well they set limits for what they can do without creating too much fuss.

In a traditional firm, you are expected to go to the manager with your ideas or complaints. If she does not listen nor acts upon “your” ideas may not be seen as having consequences. But it could. Her neglect could contribute to maintain the general atmosphere of passive complacency, so common in traditional industry. Hopefully, this may soon be a thing of the past, as it is in employee-owned companies

Or, in case the “manager” ignores your idea, you may find others to bound with and help you turn your frustration into a grievance to bring to your union representative. If he acts on it, the outcome may go in several directions depending on how it is combined with other complaints, which in turn may lead to a new institutional practice without any relevance for “your” original idea.

Eventually manager may act and take the idea further in the organization, yet never mention to anyone that it came from “you”. So you are taught a lesson – which I have heard all too often on the floor, –members of management steal ideas in order to further their own interests! So do not tell them!<sup>449</sup>

*The illusion as well as endurance of social causality*

Looking back on at Figure 5.17 #3, it is dangerous it is in hindsight to talk about cause in the social domain. What eventually will appear is determined by strings of precedent conditions, which hardly can be tracked.<sup>450</sup> Thus – as I have stated before – we better i) just think in terms of rules and try to identify the conditions under which they have so far proven trustworthy as we ii) accept that whatever the rules we may formulate they have to be under-determined.

Yet, as already stated, there are aspects of social life that do seem to have an enduring necessity as tough as that of nature! You may imagine what ever you like, but one cannot move items from A to B without using a specific, historically now emergent mean of transport, – be it by road, rail or sea. And whatever your ideas about the ideal setting for family life, your grandchildren are, if not doomed, then in all practicality forced to accept to live in one of the already existing houses of to day.

So it not without reason, some like Sawyer states: “Levels of reality-stable emergents have an independent ontological status. They have casual powers that result in constraining and enabling effects on individuals”<sup>451</sup>

The advertisement features a background image of a person in a red shirt running on a path during a sunrise or sunset. The GaiTEYE logo is in the top left, with the tagline 'Challenge the way we run'. The main text reads 'EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF FULL ENGAGEMENT...' followed by 'RUN FASTER. RUN LONGER.. RUN EASIER...'. A yellow call-to-action button at the bottom right says 'READ MORE & PRE-ORDER TODAY WWW.GAITEYE.COM' with a hand cursor icon.

Yet in principle, nothing prevents the agents – as experience accumulates – from changing rules as well as practices, just as words fall out of fashion and new ones are added, technologies and music styles change. Emergence through interaction may at best be seen as an expression of a collective, if not “learning” then at least “acquisition” process. New patterns – as they are created – are often associated with new degrees of freedom of action. Yet if they subsequently solidify into “institutions”, they too will become something “we” have to follow and thus they themselves emerge as obstacles for exploiting new and yet unforeseen possibilities.<sup>452</sup> The car for instance was introduced as a mean to increase our freedom of movement and lessen the daily burdens of keeping and cleaning our cities after the horse. But now as municipalities are constructed on the premises that all adults own a car, the automobile has as a necessity become a burden in it self.

Institutions, social mores and language patterns do have *regulatory* powers. Yet they cannot have what some call causal effects. People do fail exams; poets do try to exploit the cracks in language in order to express what plain language cannot; people do commit crime; idealists do fight governments and may at times break a pattern in order to – as they believe – make the world a better place. True, they do so at risk, but if they succeed, they may very well – like Stalin – emerge as heroes for a while.

So even if people in general adapt and even if social norms and organized life in general seem to have one-directional power, they do not necessarily have to. We shape and are shaped by circumstance according to the *illustration of the principle of social emergence*, – as all ready presented in Figure 5.17 #3 as a plenitude of cases may illustrate, including the following:

Thus, what is missed in the opening quote to sub chapter 5.16 page 259. Sperm and eggs are necessary, but not sufficient for creating articulate children. It takes a mother too with a voice of her own and a womb.

## 5.19 Emergence sets the stage for longitudinal case research

Social Research, not the least within business schools – is geared to study or even promote change. Never the less studies set up in the paradigm of emergence are hard to come by.

First off all they cannot be done at distance. You have to be there, listen, show your face, participate and expose your hand to the very people you have set out to investigate.

Secondly longitudinal studies take time. The very idea of having, year after year, to follow and be part of the inner life of an organization runs counter to the ethos of “publish or perish”. It simply does not seems worth the effort when you consider you do not know a forehead whether the effort would be worth the time and energy you have to put into it. Thus, most case studies are short-term investigations of “looking through a window in time”- or worse just one-perspective studies of the life of an organization, say after introduction of a new technology or administrative routine. While others may be comparative investigations of a particular life style with out much attention to duration.



In contrast longitudinal studies are an opportunity to reach an expanded overall view as evidence is set in time sequences and looked at from a multitude of perspectives. So as I wrote the *Employee Owner*, I presented bits of evidence, which I knew – as snap shots – could lend themselves to a series of different interpretations. It was great fun to experiment with partial views as preliminaries to my own overall interpretations as they emerged year after year.

#### *Emergence of an idea*

Yet I have to my shame to admit, that the idea of an emerging pattern of direction for employee ownership first dawned to me the first morning of my second year on the floor of Reuther Mold. The internal life of this, the youngest of the companies in my study of employee-ownership, seemed to have moved in the same direction as the oldest employee-owned company, Fastener Industries, I had in my bag.

Later, the emergence metaphor came to blossom with all the more force as the most significant steps of structural or behavioural change in these cases were driven as much bottom-up by workers as top-down by management.

Allow me, therefore, to reveal some events in the research process with reference to Figure 5.18 #1 FIGURE Emerga 4, a somewhat simplified version of the, in principle, more correct Figure 5.17 #3.

#### *Emergence in relation to a few finds from the “Employee Owner”<sup>2453</sup>*

Introducing employee ownership in a hitherto capitalist-owned enterprise looks like a revolution. And it is legally. But in practice not at first! After having receiving the stock certificates a Friday afternoon, the employees return the following Monday morning. And everything looks the same as always.

The items at your machine to be processed were as you left them, as are the orders on your desk. Nor have the organizational structures and administrative routines changed. The only perceivable change is internal, how you now perceive of your self: No more just a hired hand, now I am legally an owner!

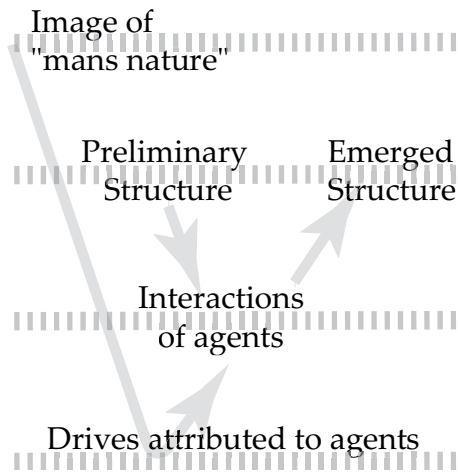
Apart from a few expretative sketc.hes based on what the employees believed, I could not give a full account of the past. I had to take the structure of “yesterday” as a given fact, as illustrated by Figure 5.18 #1.

The past matters, and it did matter so much that without a description of the prevailing images of the past, it would have been impossible for me to make sense of what was to emerge and how. The past was to “determine” what would come easy to some companies and where other companies facing similar challenges could remain stuck for years.

Workers in companies with a past of horrendous worker-management-union relations waited for a long time before they took any initiatives, and actually had to be dragged into them by the CEO, whereas companies with excellent worker-management-relations just glided into participation without much fuss.



Figure 5.18 #1HANDY MODEL OF EMERGENCE FOR CASE STUDIES<sup>454</sup>



Case research of organizations studies the consequences of human interaction as it occurs. And while we do reckon that the past matters – we will generally have to bypass a full-blown description of the past and take the *temporary structure as a preliminary given fact* along with the environment. Thus, we just run along with a few glances thrown back at the past as we try to explicate how different people perceive the present situation in general and their own situation in particular.



As stated, I visited and revisited the same four companies for two months over a five-year period, plus 4 additional for shorter intervals. So allow me to give three glimpses of doing cross-comparative longitudinal studies:<sup>454</sup>

- first an example of early operator activism and the symbolic encouragement it led to at Reuter Mold, next
- an example proper of emergence from the floor to organizational level initiated by a sequence of events at Dimco-Gray and lastly
- a shared crucial event with a long term cultural impact at Fastener.

Internal ownership is associated with being part of it. In short after becoming owner operators expect to be heard and not only participate, but contribute. The loan, you had to take to achieve stock, weighs heavily on your mind, so saving money becomes a priority. In consequence, managers and operators alike feel they have to be more aware of – what they do, – how quality may be improved – and time and money not lost in vain efforts.

*Re-modeling the Tool-Room at Reuther Mold.*

After the announcement of the ESOP to be, and thus even before the official purchase of employee stock a major initiative took place in the shop at Reuther Mold as:

Before the esop production machinery was replaced from time to time. Yet the tool-room had not been properly looked into. The cutting tools – the end-mills – for the CNC machines were reground, as in any other shop. Then the sharpened tools were put in a drawer. When some one opened the drawer, the tools rolled around and soon the fine edge was gone. So the operators always wanted new tools. They come in a little box.” In addition the grinder was worn. Thus the tools – as they were given back to the operators for cutting steel – were rarely sharpened correctly. The problem had an obvious solution: Acquire new tools. As Jerry Bilz, manager of purchasing, explained: “So we would continue every week to buy more and more end-mills. Even the guy who sold us end-mills said: “I can’t believe you guys use this many end-mills”. I said: “They need them”. “The guys are dying to have tools that work”.

“Nobody was thinking of replacing the grinder, nor were “they”<sup>455</sup> even thinking about it. It was suggested we do something about the grinding. “But, you know, everybody has a job and nobody focused on the grinding problem”.<sup>456</sup> “It ain’t my area, so why should I worry about it. No supervisor complained about it. So right, why should I?”

But now with employee-ownership coming up John McQuaid and a fellow operator took charge. They looked around for a new grinder, found and initiated it to be bought. But that did not solve the storage problem!

“Then we<sup>457</sup> went out and bought a crock-pot, a twenty-dollar crock-pot<sup>458</sup> for melting wax. The sharpened tool is dipped in the wax, which then solidifies and protects the newly sharpened edge.

Of course, it could, and should, had been done years ago. But it wasn't. Now that it had been done at last. Everyone was astonished. “It is sometimes amazing what a company will do to prevent itself from being effective”, as Jerry's commented: “The problems were looked at a year ago, but probably nobody was assigned the responsibility.”<sup>459</sup> Now two workers had taken care of the problem.

All other operators in the shop knew. Now every re-sharpened tool they took in their hand to install in their machines became a symbol, a token of how they could help improve their workplaces. And thus activism blossomed. And the supervisors, as they stepped down the floor, realized that the crews they faced were no longer hired hands, but actually representatives of the majority of owners. Accordingly, they changed the ways they addressed them.

When I came back a year later the atmosphere had totally changed. It had taken less than a year to change the internal culture within Reuter Mold.

You could sense the relaxed atmosphere the very moment I stepped out on the floor. Several groups of workers stood around some of the machines talking. And as I listened in, it was about work. And as I approached the former shop steward Phillip Bowling, he talked with gleaming eyes about how they (the operators) had taken part in numerous changes together with the engineers around the factory. Yes, he expressed how thankful he was for all the help management had provided to us, the owners. When I pointed out that this was not like how he thought a year ago, he paused for ten seconds and said, No; and then continued his talk about the changes.

This in turn taught me a lesson: New attitudes emerge as behavior change.

**The days are gone when  
you could walk around and say:  
“Hey this is the way it is going to be.”  
You have to give that employee just as much say as you got.**

Harlan Helgeson, supervisor at Dimco-Gray

*From un-coordinated initiatives  
around the shop to coordination, – the case of Dimco-Gray.*

*The Employee Owner* devotes around 60 pages to the internal developments over a five year period within Dimco-Gray – a producer of plastic knobs. Here I just in a condensed form present and interlink three key processes a) how participation initially caught on, b) the confusion – if not chaos – it led later led to, and c) how new organizational structure finally emerged four years later.

Dimco-Gray is mainly a producer of a variety of plastic knobs for all sorts of machinery. The company became an ESOP over “head and heels” as a management strategy to prevent the retiring owner to split up and sell the business to outsiders. The worker-management-relations were really bad. After the first year nothing really happened, even the new CEO, *Jim Rush*, on pragmatic terms was personally devoted to participation. So everyone was frustrated.

There were some initial efforts to clear the way, but the first real step was taking by *Gail Perry*, a clerk in Human Relations. Jim Rush wanted to set up a committee to initiate a program for the employees to police each other. Gail was to head it. After a few meetings the group decided it was the wrong way to go. Everyone all ready knows who are not performing well, – and they probably know it themselves. Instead of these “3 presenter’s” we should rather acknowledge the 97%, who do well!

So the group turned the initial idea of the CEO upside down and formulated a program. Each four month a new group – drawn by lots should – according to their own methodology – acknowledge a fellow employee-owner, excluding management.

Choosing an “Employee of the Month” occurs in many not the least service industries, but the choice is up to managers. At Dimco-Gray the operators and office workers were to be in charge. This slowly lead them to recognize – however unintended – that they could do something for themselves.



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So slowly it became easier for “Jim” to set up joint manager-employee teams to solve issues in need of change. Further more some operators began to take initiatives them selves:

A clerk in sales, *Brenda Ross*, made a simple calculation and identified what production series were so small that the company – due to set up costs – lost money. A worker, *Dan Iker* in shipping, formulated a questionnaire and put it in every package he shipped for the customers to respond to. Months later – with the feed back under his arm – he went up to the sales manager and informed her about what the customers thought about the company!

Other issues could not be dealt with individually but on a group basis. That caught further trouble. Solutions that may be more efficient at one point along the production line, can easily course nuisance to the adjoining. And they did. So some results of group work had to be abolished.

This of course caused frustrations for those who indeed had taken an initiative. So management in cooperation with some of the concerned workers established a committee for coordinating any initiative suggested by groups of managers, workers. This committee soon became *institutionalized* as an “internal board”<sup>460</sup> being the mean for coordinating all of the efforts for internal renewal and securing of proper interfacing of company performances across departments.

It worked well and even – however unintended – helped solve an older dilemma. The operators were unionized and thus had a chief steward to represent them. The workers in the office on their side had none. So they had for years been annoyed – as they sensed, the employees in production had a greater say, than them. Now both groups were represented on an equal basis in the joint organizing committee.

So after stumbling along from an indeed adversarial culture, the employee-owners at Dimco-Gray, slowly after years of trail and error, helped themselves along to amore congenial culture including a new structure as well as a far better economy. And the initiative that turned the company, was not due to how much the CEO had pulled, but the push created by Gail as she changed the agenda given to her by him

*Activists, the Complaisant and the Tedious:* During my initial studies I was led to identify at least three different types of reactions amongst the employees at most companies, the *ACT typology* – as all ready referred to in § 2.11:

The idea grew out of what happened from how the operators acted, at Reuther Mold. Inspired by the tool-room initiative, several workers had met weekends before to discuss what to do. So the very first morning as owners, they – as *activists, A* – began to restructure their own workplaces and deal with issues, which for years had been in need of improvement, but – as they saw it – neglected by management.

Their boldness in taking action amazed the majority of the workers! These, the *complacent*, C, just held their breath in anticipation of how management would react!

Apart from Reuther Mold, the activist initiatives on the floor at other ESOPs did irritate some of the managers. They perceived the improvement initiated by the activists as a threat to their endearing image of themselves as “the one, who knows best”. It would a joy here to give an account of all the games the tedious managers played in order to convince themselves and those around them about of their own superiority. But I will be brief and just say that these accounts were probably one of the reasons why a Danish reviewer said that the book was as exciting as a crime story.

This, the T *tedious* attitude were shared by a minority of workers too, who were against what had happened as well as happening now for an array of – as I saw it – emotional reasons. This group were indeed the most complex and thus in it self the most fascinating, but I had to let it pass in order to stick to the greater picture

Other managers, though, were thrilled. Activism was what they had hoped for. But yes, the aroused activity did lead to friction not only between, but – as at Dimco-Gray – within departments, So they too set a committee to coordinate or initiated problem-solving teams. This *explicit* structural innovation was in some companies enforced by training programs in problem solving techniques. As people went through these a shared bottom-to-top culture of approaching challenges emerged. Everybody simply by *implication* came to live by the same terms in dealing with administrative, communicative and technical matter at stake.

Coming back to Reuther Mold in its third year as an ESOP, I re-interviewed a younger worker who had talked with me before. He now presented him self as an activist. So I conferred his statement with memos from “problem-solving groups” and what workers around him could tell me. Although he was liked for his general support – he was by no means an activist. Thus, in a short-term view he was – some could claim – lying to me. But this was not as I saw it, – not just in hindsight but as I still was on the floor. No, – he was just eager to present him self as an activist. This might to some look like a trifle. To me it was to be a vital clue:

By implication the old adversarial culture had just evaporated. Now the activists had emerged as the idiom of what it meant to be an employee owner. A discovery, that was to be confirmed as I followed the instructions given by the seasoned workers to any newly hired operator.

Thus there was an obvious pattern in the *evolutionary* flow of activities from the first personal initiatives, the spontaneous or initial formation of problem solving groups and their subsequent institutionalization. After years of working together, employee ownership had changed company culture and the employees perception of them selves.

But even a sudden singular event may too have a sudden and dramatic effect, as the next case will show:



*A “nerve-racking” election and the dawn of a company ethos*

The election to the board of Fastener in 1987 was exceptional both in it self and in consequence. Seen in retrospect, the incident must be seen as a collective *crucial event*, – as the emotional agony endured through the crisis were to ground the personal values, which were to emerge as the implicit codex of behavior for an employee-owner at Fastener.

Due to a general down turn down of the economy, sales had been declining for months. If so, the traditional philosophy dictates us to downsize of production in order to safeguard equity, – as any student of management knows. People had to be fired, said the treasurer. But Fastener was now employee-owned. And you do not just get rid of owners! <sup>461</sup> So the board decided to ignore the treasurer and continue production, slowly building up an inventory of parts, until it finally equalled five months of production.

“As an ESOP, labour is a fixed cost”, plant manager, Jim Carroll, stressed, not even considering the – at least theoretical – possibility that some of the owners could have been asked to leave. But to the accountants, “it wasn’t good money-management...” The treasurer was concerned, because “all the money that was going into raw materials would be better going into loan payments.”<sup>462</sup> So there was a clash over “differences of management style – a difference of opinion about how the company should progress.”<sup>463</sup>



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As the bi-annual election to the board of directors drew close, the treasurer went around talking to the older employee owners in possession of most of the stock. If they would vote for him he would guarantee they would not only not be laid off, but given possibilities of advancement, e.g. be trained to work with IT or sales. He probably expected to become CEO him self. At least he informed me that “many employees were coming to him saying: “You ought to run the company”.<sup>464</sup> In short he played politics staking his chances on the most powerful voters. On the other hand Rich Biernacki, the CEO, who did not want to fire anybody, went around and talked to everybody.

“It was either him or me. Let the employees decide”, Rich said. “We’ve got a problem that I can’t solve. The only facility available for solving it is the owners themselves.”

So the employees had to choose. And they were terrified; it was as if the whole future of the company was at stake. “Oh, it was terrible. There were people shaking like a leaf.”<sup>465</sup> “It was really tense, almost like each man for him self.”<sup>466</sup> “It was nerve-racking”, as several workers recalled.

As it were, the treasurer was voted from the board and resigned. “A lot good technicians fail as politicians”, he told me.<sup>467</sup>

The incident had unsuspected consequences: The emotional strain people had lived through, made it plain that playing politics was not acceptable. You have to be straightforward, neither play games nor – as was amply illustrated by other incidents – try to hide a mistake you happened to make. This paved the way for a new *implicit* culture within Fastener of painstaking honesty. It had a depth that amazed me as it also included how their dealings with me.

Alike events – all though of a lesser intensity – occurred within other ESOPs too, for instance at Weirton Steel. Here a manager Don Batoletti had taken a decision, which in retrospect turned out to be – as he said him self, wrong. And “everybody” knew! So he publicly stood up and took responsibility, told his crews what had gone wrong and asked them for their help to straighten things out.

Without having intended to, this “gave license” for all “his men” to be open about decisions taken, that ought to be looked at a second time. Thus as he told me, do not to play politics, nor try to protect your self. It’s much more convenient “just” to be pragmatic<sup>468</sup>.

#### *The effect of the intangible*

As the companies became and matured as ESOPs, I asked the managers to tell me whether they as well as the workers had changed. Oh indeed, they themselves listened more. As for the workers, they had become more *responsible*.

This was not how the workers perceived themselves. After having asked them first to tell me how changes in workflow, quality control, accounting etc. were coming about, I asked whether they had noticed any changes amongst managers, their colleagues and themselves. Oh yes, they said, we *care* more.

It took a long time before I realized the important difference between “care” and “responsibility”. Initially, I just saw the two collections of statements as mutually confirmative. So – as I looked back on the whole process, I had lived through alongside my informants – the discrepancy between the two concepts and thus the significance of care dawned on me. The two terms belong to entirely different discourses, one family, the other to “be accountable”. And the workers had always felt responsible. But before it was not so much to the company as to themselves as a collective, represented by their union representatives.

Now, after years as employee owners, they had come to embrace their machine, their daily working life and their co-workers within the same bracket as their car, their private belongings and family. After five to seven years having worked together as owners, they had grown to care for their machine, the company and each other as a whole.

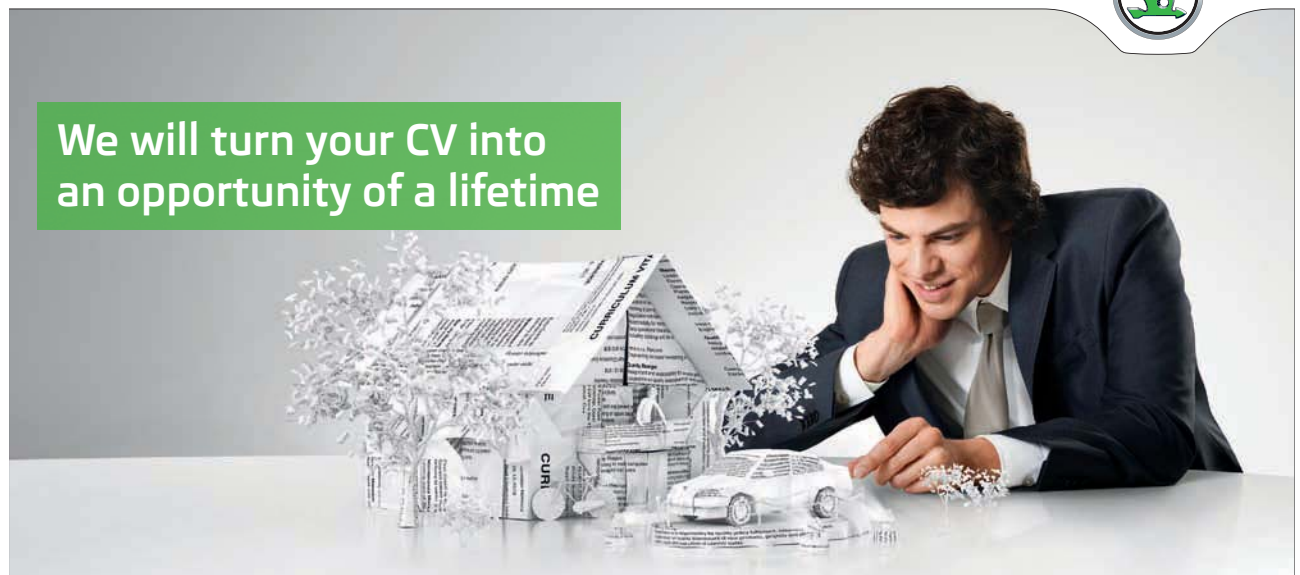
And it had and an even greater perspective. Because, what is the USA after all if not a capitalist country, where industries are owned not by the state, but by individuals – however few they are! So as one person said: “Now I had finally become one myself. So now I feel like a ‘real’ American.”<sup>469</sup>

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*The “Employee Owner” and the image of “man’s nature”*

Referring back to Figure 5.18 #1, I have to acknowledge – like most case researchers – I did not initially pay much attention to the issue of man’s nature<sup>470</sup>. Nor did I discuss whether it – like ghosts – has a reference to anything beyond being a concept of language. Initially, I just relied on my implicit knowledge of analytical, personal, social and industrial psychology.

So the most relevant and thus partial image in this case of “*man’s nature*” was first identified at the very end of the study. A step I took a step in order to make sense of, in particular, the ACT typology. In this case I was – inspired by Bergson, see § 4.9, – led to perceive man as a creature who, within a social setting, strives for individual competence. And if he could not achieve that, he would “tediously” try to fake it, lie and dabble in covert politics and thus potentially hurt others, – a scheme of thought you may recall was not alien to me, as referred to § 1.1.

*Emergence in the social domain*

Emergence as an ethos for social research may not in principle set new standards for the studies of lived life, but certainly for how to do them. It is more than just a question of making theories fit by testing their sustainability. It is a challenge of combining 1) historical awareness with 2) day to day perspective of the very small, but very concrete – the individual lives of real people – and 3) the very great, but partially abstract – middle and upper level schemes – into integrated wholes.

Thus, the constructive idiom of emergence aim to do for explanation, what reductionism as a simplifier does for interpretation.

In general though the call for emergence will most likely remain an ideal. We will never for instance be able to trace all the impacts from outside, states of mind, actions and outcomes of small scale events which, as they sum up may lead to restructurings or even revolutions referred to in § 4.11, page 149-52.

Yet the idiom of emergence calls for our deepest respect. It calls us to try bridge the otherwise irreconcilable gap between structuralism and agency. And should thus show us how individuals matter as much as the socially given.

## FINISHING IT UP

### 5.20 The tension between an interpretative and the explanatory approach

#### *The challenge of sophistication*

The old Greek Master, Thucydides, the scientist-philosophers of the Enlightenment like Holbach as well as the later founders of Positivism, Comte and Durkheim, all formulated their specific programme for explanation as an antidote to interpretation. Now “data” should rule. Social researchers should no longer be led by his emotion and/or a zest for imposing their own inner world on the outer. “Data” should be defined and gathered independently of the researcher, as should the subsequent analysis proceed without any reference to how we would like the world to be organized. We should surrender our selves to a passive stand of letting the world “say it all”. This is certainly not bad as an ideal.

The problem is whether the denial of one’s own presence is the best way to assure a call for neutrality. But indeed, interpretations are prone to be expressions of subjectivity.

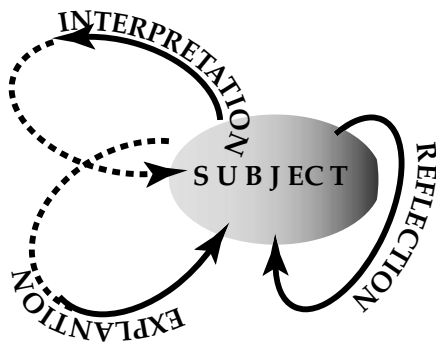
Thus we better – in a more self-conscious suspended mode – reflect upon how and what catches our “discerning eye”. In short, we should as we look around try to be aware of our own emotions and historical background. – Nurture a sense of what we are able to grasp and what not. – Try to notice how our focus is a result of the theories we have read; just as we should be aware of the possible impact of our interactions with those we study. Start looking around may at best lead to successful interventions, – just as the family doctor first after a proper diagnosis hopefully describes a wholesome cure.

Such a type of inquiry may in a more sophisticated mode be seen as extension of both an explanatory and interpretative approach, as exemplified in Figure 5.19 #1.

Secondly we should not forget that the best explanatory studies do go beyond the worst interpretative studies in ingenuity, just as the best interpretative studies outrank the more pedestrian explanatory studies in sensitivity.

Science-like research within the social domain is quite a challenge, as interpretations creep in through the numerous cracks in the armour of the explanatory posture. Sure, statistical analysis can alert us to new insights despite our predispositions. But in order to make sense of identified correlations, we have to fall back on interpretation.

Figure 5.19 #1: HOW SELF-AWARENESS COULD MAKE EXPLANATION AND INTERPRETATION CONVERGE



From a more simplistic view, *Interpretation* as Subjectivism consists in reading one self into the world.

In contrast, the *explanatory* approach calls for us to let the world to be read into our consciousness, as the Naïve Realist assumes.

Yet neither interpreters nor explainers need to be that naïve.

In any case one could try to be self-conscious as possible:

First, the *interpreter* can very well try to train her self to try to suspend and be aware – if not outright *suspicious* – of her own *pre-dispositions* and thus ready to reveal and challenge them by experimenting with different interpretations of the phenomena at hand first during fieldwork, as well as later when facts are analytically drawn together

Secondly. This is a position that *explainers* too may adapt under the umbrella of *Critical Realism*: We look for rules, but we too have to look at how we look, because language is not rich enough to capture reality in all its richness. Consequently, “I” need to be self-observant in order to test and develop a more complete perception of the perceivable.

