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CRITICAL TURNS IN CRITICAL THEORY

NEW DIRECTIONS IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

SÉAMUS Ó TUAMA

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For Piet Strydom

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ix

Introduction xi

Notes on Contributors xxxvii

1 A Theory of Cognitive Frames for Critical Sociology
Piet Strydom 1

2 An Ethic of Responsibility: Some Critical Reflections
Catherine Brennan 25

3 The Reconstruction of Sociological Learning Theory: Cognitive Sociology, Normativity, and Discursivity
Patrick O'Mahony 45

4 Rational action, Communicative Action, and the Narrative Structure of Social Life
Klaus Eder 63

5 The Significance of Global Ethics for Critical Social Theory
Gerard Delanty 81

6 Rational Actors and Paradigm Warriors: Revisiting and Gendering Social Movement Theories
Louise Ryan 97

7 Linking Knowledge, Communication, and Social Learning: Critical Theory's Immanent Critique of Capitalism's Administrative State
Tracey Skillington 119

8 Rights, Recognition and Contingency: Opening a Discussion on a Right to Have Rights
Séamus Ó Tuama 141

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page viii -- #8

9 Modelling 'Triple Contingency'
Loet Leydesdorff 165

10 Environmental Responsibility and the Public Sphere in Latin America
José Maurício Domingues and Andrea Coutinho Pontual 169

11 Sustainable Development and Responsible Governance in Ireland: Communication in the 'Shadow Of Hierarchy'
Gerard Mullally 189

12 The Calling of a New Critical Theory: Self-Development, Inclusion of the Other and Planetary Realizations
Ananta Kumar Giri 213

Index 231

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Séamus Ó Tuama

INTRODUCTION

This book is dedicated to Piet Strydom who has been the most inspirational and outstanding teacher within the social sciences at University College Cork for more than 30 years. He arrived in Cork by chance in 1976, even if his leaving of his native South Africa was a deeply considered decision. He and his wife Sunette were forced to leave their home because of their conscientious opposition to the apartheid regime. Their solidaristic commitment to their fellow South Africans separated them from everyone they loved – family, friends and colleagues. As ethical émigrés they were embarking on a very uncertain future. They arrived in Europe, first to Belgium and then to Liverpool with no assured prospects. Through contacts with a friend, John O’Malley, they were given an introduction to the Department of Philosophy at University College Cork. Later Piet would migrate to the Department of Sociology his true intellectual home.

From the beginning he carved a new reality for Sociology in Cork. His engagement with the Frankfurt School of critical social theory influenced not just his theory, but his practice as a teacher. As a student of Piet Strydom’s you were ever mindful of the historical legacy of the Frankfurt School to the development of social theory and its commitments to justice and equality, but also of the price paid by many of its early members for their adherence to the critical perspective, having to flee from Nazi oppression. In a country that was largely a late arrival to the world of the enlightenment, that had only recently joined the then EEC and was struggling to shake off the shackles of convention Piet Strydom was in a very real sense an enlightenment figure. For over 30 years he has engaged his students and colleagues in Cork in an intellectual journey that is ever fresh, new and especially challenging. His research output has gathered pace and importance in the second half of his time in Cork, bringing an international community of researchers into contact with his exceptional contribution to social theory. This book draws from both of those communities and addresses many of the key theories, concepts and insights of Piet Strydom’s critical social theory.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xii -- #12

In his own chapter ***Piet Strydom*** examines cognitive frames, which have been recognized as being integral 'to the structuring and patterning of social life'. He presents a detailed discussion on knowledge, especially on how it has been framed and understood in social theory. From this starting point he turns his focus more to 'the cognitive dimension – variously called categorical structures, schemata, schemes or frames – which are to be found at the level of both mutual lifeworld knowledge and situational common sense'.

Before pursuing his objective of analyzing cognitive frames, he points out that cognitive sociology has a much wider remit taking in a broader concern with communicative and discursive processes. He delineates his discussion under a series of headings, beginning with Pragmatic-Realist Constructivism. Here he discusses how practical knowledge allows individuals to take part in social life in an intuitive or taken for granted way, which is described by Husserl and Schutz as the Lebenswelt.

In Habermas' terms these are 'deep-seated structures of the lifeworld' presenting in linguistic and communicatively transmitted and linguistically organized cultural forms. He explores these transcendental structures, particularly cognitive frames, through various understandings including Schultz's 'schemes of experience', Kant's 'schemes of imagination' and Habermas' insistence on distinctions between weak and strong transcendental interpretations. He unfolds an engaging analysis which highlights that these cognitive frames, while presuppositional, are not reducible to empirical facts nor do they 'possess universality and necessity' in a Kantian sense. This leads to questions about what is real and 'what is selectively revealed by our cognitive structures'.

He rehearses some important constructivist debates emerging from Gamson, Habermas and a range of other orientations. Pointing out a broad acceptance that 'language use and communicative action have a biological or evolutionary root', while emphasizing the necessity of placing these in the category of 'weak naturalistic'. This approach allows for the acceptance of 'a certain universality and necessity' in our understanding of the world, while also discounting a 'strong naturalistic' approach which would suggest it is part of the genetic inheritance of Homo sapiens.

In practice, social actors can draw upon 'all-pervasive background understanding' except where there is some contention or breakdown about this understanding. This produces what Strydom describes as 'critical discourse moments', which are public communicative contestations between individual frames of understanding. This leads to 'a more or less successful learning process' variously

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xiii -- #13

described as 'an emergent synthesis' (Mannheim), 'metascheme' (Schutz) or 'masterframe' (Eder).

What are cognitive struggles? They are about the 'discursive construction of reality'. Strydom places them at two levels; the macro or external level of commonly shared cultural structures: and the micro or internal level of constructing individual actor frames. While he also points out the milieu in which they unfold at the interchange of frames and the development of coordinating master frames. All of which is swimming, as it were, in 'the whole spectrum of cognitive phenomena'.

He presents a review and critique of a range of social theoretical approaches to cognitive structures. Included here are Mannheim, Schutz, through to Berger and Luckmann, Garfinkel and Cicourel. He then deals with Goffman's frame analysis. Indicating his advances beyond ethnomethodology and his presentation of 'primary frameworks' with two general classes of 'natural' and 'social' frameworks. Goffman focused on individual experiences and developed a theory of the transition of meaning from primary to secondary frameworks, where a new or different meaning is acquired for something already understood in a previous context. The discussion then picks up on Habermas' approach commencing with his theory of communicative action. Central to his approach 'are discursive processes whereby cognitive structures and cultural models are activated. . . and reconstituted and reshaped', but for Strydom it lacks 'a reflective treatment of the cognitive structuration of discursive processes'. He identifies in Bourdieu's work 'an acute understanding of cognitive structures', which 'are historically constituted and acquired categories' that help actors make sense of the world. While these are available to all competent actors, they are subject to different interpretations and thus become contested between 'social groupings and classes'. He contrasts Bourdieu's 'anthropological-sociological' approach to that of Touraine who takes 'a more historically specific, epochal, societal, political-sociological approach'.

His review of the various contributions suggests that while it is rich in diversity it is unsystematic, thus prompting him to bring coherence through a 'cognitivist communication and discourse theory of society'. He presents a typology, the first dimension of which is the macro-level cognitively important frame, which emerges through evolutionary process. It is that toolkit of basic structural forms that allows actors experience and understand both the social and natural world and is variously described by Schutz, Mannheim, Bourdieu and Goffman.

The second dimension at the macro-level is about 'culturally

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xiv -- #14

available cognitive structures under modern conditions’. He addresses this in the context of the structure of modern social relations typified by a ‘liberal-egalitarian-discursive frame’ extending in late-modernity to encapsulate ‘society and nature’. This new paradigm of a ‘macro level frame or categorical scaffolding’ necessary for the contemporary era is traced from Goffman through Habermas and Touraine. He contextualizes this around the three frames – rights, justice and responsibility–from his own work that reflect the historical significance of frames at a macro level.

At the micro level cognitive frames are ‘a stock of knowledge at hand or. . . a toolkit’ which help actors perform in a wide range of social situations. Using Eder’s ‘empirical or objective, moral or normative, and aesthetic or conative framing devices’ he illuminates how social actors can construct collective (actor, identity, action) frames and also highlights some theoretical disagreement about these ‘meso level frames’.

He develops an explanation of how cognitive structures emerge and play out within social life. He emphasizes that this occurs in the milieu of ‘communication and discourse’. When a problematic episode emerges, within a modernity cultural frame, a social actor selects framing devices that help establish ‘a publicly relevant identity’ which interacts with others in public. What emerges is a sort of competitive network involving the individual frames, which eventually settles into a synthesis derived from the winning aspects of the various frames. This is not a steady state per se but ‘a temporary, unstable, relative, practical synthesis’. He terms this phase as a master frame, which is a ‘temporary, power-drenched, normatively sanctioned, practical synthesis’. He draws a distinction between it and a macro frame, which is more foundational in nature representing ‘all-pervasive, virtually unchangeable, common, context-setting cultural and modernity framework’.

He introduces his concept of ‘triple contingency’ into the discussion, emphasizing why it is necessary to move beyond the concept of ‘double contingency’ in the context of ‘a communicating society’. In this discussion he runs through the inherent weaknesses of double contingency as presented by Parsons, Habermas and Luhmann. With triple contingency social reality is not constituted in a dyadic relationship, but includes a third perspective that ‘represents society’. Triple contingency recognizes the dynamic role of the public in identifying, defining and resolving problems. It recognizes an increasing reflexive and discursively oriented ‘cultural macro frame’. It reflects the changing nature of many social actors who exhibit an increasing sophistication in terms of recognition and use

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xv -- #15

of 'cognitive structures and cultural models'. Most significantly it recognizes the capacity of the public to 'observe, appreciate and evaluate' cognitive structures and cultural models and thus shape choices towards the selection of 'a collectively valid master frame'.

Catherine Brennan examines the meaning of responsibility in the twenty-first century, cast in the light of theoretical discussions emerging from Ricoeur, Jonas and Apel. She outlines the scale of risk that in Apel's words threatens the 'life space of all living creatures on earth'. Human exploitation of the planet is creating a context of 'global, universal and irreversible risks' as the ecosphere, shared by all planetary life, is being put under unsustainable strain.

She rehearses some of the most profound questions facing humanity as technological capacity moves us ever closer to 'turning human beings into artifacts', with the possible consequence of eroding 'a common human ontology'. This is an area still open to wide speculation, but there is already active theorizing around possible 'post-human' scenarios demanding perhaps a new generation of philosophical concepts to even address them.

She expresses a deep concern for the 'autarchic' nature of contemporary technology: 'the self-accelerating yet purposeless tendency of organized action propelled forward... and freed from control by moral impulse'. Her discussion raises a series of key societal issues emerging from current and future science and technology advances.

She speaks of 'techno science' which is the 'fusion of scientific and technological activities' manifested in the conversion of scientific discoveries into both military and commercial applications. She introduces the notion of 'distance technology' which gives rise to 'adiaphorization' or the stripping of a causal or moral link between technological processes and their impacts. Distancing cause and effect creates a nebulous connection to responsibility, Bauman's 'floated responsibility' in which it is difficult to ascribe cause and therefore problematic to locate responsibility. Her discussion leads her to propose responsibility as the 'ethical category' necessary in this context. She builds her approach, to what responsibility might mean in the contemporary world, around a series of key theorists.

Her discussion on responsibility and especially her insistence that we have to look at it prospectively rather than retrospectively is enlightening. The ethics of responsibility she calls for emerge from our vulnerability and it is a shared sense of fragility that helps us appreciate a need for a global responsibility not just for ourselves but also for all other living things. She points out too that a future oriented responsibility is not reciprocal.

She considers Hans Jonas' concept of responsibility and lays emphasis particularly on his idea of 'value'. Value in these terms is about recognizing that all being is both a good and an end in itself. Value then is neither peculiar to humans nor a human construct per se. By understanding responsibility in terms of value it is emancipated from dependency on either subjective or relativist definitions. While 'purposive existence' is part of all living things humans alone have the ability to both set and achieve their own ends. Humans are alone too in having 'special dignity as moral agents', in being able to 'appreciate the value which other living beings place on their own being'.

She deviates from Jonas in adopting what she describes as 'a moderate, non-deterministic essentialism'. However, she reiterates the point that it is the 'intrinsic fragility' and vulnerability of any being of value that makes responsibility concrete and gives rise to 'an ethic of collective responsibility'. She turns to Karl-Otto Apel to overcome deficiencies in Jonas' ethics of collective responsibility. Apel advocates moving beyond Kantian principles of universality and reciprocity when establishing a future oriented co-responsibility. He uses discourse theory to ground his justification, which is neo-Kantian in recognizing 'universalized reciprocity', but is achieved with reference to rational argument. For in the principles of discourse there is both an a priori recognition of the equality of all individuals and a means through which norms may be validated 'with the consent of all those affected' (Habermas: 1992). As Brennan puts it those seriously engaged in discursive debate 'presuppose that real life problems. . . can only be dealt with responsibly by reasonable argument'.

