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The Ontogenetic Fallacy: The Immanent Critique of Habermas's Developmental Logical Theory of Evolution

Piet Strydom

Introduction

Since the emergence of neo-evolutionism in the 1960s, various critiques of the theory of social or socio-cultural evolution have been forwarded, including notably those of Immanuel Wallerstein, Alain Touraine and Anthony Giddens who decisively reject the idea of evolution. Within this context, Jürgen Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution has also become a specific object of critique, the best known in the English-speaking world being, perhaps, Michael Schmid's critique (1982). While the latter is ultimately based on neo-Darwinistic assumptions (1982a, 1987) which allow a non-Marxist alternative to be pitted against Habermas's position, a significant immanent critique has been taking shape during the late 1970s and 1980s the contours of which are at present starting to become visible, despite the fact that as yet it is nowhere developed and presented in a systematic manner. I have in mind here the work of younger authors belonging to the circle around Habermas, such as Johann Arnason, Axel Honneth, Hans Joas, Günter Frankenberg, Ulrich Rödel, and Klaus Eder, who have not only developed a critique of Habermas but are also engaged in developing an alternative to him within the framework of critical theory.

In this essay I propose to present an overview of this immanent (i.e. critical theoretical) critique of Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution from the point of view of the basic theoretical problem that, in my opinion, is at issue in it. Allow me to briefly clarify this point of view.

In the light of debates in both theoretical biology and social theory during the last twenty to thirty years, it has become clear that development, far from resulting from and hence being secondary to evolution, has a primary and determinative influence on evolution. Development determines what kinds of change are possible and thus fixes what is evolutionarily accessible and what not. Consequently, an adequate understanding of evolution requires that a good deal of attention be paid to development. This insight explains why the problem of development has become an independent object of inquiry in both biology and sociology in the recent past.

One should not, however, allow Habermas's emphasis on the regeneration of the theory of socio-cultural evolution to mislead one into believing that development is neglected in his work. On the contrary, he is among the few contemporary authors who understand the need for concentrating on development while maintaining a firm grip on evolution rather than neglecting or even rejecting the latter in favour of the former. Hence he writes:

> Evolutionarily oriented analyses of the present...whether Marxist or non-Marxist, are forced to monitor their assumptions - assumptions that already underlie the delimitation and description of the object - on an instructive theory of social development. (1979: 126)

Within the general context sketched thus far, the major theoretical question concerns the specific relation between development and evolution, particularly the developmental model determining evolutionary theoretical assumptions. It is this

problem that, in my view, is at issue in the above-mentioned immanent critique of Habermas, centring on his developmental logical ontogenetic model of development. The main thrust of the critique, as I see it, is that his developmental model, if not in itself problematical, is overextended: his theory of socio-cultural evolution is a developmental logical one which, as such, rests on the employment of the ontogenetic model of development in a manner which must be regarded as involving the commitment of the ontogenetic fallacy.[1]

I. The Starting-Point

Thomas McCarthy

While Hans-Christian Harten in the late 1970s in his studies of Jean Piaget from the point of view of - but also against - Habermas still uncritically proceeded, in keeping with the latter's position, from the assumption of the theoretical desirability of a close articulation of ontogenesis and socio-cultural evolution (1977, 1977a), Thomas McCarthy at about the same time expressed his unease about the application of the ontogenetic model to society. Rather than concentrating on this problem, however, he saw fit to postpone its formulation and substantiation:

> The critical queries to which Habermas's conception of social evolution gives rise are legion...they extend to questions concerning the applicability of ontogenetic models to social systems - the characterization of the infrastructure of society as a network of actions certainly does not suffice to justify this transposition. For various reasons (not the least of which are my own limitations), I shall leave the formulation and substantiation of these problems to others. (1978: 261)

McCarthy, to be sure, did not leave it at that but proceeded to make a few brief yet pregnant suggestions which were in fact soon afterward taken up by members of the younger generation of critical theorists who developed them in a direction which is more critical of Habermas.

In nuce, McCarthy's argument is that Habermas's intellectual development exhibits a fundamental shift in that, whereas in his earlier work he operated with a conception of critical theory as situation-dependent and hermeneutically rich social inquiry, in his later work he adopts a much more strongly theoretical programme which lays claim to validity independent of a historico-hermeneutic standpoint (McCarthy, 1978: 261-271). The crucial point is now that this shift in emphasis is attributable to Habermas's concern with the development not only of universal or formal pragmatics but in particular also of the theory of socio-cultural evolution. The original conception of an empirical philosophy of history with practical intent made way for the theory of socio-cultural evolution possessing the methodological status of rational reconstruction. The consequences were far-reaching. The introduction of evolutionary theory entailed, first, the replacement of the hermeneutically situation-bound character of social life as basic reference point, what Habermas (1972: 389-392) for instance articulated as the basic experiences of modernity which accompanied the revolutionary origins of modern society, by the general state of development of humankind and, second, the weakening, if not abandonment, of the originally asserted unity of theory and practice. The practical meaning guiding the interpretation of history as well as the present was thus located not in a historically and socially situated practical reason but, in a Neo-Kantian turn, rather in pure practical reason.

Although the issues raised by McCarthy provided a starting-point for a critical assessment of Habermas's position as it began to take shape in the 1970s, the actual elaboration of a critique of the latter's theory of socio-cultural evolution required the overcoming of certain difficulties in the interpretation put forward in *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*. The fact that David Held in his review and critical assessment of Habermas followed McCarthy so closely (1980: 281-284, 374-375) that he could not eliminate these difficulties explains why he failed to develop the critique further, despite such statements as '[t]he practical implications of the theory are undeveloped' (1980: 376) and '[t]heoretical categorization is combined with an insufficient regard for historical analysis of evolving social relations' (1980: 378). At least three of these difficulties are worth mentioning in the present context.

First, McCarthy is misled by Habermas's suggestion that a fully developed theory of socio-cultural evolution involves not only a reference to systematically reconstructible patterns of development, or a developmental logic, but also an explanation in terms of developmental mechanisms or dynamics of how and why developments actually come about, and indeed to such a degree that he overlooks the developmental logical emphasis Habermas lends to his theory (McCarthy, 1978: 253, 269). In view of the fact that McCarthy not only recognizes but also questions Habermas's separation of abstract evolution-theoretic explanations from substantive narrative historiographical expositions, it is incomprehensible how he is able to overlook this peculiar emphasis. For the separation of evolution and history and, hence, developmental logic and developmental dynamics obviously entails a partial identification of evolution and developmental logic which eventuates in an essentially developmental logical evolutionary theory.