An effort to design a combinatory approach may thus be a more fruitful approach. This is the move to which we will now turn.

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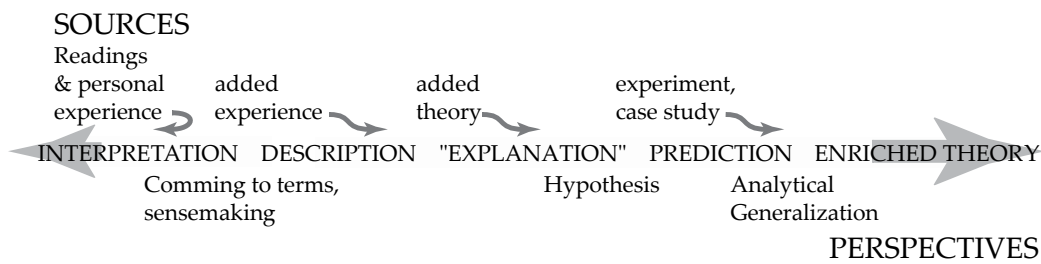




Explanations must be based on description, while description in it self must be guided by language, customs, as well as specific expectations of what it might be worth to look for (or rather to notice). In short, explanation hinges on interpretations of relevance.

Thus, it might be fruitful to see the two epistemological stands as an interwoven fabric, a continuum of sense-making and foresight rather than as contrasts, as suggested in Figure 5.19 #2.

**Figure 5.19 #2 IDEP: FROM INTERPRETATION TO REALITY TEST AND HOPEFULLY A MORE ENCOMPASSING SET OF THEORIES**



Social research depicted as an expansive process: from interpretations as premises to analytical generalization through which new insight is added due to a willingness to test the premises and further explore reality in order to substantiate rules.

The figure is an argument for the application of at least two types of sources for inquiries: 1) A *personal*, based upon experience, reading and other ideas conveyed through language, acquaintances and small-scale learning cycles and 2) the design of *experiments* and/or case studies in a open-ended, partially self-confrontational manner allowing for breakthroughs in accordance with the reality principle, ref § 2.3.

Or in short: Do not take sides, but let your research be guided by double-edged *curiosity*: In how many ways can the world be perceived and how can I – for the benefit of others – learn to perceive it in more constructive ways.

The idea is that as you move forwards and build up notions and rules (integrate), you also look around as well as back to explore which the premises your rule-making could be build on.

*If social research is at an immature stage, is there a way forward?*

Some state that social research is inferior and not as mature as the Natural Science. The most common excuse, being that exploration of the social is a relatively young field of research! Immaturity aside, age is not valid as defence. Applied social research was a well-established discipline in ancient Greece for law-making and city planning, where as natural phenomena were still only awed and subject to religious terms. Actually, Natural Science came into being as philosophers wondered whether natural phenomena could be as rule-driven as the behaviour of citizens.<sup>471</sup>

The problem is, rather, that social researchers do not pay sufficient attention to circumstance as well as history as the fundamental distinction of the social. Thus strong explanations are just by passed in order just to give room for correlations of limited or, worse, just temporary relevance.

Thirdly, since social research has become a profession many of us are tempted to try to pave our way by coining terms of our own rather than structuring our thinking in terms of analytical generalization. In short we do not work together like the stonemasons once built cathedrals, but as individual trying to make room for our own small wood carvings around the marketplace. So defensive safeguarding of our own limited territories of perception gets the upper hand rather than – in respect for the principle of the Nugget in the Rubble – listening to and integrating the insights of others.

Fourthly, along side with the immaturity claim, the notion that the social domain is more complicated than the natural is an all too often used excuse for ad hoc expretations. But stating that something is complex does not say anything about reality. It just express that as it appears, it confuses us. The statement, “it is too complex” is just an intellectual cover-up. As if it is the “fault” of something outside our grasp that we do not have words to really master it! The complexity argument is just a poor excuse for not attempting to attempt to uncover how, when and why structural changes emerge or even better how we may be midwives for better to occur!

It is not the social domain that is too complex. It is us who still lack both the words and the wisdom to contain it!

So in order for social research to move towards becoming an explanatory science, the emphasis must be expanded from correlation studies and lab-experiments to real-life studies, i.e. case research, – with a high degree of awareness of temporality and openness in terms of what different theoretical positions may have to offer and consciousness of how they might be integrated as a practice.

#### *Towards understanding*

Exponents of explanatory designs have as their basic tenet that both “data” generation and analysis ought to be as *independent* of the researcher as possible. Yet we cannot assume independence to be easily achieved if at all.

Thus we should not forgo how exponents for self-conscious interpretation *take responsibility* for their

- own role and inner movements, and
- struggle to be aware of what their presence means to the Other.

So if it was not for the fact that many interpreters are inclined simply to opt for a given view as explainers, it may seem that the self-conscious interpreter is to be given the upper hand. Thus, it is essential to recall how the explanatory call for independence originally grew out as a reaction to claim of the rights of the few, religious authorities in particular, to determine, what others should believe. According to the advocates of the explanatory idiom, it should be up to the individual him self to unravel what is true and subsequently lay it up in the open for us all to test the validity of the findings.

Nor shall we forget, that even though it is within our grasp to objectify the Other, we are not objects, however much we may at times be subject to changes we hardly recognize.

So several questions remain: Can we really believe ourselves able to contain all our inner rumblings as well those of the Other? How can we approach any Other – as we must – in a partial subjectivist mode and yet come to sense what we share as well as how we differ. How to go beyond identification of the behavioural rules by which the Other seems to abide to and get feel for how differently they might have come about.

For answers, we will have in § 6 to take turns with the third epistemological challenge to social research: *Understanding* as an opening towards enrichment, grounded in *the* privileged access we do have to the social domain, embedded as we ourselves are in it. And for which the ideal of distance is nothing but a misnomer!

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# 6 Towards Understanding As Enrichment

**There is a world around us out there  
and a world within us, which is a part of it**

**“...to refute a system before understanding it  
nor becoming acquainted with its depth’s is to act blindly”**

Al-Ghazali (1050)<sup>472</sup>

## 6.1 Introduction

Understanding” is a poly-semical word with an even broader span of significance than interpretation. So whatever meaning we assign to “understanding” as a research approach, we cannot expect it to cover all usages of the term.

In the following we will first introduce a multitude of meanings associated with “understanding”. Next we will move to the perspective my practice as a case-researcher taught me to assign to it. Then look at how the term was first introduced in Social Research, follow up by an illustrative guide of how to apply it and finally see whether and how the term may be expanded.

### *Taking it from the end*

As interpreters we rely on our knowledge of linguistic schemes, our imaginative abilities and experiences in order to bestow sense to what “we” notice. Explanation – especially in the stronger sense – is an effort to eschew the subjective dimension and identify rules for forecasting sequences of facts. Thus, stated in captivating terms, *interpretation* is about sensing the world on our own terms and *explanation* is about coming to terms with the world as it “comes to us”, ref Figure 5.9 #1.

These two features, is what *understanding* – as we will define it – aim to fuse and partly surpass as a social research practice. Just as we will propose a notion of “understanding”<sup>473</sup>, as the ability within one’s self to come to contain ways of looking at the world, which an Other refers to as his. And – with reference to case research – which leads us to opt for a practice of understanding, as “coming to know how to face up to the unknown.

### *From subjectivism and/or suspicion to understanding, – an overview*

An underlying drive for multi-level interpretative activity is – as we recall – to see beyond appearances in order to uncover and identify what is lurking behind the surface of reality. We read what we take to be signals all the time, be it knowingly or not!

Now as we have seen (ref § 4.8) there are at least two fundamentally different interpretative stands to others:

- An approach of *recognition*, the act of attributing traits and patterns of reaction to the Other, which we know of directly from personal (subjective) experience, – or indirectly from literature (professionalism).

or

- a distancing, if not outright mischievous approach of *suspicion* towards the Other – the ascription of socially harmful motives to others, be it persons or groups – due to – as “we” see it, their alleged stupidity, greed, some malign self-promoting interest, them being “brainwashed” or them being in bad faith, etc.

To this we will now add the understanding mode: An *explorative probing approach of self-search* through which “we”

1. try to “put ourselves in the shoes of the Other” in order to grasp what may move her to act as she does.  
Specifically we should
2. in an imaginative form try to recognize whether we could contain inclinations within ourselves that could lead us to behave like the Other, even we ever would. Such identification will, of course, always be partial.  
Thus this internal sense-makings must – if possible –
3. better be checked with the Other.

After this short outline of where we will end, let us start from the start with a more general perspective.

#### *From suspicion & recognition to understanding*

As the scientific revolution opened the door for us to control matter, we have provided our selves with better housing, speedier transport, more refined medic-care, etc. But it goes further than that. The idea of “controlling nature” is now extended to exploit social research as a tool for the powerful to control “us”, as employees, students, consumers, or voters. Thus, instead of being subjected to explicit religious dogma, we are now increasingly exposed manipulation of teaching institutions, political parties, and advertisers who do not see us as subjects but as objects for “treatments”. For their own, – or as they say our own good!

Degrading the powerful and see them as exploiters is of course an interpretation that may boost an image of oneself as being more clever than most.



Scepticism may have its place, but certainly not out of the blue nor by reflex. So it may serve us well also to be suspicious of the suspicious. Be on guard to explore whether the suspicious are merely projecting aspects of their own inner – as we could see it – socially unacceptable characteristics to others, who they then look at and treat with disdain. Yet the opposite may be equally dubious if sympathy is grounded in a hidden wish for identification with a – let us say – power figure.

So we may do ourselves a service and try to realize, when and how we interpret, which in consequence could lead us on to the track to sense why and what is leading us to act as we are inclined to. Our sense of others and ourselves will get the more scope, the more we experiment with different interpretation strategies, which may sensitize our awareness of what others are likely to identify as meaningful to them.

Thus, we could choose to approach the world suspicious of our own skills of detection, expecting to be awakened, moved, and challenged. If so, “analytical generalization”, ref § 2.12 becomes the epitome: as a call for constantly trying to incorporate dimensions in our perceptions that “we” have had no real sense of so far, or at best, of which we have merely had second hand knowledge.

So we better start with being suspicious of ourselves, before we expose others to it. If so “I” approach the Other assuming him to nurture inclinations, emotions, and fantasies partially grounded in his past experiences, which “I”, as a *methodological principle of ignorance*, assume to be different from mine.



“I studied English for 16 years but...  
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Thus, in the mode of understanding I do not try to interpret the Other on my terms. Instead, I try to “suspend my subjectivity” and opt for the Other to tell me when and by what experiences she was guided to look at the world as she claims to do. Furthermore, “I” take it for granted that the conditions of her life must have been different from mine, or even some “I” may never have imagined possible, or perhaps merely have second hand information about, either through reading or by hear say. Thus I stand to be enriched and easily led to question the adequacy of my own ready-made interpretations.

*Understanding* thus becomes a methodological as well as a phenomenological principle of

1. listening and then
2. trying to distance one from one’s self and direct an inquisitive position towards our own often all too ready inclinations to subject other people to characterization. Next,
3. the Other has to be given space to show how he perceives the world. Next, “I” explore within my own body whether
4. I could be led to contain the potential for the same dispositions and looking-at-the-world tendencies as the Other, or whether
5. I even have had somewhat alike life-experiences through which I could have developed thought patterns and inclinations of family-likenesses to those of the Other.

Understanding thus becomes a movement in two directions: First “we” let reality in shape of that of the Other impress itself upon us. Next “we” target own inner reality for exploration.

*Thus in the mode of understanding we are guided to  
open up for views we hitherto may have just thrown a glance at in passing,  
abhorred or not even imagined possible.*

In consequence, understanding represents a *higher mode of objectivity* in terms of eliminating personal biases, not by advocating neutrality or distance, but through engaged closeness to others and self-scrutiny. If so, understanding is a way of achieving a sense of what is going on in and between our selves and in the worlds within and around us – and thus becomes a key dimension for the acquisition of social and personal insight.

But we should not let ourselves be fooled. Such a double interpretative approach is a most treacherous endeavour. First, one may question whether “we” can “really”, not just sense, but even *notice* something we do not know of in the Other. – And then sense, whether “we” could *contain* alike drives within ourselves. – Thirdly, one is very easily lead astray, if “we” let ourselves be swallowed up by a desire to want to understand. Thus, as the fourth step we have to keep an inquisitive, relaxed *distance* throughout the process, not to the Other, but *to our own ways of noticing*.

Even though the Other apparently is the key for understanding we will later – as we finish the chapter – explore whether this outlay of understanding, as an epistemological approach, could be extended to cover social phenomena at large, and if so how. Yet, in order to avoid further confusions though, we will have first to look at the many meanings of the term “understanding”.

## “UNDERSTANDING”

### 6.2 “Understanding” – a word with a multitude of meanings

Let us start our investigation and deal with the all too many shades of different meaning of “understanding” in order to elucidate our denotation just hinted at.

#### *Understanding as interpretive sense-making*

First of all, “understanding” is commonly used as just another word for interpretation. As such, “understanding” may – as used inter pares – include the creation of meaning of not just signs for discrete facts, but of a series of events, as illustrated in Figure 6.2 #1.

**FIGURE 6.2 #1 “UNDERSTANDING” A NARRATIVE**

Story line	PRESENTATION OF
The King died	A fact, if you work in the explanatory mode; an event, if you work in an interpretive mode
...later the queen died	Another fact/event <i>plus</i> by implication: Introduction of time in the storyline
...of sorrow	Introducing an interpretation that refers to alleged mechanisms behind the events through attribution of a cause
...as she realized her husband may have been poisoned due to her own lack of diligence	Now the story opens up to a plurality of interpretations and future developments. Be they tragedies, stories about negligence, fear of personal exposure, etc.

We “understand” the story as we make sense of the “facts” presented. We produce a whole out of fragments, which, in reality, could just be discrete happenings. Yet the links are implicit attributions that we are led to add. Thus, narratives may contain a plurality of truths that say more about each of us as interpreters than it says about the text referred to in it self. In this sense, texts may act as vignettes just like the pictures for interpretation presented by Murray<sup>3</sup> to his students for a study of more or less “free” associations.

But “understanding” as a term is also used in other situations as we shall see.<sup>474</sup>

#### *The terms as used in social practice*

A teacher for small children writes “=” at the drawing board. Next, she tells the pupils that this means, “equal to”. She then takes two pencils in each hand, says “two”, and assembles them in one hand, saying: “Now I have four pencils in one hand”. Then she goes to the white-board and writes: “2 + 2 = 4”. She then asks her class: “Do you understand?” Some nod, others hesitate.

Now what does “understand” mean in this context? Is it:

- o “Now, I know how to use = “or”
- o “Now, I know what = is a sign of”.
- o Or are we taking the first step towards checking whether the pupils are willing to copy our use of “=”. If so, why do we not use an expression like the one we use to train puppies to give paw? Dogs can hardly understand what the gesture means to people – apart from the fact that it pleases us.<sup>475</sup>

No! In this instance to “understand” is not a question of what “=” means, but whether the pupils fathom the intention of the teacher. She wants the Other, the pupils, to use “=” as demonstrated. Thus, understanding, as implied here, involves a sense of recognition by the pupils of what the teacher wants of them.

Do you “understand”? Well the answer is up to you. Say you agree! If so, understanding might also mean “I *accept* your claim, whatever, – or “I agree, you had to act like you did. This not only implies recognition, but an acceptance of the Other as an autonomous person. Or “I understand” may even be a way of confirming the other as a superior; that “I will do what you want and expect me to do.

So, “understanding” has a great range of meanings, referring to:

- The process by which we comprehend the meaning of an expression<sup>476</sup> – with the implicit assumption that there has to be one
- An inner sense of what drives another person (inflated attribution of meaning)
- A recognition, that a given reaction of another, e.g. an act of revenge, is a reaction we, we – given the circumstances – could be inclined to act out too.
- Empathy, being able to e.g. sense the joy, circumstantial stress, or internal pain of another person, including
  - o believing one self capable of seeing and sensing what others cannot grasp.
  - o identification with the obligations and rights associated with the position of an Other.

All practices of recognition and thus ready at hand interpretations – yet with a *flavour of feeling of coming to know* rather than with knowing.

So if I ask: “Do you understand” – I expect you to state that you recognize and accept either what I want, claim, do or hope for. Thus to “understand” is often associated with recognition – be it of

- o the power of the Other or
- o being equals, seeing one self in the Other,
- o or just being able to sense that I, too, might have acted like you did
- o or at least, yes I have heard of people, who might think or react like you did.

As we see, these are all interpretations with a flavour of either compliance or sympathy. This is even more pronounced if the reaction is negative. Thus, “You do not understand me” might mean

- o “You misinterpret my motives”
- o “You do not sympathize with me”
- o “I feel rejected”

Thus we are coming closer to our definition, but let us first take a sweeping look across other domains for approaching “understanding”:

“*Understanding*”

– *what the expression might mean according to a dictionary*

We have established that “to understand” has many shades of usages. And if you listen further, you will be stunned how often we in everyday speech with ease intermix the terms “understanding”, explanation or interpretation. Researchers have to be more precise at the cost of limiting the span of significance for understanding as an epistemological approach to reality, not least to our inner. But let us proceed with some care and look at the variety of ways “understanding” is defined in dictionaries – please refer to Figure 6.2 #2MEUND, which show “understanding” often refers to abilities: To be able to do right with symbols or through our bodies.

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“I” am sure that not all readers will accept all the conceptions presented in the Figure. But please notice, how – in addition to “coming to know” – some of the definitions have a flavour of the more personal than interpretation needs to have: What I claim to “understand” may express who I am and how “I” want to be perceived in relation to others and in particular to and for an Other: A supportive stand with a flavour of appreciation and tolerance. And, as we shall later see the act of g) appreciating and h) seeing the world as another person does, may be condensed into the rather crude metaphor of *containing*.

**Figure 6.2 #2: WHAT UNDERSTANDING MIGHT MEAN**

ACCORDING TO WEBSTER	MOST LIKELY REFERENCE	Mode	Truth <sup>477</sup>
a. to seize the meaning of...	to <i>translate</i> texts or expressions into a format, which should be easier for an other/s to grasp	Int	Cor
b. to be able to form a reasonable judgment about a certain subject	to present an evaluation (in a form that you and I are likely to feel comfortable with)	INT	Coh :
c. to possess a passive knowledge, for example of a language	to inform and express one self with or in a certain structure of symbols	INT	Cor
d. to be thoroughly acquainted with .	to know about – not just by hear say – but by practice	INT	Cun
e. expert in the use or practice of	the ability (not just to talk about but) to master a practice	INT	Cun
f. to accept what will be coming, say, a retribution for an act	the ability to forecast, and thus, by implication, the ability to explain	EXP	Gen
g. to appreciate and sympathize with	the ability to value and accept another person as he or she is	UND	Cor
h. to feel and show tolerance towards	the ability to see the world as another person does and to respect hir right to do so	UND	Cor

While the original etymological meaning in Old English is

i. to stand under
-------------------

*“Understanding” according to Etymology*

As we look back on and across Western languages, we will see curious resemblances as well as different shades of how to perceive the term “under-standing” with a literal reference to i) standing.

“Understand” was coined just before the Anglo-Saxon invasion; originally it meant to stand *under*,<sup>478</sup> where as “verstehen” in German etymology comes from “standing in *front* of something in order really to see it, in particular before a court of justice”. Probably the first use of the term is: “Er versteht seine Sache” = “He understands his case” meant “he is able to present his case in court so well that he will win it”.<sup>479</sup> Connotation like reference e) & f) in Figure 6.2 #2:

In the Scandinavian languages “forstå” (literally “in front stand”) has a somewhat similar background, originating from Plat-Deutsch “vorstand” and specifically from “*silently standing in front of something in order to investigate it*”.<sup>480</sup>

Danish also has a term that looks like a literal translation of understand: “underforstå” (under standing), which, as so many other words within this family, does not have an English counterpart. “Underforstå” means something like grasping a meaning, which is expressed not with, but behind the words,<sup>481</sup> e.g. being aware of irony.

Classic Greek for understanding, επιστασται / *epistasthai*, comes from “*putting one self in a position in order to do something*”.

In Modern Greek understanding is καταλαβενο/ *katalaveno*. The first part “kata” indicates a direction, although not “under” but towards or downwards. Etymologically *katalaveno* comes from Classical Greek *katalabano*, meaning to take in, to receive with acceptance. The word literally means something like “*to take in the mind with acceptance*”, like g) and h) in Figure 6.2 #2.

In French, the term for understanding, *comprendre*, takes us down a quite different alley. It comes from Latin, *comprehendere*, composed of the verb *prehendere* = take or catch, now shortened to *prendre*. In conjunction with the prefix *com* = together, the meaning thus becomes something like to *catch, to take or bring together*. Like in English *comprehend*. It is interesting that German – apart from *verstehen* – also has an expression with a similar concrete meaning of catching: *begreifen*.

There is an obvious family-likeness between these different shades of meaning, as well as those referred to in Figure 6.2 #2. However, this hardly has much bearing of an epistemology. But *katalabano*, to *receive with acceptance* as well as “*vorstand*”, may indeed serve as a first approach to our perception of understanding as a craft, ref to e) in Figure 6.2 #2.

With this array of conceptions it hardly any surprise that the dividing line between understanding, subjectivism, and interpretation at times is as thin as paper. So our predecessors are to be excused for not always being aware of this, as they tried to guide us towards understanding as a methodology in its own right, as we shall see next:



### 6.3 Introducing the approaches of Weber, Schleiermacher, Dilthey as well as Schütz to “understanding”

1850 up to WWI was a most fertile period of moving social research beyond philosophies of life and jurisprudence. Thinkers across the Western civilizations Europe struggled with the issue of

1. defining the social and whether to
2. opt for a social research that should be like natural science and become an explanatory discipline or
3. “one” had to recognize that social research has to have unique features of its own.

We have already referred to some issues of this discussion in the chapters on explanation and interpretation, particular the developments in France, ref § 5.3, page 191 and forwards. We will now turn to Germany, where Weber, Dilthey and Schutz each had their interrelated conception of “understanding” as the unique features of the social.

As a conclusion, we will see how Weber tried to integrate his conception of “understanding” into an explanatory format, whereas Dilthey was firm in his sensitivity towards the uniqueness of the social as a world that we are all part of in contrast to the natural domain. The same is the case for Alfred Schutz whose thoughts on the creation of meaning have gained quite a revival lately.



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After a short reference to later trends in Phenomenology, I finally return to a more interpersonal (psychological) and case-orientated conception of understanding.

*Max Weber*

*and the recognition of rules used by an Other for inference*

In the opening paragraph of his “Outline of Interpretive Sociology”<sup>482</sup> the great *Max Weber* (1864–1920) stated that: “Social Research is a science concerning itself with the *interpretative understanding* of social action and thereby with *causal explanation* of its course and consequences”. A statement that intermingles explanation, interpretation, and understanding in one single phrase! This, as we shall see, hardly makes sense unless the meaning he attributes to understanding, is recognition:

Couched in a rational idiom, Weber by demonstration tells us how we may “understand” in the terms of grasping the means chosen by another person in order to achieve a goal of his. For example, how and why the cosmetic industry now tries to expand its business to include products for men? In this sense, “understanding” implies *recognition of the rules for inference* used by another person.

Secondly, we – according to Weber – may grasp the ultimate values “to which experience shows that human action may be orientated”. This may indeed be difficult, particularly if the values differ from our own. In such cases we can merely rely on “intellectual understanding”, says Weber, for example: No matter how much we personally may dislike extreme discipline, do recognize when and why some commit them selves to it, – be it in religious, military or criminal organizations.

“The more we know of our emotional reactions, like anxiety, anger, ambition, envy jealousy, love, enthusiasm, pride, vengefulness, loyalty, devotion, and appetites of all sorts – and the “irrational” conduct that these emotions may cause – the better we will be able to relate to them, in hindsight, as evidence. The sheer recognition of these drivers within ourselves enable us – by means of emotional self-identification in the situation of the Other<sup>483</sup> – intellectually to sense the means and the flow of acts chosen by the Other. Even we, ourselves, are not subject to these emotions with the same intensity!”<sup>484</sup>

The point being that knowledge of our inner emotional life, our self-awareness of situations that trigger our emotions, our attentiveness for the consequences these may have for others as well as those who are implicated in them – all this can be taken as evidence for the intellectual development of explanations. If so, the acts of the Other can be “understood” or rather intellectually *derived by a motivational calculation* just as when we add 2 and 2.<sup>485</sup>

However, as Weber adds, we should be aware that “reading the mind of the Other”<sup>486</sup> even if we cannot help doing it, has to be done with some apprehension. As experimentation is out of the question, the best we can do – if possible – is to align any given case with other cases. Nor should we forget that people, as they have to make decisions, might be subject to different and conflicting emotions. Thus, the outcome of our analytical investigations can hardly be more than hypothetical. Nevertheless, some cases stand out more clearly than others and may thus be used to represent “typical” reactions. And accordingly, they may be conceptualized as *ideal types*, says Weber.

An ideal type is, e.g., the ACT-classification of employee owners as activists, as complaisant, and as tedious, – refer to § 2.11 & § 5.18. Ideal types are the means of facilitating *verstehen* in the explanatory mode, which Weber saw as indispensable to social research. Ideal types are like conceptual sieves with a family likeness to statistical generalization, which captures the grand story and lets all the minute details of lived life slip through the fabric.

Thus, Weber’s idea of the ideal types represents *interpretation in a sensed mode of recognition* in accordance with the uses from a) to f) as outlined in Figure 6.2 #2. Of course, other researchers may test the sensitivity of any presentation of an ideal type – like the ACT model. And while recognition is indeed interpretation, it may at the same time be a first step towards understanding as the process as we will come to outline it as.

### **We explain nature, mental life we understand**

Wilhelm Dilthey<sup>487</sup>

*Wilhelm Dilthey, – recognizing the individual*

Dilthey (1831–1911) is German philosopher-scientist, of importance to us as he made “understanding” the corner stone of his social or rather his socio-human science.<sup>488</sup> With the catch phrase given above he stressed that

- nature presents it self to our consciousness as coming from the outside in terms of “causal” strings of observed facts, while
- the social world is also accessible to us from within as a living coherent stream of interconnected relations.<sup>489</sup>

We know of *nature* as a plurality of facts referring to something *outside* ourselves. With luck, ingenuity, observation, and experiment we may analytically convert the mess of facts into rules for when and how which phenomena occur: For example, at what altitude and temperature water is expected to freeze.

In contrast, the *social* world is directly accessible to us from *within*, as we are enmeshed in it as the very carriers of it. Sure, nobody is able to sense socio-human interrelations in their plurality. And sure, some people might try to misguide us. If so, it is up to us, e.g. helped along by art and social science, to become aware of when and how we are being misguided. Thus, the means by which we study mental life, history, and society have to be different from those by which we come to know nature.<sup>490</sup>

What a clash with the idiom of the classical comparative experiment set up by Stuart Mill in order to neutralize the subjective component, ref § 5.3! A classical experiment is what it is, – just an experiment. As already hinted at in § 2.10 and § 5.9: All the conclusions I knew of from lab experiments on participation with participants without prior knowledge of each other, crumpled before my very eyes, the very first day of fieldwork in employee owned companies: The ways people cooperate is a result of their past shared experiences. We are entangled within the social as an historical outcome. People and the images we have of each other matter as much as the tasks we have to face.

Neither explanation nor interpretation in general thrives on respect for the individual – which is the very strength of understanding. The “truths” about the human condition are to be found within our *lived experiences*, rather than through lab-experiments and statistical accumulations.



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**Understanding of other people and their expressions of life  
is based upon both the lived experience and understanding of oneself**

Dilthey<sup>491</sup>

*Understanding other persons and their expressions*

So “understanding is the prime method for human studies. It is the method by which we comprehend the meaning of expressions – whether they be intended or not”.<sup>492</sup>

When a woman says to her lover: “Kiss me”, neither the lover nor a listener is in doubt of what is meant. But grasping content does not inform us about what is expressed, nor can we immediately know why he may hesitate and why she kisses him instead. “In order to determine what happened, we need to clarify how circumstance, purpose, means, and life context are unified in the act”.<sup>493</sup> So far so good, but Dilthey wants to go further and to differentiate “understanding” from interpretation. He wants to base recognition on something we all share, something which artists in particular are apt to express.

In its most *elementary* form, relating to every day routines, we understand the intentions of the other as when the sales clerk says: “You better pay”. Just as it is through experience we learn to read gestures and facial expressions, says Dilthey. We do that by analogy, – by transferring one’s own self into a given set of expressions of life.<sup>494</sup> And we can do so, because mental life is subject to “uniformity and regularity”.<sup>495</sup> And in contrast to nature we have direct access to mental life as “lived reality”<sup>496</sup> through ourselves.