She presents three dimensions that need to be drawn out more systematically in order to develop 'an ethic of co-operative responsibility practiced and organized discursively', these are embodiment, emotions and imagination. In the first of these she underlines the necessity to revisit 'bio-bodily existence and vulnerability' in order to answer the question why ought human beings exercise co-operative responsibility, which is not addressed satisfactorily by Apel. She proposes that it is our vulnerability as beings not our rationality that disposes us to being moral subjects. Fragility she points out does not arise through argument but because of our biological existence.

She criticizes both Apel and Habermas for having 'a rationalist prejudice' and thus underplaying the significance of emotions 'in gaining access to the domain of the moral'. She develops this discussion making connections to a recognition of the importance of the emotions in Habermas, Apel and Jonas, but leaving a sense

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xvii -- #17

that this avenue has not been nearly explored to the extent it ought.

The third dimension concerns moral imagination, which is becoming increasingly important as humans are sanitized both spatially and temporally from the consequences of their actions through advances in technology. She advocates a leap in moral imagination beyond ‘an ideal speech’ scenario involving ‘all linguistically competent humans’. Included in this moral community would be ‘all living beings, even if all these forms of life are not of equal moral worth’.

In the closing section of the chapter Brennan raises important questions regarding how as humans we might act in a responsible way vis-a-vis those ‘not capable of speaking in the reasoning public sphere’. Here she includes not just other animal and plant life, but future generations of humans and ultimately inorganic nature. She proposes an advocatory solution, but this leaves open a number of issues that need to be addressed including a tendency among humans as the only participants in ‘practical discourse’ to take an anthropocentric orientation, the value placed on different beings and things, conflicts between the needs of different beings and things (for instance beings that might be harmful to humans).

Towards the end of his chapter ***Pat O’Mahony*** highlights the central importance of Strydom’s work in ‘exploring the relation between macro-ethical learning processes and institutionalized practical rationality’. The challenge is for society to understand its own learning processes and in turn see how these might lead to ‘advances in practical reason’. These can justifiably be seen as fundamental questions for our time and may demand greater public attention in the coming decades than they have in the past. For that contribution alone Strydom deserves a greater recognition within critical social theory and in the wider public sphere.

In addressing sociological learning theory O’Mahony sets out by at once highlighting the existence of a rich tradition of learning theory within sociology and simultaneously indicating its lack of visibility and indeed a poorly formed appreciation of its complexity. He then introduces Strydom’s contribution to developing this field. Initially he drew on and critiqued Habermas, taking a line closer to that of Miller and Eder, this acts as a foundation for his later work on cognitive sociology.

He sets out his analysis of Strydom’s contribution in three waves. The first is based on Strydom’s ‘constructivist inspired reassessment of reconstructivism’, his ‘move from moral development to the social evolution of practical reason’ and his ‘shift in emphasis from double to triple contingency’. His second appraises Strydom’s cognitive sociology. The third looks at his cognitive sociological framing of

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xviii -- #18

collective learning within a democratic public sphere

He identifies a shift in emphasis in Strydom’s work from the 1980s which orients it towards ‘the development of a social pragmatic framework’. This new direction leans towards a normative approach which carries social theory’s evolutionary theory forward and simultaneously keeps alive the realization of ‘non-linear dynamics of a contingent, emerging world’. He places Strydom’s work beside that of Habermas, highlighting both areas of convergence, but also clear divergence. He presents an overview of the origins and dynamics of reconstructivism in philosophy and social theory. He then discusses Strydom’s critique of constructivism, pointing out that in his earlier work he already saw it as ‘over-anticipating and hence subsuming social practices’. Strydom’s theory would seek to move beyond these limitations leading him to constructivism ‘that would have communicative practices in social situations as its generative core’. For O’Mahony this is a ‘decisively sociological orientation’ that moves beyond Habermas’ ‘individual and intersubjective model’ and is subsequently enhanced through Strydom’s theoretical attention to frame analysis.

Strydom’s development of theories of learning, which are critical of Habermas’ emphasis on the individual, recognize collective learning. His theory is grounded in recognition of the potentialities of collective action and communication. He highlights an important nuance in Strydom’s theorizing which ‘decouples learning from practice’ that allows for recognition of collective learning but does not suggest that it inevitably leads to new social practices. What this highlights are the ‘socio-cognitive potentials’ of collective learning through the creation of ‘a fund of collective utilizable knowledge’, which may or may not be taken up in practice. These insights pushed Strydom to develop his theory of triple contingency in the 1990s, this, as discussed elsewhere in this book, was a significant advance on the concept of double contingency associated with Parsons, Habermas and indeed Luhmann.

O’Mahony points out that one of the key insights provided by this model is that ‘triple contingency permeates all democratic communication’, thus the public is central to political legitimation. He goes on to counterpose this with Habermas’ continued use of ‘double contingency’. This leads to a series of unresolved issues including a lack of recognition of ‘different subject positions amongst the public’, which lead to further problems down the line. Triple contingency is an inevitable outcome of Strydom’s strong ‘constructivist and collectivist emphasis’. It gives a deeper understanding and more sophisticated range of possibilities for how we conceive the

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xix -- #19

public and the public sphere, but it also opens up a range of possibilities for the development of sociological theory, which O'Mahony enumerates.

In terms of Strydom's cognitive turn, he sees this emerging from a critique of Habermas' normative assumptions that do not distinguish between 'instituted norms and cognitive rules'. Cognitive rules are the 'means, devices or tools for categorizing, classifying and ordering the world'. There are two theoretical implications of this. Firstly, that norms are continuously negotiable and reflexive and secondly that normative innovation is a collective cognitive process, which in turn has both discursive and substantive implications. Strydom's triple contingency and cognitive structures challenge Habermas' concept of deliberation as 'self-organizing and self-contained'. Strydom's approach emphasizes the procedural and contextual aspect of deliberation. It is part of a wider discursive context playing out in multiple arenas and social contexts. O'Mahony suggests that 'existing forms of deliberation' fail at a 'basic normative-procedural' level and are buffeted by a storm of non-deliberative externalities and cognitive and pragmatic forces. Yet new opportunities and models for public deliberation are necessary to revitalize civil society. Strydom diverges from Habermas in emphasizing 'the openness and variability of both the mechanisms and dynamics of discourse'.

O'Mahony highlights the significance of Strydom and others pursuing theories of collective learning and evolutionary practical rationality on the direction of critical social theory, pointing it towards a more sociological bent and away from the psychological and individual orientation of Habermas. He completes his discussion on cognitive structures by making three points. Firstly, discursive processes are both the product of cognitive structures and help shape them by extending and interacting with them. Secondly, learning processes operate both in the medium of cognitive structures and in shaping them. His third point is that 'macro-ethical cognitive structures' are essential to the formation and effectiveness 'of the ethical and moral norms essential to social integration'.

O'Mahony addresses Strydom's contribution to the advancing of sociological theory and research into public culture and the public sphere and in turn links it to his own work in this area. He addresses this from three perspectives, firstly vis-a-vis social order in which he engages in a dialogue with Luhmann's systems theory. Then he engages it with 'a cognitively sustained normative pragmatic' approach addressed but not taken to conclusion by Habermas. He carries forward the discussion in relation to Eder's work and especially his 'narrative construction of the social bond'

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xx -- #20

within identity communities being essential for a public sphere. He presents a discussion on the cognitive structure of the public sphere, which he illustrates diagrammatically. In this he draws out the three symbolic codings: functional, ascriptive identity and normative – and highlights the gravitational pull of each within the domains of the state, the system, civil society and the lifeworld. He argues that macro-ethical cognitive structures emerge in conditions where autonomy has been achieved and have to be defended against functional and non-normative logics. He follows with a discussion on what he terms the cognitive circuit of communication. Collective learning he concludes is a process of cognitive structure building, which sometimes leads to the emergence of successful symbolic structures, examples of which are at the normative level a macro-ethics of responsibility and in identity the emergence of nation states from the nineteenth century.

Klaus Eder addresses what are often presented as two poles in a continuum represented on one side by 'Habermasian discourse theory' and on the other by the economic rational choice model emerging from 'the non-Kantian English philosophical Enlightenment tradition'. He presents a theoretical 'third way' to approach the discourse–market debate which both pushes us beyond a dichotomous analysis and contextualizes it around what he terms 'the narrative bond'. Narrative bonds are socially acquired frames or rules for social interaction, that allow individuals navigate a contingent social world, these frames can in turn be 'resistant to arguments [discourse] or to real interests [rational choice]'.

He makes the bold statement that: 'Living with stories is the constitutive moment of social bonds'. Here he grounds everyday social interactions in a real world, this is not a process in which actors are compelled towards making rational choices or towards reaching consensus. Instead actors drive towards reaching 'a shared interpretation', in doing so they store narratives of successful and unsuccessful attempts at shared interpretation.

Narrative bonds are essential for people to make sense of the world. Traditionally these are 'resistant against empirical evidence as well as moral arguments'. Markets and discourse provide distance from these types of narrative bonds by allowing for 'freedom' and 'reflexivity', yet they too must follow a narrative in order to maintain necessary social bonds.

He proposes the concept of an 'undifferentiated sphere' which is neither rational (utilitarian/game-theoretic) nor communicative (deontological/Kantian). This pushes him to recognize the necessity for a 'theory of situational accounts', which can explain the emer-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxi -- #21

gence of both markets and discourse as special situations that have socially evolved. What he is driving towards is a way in which we can understand a range of interaction situations from everyday life to markets and discourse as narrative networks.

From this perspective it is not a case of primacy for either rational choice or discourse, but rather recognition that they can be understood as functionally specific modes of communication. Thus they are not the key to understanding how social relations are organized, but are specific narrative networks which have evolved from everyday narrative networks. Arguing that social relations are mediated by stories reminds us of the basic stuff out of which human communication is made.

In his chapter ***Gerard Delanty*** searches for a cosmopolitan global ethics, which avoids the pitfall of being a 'false universalism' or western worldview. He defines global ethics as 'non-foundational', it is not a code like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it operates at a procedural level on 'common ways of dealing with problems rather than an appeal to an underlying consensus'. Global ethics arise in the context of a cosmopolitan community; it is in a limited universalistic context rather than universal and is based on communicative rationality. It is articulated at the level of 'individual identities to global protest movements and inter-governmental policy-making as well as forms of consumption.'

He dismisses the claims of a series of approaches to global ethics, settling on Apel and Habermas constructs as providing the most promising prospects. Global ethics are 'post-universal ethics', are more cognizant of context, against the notion of attempting to universalize the particular. He proposes that the context in which we can understand global ethics is the public sphere rather than specific actors. The complexity of the task he undertakes is clear from a set of four preliminary questions he poses to tease out precisely what global ethics might mean. He steers away from modern deontological ethics, but does not jettison their essential core; instead he proposes 'a certain relativization of universalism'.

In order to contextualize global ethics he directly challenges conceptions of civilizations that either suggest they are coherent wholes or that they are primordial in nature. He dismisses the idea that civilizations are 'closed systems locked in conflict with each other'. Instead the nature of inter-civilizational encounters include mutually transformative dynamics. They do not meet each other like tectonic plates, but are far more open and internally diverse than many theorists (especially on the right) have allowed. This analysis gives the task of searching for a global ethics a very

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxii -- #22

different orientation. It is not about 'global values' *per se* but about a communicative process on how we see the world.

Neither communitarians (Walzer) nor liberals (Rawls) satisfactorily address the concept of global ethics. Walzer seeks after a 'thick' ethics and Rawls pursues a common ground for global ethics, but does not sufficiently challenge current ethical assumptions nor allow for global culture. Delanty finds some positive aspects to universal cultural values approaches, highlighting the work of Bok and Kung in particular. The key failure of these approaches is that they assume that 'a global ethics already exists within the cultural traditions of different civilizations or ethnic groups' and that what is required is a recognition for these and mutual understanding. Collective responsibility as a starting point suffers from being too closely justified by necessity and remaining too close to Kantian universalism of the categorical imperative.

He identifies a more sustainable approach to global ethics in the work of Apel and Habermas. Apel's is based on discourse and has four key features that recommend it. Firstly it is 'an anti-foundational ethics', that is, it does not rely on any pre-existing moral framework. It emerges through communication or discourse and is thus free from national or context specific constraints (the particular). It is not tied to 'specific cultural worldviews'. Finally it is procedural rather than substantive. Habermas and Apel diverge in that Apel conceives global ethics as legal instruments, while Habermas envisages a discourse that 'can never be concluded'. Underlying this understanding of global ethics are three pillars: open debate; a global public sphere; and socio-cognitive evolution. Delanty includes two important observations, first that Apel already sees the emergence of a '"second order" globalization' and the second is an open question on whether there is still a latent western centric understanding within Habermas' approach.