Secondly, McCarthy (1978: 236) concedes to Habermas's argument that an evolutionary theory oriented towards the analysis of the present is compelled to monitor its assumptions against a guiding theory of development, but does not see that such acceptance by no means forces one to agree to the projection of a developmental logical ontogenetic model onto socio-cultural evolution. Considering the debate about epigenetics, particularly the position of development in relation to Neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory, in contemporary biological theory (see, e.g. Lovtrup, 1974; Ho and Saunders, 1979, 1982), it would seem as though Habermas's starting-point possesses a good deal of plausibility, but whether a theorist is entitled to take the further step of adopting an ontogenetic model with him is another question - one that an increasing number of critics answer negatively.

Finally, there is a problem about the manner in which McCarthy understands the relation between the theory of socio-cultural evolution and critical theory. According to McCarthy (1978: 265, 269-270), the theory of socio-cultural evolution provides the theoretical framework for a critical historical account of the genesis of contemporary society and its pathologies. As is clear from his treatment of Habermas's critical theory of late capitalism (McCarthy,1978: 358-386), he takes this to mean that the theory of late capitalism as for instance represented in *Legitimation Crisis* is something like an empirical appendix to a methodologically highly differentiated social philosophy or merely the application of a critical methodology. Not only does this understanding give evidence of a lack of a sufficient grasp of the structure of critical theory, but it also prevents McCarthy from seeing through the problem of the relation Habermas postulates between development and evolution as

well as from drawing appropriate conclusions from his critique of Habermas's separation of evolution and history.

Unlike Held, who followed McCarthy's account of Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism almost verbatim and consequently failed to develop a critique of the resultant theory of socio-cultural evolution, Axel Honneth simultaneously appreciated the thrust of McCarthy's various critical points and uncovered the weaknesses of his interpretation (see Honneth, 1981a: 162-170). It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that the immanent critique of Habermas's ontogenetically based developmental logical theory of socio-cultural evolution received its first explicit formulation and substantiation in a work co-authored by Honneth (Honneth and Joas, 1980, 1988). Here Honneth and his co-author Hans Joas had the opportunity to also draw on the acute analysis of Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism by Johann Arnason (1979, 1980).

Johann Arnason

In his analysis, which has been designed to highlight the differences between Habermas's reconstructed version of historical materialism and Marx's original model, Arnason does not make any mention of the ontogenetic model of development as such, yet displays a clear understanding of Habermas's relationship to the Piaget-Kohlberg tradition of cognitive psychology (Arnason, 1979: 216) and the consequences the adoption of the concept of developmental logic has for the theory of socio-cultural evolution (1979: 211-18).

Approaching Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism in a much more analytical spirit than McCarthy, he immediately sees that Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution is a developmental logical theory which takes evolution to mean 'the realization of an ordered sequence of structural possibilities' (Arnason, 1979: 215) and appreciates that this process is regarded as taking place, analogous to ego development, at a number of dimensions, namely worldviews, collective identity and, most important for Habermas, moral-legal structures. At the same time, however, he also puts his finger on the basic influence cognitive psychology has had on Habermas's position. This influence, needless to say, goes back to the concept of ontogenesis as a constructive learning process undergone by a subject who develops from stage to stage through confrontation with and solution of objectively given problems. Arnason finds it exhibited by Habermas's assumption, first, of 'a certain primacy of the individual over society, and hence a priority of the relationship between man and world compared to that between man and society' (1979: 216), and, second, of systems problems bearing on moral-practical development in such a way that the emphasis is placed on 'the independence and universality of the social process' as such (1979: 212).

The theoretical implications Arnason discovered Habermas's position to have are both wide-ranging and far-reaching. First, the conception of the social process as being grounded in a universal developmental logic of evolution circumscribes class struggles and social movements to such a degree that the possible historical effects of their practical projects are reduced to auxiliary functions of transmission and acceleration (1979: 213). Second, the dualistic model of the evolutionary process as an invariable correlation of system problems and logic of stages of maturation not only a priori excludes the discontinuous moment of evolutionary transitions which

can be grasped only when attention is paid to the interlocking of the appropriation of nature and the association of people within a specific historical configuration (1979: 212-3), but by the same token also portrays 'the cumulative development of technical knowledge [as] the only possible modification of the relationship between man and nature' (1979: 217). Finally, the introduction of the concept of development logic implies 'a double closure' (1979: 217) in that it, through an instrumentalist reduction of the relation between man and nature and a normativistic subsumption of the relations between people in society, allows neither interference from the material context nor alternative projects.

These pernicious implications of Habermas's reconstructed version of historical materialism lead Arnason to suggest the introduction of an alternative praxis theoretical position which operates with the conception of a 'pluri-dimensional and open-textured' (1979: 217) social process involving both a more than merely instrumental or purposive-rational notion of the appropriation of nature and a notion of association admitting of alternative practical projects.

With the various suggestions and arguments put forward by McCarthy and Arnason, the agenda was set for the articulation and elaboration of the major motifs of the immanent critique of Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution.

II. The Critique

Axel Honneth and Hans Joas

While Harten and McCarthy in the late 1970s accepted Habermas's postulation of a relation between ontogenesis and socio-cultural evolution, the former happily and the latter somewhat uneasily, and while Arnason without pinpointing the ontogenetic model indicated various problems in Habermas's developmental logical theory, Axel Honneth and Hans Joas as early as 1980 identified the basic difficulty of Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution as residing precisely in his theoretical strategy of basing the theory of socio-cultural evolution squarely on the ontogenetic model.