According to Dilthey, “understanding” in its elementary form is facilitated by the rather stable organization of the social world: The prevailing structure of businesses, civil law, bank-routines, etc. So we expect everyone to know what it means to take a loan. So when the clerk says you better, he expects us pure and simple to *recognize* what he wants to do. This is trivial knowledge, yet *higher* forms of understanding are not.

*Higher forms of “understanding”*

What Dilthey sees as “*higher forms* of understanding” is, by implication, related to the appreciation of art in general, of poetry, and in particular reflections on the works of great artists. A drama may be enjoyed as just a plot unfolded as a game on the stage – this is “elementary understanding”. But we could go further and pay attention to the means chosen by the actors to express the depth of the text, as well as pay heed to how and why the author produced the text as he did. In short, it is about grasping the whole presentation as a double feed back loop, and for this we need to expand our frame of perception. Thus, “higher understanding” rests on the level of the elementary, but is both far broader in scope and finer in detail and inner regard for the human condition, which we find in the works of the more developed individual artists.<sup>497</sup> It is a scope that moves us far beyond the means of explanatory psychology, which – as it mimics science – just stick to observation of outside-our-selves given facts.<sup>498</sup> Or in our terms pay conscious heed to expression as well as effect, ref Figure 4.2 #1.



By implication, we see, how Dilthey believes him self, step by step, to be able to reproduce and re-enact the experience of the Other, given knowledge of the circumstances under which the Other worked, – ref Figure 4.6 #4. A viewpoint that is all too easy to criticize, not least with regard to some academics' all too often twisted presentations of the works of people they dislike. But depreciators aim to reject not to understand. So we better strive to be enriched and retain a respect for the idiom of the Nugget in the Rubble!

And sure Dilthey, as a lover of music and poetry, wanted to embrace, not to reject. As he with a fascinating blend of pragmatism and romanticism assumed that, there is an inner connection between men that enables us to share experiences. If so texts don't just refer to other text in order to be understood<sup>499</sup>, they have – if not explicit – then at least be implication to refer to lived life as we see it.

Unfortunately, this sense of belonging or “feeling at home in the world” was soon – with the increase of industrialization and social mobility and not least the upcoming world wars, – to be replaced with the uneasy term of alienation.

Yet what remains with us is the idea, that we – provided with the necessary circumstantial evidence – may truthfully reproduce the situations of others – or as I would rather state it – that we may be enriched by the sheer effort of trying to do so.

#### *The hermeneutical “circle”*

Aiming for an most inclusive understanding of how a mass of details generated one after another supports and is contained in a whole, calls for a certain method: *Hermeneutics*, a continual, iterative search of making room for each item noticed within an emergent idea of a whole framing it, please ref to Figure 6.3 #1.

Thus, we gradually step by step piece the whole together<sup>500</sup> of lived-through-experiences, not by adding, but by integrating every part into the emerging whole, which in itself is reflected in every part. So according to Dilthey and in opposition to what we often hear, we do not just come to terms through categorizing, but through integration of parts too. Thus, the decent way of reproducing the lives of others is not merely by assigning labels to them, but by producing narratives that unfold and reveal what who did, when and how. Understanding is the acceptance of any such presentation as *trustworthy*.

#### *Summing up*

According to Dilthey, “*skilled understanding*” is based upon the inner recognition of expressed forms of lived life. The aim is to know enough about one's self as well as of the Other and his situation in order to *re-experience* how and why the Other acted as he did.

Thus, “knowing” refer back to a self-referred “inner awareness of the entire psychic reality”<sup>501</sup> of an Other, based upon a minute regard for detail and individual wholeness. Like great authors know how to create thrust-worthy images of their characters. This is – according to Dilthey – what self-conscious referents such as caseworkers should aim for too.

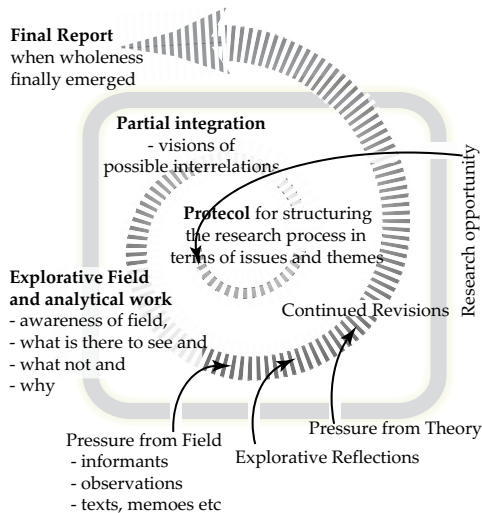
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*Critical appreciation of Schleiermacher and Dilthey*

“To understand” according to Dilthey<sup>502</sup> is to recognize the human Spirit that we all share. Thus, it is more than just the subjective reading of the Other, as if we have reason to believe that others react and feel in the same way as I assume “I” would in a similar situation.<sup>503</sup> A pragmatic conception grounded in a romanticist vision of life!

**Figure 6.3 #1: HERMENEUTICAL “CIRCLE” AS A GUIDE FOR CASE RESEARCH ACCORDING TO EXPLORATIVE INTREGRTATION<sup>504</sup>**



According to Dilthey the Hermeneutical Circle is the proper approach to humanistic studies. It is a successive and increase-singly detailed integration of facts (parts) into the overall structure (the whole). – Like the meaning of a word – in part is determined by its reference to the sentence, it itself give colour. – As sections of texts are contained in the horizon, they define it while all being part of it (Gadammer). – Or how man is determined by language and historicity

while still being embed-ded in them as they change, ref to Emergence § 5.15-18. The spiral-method has a long prehistory.<sup>505</sup> The present use was introduced by Ast<sup>506</sup> and further broadened by Scleiermacher, Dilthey’s mentor.<sup>507</sup>



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Dilthey further assumes that only the hermeneutical method will enable the human-social scientist to re-experience the inner lives and acts of others. Why? Because hermeneutics calls for reflection! What we in a subjective mode assume to be at work within the Other may later show it self to be a mis-judgment. Having worked within the same ethos, I know how often I was sure “I” believed “I” knew. In fact had, I at times, believed at got the grip on a “story”, which took a different turn, – as the Other was asked to comment on it. Thus making it more complete!

We should not just base our conclusion of what it means to a great artist, a machine-worker, or a prostitute on mere recognition of what we are capable of recognizing in the Other. If so, we stand to ignore what we cannot contain, not necessarily deliberately, but by omission. So if we want to come to an understanding in its fullest sense, instead of reading the Other on our terms, we should rather hunt for what we do not yet contain – from the Other.

Unlike Weber, Dilthey and Schleiermacher is not studied much by contemporary social researchers. A curious fact, since many of their ideas is integrated in the qualitative bend of social research in general and of case studies in particular.<sup>508</sup> For example, the emphasis on the experience of the individual and presentation in the narrative format, – the interaction of man as a creator of his world and his containment within it, – a quest for truthfulness, and not least, – how understanding of the Other goes hand in hand with the process of coming to terms with Oneself.<sup>509</sup> – An insight we will carry over to the next chapter. But first a few remarks on Alfred Schütz.

#### *Schütz and the idea of “interpretative understanding”*

What we sense is not the world and the objects in it as they are, but the impact that the world has on our senses, and the impressions that it creates in our consciousness<sup>510</sup>. Taken as a fact, such an exaggerated interpretation with all its hidden preconceptions, may encourage some – like Fichte – to state that the world is *just* created by and through our own mind.

For Schütz this means that we – in order to understand our fellow men – first have consciously to pass through our own subjectivity. Let us say we see a man chopping wood. By stating that he is “chopping wood” we implicitly 1) assume what happens must mean something to the actor himself and that we even 2) can categorize what is happening.<sup>511</sup> It must serve a purpose, whatever it is.

Now, “*understanding in the fullest sense*” of the term, as Schütz terms it, means that we can reproduce the act of the Other as a part of a *project* that he identifies himself with. That we can 1) *explicate his “in order to motives”* as if it were our own,<sup>512</sup> as well as 2) present the reasons why and how this project of his came into being. For instance, that he chops wood for others as part of his profession, for physical exercise, or as an angler in order to prepare a fire to cook a recently caught salmon for lunch. “Understanding” goes beyond believing that one, by recognition, knows what the Other is doing; it has to include the assumption that one knows why. Thus, understanding in its fullest sense according to Schütz has to derive from face to face encounters. *Only by talking together may we share the lived experiences of each other, only then may we come to “live in the same world.”*<sup>513</sup> And it is from such close encounters that we derive our experience-based schemata for sense making.<sup>514</sup>

Yet there has to be limits, because as Schütz clearly realizes the inner world of Others is in principle inaccessible to us, and by an unfortunate mix of terms and a borrow from Weber his position is often coined as *interpretative understanding*.

Of course, in order to present the inner life of others as “interpretative understanding” we have to rely on minute explanation, but only by implication. The crucial issue is *trustworthiness*: That you – if subject to my interpretation of your moves and acts – can recognize yourself, your own experiences, and emotional life in the text. This is hardly possible if we have not talked together, preferable face to face.



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*An evaluation: The question of one's self as an open book or...?*

However important the work of Schütz, however much we may value him,<sup>515</sup> I cannot help wondering how it was possible for him to believe that we act with full awareness of what we do and why. It is as if he did not feel any need to pay attention to the works of his contemporaries, Freud and Jung. Apparently he did not realize how often we opt for after-rationalization, finding words to make sense of our own acts, as illustrated by laddering, refer to § 4.8.

Nor are the patterns other may infer from our behavior necessarily in accordance with the guidelines we inform others that we adhere to. This is amply illustrated by management research, all ready referred to in the terms by Agyris: The behavioral patterns that can be implied from our behavior, "Theory in Use" often differs from our "Expoused Theory" – the guidelines we tell other we follow.<sup>516</sup> A discrepancy between behavior and self-image that you can easily reproduce in a classroom with students of management!

Nor does Schütz or his later followers seem to pay attention to compulsory behavior. At least Weber does refer to what he calls irrational behavior, yet he discards it as scientifically uninteresting.

In defence of Schütz you might claim that "understanding" aims at reproducing how another perceives his world, including what drives him. Good enough, but not enough for a case researcher, not least one who studies organizations. What people try to hide for others or even for themselves is certainly as interesting as what they explicitly express. Or with a rhetorical twist: Is not image creation, pretence, lying, or outright betrayal worth studying? Identification of discrepancies between what people *say* they do and what they *do*, is a great driver for coming to terms with processes of organizational life.

To reproduce the life of another, as she looks at it is fine, but will only bring her as well as us a part of the way. To "really" help the Other, we have to go further and either try to make the Other face up to what he actually does or even better try to help him come to terms with what he seemingly tries to hide for himself.

**Being able to predict things or to describe them, however accurately,  
is not the same thing as understanding them.**

David Deutch<sup>517</sup>

*Natural science and understanding*

For completeness we should finally remind ourselves how natural scientists at times assign a particular meaning to "understanding" – which we thus may see reflected in social research as well.

As Deutch explains, after the quote above, "facts cannot be understood just by being summarized into a formula", say as a correlation between entities.

For science “facts can be “understood” only by being explained” – or – more precisely – by being related to theories that enable us to derive process from structure. For instance, how Newtonian Mechanics can explain the motion of the planets or how atomic theory partially can explain the outcome of chemical processes. Or, more vaguely, how actions may be expretated by reference to motives.

This usage ties “understanding” to a specific competence: The ability to make useful deductions, i.e. explanatory skills, ref point e) in Figure 6.2 #2. And we should certainly appreciate the talent of seeing processes as an unfolding of impacts – external as well as internal feedback – with the potential for a change of structure. Yet for social research I will insist that we keep the two terms separate. Or, if generous, accept to sense a family likeness between mastery of constructive competences and understanding in the social sense.

With these final remarks on the confusing array of usages of the term “understanding” within interpretative as well as explanatory research, let us take the final step and move from sociology and human sense-making back to field studies and personal psychology.

#### *Summing it all up in an illustration*

But first, as a conclusion, let me present an illustration of some of the usages mentioned above, as well as the notion of understanding that we favour, please refer to Figure 6.3 #2 EERU:<sup>518</sup>

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#### **Figure 6.3 #2: FROM EXPRETATION TO THE RICHNESS OF UNDERSTANDING**

---

Son: Dad, why do people kill each other?

Dad: “Son, when someone, say, a boss, wants another to do something that he does not want to do, the boss will try to persuade him. So, he promises him a reward if he accepts, or he threatens to harm him; – and if he is a gangster he may even threaten to kill him if does do as told”.

This is indeed a weak *explanation*. Yet the reasoning is well known and often cited as “War is a mere continuation of policy with other means.”<sup>518</sup>

But the father might also try to make the child *understand* what is at stake:

Dad: “Son, do you remember the other day, when you came home and you were so angry at Brian. Once more, he had teased you and Thomas when you played ball?”

“Yes”

Dad: “And you said that you never wished to see him again, you wished he would go away?”

“Yes”

Dad: “You see, sometimes people get so mad at other people that they might even kill them.”

While explanation is presented as a disengaged rule applicable to cases we imagine, we in the *understanding* mode try to *see and get a feel for the Other in us*.

After this the child will most likely remain silent for a moment. After a pause the good dad might add:

“You remember I scolded you for hitting Abel with your shovel the other day?”

“Mm, but he was so irritating”!

“Now, grown-ups may kill someone who “irritates” them. But you know, this is forbidden! God tells us not to! Therefore the police tries to bring murderers to court in order to put them away in prisons. This should not happen to us. So, we must be careful and take a pause before we react when someone annoys us. Right?”

“Yes, Dad, but...”

Next the father may now guide the child to help himself *find the means to cope* with his negative emotions, as well as lead him into role playing to help him learn to look into himself before he acts.

---



With the last part of this example we have already left our historical exposé and can now continue our presentation of understanding as a method worth pursuing for any one, – and not the least for case researchers.

**THE ROYAL ROAD TO UNDERSTANDING:  
FROM SEEING “ME IN YOU” TO LOOK FOR “YOU IN ME”**

**For the Greeks truth meant:  
to take out of concealment, to uncover, to unveil**  
Heidegger<sup>519</sup>

**6.4 Understanding as an expression of an inward search for recognition**

Even understanding often seems to imply a sense of recognition; the term has to cover more than “I see myself in the Other”. If not “understanding” would just signify subjectivism, the naïve mode of interpretation!



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And indeed we do want to give it another twist. As we define it, understanding implies that I – as “I” come close to You – will search within myself in order to see whether “I”

- share or could have been led to share or
- now as the situation is, could come to share some of the dispositions and thought patterns you
  - o 3.1) seem to express, or
  - o 3.2) that you, yourself, claim to nurture.

An example: Once I was given the opportunity to interview a North-American union-leader. His members, crews of dockworkers, were hired from day to day to load and unload ships for an array of companies. He had just “inherited” his position from his deceased father. He now saw employee ownership as a chance to be both chief steward and managing director for his men and envisioned how he might come to take 5% for himself every time he was able to persuade the clients to give his member-employees a 10% pay increase. Because – as he said – he had his expenses too! He had to entertain a gang who helped put some muscle behind the negotiation of tariffs for his members!

To me this was a look into a foreign world of thinking. But I can ensure you, I certainly preferred to be drawn in – to be included in his scheme – rather than voice my own and for other people rather un-interesting views. I felt and still feel enlightened having attained a feel for the naturalness by which some people live a life in – what some consider – crime.

Could I be led to share some of the attitudes of this union leader? Let us see, in the mode of understanding there are – as we recognize- at least two layers of strata:

- o Personal
- o Theoretical

First, on a specifically *personal* level: Can I imagine any circumstances under which I might become a borderline criminal? Without going into detail, I will have to confirm that I can. Be as a youngster for the excitement or as older in order to provide for my family

Secondly, on a *theoretical* level, there are sets of well know principles that cover such an incident. I might – as an interpreter – refer to the principle of socialization: People often assume the world-views of those with whom they grow up. Or as a proverb states: As father, so son.

So, even though I could not accept the goals to which the union leader adhered, I could easily come to terms with his positions. By keeping my mouth shut “I” thus became all the wiser. He was certainly worth all the attention he was ready to give me!

As another type of example, let us turn to body movements. To read a posture as a sign for internal motion is of course an interpretation in the mode of translation. Say, you are watching a speaker in the expressive mode, ref Figure 4.2 #1. As you see it, he acts in a manner that you have not noticed before.

Now at home try to recall how he behaved or perhaps even acted, when he said what! Mirror his tone of voice, his movements, – and you may get an internal sense of what these gestures could express! If so, you are provided with *a tentative first step* towards understanding; – an understanding that eventually may lead to the formulation of rules!

Behavior activates recognition of emotions, as Carl Langer was the first to bring to our attention.<sup>520</sup> You do not first feel angry and then express your self. It is the other way round. It as you either express anger or – if alert – notice the inner drive to express it, you will be aware of the state you are in. That is why you – in the latter case – may either release it or suppress yourself expressing it. Thus copying in the mode of understanding may lead you to an internal recognition. Later we will return to a more specific elucidation of this technique. So understanding – as we will come to define it – at least implies:

- acquiring an inner sense (beyond words and schematic thinking) for what might be happening to or going on within an Other – or may be even in others.

Off course it wouldn't lead to any insights just to mimic any one without being keenly aware of circumstance,<sup>521</sup> – including your own. Developing guidelines for interpretation of body movements will lead us astray if we apply them without paying attention to the actual conditions for their occurrence (opus operandi). Gestures like words may express an array of meanings according to the situation.

#### *The Other perceived as unique in his own right*

In the weaker mode of explaining the mid-level researcher has to assume that all members of a given group – according to definition – can be characterized as an ideal type. As will the naïve interpreter believe that he can see what is happening within others or at worst project what he hides for him self to the Other

Likewise or as a contrast, the understander<sup>522</sup> basically assumes the Other to be moulded from the same clay as hir self, yet she recognizes that life must have given the Other a shape different from his own. We are woven from the same fabric, yet in each our own unique pattern. It is constant excitement to meet others, expecting them to be distinct in their own right. Yet we have to admit that the joy may rather be a challenge when “we” meet people who tend to make us uneasy! Yet no one might better teach you not only about your self, but enlightened you about the human condition, than those, you dislike the most!

So, according to “our” exposition, understanding as a principle of epistemology embodies a triple methodological principle:

- First, you assume the Other to be different from you. Every one you meet will should be seen as a person with a background of experiences different from your own, with hir own tendencies to act, dreams, ect.
- Secondly, the Other is expected to have something to tell us which could help us get a better feel for life
- Thirdly, as you develop a deeper sense of the uniqueness of the Other, you might – despite the initial reactions – discover, how she may display traits you have or could have developed had your line of experiences been different.

To view the Other as alike, yet different, sensitizes us to imagine what we could contain, without having recognized it yet. Thus understanding is a way of becoming aware and expanding our sense of human plasticity.

However, it is not easy! It is far easier to believe that others are like your self, as “thieves believe that everybody steals”. Yet, whereas the wise understand thieves, thieves do not understand the virtuous! So to our amusement, most Danish car owners consider their driving skills to be above average.

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This means that you have a choice. Depending on the circumstances and the nature of the study, you may either devote your self to a contractive perspective of interpretation, or to an expansive principle of understanding. So understanding does not only include interpretation, it goes beyond it, as it supplements sensing with exploration.

To recapitulate: For statistical analysis it is necessary to operate with “look-alikes”. For more comprehensive views it is more rewarding to assume everyone to be unique in their ways of coming to perceive their surroundings and inner worlds.

But, of course, the uncovering of differences is, by implication, only possible from an established background of similarities. Or expressed as a slogan: While weaker explanations thrive on a stern attention to averages, understanding thrives on a playful search for deviations too – like persons who succeed in breaking their “social heritage”, ref page 231.

Some abide to the traffic and tax law, not out of fear for sanctions, but as they reason it serves us all best to do so. While, others may try to cheat for the thrill of it.<sup>523</sup>

**Es gibt allerdings unaussprechliches**

Wittgenstein<sup>524</sup>

*Mind apart, the body has its own wisdom too!*

Finally, let us recall: What we are able to express in words is merely a minute part of what is going on within us. We recognize faces, I cannot describe the appearance of you in such detail, that a third person will be able to pick you out in the street. That is why – if you are going on a blind date – you have to wear a bit of unusual attire in order to be recognized. Nevertheless, when entering a shop floor we will immediately sense the atmosphere, before we can explain why. Obviously, we possess an inner potential for drawing on resources that surpasses our explanatory abilities.

**If interpreting the behavior of others is not a problem for you,  
you are stuck with a real problem and so may those who meet you get**

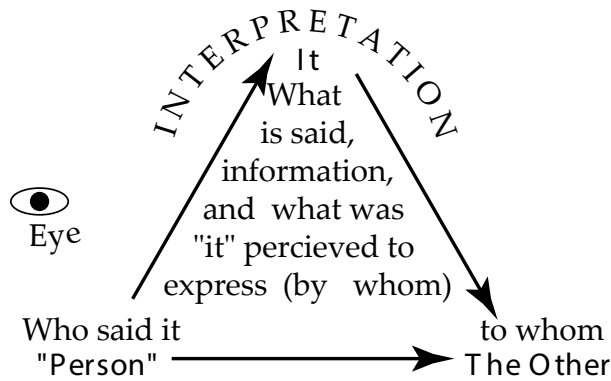
**A good mother understands what the child cannot say**

## 6.5 Taking the Other for granted, as the anti theses to understanding

*From positioning to understanding and reflective awareness*

Moving on, let us first recall how interpretation may go beyond subjectivism and become a playful multi-dimensional experimental endeavour, as outlined in § 4.3, § 4.7 and § 4.15. Or, as illustrated in Figure 6.5 #1 below:

Figure 6.5 #1: INTERPRETATION



As a self-conscious interpreter, the case researcher may experiment with how he takes artefacts, images, or sentences (texts) for signs of the inner states of others, refer to Figure 4.2 #1. Playing with alternative interpretations may be seen as a first attempt to move us beyond subjectivism.

As “we” keep a watchful distance to ourselves, the drive towards self-conscious playful interpretation should by implication, enable us to become aware when and how we are touched. Say, be smilingly aware of the ways – and perhaps even recall and explore why and the manner in which we interpreted what we just read or heard. Or when spotting a group of operators around a supervisor try to notice which signs could be read either as passing information, obliging guidance or one-up-manship!

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*Taking the Other for granted, the anti theses to understanding*

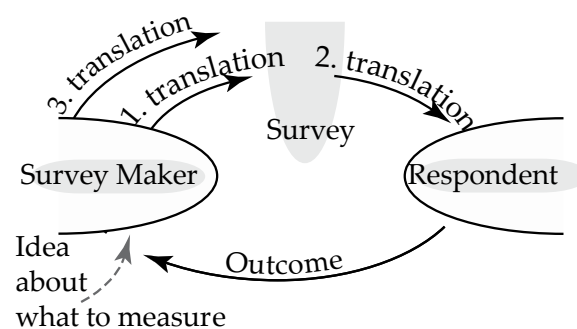
In order to make the position of the understander more explicit, let us first look at some positions it is formulated as a contrast to. Of course the idea of playing with interpretations is beyond researchers, who *explicitly* denies the “legitimacy” of other views than the ideology they are swallowed up by, – be it a conception of rational man, exploitation (Marxism), or structured power thinking. Yet, the role of pre-conceived notions are less evident, when we our self *implicitly* takes it for granted, that others assign the same semantic meaning to words and signs as we, – as is evident from many questionnaires, refer to Figure 6.5 #2.

It is obvious how listening at a distance easily sets the scene for subjectivist bravado. Unfortunately, physical proximity is not itself a guarantee for personal presence. How often do we not witness discussions in which neither part listens to the “Other” – nor to themselves in order to check whether, whether they express makes sense? Discussions without such a lack of awareness may be depicted as in Figure 6.5 #2,1.

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**Figure 6.5 #2: INQUIRING UNKNOWN THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY MEDIUM**

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We, lecturers included, often just talk to others rather than with them. Thus, producers of surveys

1. expect the questions they want the respondents to react to be aligned with their own thinking. Furthermore they
2. expect the respondents not to answer strategically, nor
3. haphazardly as they are assumed to be acquainted with the terms used in the questionnaire.<sup>525</sup>

Yet, a lot of guesswork is involved in the processing of questionnaires.

- First, the *producer* of the survey has to translate what he or she aims to measure into written sentences.
- Next, the *respondent* has to transform the sentences read into something that is meaningful to him.
- Then he must interpret what the unknown researcher may have in mind and choose whether to respond according to his own or his own interests.
- Finally, the researcher may feel tempted to go beyond registration and interpret what the identified co-variations between the selected variables might express according to him or her.



*Towards understanding*

If *talking to* another person without listening is seen as one extreme, understanding will be at the other end.

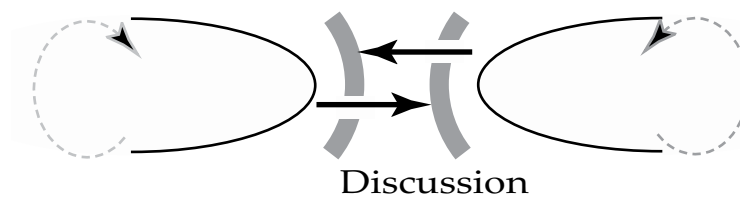
In the mode of understanding we try to let go of any tendency we may have to position ourselves. Instead we try to get a sense of what the Other is trying to express as we listen to what is said and notice words and phrases employed. Thus if he states something we cannot follow, instead of rejecting him as say silly, we *ask him to help us* catch his drift. Suspension of subjectivism is of course all the easier if both parties are prepared to help one other come to terms. But even then, getting there is a challenge.

The bad habit of discussion is not as easily wiped away as the democratic states in their dawn succeeded in wiping out duels by sword. Furthermore we may be tempted – and at times with good reason – to let ourselves be swallowed up in aggressiveness when another person tries to probe into the depth of our inner life. And even more so if this is done in public – which is not proper!

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**Figure 6.5 #2,1: TALKING TO ANOTHER WITHOUT LISTENING**

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Discussions are often conducted in an aggressive-defensive atmosphere of “I know, so let me inform you about how it really is”.<sup>526</sup>

Both parties try to break down the defences of the Other in order to convince him of how and why one’s own information and views are the right ones. In fact, neither part tries to come to terms with, what the Other is expressing, nor does he listen to his self. Thus, whatever feedback is accentuated it will be as a rhetorical effort of persuasion.

---

Thus, understanding calls for setting a scene, not of aggression, but of respect for the integrity of the Other. Unfortunately, we all too seldom take part in such encounters. However, as many an interviewer may have noticed, people do recall incidents when it did occur with particular fondness.<sup>526</sup>

So let us illustrate how understanding may work as a *four-step process*:

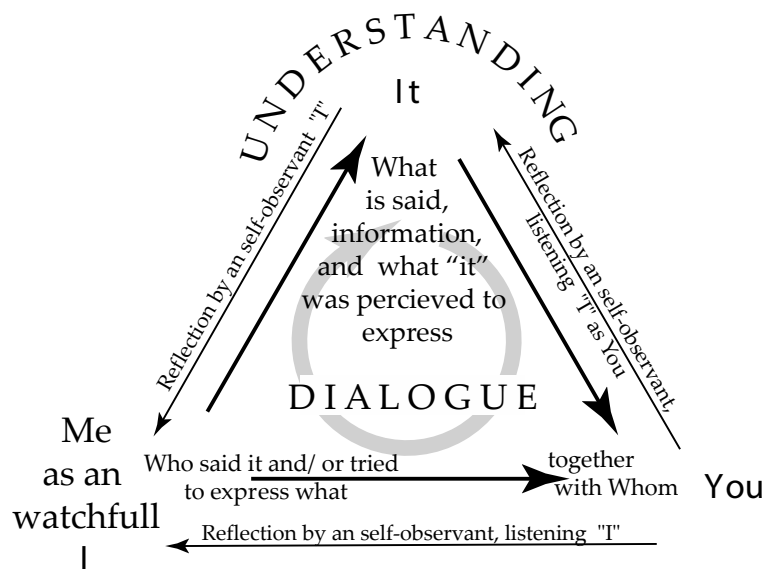
First, prepare yourself to listen to the Other as well as to one’s self. Maintain a *probing* attitude towards one’s self and *experiment* with different interpretations of what is happening.

As you go along, *ask the Other to comment* on your ability to grasp what he is trying to express and invite him to guide you to gain a better understanding of how he experiences his situation. As you are likely to have different frames of reference, try to help the Other make his references as *explicit* as possible.

Check whether what he is saying might make sense to you – either as you check with your self personally or by reference to what you may have heard about. In the first case, the scene is now set for personal exchange. In the latter case, praise your luck. There is a vast difference between having heard what someone might do or believe, and actually be sitting in front of a person who is a carrier of a scheme of thought you so far only have had second hand knowledge of. You should be all the more intrigued, you by inclination are tempted to reject this particular set of beliefs as unhealthy.

The whole four-step process may be illustrated as in Figure 6.5 #3.