Louise Ryan renews a debate about the gendered dynamics of social movements theories. She traces the discussion from Smelser's depiction of collective action as usually being spontaneous and leading to 'irrational and abnormal behaviour' through to the Resource Mobilization Theorists and the later Political Process Theorists that recognize the 'rational' aspect of social movements. She mines deeper into these theoretical approaches to point out that they do not pick up on the 'emotions in social movements' (Gould) and that they are essentially framed in 'an image of masculine rationality' (Charles).

She develops an incisive critique of New Social Movement theory. She finds particular objection to a shorthand analysis which counter

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxiii -- #23

poses nineteenth and early twentieth century social movements with new social movements on the basis of a temporal critique that she believes does not hold true in all cases. She poses three central critiques to New Social Movement theory. Firstly, she believes the descriptors of new social movements are too narrow in representing them as being primarily ‘post-materialist’ in nature. This she points out is empirically invalid as many new social movements in fact address ‘old’ materialist issues like global poverty and debt, while the ‘women’s movements continue to campaign around material issues such as reproductive health, welfare and safety’. Her second objection centres around generalized assumptions about ‘old’ social movements. These include descriptions of them having ‘dominant and centralized leadership structures’, which may be true of some but not all social movements of the time. With specific reference to the women’s suffrage movement she argues that they were not just concerned with materialist issues, but campaigned around identity concerns, while ‘new’ women’s movements still campaign about some materialist issues. In short, she argues that there are greater continuities between ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements than is allowed within much of the literature. Her third area of objection revolves around the lack of recognition of gender as an issue even within the ‘identity-oriented school of social movement theory’.

A critical aspect of Ryan’s analysis is to demonstrate a level of continuity within the women’s movement from the first to the second waves, that gap is bridged through the use of Taylor’s ‘movement in abeyance’ construct. This has specific importance in terms of how the women’s movement can be understood, especially in eliminating misconceptions about the nature of the movement, but it has wider application too in understanding the nature of all social movements. She adopts Strydom’s ‘synthetic approach’ to argue against a construction of social movements either within a linear framework or a cyclical one. The synthetic approach allows her to pick up a more nuanced and complex understanding of the suffrage movement and break down the dichotomous analysis of old and new social movement.

Her analysis captures a wider spectrum of social movements, it gives a more complete picture of the social and political context than much previous analysis that focused on ‘main social movement and the dominant elite’ and gives a more sophisticated account of continuity within social movements. Her examination of the first wave feminist movement provides clear evidence of a more complex agenda than is presumed in much new social movement theory. Here she counts contestation around identity, the public-private

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxiv -- #24

dichotomy, male defined morality, laws and practices, prevailing social structures and an internationalization of the movement in a manner often reserved for descriptions of new social movements. She describes the Irish suffrage movement as ‘fairly non-hierarchical’ with a ‘fluid and flexible’ membership. It also articulated a very wide range of campaigns and not merely ones about suffrage and political representation.

In her opening remarks ***Tracey Skillington*** reiterates critical social theory’s dual orientation of both attempting to understand the world and also to engage in the struggle for justice and equality. It inherits from Marx this orientation towards a praxis, which has the social actor at its centre. She traces the origins of this commitment through first generation figures like Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse up through Habermas and on to the critical theory of Piet Strydom. She sees evidence of this orientation in his work through his push towards ‘a politics of inter-subjectivity’, in which the public is ever present within contemporary communication processes. This is an evolution from Habermas’ theory of communicative action, which understands the production of knowledge as a communicative process. In their ordinary lives people communicate using language, which is about reaching common understandings, but it can also through discursive processes take on a political role. At this level they are engaged in trying to ‘realize modernity’s unaccomplished emancipatory potential’.

She uses Habermas’ concept of lived crisis, which relates to the individual’s ‘feelings of exploitation, injustice, resentment, insult’ which are initially experienced at an individual level, but through communication can be shared socially. Skillington explores this relationship in *Legitimation Crisis* (1976) in which Habermas explains how the individual’s experience of ‘lived crisis’ is a socially significant pre-condition to practices of social learning. ‘Lived crisis’ here signals the emergence of feelings of exploitation, injustice, resentment, insult within the lifeworld of individuals, and can be distinguished from ‘systemic crisis’ which relates to a malfunctioning of objective contexts of relations, such as economic relations (Benhabib, 1984).

She highlights, referring to Habermas’ *Legitimation Crisis*, an inherent incongruity between an administrative system ‘geared towards the impersonal demands of the market and capitalist growth’ and the social demands emanating from the lifeworld. She contextualizes this theoretical discussion in the everyday lived experiences of people with reference to the Irish health service. She applies this in the context of a push to increasingly marketize the health service

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxv -- #25

through adopting policies around ‘a drive for efficiency, effectiveness and value for money’. Public dissatisfaction with the health service, arising from the lifeworld, is shaped by ‘cognitive learning, where citizens’ direct perceptions and experiences of institutional inefficiency and neglect are collectively shared’. She lists a series of issues that have been prominently debated in the Irish media to illustrate this point.

Through pursuing a new set of policies deriving from what she calls the ‘new spirit of capitalism’ the Irish government is changing the ethos and objectives of the health service. Within this she highlights an unresolved dichotomy. On one side is the administrative system focused on an instrumental rationality, which she aptly describes as ‘irrational rationality’, around delivering the sort of system-defined efficiencies described above. However, this leaves a dilemma where it cannot achieve legitimacy as ‘cognitive awareness of crisis and neglect provides vital counterfactual evidence to contradict the justifications’. This shift in emphasis from one based on citizen rights and public service to one based on market criteria is profound. The consequences she points out are both in terms of increased risk and in many cases poorer service and also in terms of the meaning of civil society. At play in the latter context is the transformation of ‘citizens to market players, recognizing them only as consumers’. This has elicited a counter drive to reassert citizens’ rights to ‘equality, justice and fairness’. This ground-up movement is forcing the debate away from being merely economic to also encompass a wider social and political frame, which sets out as an articulation of dissatisfaction about either specific (lived crisis) or a general crisis in healthcare up to the rights of citizens.

This reaction to a set of negative personal experiences leads to a collective alternative understanding of the health service–‘a prognostic framing’. This perspective articulates the need for ‘equity and respect for the sick and the vulnerable’, in other words for a ‘more communicative rationality’ in place of the instrumental rationality espoused by a neo-liberal approach. In an excellent portrayal of what is at issue she underlines the cultural significance of the hope for health and longevity which is counterposed by an economic and system driven rationality, which presents as a denial of that hope, and is interpreted as ‘a powerful blow to individual dignity’. It is perhaps ironic that in terms of exercizing their ‘citizenship entitlements to equity’ actors have to resort to the courts as the administrative system can ‘survive without fundamentally addressing the problems’. With reference to Strydom she classifies this as a pathogenesis, which has been sustained because of an absence

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxvi -- #26

of 'a participatory politics of conflict', but she sees indicators that disenchantment with the health service may be leading to 'a degree of societal learning' that may arrest this deficiency.

In his chapter ***Séamus Ó Tuama*** addresses the right to have rights, borrowing a phrase from Arendt to frame a discussion on rights in a posttraditional context. He discusses human rights at a fundamental level, prior to law and bills of rights, at the human level where all individuals require recognition, respect and dignity.

He contextualizes his discussion against a backdrop of major advances of rights from national constitutions and rights provisions to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rolling out of several other international conventions, treaties, courts and tribunals on one side and on the other a continued disregard for rights in a wide range of contexts. The essential point of his discussion is that despite many advances 'there is still no clear recognition that all humans are truly equal'. He addresses this problem at two distinct levels. The first is about 'establishing a fundamental benchmark' for rights, which he develops around the concepts of recognition, respect and dignity. The second stage is about how the justifications can be articulated and in this regard he looks to the communicative contingency theories of double and triple contingency. In this he identifies two basic tasks, firstly 'a sustainable justification for human rights' and then 'a genuinely universal realization of human rights'.

In terms of a universal realization of rights he points out that while there may be legal definitions of rights in national and international contexts this does not transfer into a uniform recognition of those rights (including their denial by terrorists and criminals). With reference to Honneth he takes the discussion to the private domain where in practical terms many people are denied respect, dignity and tangible recognition of their rights as humans. He broadens out his account to indicate a range of contexts in which rights are systematically denied and or curtailed by legislation or by the categorization of human beings to label them such that they are not afforded their full dignity, respect and rights. This brings us back to the two basic contentions he sets out at the beginning; that we still need to find irrefutable and defensible bases for humans to have rights; and that we need to have means to enforce those rights uniformly and universally.

He contends that the unfolding of human rights is not necessarily an inevitably permissive one and that there are enough contrary indicators that, at the least, we need to have stronger arguments to defend them in all contexts. He delineates a series of boundary mechanisms that are adopted in the developed world that place huge

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxvii -- #27

swathes of the world’s population beyond the pale of universality in terms of rights. While we can witness advances in terms of formal rights recognition, we are not approaching a situation where rights are ‘universal, immutable and inalienable’.

He explores the neo-liberal perspective, with reference to Hayek in particular, which delivers a logic that human rights are not underpinned by a universal categorical grounding, but are regarded as ‘utilitarian rather than essential’. In essence he sees two pressures undermining the justification of rights. Firstly, in a posttraditional context we can no longer call on ‘transcendental assumptions’ to support rights. Secondly, an ideological push from neo-liberalism frames formal rights as being ‘grounded in utility’.

In seeking a solution to this he reverts to seeking new groundings for rights. Here he draws on the concepts of recognition, dignity and respect, which he defines. Recognition is necessary both in terms of our identity as humans and as citizens. It is about how we understand the individual, how we understand the individual as a social actor and ultimately how we understand both society and a community in which rights are recognized. He teases out the distinction between the concepts of dignity and respect and how they relate to each other. Dignity he defines as that which marks us as inherently human, it is ‘the commonality of the human experience as opposed to the particularity of the individual’. Respect he defines as ‘that which we owe to each other as humans, given our common dignity’.

Taking the denial of respect–disrespect–as an empirical tool he applies his discussion to human lived experiences. He draws out the meaning, context and implications of disrespect with reference to Miller, who suggests it manifests itself ‘predominantly in mundane contexts’. He then looks at two US studies of disrespect and recognition, Pritchard (1972) and Taslitz (2003), both in relation to justice. In this discussion he states that dignity is ‘an innate quality of being human’ and is a ‘fundamental catalyst’ for both the emergence of rights and why they ought to be considered inalienable. He explores this in relation to the denial of dignity as generating a ‘pre-political moment’ prior to an appreciation of right *per se*, referring to similar interpretations in Pritchard, Honneth and Lynd. In an aside to the main theme, but related to denial of dignity, he discusses surveillance in contemporary society emerging from a variety of state, commercial, subversive and private sources. On the discharge of justice he highlights issues around respect, exhibited by failures regarding the ‘just and equal’ application of law vis-a-vis individuals and certain population cohorts, especially minorities

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxviii -- #28

and other out groups in society. This underlines issues like police profiling of certain populations. While in general terms Tyler and Wakslak (2004) showed this to reflect negatively on the police there are indications that in the Post-9/11 era it has gained some legitimacy in the fight against terrorism. They share with Honneth a view that the recipients of disrespectful treatment by the police intuitively recognize that something is inherently wrong in the exchange that is a denial of recognition as humans of equal dignity. The concept of recognition is then pursued in relation to the work particularly of Honneth, who in turn draws heavily on Hegel’s categories of ‘love, legal respect, and esteem’.

He places the discussion in ‘an action setting’. What this means is that to pursue an individualized notion of the good life or self-understanding one needs both formal and factual rights protection. This introduces the concepts of double and triple contingency as the context in which this can be acted out, a point he explores with reference to Honneth, Habermas and Thomas McCarthy. What follows is an in depth discussion on double contingency as elaborated both by Parsons and Luhmann. In elaborating on double contingency and its limitations he also makes links to Strydom’s triple contingency. He then refocuses the discussion back to recognition, dignity and respect. Here he suggests that recognition emerging at the level of double contingency leads to a recognition of individual rights [mainly formal rights]; and that recognition emerging at the level of triple contingency leads to a recogniton of ‘solidaristic rights’ [mainly factual rights]. The nature of rights ‘not as an individualized contract, but. . . a common contract within a collectivity’ draws out the significance of this distinction and highlights the role triple contingency plays. Using a communicative logic rights are established as being universal in the sense of applying to all and being fundamental to the human condition (dignity) and inalienable and immutable as all humans are due equal respect. This approach frees rights’ justification from western oriented universalistic arguments like those underpinning the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many bills of rights. Instead rights are justified in an ongoing communicative process, that still recognizes them as fundamental, universal, inalienable, and immutable, but does not circumscribe them in terms ultimately derived from a western cosmological perspective.