Whereas McCarthy permitted himself to be led astray by Habermas's suggestion that a complete evolutionary theory requires a reference to both developmental logic and developmental dynamics, thus rendering himself incapable of assuming a critical posture, Honneth and Joas (1980, 1988), like Arnason, from the start appreciated the specific character of Habermas's theory. In a brief yet penetrating analysis they clarified the role of the ontogenetic model in Habermas's conceptualization of the theory of socio-cultural evolution, revealed the developmental logical bias of the theory, and demonstrated the problematic nature of its implications. Central to their critical analysis is a dissection of Habermas's explanation of socio-cultural evolution in terms of developmental logic. For thereby Honneth and Joas are able to show that the ontogenetic model features in Habermas's theory not only in the sense that the development of worldviews, collective identities and moral-legal structures are conceived as being analogous to ego development, but also and in particular that his evolutionary explanation as such depends on the attempt to 'project the structure of ontogenetic learning processes on to the process of evolutionary learning' (1988: 165). This means that not only socially mediated technical and moral learning processes follow the same pattern as the process whereby the individual subject learns from dealing with and solving problems, but also that society as a whole in its

evolutionary advances from the primitive to the civilizational level or from archaic and developed civilizations to modernity. Evolutionary learning processes in this latter sense involve, strictly in keeping with Habermas's ontogenetic model, ‘unresolved system problems that represent challenges’ and ‘new levels of learning’ that are latently available and could be drawn upon for the purposes of solving problems threatening the continued existence of society as a whole (Habermas, 1979: 121-2). For Honneth and Joas (1988: 163) this position implies that ‘system-threatening problems’ are adduced ‘in order to identify the moral learning process which ... permits the overcoming of the threat to the system and thereby the evolutionary further development of the technical-strategic system of action. The manifold implications of this developmental logical ontogenetic type of evolutionary explanation are patiently teased out by Honneth and Joas.

In the first place, an explanation that is cast in this mould necessarily abstracts from historically specific events and unique collective experiences within the framework of which social groups engage in historical action, and thus detaches itself from the real historical process (Honneth and Joas, 1988: 164). Insofar as such an explanation does take the historical context into account, it does so only to ascertain formal levels of consciousness and hence ignores processes of communication guided by collective processes of interpretation and experience gained through collective learning processes. That this is indeed the line followed by the developmental logical evolutionary explanation is borne out, for Honneth and Joas (1988: 164), by Habermas's rigorous separation of reconstructive developmental logic from narrative historiography. The theory of socio-cultural evolution is solely concerned with the development of structures and hence reads the historical material exclusively from the point of view of the logic of such development. The researcher is thus from the outset predestined to lose sight of the kind of historically innovative action which is typically represented by social movements and which does not arise in response to a problem threatening society as a social system.

Second, the ontogenetically based developmental logical approach to socio-cultural evolution operates with an ambiguous concept of ‘social learning’ (Honneth and Joas, 1988: 165-6). Habermas himself explicitly includes under that rubric systemic learning in the sense of the evolutionarily significant response of society as a social system to a system-threatening problem. As is suggested by historical evidence, however, moral-practical learning processes often occur within the context of social movements, the typical ‘historical bearers of evolutionary learning processes’ (1988: 165). The crucial point is now that social movements, typically representing a consciousness of action orientations which are socially superior and constituting a normative advance, learn not in reaction to unresolved system problems and dangers, but rather through the collective experiencing of and cooperative opposition to repression and social justice prevailing in a society (1988: 166). Given that this is the case, Honneth and Joas (1988: 165) insist that Habermas is compelled at all points where he wants to document historically the presence of moral learning to have recourse to social movements which, ironically, are incompatible with developmental logical evolutionary classifications. Habermas (1981: 468; 1987a: 316) indeed envisages as ‘the major task’ that remains after the developmental logical explanatory scheme had been established ‘the description of evolutionary learning advances in terms of social movements and political transformations’. This position provides evidence for Honneth and Joas's (1988: 166) claim that Habermas's concept of social

learning must of necessity be ambiguous to encompass within a single framework both the process of systemic learning and socially revolutionary learning processes.

The final implication Honneth and Joas discover in Habermas's introduction of the ontogenetic model into evolutionary theory links up with the theory's high degree of abstraction from everyday plexuses of meaning that renders it incapable of vindicating the critical theoretical claim of being concerned with the development of enlightening hermeneutic interpretations which have a bearing on social agents' self-understanding and help them in orienting their action. This implication, one that McCarthy failed to see, is that the developmental logically conceived theory of socio-cultural evolution does not understand itself, as it should, as a reflexive step in substantive socio-cultural research which is by no means practically irrelevant, but rather 'pretend[s] to the status of a foundational science' (Honneth and Joas, 1988: 166).

Both Honneth and Joas, each in his own way, followed up their critique in subsequent writings, and while they did not contribute much towards a further understanding of socio-cultural evolution, they nevertheless succeeded in bringing some clarity to a number of related points. On the basis of a critique of both Habermas's action theory and his adoption of functionalist systems theory, Joas (1986: 165-6) invoked the need to recognize social order as being explicable only in terms of a theory of collective action. Following a series of essays (Honneth, 1981b, 1982), reviews (1981a, 1983) and papers (1985/1986) in which he insisted on the centrality of social movements and their collective experience of injustice, Honneth developed a comprehensive analysis in a book in which he presents a 'critique of power' (Honneth, 1985) that contrasts sharply with Habermas's conception which in turn eventuates in a 'critique of functionalist reason' (Habermas 1981, 1987a: subtitle).

According to Honneth, Habermas conceives of the theory of evolution as being a complementary extension of universal pragmatics in the sense that, whereas the latter focuses on the reconstruction of the implicit rule systems of social action on the synchronic axis, the former seeks to reconstruct the logic of development of such rule systems on the diachronic axis, involving the determination of the necessary sequence of stages in the acquisition and establishment of rule systems under the empirical conditions of the history of the human species (Honneth, 1985: 311-2). The crucial point - and this accords with Honneth and Joas's original insight - is now that Habermas, for the purposes of constructing his theory of evolution, made the important decision to transfer the logic of development Piaget had established for ontogenesis to the phylogenetic dimension of human history (Honneth, 1985: 311). As the concept of developmental logic is but one term of a conceptual pair, this decision entails the adoption also of the second, namely developmental dynamics. But since Habermas interprets this essentially psychological distinction social theoretically to mean that the logical dimension of the sequence of necessary stages of the rationality of action, worked up into a classification scheme, enjoys priority over the dynamic dimension of the factual process of social change, which at most possesses only narrative historiographical significance, he by the same token loses his grip on history, the dialectic of class antagonisms, social movements, and the communication theoretical model of 'social order as an institutionally mediated communicative relation of culturally integrated groups which unfolds in the medium

of conflict for as long as social power is asymmetrically distributed' (Honneth, 1985: 334).