**Figure 6.5 #3: UNDERSTANDING AS A DIALOGUE**



In the *mode of understanding*: Interpretation is supplemented with self-awareness, experimentation, and an inner search for recognition: The focus is still oriented towards what is said (information) and done and how (expression). But in the mode of understanding we also

- listen and observe the Other as well as our selves as we
- search for information as well as clues in order to get a feel for why the Other, as well me might nurture each our own interpretation as they pop up in "our" minds
- Next "I" in a playful mode try to experiment with different analytical frames for interpretation the actions of the other as well to
- search for clues to test the range of adequacy for the interpretations activated in hir as well as within one's self
- These we then have to check with the Other.
- In consequence we should be led to see what may be expressed apart from what we otherwise took for granted, perhaps even in a judgmental fashion.

In short, we ask the Other to help us enrich our sensing capabilities. And even better, we may help the other to do so too. Such an exchange could become a mutually shared encounter.<sup>527</sup>

The process of understanding simultaneously moves in at least two directions, one towards embracing the Other, the second towards yourself. Thus we finally have to question our own reactions in order to detect the relevant range for application of the schemes of interpretation that one is aware of applying, including trying to<sup>527</sup>

- detect whether one has a tendency to give one's self away to more or less stereotypical patterns of interpretation, which may lead one to neglect clues and openings towards additional dimensions.

This will include

- o looking back into one's own past to see how and – if possible – when such patterns may have been formed
- o looking into the present to sense how they may serve us,
- o could it for example have anything to do with how “we” want to be seen by others, i.e. image-making?

*The challenge of choosing the right terms*

Listening in the understanding mode is an integration of grasping words and meanings with a pre-linguistic sense of what may be happening to and within the Other as expressed, including through subliminal signs. The latter we cannot control, but we may make an effort to find the terms that might guide the Other lead us to a better understanding.



"I studied English for 16 years but...  
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons"  
Jane, Chinese architect

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If we want to get a feel for the foreignness of the Other, we should not impress our terms on him, but rather adapt our selves to his, ref Figure 4.6 #2. And should his words seem meaningless to us, we should invite the Other to guide us by explicating them, i. g. by exemplification.

This brings us back to the issue of translation of texts in general. In his advocacy for trying to preserve foreignness of the original text for translation of humanistic texts, ref § 4.6, Schleiermacher says: “One “understands an utterance as an action of the speaker only if...one can feel where and how he was seized by the force of his language”<sup>528</sup>. Thus a translator should not try replace the proverbs in the original with some from the target language but translate them a literally as possible. This may in turn enrich the target language

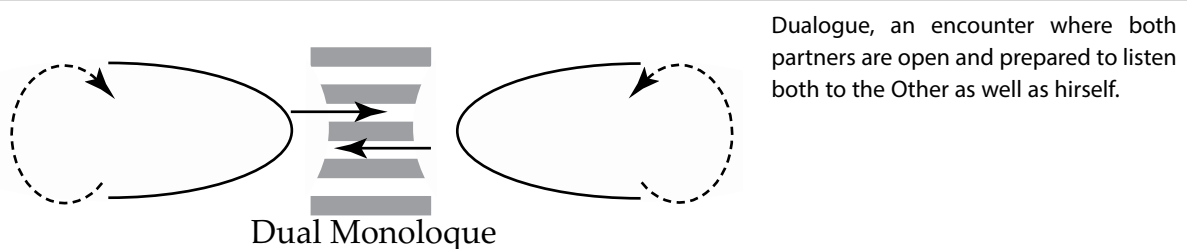
As for coming to speak another language the effect is all the stronger as we within our own body will come sense the strength of its railing power of it and thus get a better sense of that of our own, and thus in practise sense the depth of the ethos of structuralism

Now this goes for meeting another too. Sure the nuances of differences may at first be ignored, as they by appearance may be subtle. Yet they are there if one hunts for them. So just by *rephrasing the terms* used by the Other one can not only help the her to relax, but may even help one self to acquire a sense of how they function.<sup>529</sup>

### Dualogue

Normally, at least during fieldwork, the openly expressed process is primarily one of helping the Other to express him self, while the researcher mainly keeps his thought and reactions for himself. While among colleagues the search for understanding could turn into a process of mutual help, – a *dualogue* as illustrated in Figure 6.5 #4 (INUN 3).

**Figure 6.5 #4: TALKING WITH ANOTHER**



In this mode both go beyond the exchange of ready-made information in order to present e.g. narratives about crucial events, like emotional reactions that they have experienced but do not yet comprehend, etc.

If so, *silence*, just sitting there and being together, creates an atmosphere of mutuality that goes beyond the mere exchanging of words.

**Take a breath. You may learn far more through listening than talking!**

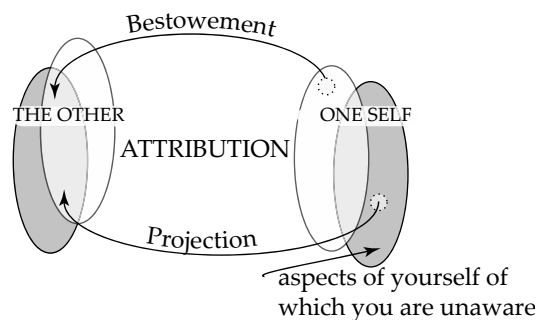
## 6.6 Towards understanding as a process of receivement

### *Bestowment*

Let us repeat: Captured in subjectivism we attribute our own inner movements to others as well – the act of *bestowment*.<sup>530</sup> This “identifying of you as if you were me” or “with what I can imagine” relies on a sympathizing recognition.

*Sympathizing* in the sense that as I imagine you to be like me, thus I also bestow the negative drives which “I” contain to “you”. In case I transfer drives and emotions of my own darker side, which “I” am not ready to admit to the Other we talk about *projection*, ref § 4.8 or the Figure 6.6 #1.

**Figure 6.6 #: THE BESTOWMENT and projection<sup>531</sup>**



Both bestowment and projection are interpretative acts of attribution. The former performed as if in harmony with the Other and his situation, projection not. Neither move contains any guarantee for adequacy of coverage seen from the perspectives of the Other, nor may it concern “me” whether the traits “I” attribute to you will be acknowledged.

Bestowment may lead to understanding so far it is followed by 1) an exploration of the degree to which our perceptions fit and, if not, 2) an inner search for the potential backgrounds for the differences between us, as illustrated in the up coming Figures 6.6 #2 & 2.1.

Bestowment is an act of attribution and can either be

- o Personal: based upon “placing one self in the shoes of the Other” and/or recall how one often or at least once reacted in similar situations.
- o Theoretical appreciation of the behaviors, whose occurrence one has heard of – including having learned to be the very traits that define a person as a member of a particular group.
- o An rejection: At times we may witness behaviors that are utterly alien to us, say an act we believe we could never do. Being in the mode of non-recognition may tempt to lead us to a judgmental rejection of the Other, as not “really human”.

Rejecting the Other as a worthy social being, say, setting him aside from ourselves as either say a capitalist, socialist or insane, may soothe our own self-image, but never guide us to generate understanding. When being at a loss to explicate a hitherto unknown behavior, it is better to simply admit it being so. So if you for instance encounter a religious ritual that you cannot comprehend, linger in puzzlement, be fascinated or even better than anything try to simulate it! For a recapitulation please refer to Figure 6.6 #1.1.

Figure 6.6 #1.1: BESTOWMENT  
 RANGING FROM RECOGNITION & WONDER TO REJECTION

TO SEE ME IN YOU	Mo- de of recog- nition	Per- sonally	<i>Bestowment</i> : Attributing to the Other the patterns of action and reaction, which one knows of from one self - either personally, or preferably in a <i>sympathizing</i> <sup>532</sup> mode. A stand which will include <i>subjectivism</i>
		Theo- retical- ly	<i>Theoretical Appreciation</i> : Yes, "I" have heard of such behavior before e.g. from literature. A stand that may lead to a self-observant play with alternative interpretations ( <i>suspended subjectivism</i> )
OR NOT	Mo- de of non- recog- nition	Per- sonally	<i>Projection</i> : Transference of inner drives to the Other, which is difficult for us to accept, could roam around within ourselves.
		Never heard of, yet!	Fascinated Puzzled Intrigued observation of the Other
		Rejec- tion	Denying the Other any sense of human social aptitude and/or rationality

Any of these stands may in different degrees open the door to understanding, or they may indeed close it. All depending on your awareness!



*Understanding (continued)*

While attribution occurs on my terms, understanding, as we define it here, is an attempt to come to terms with how the Other expretates his actions. Which of course does not entail the Other really knows – even she tries to make sense of her acts! As I listen I may very well a) inwardly attribute other drives to the Other. But how can I know I am right? It would better first b) to let one self be puzzled and for instance say: “Does that mean that...” and give the Other c) the chance to reflect and comment and address his own interpretation, and in consequence also mine.

The Other is thus to be encouraged d) to draw my attention to those facets that “I” did not notice or imagined capable of playing a role. Thus the door is opened for us e) to wonder and ask ourselves: How is this possible? Can I f) recognize or at least imagine any potential for a similar inner movement? So g) I ask the Other to explicate how his perception works for him, and even better, to inform me how it came about, as far as he can recall how, – its genesis. Thus, we are h) put on the trail towards understanding

The process of understanding thus becomes one of *receivment*: Being guided in a double sense, from the Other as well as from still unrecognized potentials within oneself, please refer to Figure 6.6 #2 A&B.

What do you want to do?

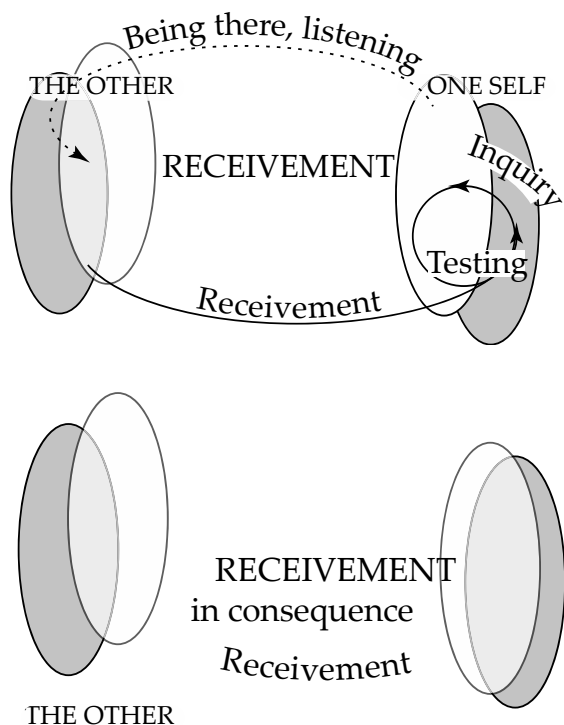
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**Figure 6.6 #2 A&B THE RECEIVEMENT PROCESS**



Receivment as a double process: As we listen to the Other try to assist her to come to terms with her experiences, past and present feelings. Then question whether one may detect some comparable patterns within one's self.

This may either be done in an explorative mood looking within one self, trying to sense a *hypothetical potentiality* of similar inner motions or even similar patterns of action-reaction.

Or "I" may – in retrospect – recognize I do *contain* similar patterns, despite the fact that "I" was not consciously aware of their presence.

Or one may reject any correspondence. If so, some self-scepticism could be called for.

Now say, I have an inkling, that "You" might may address me with a particular effect in mind. If so "I" will have to ponder on a strategy. One could be to take a side step and with a drawn back accommodating smile "I" could suggest that "You" might be pulling my leg. – Which you may deny. But if you are ready to admit you did try, the door will often open up for a deeper, mutually honest exchange, refer to Figure 6.6 #3.

Figure 6.6 #3

ALTERNATIVE MODES FOR RECEIVEMENT

UN- DER- STAN- DING:  THE SEARCH FOR YOU IN ME	Affir- ma- tion        Rejec- tion	<p><i>Receivment by contact</i>: realizing the potential of un-recognized inner movements within me.</p> <p>Receivment by imagination: visualizing what dispositions I might have developed had circumstances been different.</p> <p><i>Receivment by guidance</i> from the other: detection of new sensibilities within one's self, and thus achievement of greater insight into the human condition.</p> <p>After self-examination, a self conscious rejection of the possibility of any recognition without being either fascinated nor condemning</p> <p>Drawn to a judgmental rejection without being inclined to ask oneself the reason why.</p>
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Let me make sense out of these notions by providing a few examples.

*Examples*

My father was in charge of a large processing plant. As a student I joined him on a visit to another company. After having walked through the machine shop, my father asked me what I made of what we had seen; – the amount of space behind the presses, how the items to be processed were placed around the milling machine; the oil under the drilling machine in the corner; the postures of some of the workers at the benches, etc. I did not have much to say. I realized how I had walked through the shop with my eyes shut. This was an episode that I have often thankfully recalled during my fieldwork years later.

Talking about my father brings me to mention another episode. He had led a small group of freedom fighters during the German National-Socialist occupation of Denmark. They were the first to secure the weapons from the field where the allies had dropped them. An issue he hardly ever talked about. Years later we went on a tour through what was then Socialist East Germany. At the border, a group of soldiers told us to get out of the car. One of them placed him self at the rear and ordered my father to open the trunk. I heard a click: The release of the safety catch of a “Tommy Gun”.

The sound did not mean a jiffy to me. Nobody was hidden in the trunk, so it all seemed like “theatre” to me. But to my father! His posture froze, – his face went white! What he had been so afraid of during the occupation 20 years ago was happening now: He was hold at gunpoint by a German soldier. Now, suddenly I realized the pressure he must have been living under back then. And as we drove on he began to talk.

In another case I interviewed a Danish student, who professed to be a member of the Socialist People’s Party of Denmark. Yet, all her beliefs were profoundly liberal: Every person should be able to carve hir own way through life, search for individualism, etc. As a student of philosophy, “I” was tempted to teach her a lesson about Stuart Mill, the elementary differences between left and right, etc. But I held my tongue and remained puzzled. Luckily, because then she said: “The right wing members of Parliament talk about nothing but “economy”, the Socialists are the only ones to talk about the lives of people”. It was a revelation. Instantly I with sympathy sensed how one might be attracted to a political scheme to which “I”, for historical reasons, was not.

*However much we may want to understand, there may be limits*

Experimenting in terms of receivment opens the door to let one see what one has not yet the ability to contain and thus may have to work on. Allow me to offer some examples of patterns of behavior, which I hard time seeing myself adapt to:

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During centuries people have exposed themselves to self-mutilating pain: e.g. Christians in the Middle Ages, who whipped their own backs till the blood flowed in order to atone themselves with their image of god. As Shia's still do it at "Easter" in their recall of the infamous betrayal of Hussein. Or as some girls today – like Saint Serafina di Ciardi of San Gimignano in Renaissance Tuscany – starve themselves to death.

But, as we shall see next, there may even be behaviors we better not even try to understand.

*There may even be behaviors  
one should abstain from trying to understand*

While receivment may be therapeutic, it may also have some unwarranted consequences:

From my very first day in school I was drawn to girls. The idea of homosexuality would properly never have dawned on me, had I not been told about it, so it became a theoretical fact. Later, my wife and I came to appreciate several gay persons as friends. Now homosexuality had materialized in a concrete form. So I had to "ask myself" in the receivment mode, whether I could have become a member of the brown circle, as Casanova termed it.

And my answer is affirmative. If I was to be isolated with men for years – say in a prison – I could see myself turn to someone and engage him in a caring and sexual relationship. So far so good!

Years later, when our own boys were in their teens, the Danish Press gave a lot of publicity to paedophiles. Could I possibly understand that? In an experimental mood I looked at small girls to see whether I could see them as targets for sexual pleasure. Just experimenting with the idea had an unforeseen consequence: Girls suddenly no longer appeared to me as children but as potential targets for sexual encounters.

I deeply regretted having ever tried to understand paedophilia and had to de-sensitize myself. And certainly, I found no reason to go further and to try to "understand" how men – priests in particular – could lust for boys. Thus, I learned there are limits for what I, even just in thought, should try to simulate. Ignorance may at times serve us as well!

In short, despite its potential for enriching one's sense of human plasticity, receivment has to be performed with the awareness that one has to set limits for what one might try to "understand". With this in mind let us take a further look at the potential dynamics of understanding.

*Receivment by imagination*

We have previously in passing, ref § 4.4, referred to the as I said then, fantastic idea of reading the future from the entrails of chicken. Since high school it puzzled me for years. So, a morning decades later now as a farmer, I imagined still half asleep having slaughtered a chicken and offered it as thanksgiving to God for what we receive. An – as I imagined – a most relevant gift within cultures, which knew of hunger!

Next it was not difficult to envision how a god<sup>533</sup> could react and give something back in a hidden form of dreams; – not immediately for any one to grasp, but readable for those who seek to be enlightened. Thirdly I had slaughtered enough animals to know that livers at times have spots of different shades of colour. And these might of course be interpreted in the same ways as we may see figures in the clouds.

True or not? I do not know! But I do know, that the reading of entrails is not that alien to me anymore

*Summing up so far*

After these more or less rhapsodic examples let us sum up, what the consequences of an inquiry within one self towards internal recognition may be.

One may realize that one can imagine circumstances in which one could act similarly: For example stealing in order to provide for ones starving family or even murdering someone. Or one may be reminded that that there have been incidents in one's own life in which, although the situations are not exactly a par, one did something similar or perhaps just imagined that one could do something similar. Thus, we need to distinguish between

- o Actual awareness and
- o Hypothetical awareness

Or one may perhaps vehemently reject the idea that one could never be “in the shoes of some” who could do something as nasty as beating a child. Yet this does not mean that one could not have had inclinations to do so at least once. So as receivment is founded on a romantic idea of a shared humanity, we will have to look at ourselves with suspicion every time we set ourselves apart from the doings of others.

So let us go back to see what receivment based on personal encounters may bring us.

**It takes two to clap with one hand**



## 6.7 Helping the Other to get in touch with himself

### *Expanding the concept from personal to reciprocal understanding*

The case researcher primary interest should be to watch and learn from others. And if we want to move beyond mere “fact finding” and deal with the issue of lived life, we have encourage the Other to get in touch with, reflect on, and express hir self. – Which has an ethos of its own: Helping the Other to recall experiences, visualize, listen to hir inner movements as well guide her as she searches for words to express hir self. In short, also to give the Other time to *be aware of herself in the present*.

This is not the place for an extended how-to-instruction,<sup>534</sup> but a few pointers on how to go about the task are provided in Figure 6.7 #1 below:

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#### **Figure 6.7 #1: HOW TO HELP THE OTHER WORK IN THE RECEIVEMENT MODE**

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- o Echo: Repeat what the Other just said in order to enable him to listen to what he said him self
  - o Listening means keeping your own mouth shut and abstain from any inclination to teach the Other how to look at a given issue
  - o Give the Other space. Take a deep breath – or even two – before you respond
  - o Help the Other to get beyond talking in general terms. Guide the Other to recall and reflect on concrete situations, events and what they have come to mean to him and why. In short, be concrete!
  - o Flow with the Other but return to previously addressed issues, you sense may deserve a more thorough treatment
  - o Ask to be enlightened on issues that you had not imagined to be of any relevance
- 

### *Dualogue*

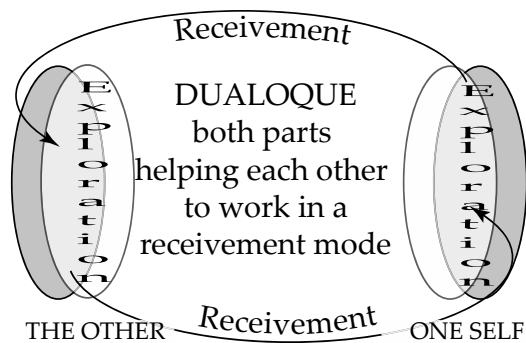
The mode of understanding may be expanded to a mutual search of coming to terms: In *dualogues*, both parties are helping each other to get in better touch with each other.

Dualogue may be defined as *an encounter* of two people, both engaging themselves in an interrelated process of receivment. Both listening to each other, try to help and give the Other time for inwards recognition, reflection on past experiences, as well as allowing the Other time to search for words to express him self. A dualogue is thus an inquiry of mutual exchange of tentative expressions as an effort of coming to terms with the sensed potentials tentatively offered to each Other. A way of coming to terms as a two fold engaged listener.

Dualogues thus have an ethos of their own: Give the Other as well as your self *space to be aware in the present*

Any such encounter has an intensity of awareness far beyond the ordinary relaxed small talk or the heated exchanges in the mode of discussion. Such an exchange and inner search may be depicted as in Figure 6.7 #2.

**Figure 6.7 #2: (RECEI 2): ENCOUNTERS: DIALOGUE IN THE RECEIVEMENT MODE**



*Dialogue*, a mutual search for understanding: A string of interchanging outwards expressions and inwards reflective, tentative searches towards coming to terms with experiences and emotional responses.

During such an encounter both partners see themselves as interlocked in a non-judgmental search, trying to help the other to.

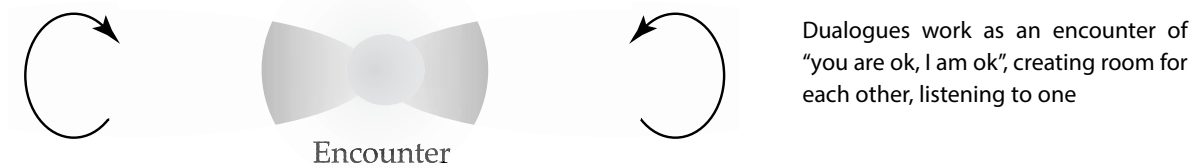
come to terms with their emerging tentative insights

Thus, *encounters build on sharing*, a willingness to ask one another for help to open up to exploring one's hitherto not openly recognized or even darker sides. A dialogue, thus become an on going mutual exploration and search for recognition of the experiences and the inner lives between two people in a consistent, mutually containing, helpful mode.

Or with a reference to the previous figures 6.5 # 2.1 & 6.5 #4 receivment during an encounter may be illustrated, as in Figure 6.7 #2,1 below:



Figure 6.7 #2,1: AN ENCOUNTER



another as well as being in touch with the movements within one’s own body, sharing life stories and emotions in a joint quest of what one may term *inner-standing*. Thus, the borderline between you and me becomes blurred. Reflection and talking with the Other becomes as an extended inner dialogue with one’s self.

*To understand is more than an act; it is a certain state of mind*

While interpretation and explanation may be seen as acts of the consciousness, understanding explicitly relies on the awareness of motions within the body too. It is a suspended state of being open both to the Other as well as one’s own inner motions. So “we” with a probing attitude make a note of our own semi-automatic thinking and speech patterns. To be followed up with tentative suggestions of how to go beyond such reactions, which you then later may come to look back upon as a lack of awareness, prejudices, or ideological misconceptions. Thus, understanding carries with it a potential for altering you as a person, not just your mindset, but how you cope with the emotional reactions in your body.<sup>535</sup>

#### ASPECTS OF RECEIVEMENT

### 6.8 Outlining the scene for telling and being told

Receivment is an experience most of us should be familiar with:

For instance as one is struck and alerted to come to terms with something we have not hitherto known of or respected. So while the classical approach to “understanding” outlines “recognition” as the carrying part of the process of understanding”, the aim of receivment is to bring us beyond that. It refers to the process of becoming aware of what *we do have not hither too recognized*. Receiving goes beyond merely seeing man as a rational calculating being, as Schutz and his predecessors did, refer § 6.3.

As an introduction to a later theoretical outline, allow me first to present a few cases from my fieldwork, case-like narratives, as well as some further personal experiences.

#### *A case of being told*

I have often enough given an account of how I was led to the ACT-distinction of worker- and manager-owners of their own company, refer to § 2.11 & § 5.18. Yet, all its implications did not come all that easy to me. When I drafted a report from my last visit at Reuther Mold, I struggled with a short ten-line paragraph, which concerned the attitudes of the complaisant. I had a clear sense, that what I was putting down in print was wrong. I re-wrote the five lines for hours. It was still wrong but I could not figure out how. So finally I had to let it pass.

The draft was distributed around Reuther Mold before my return. The morning I – at the date announced – stepped onto the floor, *Werner Eggers*, an older worker, rushed forward with my paper in hand, pointing at the dubious lines, exclaiming: “This is wrong, this is wrong”. He went on to explain why. I “immediately” sensed his points and knew how right he was. Receptiveness! I had been so engulfed in sympathy for the activists and relied so much on their descriptions of the complaisant that I had neglected to embrace their position on their own terms.

As one of the older, Werner identified himself with the complaisant. And they, he told me, did not want to step in to promote themselves. In the long run it was better for the company, if the younger colleagues were trained in approaches to problem solving, rather than them. Instead the complaisant supplied the activists with ideas and expected them to go along with these – which, as I was to realize later, they actually did.

As I took a closer look at the issue, an even more important function dawned on me: The ideas launched by either activist-workers or managers may not always be as sound as they at first seemed to those who conceived them. So, as activism spread, the complaisant stepped in to make sure that all the suggestions were properly evaluated. Thus the complaisant became a sounding board for thoughtfulness in order to prevent overzealous actions.

### *Fiddle-faddle*

The next example reflects on an embarrassing incident for me during an interview with *John Winter*, compression-moulder at Dimco Gray in 1988, ref Figure 6.8 #1 JW.

---

#### **Figure 6.8 #1 JWAN EXAMPLE OF BEING TAUGHT**

---

Amongst managers John W had had a bad name for absence. Or as he told me:

“Work is not all my life...But work most of the time gets its priority. But then there is times, when this priority just has to be put aside. And fishing rod has to come out, and camp and gear and you just got a go.”

For this John got “bad points” which he had to work off.

-: So you worked your points down to zero?

“I worked my points down. And then they build back up again. I go to... Seems like I go through a period... I don't feel... It is nothing against the company, it is not that I don't want to be there.

Now I stepped in trying to be oh so understanding:

--: Oh no. It is not a natural part of human nature to work every day, – even though work is a good thing, it is not necessarily so everyday.

To this John answered

“Yeh, but we still have the T-shirt.”<sup>65</sup>

---

I felt so ashamed.<sup>66</sup> Week after week I had been travelling around Ohio, constantly enjoying new experiences, while day after day John Winter and his co-workers had been tied to the same machines, – just as I had been as an apprentice. How condescending of me to say: “It's not a natural part of human nature to work every day”. I, – who for twenty-five years had not worked for money, but enjoyed being allowed to teach, explore, and write!

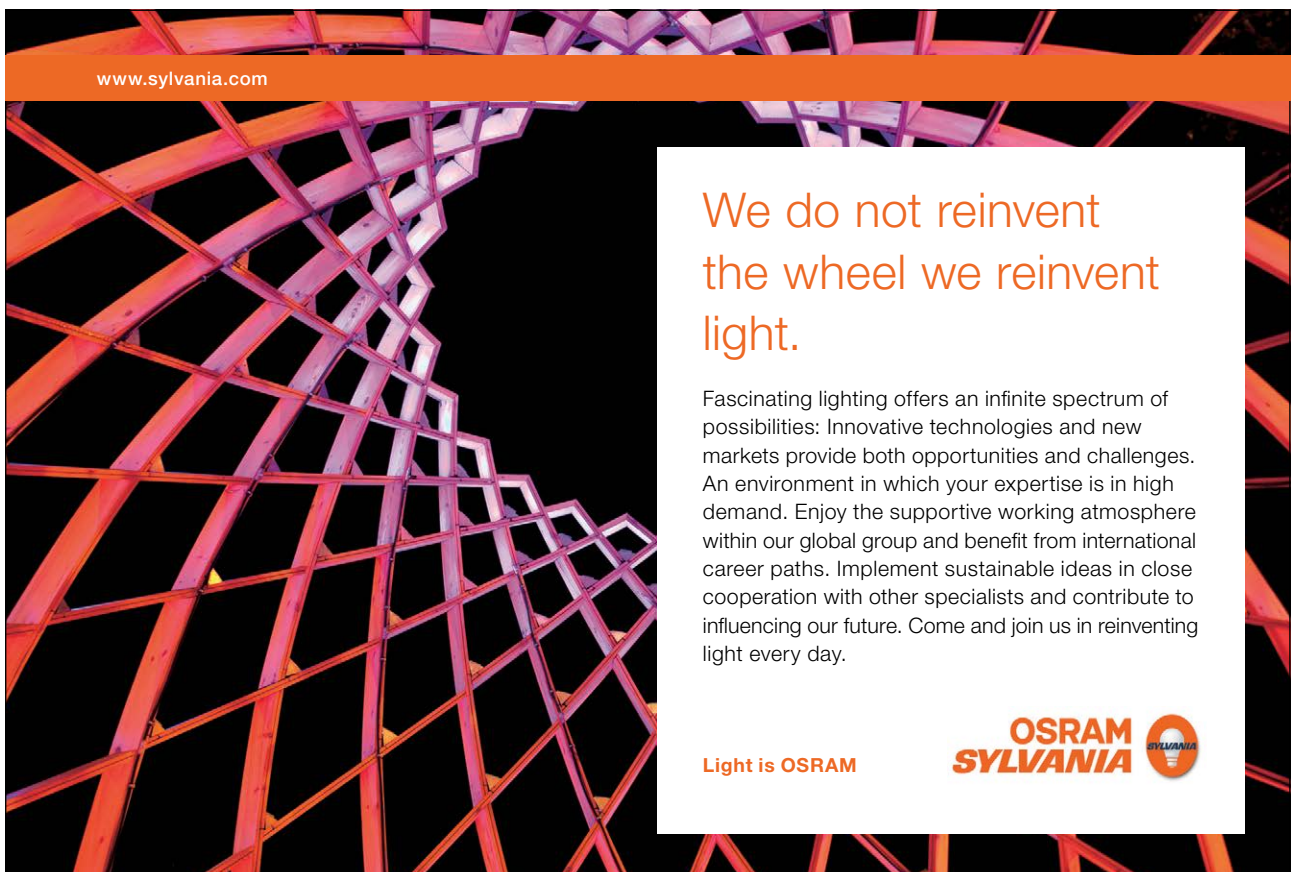
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To sympathize without sensitivity for the situation of the Other is what the Danish existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard called fiddle-faddle.<sup>538</sup> For instance, making a scam confession of a wrongdoing without feeling any intention to change. I had due reason to feel ashamed of my lack of let us call it compassion. I still had much to learn not only as an interviewer, but as a person!