In a short but interesting chapter ***Loet Leydesdorf*** discusses both Luhmann’s model of double contingency and Strydom’s triple contingency. He speculates on possible ways to mathematically capture triple contingency.

Two chapters apply critical social theory to environmental issues.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxix -- #29

José Maurício Domingues and ***Andrea Coutinho Pontual*** look at environmental responsibility and the public sphere in Latin America, while Gerard Mullally takes Ireland as his case study.

Domingues and Pontual present an overview of the changing understandings of responsibility from a liberal individualistic concept through to how 'environmental responsibility spreads its ideals to all sectors of society', which is evidenced in the Bruntland Commission, through to the Rio Earth Summit and in the take up of the idea of sustainable development. They then address the meaning of the public sphere, here they draw on Habermas, but quickly expand the understanding of public sphere beyond 'an exclusive focus on communication and the networks of collaboration'.

Their model of 'real public spheres' includes three key organising dimensions: market; hierarchies and networks. Their wider framing of the public sphere gives it a greater grounding and mirrors some of the issues raised by Strydom, including his seminal work on triple contingency, and Klaus Eder's chapter in this book.

They show a transformation of the public sphere in Latin America partially arising through external pressure to address environmental issues, but from the 1980s also through the emergence of 'endogenous environmental social movements'. Environmental concerns were articulated in the context of 'socio-environmentalism' – dealing with both environment and inequality. In this revitalised public sphere discourse around rights, justice and responsibility were to the fore.

They point to some serious issues that hinder the proper functioning of the public sphere. One arises through external support for local NGOs, which ultimately compromise their effectiveness, leading to 'low internal public legitimacy' and 'stalling the development of endogenous priorities'. The landscape is further distorted through a perception that natural resources are plentiful. These perceptions are played out against extensive poverty and the perceived need for development to address this. This is further exacerbated by a 'neoliberal trade regime' that prioritises economic growth often at the expense of the environment.

They trace the development of environmentalism and environmental politics in Brazil from the early 1970s through the fall of the military regime on to the emergence of a new constitution in 1988. A raft of pro-environment legislative instruments, agencies and constitutional provisions were created, partly in response to the environmental movement and the later emergence of 'Ecopolitics'. They point to a high degree of success by the Brazalian environmental movement in terms of impacting on policy, engaging with

and participating in influential networks (including at governmental level), increased professionalization, extending the environmental movement to include previously excluded groups. However its 'capacity for popular mobilization' and 'influence in the larger public sphere have declined'. They suggest the environmental movement at local level is 'flawed in terms of efficacy and legitimacy' and highlight significant barriers to participation in the public sphere by socially and educationally disadvantaged groups. They highlight some serious crisis points in the Brazilian public sphere in relation to environmental issues. At national level there are 'limits to collective environmental responsibility, the national environmental agency CONAMA 'has lost much of its power' and Congress is not motivated to support environmental issues as 'environmental considerations' carry very little weight in the electoral process. This has resulted in serious environmental degradation at local level as evidenced by massive deforestation in the Amazon region to facilitate soy cultivation. Overall Domingues and Pontual find that Brazil exhibits a patchy commitment to environmental responsibility.

In the case of Mexico the initial environmental policies were exogenously driven following the 1972 Stockholm conference. Key issues around air pollution and specific challenges to ecosystems dominated the early phase. This was followed by several reforms, including an attempt to mobilise 'a state controlled environmental movement' in 1984. However significant developments followed in subsequent years. Domingues and Pontual raise serious questions about the extent environmental responsibility in Mexico has been taken up in the public sphere. At governmental level there have been efforts at cooption and neutralization of environmental movements and discourse, and to use environmental rhetoric to 'bypass conflicts and legitimize' its own position, without implementing significant environmental reform.

The Venezuelan case is very interesting as environmental concerns are constitutionally enshrined, but not copper fastened in law. This has facilitated the development of an active environmental movement, but does not have sufficient legal force. A proposed electrical connector between Venezuela and Brazil exposes the strengths and weaknesses of the model. On one side environmentalists emphasize 'ecological and participatory dimensions' while the government favours economic growth and consultation. They pose very serious questions about how 'a stronger public sphere' might be able to address the clear contradictions that the Venezuelan case exposes.

They point out that the very term 'sustainable development' in a Latin American context has emotive echoes emerging from its two

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxxi -- #31

poles of sustainability and development.

Gerard Mullally builds his analysis off four pillars, the first of which is a discussion on responsibility, which tracks through Strydom’s conceptualization of responsibility, and especially his application of co-responsibility to sustainable development. It also points to the emergence of reflexivity, which he discusses in terms of first and second order reflexivity. First order reflexivity enables the emergence of the concept sustainable development as it allows for ‘societal advance’ in a way which does not undermine future progress. Second order reflexivity is about a ‘self-critical and self-conscious reflection on processes of modernity’, so in terms of environmental risk it also forces society to evaluate what is important and to make conscious decisions to shape the future. Part of this process has been the emergence of discursive ‘innovative institutional procedures outside the state’.

His second pillar is that ‘of co-governance as a steering mechanism’ for ‘co-ordinating societal responsibility for sustainable development in conditions of complexity, uncertainty and growing ambivalence’. Beneath this banner he disentangles a series of complex issues, including the concept of sustainable development. In common with Domingues and Pontual, he points out that in the political realm it is a difficult concept to pin down, but in his understanding it presupposes addressing responsibility, political co-ordination and radical new thinking about what sustainability means in practice. This latter point must take cognizance of challenges of complexity, contingency, lack of predictability and social, economic and political orientations. Governance is then not just about ‘design and implementation of government policy’ but also concerns ‘monitoring, reflection, debate and decision’.

The discussion engages in some key contemporary political questions like the changing role of the nation state, political legitimacy, complexity, knowledge, contingency and path dependency, the shift from formal rationality towards procedural rationality and ‘softer “steering mechanisms”’, corporatism and post-corporatism. This leads neatly into his discussion of the Irish case, which forms the third pillar of his analysis.

The Irish case shows a shift from ‘governance as hierarchy to new more flexible forms of governance’, but its specific characterization and whether it fits under the rubric of post-corporatism is open to debate. Equally in relation to Irish civil society there seems to be problems of clear definition as the voluntary sector occupies its core and the boundary between the state and civil society is ambiguous. Within Irish civil society environmentalism is seen as

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxxii -- #32

one of its ‘weakest sub-sectors’, which lacks political clout and coherent coordination. The environmental movement is engaged in activism within a formal public sphere rather than having a representative role, but it is nonetheless innovative in terms of its activism.

He looks at some recent communicative interfaces, which give an important empirical dimension to the discussion. The Irish submission to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 emerged from a process that included ‘a range of voluntary and participative instruments alongside instruments to improve existing regulatory measures’ and Comhar: the National Sustainable Development Partnership was given an agenda that aimed at reaching a national consensus on sustainable development. However he is not convinced of a substantial shift away from the social partnership model.

He then considers the fourth pillar of his analysis around practices of local social partnership, Corporate Social Responsibility, to discursivity around waste management. In 2002 CDBs (City and County Development Boards) were established ‘to build consensual problem-solving institutions with strategic intentions at the local level’ and ‘were consciously designed to be deliberative and participative’. The CDB experience is varied. From an environmental perspective the high visibility of sustainable development in official strategies is positive, the limitations of low membership by the voluntary sector and poor public awareness of their ‘purpose and activity’ are negatives.

Corporate Social Responsibility reporting is not mandatory in Ireland and is thus far largely ‘self-referential communication or public relations’. However, there are indications that citizen pressure may eventually push for change as a 2003 survey showed ‘that 60 per cent of Irish adults believe that industry and commerce do not pay enough attention to their social responsibilities’.

He places the waste management debate into three categories; i. Spatial location and responsibility; ii. Toxicity and risk; and iii. Waste as a public good. He is stark in his analysis that in Ireland ‘waste management politics represent a communicative abyss’. The contentious public engagement around waste ‘creating an inhospitable context for reflexive governance’, even when the issues were put before a citizens jury.

Ananta Kumar Giri’s chapter forces us to look at critical social theory and the work of Piet Strydom from a very different perspective to the other contributors. He comes to the discussion with an appreciation of Indian philosophy and from an Indian perspective.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxxiii -- #33

He sets out by highlighting Strydom's contribution to what he terms the 'continental traditions of critical-social theory', listing a long line of theoretical achievements. He writes about Strydom's capacity to marry critical engagement with 'a new normative height and depth' in sociological analysis. From the outset one senses in Giri's style and approach that he is not only speaking as a critical observer, but in his own words as a 'fellow seeker'. What we get is a combination of both orientations, theoretically based and innovate analysis of Strydom's work, but also a critique which pushes us beyond the normal comfort zone of critique within the critical tradition.

In his capacity as fellow seeker he takes us on a journey through a series of theoretical concepts in Strydom's work alluding all the time to their practical application. He places before the reader the possibility of dichotomous challenges in Strydom's work: 'a political process but also a spiritual process' and between epistemic and ontological processes. He speaks about 'going beyond the dualism' this presents and seeks in Strydom's approach the 'creative pathways' to make bridges, in a sense loosening the theory from its continental genesis. In this journey he pushes Strydom's work into an innovative and from a western philosophical perspective somewhat new terrain.

He links into Strydom's 'new cognitive revolution and social constructivism' and shares with it a commitment to address 'contingency, disjunction between facts and norms, the work of antinomies in self, culture and society, and the critique of linearity'. He rehearses Strydom's cognitively oriented depiction of constructivism, which accommodates 'both intersubjective understanding and the objectivity of reality' and brings us through a four-point exposition of socio-cognitive critique.

He then presents and underlines the significance of triple contingency and triple contingency learning both in terms of individuals and society but also as a means of making sociology public. Leading from this he teases out the meaning of the third point of view arriving at a contingent juncture rather than firm answers. In the first stage he has an early formulation by Strydom which sees it as representing society and then his later formulation is of a 'a discursively engaged and learning public'. He then poses a second level question regarding its transcendent locus, posited by Strydom as being within society, but he suggests that it has transcendence that is 'between, within and beyond society'.

He traces significant advances in Strydom's theory on the public, public sphere and the third point of view that take him beyond

Habermas. In brief he shares with Strydom the view that Habermas does not fully elaborate the distinction between the public sphere and the public; that Habermas places the moral philosophical third point of view over that of society or citizens; that Habermas focuses on social movements actors over other 'agents who participate in the process of social construction'; and that he has an individualistic orientation to the neglect of a 'more sociologically relevant phenomenon of social knowledge and cultural models'.

He addresses Strydom's theories of responsibility, co-responsibility and risk. These are contextualized within public communication and specifically in relation to collective learning processes. He pursues this theme with reference to Strydom's six concentric circles of resonance in contemporary communicative societies. For shorthand purposes I will label them: formal decision-making institutions; statutory decision-making institutions; civil society; lifeworld; cultural foundations and the auditing public. Giri raises objections to this model on two counts, firstly because they are concentric and not interpenetrative and secondly on the fundamental issue that he contends there should also be a 'circle of self'. This omission he ascribes to Strydom being a child of the European enlightenment and thus predisposed to 'privileging of the public to the exclusion of engagement with self'. He tests this against Ramashrov Roy's critique of Aristotle's construction of the public. Roy basically contends that the public cannot rectify deficiencies in individual character and to be a citizen capable of pursuing the common good one needs to 'be reborn as a person', which he describes as 'the cultivation of dharma'.

Giri proposes that Strydom must transform his concentric circles to interpenetrative ones as it is not enough to have performative competences, the actor must also be able to self-transform. This requires the actor to move beyond his or her own ego, ethnocentrism and anthropocentrism. This contention is central to Giri's argument, which he labels 'multigonal', in other words he is determined to open up 'a multi-value logic' and sees in Strydom's work the potential to achieve that logic.

In this he is walking a tightrope when seeking to liberate 'modes of thinking' from what he terms ontological and epistemological violence, or what in lay terms might be seen as a western philosophical mindset. In a very different linguistic and conceptual discourse his analysis carries some of the same resonances as O'Mahony. Both see a shift in Strydom away from a primary reliance on philosophical formulations. In O'Mahony's case in the direction of sociology which gives his theory a far more rounded aspect than Habermas'

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxxv -- #35

and in Giri’s case opening up what Delanty might describe as a cosmopolitan ethics. Giri’s quest may remain to some degree frustrated. He draws on Ankersmit to highlight the ontological dimension of learning which he conceives to be weak in Strydom. He is correct in identifying in the continental mind a reluctance to push too far beyond rationality, the genesis of that has powerful resonance in a context where enlightenment also delivered liberation from varieties of ontological and epistemological violence.