Honneth develops this by now familiar argument, although not particularly systematically, on two distinct levels. At the cultural level, first, he identifies over and above the reproduction of shared background knowledge, presumably by ontogenetic learning processes, collective learning processes whereby life-worldly knowledge is expanded and changed. It is to this latter aspect that Habermas refers as the 'rationalization of the lifeworld', conceiving of it as following the same logic as that postulated by Piaget for ontogenesis (Honneth, 1985: 318-9). Second, for the various rationalized aspects of the lifeworld to become effective at the social level, they must in some way or another become part of social institutions and thus obtain obligatory validity. Decisive at this juncture, as Honneth (1985: 320) points out, is the model that is adopted to make sense of the implied translation of culturally rationalized structures of consciousness into institutional structures. Habermas's solution to this problem, borrowed from Weber, takes the form of a process of institutionalization in the course of which rationality dimensions are first differentiated into separate action domains at cultural level and only in the second instance do they have a trans-formative impact on social institutions; or as Honneth (1985: 320) puts it: 'the cognitive rationalizations are responsible for the emergence of institutional complexes'. Here we touch the core of Habermas's theory of evolution: the evolution of society is possible only if the necessary institutional preconditions within the life-world have been established by the rationalization of communicative action and hence advances in forms of communication (Honneth, 1985: 325). If one bears in mind at this stage Honneth's basic thesis of Habermas's projection of the ontogenetically based concept of developmental logic onto the process of socio-cultural evolution, then a number of considerations assume great importance. It is not only ontogenetic and, parallel to it, collective learning processes at the cultural level that follow a three-stage logic of development, but at the same time also the process of institutionalization at the core of socio-cultural evolution. It is in this latter respect that Habermas represents a theory of evolution which, as Honneth (1985: 311) submits, 'investigates the development of societies with reference to its general logic'.

As I have already pointed out, Honneth objects to the concept of social evolution in this sense of the general logic of the development of societies due to the fact that it entails a historically insensitive abstract classification. Now even if one accepts this position, which I think one should, a question still remains, namely: what exactly are the theoretical implications of a critique of the theory of socio-cultural evolution to the effect that its construction depends on an unjustifiable projection of the theory of developmental logic onto it? Honneth does not elaborate on these implications, but, like such authors as Alain Touraine (1981: 14) and Anthony Giddens (1984: 239), apparently rejects the theory of social evolution in favour of a version of the praxis theoretical position.

Günter Frankenberg and Ulrich Rödel

Problems similar to those identified by Arnason and Honneth and Joas in the theoretical context were discovered by Günter Frankenberg and Ulrich Rödel in the course of substantive research within the framework of a project concerning the development of structures of justification and conceptions of justice in modern law as

a sociological problem conducted under Habermas's direction during the late 1970s and early 1980s at the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg, and reported in their book *Von der Volkssouveränität zum Minderheitenschutz* (1981: 9-31). They speak of the 'empirical failure of the developmental logical conception' and even of 'a general scepticism against the fruitfulness of developmental theories of the Piagetian type' for the analysis of the history of society (Frankenberg and Rödel, 1981: 18).

The basis of their research was a project designed by Klaus Eder, Frankenberg, Rödel and Ernst Tugendhat which combined a normative theory with a historical-sociological approach. The normative theoretical component, a moral philosophical construct, took the form of an ontogenetically based developmental logical stage model, representing a reconstruction of increasingly complex justificatory structures at the level of philosophical ethical theories (e.g. Hobbes, Kant, Rawls, Habermas and Apel) (Frankenberg and Rödel, 1981: 10-15). Hypotheses deriving from a historical-sociological theory were then related to this strong theoretical component on the assumption that historical developments correspond to the developmental logic. As regards the question of the transition to a more complex procedure of justification, the hypothesis was introduced that, rather than taking place through mere thought or the immanent development of structures, it can empirically be determined with reference to experiences undergone in relation to changes in social reality which are translated into normative pressure by political organisations and social movements (1981: 15). The developmental logical scheme, however, was not taken as implying causal necessity in the sense of history being a progression or 'world-growth story' (Gellner cited by Giddens 1984: 237), but only as representing a certain conceptual necessity which makes it possible to derive a criterion for distinguishing between progressive and regressive changes (Frankenberg and Rödel, 1981: 16).

Frankenberg and Rödel's attempt to apply this twofold (moral philosophical-historical sociological) theoretical construct to the relevant historical material, including selected doctrines of British common law and in particular legislation, judgments and political journalism bearing on the development of the freedom of political communication in the USA since the colonial period, proved to be an empirical failure, however, in that the material simply did not admit of being ordered according to the chosen viewpoint. In addition, a number of weaknesses of the developmental logical model also became apparent. First, development is not reconstructed from the internal perspective of historical subjects and their normative evaluations but rather *ex post* from the perspective of the external observer according to a normative standard he commands by virtue of his disposal over a stage model. This standard has not been established by way of an analysis of historical development but a priori and deductively derived from a developmental logical conception which clandestinely regards the contemporary normative position as the endpoint of development and adopts it as the basis of the *ex post* evaluation (Frankenberg and Rödel, 1981: 19-20). Second, the developmental model, due to its emphasis on the co-ordination of evolutionary mechanisms from the point of view of the observer, leads to a reductive treatment of the complex of relations among normatively oriented historical actors and their internal perspective, institutionalized norms and system problems (1981: 20). And, finally, the model overburdens the empirical analysis with such strong theoretical presuppositions that important aspects of reality are necessarily excluded from the observer, brushed aside as theoretically insignificant, or admitted only in some reduced form (1981: 20).

It is significant that the empirical flaws in the developmental logical model do not lead Frankenberg and Rödel in the direction of a revision of a theoretical revision, rather it points them to a scepticism towards developmental theories of the Piagetian type. It is necessary, however, to be precise about the object of this scepticism for developmental assumptions are not thrown out *in toto* (1981: 20-21). The characteristic feature of the Piagetian type of theory for Frankenberg and Rödel, as for Honneth and Joas, obviously resides in its ontogenetic foundation as this is reflected in the twofold emphasis on the pressure of a socio-economic system problem and collective disposition over a stage specific argumentative competence which is drawn upon for the purposes of overcoming the problem (1981: 18). What is questionable about the ontogenetic model from their point of view is whether it is meaningful at all to project its developmental logical structure onto society in general. For the application of the ontogenetic model at this level presupposes

'that societies, social groups or classes in a particular historical period - comparable to children at a particular stage of their cognitive development - are not yet able to understand and to produce arguments and justifications with reference to moral and legal norms' (1981: 18).