As feelings and e-motions rush through our bodies, we may just pay them a fleeting look or even subdue or reinterpret their occurrence in order to save face. Yet, we better receive them, pay heed to when and how they occur and then reflect on what “eye-opening” messages they may contain!

#### *Receivment as corporeal expansion*

The shame aroused within my body led me towards awareness of my insincerity. A lot is experienced through the corpus rather than just by intellect alone. The body has a wisdom of its own, which our rational faculties<sup>539</sup> may, at best, have only a theoretical notion of. Rationality is like icing on a cake. It appears as to be on top of things. However it is for the most activated in a passive, reactive mode, as a mean to come to terms with something that has happened. This not the least in the case of outbursts of emotions! So far, they are spontaneous off course! Actors may choose to express them selves as being angry. But normally we do not decide to be so. Generally it is the other way round as all ready stated. It is when we see ourselves act angry, that we do know we are.




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We know of our inner state as we sense what is expressed through the body, its inner as well as outer movements – ref § 6.4<sup>540, 541</sup>. And if you still – say as a cognitivist – believe in supremacy of thought: Clutch your fists, shake your arms, and draw your lips backwards – and you will soon feel an inner motion of anger building up inside. Or you may make yourself happy just by dancing around with a smile on your face

We associate all sorts of inner body movements with affective states. For instance coldness with fear, a twinkling eye and smile with joy, or blushing with shyness or shame. And please notice such movements are not consequences, but the means by which we realize what state we are in. As we feel the knot in our stomach, we know we are embarrassed, not the other way around. The body reacts; the mind follows, if it is prepared to notice and we ourselves are prepared to listen. That is why it is important to be prepared for receivment.

### *Crucial incidents*

The shame aroused in me by my superficial comment to John Winther may be called a crucial event, as already referred to in § 5.18 on emergence.

*Crucial incidents* differs from critical, ref § 5.7. The critical incidents have an immediate feeling of danger associated with it, – being it for one self or others. In contrast crucial situations may at first often be seen as trivial. But, as we in hindsight realize, they did guide us to reflect, they acquire significance. They were wake up calls, as they showed us that there is more to notice and be aware of than we saw so far, as referred to by the story about little Erik in class, § 1.4. To the unprepared mind this could – often unconsciously – create some uncertainty. If so we may suppress and skate past it in an attempt to save face. But if “we” want to learn “we” better try to align our inner reality with the outer and prepare our selves to listen to what is happening within us as well as to what others may tell us.

Reflection calls us to step back as we listen and conceive the movements in our own body as an Other. After some trial and missteps we may thus help ourselves to realize how

- o we may have been swallowed up in stereotypical generalizations – or prejudices as some may call those of our semi-automatic cognitive orientations they disagree with,
- o our behavior (our social life) is out of accord with how we believe we act – or at least how our acts are perceived by others.

Thus opening a door for

- o what we later in hindsight, we will find “we” did miss and which we now value and recognize as important.



*A short note and the limits of rationality*

We are emotional beings, and that is exactly why we cling to rationality as a means of making sense. And rationality does serve us well and may on grandest scale help us to create well functioning airports. Yet on a personal level, it is not necessary, but rather dangerous to give our rationality the upper, if not the only hand. People in other cultures live as well as lived without having to drum up rational reasons for their actions.

Sure, what counts in our culture as partners in teamwork for constructive purposes, is to be accountable or at least able to present after-the-fact expretations. But in order to receive, we have to enmesh ourselves in the stream of lived life, – listen to others as well as our bodies rather than resort to language games in order not to come to terms with our vulnerabilities. Detached listening to the motions within our bodies opens the door for receivment.

*Moves towards receivment as a practise of conversation*

Crucial incidents gently come to “blow our minds”.

At times they may be a welcome expansion. But they may challenging to live up to too, particularly when they show how “you” may have fooled our selves in the past and betrayed others in the process. And it may even look, as if receivment entails you to live out side your self as your own watchdog. Yet as sooner “we” learn to let the imprint of the past be bygone and accept what we may become, rather than cling to what “we” say we are, the sooner will we enjoy the freedom of watchful flow.

Allow me to present a few somewhat guarded guidelines for moving in that direction as you talk with others:

- o Make yourself *vulnerable*<sup>542</sup> – present how you look at a certain subject and ask the Other to evaluate it. Listen to what she has to say and inwardly pay attention and suspend whatever inclination you may have to defend what you could state as “your” position.
- o When you never the less is brought into a defensive mode, listen and give your self time to explore why you feel a need to defend what.
- o So instead of arguing, be present and follow the inner motions aroused within you.

In other words

- o try to move from dialogue to encounter by listening with suspended judgment and a conscious intent to listen, not only to the Other, but to your self as well. All done within the idiom of “I’m OK, You’re OK”.<sup>543</sup>

Of course, this is all the easier if your partner is not only interested in helping you to search inwards but apt to follow the ethos of the listed guidelines hir self.

*Seeing One self as an Other – an example of the impact of crucial incidents*

After the arrest of his Master at the Mount of Olives, Simon, the apostle, in order to save himself thrice denied to be a follower of Jesus, the gracious.<sup>544</sup>

Later, when in safety as Simon looked back, he cried bitterly as he recalled how he, a few hours earlier, so boastfully had promised to follow his Master and even die for him. Now he realized how easy it is to use words in order to shield oneself from facing up to realities.

It may very well be this incident that brought Peter to realize that in future he would have to act differently and openly admit and stand up to his trust in Christ, the merciful. Thus committing himself to an existential truth, ref Figure 2.2 #1, page 34.

The challenge of understanding goes beyond words. It is as we realize our shortcomings – we may be moved to change our ways of being.

*Seeing not what diverges  
on the lower level, but what is shared on an upper*

As a teenager my conception of Christianity was tainted by the Lutheran emphasis on sin, man's baseness and helplessness. With such a heavy yet indeed limited luggage I, at seventeen, began my hitchhiking tours through France, Catholic Spain, Orthodox Greece, Islamic North Africa and the Near East. Year after year I dwelled on the different religious dogmas and practices that I was confronted with. And believe me, I was bewildered!

Then in my third year of travelling I met an older man, – probably a Sufi – in the outer yard of a Syrian mosque. He listened to my confusion and suggested: "Erik, maybe you should not look at how the great religions diverge. Differences are man-made. Try instead to look for what all religions share, and honour that".

Immediately, as if struck by lightning, I knew this to be profoundly true. An expansive eye-opener I accepted on the spot. And gone were all my futile inner comparative rumblings!

I think many of us have seen challenges disappear as we are helped to redefine our problem, or as I prefer to see it: To be guided to put the problem in a proper perspective closer to home. It was this incident that later, – whether logical or not – led me to accept the profound guidance of the research principle of "the Nugget in the Rubble": Search for the central kernel of value in any ideology and ignore the defences by which it turns its back to the world at large.

## 6.9 Coping and enrichment as an ever expanding process

### *The active role of rationality*

Receivment may – as stated – arise in many forms, stretching from a revelation, a joyful moments of insight, to an embarrassing feeling of “being caught red-handed in the act”. Of course, the chance of receiving may be lost in fright and emotionally driven defensive aggression towards others, – and consequently towards one self. In any case you may experiment with different ways of coping with your reaction.

*Coping* is the term the ways we after a period of reflection plan for, try and do implement new ways of reacting to specific emotions as they arise, and thus indirectly to the social challenges that we face. The *active role of consciousness of rationality*, one might say!



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Learning how to cope is a challenge, not least in the more trying cases. Easy to talk about, yet hard to practice! Coping is most relevant in the case of arousal of feelings that we know it may not be for own good to surrender ourselves to potential dysfunctional reactions, like defensive modes, anger, shame, etc.<sup>545</sup> When such feelings arise, we may in the receivment mode try to opt for the following:

- first make a break and try step out of “the stream of lived life” and look at One self, *be mindful*: Try to sense what one is apt to do now more or less spontaneously,
- refrain from just acting on it and *imagine* whether another reactive pattern might be better in the long run.

The idea is to learn just to flow along in life without later being overwhelmed by thoughts of what we rather should have done!

We have already implicitly referred to coping in relation to acting in order to create an effect, ref Figure 4.2 #1. It is not the same to display anger as an actor and being swallowed up in it. Caught in a situation you do not first feel angry and then express yourself! No, it is – as we have mentioned before – the other way around: It is as “you” sense an inclination to display signs of anger you may become aware of your inner state.

Now say you *want to cope*. So as soon as you feel the inclination to say defend an argument, step out of the stream of semi-automatic behavior, notice the inclination to retaliate, and then wonder what to do. That does not mean that you should suppress it. If you “swallow” it, it will remain locked up within you. No, just take notice of the arousal of say an irritation, smile inwardly, rest, and let the tension evaporate. Then address your full attention to the issue at stake: Be aware of the Other. See whether and how you may help both of you to come to terms with the situation! It is not easy, but if you succeed, it will be mutually beneficial.

As stated ever so often, receivment works best in an atmosphere of mutuality. In case a powerful superior threatens to impose his views on us, receivment may not be as much an issue as our potential loss of freedom. If you – at least as a lip service – have to align, do not give in to the temptation to remedy the situation and “explain” it away.<sup>546</sup> That would merely add a layer of bad conscience; as referred to in § 4.8, to our psychic make up.

It is as we realize, how we do not flow along with how we behave, we have to prepare ourselves not to be ensnared the next time. Write down on paper what was at stake. Prepare yourself to recall your note the next time when you may be on your way into a comparable situation! Then, should it emerge, take note and make a pause. Relax in a playful mode and experiment with alternative procedures. Once more write down what happened, or even better, talk to a colleague you can trust not to exploit the vulnerability, you thus expose.

For case-researchers in particular, coping has at least two aspects. Be aware, – as if you were standing beside your self, – not to express an air of rejection of the Other and the foul views she brings forward. Instead, try to

- o guide the Other to help you to perceive him in a plurality of details
- o as you listen, employ your arsenal of theories for looking at the world in order to face up to and “set question marks” around your pet theories, e.g. refer to analytical generalization, refer to § 2.12.

Be aware not to give yourself away to be captured by rejection or other negative emotions. It blurs your capacities for noticing.

As for field-work do not identify yourself with any side, neither managers nor workers. Just *identify yourself with your curiosity* – the desire of coming to know, to receive! Then we might suggest a scheme for coping to an Other, for example through visualization – and if she tries it out, we have as much to gain from the attempt as the Other. Partial confirmation or – if it runs sour – rejection may thus be converted into an understanding.

### *Understanding*

*as an expression of an on going process of learning how to cope*

Understanding is grounded in the belief, that we are able to go beyond interpretation and attain a greater sense of what is going on. Just accepting this as a possibility may open the door for dialogue, inner or outer. This call for us to respect what we otherwise may be inclined just to let pass or even deny as relevant. A process, building on awareness, visualization and response, which may be as described below:

- First interpretation in the mood of bestowment: Using ourselves silently as media for *imagining* what is going on within and/or between others.
- Next, exploring whether and how the Other perceives him or herself and the world that he or she is part of, at least in fragments.
- As we do so we inadvertently, try to keep track of the expressions of the Other and wonder whether our ways of bestowment could be biased. This is all the more likely easy to result in awareness, if we – as a methodological principle – expect the Other to be different from us in the sense of having experiences of her own.
- The Other is thus seen as a resource that might help us to notice what we would not have seen otherwise. And so far the Other is present, she may guide us to attain a sense of what might move other beings.
- Furthermore, by searching for ways and means to express, the Other might get a better grip on hir own life, as she is given room and guidance to pause and reflect upon hir own experiences.
- By constantly making an account of what we believed/imagined to be the case, and compare it with what any individual case led us to, we may thus be able to get a better vision of the human condition.

A process, that will go on and on, as depicted in the figures below. Figure 6.9 #1 is an attempt to illustrate enrichment as a process of added abilities termed in a dialectical logic. – While 6.9 #2 metaphorically outlines it as a timeline:

**Figure 6.9 #1: FREEDOM AS SUBJECT TO AN EXPANSIVE SPIRAL LOGIC**

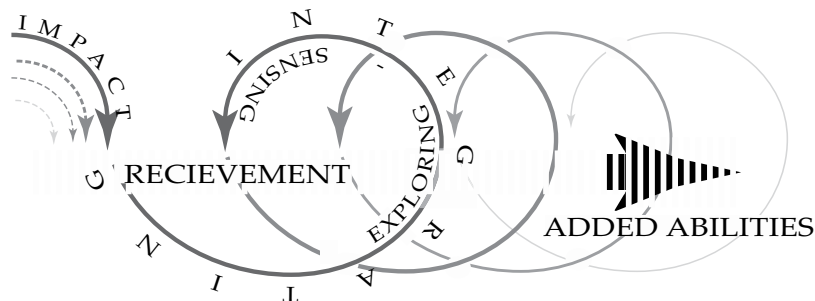


To an existentialist, freedom is the “freedom to choose”. But guiding oneself from decision to implementation calls for discipline, – as anyone who has tried to give up smoking knows.

So exercising your freedom calls for you to constrain your liberty to act, but it is worth doing because reaching goals and embracing new competences may in it self create new potential freedoms.

Human freedom is not an absolute. We are never free to do just what we want, nor may it be good for us. Rather than hunt for what we desire, we should try to identify what we need.

**Figure 6.9 #2: RECEIVEMENT AS AN EVER EXPANDING, ONGOING PROCESS**



New abilities are hardly due to just one impact, but are conditioned by several others. The inner potential for the reception of impacts, that may lead to receivement may have been present within us as vague forebodings. Thus, we may already nurture a sense of their potentiality and be somewhat internally prepared to cope with them before becoming conscious of it.

However, if unprepared, crucial events may lead us to a fright that could sway us into aggressive rejection, loss of grounding, or even into depression.

*The Other as the guide to help us to get in better touch with our selves*

Most of our mundane acts are performed more or less automatically. Yet when facing a question of why we acted as we did, we are often more than ready to present an expretation and are thus likely to misguide ourselves to believe in our own “rationality” – as illustrated by laddering, ref § 4.8. So, the ability to make sense does not entail we really know.



To look back on what we did or did not do, the practical as well as emotional consequences it had, calls for us to step out of their spontaneously lived life. As reflection suspends the present it may lead to the visualization of alternatives, ideas of what we could have done; – how we may have coped. Very fine! But it does not necessarily entail that we will act as planned. People may get fatter and continue to smoke, however much they wish and plan for it to be otherwise. As said earlier, it is not until I realize what “I” thought “I” wanted, – was not be what I do need.

There is a partial reason for this dilemma. It is hard to observe ourselves as we reflect. Reflect as we reflect! And worse, self-reflection without awareness makes us liable to daydreaming. In a direct encounter though, you as an Other, can observe how “I” act. Thus your observations may lead me to reflect on what is “really” – as you see it – happening within me. Just as “I” can observe you as you act.

The *strength of the encounter* is thus that the Other may notice signs of which we ourselves are unaware. Therefore:

*During an encounter your reflections – as an Other –  
of my behavior is a potentially better source for me to come  
to terms with myself, than if I am just left to my own rumblings.*

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This means, that understanding as an epistemology – as a contrast to the classical explanatory ethos of distance – is a social endeavour base upon engaged nearness.

Thus, *understanding transcends the traditional objective-subjective pattern*, so dear to some. It is a process of both seeing the Other as part of me and trying to get a sense of what one have not yet, or perhaps may never be able to contain.

This double-faced reality may explain why encounters have such an intense feel of presence, which debates within one self seldom acquire. Why? Because inner dialogues within may so easily run in ritualized grooves, which unerringly could be undermined by encounters!

Encounters lead us to face up to acknowledge how “we” may give ourselves away to wishful self-imaginary, including projections. Thus both parties are likely to become all the wiser from the experience.<sup>547</sup>

So understanding – as we define it – is *coming to know*. Thus the potential power of doing case studies! As we guided by others search for what we do not know of, the likelier “we” will be enriched, not just professionally but personally. But one has to prepare oneself for it! It is only through ourselves that we may learn of and from the Other, – seeing him as a person with a lived life, and not as a classified or generalized It.

#### *Understanding and logical schematics*

Understanding – if to be expressed in words – has to be conveyed by at least minute-level expretations. If so, coming to understand has partly to draw on the ability to discern, to categorize, and to ponder the consequences. But the basic source is an inner “illumination”. Understanding thus transcends subjectivity, as well as any idea of the power of abstract rationality.

To indulge oneself overzealously in logically structured chains of argumentation might, in fact, be a cover-up for angst<sup>548</sup>, – a mean to avoid facing up to aspects that might disturb ones self-image. If there is something you do not want to recognize for what it is, it is certainly assuring to be able to show the world how reasonable it is to dislike it. Nor do linear conceptions of logic suffice. The logic that carries an expanding interchanging process across levels may better be depicted like an expanding spiral rather than linear, as hinted at in the previous Figures 6.9 #1 & 2.

*Techniques for helping oneself to change one's frame of reference*

We have here to remain within the methodological confines of the present essay.

Nevertheless allow me to pass on a few hints to techniques that might help one “see the world differently”.  
Be it:

- creative techniques aiming at reframing your analyzing mind, of which there are many ranging from I Ching<sup>549</sup> to “quality circle techniques”<sup>550</sup>
- morphological analyses<sup>551</sup>
- professional training in hitherto unfamiliar fields in order to enhance theoretical sensitivity
- respect for the inclusion dogma, ref § 2.13
- switch of media of expression, say from text to diagramming.<sup>552</sup>

On the more intimate and personal level, one may guide oneself to further understanding by gestalt psychological analysis of dreams, meditation,<sup>553</sup> etc.

*Enrichment as the initiation point for emergence*

Enrichment is coming to see the world not just in an other, but in greater perspectives. So far this become an inspiration for others too it may trigger an emergent process of organizational change.

As an example we saw, how Gail Perry and her group at Dimco Gray re-defined the agenda assigned to them by management and formulated a program where subsequent employee groups each should determine how they each would select The Employee of the Month, ref page 277. – A crucial event that lead the employees to realize, how they could do something for themselves. Here after people around in office and shop began to take hand of their own situations just as the activist had done at Reuther Mold from “Day One” as an esop.

Group enrichment processes need not – as above happen by accident, but may be planned as a structured flow, where i.g. management and/or workers jointly set up problem-solving teams in such a way that neither management nor the workers a forehand defines the situation, but where every body from the very start is given the opportunity to be listened to. The script for such a process of structured problem-solving group may like the practises at Weirton Steel<sup>554</sup>, consist of series of expansions and contractions.

First each member suggests an array of problems associated with a situation that need to be improved. One is selected by voting, next every member in turn suggests whatever causes may be behind it, – be it inefficient machinery, sloppy manual handling, logistics, ect. One potential relation is chosen. Then in order not to base decision-making on politics nor beliefs, a hunt for data is set in. Finally, all according to the result, a brainstorm for how to solve the problem is set in or perhaps the process has to be expanded to include other potential issues and causes too.

Obviously every member in the group ends up with a greater perspective and mutual trust, as the group is likely to end up with a workable solution.

*Understanding is a never-ending process,  
yet new insights may solidify into new schemes of interpretation*

Understanding – when first initiated as conscious process – is likely to become a never-ending expansion, limited only by our own lack of experience and what we want or do not dare to embrace. In practice, at least two kinds of blockages can be observed:

One related to protection. One may contain inner anxiety for having ones worldview challenged. Thus disturbing facts have better be ignored or – if acknowledged – explained away.

The other related to the joy of discovery and personal identification with the expanded perspective that understanding lead to. All too often we see how new insights solidify into interpretative dogmatism. The creator himself may be the first victim to his success, as was the case for great Freud as shown by the transcription of his conversation with Dora, ref Figure 4.14 #1. – As well as followers, ref to Figure 4.6 #1.

*Summing up*

On the personal level, understanding may be further clarified if we distinguish between “I” and “me” as GH Mead did.<sup>555</sup>

I joined MITAS because  
I wanted **real responsibility**

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for Engineers and Geoscientists  
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**Month 16**  
I was a construction  
supervisor in  
the North Sea  
advising and  
helping foremen  
solve problems

Real work  
International opportunities  
Three work placements

**MAERSK**



I is what “I” am, autonomous and in the present. “Me” is what I make out of myself, as I look back on me as an “It”, and not least as a social “It”. Say, what I did or did not – as an It, what “I” once dreamed about, etc. that is all me. Where as I is, what is here and now! An idea well captured in the phrase: “What I am doing now will make me responsible”!

So let me try schematically to give an overview of some of the relations that we have touched upon, please refer to Figure 6.9 #4.<sup>556</sup>

<b>Figure 6.9 #4: (INUN 5): POTENTIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE</b>		
POSITION	RELATION	SITUATION
ARGUMENTATION the I <sub>A</sub> – I <sub>B</sub> mode <sup>85</sup>	A and B debating each other, both seeing themselves as “I”s.	Persuasion, power play, seduction, etc.
Interpretation		
I <sub>A</sub> – It <sub>B</sub> mode	A observing B, as an acting It	Behaviorism
I <sub>A</sub> – You <sub>B</sub> mode	A evaluating B, as a “You are as Me”	Subjectivism
Not I <sub>A</sub> – You <sub>B</sub> mode	A evaluating B as utterly different from me	Projection, – may be
Me <sub>A</sub> – You <sub>B</sub> mode	A in conscious self-ness looking for clues to make sense of acts performed by B.	Interpretative experimentation
UNDERSTANDING		
Me <sub>A</sub> – Thou <sub>B</sub> mode	A as a “Me” helping B as a Thou to reflect on her inner life as well as why she acted, how, and when.	You are OK – Therapy
Me <sub>A</sub> – I <sub>A</sub> mode	Inner dialogue of trying to come to terms with one’s own acts and e.g. experimenting with how to cope in the future.	Inner reflection, coping
UNDERSTANDING AS DIALOGUE		
Thou <sub>A</sub> -Thou <sub>B</sub> mode	Helping each other to look and search for means to come to terms with one’s inner as well as active life.	Encounter of mutual reiveiment: You are OK and so am I

The scheme above does not exhaust all potential relations. It is only thought to illustrate some differentiating ethos between interpretation and understanding.

**He, who thinks he knows can not...ask the right questions.  
 In order to be able to ask one must want to know,  
 which involves knowing one does not know  
 To ask means to bring out in the open.  
 Hans-Georg Gadamer<sup>557</sup>**

## 6.10 Understanding, as a commitment to a methodological principle of ignorance

In a dialogue one acts as a midwife, helping the Other – all according to the sensitivity of both parts – to give air to possibilities or coming aware of blockages he has not yet recognized. So, if the Other does not find you trustworthy as a “travelling” companion, you “lose”. In dialogues the exchange is mutual, both parts expose their vulnerabilities in order to become sounding boards for receivment

In the mode of understanding we assume that we do not fully know the Other. That we are without any firmer grasp of when, why, and how the emotions of the Other sets in. And likewise for our selves! Thus, every one we meet could be approached as a source of information on how man may struggle in order to come to terms with life.

### *Sensing and searching for means to express oneself*

There is only so much that can be expressed in plain English. As receivment is the act of becoming aware of signs referring to the hitherto unnoticed, we may at times be unable at the spur of the moment to find the means to find the right words to express what up till now has escaped our ability to notice, refer to Figure 1.4 #4.

If the effort to express a felt sense of the real beyond the often all too easy flow of words fails, we should respect the felt need and try to find other means for articulation. E.g. to resort to the drawing of sketches, diagrams or to express our selves through music, dance or poetry! This may suffice in it self as well as be an initial guide for our search for the right terms to use in order to come to express and inform others of what we have come to understand.

Otherwise narratives – as we shall see next – may evoke a sense for the real beyond the realm of the abstract.

And as this a an essay on research rather than personal development, we have finally to see whether and how we may extend the process of understanding metaphorically to perception of texts, the past, as well as contemporary yet distant happenings.

### **EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF UNDERSTANDING TO DOMAINS BEYOND THE PERSONAL ENCOUNTER**

**Philosophy lives in words,  
but truth and fact well up into our lives in ways that exceed verbal formulations.**

William James<sup>558</sup>



## 6.11 Reivement metaphorically expanded to include text-reading

Let us recapitulate. As we have defined it:

- o Explanation is linked to rationality, professional in particular, and as such expressed in the formulation of goals (politics), planning (administration), construction (emergence), and control (feedback).
- o Interpretation is linked to expression, attribution, and coming to terms with life through psychological studies, history, art, and organized religion, etc.
- o Understanding to confessed ignorance, experimental play, been told, exploration and reivement,

In the mode of understanding we abstain from assuming that we already know. With relaxed, light-hearted scepticism we should try to notice our own all too ready tendencies to interpret what goes on within others, and to avoid being caught up in the act. Instead we simply seek to give ourselves away to *methodological ignorance* and ask the other for help!

And believe me, this is often appreciated by the Other as well. First because he is allowed to his story, uninterrupted, next because he fell and is indeed listened to. Unfortunately, to be guided to reflect on what is happening to and within you, as well as to be helped to bring pieces of your life together, is a gift of space that we are given all too seldom. Most people have not even learned to speak with others in a manner that facilitates this contact. So what should have been an interpersonal skill is passed on to the professional therapist.

That apart let us move on and see whether it is possible to expand the mode of understanding beyond the personal encounter. And if not, at least the effort of trying to do might be valuable and fill out some of the holes in our fabric of mere subjective and/or theoretical awareness.

**Creatures of painting stand out like living beings.  
Yet, ask them a question and they will preserve a solemn silence**

Plato: Phaedrus 275D

Some – like Dilthey – talk about how well they understand Nietzsche, Montesquieu, – or even the mission of Jesus, – the G-d blessed. At best, their arguments may be the perfect way of presenting angles of or even hopes for the human condition. At worst, some writers gives themselves away to defamation and a demonstrative will not to understand. Thus, we should never forget how the Other has to be given a say. She has to be given the opportunity to supplement our perceptions with hers, so we can become all the wiser. This is of course impossible when we the Other is a historical figure.

Yet, at times even a fictional character can resist the interpretation that you initially tried to impose. And thus you are led to search for and expand your sense of “reality,” and so we may figuratively talk about receivment.

Granted, you may believe that you – just as I – are able to reproduce the Comte’s motivation to write his initial work, ref § 5.3, based upon a comparative analysis of his writings with his contemporaries, etc. And I certainly hope that what I wrote about his mission made sense to you. Or if you may make the claim, “how you do understand the dilemmas facing Cesar”, you have at least to be aware of his epoch and played with the options, he then had and how he could have reacted to them. Yet our reports, if interesting, is likely to tell as much about you and your present conditions as it does about the past. Nevertheless, “meeting” people through text might enlighten us about what is humanly possible.

So we will now with receivment as the ground figure explore whether and how understanding may be extended to texts.

*Receivment, metaphorically expanded to text-reading*

As a “scientific” term, “understanding” has always been more closely tied to Human Studies than to Social Research. Yet, my use of the term as a process of personal discovery is closer to psychology.

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And certainly it would be a crime to forgo what Human Studies might do and does for us. I am sure you might have recognized a family likeness with the present presentation and the hermeneutical teachings of Gadamer,<sup>559</sup> which, granted, is an appreciation in itself,<sup>560</sup> please refer to Figure 6.11 #1.

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**Figure 6.11 #1: HORIZON OR PERSPECTIVE, A CHOICE OF METAPHOR**

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Obviously, there has to be a parallel between being enriched during an encounter and being enriched by a text. Person to person we talk about getting a sense of how another person perceives his worlds, perspectives, and we may even get glimpses of why, as he or she is encouraged to explicate how and when his views were formed.