In seeking to rectify this deficiency he proposes to add a seventh circle to Strydom’s model, the ‘circle of self’. He also wants to present them as interpenetrative not concentric circles in order to represent what he terms a ‘multidimensional ontology of autonomy and interpenetration’. He supports this orientation with reference to Chitta Ranjan Das’ construction of self and especially the unconscious as being a gateway to ‘the highest possible in self, world and cosmos’. Giri pursues an engaging debate, challenging what he terms ‘authoritarianism in epistemic authority’. This is an important discussion, at the heart of which is what he sees as ‘judgmental critique from above or afar’. It is for him about the inclusion of a third point of view that is not limited by ‘arrogance and closure’ and in which all participants can self-transform and learn from each other in an environment which is not dominated by a priori judgements.

He presents the concept of ‘sakhi purusha (witnessing self)’ from the Indian spiritual tradition as a transcendental or third perspective in which critical observation is both from within the self and externally at societal level–in a way the self acts as an external observer or the third perspective envisaged in triple contingency. He is attempting here ‘to combine cognition with emotion and generate knowledge’ which comes from the heart. From an Indian spiritual perspective this may seem more feasible than from a European perspective, which has a tradition of battling against cosmological certainties that eschewed rationality and in more recent history a fascist legacy that eschewed intellectual endeavour. In fairness to Giri’s discussion he is not eschewing rationality, rather he attempts to forge a new balance in which spirituality and self are seen as part of a ‘new critical theory’.

He critiques Strydom for not including self-knowledge among his catalogue of plural knowledges. He sees this as a failure to engage in ‘a foundational critique of knowledge itself’. He carries this discussion through to Strydom’s formulation of responsibility and suggests the inclusion of ‘appropriate self-preparation’ in order to fully comprehend its meaning. In proposing his vision for a new critical theory he suggests that ‘self-development is a neglected

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxxvi -- #36

theme of critical theory’. He pursues this towards Bhaskar’s concept of the ‘transcendentally really self’. He enumerates the components and realms in which and through which this can be realized, but is neglectful of the legacy of social psychology, which helps inform Strydom’s theorizing.

He addresses power and seeks for a Heideggerian ‘power free existence’ and ‘shared sovereignties’. He again addresses ‘inclusion of the other’ charging that while Habermas espouses universalism and other sensitivity, his approach is framed and understood from a western Judeo-Christian perspective and requires ‘a lot more self-development’.

He concludes his discussion with reference to ‘planetary realizations’. He rehearses this new reality in the global context of what might be seen as the risk society and ties this into Strydom’s theories around ‘risk, environment and responsibility’ and his recognition of a need for transformation at the level of anthropocentrism and post-nationalism. He also includes in this possibilities emerging from his work like triple contingency learning. With reference to Melucci, Giri also articulates a need for inner planetary realizations around ‘the biological, emotional and cognitive structures’ that are part of our experiences and relations.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxxviii -- #38

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‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xxxix -- #39

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‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xl -- #40

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‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page xli -- #41

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1

A THEORY OF COGNITIVE FRAMES FOR CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Piet Strydom

Introduction

Since the critique of functionalism and structuralism and the appropriation of the long marginalized interpretative and critical sociologies, it is widely recognized that cognitive structures and knowledge, far from being incidental to the structuring and patterning of social life, in fact are integral to it. The acknowledgement of this across theoretical and national traditions constitutes one of the most significant developments in the social sciences in the late twentieth century (Strydom 2007). It amounts to a cognitive turn which transformed not only the traditional sociology of knowledge but in fact sociology itself – in particular opening the possibility for a better appreciation of its critical dimension. Appropriate quotations could be drawn from various leading authors, but Pierre Bourdieu is perhaps the one who gave the constitutive significance of this cognitive component its most pointed sentence-long formulation when he indicated that his project is ‘to include in the object the knowledge which the agents, who are part of the object, have of the object, and the contribution this knowledge makes to the reality of the object’ (1986: 467).

It is of course inadequate simply to speak of knowledge here or, rather, it is apparent that Bourdieu uses ‘knowledge’ in more than one sense of the word – whence his further submission that ‘all knowledge, and in particular all knowledge of the social world, is an act of construction implementing schemes of thought and expression’ (1986: 467). But this is a matter about which there

is not full clarity. It had always been a problem of the classical tradition of the sociology of knowledge. Mannheim himself undoubtedly understood the issue, for he explicitly identified the 'categorial apparatus. . . of order patterns' preceding all knowledge (Wolff 1993: 426–7, 409). Yet he paid scant attention to the distinction between the cognitive dimension (Erkennen/Erkenntnis) and knowledge (Wissen), with the result, as Wolff (1993: 27) pointed out, that the subsequent literature failed to recognize and elucidate it. For related reasons, Schutz (1964: 121) criticized the sociology of knowledge as a misnomer. Subsequently, Giddens proposed to improve matters by focusing on 'the logical status of the knowledge applied by social actors in the production and reproduction of social systems' (1979: 5). His remedy is to keep apart two levels which are often conflated: 'mutual knowledge', in the sense of a non-corrigible tacit resource shared not only by social actors but also by the social actors and the social analyst, and 'common sense' understood as corrigible knowledge or belief-claims tacitly or discursively implicated in social forms of life (1979: 251–2, 1986: 336–7). This proposal calls to mind the phenomenological distinction between the prereflective and the reflective. Schutz, for instance, knew that what he called the 'stock-of-knowledge' at the core of the lifeworld is not merely a passively possessed store of already constituted shared knowledge, but also includes ways and means whereby such knowledge could be used or even creatively reactivated so as to give rise to new categorial structures (1967: 77–83). Habermas (1987: 124–5) likewise distinguishes between the lifeworld as the totality of what is taken for granted, on the one hand, and known and problematized facts, norms and experiences framed by the formal concepts of the objective, social and subjective worlds. An important connotation of the distinction between knowledge and the cognitive acknowledged here should be kept in mind. On the one hand, cognitive forms, schemes or frames organize experience and thus make possible the generation of interpretations of the objective, social and subjective worlds and the attachment of meaning to them, and on the other particular instances of knowledge, interpretations and meanings fill out these forms (e.g. Goffman 1986; Eder 1996; D'Andrade 1995; Conein 2005).

The principal concern of this paper is with the cognitive dimension – variously called categorial structures, schemata, schemes or frames – which are to be found at the level of both mutual lifeworld knowledge and situational common sense. It is the task of cognitive sociology to analyze and clarify these frames. Although it is widely held that the lifeworld is a transcendental concept which fulfils a

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 3 -- #45

metatheoretical function and thus cannot directly be put to empirical use, this perspective allows one to draw out the relevance of this dimension for empirical research purposes. In view of this, cognitive sociology is understood not merely in the micro sense of for instance Cicourel (1973), but also in the sense of being capable of extension to the macro dimension of society. At the outset, however, it should be acknowledged that cognitive sociology does not exhaust itself by focusing on such frames alone. The cognitive turn extends to the broader concern with the knowledgeable participation of social agents in communication and the discursive construction of reality at both the micro and macro dimensions (e.g. Eder 1996, 2007; Strydom 1999a, 2000, 2002). In the present context, I concentrate largely on the sociological level of analysis of cognitive frames, but I also add some reflections on the processual dimension. A critical cognitive sociology requires both.

Pragmatic-Realist Constructivism on a Weak Naturalistic Basis

Practical knowledge makes it possible for competent social actors to take part in social forms of life and to fulfil corresponding accomplishments. It is embodied in a whole range of elementary types of activities or practices, the key to the analysis of which is the concept of being oriented towards a rule. Social actors on the one hand follow many rules intuitively in so far as they have gained a practical mastery of them, while on the other they have an explicit knowledge of a range of further rules. Intuitively exercised knowledge enjoys a certain priority over explicit rule knowledge for it carries the whole network of basic practices and accomplishments in which a social form of life is articulated. It is this whole complex of implicit yet holistic practical knowledge that phenomenologists such as Husserl and Schutz described as the *Lebenswelt*, the taken-for-granted largely unthematic background of social life. The fact that the presupposed practical knowledge at issue here is of an enabling kind, making social participation and accomplishments possible, leads Habermas, despite the pragmatist deflation of Kant's transcendental philosophy by Peirce and Apel (1981), still to approach it in terms of 'transcendental analysis' (1999: 19). It takes the form of the analysis of the deep-seated structures of the lifeworld embodied in the practices and achievements of competent social actors. For him this means the identification of those invariant yet flexible features which appear throughout the whole range of different sociocultural forms of life. First among them is language, and the second is culture in the sense of the communicatively transmitted and linguistically organized stock of patterns or frames of

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 4 -- #46

interpretation, valuation and expression. With these transcendental features Habermas contrasts the contents of cultural tradition persisting only in symbolic form and situationally relevant facts, norms and experiences which, strictly speaking, alone fall under the category of knowledge (1987: 124–6).

The transcendental status of these structures, of which cognitive frames are of most interest in the present context, can be understood in a number of different senses. Schutz, for instance, insists that his schemes of interpretation and expression, which are ‘schemes of experience’, differ sharply from Kant’s schemes which are ‘schemes of the imagination’ (1967: 82). Habermas makes a distinction between a weak and a strong transcendental interpretation (1999: 27). In the classical sense, anything encountered in the world receives its very form from the structures of the human mind. As against this strong version, the weak interpretation requires at most that the world, in so far as human beings are at all able to gain knowledge of it, should match our cognitive structures. In addition, however, the contemporary interpretation of the transcendental appreciates further that the possibility of encountering the world depends on human activity embodying human concerns, interests and beliefs (Habermas 1999: 28). The cognitive frames providing the situational structures of social forms of life located in space and time form part of a variety of different practices, from instrumental intervention through self-interpretation to communication and discourse. Although these transcendental structures are of a presuppositional kind and therefore are not simply empirical facts, they no longer possess universality and necessity, as Kant would have accepted in respect of transcendental consciousness. This opens the door for a form of idealism which is widely accepted today in the social sciences, particularly by certain forms of constructivism. Since we do not know whether and to what extent the structures of the human mind ontologically correspond to the world itself, we can no longer be sure whether the reality selectively revealed by our cognitive structures is objective or perhaps a distorted cross-section. Gamson is of course correct when he submits that a ‘successful theory of framing must be based on an epistemology that recognizes facts as social constructions’ (1992: 69), but this leaves one uneasy about the exact status of the constructivism he has in mind. Habermas (1999: 30, 39) goes further by insisting that there is a sense in which our grasp of the world does possess universality and necessity. For him this is apparent from the fact that these structures not only provide human beings with access to the world, but at the same time also occupy a position in the world itself – i.e. they evade both the

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 5 -- #47

transcendental difference between the world and the inner-worldly as well as the methodological dualism between understanding and observation.

Authors from a variety of intellectual traditions such as Marxism, pragmatism, philosophical anthropology and genetic epistemology had already recognized that instrumental practices, language use and communicative action have a biological or evolutionary root. Against this background, Habermas advances a ‘weak naturalistic’, ‘transcendental-pragmatic’ position (1999: 32, 36–40). At its core is a pragmatistic understanding of lifeworld practices. On the one hand, they take the form of ‘intelligent’ or cognitively structured and knowledgeable problem solving and learning through the correction of errors and discursive justification and, on the other, they generate a broad dynamic of the growth of cognitive structures and knowledge beyond the particular views and commitments of the participants. The overall process of the constitution of society takes place at one and the same time on a spatial, social and temporal level, and involves both moments of passive experience of reality and moments of constructive design, interpretation and justification. Active engagement with reality, whether resistant and constraining objects or contradictions between social actors whose orientations come into conflict, is accompanied by, or at least eventuates in, a discursive exchange of views and objections from which in turn emerges a more or less justified, intersubjectively accepted interpretation on the basis of which society is then for the time being organized.

An interesting step in his recent writings is where Habermas (1999: 37–40; 2005: 157, 171, 215) explicitly adds a ‘weak’ or ‘soft’ naturalistic dimension to his account of lifeworld practices. According to this metatheoretical assumption, the learning processes that we human beings undergo, which are possible only within the context of sociocultural forms of life, are no more and no less than a continuation of the preceding evolutionary learning processes which, for their part, gave rise to the structures of our forms of life. This means that those structures which make our learning processes transcendentally possible are the outcome of less complex natural-historical learning processes which lend them cognitive significance. Habermas is emphatic about the cognitive import deposited in the structures of the lifeworld by evolutionary learning processes. It accounts for the fact that, despite the deflation of transcendental epistemology, our grasp of the world nevertheless possesses a certain universality and necessity which remains despite its contingent genesis. He also stresses that the assumption of

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 6 -- #48

natural-historical continuity must be understood strictly in a weak or soft naturalistic sense and, hence, that no reductive claims should be attached to it. The latter would be the case with a strong naturalistic approach which seeks to replace the conceptual analysis of lifeworld practices by a natural scientific, e.g. a neurological or biogenetic explanation (e.g. Turner 2002). It is sufficient, by contrast, simply to make the basic assumption that the organic development and cultural form of life of *homo sapiens* have a natural origin and are accessible to an evolutionary explanation. It would be mistaken, furthermore, to conceive of the cognitive dimension of the lifeworld in ontological realist terms, as Outhwaite (1987: 84, 86–7) seems to interpret Habermas. In his recent work, Habermas adds clarity by explicitly adopting ‘pragmatic realism’ (1999: 45, 2005: 171) and insisting that lifeworld structures must be analyzed, notwithstanding the metatheoretical assumption of natural-historical continuity, in terms appropriate to cognitive structures appearing to us as universal and necessary.