This presupposition is clearly one that cannot be defended, particularly when it is seen in conjunction with the acceptance of the contemporary normative position as the endpoint of development.

Johann Arnason

What Honneth has done by way of a critique of Habermas with reference to power, Johann Arnason (1988) seeks to do with reference to culture and the problem of interpretation. While his critique thus applies more directly to Habermas's universal pragmatics than to his theory of evolution, the latter issue comes up time and again due to the fact, as Honneth made clear, that the two theoretical components are complementary to one another. Arnason's argument is basically that Habermas's universal pragmatic communications theoretical model, emphasizing consensual principles and obligatory action orientations, is by no means the only conceivable one, and certainly not one that can conclusively put to rest the conflict of interpretations which in modern society typically results in competing socio-cultural projects, such as the mastery of nature, democracy, autonomy, a national collective identity and revolution, which nevertheless share interpretative horizons. The interesting part of Arnason's analysis is the close attention he pays to the centrepiece of the theory of communicative action which mediates between universal pragmatics and the theory of evolution in that it relates the intuitive knowledge of competent members of society and epochally valid criteria, namely the theory of forms of understanding (Arnason, 1988: 187ff).

According to Arnason's interpretation, Habermas's position harbours a difficulty in that it entails the narrowing down of a fruitful perspective no sooner than it has been opened up. On the one hand, Habermas bases his theoretical programme on the dual premise of the structures of the modern understanding of the world or form of interpretation and the social relations or form of life on the assumption that they are mutually dependent and interrelated. Insofar as he assumes this point of view, Habermas recognizes the significance and autonomy of practical reason (Arnason, 1988: 266). It is not only that consistently rationalized structures of consciousness do not admit of being belatedly transposed into appropriate communicative structures but

rather can be developed at all only in conjunction with such structures; it is also that the relation between the culturally codified worldview and the historical process of the change of society exhibits tensions and deficits which require a practical critique and transformation of society.

Although Habermas thus approaches a complex concept of practical reason which applies not only to what one may call developmental collective learning processes running parallel to ontogenesis, but also to the evolution of the practically rational organization of society by way of evolutionary collective learning processes, Arnason nevertheless finds that he, on the other hand, interprets modern structures of consciousness in a transcendental manner: they play precisely the same role in relation to the theory of communicative action as do the natural sciences in relation to Kant's critique of reason (1988: 267). This implies that practical reason is transposed into something a priori and located outside society as the standard and goal of social evolution. It is from this point of view that Habermas in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987a) conceives of evolution as the evolution of forms of understanding (Arnason, 1988: 239, 269), within the context of which the modern form enjoys a privileged position. Arnason's interpretation is supported, incidentally, by Honneth and Joas (1988: 167) who point out that in Habermas's last major work 'the theory of socio-cultural evolution has been left only with the function of serving as a kind of secondary theoretical affirmation of the process of the evolution of consciousness...' It is almost as though Habermas is on the verge of transposing practical reason into pure reason and of joining the ranks of the evolutionary epistemologists.

Whereas Habermas adopts his peculiar evolutionary theoretic position in order to avoid the unacceptable consequences of cultural relativism, Arnason, against the above background, comes to the significant conclusion that, if the possibility of the 'immanent self-critique' of modern society opened up by the full concept of practical reason is taken seriously, then the 'radical self-relativization of modernity' is as little a danger as the legitimation of the self-understanding of modernity by way of 'an epoch-transcendent theory of society and history' is a viable option (Arnason, 1988: 267). From this it would seem as though Arnason, unlike Honneth, would be willing to contemplate retaining the theory of evolution, yet in the form not of a universal historical and general societal theory but specifically of a theory of *social* evolution in that it focuses on the evolution of the rationality of those social practices which are decisive for the organization of society. A praxis theoretical position is introduced which seeks to avoid the reductionism of the praxis tradition at least in this respect, namely retaining the theory of social evolution.

Klaus Eder

What remains implicit in Arnason is made into an explicit theme by Klaus Eder in his latest work. Like Arnason, he adopts a theory of praxis, but at the same time he also develops a theory of evolution which, correspondingly, takes the form of a theory of the social evolution of practical reason (Eder, 1988). Considering Eder's position as a whole, however, it is remarkable that it has undergone a drastic change in the course of the last twelve years or so. From being Habermas's chief theoretical collaborator in the development of the theory of socio-cultural evolution (see Eder, 1976; Habermas, 1979), Eder has emerged on the side of Habermas's praxis theoretical critics, but one who, unlike Honneth, does not reject but rather fundamentally rethinks evolutionary

theory. This change of position has gone through a number of clearly identifiable phases.

The first step towards distantiation from Habermas was taken in the first part of the 1980s and culminated in his book *Geschichte als Lernprozess?* (Eder, 1985). Inspired by Max Miller's (1986) sociological learning theory to which is central the concept of collective learning, Eder here develops an indirect critique of Habermas's view, underpinning his essentially classical understanding of institutionalization according to which cultural rationalization calls forth corresponding institutions, that the rationalization of the lifeworld is spearheaded by ontogenetic learning processes. It consists of the demonstration that everything depends instead on social or collective learning processes which are located or, at least, begin at the everyday level of the practice of life. The principles of freedom, equality and discourse were for the first time clarified and socially concretized in the political associations that increasingly formed from the eighteenth century onwards and called forth learning processes in the participating individuals. Hence Eder's (1985: 87) main empirical thesis: 'the logic of associative communalization underlies the rationalization process of moral consciousness in the modern period'.

Although Eder's argument went to the heart of the matter, it did so only in some aspects in that he at this stage still uncritically accepted Habermas's linear theory of socio-cultural evolution. This situation changed in *Die Vergesellschaftung der Natur* (1988). Eder indeed continues criticising Habermas's obliteration of collective learning processes as a result of his overextension of the ontogenetic model, as he did earlier, as for instance where he points out that Habermas actually reverses the true relationship when he depicts the connection between social structure and reason as implying that truth leads to professions and correctness to associations (1988: 302). But over and above this he focuses in this work on the deformation of the theory of social evolution which occurs when the ontogenetic model is projected onto it. He thus breaks radically with Habermas's universal historical and general societal - which in effect means his developmental logical - theory of evolution in favour of a praxis-theoretically based theory of the social evolution of practical reason. Given that Eder collaborated with Habermas in the elaboration of the developmental logical theory of evolution, it is obvious that this third step required, over and above breaking with Habermas, a radical self-critique on his own part. To his credit, Eder (1988: 33) does not attempt to conceal the radical turn-about in his thinking and the need for a far-reaching self-critique.