As an analyst of texts, Gadamer talks about the horizon<sup>561</sup> of the reader, – referring to what a reader is able to absorb, as well as – the enlightenment that she received from the text. Horizon is defined as “the range of vision<sup>562</sup> that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.”<sup>563</sup> Thus, as Gadamer expressed it, when we meet a text and we do not listen to it, we may speak of narrowness, – or if we do listen – we may talk about the opening up of horizons. In case we let us be enriched by a text; he uses the expression of the fusion of the textual horizons, our own initial and those of the text.

This is indeed captivating. And the metaphor is so much better, as the horizon is always there to be seen but never to be reached.

---

So, let us see how reception could be extended to the acquisition of written texts. If so, a text has to be read with a certain “identifying-with-it” attitude, and not just for entertainment or for the acquisition of information. The trick is to make the text *confront us with the same pressure of realness as a person* in front of us might. In other words the text has to be read with existential awareness.<sup>561</sup>

If approached with sincerity, many a literary text may indeed “speak” in all its richness and even resist our initial and, in hindsight, too superficial if not outright biased conceptions. This may happen if a commentator has led “us” to pick up a text to illustrate a malpractice that he wanted others to refute too. But as the text takes on a voice of its own, it may not only lead to glimpses of the subjectivity that led us onto a trail towards misusing it, but even create a sense of how and even why others were.

*An example of “identifying-with-the-text” reading – or being-in-another*

Years back, I introduced strategic planning to graduate students by means of cases they had to “solve”. It was tough. Even though there was never a consultant presented as part of the case, the students preferred to approach the challenges of the case from the outside as if they themselves were consultants. In short, the students preferred to read the text as spectators. But – as I saw it – in order to turn the classroom into a laboratory and help the students to come to know themselves better, – it was necessary for the students to identify themselves with the players in the case and visualize, what “they as them” could, might, and should do. In short, we should each, not only see, but feel the challenges facing the people in the case, – as if we were them. In short their acquisition of the text should be an existential. Yet they backed off. So I had to assign some of the students a role from the case and transform the case-sessions into a theatrical performance with an active intervening audience.

For an illustration of how to read a text existentially we may turn to Søren Kierkegaard. In one of his texts he leads us to visualize how Abraham, with Isaac at his side, struggles toward Mount Morija. Kierkegaard is apt to make us sense, how Abraham is unable to look the boy in his eyes and respond to his questions about, where they are going and why. How can he tell Isaac – his only begotten son – that he fears their G-d so much that he is prepared to slaughter him on G-d's demand? As he casts a glance down at the boy, he imagines how Isaac tomorrow will cling to his knees praying for his life. And he asks him self: How can I turn the mind of Isaac away from the “real” G-d in his dying moment? Should he not rather claim, that the “I” am driving the knife deep into his heart because “I”, his father, is an idolater? Then, without betraying Jehovah, Isaac could throw his eyes to the sky crying: “Oh G-d, save me. I do not have a father anymore”.<sup>564</sup>

Read in this existentialist way, the story becomes so real that we can neither escape the story nor the knowledge of what a god like Jehovah might demand of man.<sup>565</sup>

#### *Situating yourself in the shoes of an Other*

This existential, “identifying-with-the-text” reading is at times called “a reading in the sympathizing mode”. Yet, I hesitate to do so. The original Greek conception of “sympathy” went in the direction of a feeling of togetherness. Good enough! Yet “sympathy” has too great a span of significance to encircle what we are dealing with. To “have sympathy” usually just express having a favourable attitude to someone.

So we are at a loss for an English term. Yet we have two German terms at our disposal:

- o “Ein-fühlung” = in-feeling. And true, the existential reading does include feeling, but there is more to it.
- o “Ein-leben” = in-living. Unfortunately a term fraught with wrong associations in the direction of living in (with somebody). The dictionaries suggest “sympathetic insight”.

So once more<sup>566</sup> we see the term “sight” – so cherished by the English language – emerge as the carrying metaphor. But “einleben” is nevertheless the better of the two German terms, as it refers to something that is anchored in the corporeal. Furthermore, “Leben” points to life rather than just living.

However, despite this lack of appropriate terms, there is indeed a nice metaphor with which to express the idea in English:

- o “Putting your self in the shoes of the Other”.

This leads me to suggest a term like

- o *to situate your self in the place of another.*

We are often all too rash to bad mouth politicians and their decisions. But try to see your self as the Other, faced with a challenging situation of theirs. Say as a known politician confronting a gruesome dilemma, a historical figure confronting a tragedy, or a literary character in a stressful situation. Instances, that might lead us to get in touch with ourselves in a testing mode, and thus to reevaluation. Yet, it can never be as intense as an encounter. First of all, because to be-in-another shoes remains “just” a visualization. Secondly, the exercise may easily lead you astray into a state of daydreaming, and thus away from yourself. Or as laddering, refer to Figure 4.8 #2, may lead us to justify or perhaps even idolize our acts.

In order to be of benefit from approaching texts in a mode of understanding, we must be prepared to open ourselves for it and let the text touch us. Only then may it lead us and to get a glimpse of worlds hitherto alien to us. Just as Kant indulged himself in images of how truly rational beings will behave.

Here we may also recall how Gadamer stresses how a text can talk back and resist a too narrow interpretation. But there is still a difference between meeting another person face to face and meeting a string of words. The text does not have any other means of talking back than what can be contained by the reader’s sensitivity. Or as Plato said – after he had compared texts with paintings – the written word is accessible to all with “no power to protect or help itself”.<sup>567</sup>



“I studied English for 16 years but...  
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons”  
Jane, Chinese architect

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While one may misread or even discard a text, a person in front of you is not as easily brushed off. In all his concrete “being here”, his embodiment of lived life, hopes, agonies, and interpretations, he is not as easy to forego as a text is.

So as Ricour<sup>568</sup> reminds us: Reading only leads to understanding if we let it open us up to new insights, potential worlds and/or life styles. Only in this way will the text help us go beyond the confines of our thinking patterns and thus our subjectivity.

*Avoid exaggeration,*

*reality is not just a text to be interpreted as if life is like a novel*

Ricour<sup>569</sup> tries to convince that we should turn the table and equalize the “reading of nature and the social” with the literal interpretation of texts. – Replace “Text as Reality” with “Reality as Text”, so to speak! An indeed appropriate however simplified metaphor, which stresses how superficially we may perceive social events and read facial expressions. True, the world comes to us by appearance. Yet, there is more in the world to be seen, sensed, and recalled than any text can capture.

Furthermore, if you do not have any sense of what a text may awaken you to see, you are at a loss. And should you never the less be intrigued to search for it, the answer is not in the text, but in a reality outside or inside your self. As for the social in the understanding mode, you yourself is the subject, texts just the medium! To read the social as a text is like stopping short with an – in mathematical terms – satisfactory statistical analysis and abstain from exploring the issues touched upon by the informants themselves

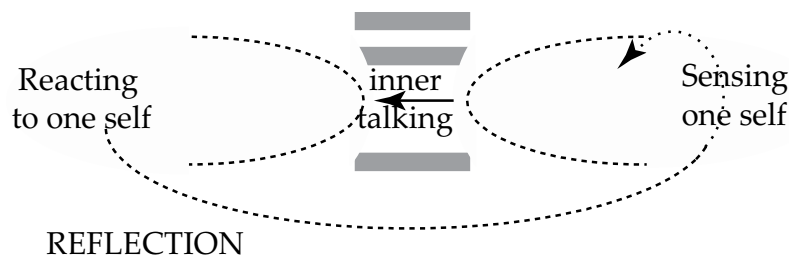
Seeing the world as just a text to be interpreted is a betrayal of our potential for reaching out and embracing a more inclusive grasp of the social in the mode of understanding. Like inner dialogues meeting an Other in a text alone, generally lacks the intensity of the personal encounter. Why? Because reflections initiated by reading are partly under the control of our everyday consciousness.

*The divided Self*

Reflection, as an inner theatre of voices, are more similar to a conversation between friends and foes; refer to Figure 6.11 #2.



**Figure 6.11 #2: (INUN 6): REFLECTION, SENSING, TALKING, AND LISTENING TO ONE'S SELF**



Reflection in the understanding mode is likely to activate an inner discussant group of voices, views, searches for comprehension, or at worst wishful thinking, construct beliefs to repair the wounded ego as well to suit one's inner "super ego" – and thus under the control of our everyday consciousness. Thus the splitting up of the self does not generally lead to the same concentrated borderless intensity of crucial events or encounters do. We need to be enmeshed in the social to be made aware of ourselves.

Yet some similarities do exist between meeting a text or be part of an encounter. Recall how translation of texts from a source into a target language is a multi-level task – as outlined by Figure 4.6 #2. Recievement could be depicted as the reverse flow, the translator assisting the other – metaphorically the text – to come to terms with hir own situation and in consequence enriching hir self as translator.

In social research there is no escape for empirical feedback, nor for examining our own ways of noticing. There is always more to sense of what is in front of you.

Therefore, we will be in for a treat when we begin to wonder not just what we see, but how we see.

#### *A note on dreams*

Yet there are some internal experiences of an intensity that leaves an unshakeable imprint on our lives thereafter: *crucial dreams!*

A nocturnal dreams is a mean through which the body tries to tell "Me" something about my social life that "I" do not yet have the insight and thus not yet the words to contain. In this sense, dreams are – if not outside – then at least beyond, what our everyday mind contains. Dreams convey pictures to us as puzzles we need to solve.

The "Other" may thus also be sides of our selves, which the "I" are not able yet to contain.

## 6.12 "Dancing around the beer box" or aligning text with sense

My last example shows the other side of the coin: How you your self may resist a text that you are trying to compose:

I was working on my first book,<sup>570</sup> which dealt with personal identity, social relations, and similarities between being instructed by an Other and instructing one Self. Another way of obliterating the traditional “subject-objective” dichotomy! The last chapter, the crescendo, had to deal with love. I felt, “I” had to write something about love being unconditional. Agape – as the Greeks called it – the idiom of an idealized mother-child relationship, – a more existentialistic position than Philia or Eros! But I enjoyed being newly married and certainly expected us to gain from it.

Yet, the conventional “wisdom” that I apparently adhered to “prohibited” me to write what I felt. It had to be unconditional love! I could, but would not put it down in print. As poor as we were then, the typewriter was placed on a wooden beer box in the middle of our small room. I literally walked around it day after day for nearly two weeks. Then, finally, I sat down and wrote what I really felt for six straight hours without any later need for any mediated re-typing.

Now, a lifetime later, it is easy to see what was at stake. Sure, our conceptions of love, and not least how love is commonly expressed, are guided by custom and cultural norms – as claimed by the structuralist ethos! The incident was thus to become a crucial event, that told me how firm a grip language, with its inner coherence, might have on our mind. A grip that it will maintain as long as we do not reflect on or confront words with a sense of real lived life. In order to understand we have to honour the real and unshackle ourselves from the power that words may have over our mind.

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Thus we see how the opening quote to § 4.12, by Kvale, is as much a warning as a “truth”. As well as how the claim – that language is “a self-sustained systems of signs” – however partially true has to be supplemented with the notion that language also is a medium for expression, – not the least for release of inner bodily calls for outer, consciously recognition.

*However necessary*

*and even enlightening words may be, they are seldom sufficient*

The drive towards understanding is based on the presumption that we are not able to grasp the whole by means of words alone. I know of the world, but I do not know it. All we have to go by are signs, be they of the imagined or manifest. Signs that may be released by a multitude of antecedents, commonly called “causes”. So emergence, while being the solution, is all too often too demanding to reach, interpretation by substitution becomes king.

It is only so far as you work in the mode of understanding that you will be painfully aware of how exposed “we” are to our own particular sensitivities. We stand to learn as long as we experiment and try to see the world through the eyes of the other, even though we know it – in an absolute sense – is impossible. But as long as “we” try, the effort itself should enable us to get a better sense for human plasticity.

Striving towards understanding thus becomes a *process of cleansing* through which the increasing awareness of one’s own anticipations and interpretative schemes help us come to terms with how others might interpret their world, and we might even get glimpses of why.

Understanding while leaning on interpretation as an acknowledged practice expands the explanatory ideal of a non-participatory stand to include engaged involvement.

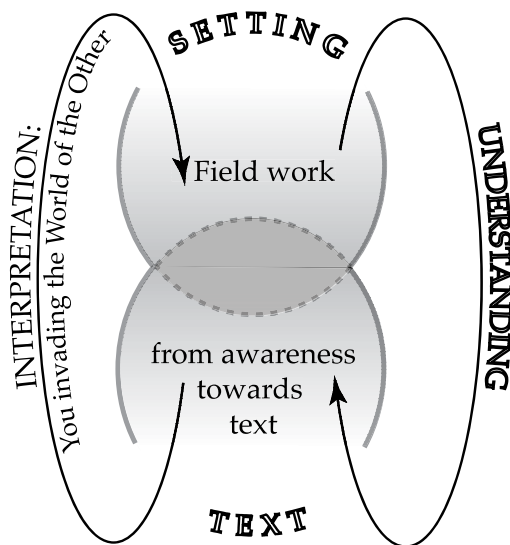
### 6.13 From explanation and interpretation to understanding one’s self – the promise of emancipation

*Helping the Other to help himself*

Apparently “understanding one’s self” if to be really forceful demands the presence of an Other to challenge us to inspect the interpretations we, as an “I”, more or less automatically resort to. Thus, the move towards self-understanding is a social endeavour.

A better feel for the genesis and consequences of our own inner movements in addition goes hand in hand with being moved to understand others better, as illustrated by Figure 6.13 # 1 IU.

**Figure 6.13 #1: INVADING THE OTHER OR OPENING YOURSELF TO RECEIVEMENT THROUGH AN OTHER**



As an interpreter with preconceived schemes of thought you invade the world of the other.

In the mode of understanding you open yourself to give the Other the opportunity to invade and challenge your own perceptions. If you respond with openness your own conceptual abilities may widen as you struggle to contain his and experiences

Thus, as you learn about the Other, you will come to know yourself better as well.

Understanding is neither a contrast to explanation nor to interpretation. Rather it involves, integrates, and expands them. Explanations enable us to foresee how we will behave in future situations, and may thus supply us with clues of alternative ways of coping. So, we have to experiment with different interpretations, both as a means of increasing our ability to grasp what is going on, and to loosen the grip language has on our perceptive schemes and thought patterns. Thus understanding may increase our own predictability to ourselves, although not necessarily to others.<sup>571</sup> An informed way of taking responsibility! See also §5.13 & § 6.14.

Obviously, self-observance – to see the Self as an Other – is an integrated part of “the road to self-understanding”. This includes a permanent awareness of what one believes might be, if not out right false, then at least incomplete. As well being infected with imprints from our emotional scars, inferiority complexes, etc. If so, understanding constantly draws on comparisons and reflections on behaviors, including speech patterns, outbreaks of emotions, and feelings.

Exploring the “Thou in Me” conveys the thrill and challenge of drama, art, history, and empirical research. Case studies about and narratives on forms of life hitherto unknown to us – all with carry the potential to enrich and guide us to alternative interpretations or explanatory schemes.

*Become what you are*

Humanistic thought is ingrained with an ethos of “self-realization”, and so is existentialism, “Werde was Du bist”.<sup>572</sup> “To grow to become the person one is” is of course analytical gibberish. Nevertheless, the dictum makes a lot of sense when set into the frame of understanding:

Within you, you carry the potential for opening up to sensing far more than you presently allow yourself to. Thus, the claim is a dictum to set yourself on the trail of *becoming*, rather than remain stuck with being what you define your self as. If so you would not identify your self with you functionally are e.g. in terms of attitudes and theoretical positions, being inclined to defend that. Instead you will identify your self with the very process of change of becoming someone else, and thus perceive yourself as in terms of your *dynamic identity*.

To be open for receiving is to license your self to be free! Where this will lead us we cannot know. Which unfortunately may hold us back! In addition it will occasionally be painful. It is not comforting here and now to realize how your previous blindness may have hurt, not only yourself bur others as well. Yet it will pay off in the long run.

*Truth, once more, towards the final word*

Initially in this essay we dealt with truth, and may recall how we – as most – rejected the 1:1 theory of correspondence, ref § 2.3: There is no general “one to one relationship” between the signified and the words of languages as the mean for signification. Never the less, when we close our eyes and ask ourselves inwardly what truth “really” is, I think most people, as I, will have a sense that to be true means to speak in accordance with what is the case.



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Sensed truth is what the Germans with an excellent word call *aufrechtig*. In English it literally means “upright”. There may be no proper English word for this, but dictionaries suggest “sincere” for *aufrechtig*, while “know of and being faithful to your own inner emotions” would be more to the point. Even “*aufrechtig*” may be compared to “upright”, meaning “to be honest to one self and others”, “upright” also refers to a rigid body posture and can be read metaphorically as being faithful to some adopted principle. The expression “the naked truth” may be more to the point with regards to *aufrechtig*.

The Germans have another word too for saying it, as it is: “*Offenherzlich*”, which literally translated is “to be open hearted”. The dictionary here suggests “candid”, which could cover sensed truth in terms of being open and straightforward in one’s report of what is happening to and within one self. In short, one’s reports have to be as reliable as possible. In order to become what we are, we should thus try you do your best *to speak without a mask*. And thus hesitate to search for the right expression to express our foreboding and never in order to find an effective<sup>573</sup> argument.

This is all meant to show that on an every day personal level there is a lot of sense – if read metaphorically – in the 1:1 idea of correspondence: What you try to express should – as far as possible – be in accordance with your inner being. And while words may not suffice, they could nevertheless point in the right direction for those who can read between the lines and sense what the other may aim at.

### **Sleep is the similitude of death and waking of resurrection**

Al-Chazali<sup>574</sup>

## 6.14 Narratives as a medium for case studies

Narratives are integrated in all three types of social research, explanatory, interpretative, and understanding. Be it in the form of a report from an experiment, a description leading up to an analysis of a social dilemma, or a full-blown case study.

*Once more let us take it from the top*

A narrative, refer back to Figure 6.2 #1, is a string of events bound together with adjectives and verbs, as qualifying “stepping stones” for sense-making. Whether we are aware of it or not, qualifiers act, as expretational rules – as was illustrated in figure § 5.4 #, the store throwing example, § 4, or the “Oedipus-went-mad” example § 5.5 as well as others in the text.

In principle, any such slapper dapper use of expretational drivers should not be tolerated within research. Yet it would be impossible to give room to all the footnotes needed to explicate the means by which a text is driven along. If we attempted to, the text would be squeezed into a line on top of the page, – as there had to be footnotes to the footnotes.<sup>575</sup> – A dilemma previously referred to as the Duhem-Quine thesis, refer to § 5.11. In the end we are thus still left to refer to our own judgment and the confusion this entails.



In the quotation by Plato, ref § 6.11, texts were compared with paintings and as we read on, his spokesperson, Socrates, tries to seduce us into agreeing that a text refers to one meaning only. Now, had Plato compared texts with statues, as the writer Borges did in a misquotation,<sup>576</sup> the allegory could have been taken in another direction:

First, statues are perceived according to how we approach them. What we see from the left differs from what one might see from the right, the front or the top down. Yet the object remains the same: a chiselled chunk of marble. Every look is different but refers to the same foundation. Reality is the same, even though the object appears differently according to who, you are, where you are, how you look and bring with you to the scene. Thus, any new angle may present us with the potential for a more complete grasp of what exists, and it may widen our own set of perspectives.

Thus we may discern what “seeing” lacks as a metaphor for examination, cognition, ref figure 1.4 #2: The positioning of a multitude of looking positions. So long you just stand still looking at something from far away, it appears as flat<sup>577</sup>!

In order to be reliable, one’s accounts of cases must contain more than one dimension if to present a more complete outline of reality

*Stories as a mean to train others to get a sense of how to use a given theory*

Before we embark on narratives as means of presenting the results of case research, I will have first refer to the use of cases as pedagogical devices. Many textbooks are energized by a captivating use of small “real life” vignettes or one-page novella to help students get a feel for how, as an analyst, one might apply a given set of theories.

Short stories and vignettes, splendid as they are, breathe life into any explanatory presentation. Of course, the storyline has to be adapted to the theory at hand and chosen by theorampling. Thus the composer has to be careful and avoid presenting facts that could be combined in ways that might support different theories, refer to Figure 2.4 #1.1. As an extra safeguard against multidimensionality, textbooks of case studies for laboratory exercises<sup>578</sup> may even contain a teaching note as a guide for how to interpret it.

Thus there is a second reason to praise the application of vignettes. The trustworthiness of the storyline, however unintentional it may be, provides the reader with a test bed for evaluating the relevance of a given set of theories. Excellent, but for presentation of research, cases have to be more intriguing:

**Sociology necessarily begins  
with the understanding of everyday life**  
Jack D Douglas<sup>579</sup>

*Narratives as vehicles for understanding*

In order for the research narrative to open up to receivment it must be intriguing enough to encourage people not to resort to the security of some simplifying “I-know-it-all” interpretations.

There are many means to choose to make a case as multi-facetted and thus realistic as possible. Initially by letting our selves be guided by theoretical sampling. Later in the field by giving voice to participants with different experiences and views within the organization under study as well as to their outside associate partners.<sup>580</sup> A slick and easily achievable way to show how differently the “same events” appear to various people!

Next, as contradictions are bound to occur, we have to pay respect to the inclusion dogma, ref § 2.13 page 82: Never forego evidence that seems to disturb any tentative, preliminary condensation of the bulk of generated facts. And even the informants seem to agree we should not take it for granted that all and everyone attach the same meaning to key concepts. Social terms – like information or influence – have fuzzy spans of significance. So it is our job – the sooner the better – to find out what key terms mean to others by exploring how the different players make use of them. And then afterwards, by means of a storyline, help the reader to get a feel for it.

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Employees like to accentuate how their company is unique, – which indeed is true, if looked upon close enough. However across industries, there are roles of an alike nature, that has to be fulfilled in any manufacturing or service-industry. Front line service persons must facilitate clients and thus have to deal with difficult costumers regardless whether they be barmaids, receptionists or travelling salesmen, – just as they have to deal with their supervisors and at times ask a colleague for help. These relations – action nets<sup>581</sup> – can not only be compared across cases; the ways and means how each individual deals with them can be depicted as narratives in them selves. Everyone is unique and fulfils her role in her own way. And that's is always worth a story!

### *Subjectivity as reality*

Being a worker, is not just being a worker. If given a chance her story may be unique, and worth listen to if filled with tensions, – like a character in a novel by [Dostojevskij](#).

This was the case for Carol R Ronia, who paid her way thru university as an erotic dancer. She had mixed feelings about the job, particularly her performances in the nude Her story is indeed subjective but her problem recognizable for most of us. Her text is written as an invitation to us to listen in on how she tried – as so many of us – to deal with the many dimensions of her identity and – as she termed it – accept her self as not-being, – because as she says “Perhaps believing that you are not really a dancer is part of being a dancer. May be I am a “real” dancer after all.<sup>582</sup>

Nor is a slut just a slut. Naomi Wolf opens her moving tale of “her secrete<sup>583</sup> struggle for womanhood” thus: “The following is a set of confessions, a subjective exploration based upon a collection of real life stories. The emotional information yielded by these even is a different, more intimate than those produced by surveys” And as she continues, the subjective angle is the base for statements of general value: “By telling my story and asking other women to tell theirs, I wanted to elucidate the emotional truths that emerge from a particular generations erotic memory”. Information a teenager would never reveal to an adult interviewer!<sup>584</sup>

During your tale, as author as well as researcher, you may reserve room for your own reflections. As when Naomi Wolf states: It's not the sex, but the consciousness of what you are doing of your own volition that makes you a slut<sup>585</sup>. As if it is up to the individual to determine her social identity!

But case stories may also do well without any theoretical filigree, as one of my hero's of writing, Studs Terkel, did in his presentations of people and their life long earned attitudes to their way of earning a living<sup>586</sup>.

Off course if you should do insert your own reflections – as I do – you should indicate when you speak in your own voice. And if some of your informants have comments to that, you are obliged to include their perspectives in your text.<sup>587</sup> Failing to do so, you will not only misguide yourself; you will betray the people involved and turn them into pawns in your own game.

Thirdly, we have constantly to be aware how the task of writing a narrative may tempt us to let the consequences of some strings of events dictate the cause. So beware of the fallacy of “putting the cart before the horse”! Thus, as “you” unfold your story, be aware that whatever happens is rooted in a multitude of antecedent conditions which have to be identified. If you forgo the uncertainties of the actors of what to do before a decision is taken, the sense of being there will be lost in simplification.

Fourthly, do not let your self be guided by some pet theories of yours chosen beforehand as the material is condensed, instead use the facts generated in the field as a material basis for experimenting with the development of different theories. As I wrote the storylines in *The Employee Owner*, it was great fun to select facts that could make it possible for others to read each of their favourite theories into the text; provided of course that they ignored all the counter-evidence. Thus facts were included that could be used as stepping-stones for theories to which I personally have a rather sceptical attitude – not the least those of a Marxist orientation.

This will enrich your grasp of not only the reality at hand but theory as well. And it constitutes an excellent antidote to the sloppy acceptance of theories that could be made to seem to fit.

For the fifth: Do include disturbing facts, you do not know to make head and tail out of. How can a presentation be true to life if you do not try to embrace what your present language practice cannot yet contain? True coherence is a major demand, but should not trustworthiness play a role as well? Or, at least be honest about the conclusions that you are at unease with.

Six: As you write your first drafts make room for numerous blank spots to be filled out later. Or more precisely, when you are at a hold, make understanding possible by allowing space for later insertions and expansions. If so, you may metaphorically come to see the process of writing as meet, where the text – conceived as an Other – and you – as the author – try to reach a mutual elucidation of the life within a group of subjects. Thus, try to compose and re-write the texts in ways that might let make “you” aware of its own insufficiencies, be it lack of intermediary facts or coherence – both structurally and with regards to what matters.

Finally, we have to recall the profound differences between spontaneous talk and writing as a mediated process.

However, there is a type of writing, which shares some of the characteristics of a dialogue: It happens when we acknowledge being at a dead end for making facts fit, – when you sense something is missing. If so, you better not fool self and resort to rhetorical tricks, ref § 1.2! It is far better to embark on an understanding trail and search

1. inwards to express your intentions, experiences, and perception of the impressions you have required through discussions and/or readings. Supplemented with
2. an outward search for words and images you may require to convey a more comprehensive meaning to your self and as a writer, to others. And of course at best, if possible,
3. go back to the field and ask your informants to help you to fill out the blanks!

#### *List of narrative presentations of research*

The content of narratives may address a variety of issues. It is of course a subject in itself, but allow me let at least to present a list of possibilities, starting with the most popular at the top. All of which tries to give the reader a feel about being enclosed in the reality presented:

- o Life stories, – be it of a certain type of persons who have lived through a trying slot in time or of the biography of particular, say historical person.
- o Work stories about what it means to be a journalist, bar maid or combat soldier presented through the challenges they face from day to day as the age
- o Personal strategies chosen by different types of employees as they fight for, try to benefit from or struggle against structural constraints in their places of work, say tracking the imprint of institutionalisation,
- o tracking the mental consequences of imposed behavioural changes on individuals, – be it due to impacts of administrative or technological change, aroused religious experiences or group pressure from organized religion
- o Ethnographic accounts of, say of tribal life or not to well known communities within the established society.
- o Tracking the array of reactions to and change in mental perception of an Others including of her personal identity as say, she becomes a participative owner of her working place rather than a hired hand.

All accounts that – in order to be narratives – has to be presented through the acts and words of the individuals involved, rather than in abstract terms or through statistical enumerations.

#### *The wisdom of a great ruler*

Allow me to finish with a mini case, an anecdote, which says far more about the wisdom of a particular man than any string of adjectives or numbers would do:

The Mongol Great Khan Khubilai (lords of lords), 1215-94 ruled over an area spanning from China to Burma in the south, most of Russia to the Near East. In his later years a relative, Nayan, rebelled against him<sup>588</sup>. As for so many others before Nayan was beaten in battle “despite” he – as a Nestorian Christian – fought under the cross, as Marco Polo puts it.

After the battle various groups of other faiths, “Saracens<sup>589</sup>, Idolaters<sup>590</sup> and Jews – as Marco Polo tells – mocked the Christians and their Cross, which apparently had been of no power. Their mockery reached the ears of Khubilai, so he summoned his people and as many Christians he could and said to them: “It was for a very good reason that the cross of your god did not help Nayan. Because the “cross” is good, it ought only lend its aid to good and righteous causes. Betraying your lord is not a good cause. The cross of your God did well in not helping him against, what is right”.

The Christians answered: “Mighty lord what you say is true, the cross should not lend it self to wrongdoings<sup>591</sup>. Thus all were reconciled.

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## 6.15 Is there really only one reality?

### *A prismatic view*

Understanding is an ideal. Complete understanding is not possible, as any new perspectives that we are led to embrace will always be questionable. But, if we are able to frame it within an emergent scheme, it may be more than just another interpretation. So, let us sum up some of the steps that constitute the process.