Given the centrality of the lifeworld infrastructure specifically understood in cognitive terms, the question arises as to how it could be extrapolated sociologically. How could we transpose Habermas’ detranscendentalized transcendental analysis into a sociological analysis of the whole range of cognitive complexes – from context-setting structures, through situation-generating structures, to situation-defining structures? How could we theoretically develop a cognitive sociology that is relevant for social scientific – specifically critical sociological – research practice?

A Theory of Cognitive Frames

Social reality presents us with a complex of instrumental intervention, communicative action, social interaction and a network of social relations. On the one hand, this complex is provided with an all-pervasive background understanding making possible the various practices and their corresponding accomplishments. On the other, this complex often takes a discursive form in the wake of the partial breakdown of this background understanding or a problematization of an aspect of it. It is in such discursive moments that the contradiction between social actors whose orientations come into conflict becomes manifest. Critical discourse moments of this kind are of particular cognitive sociological interest since it is in breaches like these that cognitive structures and cultural models structuring or potentially structuring the situation become visible. Those involved all focus on the fact, norm, experience or combination of them which has become problematic and contentious. Each of the parti-

cipants draws on culturally available resources to construct its own frame of the situation in general and the issue at stake in particular, and then communicates this individualizing frame in public. In so doing, the communications of the different participants generate a discourse in which their respective frames enter into competition and conflict with each other. Such a discursive legitimation struggle in the medium of public communication typically ends, via a more or less successful learning process (Miller 2002), in the intersubjective or collective acceptance of an emergent 'synthesis' (Mannheim 1993: 433), 'metascheme' (Schutz 1967: 119) or 'masterframe' (Eder 1996: 181) in the sense of a new selective set of cognitive structures coordinating the competing frames in proportion to their degree of power and acceptability to the public.

A central yet nevertheless weakly acknowledged dimension of discursive struggles is the cognitive one. Struggles of this kind represent a social process of the discursive construction of reality. In and through such processes, cognitive devices made available by culture are employed by social actors to construct more or less coherent sets of cognitive structures or frames, while these latter frames are communicatively mediated and thus catapulted into a dynamic that leads to the discursive construction of a composite master frame. In a sense, this statement could be read as a decomposition and more analytical restatement of the formula Giddens used to indicate the sense of his theorem of the 'duality of structure': 'the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize' (1986: 25). Although it is not brought out, Giddens also recognizes the cognitive dimension when he continues that: 'Structure is not "external" to individuals: as memory traces, and as instantiated in social practices, it is in a certain sense more "internal" than exterior to their activities in a Durkheimian sense'. What is not clear from his formula, however, is the crucial difference in level of structure in the course of the process linking 'medium' and 'outcome'. On the one hand, structure refers both to commonly shared and generally available cultural structures on the macro level and to their appropriation and employment at the micro level as elements or devices for the purposes of constructing actor frames. On the other hand, structure also refers both to the meso level arrangement and rearrangement of frames and to the emergent macro level master frame coordinating them. Of cognitive sociological interest is the whole spectrum of cognitive phenomena which play a structuring role throughout the process of discursive construction – which is actually the medium – at all the different levels.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 8 -- #50

The sociological question arising here, therefore, is what these cognitive phenomena are, and how we could go about analyzing them. A few references to some leading social theorists could be helpful.

Social theorists on cognitive structures

Against the background of theoretical developments around the turn of the previous century seeking to describe the structure of modern life which was supposed to have freed itself from structure, Mannheim in the 1920s adopted the most basic societal cognitive resources as starting point for analyses within his favoured area of the sociology of knowledge. He spoke of the 'deepest strata of world interpretation', 'the categorial apparatus' or the 'inventory of our set of fundamental meanings in terms of which we experience the outside world as well as our own inner responses' (Wolff 1993: 419, 405). It is clear from his earlier writings, particularly those on 'the structures of thinking' (Mannheim 1980: 211–25), that he grasped the multi-dimensional – and not just linguistic – makeup of this categorial apparatus. In addition, he also exhibited an interest in the change and differentiation of these cognitive resources through the competition of different generations and groups (e.g. Wolff 1993: 399–437). At the centre of his attention, however, were ideational contents, bodies of knowledge, ideologies or sets of related ideas, with the result that he neglected both to theorize the presupposed cognitive dimension and to exploit its significance for sociological analysis.

Schutz (1964, 1967), by contrast, concentrated on structure. On the one hand, he offered a formal theoretical analysis of the 'categorial structures of meaning' or 'stock of knowledge' and the constituent 'schemes of experience', 'interpretive schemes' and 'expressive schemes' (1967: 77–86). On the other, he drew attention to the schemes or 'typifications' of common sense which form integral elements of concrete, historically specific sociocultural forms of life (1971: 59, 73, 281–5). Even at the latter level, however, Schutz's analyses retained the formality of the former level, thus never developing in a substantively oriented direction beyond epistemological and methodological concerns. Later authors who drew on Schutz advanced matters in one way or another by highlighting the social scientific significance of presuppositional structures. Berger and Luckmann (1967; Berger 1973) emphasized the link between the sociology of knowledge and the cognitive implications of social-psychological processes and its employment as a basis for a sociological rather than social- psychological model of the social

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 9 -- #51

construction of reality. Garfinkel (1967) and the ethnomethodologists focused on the formal properties of everyday or common sense activities. Since they assumed that such properties have no source other than ongoing practical accomplishments, however, they sought to reveal them sporadically through indirect means, such as the misunderstanding or unsuccessful application of a taken-for-granted assumption or deviation from it, rather than developing a more positive theoretical account. Adopting a comparable approach, Cicourel (1973) emphasized the cognitive role of memory and interpretation in invoking formal properties through practical reasoning by drawing on indexical particulars in interaction situations.

In his significantly entitled book *Frame Analysis* (1986), Goffman went beyond the ethnomethodologists' theoretical abstentionism by adopting a more structural approach to the organization of experience and the interpretation of the world. He indeed continued to focus extensively on the analysis of anecdotal materials which reminds one of the ethnomethodological obsession with marginal or liminal situations, but throughout the book one gets a sense of an attempt to make a systematic contribution. In any case, his avowed aim was 'to isolate some of the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense out of events' and thus to arrive at 'a general statement' (1986: 10, 14). The major step he took toward a theory of frames as the cognitive forms organizing experience was put forward under the title of 'primary frameworks' (21–39) of which there are two general classes: 'natural' and 'social' frameworks applying respectively to natural occurrences, events and phenomena and to rule guided conduct and events involving agency. He saw these frames as cognitive resources which form a central component of culture and are shared, although not uniformly, by large numbers of people. They are culturally available principles of organization or complexes of rules which enable individuals to experience, perceive, interpret and understand events and actions and their effects as well as the responses of others. The larger part of his work, using the central concept of 'key', was focused on the process of transition from primary to secondary frameworks involving activities already meaning something in one context but then acquiring another meaning in a different context. Throughout, however, his focus remained the organization of individual experience.

Habermas provides valuable guidelines by means of his theory of communicative action and discourse, but he himself has developed his position only in a very general way. In the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1987), he sought to revitalize critical theory by refocusing it on the provocative contemporary threat of the col-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 10 -- #52

onization of lifeworld structures and thus made available a range of cognitively relevant concepts, but beyond that he neglected to pursue the implied line of cognitive sociological inquiry. *Between Facts and Norms* (1996) considerably improved the situation. The core of the social theoretic contribution of this work turns on his focus on the 'discursive mode of sociation' characteristic of contemporary societies. In accordance with the general pragmatistic (i.e. Peircean-Piagetian) view of 'societies. . . as problem-solving systems' (1996: 319), he here exploits to some degree his understanding of the discursive construction of reality in public communication. Central to his account are discursive processes whereby cognitive structures and cultural models are activated, on the one hand, and reconstituted and reshaped, on the other. In this respect, his theoretical model of the constitutionally guaranteed circuit of power in the public sphere is very promising. As a sociological version of the discourse theoretical interpretation of democracy, it offers an excellent statement of the general framework required for situational analyses and contains a profusion of suggestive contact points for their development. What is lacking, however, is a reflective treatment of the cognitive structuration of discursive processes. Using a variety of terms, Habermas does indeed refer to cognitive structures of various kinds. For instance, he speaks of 'cultural patterns' 'interpretative patterns', 'patterns of interpretation, valuation and expression', 'formal world-concepts', 'formal frames', 'validity claims', 'the frame or categorial scaffolding that serves to order problematic situations' and 'forms of the intersubjectivity of possible understanding' (1987: 124–6). Since the early 1970s, moreover, his work has been shot through with an acute sense of the 'epistemic' role of discourses whereby something individual, such as interests, motives or values, is abstracted and transposed into a structure appropriate to the situation and acceptable to the participants (e.g. 1998: 7, 31, 43, 81–2). It is apparent that when he stresses that 'single elements [of lifeworld structures], specific taken-for-granteds, are. . . drawn upon [and] mobilized. . . in co-operative processes of interpretation' (1987: 124), he appreciates that they are discursively available cognitive structures and cultural models brought into play in social life. The problem remains, however, that Habermas' position on the cognitive dimension is too schematic and underdeveloped. Taking a problem-solving perspective, he also overlooks the world-creating significance of cognitive processes and structures.

Amongst contemporary sociologists, Bourdieu (1986) stands out as one who has an acute understanding of cognitive structures as a fundamental dimension of a society which is simultaneously

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 11 -- #53

incorporated into the minds and bodies of its members. He employs a wide range of expressions, from 'cognitive structures' (468), through 'schemes of thought and expression' (467) and 'historical schemes of perception and appreciation' (468), to 'commonplaces' (477), 'forms of classification', 'classificatory schemes' (471) or 'classificatory systems' (477). All these concepts refer to the cognitive dimension, but they differ in that they point to either its micro or macro manifestations. Bourdieu is critical both of philosophical idealism, which is fixated on a system of universal forms and categories, and of cognitive approaches in anthropology and sociology (e.g. interactionism, ethnomethodology), which ignore the problem of the genesis of mental structures and classifications. In his view, they are historically constituted and acquired categories which organize the idea of the social world in the minds of all the subjects belonging to that world. Being common to all competent agents, even if interpreted differently by them, they make possible the production of a common, meaningful, common-sense world. As principles of division, they are produced and reproduced through social divisions, including divisions between generations, the sexes and classes. Far from being a system of universal forms and categories oriented toward pure knowledge, therefore, they form a system of internalized and embodied schemes which are available as practical knowledge and are used for the purposes of practice. Social groupings and classes are incessantly engaged in legitimation controversies or 'classification struggles' (479) in which the system of classificatory schemes is the 'stake of the struggles' (477). While struggling over it, they seek to gain control over the classification system and to turn it to their own advantage. They put forward different interpretations and make antagonistic uses of it, and thus form distinct social identities on the basis of differences. This position is comparable to that of Touraine who emphasizes the 'cultural model' (1981: 14; 1988: 54–5) or the common image of society's creative capacity which is differently interpreted and used by the major social forces struggling over it as the stake in their conflicting constitution of society. Bourdieu's examples show that he conceives of classifications and schemes in a more general anthropological-sociological way, whereas Touraine's work is focused in a more historically specific, epochal, societal, political-sociological way. Bourdieu (1986: 468, 470) thinks of a 'matrix of all commonplaces' forming a 'network of oppositions' of high/low, strong/weak, spiritual/material, fine/course, light/heavy, free/forced, broad/narrow, unique/common, brilliant/dull and so forth, which in class societies are articulated in terms of the intersection of two

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 12 -- #54

principles, namely the division between the dominant and the dominated and between different factions competing for dominance, such as business executives and intellectuals today. Touraine (1988: 111) has in mind liberty, justice and happiness as the central loci of conflict and struggle between elite and social movement in mercantile, industrial and contemporary societies respectively.

What becomes apparent when one assesses some of the major contributions to the theory of the cognitive dimension is the dissonance between the different emphases and hence the lack of a systematic position. There is certainly no dearth of interesting ideas, but they are still in need of being related to one another, of being compared and contrasted, and of being put together and developed so as to form a more coherent theory of cognitive structures and cultural models.