Eder develops a profusion of critical perspectives, both directly and indirectly, on Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution,[2] but it is nevertheless possible to identify a basic theoretical strategy informing his critique of Habermas. It is best expressed, in my view, by the formula 'ontogenetic fallacy' (1988: 296, 310, 313). While Eder apparently draws on a different source for inspiration, namely the essays in Schöfthaler and Goldschmidt's reader (1984) containing a critical discussion of Piaget's contribution from the point of view of the question of the relation between social structure and reason, this formula encapsulates the early insight of Honneth and Joas to the effect that the projection of the developmental logical structure of the ontogenetic learning process onto society has theoretically profound yet undesirable consequences. Eder, however, works it out in a more differentiated although not always fully consistent manner. On the one hand, the ontogenetic fallacy consists in

drawing a conclusion from ontogenesis in respect of the change and development of culture or collective symbolic systems which can be accounted for only with reference to supra-individual learning processes. At this level, therefore, the ontogenetic fallacy can be overcome by the introduction of the concept of social or collective learning processes (Eder, 1988: 296-8). On the other hand, the ontogenetic fallacy is committed when one transfers the ontogenetic model to the level of evolution (1988: 313). As suggested earlier, the solution of the ontogenetic fallacy at this level demands rather more drastic intervention. On the whole, it involves a radical break with the developmental logical conception of evolution as such. This he accomplishes in a number of steps.

First, Eder displaces the psychologically inspired distinction between developmental logic and developmental dynamics by the theory of the self-production of society, borrowed from Touraine (Eder, 1988: 256-7, 301) and referred to as the theory of praxis (Eder, 1988: 291-3, 300). This he does in order to fill a categorial gap he discovers in Habermas's theory under the influence of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, namely a gap left by Habermas's concentration on the *opus operatum* in the sense of the effects of evolutionary changes to the detriment of the *modus operandi* in the sense of evolutionary changes and their mechanisms themselves. Second, Eder introduces a sharp distinction between ontogenetic and collective learning on the one hand, and social evolution on the other, in order to break the hold developmental logic has over evolution in Habermas's work (1988: 303, 313, 316-7). Finally, these moves culminate in Eder's most drastic critical (and self-critical) step, namely radically freeing the theory of social evolution from the universal historical and general societal frame within which it is confined by Habermas, with a view to avoiding the untenable causal assumptions, schematizations, classifications and ideological implications to be found in the latter's work (Eder, 1988: 33, 69, 165, 291, 325, 374).

Although various specific difficulties can be found in Eder's proposals, something I will return to below, there is no doubt about the fact that he has succeeded in lending new impetus to the major thrust of the immanent critique of Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution. It is equally clear that Habermas would be able to ignore the results of this critique only at his own peril.

III. The Response

Jürgen Habermas

It is interesting to note that a perusal of Habermas's latest works from the point of view of the question of what impact the immanent critique of his theory of socio-cultural evolution is exerting on his thinking by no means ends in disappointment. On the contrary, his major writings from 1985 to 1988 give unequivocal if brief indications of an attempt to accommodate the major points raised by his critics.

In the fifth volume of his political writings entitled *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit* Habermas (1985a: 234) acknowledges Eder's critique of his assumption that ontogenetic learning processes function as pacemaker of socio-cultural evolution:

> 'He [Eder] leads innovative spurts immediately back to social learning processes in the framework of new forms of association, i.e. to new experiences of egalitarian intercourse first in freemason lodges, secret societies and reading circles, later in the early socialist workman associations'.

The concessions Habermas subsequently made to his critics in *Kommunikatives Handeln* (1986: 394) by adopting in self-criticism of his earlier position both a sociological theory of learning and the concept of social or collective learning processes, bears out the fact, however, that he did not stop at merely acknowledging the critique but soon after was willing to embrace it - although he at this stage has still neglected to spell out the implications of this step for his overall theoretical position (Strydom, 1987a). These concessions were preceded by an affirmative use of the concept of learning processes in *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Habermas, 1985a: 394; 1987c: 339). The employment of the concept in this context, it is interesting to note, went together with the introduction of a new position on the aesthetic or conative component of culture: instead of an expressionist theory of art he now forwarded a Heideggerian-like theory of world disclosure.

It is remarkable that in subsequent writings collected in *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* (1987a), for instance in 'Die Idee der Universität – Lernprozesse' (1987b: 76, 79, 94, 95, 96) and 'Geschichtsbewusstsein und posttraditionale Identität' (1987b: 170), the concept of learning processes appears again and again. This same collection also contains a theoretically most interesting statement to the effect that '[i]t would be false to conceive of group-identities as ego-identities writ large - between them holds not an analogy but a complementary relationship' (1987b: 73). The question raised by the position Habermas takes here is: what are the implications for the ontogenetic model? Does Habermas's commitment to the ontogenetic model remain unaffected, or does this move decrease its theoretical significance? In my view, the latter of these two options applies. For the severance of the analogy or homology between ego-identity and group-identity implies a significant decrease in the range of application of the ontogenetic model, i.e. a withdrawal from the domain of collective identity and a corresponding confinement of the model to the domain of ego-identity, and a surrendering of the vacated domain to social or collective learning processes.

If my interpretation is correct, this means that by 1987 Habermas had made a remarkable transition by fully absorbing the critique Eder advanced in 1985. But this still left the universal historical employment of the ontogenetic model intact. A change of position affecting this dimension of the ontogenetic fallacy would seem to be broached, however, in Habermas's book, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* (1988).

As in the preceding works, the concept of learning processes abounds in the philosophical essays collected in this work (1988: 50, 101-3, 103-4, 177, 178, 191). And in this context Habermas draws a sharp distinction between ontogenetic and social or collective learning processes:

> 'Socialization and formative processes are person dependent learning processes. From these we must distinguish supra-subjective learning effects which manifest themselves as cultural and social innovations and are sedimented in the productive forces and structures of moral consciousness'. (1988: 101-3).