- o Understanding is rooted in the body; it is corporeal, not just intellectual.
- o Understanding calls for periods of relaxed searching, thus even silence may help render the otherwise hidden visible.
- o Thus a drawn back attitude, allowing for moments of no-talk and certainly not interruptions, may give others space to listen to their own inner realities. Creating a close and confident presence may thus help others to come understand themselves better.
- o And as the other is given space to listen to him self and his inner movements, we ourselves should gain insight in man's plasticity and thus our own potentials.
- o Every perception that we have of the Other has – as far as it is possible – to be tested with the Other his self.
- o The Other may see “me” in a different perspective than I do myself – perhaps even one I am not ready to contain. If so, listen, both to your own inner resistances as well as the emotions the Other produces! In short see your opponent as one who is offering you a gift to unwrap. Sure it is not easy, but the alternative, a row, does not make any of you any wiser!
- o Enrichment is driven by the willingness to test our own susceptibility to bias, projection, etc., which constitute constant challenges to our sensibilities.

Finally, when another researcher are out to test your constructive abilities:

- First, try to identify the level that his interpretation is coming from, then
  - o test it both for its own value, as well
  - o explore its relevance by trying to integrate it within an emergent scheme.

### *So is there really only one reality?*

Throughout this essay I have insisted that there is only is one reality, albeit we each live in our own. Just like a prism in front of sunlight makes us see the reality in all the colours we are receptive to. And even an architect will have a different conception of a new house than then the electrician, they still refer to the same reality. And so may know and even contain a why!

So the task in not whether can I place myself outside “the system”? But whether “I” can break the spell of my preconceptions and learn both to sense and appreciate how others perceive their reality and then come to sense the real in its totality?

So can I? No, of course not. Any claim for totality turns whatever into fiction! First of all, it is simply beyond our capabilities. Secondly, language is not adequate, neither in it self nor with its captivating number of senseless concepts and the many imaginary fictums of reality that it is so aptly creates. But that does not exclude that we may achieve a greater partial sense for the real.

Thus, the conception of “*One Reality*” is more a methodological principle than an ontological platitude. It is an antidote to the claims of structuralism, subjectivism and idealist imagination, – however much these perspectives each may seem to contain a kernel of truth in their own right – as referred to by the principle of the Nugget in the Rubble.

Without the One-Reality idiom we have neither reason nor the drive to believe that we might just break the spell of languages; the grip that culture and each our past lives have on our acts, including our patterns of thinking.



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## VALIDITY VIS-À-VIS RECEIVEMENT

### 6.16 Confirmability

The validity issues with regards to case studies conducted in the understanding mode face many challenges; particularly internal validity:

Statistical analysis is a par with a high internal validity. Throw “data” into the machine, and from the beginning to the final result any calculation can be traced.

But for qualitative studies *internal validity* is a problem. And studies in the understanding mode are particularly at loss to make the whole process transparent. It is nearly impossible to trace what happens when you rely on sense and intuition as the means to enlightenment. The puzzles I faced day after day as I composed the drafts for the Employee Owner were solved during the night. It was as a gift received! I went to bed, and after having kissed Jane – the woman of my life good night – I dwelt on the thorny issue at hand. Around four o'clock I woke up with a solution in mind, made a few notes on the block by the bed, – preferably with my eyes still closed, and went back to sleep. As I woke up for real, I had usually forgotten all about it. But as I glanced at the paper slip, it all came back to me. Then I rushed to my Mac! It would not do first to get to work on it later in the afternoon.

Inner receivment does work, but how it works is beyond our grasp. But as intuition has its uncertain ways, any solution received has to be challenged systematically in the days there after in broad daylight.

Nevertheless, social research have to respect to the *principle of transparency*. So case researchers too have to try to do their best: Specify the context and demonstrate step by step how the facts were created through tracking, annotation, pattern identifications, analytical generalization, etc. And last but not the least, check the finds and intermediary drafts with the informants.

As for the overall guidelines, we may refer to a few principles already referred to:

- **Authenticity:** Work as close to the source as possible. If you quote others always refer to the original source. You have to be sure you do know the context.
- **Inclusion:** Do not leave anything out that seems odd – the seemingly disturbing point may be more important than just one more point clustered around an average.
- Use an open system of classification to assemble perspectives, – facet classification that is
- Systematically confront facts from different sources, interviews, and series of observation – and try to find concepts that can unite potential differences into meaningful ideas. Work with sequences of drama as well as other means.
- When in doubt always go back to your informants and ask for guidance
- When reaching a blockage, change your frame of thought i.e. by drawing images or (as in this book) diagrams of what you are trying to get a conceptual hold on.

You will never be able to trace your own path towards receivment. But you should at least use an open text or a diary to keep track of what you receive, what still puzzles you. There is hardly anything better than a diary to serve you as a guide for back looking trail of your potential insights.

Understanding works through ever-expanding steps of checks and inclusion of interpretations, as we align our perspectives with those of the Other. Thus, our ability to make sense of what others do, could do, or at least may do, should expand.

The other three basic validity issues are fairly straightforward, as illustrated in Figure 6.16 #1.<sup>592</sup>

It is excellent that a research program has led its researchers to a greater insight, and that it has even helped our informants get a getter grasp of them selves. – And even better, if they can demonstrate this in terms of performance. Thus, conformability may be further expanded as indicated in Figure 6.16 #1,1

**Figure 6.16 #1: A SCHEME FOR GOOD RESEARCH IN THE MODE OF UNDERSTANDING, AUTENTICITY AND PRAGMATISM**

<b>STAGES</b> In r e s e a r c h	<b>O R I E N T A T I O N</b>	
	THEORETICAL	RELATED TO OTHER DOMAINS
CREATING DISCRETE IMPRESSIONS OF WHAT EXISTS	identification of what 1.1 COMPLETENESS (TRUSTWORTHINESS) Does the research a) respect and include the whole range of experiences and insights of the persons in the field b) as well as their background?	generation of facts 1.2 DEPENDABILITY Are the basic concepts c) recognizable and is it clear how key terms fit with those of the informants. d) Does the text include an account of the day to day changes in circumstances and research design? <sup>121</sup>
SYNTHEZING, SEARCHING FOR WHOLES, AND/OR CREATING MEANING	compilation of facts 2.1 TRANSPARENCY e) Is there a text available that allows other researchers to get an idea of how the results were obtained, step by step f) May the text enable them to explore whether they can identify and investigate <sup>122</sup> possibly related fields in a similar manner?	application of results 2.2 TRANSFERABILITY & CONFIRMABILITY Is the presentation of the background sufficient for others to evaluate g) the usefulness of the study for the informants, h) does it give others a basis for pondering on whether they might transfer the results to other domains

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**Figure 6.16 #1,1 VALUN.1. FURTHER STANDARDS FOR RESEARCH RELATING SPECIFICALLY TO CONFIRMABILITY**

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FAIRNESS<sup>594</sup>

Have a) all parts in the field been listened to and their views been included?  
And b) has the author – as the research unfolded – made himself vulnerable to objections to his text?

---

EDUCATIONAL AUTHENTICITY

It is clear that at least some of the informants involved in the study have  
learned something about themselves and their situations?

CATALYTIC AUTHENTICITY

To what degree has the researcher been able not just to make people eager  
to change their situation, but actually helped them achieve it?

TACTICAL AUTHENTICITY

Demonstration that the informants have actually been able to improve their situation.

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*Tactical authenticity and actions research*<sup>594</sup>

It is a true wonder how empiricists can accept an experimental set up with a few dozen participants trying their best at an artificial problem-solving exercise one afternoon as science and reject the scientific value of case- and actions research programs, grounded in months and months of fieldwork, including feedback from informants. But sure, while we wait for the sunrise, the owls exploit the twilight to hover over the moor!

Experiments are set up to uncover a potential relationship and convince not the participants, but the scientific community of readers, that is properly done. Fine!

In contrast, case studies in the understanding mode the research process have to un-cover aspects the informants can benefit from. Not the least by explicating implicit patterns of behavior within the organization and thus open the scene for these to be examined by the actors themselves. Such a *reality test* is especially important because we deal directly with the lives of others, and thus in consequence our own. A far cry from the safety of behind-the-mirror observations and/or armchair statistical analyses!


And it is in itself an illustration of how we might – as we move from interpretation into understanding, if successful – prove one self-competent enough to work in an explanatory mode with a deep respect for others.

# 7 Interpretation, Explanation And Understanding

## 7.1 Summing up

As we have seen social research calls for

- better and more unified precision of terms, including *definitions* across disciplines
- *respect for opus operandi*, greater awareness of levels, as well the empirical and historical background of theories
- *reverence* for what each theoretical perspective may have to offer – the Nugget in the Rubble idiom, as well as
- a call for *analytical generalization* to create an inner driver linking theories in order to solidify integration and
- create patterns for emergence.



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Hopefully this essay contributed a bit of precision as we showed respect for the modes of explanation, interpretations and understanding, rather than added to the confusion by elaborate defences and exaggerations. Summing up we have made these differentiations:

- *Explanation*: a professional approach, looking outward towards what directly “are present” to be sensed. Using enumeration and all too often, just linear logic to outline rules for prediction of the consequences of an initiated sequence of acts. Thus the ability to explain is rather to be demonstrated – not by belief – but by display of constructive competence and sensitivity.
- *Interpretation*: attributing specific potentials to people and groups, each with their background. To interpret is an effort to make sense of the world, including the world within one self. Hopefully adjusted by self-conscious, suspended awareness of how we semi-automatically seem to nurture particular set of preferences! The vehicle for interpretations are ordinary language. Yet adherents to specific schools of thought are all too inclined to introduce certain terms of their own in order to differentiate oneself as an in-group from other perspectives.
- *Understanding*: trying to embrace and contain the Other, – both as a person, as well in weaker sense the Other as a fictional character or analytically perceived member of certain group. The Other is to be approached, just as much for his own sake, as well as a mean to absorb and learn to respect perspectives that at first seemed alien to our own conceptions of reality. So understanding is not something you have, is something you may acquire. An ever moving process that stops, the moment you feel you know enough to make sense.

In this mode language is extended to include signs, as a medium for arousal, expression as well as a potential for a semantic driven distortion of a more direct and complete apprehension of reality.

This essay has tried to show that neither approach can do without the others. We interpret as we select and create the facts, according to the theories we are led to choose or even stand for. And if in doubt we may be tempted to hide our potential uneasiness under heavy argumentation for the strength of our own approaches as well as blabbering about Perspectivism is okay, – regardless of circumstance.

Yet it is only as far as we try to suspend our subjectivity and perceive what we do as linked to our specific backgrounds, as well as try to expand our theoretical and practical training, that we may approach some sort of “second level” objectivity.

#### *Further differentiation and inter-relations*

The disparity between the three approaches may thus be seen as a question of different intermixed sequences of focus, degree and level:

Explanations are governed by explicit rules, just as interpretations are governed by principles. Principles that usually are not as explicit presented as the rules for explanation. Yet they share the same core. The greatest difference between the two is related to practice:

Explanations actively try to create marketing suggestions, re-model production lines, re-organize organizations or improve the conditions for the poor in the third world. Thus explicators need to be precise in accounting for opus operandi. In contrast interpreters are more apt as onlookers to use their principles in hindsight to make sense out of what is going on.

Yet the choice a set of explanatory rules as a guide for implementing change derives from an interpretation, that they in the given situation are the right to use. And unfortunately theories for guidance for action are often too incomplete. Thus the best managers, – while they certainly do pay respect for what is possible to measure – also have to rely on their sense of the real, including a feel for opus operandi as they decide what to do, rather than just resort to theory.

Thus analytical generalization in combination with the inclusion rule is one the most effective means to drive us beyond simplistic explanatory rules to more complex ones grounded in respect for opus operandi.

Understanding carry a potential of leading us to ease the grip of defensive attitudes and thus open the door for a more reliable base for forecasting. Thus rules for social re-construction better make sense to the people involved too. This may be facilitated either by interpretations or better if we – in a understanding mode – are able to draw people in and open ourselves to a dialogue with them.

With the richness of social life we are often at a loss for explanations. Thus we turn to interpretations or unknowingly to expretations, the robustness of which we could, but often prefer not to subject to reality tests.

Or we may turn to others for help. This being a first potential move towards receivment! Yet any insight we may have gained through understanding has to be tested for reliability. Not the least if we choose to express ourselves in text and thus have to rely on minute level explanations.

### *Summing up*

Our trail of thought has uncovered how the three different approaches to social research aim at different aspects of our inner and outer worlds:

- Interpretation: *sense-making* in general and – if done in the suspended mode – creation of new angles for looking at aspects of the social.
- Explanation: *construction*, application of rules in attempted correspondence with reality and application of a strict logic.
- Understanding: a sense of *inner concord* between humans and in a wider – however uncontrollable sense – all living matter

To the dismay of spoke-persons for Perspectivism, we have seen how adherents of the explanatory idiom of objectivism alongside those who speak for understanding share a point: We cannot grasp the world of others as long as we are caught up in our own web of preconceived notions. But we have also seen that explanation is only part of the cure. Bias is more than just a technical matter. It is a personal issue, and ever so more so, if we do not believe ourselves to be caught in a fixed position

Thus in order to challenges our prepositions we have to be moved by recognizing the positions of others as we try to situate them within us, – the move towards understanding. Be it by

- case studies, explorations of how people interact in the setting studied, including a report about their inner life as well as of your own reactions as you move through the field,
- dialogue with the very people whom you study and make sense of your life experiences by experimenting with different interpretations,
- trying to make a whole out of the backgrounds and discrepancies between the array of expretations and interpretations presented to you, as well as discrepancies between what your informants say they do and what they do,
- aiming for the creation of patterns of emergence linking the levels of historical background and present conditions with the actions taken; – which even may be linked to a constructive perspective!
- cleansing oneself as a person from emotional inclinations and scars as an ultimate goal.

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Experimentation with different interpretations may – as work in the understanding mode – open doors and guide us to get glimpses of domains beyond our every-day theoretical reasoning. But there is a difference, understanding is a dialectical process, it is inclusive, – while interpretational schemes, even they may unlock some doors, most likely will let others remain closed. So while

- interpretation is geared to help others share our sense out of what has happened,
- explanation, geared towards construction including in case of organizational re-design, means for over-seeing, financial, marketing and crowd control of others, while
- understanding aims at helping people, including ourselves, to expand and improve our ability to rely on a dawning sense of what we might become and thus potentially to be in our own control.

And lastly we have to realize the link between understanding and explanation in the strong sense, share the same idiom of searching for completeness, – however impossible it will be to obtain. Thus we could be brought to see the three approaches as complementary:

## 7.2 The inner drives between the three approaches

As for the relation between how and what the observer notices and what is observed, three different metaphors may be suggested.

For

- explanation: *sight*, noticing with neutral distance
- interpretation: to *feel in touch* with, relying on imaginative sense for the Other based upon self perception rather than testing
- understanding: to *be in touch* with as well as *being touched* by the Other

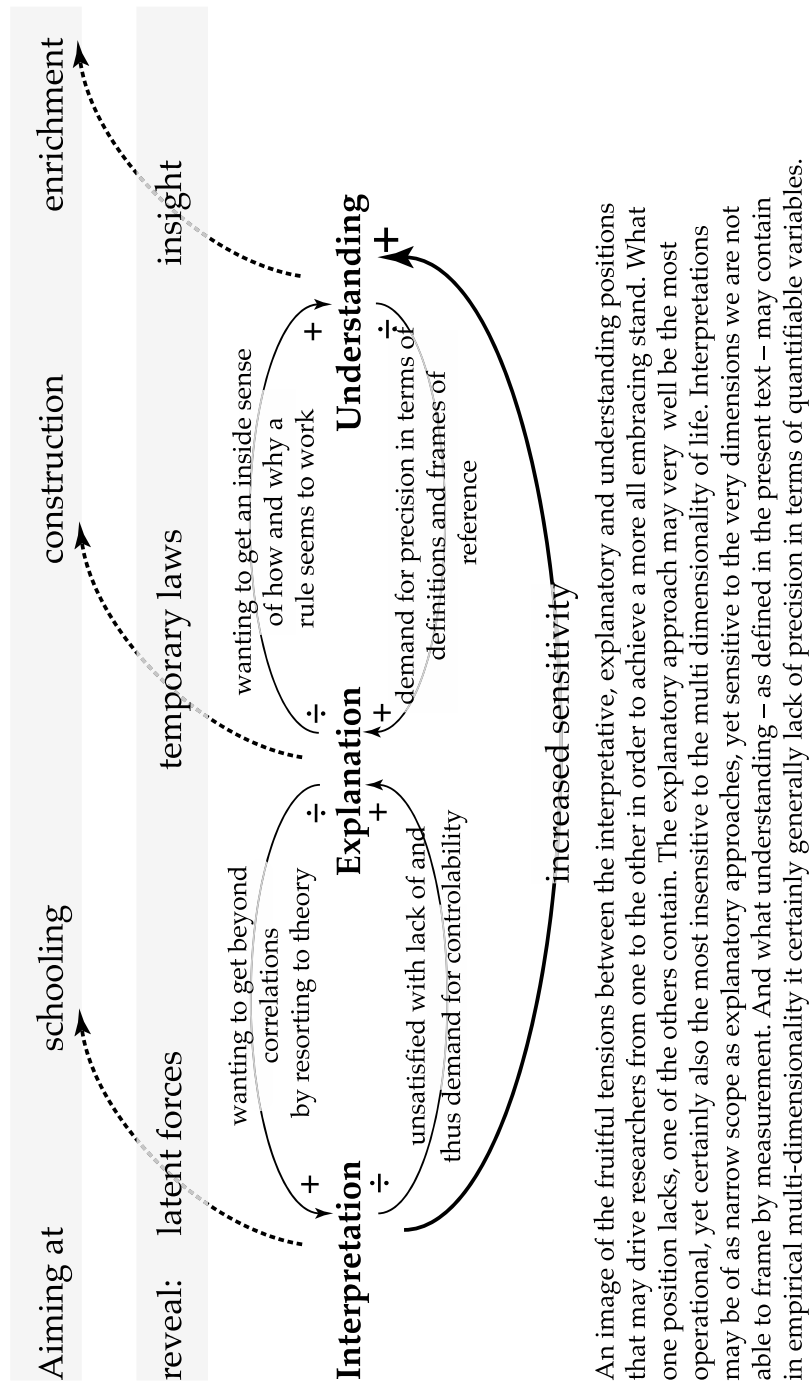
*The three*

*different approaches is to be seen not as exclusive, but supplementary.*

Neither approach should be made to stand for itself. However different in ethos, there is family likeness between e.g. enrichment and constructivism, – working in either mode should drive us in direction of more realistic terms as well as personal competences. Likewise, interpretational efforts are often a starting point for subsequent explanations.

So the three modes are interconnected, albeit not on the same level. Thus they may finally – if seen in an expansive self-critical perspective – be integrated as a practise in themselves, as depicted in Figure 7.2 #1, an expansion of Figure 3.1.

Figure 7.2 # 1 THE INTER-RELATED EXCHANGES BETWEEN INTERPRETATION, EXPLANATION AND UNDERSTANDING



An image of the fruitful tensions between the interpretative, explanatory and understanding positions that may drive researchers from one to the other in order to achieve a more all embracing stand. What one position lacks, one of the others contain. The explanatory approach may very well be the most operational, yet certainly also the most insensitive to the multi dimensionality of life. Interpretations may be of as narrow scope as explanatory approaches, yet sensitive to the very dimensions we are not able to frame by measurement. And what understanding – as defined in the present text – may contain in empirical multi-dimensionality it certainly generally lack of precision in terms of quantifiable variables.

# Endnotes

313. R Harré & PF Secord, *The Explanantion in Social Behavior*, Basil Blackwell , page 161.
314. As a philosophy, “Subjectivism” is associated with such diverse thinkers, as e.g. empiricists like Hume, rationalists like Descartes. Cognition has to be founded in subjects’ intellectual self-awareness or as idealists like J.G. Fichte sees it the foundation of knowledge is the creative activity of the subject her self. Personally I am – even as a kind of realist – in terms of temperament far closer to Fichte than to Descartes.
315. He was chosen as a general to lead an arm of the Athenian army. Author of *The Peloponnesian War*, a fight in 431–404 BC between Athens – a democratic state and power at sea and head of the league of Ionian islands – and Sparta – an oligarchy with at that time the strongest land-based army and head of most of the Peloponnesian states. Thucydides is – as a reporter of contemporary events – the first known case researcher.
316. Direct paraphrase from Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, book 1, #22.
317. For a discussion of the methodological parallel between the study of social life according to Thucydides and Medicine as a Natural Science, see E. Badian (1993) *From Plataea to Potidaea*, Johns Hopkins University Press, USA, Chapter 4.
318. Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 1, #23, #57 & 86, Book 3 #3.
319. For the idea that History like any Natural Science should formulate general laws and means of identifying when to apply them (opus operandi), see Carl Hempel “The Function of General Laws in History” in *Aspects of Scientific Explanation*, New York, Free Press, 1942, pages 231–43.
320. Another translator, Rex Warner, preferred instead of truest the *real cause*.
321. Of course, one can state, that however much Thucydides may have seen him self as one who explains events, as a historian he is a narrator. For this aspect, one might consult Tim Rood (1989) *Thucydides, narrative and explanation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford. His discussion of other causes, sheds light on Thucydides’ use of the expression “the truest cause”.
322. Richard J Evans (2009), *The Third Reich at War*, (2008), Penguin, page 188.
323. See e.g. Article 51, UN Charter, latest version of October 2000.
324. Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War*, book 1, #23,.
325. For an alleged example of this, remember the accusations made against M. Mead up cit, see § 4.14.
326. Ideals may serve you well, believing yourself free from bias. So the point here is not to discuss whether Thucydides him self was biased and how, i.e. as referred to by Tim Rood (1998), *Thucydides Narrative and Explanation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
327. *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, Six Volumes, Bachelier, 1830-1842. The very word Sociology is introduced in 4<sup>th</sup> Tome, leçon 47, page 252. Below, though, I will refer to Auguste Comte *Positive Philosophy*, translated by Harriet Martineau, London, 1853, where Sociology is mentioned in Book VI, Chapter II, page 58.
328. For an example, please see Aristotle and his “explanation” as to why things fall, ref § 1.5 page 21.
329. Auguste Comte, op. cit, Vol. 1, Book I, page 3 & Vol. 2, Book VI, chapter iii, page 97.
330. Auguste Comte, op. cit., Vol. 1, Book 1, page 12, se also Vol. 2, Book VI, chapter iii.
331. See Auguste Comte, op. cit., Vol. 2, Book IV, op. cit.op. cit. page 72.
332. Paraphrase, refer to Auguste Comte, op. cit., Vol. 2, Book IV, op. cit. page 70-4 or Tome IV, Leçon 48.



333. Auguste Comte, op. cit., Book VI, chapter iv, page 113. For completeness, one might recall that Schelling had nurtured somewhat similar notions, ref Friedrich W J Schelling (1799) *Erste Einwurf eines Systemes der Naturphilosophie*.
334. Auguste Comte, op. cit., Vol. 2 VI, Chapter iv.
335. Auguste Comte, op. cit., Vol. 2, Book VI, Chapter iii, op. cit. page 103.
336. Plato (390 BC ) *Theaetetus* (On knowledge), Loeb Library, 1952.
337. I would love to refer to the later work of Comte, but I must leave this to another. Yet the richness of most “Master Thinkers” is fascinating compared to how little of their work survives in public awareness. For an overview of Comte’s subsequent moral and aesthetic work, see i.e. Harald Høffding (1895), *History of Modern Philosophy*, London, 1900, Book 9.
338. Emile Durkheim (1895), *The Rules of Sociological Thought*, Free Press, New York, 1938, page 4. Please notice that I have chosen to translate “tendances” as inclinations instead as tendencies, cf. *Le regles de la methode sociologique*, Press Universifiare de France, page 6.
339. Truncated quote.
340. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules*. op. cit., xlv.
341. As such the social researcher should make himself vulnerable to guidance from the field, – one of the tenets of research in the understanding mode, as we shall see in § 6.8.
342. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules*. op. cit., 15.
343. It is fascinating how Positivism and Phenomenology share this claim while defining themselves in opposition to each other.
344. Op cit. page 48.

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345. Emile Durkheim, (1897) *Suicide – Study in Sociology*, Illinois 1951.
346. Indirect in the sense that some traffic accidents may be concealed acts of suicide.
347. Positive or negative Positive should perhaps be translated as direct in the sense of actively doing something, i.e. taking poison. Negative could, thus, be called indirect in the sense of doing something that might induce others to kill you, e.g. martyrs, soldiers dying during an effort to save others, etc.
348. Ref Functionalism (1) § 4.9, page 140.
349. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules...* op. cit., Chapter 5.
350. Cf. S.E. Finer (1952), *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick*, Barns and Noble, 1970, on the development of laws regarding the poor in early industrial England.
351. Plato (ca. 367 BC), *Phado*, sections 96d–99d. See also R.I. Hankinson, *Cause and Explanation in Ancient Greek Thought*, (1998) Oxford, 2001, page 84–87.
352. Ernest B. Haas (1958), *The Uniting of Europe*, Stanford University Press.
353. John Stuart Mill (1834, 1872), *System of Logic*, Book 3, Chapter 7.
354. Physicalism – the term referred to here must not to be confused with the economical concept by the same name.
355. Hegel (1830) *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, § 312, here quoted as translated by A.V. Miller (1970) *Hegel, Philosophy of Nature*, Oxford. The quote is a perfect illustration of how Hegel was swallowed up by his initial success as a dialectical thinker and brilliant author (1807) of *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.
356. The participants in the Wiener School did not commit themselves to any unified conception of “protokollsätze” throughout its history. Neurath – the only social researcher within the group – did try to guide his colleagues, including Carnap, to a more realistic awareness Basic social observations must be rooted in unsteadily growing theoretical complexes rather than in some pre-fixed order, Protokollsätze, *Erkenntnis* 1932/33, See Rudolf Haller & Heiner Rutte (eds) *Otte Neurath Gesammelte Philosophische und Methodologische Schriften*, Band 2, page 577–85.
357. Carl G. Hempel (1942) The Function of General Laws in History, *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 39, #2, pg 35–48.
358. Paul K. Feyerabend (1961) *Knowledge Without Foundations*, Oblerin College.
359. For illustration of an actual example, see Sigmund Freud (1901) *Dora*, Chapter II – as referred to in Figure 4.14, page 172.
360. G.E. Moore (1903), *Principia Ethica* Cambridge University Press, 1965, #10.
361. G.E. Moore, op. cit.
362. What a fascinating a way to express an insult! The day the moon turns blue it vanishes. Even if you became rich, no one would see it!
363. Philip Hiscock (1999) “Once in a Blue Moon”, *Sky and Telescope*, March, page 52–55 & Donald W. Olson et al (1999) “Blue Moon”, *Sky and Telescope*, May, page 37–38.
364. § 4.3, footnote 19.
365. For a proper explanatory illustration of “the strongest survive”, see Edward O. Wilson (1975) *Sociobiology The New Synthesis*, Bellknap Press and the herein referred example with doves.
366. By far the best, all though modernized, version of Sophocles (written around 425 BC) *Oedipus The King*, I know of in English is the modernized translation by Bernard Knox (1959), Washington Square Press, 1994.
367. Cf. Tom L. Beauchamp & Alexander Rosenberg (1981) *Hume and the Problem of Causation*, Oxford University Press, pages 258-9.