Typology of cognitive frames

I propose to begin this task by developing a non-eclectic typology of frames which is able to accommodate the major distinctions suggested in the literature by means of a cognitivist communication and discourse theory of society. My aim is to pursue this theoretical exercise to the point where a framework emerges which is sufficiently differentiated and coherent to be used as guidance in research (e.g. Strydom 2000, 2002). The typology is a cross-section through a dialectical process unity which consists of a number of dimensions running from the macro to the micro level. They all form part of a given cognitive order which is reproduced and/or transformed through a process of cognitive structure formation in the medium of communication and discourse such that it leads to a processual result or outcome in the form of a new cognitive order (see diagram below). Rather than teasing out all the logical possibilities, however, I confine myself for present purposes to aspects more immediately relevant to researching critical discourse moments and the resolution of controversies, with slower and more deep-seated cultural change somewhat more in the background.

The first dimension of the typology occupies the macro level occupied by the cultural (macro) frame possessing context-setting significance. It embraces the intersubjectively shared, naively accepted, diffuse, enabling yet limiting, deep-seated structures of the lifeworld which, as Habermas argues, have become established in the course of natural history or evolution as structures having cognitive import at the sociocultural level. As such, it corresponds to the most basic part of Schutz’s ‘stock of knowledge’, or what Mannheim called the ‘deepest strata of world interpretation’ and

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 13 -- #55

Bourdieu the ‘common system of classification’. This dimension includes both Goffman’s ‘primary frameworks’ straddling the natural and sociocultural dimensions. Here are located all those structural forms which make it possible for social actors or agents to experience, perceive, interpret and understand both the natural and the social world as well as their own inner or subjective worlds. As a ‘stock of knowledge at hand’ (Schutz 1967: 78) or as a ‘tool kit’ or ‘repertoire’ (Swidler 1986: 273, 277), it keeps publicly available a virtually limitless and diverse range of cultural resources.

Typology of Cognitive Frames

	PROCESS IN THE MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION AND DISCOURSE:	
	GIVEN COGNITIVE ORDER	PROCESS RESULT/ OUTCOME
MACRO	cultural frame	reproduced/transformed cultural frame
	modernity frame	reproduced/transformed modernity frame
	historical frame	new master frame
MESO	problem situation frame	current situation frame
	collective actor frames	reproduced/transformed collective actor/identity/ action frames
MICRO	framing devices	reproduced/transformed framing devices

The second dimension of the typology is a crucial social theoretic specification of the macro level from the viewpoint that the social world is a world of meaning which is by necessity given a general yet directional interpretation. Here it is understood in accordance with the social theoretical assumption made by such authors as Habermas, Mannheim, Bourdieu, Touraine and Giddens that in sociology we

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 14 -- #56

are concerned with culturally available cognitive structures under modern conditions. Stated at the highest level of historical specificity, it can be referred to as the modernity (macro) frame (compare Strydom 2000: 60–3).

Since the early modern period and until recently, the modernity frame took the form of a liberal-egalitarian-discursive frame, or what Eder called ‘the frame of free, equal and discursively structured social relations’ (1992: 3). It took effect in the process of the structuring of social relations and society more broadly by operating as a cultural model, partly embodied in constitutions and legal systems. In the wake of the late twentieth century conflicts and debates about the ecological crisis, however, the general modernity frame has recently begun to undergo a marked modification – a change that itself calls for social scientific analysis capable of traversing the cognitive dimension. The direction of change is indicated by the emphatic late twentieth-century concern with the environment. In addition to the modern privileging of the social form of relations marked by the emphasis on freedom, equality and discursivity, a range of cultural resources has been singled out anew under the general title of ‘nature’. A reconstitution of the relation between the two types of primary framework distinguished by Goffman, the social and the natural, obviously occurred here – or we could say that through the ecological crisis natural historical processes produced a new cognitive perspective for the organization of sociocultural life. The liberal-egalitarian-discursive frame of modern times has been expanded to form the late modernity frame in which both society and nature occupy a significant position. Eder speaks of ‘the frame of an order inherent in nature, the frame of a natural order of modern societies’ (1992: 3). A new set of rules has been added to the old set to form an expanded cultural model to generally govern the experience, perception, interpretation and understanding of as well as action upon reality in its various dimensions under contemporary conditions.

The modernity frame itself gets internally articulated in historically more specific horizons of lower level yet dominant epochal pre-understandings of society. This is what Habermas (1996: 388–446) thinks about when he distinguishes the ‘liberal’, the ‘social-welfare’ and the ‘procedural paradigms’ in his discussion of modern law. It is also what Touraine (1988: 111) has in mind when he identifies liberty, justice and happiness, or the cultural models of exchange, progress and self-produced normative guidelines, as the central loci of conflict and protest in the mercantile, industrial and programmed ages of modernity respectively . We have here a macro

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 15 -- #57

level frame or categorial scaffolding of a broad historical situation within modernity containing a general characterization of the times in terms of an understanding of the direction which needs to be pursued to realize its potential.

It is within this context, depending on the chosen level of analysis, that still more specific diagnoses of the times and responses to the perceived challenges or threats of the present are discursively developed – i.e. frame construction processes which are at the very centre of critical cognitive sociological analysis. While such discursive framing processes depend on problem situations which are in turn framed on the meso level and allow problems to be made into collectively defined issues, their outcomes in the case of high level issues are macro level frames which for a certain time come to play a central role in institutionalization and hence the organization of society – what is here called a master frame (compare Eder 1996). For instance, aspects of the sociocultural lifeworld become problematic, whether facts pertaining to the objective world, norms belonging to the social world, experiences ascribable to the subjective world, or a combination of all three, as is more typical. It could present itself in the form of the society-wide problems of early modern violence and disorder, modern impoverishment, or contemporary risk. Three historically significant frames of this kind can thus be distinguished – what I for particular purposes elsewhere proposed to call the ‘rights frame’, the ‘justice frame’ and the ‘responsibility frame’ respectively (Strydom 1999b, 1999d, 2000, 2002). Many smaller, lower level problems can and often do provide the focal point of problem situations, even simultaneously with societally more significant ones. There is no lack of examples of particular issues from various fields providing controversial flash points (e.g. Nelkin 1992). But the problem situation frames developed through conflict, communication and discourse which flare up around such problems do not necessarily provide what is required for the emergence of a master frame. Society-wide problems are more likely to do so.

The micro dimension of the typology concerns the wide range of cognitive structures employed as frame construction devices by the social or collective actors or agents. The cognitive resources at issue here are those concepts, norms or rules of conduct and culturally specific values as well as emotions and moods which social actors draw from culture as a stock of knowledge at hand or as a toolkit – having learned to use them more or less skilfully in varying configurations to construct identities and lines of action to deal with the different kinds of problems they confront in social situations.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 16 -- #58

As framing devices, they include Schutz's common-sense typifications and Gamson's metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images (Gamson and Lasch 1983: 399–400). Authors in the Kantian-Habermasian tradition, however, have succeeded in theoretically systematizing this dimension of analysis. Eyerman and Jamison (1991), for instance, fell back on Habermas' distinction between technical, practical and emancipatory 'cognitive interests' to distinguish the different dimensions of what they call 'cognitive praxis'. Starting from Habermas' cognitive 'validity claims' instead, Eder (1996) distinguished empirical or objective, moral or normative, and aesthetic or conative framing devices. By employing these three basic situation-articulating or text-generating devices, social actors construct collective actor, identity and action frames in relation to an issue, which they then communicate in public and allow to be reproduced or transformed through the ensuing discursive process.

Such a construction process involves the alignment (Snow et al. 1986) of the micro level cognitive structures of the individual participants and meso level frames of collective actors. This is certainly the case with social movements, as the relevant literature makes clear (e.g. Morris and Mueller 1992; Melucci 1996; McAdam et al. 1996). Quite untenably however, some authors prefer to confine the concept of 'frame' to this level and to it alone (McAdam et al. 1996: 6; see Strydom 1999d: 73–4) and concurrently tend to reserve the concept of 'master frame' for the collective action frame of social movements. But it should be emphasized that the process of collective identity formation holds equally well for the state, industry, science, and other relevant social agents. As soon as frames are communicated in public and a shift occurs from the micro to the meso level, at any rate, frames appear in the plural. For this reason, authors such as Mannheim (Wolff 1993: 399–437), Bourdieu (1986: 230–1), Gamson (1992: 70) and Eder (1996: 169) rightly emphasize that 'competition' – and by extension conflict – is of central social scientific interest. Such dynamic processes are all the more of interest in that they are essential for the discursive construction of a master frame.

The Discursive Socialization of Cognition

To offset the disadvantages inherent in the diagrammatic presentation of the typology, I propose to elaborate briefly on the dynamics of the process of structuration whereby the various types and levels of cognitive structures become expanded and interwoven in practical contexts of social life. The processual medium in which the different

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 17 -- #59

cognitive structures are suspended, as it were, and through which they are related to and connected with one another is provided by communication and discourse. Unlike Giddens' structuration, therefore, this is conceived as a process of communicative and discursive sociation or socialization of cognition and learning.

When the taken-for-granted background of understanding breaks down or something becomes problematic, the relevant segment of the lifeworld is thrown into relief, so that the context of relevance and hence the ordering frame of the problematic situation begin to become apparent. It is articulated by social actors who, locating themselves in the cultural frame already interpreted in terms of modernity, choose particular framing devices and construct collective actor, identity or action frames for themselves. By means of such a frame, a social actor establishes a publicly relevant identity, and by communicating it in public it distinguishes itself from and establishes a relation with other co-operating or competing social actors. The framing process allows the actor to define the situation – in the sense of becoming clear about the current context of relevance – and in particular the problem which needs to be identified, defined and eventually agreed upon as a collectively relevant issue. In this way, a link is forged between the cognitive structures or frame of the actor and the broader frame that serves to order the problematic situation that has arisen for the participating actors. The communication of a variety of frames in public establishes a network of co-operative, competitive and even conflicting relations among them, and thus generates a discourse with dynamics of its own. In and through the processual dynamics, the frames of the different actors are played out and weighed up against one another, up to the point that an amalgam of selected aspects of each of the frames in proportion to their situational and cultural significance emerges victorious over the competing frame elements. If one thus considers the macro dimension from a dynamic viewpoint in relation to the micro and meso dimensions, then an important manifestation of lifeworld structures becomes apparent. Attention then shifts from the givenness, commonality or intersubjective sharing of these structures in the form of the cultural and modernity macro frame to their emergent effects and patterns. This is where the sociologically – rather than philosophically or anthropologically – crucial phenomenon of a historically specific, discursively generated and collectively accepted and valid frame of reality makes itself felt – Mannheim and Eder's 'synthesis' and 'master frame' respectively. As Mannheim was acutely aware, this is of course only a temporary, unstable, relative, practical synthesis which at best provisionally

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 18 -- #60

normalizes continuing oppositions (Wolff 1993: 433; see also Kettler and Meja 1988). This is what Eder has in mind when he, in Bourdieuian parlance, speaks of the significance of 'frame capital' (1996: 169) for the emergence of a collectively valid master frame of reality through discursively organized frame competition. This by no means excludes, of course, the normative component of such a synthesis.

I propose to reserve the term 'master frame' for this temporary, power-drenched, normatively sanctioned, practical synthesis. The rationale for this is theoretical in at least two senses. On the one hand, it allows a distinction between macro frame and master frame, where the former refers to the all-pervasive, virtually unchangeable, common, context-setting cultural and modernity framework and the latter to the historically specific, temporally activated, situation-defining frame which can be expected in the course of time to be replaced by another quite different frame. The acknowledgement of this distinction is the first step toward dealing with and overcoming the seemingly irresolvable conflict between formalism and contextualism (see critique of Habermas in Strydom 1999c). Here different objects of possible analysis present themselves for social scientific study, from the master frame to the reproduced and/or transformed cultural and modernity frames. On the other hand, the theoretical choice to reserve the master frame for the temporary synthesis opens the possibility of confronting the problem of contingency in a novel way.

The process of communicative and discursive socialization of cognition and learning through which the different types and levels of frames are interrelated so as to continuously constitute and structure social life is classically understood as a process subject to double contingency. This is emphatically the case with such leading authors as Parsons, Habermas and Luhmann. In opposition to this theoretical position, I have elsewhere argued that we need the new concept of 'triple contingency' (Strydom 1999c).