It is to this latter category of social or collective learning that he refers as 'intramundane learning processes' (1987c: 339).

Of greater importance in this work than the employment of the concept of learning processes, however, are those cautious yet far-reaching steps Habermas takes toward curtailing the reach of the ontogenetic model, withdrawing it from the domain of

universal history. On the whole, these steps entail a distantiation from a Neo-Kantian, quasi-transcendental or criteriological position in favour of a weaker theoretical position. As against the 'idea of undamaged intersubjectivity', given with the necessary conditions of understanding and agreement, in the sense of the totality of a reconciled form of life projected as a utopia into the future, first, Habermas introduces the conception of self-production ('Produzierens oder Selberhervorbringens', 1988: 186) whereby human beings in a responsible yet unintended manner through fallible and often abortive, co-operative yet by no means conflict-free ventures engage in the establishment of an appropriate form of life. This move entails, second, the introduction of the concept of 'situated reason' (1988: 186, 48, 179). And, finally, he accepts Hilary Putnam's and Thomas McCarthy's contention, which obviously has devastating implications for his three-stage universal historical and general societal theory of socio-cultural evolution, that in cases of intercultural and historical understanding in which both rival conceptions and conflicting standards of rationality come into play, the relation between 'us' and 'them' is a symmetrical one (1988: 177).

The various changes Habermas has made to his position between 1985 and 1988 - from the adoption of the concept of social or collective learning over and above person-dependent ontogenetic learning processes, through the theory of the self-production of a form of life characterized by undamaged intersubjectivity and the related concept of situated practical reason, to symmetrical relations between intercultural and historical contexts - all provide evidence of the fact that he, in accordance with the immanent critique of his work, is discernibly freeing his theory of socio-cultural evolution from its entanglement in the woof and warp of the ontogenetic fallacy by moving away from his earlier ontogenetically based developmental logical conception of the theory.

IV. The Outlook

Considering the thrust of the immanent critique of Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution as well as the latter's response to it, the major question that arises now is how the emerging new position is best further developed.

To begin with, it is certain that the emerging position involves not the rejection but rather the retention and reconstitution of the theory of socio-cultural evolution. Theorists such as Alain Touraine (1981: 14) and Anthony Giddens (1984: 239) are mistaken, in my view, when they advocate that we should break with evolutionary theory in a radical way. Their common error is that they take the inflated claims of evolutionists at face value and hence as entailing the discrediting of the theory of socio-cultural evolution rather than subjecting them to a thorough critical analysis. Had they conducted such analysis and discovered the typical confusion of development and evolution and the naturalistic assumptions of the major evolutionary theorists, they would have realized that there is no need for rejecting evolutionary theory. Because of the fact that Klaus Eder sees through not only the configurationalist limitations of Touraine's and Giddens's respective positions (1988: 292-5) but also the unjustifiable naturalistic assumptions of the classical theories of socio-cultural evolution from Spencer to Luhmann and Habermas (1988: 18, 166) and is therefore able to conduct a critical analysis of evolutionary theory in the social sciences, his latest work must serve as a major reference point in any discussion about the future development of the theory of socio-cultural evolution. This does not mean,

however, that one would be able to adopt his proposals lock, stock and barrel. On the contrary, they display certain conceptual difficulties which would have to be eliminated before his work could become really fruitful for the development of an adequate theory of socio-cultural evolution.

The first difficulty in Eder's work pertains to his proposal to appropriate the 'theory of praxis' (Eder 1988: 291, 292) in order to conceptualize the process of the production of society which precedes and serves as the social presupposition of both the rationalization of the lifeworld and systems building. It is possible to agree with him on the need for the introduction of a theoretical component to fill the gap left by macro communication and system theories, such as those of Habermas and Luhmann respectively, which concentrate on the *opus operatum* to the exclusion of the *modus operandi* (1988: 291). But, considering the inherent weaknesses and drawbacks of praxis philosophy (see Habermas 1982: 223-6; 1984: 25-6; 1987c: 60-9, 75-82), it is highly questionable whether this component should be given the form of the theory of praxis. The problems Eder runs into in his attempt to do so become apparent at a number of different levels. His emphatic appropriation of the theory of praxis and simultaneous insistence that it should not be understood as an action theory due to the fact that it concerns a social reality over and above the individual (1988: 292), does not help to clarify the problematic relation between the theory of praxis and the theory of the collective production and reproduction of the constitutive structures of society. In my view, the latter can only with ill effects be forced into the mould of the former. This is borne out by the conceptual confusion surrounding his use of the term 'praxis'. Rather than lifeworld or system, Eder adopts praxis as the most basic concept which provides the root metaphor for his overarching theory of society (1988: 300). No sooner has he taken this step, however, than he proposes to treat 'praxis' as one of the terms of a conceptual pair, the other being 'poiesis' (1988: 306-7). Both praxis and poiesis are practices through which the potentialities made available by individual and collective learning processes are realized. Whereas the latter leads to the expansion of knowledge and control over the environment of society, the former eventuates in the rationalization of the forms of communicative understanding and agreement. The equivocation is obvious: how could the concept of praxis be employed concurrently both as an overarching concept and as a term of a conceptual pair? A solution is obviously required which is capable of making sense both of the theory of the collective production and reproduction of society and of praxis as one of a number of social practices. I propose to return to this question in due course.

A second major difficulty in Eder's proposals resides in the status accorded to the ontogenetic model. We have already seen that Eder, with the support of Miller, elaborated on the concept of collective learning processes in order to be able to conceive of the development and change of culture or collective symbolic systems of interpretation in terms other than the development of the individual. In light of this advance, it strikes one as most peculiar when he then nevertheless proposes to refer to both aspects by means of the concept of ontogenesis, thus speaking in parallel fashion of 'the ontogenesis of psychic systems' and of 'the ontogenesis of knowledge and morality' or 'the ontogenesis of society' (Eder 1988: 315, 316). While Eder was instrumental in introducing the formula of the ontogenetic fallacy for the purposes of criticizing the classical theories of socio-cultural evolution, including Habermas's, he himself, paradoxically enough, continues to commit that very fallacy insofar as he

persists in thinking of the development and change of culture and society according to a model which applies strictly speaking only to the development of the individual.