368. Cf. Rüdiger Bittner (2001) *Doing Things for Reasons*, Oxford University Press.
369. One might state that the rule is implicit in the story as a whole. Recall how often – especially in fictional political texts-, alleged descriptions are profoundly coloured with evaluations. At times the expressed evaluation may even be the primary concern, the example being simply the vehicle chosen to convey it.
370. For a selection of other definitions of a proverb please see Wolfgang Mieder (1993) *Proverbs are never out of Season – popular wisdom in the moderns age*, Oxford University Press, page 22–3.
371. La Rochefoucauld (1665) *Maxims*, Penguin Books 1959 #31 & 442.
372. Jon Elster (1999) *Alchemies of the Mind – Rationality and the Emotions*, Cambridge University Press, page 11–47.
373. Some may thus – by a trick by some – turn nothingness into a philosophy.
374. See Ross Ashby (1956) *Introduction to Cybernetics*, Methuen and Co, 1964, page 206.
375. For another somewhat similar, though a little more obscure definition, see R.E. Quinn & K.S. Cameron (eds) (1988) *Paradox and Transformation*, Balling Publishing Co., MA, page 2 as well as J.D. Ford & R.W. Backhoff (1986) *Organizational Change In and Out of Dualities and Paradox*, page 89.
376. Slightly reformulated from Lotte L. Lüscher (2002) *Working through Paradox*, PhD Thesis Aarhus School of Business, page 22. The former HR Officer at LEGO, Per Sørensen, originally designed the paradoxes a generation ago.
377. August Comte (1852) *The Catechism of Positive Religion*, London 1858, paraphrased quote, page 57.
378. The word “superficial” is a metaphorical reference to what can be observed and at best even measured as appearances “on the surface” – be it through observation of what occurs, is said, signalled or read as expressions through text, attitudes and pictures, or through occurrences of events within organizational life, whether overt or unspoken conflicts within a group.
379. Ref § 1.5, page 16. Yet “ball hitting ball” is not as simple as supposed. In fact it is – as we shall see in § 5.7 – quite complicated when looked at up close.
380. Leon Festinger (1957) *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford Un Press.
381. A simple one-loop machine is like a thermostat geared to use energy in order to maintain a specific state (20° C in our rooms) despite variations of temperature in the environment.
382. A double-loop machine is also able to use energy in order to maintain a certain state, but it is also able to “choose” the most convenient ways of doing so. Or put metaphorically it works strategically, whereas a one-loop machine is just a tactical operator.
383. See Charles Taylor (1981) *Human Agency and Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, page 113.
384. In some of forms cause is derived from consequence by making a probable cause, the cause, claiming i.e. that Georgina did Y because she was motivated by to do so.
385. The interested reader may for further amusement consult Kenneth I Gergen *Realities and Relationships*, Chapter 7 on “Objectivity as Rhetorical Achievement”, Harvard Press, 1994 as well as refer to the dictum by Durkheim, here referred to at page 198.
386. Twisted reference to Plato (390 BC) *Theaetetus*, 152 B, Loeb Library, 1952.
387. William James (1902) *The Varieties of Religious Experience, – a study of human nature*, Folio Society, 2008 page 427.
388. David Hume (1740) *A Treatise of Human Nature Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* part iii, section xiv, part iv, section ii.

389. We may excuse people for been mistaken about this, as even the great Newton at first had the idea that “a force internal to (moving) bodies kept them in motion”, ref Richard S Westfall (1980) *Never at Rest – a biography of Isaac Newton*, Cambridge Un Press, NY, page 144 & 302.
390. Robert B. Laughlin (2005) *A different Universe*, Basic Books, page 30.
391. Procustes, a son of the God for Earthquakes and the Sea, seized and fastened people to a bed. If they didn't they fit, he either cut of their limbs or stretc.hed them until they did. Thus the idea of the expression is to expose something to a test bed.
392. John H. Holland (1195) *Hidden Order – How adaptation builds complexity*, Reading, MA, page 36.
393. Constructors though do not work just by following rules. Constructions is a learning by doing process of constantly searching for ways and means for adapting and combining rules as well as assigning the right values, ref Idel Harel & Seymour Papert (1991) *Constructionism*, Ablex Publ NW, page 6.
394. John B. Watson 1924) *Behaviorism*, University of Chicago Press, 1957, page 5-6. Text abbreviated by present author.
395. Ref John B Watson, op. cit. page 23. The example it self is a witness of the simplicity of behaviourist thought!.
396. John B. Watson, op. cit. page 120-1.
397. John B. Watson, op. cit. page 104 – truncated, the full version is even more boastful.
398. One of the first books, written within the behaviorist idiom to break the ice, was GA Miller, E Galanter & KH Pribam (1960) *Plans and the Structure of Behavior*, Holt Rinehardt & Winston, 1970.
399. Ref R Harré & PF Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behavior*, Chapter 3, Basil Blackwell, 1972.
400. Karl Pearson (1922) *Francis Galton 1822–1922 – A Century Appreciation*, Cambridge University Press, London, pages 10–12.



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401. For one example among many, see Edwin A. Locke, Gary P. Latham & Miriam Erez (1988) “The Determinants of Goal Commitment”, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 13, #1, page 23–39.
402. Robert B. Laughlin (2005) *A Different Universe*, Basic Books, page 9.
403. Emile Durkheim (1897) *Le Suicide*, page XX.
404. Jay W. Forrester (1961) *Industrial Dynamics*, MIT Press, Mass.
405. Ludwig Feurbach (1866) *Gottheit, Freiheit und Unsterblichkeit vom Standpunkte der Anthropologie*.
406. Roy A. Rapaport (1986) *Pigs for the Ancestors*, Yale University Press.
407. Underfed people may not be as suitable for mating as well-fed, as suggested by Wynne Edwards (1962) *Animal Dispersion in Relation to Social Behavior* Oliver Boyd, UK, page 251.
408. Steven B. Shantzis & William W. Behrens III (1973) “Population Control Mechanisms in a Primitive Agricultural Society”, in Dennis and Donella Meadows (eds) (1973) *Towards Global Equilibrium*, Wright-Allan Press, pages 257–287.
409. This and the previous figure are from Steven B. Shantzis & William W. Behrens III op cit, pages 268 and 275.
410. Please notice I still do not claim the synthetic theory of biological evolution is the paradigmatic model for evolution, – as it hinges on intellectual cover up by making what we do not know of “chance” (mutations) to one of its corner stones, ref § 4.9, page 141.
411. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* Cohen & West Lmted, London, 1968, page 203.
412. For the original formulation please refer to W.V.O. Quine (1951) *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* and (1961) *From a Logical Point of View*, Harvard University Press.
413. Sigmund Freud (1899) *Die Traumdeutung*, Gesammelte Werke II/III, Chapter 6, B.
414. Erik Maaløe *The Employee Owner*, op cit.
415. Robert Miles (1982) *Coffin Nails and Corporate Strategies*, Prentice Hall.
416. Such systems are known from the science of weaponry, where missile guidance systems try to deduce the pattern of evasion tactics of the targeted airplane in order to counteract it, as do the systems within the airplane. And of course the idea is integrated in any better scheme of strategic planning too.
417. Pierre Duhem (1954) *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (1890), Princeton University Press, NJ, ref page 180–95 & 208–18.
418. Pierre Bourdieu & Jean-Claude Passeron (1970) *Reproduction in education, society, and culture* 2000, Sage.
419. Erik Maaløe (1996) *Case Studier af og om Mennesker i Organisationer / Case Studies of and about People in Organisations*, Akademisk Forlag, Denmark, page 295.
420. Richard E. Boyatzis (1998) *Transforming Qualitative Information – Thematic Analysis and Code Development*, Sage, page 107. “Emotions” is inserted by me.
421. The value and pitfalls of managerial “self-reporting” are overwhelming and delightfully confusing They cover the whole range from conscious cover up, unaware projection, wishful presentation of self and semi-automatically living up to what is expected, to a conscious commitment to realism and belief in the power of honesty.
422. Richard E. Boyatzis op. cit. page 97. As one can see, this “definition” is more precise than e.g. defining empathy as being able “to perceive the world as the client sees it” as done by Carl B. Rogers (1951), *Client Centered Therapy* London 1973, page 29, whereas Chapter 10 is an excellent guide to how to achieve it.
423. To day this would entail the ethos of Institutionalism!.
424. Ref GS Kirk & JE Raven (1957) *The Presocratic Philosophers* Cambridge University Press 1963, page 400–426.

425. Please note that it is not the increased temperature that “causes” the pressure to increase, but whatever causes the temperature to raise as well as the walls to remain tight, rigid etc.
426. Robert B. Laughlin (2005) *A Different Universe*, Basic Books, USA page 130.
427. For a breath taking introduction to the behaviour of “social” insects, please see Deborah Gordon (1999) *Ants at Work – How an Insect Society is*, Free Press.
428. John H. Holland (1998) *Emergence – From Chaos to Order*, Oxford University Press, UK, page 117–8.
429. For an introduction to an initial mathematical modelling of ant behaviour and similar phenomena please see Mitchel Resnick (1997) *Turtles, Termites and Traffic Jams – Exploration in Massively Parallel Microworlds*, MIT Press.
430. Action figures in video games.
431. Paul Henri Th D’Holbach (1770) *Système de la Nature – ou des lois monde physique et du monde moral*, George Olms, Germany 1966.
432. Holbach op. cit., page ixxx, rephrased quote.
433. I do not dare to discuss the relations between G-d as creator and Christian conceptions of mans nature – whether general or not – nor our wickedness or by implication assumed ability to improve socially and spiritually. Thus the picture just refers to Holbachs perspective.
434. See chapter 11, Holbach op. cit.
435. Holbach is certainly not the first to indicate that we are primarily driven by self-interest, nor the first French author to do so. We have all ready quoted la Rochefoucauld, who with artistic elegance in his maxims stress how virtue is a disguise for our meaner drives, ref page 206.
436. I.e. sympathy and antipathy are complementary like attraction and repulsion, etc. Holbach op. cit., page 55.
437. Holbach op. cit. page 302.
438. Steven Pinker (2007) *The language Instinct* (1995) Folio Society, page 279.
439. Thomas C. Schelling (1971) “Dynamic Models of Segregation”, *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, Vol. 1, pp 143–186, quote page 147.
440. For an overview of initial model structures one may refer to Nigel Gilbert & Jim Doram (eds) (1994) *Simulating Societies – The Computer Simulation of Social Phenomena*, UCL Press, Chapter 1.
441. Alfred Shutz (1932) *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Northwestern Press 1967, USA, abbreviated quote from page 4.
442. For more thorough examples, please see Nigel Gilbert & Jim Doran op cit.
443. See also R. Keith Sawyer (2005) *Social Emergence Societies as Complex Systems*, Cambridge University Press, page 192.
444. Robert H Miles & Kim S Cameron (1982) *Coffein Nails and Corporate Strategies*, Prentice Hall.
445. R Jeffery Ellis (1988) *Managing Strategy in the Real World*, Lexington Books.
446. Steven Englund (2004) *Napoleon – A Political Life*, Scribner, USA.
447. See e.g. William James (1902) *The Varieties of Religious Experience, – a study in human nature*, Folio 2008, Lecture IX & X on conversion.
448. I have time after time heard this expressed. Spontaneously I react with sadness and unease, – as the stories may be a defence by and operator which – as he addresses an Other – excuses himself for not acting, but just talk about what could be done.



449. The main Sanctuary of the breath-taking Imam Mosque in Esfahan (Iran) is covered with a 37 meters high dome. Place your self in a particular corner, utter a word, and you will hear it repeated several times. Acoustically 49 echoes can be measured, even though the human ear can only catch the first 12. This is seen as a symbolic fact expressed in stone, teaching us how our acts have consequences that keep coming back to us We may be aware of a few of the first consequences, but most of the subsequent impacts we cannot track.
450. R. Keith Sawyer, op. cit., page 216–7, slightly abbreviated.
451. We shall later throughout § 6 illustrate how a new interpretation may give us new insights, while later, if overemphasized by too zealous followers, may become a quasi-ideological straitjacket – refer also to § 4.6.
452. Erik Maaloe (1988) *The Employee Owner – Organizational change within manufacturing companies as participation and sharing grow and expand*, Akademisk Forlag, Copenhagen.
453. For a brief account of method and results, please see Erik Maaloe “Employee Ownership as a joint Management-labour drive towards caring and sharing”, in Panu Kalmi & Mark Klinedinst (eds) (2006) *Participation in the Age of Globalization*, Elsevier UK.
454. The figure is the same as the one already depicted as Figure 5.16 #3, page 264.
455. It is obvious from the interview that “they” is generally used by workers to mean management. Or, as here, someone in the past taking decisions or – as in this case – not taking decisions. Since the person speaking here is a manager, it is very uncertain, who “they” refers to. For the full story and of other related events within Reuther Mold please refer to *The Employee Owner*, up cit, page 19–40.
456. Jerry Bilz, Reuther Mold, 1988.



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457. Nobody wants to be associated with the “they” who performed poorly in the past. But nice to see oneself as having a share in the “we” who contributed to a success.
458. Jerry Bilz, Reuther Mold, 1988.
459. Jerry Bilz, Reuther Mold, 1988.
460. Each company assigned their own names to such committees. Yet when and how they came into existence different from place to place – a story in it self.
461. That owners can not just be fired were a great concern for several groups of workers as the ESOPs was set up and different solutions emerged from place to place.
462. Hank Provost, Fastener, 1989.
463. Don Lesko, manager at Fastener, 1988.
464. Field Notes, 1989.
465. Hank Provost, Fastener, 1989.
466. Sue Kaminski, Fastener 1990.
467. Field Notes, Fastener, 1989.
468. Erik Maaloe. *The Employee Owner* op cit.
469. private conversation on the work floor, not taped.
470. I simply took my long term association with Human Psychology for granted.
471. Benjamin Farrington (1944 & 49) *Greek Science – it’s meaning for us*, Penguin, UK, 1953.
472. Al-Ghazali (ca 1050) *Deliverance from Error and Attachment to Lord of Might and Majesty from the* edition by W.M. Watt *The Faith and Practice of Al-Chazali*, George Allan Unwin, 1963, page #85.
473. When written in brackets “understanding” refers to how it may be generally applied. Without understanding refers to the more precise meaning given to it in the research essay.
474. Known as TAT, the Thematic Apperception Test, HA Murray (1938) *Explorations in Personality*, Oxford University Press.
475. Actually, dogs are not really trained to give paw. It is an inherent puppy care-taking gesture, which we transfer to and interpret in the terms of our world.
476. This is what the Wilhelm Dilthey – as we shall see – defined as “understanding”.
477. INT Interpretative, COR Correspondence, Coh Coherence, Cun cunning, Gen Gen-eralization, UND understanding, approaching our conception. EXP explain.
478. Ernest Klein (1990) *A comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol II, page 1677.
479. Friederich Kluge (1883) *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, 19. Auflage, Berlin 1963, page 819–20.
480. According to (2000) *Etymologisk Ordbog*, Politiken, Denmark, page 240.
481. The fact that the dialect spoken in Jutland thrives on this aspect of understanding could alert others, who might want to explore the background of the English term.
482. Max Weber (1922) *Economy and Society – an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, University of California Press, 1978 page 4; published posthumously by Marianne Weber. I have allowed myself in the initial quote to replace Soziologie with “social research,” as Weber himself in a parenthesis declares the term Soziologie to be highly ambiguous. Please refer to footnote 15 too.
483. Nachzuerleben.
484. I have allowed myself to break the original German text, op. cit., page 2, down into two paragraphs rather than one.

485. Max Weber *Economy and Society*, op.cit., Paraphrase, page 8.
486. In the English translation Sinndeutung is out of the blue replaced with “subjective interpretation”. The English reader should be aware that 1) there are more concepts of understanding and interpretation in German than in English, 2) accordingly, translators have to try to interpret the meaning of the original expressions and may at times transform verstehen to interpretation. – As was the case with the subtitle of the original work *Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, which in the English format became *An outline of interpretive sociology*. Now “interpretive” may in fact – if we look at how Weber handles “understanding” in regard to content – be “correct”. But it was not what Weber intended.
487. Wilhelm Dilthey (1894) *Ideen über eine Beschreibende und Zergliedernde Psychologie*, later translated by RM Zaner (1977) and published as the first part of *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding*, Martinus Nijhoff. The indicated page numbers refer to *Gesammelte Schriften*, which the English translation follows too, in case Volume V, pg 144.
- Some of the translations are of my making. For clarity, “Mental” in the quote above is sometimes translated as “social”. The German term is “Seelenleben” – of which a literary but improper translation would be “soul life”. Yet, “inner movements” (emotions) could be a better translation, but for many, I believe, an awkward translation.
488. Regarding “social-human science” The proper translation of “Geisteswissenschaften” might be something like “The Study of Mind and Minds and the Manifestations thereof”. This sounds uncanny. Here I will just use the term “Social Science”, even though it is too narrow. For Dilthey, studies of the social realm include poetry, literature, music, and architecture, as well as history, jurisprudence, and economics. See *Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies*, Chapter i.
489. Refer to *Gesammelte Schriften*, V, page 143.
490. *Gesammelte Schriften*, V, page 144.
491. Dilthey (1910) *Understanding other persons and their expressions of life*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Netherlands 1977, *Gesammelte Schriften Vol VII*, Berlin.
492. Wilhelm Dilthey, (1910) *The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies* *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. VII, page 79–88.
493. *Understanding other people and their expressions of life*, op.cit., page 206.
494. Op.cit., p. 214.
495. Dilthey *Ideas Concerning a Descriptive Mind and Analytical Psychology* (1894), page 148.
496. Op.cit., page 52.
497. Op.cit., page 180.
498. Op.cit., page 156 and 158–168.
499. Refer to quote by Bloom § s4.6.
500. Op cit. page 171.F.
501. Up cit page 218.
502. Dilthey (1927) *Studien zur Grundlegung der Gesteswissenschaften*, *Gesammelte Werken* Band vii, 1927, page 191.
503. George Walsh, introduction to Alfred Schutz (1932) *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Northwestern Press, 1967, page xx.
504. Erik Maaloe (1996) *Case studier af og om mennesker*, *Akademisk Forlag*, Copenhagen, 2 version 2002, up cit.
505. Refer e.g. Richard E. Palmer (1969) *Hermeneutics*, Northwestern University Press, US.

506. “The base for all understanding is to see how the part fits into the whole and through the whole identify the part”. Paraphrase from D. Friedrich Ast (1808) *Grundlinien der Grammatik, Hermeneutik und Kritik*, Bibliotheca Wegeneriana, Jena, page 178.
507. Dilthey’s first major work was indeed a biography on the life and times of Schleiermacher, 1870.
508. The reason why it remains out of the mainstream is probably that they wrote so much more on other subjects. Also, remember how the major part of the works of Comte is ignored.
509. For a supplementary evaluation, please refer to HP Rickman (1998) *Dilthey to Day, – a critical appraisal of the contemporary relevance of his work*, Greenwood Press, US.
510. Paraphrase of quote by Schleiermacher, Richard B. Brandt (1941) *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher*, Greenwood Press, Conn., 1968, page 76. Brandt refers to *Briefe*, vol. IV, page 51, which I have not been able to trace.
511. Alfred Schutz (1932), *The Phenomenology of the Social World* Northwestern University Press, 1967, page 114. An example which in itself refers back to Weber, op.cit / Schutz is the anglicized version of Schütz.
512. Alfred Schutz op. cit., page 115.
513. Peter L Berger & Thomas Luckman (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin Penguin Press, 1967, page 150.
514. Alfred Schutz *The Phenomenology of...*, op. cit., refer to page 215–6.
515. Schutz is the mentor for the influential work of Peter L. Berge & Thomas Luckman, op. cit.
516. C. Agyris (1990) *Overcoming Organizational Defences. Facilitating organizational learning*, Allyn and Bacon.
517. David Deutch (1998) *The Fabric of Reality*, (1997) Penguin, UK, page 2.

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518. Carl von Clausewitz (1827) *On War*, Penguin 1977, Chapter 1, #24.
519. Martin Heidegger (1927) *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translation by A Hofstadter, Indiana University Press, 1988, page 215.
520. Reference to the *James-Lange thesis*. After Carl Lange (1885) *Om Sindsbevægelse*, Copenhagen (later translated into German *Über Gemüthsbebewegungen*, 1887 and French *Les Émotion*, 1895) and William James (1884) What is an emotion? *Mind*, 9, pp. 188–205. See also William James (1890) *The Principles of Psychology*, chapter xxv.
521. Nisbett, R.E., & L. Ross (1980) *Human inference Strategies and shortcomings of social judgement*. A Tversky & D Kahneman (1974) “Judgement under uncertainty”, *Science* 185, page 1124–31.
522. Understander = one who understands, refer to *Oxford English Dictionary*, (1931) Oxford Clarendon Press, 1961, Vol xi, page 148. Understander could also be the acrobat who on his shoulder carries the full weight of a pyramid of team-mates.
523. For a more thorough discussion please refer to Finn Collin *Theory and Understanding*, Basil Blackwell, 1985, chapter 1.
524. Ludvig Wittgenstein (1922), *Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, sentence #6.522.
525. In all fairness, we have to notice that how to choose the proper wording as well ex-pressions has recently been in the forefront of survey research rather than statistical intricacies. For a short reference see e.g. Floyd J Fowler (1995) *Improving Survey Questions*, Sage Publications.
526. In fact this may actually be taken to define “the ethos of discussion” in contrast to e.g. conversation, “talking with each other”, encounters, etc.
527. The figure depicted draws on a reading from Paul Ricour, (1972), translated in *Hermeneutics & the Human Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, page 166.
528. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1813), *On different Methods of Translating*, reprinted as chapter 4 in Lawrence Venuti (2004) *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2 ed. Routledge, London.
529. A technique interviewers should know of, as echoes, ref to Carl B Rogers (1961), *Client Centered Therapy*, Constable 1973, chapter 2.
530. The term was first formulated in passing by the translators of George Walsh & Frederic Lehnert (1932) of Alfred Schutz *The Phenomenology of The Social World*, Northwestern University Press, 1967, refer to page 55.
531. The darker areas in this figure are meant to express parts of our psychic life of which we are unaware. It can be due to sheer ignorance or internal censorship. Had we to acknowledge them they would disturb the self-image that we like to transfer to others – “self-censorship by the Super-Ego” – as Freud would call it.
532. “Sympathizing” does not necessarily mean that we personally value the drives bestowed to the Other. In fact, they may be urges that we do not like to see in ourselves. If so, it would still be an act of seeing me in you.
533. The Roman historian and practitioner of divination, Amminanus (400 AC) tell us”. God directs the flight of birds, so that their motion indicates the character of the future. By such acts the deity gracefully informs us of what is impending”. Rephrased from Amminanus’s works in English published on the Internet, Book 21, #1.9.
534. Danish readers may refer to my book *Case studier af og om mennesker i organisationer*, where 30 pages deal with this issue in detail. English readers may consult one of the many the illustrative books by Carl B. Rogers on client-centered therapy.

535. For the reader who wants to compare, the meaning given to “understanding” in the present text and that of Heidegger, it may be proper to stress that there is some family likeness. But my approach is not related to readings in Phenomenology, but to Humanistic Psychology as well as my practice as a case researcher of ordinary lived life, including how we may open ourselves to and cope with evidence that might alter and/or enrich our views. In contrast, Heidegger created his own conceptual universe, which, however inspiring it may be, draws heavily on the structure of the German language and primarily open to specialists and, as I see it not immediately applicable to lived life. If it were, I am sure *Sein and Zeit* would have been full of enlightening practical illustrations. But yes, Heidegger too sees “understanding” as a corporeal state, not just an attitude of mind.
536. Write-out from interview. “. . .” indicate a shorter or longer pause.
537. Shame has many faces and may lead to many reactions as indicated by e.g. Donald L. Nathanson (1992) in his book *Shame and Pride*, Norton Comp. In my more modest perspective, shame occurs the moment you realize that you are acting in dis-accordance with your self-confessed ideals. In contrast, guilt occurs when you realize that you have acted against moral standards your upbringing have led you to adhere to.
538. The Danish word is “pjat”. Kierkegaard’s use of the word is very subtle. Unfortunately, “pjat” is hard to translate if all the connotations, – stretc.hing from childish enjoyable playfulness to shallowness – are to remain intact. “Pjat” stresses a lack of correspondence between the signal you display for effect and your inner lack of serious engagement.
539. Here the term ‘rational’ is related to thinking in means and goals, as Weber, among many others, has proposed.
540. Please refer to the James-Langer thesis, op. cit. footnote # 50.
541. We will soon deal with coping, the potential active part of the consciousness.
542. The principle of vulnerability was given to me during fieldwork. Good esop managers saw it as beneficial for the company to make themselves vulnerable to critique.
543. Thomas A. Harris (1967) *I’m OK, You’re OK*, Avon Books, US, 1969.
544. Matthew 26.70–75 / Luke 22.55–65.
545. Richard S Lazarus (1991) *Emotion and Adaptation*, Oxford University Press, page 112–115, etc.
546. As exemplified by the tactics of dissonance reduction, refer to Leon Festinger (1957), *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford University Press, 1962.
547. The reader may notice that Schutz, op.cit. on page 126–7, also touches on this issue.
548. I have an inkling, that angst plays a far greater role for social researchers than is generally acknowledged. How often have I not seen how relieved a PhD student becomes, when she finally has committed herself to a particular theory as a life-saver by which she is able to reject the potential relevance of other perspectives.
549. See I Ching (1150 BC) translated by John Blofeld as *The Book of Change*, George Allen & Unwin, UK 1965.
550. As called problem solving teams, for an example see below.
551. Fritz Zwicky (1958) *Morphologisches Forchung*, Wintherthur AG.
552. See e.g. Mathew B Miles & A Michael Huberman (1984) *Qualitative Data Analysis* 2nd edition, 1994, Sage.
553. Refer for example to Frederic S Perls (1969) *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* Bantam Books or Tsultrim Allione (1998) *Feeding your Demons*, Little Brown and Co, US.
554. For details, please refer to Chapter 3.2 in *The Employee Owner*, up cit.
555. George Herbert Mead (1934) *Mind, Self & Society* University of Chicago Press 1972, #22.
556. Here the “I” presents a person, rather similar to the Freudian Ego, – an evaluating observing entity.



557. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960) *Truth and Method* transl by Garret Barden & John Cumming 1975, Sheed and Ward London, page 326.
558. William James *The Varieties of Religious Experience, – a study in human nature*, (1902), Folio Society, 2008, page 387.
559. Hans Georg Gadamer (1960) *Truth and Method* Sheed & Ward, London, 1975.
560. The theoretical background for the present essay is anchored, not in text reading, but in “Humanistic Psychology,” and the practice of observant interviewing I developed during years of research.
561. The term horizon is borrowed from Schütz, see Alfred Schutz (1932) *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, North-western Un Press, Ill, 1967, pg 83.
562. To be read metaphorically!.
563. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960) *Truth and Method* Sheed and Ward, London 1975, page 269.
564. Condensed paraphrase from Søren Kierkegaard (1843) *Frygt og Bæven*, pp. 17–33, translated as *Fear and Trembling*, by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (1983) , Princeton University Press.
565. When I heard the story as a child it promptly made me turn away from the god of the Old Testament. The idea that my father might slaughter me, if a god said he should, made me aghast. An act Kierkegaard would certainly not have approved.
566. Refer back to § 1.4.
567. Refer back to the initial vignette to this sub-chapter, Plato *Phaedrus* 275 E.
568. Paul Ricour (1973) “Hermeneutique et critique ideologies”, reprinted in *Hermenutics & the Human Sciences*, Cambridge Un Press, 1995, page 96. – An important point for Ricour, which he shares with others before him. For further elaborations, refer to page 112–3 & 141–4.



569. Ricour, op.cit.
570. On personal identity and our relations with the Other, called *Egenskab og Fællesskab* (in German “Eigenschaft und Gemeinschaft”), Munksgaard, Copenhagen, 1969.
571. Paraphrase from Abraham Maslow (1966) *The Psychology of Science*, Harper and Row, NY.
572. Martin Heidegger (1927) *Sein und Zeit* Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1963, § 31, page 145.
573. Effective, please refer to Figure 4.2 #1 TIMEAN, page 118.
574. Al-Ghazali (ca 1060), *The Beginning of Guidance*, chapter 10, op. cit.
575. In fact such texts do exist in German books from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
576. George Luis Borges (1980) *Seven Nights*, New Directions, USA, 1984, page 77.
577. Ref, how perspective is something we read into what we see, § 1.5 page 14.
578. Refer for instance to James A. Erskine, L.A. Maufette-Leenders & M.R. Leenders (1977) *Learning with Cases* & (1988), *Teaching with Cases*, Richard Ivey School of Business, 1999 & 1988.
579. Jack D Douglas (1970) *Understanding everyday Life*, Aldine Publ Comp, page 3.
580. In a study on Office of Technology Assessment under the US Congress in the early eighties half my informants were from inside the Office, the other half being representatives of organizations surrounding it. Erik Maaløe (1982), *Teknologi-vurdering*, Teknisk Forlag, Copenhagen.
581. A term borrowed from Barbara Czarniawska (1997) *Narrating the Organization*, Un of Chicago Press, page 179.
582. Carol Rambo Ronai (1992) The reflexive Self through Narrative, in Carolyn Ellis & Michael Flaherty (1992) *Investigating Subjectivity*, Sage, page 108.
583. “secrete ” in the sense of a story otherwise seldom told about a reality yet known by some but not revealed openly by most.
584. Naomi Wolf (1997) *Promiscuities – the secrete struggle for womanhood*, Ballantine Publ Comp, NY, 1997, truncated quotes from page xvi.
585. up cit page 136.
586. Studs Terkel (1972) *Working, – people talk about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do*, Pantheon Books.
587. For an example, please refer to Erik Maaloe *The Employee Owner*, op. cit., page 96.
588. Morris Rossabi (1988) *Khubilai Khan, – his life and times*, University of California Press 2009, page 222–4.
589. Muslims.
590. Idolaters, according to Marco Polo those who worship carven images of other gods, than Christ, – Marco at times refers to Hindus, in this case most likely Buddhists.
591. *The Travels of Marco Polo* (1299), Chapter on Kublai Khan, Folio Society, 1990, page 97, truncated.
592. For instance, expansion of rules of correspondence, major changes in organiza-tional structure, and/or environmental conditions, etc.
593. Including setting up a Theory Test.
594. Fairness is related to the final text and will not be reached without a search for completeness during fieldwork.

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