The solution to the problems Eder comes up against is ready to hand in his work although without him ever realizing it. It is encapsulated by the expression 'Vergesellschaftung'.[3] It makes its appearance throughout Eder's work (e.g. 1988: 23, 256, 289, 290, 291, 293, 300, 307, 308, 310, 368 as well as the title), but an assessment of its varied employment shows that for him it is not a concept with a clear meaning. In the title of his latest book as well as at crucial points in the text (1988: 307, 308), he takes 'Vergesellschaftung' to mean the human social appropriation or socialization of nature. As such it contrasts with the production ('Herstellung') of a social order. On another occasion, however, Eder speaks of 'the socialization of nature' and 'the socialization of sociality' (1988: 310) in the same breath as being subject to a particular cultural code. This code could take the form of either praxis or poiesis, the latter representing the principles of domination and control and the former those of co-operation, understanding and agreement. This usage is in line with his perception of a need for social theory to shift from an emphasis on social order, the *opus operatum*, to the ambivalent and contradictory process of the creation or construction, the production and reproduction of society, the *modus operandi*, and that such a dynamicization of social theory is captured by the concept of 'Vergesellschaftung' (1988: 256, 290). What I find astounding is that Eder neglects to pursue and develop this insight. Instead of a theory of 'Vergesellschaftung', he proposes that we should adopt the theory of praxis to fulfil this requirement. The key concept of social theory or the theory of society, according to his understanding, is neither lifeworld nor system (1988: 300). The reason for this is that both of these concepts are not only incapable of grasping society as a 'phenomene social total' (1988: 356) but in fact displace it. In order to grasp social reality in this sense, attention must rather be paid to the process of the collective production and reproduction of society. For Eder this means that the key concept is praxis, and that it is oriented towards the development of a constructivist macro-theory of society. In view of the inherent limitations of the praxis perspective, however, I am convinced that the concept of praxis cannot assume this function and that if it were to be retained it would have to be integrated into a more comprehensive alternative. This alternative is, in my view, represented by the theory of 'Vergesellschaftung', that is, the theory of socialization or of sociation in both the micro and macro sense of the term.[4]

It is this theory that has to be built into the theory of socio-cultural evolution were we not only to overcome the ontogenetic fallacy and avoid its monistic impact but also to develop evolutionary theory in an appropriately differentiated yet not eclectic manner.

Notes

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[1] The critique of Habermas's position to be reviewed below applies, in my opinion, with equal force to the work of his colleague, collaborator and friend, Karl-Otto Apel, particularly as represented by his latest publication (1988).

[2] These critical perspectives include the following arguments:
• Habermas's theory of socio-cultural evolution, following the classical theories, ultimately gives primacy to natural evolution (Eder, 1988: 18);
• Habermas makes the question of the classification of societies the central question of the theory of socio-cultural evolution, while the central issue is really whether the appropriation of nature is related to learning processes in the dimension of practical reason (1988: 19);
• Habermas's view of a unilinear and unequivocal process of rationalization in modern times is unjustifiable in light of the fact that the modern form of the symbolic appropriation of nature is ambivalent (1988: 23);
• Habermas's theory of evolution, while correctly emphasizing morality, does not radically enough free evolution from natural or universal history, which implies that the location of moral evolution is much more subtle that he would have us believe (1988: 33, also 291);
• Habermas's moralization of historical materialism places the emphasis on the inner reality of society and as a consequence excludes nature from the theory (1988: 33-4, also 51-2) and thus becomes insensitive to the ecological problematic (1988: 36);
• Habermas operates with an inadequate theory of culture in that he, over and above the rules of productive practices, takes account of the rules of distributive practices by way of moral consciousness, but thereby excludes consumptive practices (1988: 36-7);
• Habermas's competence theoretical conceptualization of evolution as a phenotypic manifestation or embodiment of genotypic characteristics betrays a biologistic tendency which leads to a concept of society the emergent properties of which are shifted onto the systemic dimension (1988: 290);
• Habermas's theory of evolution as a rationalistic theory assumes an implicit compulsion towards learning, but what sets it in motion and the social presuppositions of the process are not taken into account (1988: 290-1);
• Habermas conceives of the theory of evolution as a structural theory of what has been learned while it should rather be conceived as a structural theory of the practical application of what has been learnt (1988: 302);
• Habermas presents structural models of social formations whereas what is required for the theory of evolution are structural models of praxis (1988: 309);
• Habermas's theory of evolution, emphasizing understanding and co-operation, is not a theory of historical evolutionary processes but a normative theory, a utopian counter-model of modernity (1988: 308);
• Habermas operates with an affirmative concept of evolution (1988: 309);
• Habermas seeks to resolve the directional problem in evolution by recourse to developmental logic, but this constitutes nothing less than the ontogenetic fallacy (1988: 310);
• Habermas constructs ideal stages of evolution rather than identifying real stages (1988: 320);
• Habermas tries to gauge practical reason and its evolution from ethical systems, but this is possible only with reference to social praxis in which moralization labour is done, as represented by cultural, political and social movements (1988: 372-3);
• to the extent that Habermas holds to the conception of moral evolution as culminating in modernity, he entertains an evolution theoretic myth, indeed an ideology which should not be mistaken for a counterfactual one (1988: 373);
• Habermas makes the correct assumptions about moral learning but applies them incorrectly: the stages of development do not culminate in modernity but can be identified in all societies (1988: 375); and finally
• Habermas assumes too close a relationship between learning and evolution (1988: 376).

[3] The expression *Vergesellschaftung* runs from such classical authors as Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel through early twentieth-century writers such as Georg Lukács and Theodor Adorno down to contemporary social theorists like Jürgen Habermas and Claus Offe. It indeed makes its appearance in the English-language literature, yet in such a range of confusing translations that the formation of an awareness of *Vergesellschaftung* as the key concept of social theory was inhibited. Among these translations are the following: socialization (in both the English-language academic

sociological and the Marxist sense), societalization, sociation, consociation, appropriation, adaptation and integration. I provided a preliminary overview in Strydom, 1987a.

[4] For several years now I have been engaged in developing a theoretical position which I propose to refer to as 'the theory of sociation'. I have arrived at this position by setting myself off, on the one hand, from Habermas's synchronic-structuralist theory of communicative action and, on the other, from the opposed theory of praxis of his explicit (e.g. Axel Honneth and Klaus Eder) and implicit critics (e.g. Alain Touraine and Pierre Bourdieu) critics. In strategic respects, it differs also sharply from Anthony Giddens's rather abstractly named 'theory of structuration'.

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