In accordance with the theorem of double contingency, social reality is conceived in terms of the dyadic or dialogical ego and alter model. Social action, interaction, social systems, social order and hence society are possible only to the extent that the first and second persons are able to bridge the differences between them and to overcome the indeterminacy of the situation in which they confront one another. If, instead of the reductive dyadic model, one were to choose a more complex model which takes into account the full structure of communication, something all the more necessary under contemporary conditions of the abstraction and generalization

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 19 -- #61

of communication in what is called a communication society, he or she is in a better position to keep in mind the whole range of cognitive structures and the dynamic relations among them. To proceed from double contingency can mean different things, depending on one's theoretical perspective, but in each case the consequences are negative. Either one reifies the cultural macro frame and snuffs out the effects of social actors' creative choice and combination of framing devices, as Parsons does (Strydom 1999c); or one indeed makes culture dynamic and stresses the competence of social actors yet fixes on the participants trying to convince each other by means of the better argument while overlooking the public which has to accept and validate the position emerging from the debate, as Habermas does (Strydom 1999c, 2001, 2006); or one autopoietically fluidizes social reality as a whole into recombinant cognitively relevant elements yet holds onto a 'mutualistic organization' of social systems which cannot rise above the fragmentation of a 'semantic mediation' of a 'multiplicity of double contingencies', as Luhmann (1992: 379; Strydom 1999c) does. One of the contributions of a critical cognitive sociology aware of the whole range of phenomena specified in the above typology is precisely to draw attention to the necessity of taking into account the dimension systematically ignored by the neo-classical social theorists.

To consider the process of communicative and discursive sociation in terms of triple contingency instead, implies that the third person point of view is taken into account above and beyond the first and second person perspectives. It is to acknowledge that the third point of view has a constitutive import for social reality and, therefore, that the threefold configuration of the first, second and third person perspectives represents the elementary generative model of the social situation rather than the twofold relation usually adopted by social theorists. It is to recognize that the third point of view represents society and that it, rather than simply the first and second perspectives, serves as vehicle of the power to define the social situation. This obviously has serious implications for the establishment of master frames. Since World War II, both the more general constitutive import – e.g. human rights (e.g. Donnelly 1998) – and the more specific defining power of the third point of view – e.g. national, transnational and global public spheres (e.g. Habermas 1998: 175–77) – are increasingly appreciated and are therefore also becoming increasingly effective. The particular form in which it asserts itself is that of the epistemic authority of the public in discourse conducted in the medium of public communica-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 20 -- #62

tion. Although not a direct participant taking either the first or the second person perspective, the public exerts influence through its epistemic role in public communication which has a direct bearing not only on the collective identification of a problem but also its collective definition as an issue deserving to be placed on the public and political agenda. Above all, it also has a decisive impact on the collective resolution of issues. It affects first the collective selection of cognitive structures from the available variety of competing frames, secondly the collective acceptance of the resultant master frame as appropriate to the given situation, and finally the collective validation of this master frame as a new configuration of cognitive structures (i.e. emotions, concepts and norms) that will henceforth, at least for the time being, be significant for the organization of social interaction, social relations and society.

The introduction of the concept of triple contingency invokes a new level of contingency which becomes fully apparent only from a cognitive sociological viewpoint. Considering the typology presented above, this phenomenon embraces and therefore must be explicated with reference to a number of different levels. In the first instance, it concerns the fact that a growing part of the cultural macro frame, including an increasing number of constituent cognitive structures and cultural models, is becoming increasingly reflexive and thus discursively available. Secondly, relativizing Bourdieu, it refers to the fact that an increasing number of social actors are not only gaining awareness of cognitive structures and cultural models, but are also developing the ability to choose among them and to employ them in processes of identity construction. Above all, however, the new level of contingency is manifested in the increasing ability and epistemic authority of the public to observe, appreciate and evaluate such choices and identity constructions and thus to guide the selection, definition and acceptance of a collectively valid master frame.

Master frames, which are of special interest in empirically oriented, cognitive sociological analysis, can be adequately understood only in terms of triple contingency. But to be able to satisfy the proper social scientific interest in the genesis of such master frames, it is imperative for cognitive sociological analysis to focus on the different types and levels of cognitive phenomena in the dynamic process of their intentional construction and subsequent discursive interrelation, selective reduction and synthetic recombination. This is what distinguishes critical cognitive sociology (e.g. Miller 2002; Eder 2007; Strydom 2000, 2002; Delanty 2001) from the more prosaic forms of cognitive sociology available today.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 21 -- #63

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 22 -- #64

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 23 -- #65

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2

AN ETHIC OF RESPONSIBILITY: SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Catherine Brennan

The borders of the moral community for the majority of moral philosophers and social theorists (at least in the West) did not until recently, that is, until the development of ‘distance technology’ extend beyond relations between humans living in the present. An ethics of proximity held sway anchored in moral norms regulating face-to-face relations. The nature of ‘distance technology’ is such, though, that the causal connections between the technological processes which trigger activity and their final consequences remain invisible. The ethical category that is called forth by this totally novel situation in human history is responsibility. In this chapter I reflect on what human responsibility might mean in the risk society we inhabit at the threshold of the twenty-first century by engaging in a dialogue primarily with Paul Ricoeur, Hans Jonas and Karl-Otto Apel. The main thread holding my reflections together is that vulnerability (not only of human beings but of all living creatures) is the wellspring of an ethic of collective responsibility enacted to deal with the consequences of the collective activities of humankind in science and technology.

The Ecological Crisis

As Apel (1978) puts it, ‘the unchecked onslaught of technology upon nature threatens to destroy the life space of all living creatures on earth’ (83). The whole biosphere of the planet is revealed in its vulnerability due to humankind’s excessive technological intervention and power. What is particularly striking about modern technological interventions into nature is the spatial spread and time-span of the cause-effect chains set in motion and the irreversibility of many processes. Some of the major cause-effect chains set in motion

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 26 -- #68

include: environmental pollution, depletion of energy resources, atmospheric warming, rising sea levels, the destruction of rainforests, nuclear risks and overpopulation.

In respect of non-human sentient beings, scientific progress in many fields depends on their use in experiments. Modern meat production, for instance, is largely dependent on the scientific exploitation of the life processes of domestic animals. Examples that come to mind include: genetically generated deformations and the minimization of the space available for the natural movements of animals. More than that, non-human sentient beings living in their natural habitats are increasingly at risk of becoming extinct. Similarly, biodiversity is under serious threat because of the extinction of a vast number of plants.

This rendering of the ecological crisis is constituted, understandably, by an anthropocentric point of view. However, a vulgar anthropocentrism is not being propounded here which considers nature simply as instrumental to the purposes of human life. Rather, as Apel (1992) observes, human beings cannot avoid focusing on the anorganic and organic components of the earth which constitute *'the ecosphere of humans and those plants and animals which make up a community of fate with us'* (237). What could be destroyed, by the technological interventions of *homo faber* into nature, is that part of the biosphere that shares its conditions of life with humankind and, thus, belongs to our ecosphere. As Clark and Stevenson (2003) point out, we are already in a kind of 'ecological overdraft' since current global demand is digging deep into the earth's 'capital stocks of forest, fish and fertile soils' in a way that is simply not sustainable (235). This intensification of the human exploitation of nature through technology conjures up global, universal and irreversible risks. 'Risk' has become, as Strydom (2002) observes, 'the signature of contemporary society' (4).

The Instrumentalization of Human Nature

Technology is not only applied to 'outer' nature; it is now also applied to 'inner' nature. To take the case of the major advances in molecular genetics: what human beings are, 'by nature', is coming increasingly within the ambit of biotechnological intervention in 'the civilization of the gene' (Strydom, 1999a). As Habermas (2003) puts it, gene manipulation is intertwined with issues touching upon the very identity of the human species. Enhancing eugenics suggests the technical use of the human body, obscuring the boundaries between 'the naturally grown' and 'the made', in other words, turning human beings into artifacts. The future 'human being' is submitted to the

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 27 -- #69

intentions of third parties regarding their genetic make up which is, in principle, non-modifiable (for the foreseeable future at least). Will, as Habermas asks, 'the genetic self-transformation and self-optimization of the species' lead to the increased autonomy of human beings understood as self-determining, responsible 'persons' leading their own lives and treating one another with equal respect? (29). Or, is it possible that genetic engineering tampering with the genetic foundations of human life will bring about the ontological transmutation of the human species? Will biotechnology erode a sense of a common human ontology?

Another area where a direct technological challenge is being posed to conventional wisdom about 'the human', relates to the possibility of a 'post-human' world involving the increasing overlapping of humans and machines. Some thinkers envisage the emergence of a new species, *robo sapiens,* involving a convergence between humans and robots and in the process de-emphasizing those aspects of the human condition like embodiment (Menzel and D'Aluiso 2000; Moravec 1999) and consciousness (Brooks 2002) that intelligent machines do not share (Haraway 1991; Hayles 1999; Latour 1994). Similarly, what are the implications of cyberspace technologies for embodied humans consequent upon the dislodgement of the material body from the confines of its immediate lived space?

Modern Technology

Thus far, we have been reflecting upon technological interventions into both 'outer' and 'inner' nature. What is striking about modern technology as we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century is that it has become autarchic; it generates its own legitimation. It is the self-accelerating yet purposeless tendency of organized action propelled forward by modern technology and freed from control by moral impulse that is a cause for such grave concern. The very availability of technological resources justifies their need and calls for their ever more efficient application (Shibasaki 2005).

Of particular relevance also is the increasing fusion of scientific and technological activities, in other words, the fading of the traditional separation between 'pure' and 'applied' research in what is aptly called techno-science (Kurasawa 2004). Since World War Two, techno-science has been increasingly penetrated by the state and the market ('big science'). Scientific discoveries are being increasingly operationalized into technological applications that are exploitable for military or commercial purposes.

Another important point is that the development of techno-science allows action at a distance. The nature of 'distance technol-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 28 -- #70

ogy' (in both a spatial and temporal sense) is such that the causal connections between the technological processes which trigger activity and their final effects remain invisible. Indeed, techno-science has pushed the adiaphorization of social action to an extreme level; social action is merely measurable against technical (purpose-oriented/procedural) but not moral criteria.

The term, 'adiaphoron', originally meant a belief or custom declared indifferent by the Church and, thereby, requiring no official endorsement or prohibition. Put another way, the operation of techno-science is associated with '"floated" responsibility', to use Bauman's (1993) apt term. That is to say, responsibility 'belongs to no one in particular, as everybody's contribution to the final effect is too minute or partial to be sensibly ascribed a causal function, let alone the role of the decisive cause' (126).

Besides techno-science allowing for action at a distance, long-distance interaction by means of anonymous relationships in the global capitalist market-economy leaves little room for an ethics of proximity grounded in moral norms regulating face-to-face relations in small groups such as the family and neighbourhood. For, after all, human interaction in the world market is driven by factors such as prices and realized through the medium of money.

Vulnerability and the Call to Responsibility?

The unchecked onslaught of techno-science leaves humankind in an 'ethical vacuum' (Jonas 1985). Techno-science has neutralized both 'outer' and 'inner' nature with respect to value. The ethical category that is summoned by this ethical novum is responsibility. What kind of responsibility is called for in the risk society to deal with the effects and side-effects on both 'outer' and 'inner' nature of the collective activities of humankind in science and technology? The ethical universe until recently was of 'the here and now', comprised of contemporaries who were 'sharers of a common present' (Jonas 1973: 36). The ethical universe did not extend beyond human beings in proximity to each other. In this regard, Kemp (1999) bequeaths the important insight that a 'certain insensibility towards the living world' has been part of our ethical inheritance in the West. What is called for now in our scientific-technological society, according to Kemp, is 'bioethics', that is, 'an ethics for the entire living world' (292). In a similar vein, Jonas (1973) contends that the biosphere has become a 'human trust' (40). Westra (1994) emphasizes that the principle of environmental integrity obliges us to refrain from interfering in the healthy functioning of life-support systems. And Apel (1987) speaks of 'an ecologically oriented ethic of responsibility

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 29 -- #71

to the future' (see also Strydom 1999b).

What these various declarations are pointing to is that the traditional notion of responsibility rendered as the ability to regard oneself as the author of one's acts is incomplete. The incompleteness resides in the fact that this kind of responsibility tied to individual autonomy is oriented towards the past rather than the future; it simply involves giving an account of one's actions. 'Thus', as Ricoeur (1995) remarks, in giving an account of action, 'it is always towards *retrospection* that we are drawn' (16). What Ricoeur underlines is the intrinsic relation between fragility and responsibility. Fragility is a sufficient condition to qualify as a moral addressee. Put another way, vulnerability is the wellspring of an ethic of responsibility. There are two principal types of human vulnerability: natural threats stemming both from our biology and environmental and other natural disasters, and social threats arising from war, crime and the like. The intrinsic vulnerability of human beings and non-human sentient beings, plants, other living organisms and, indeed, the whole biosphere calls for action by dint of an intrinsic relation with the notion of responsibility. Responsibility is a 'principle' in the sense that it is an imperative which nothing precedes. 'We are rendered responsible by the fragile' (16). We are enjoined by various kinds of living, finite fragile beings to help and to contribute to their flourishing. It is always vulnerable 'others' (not just other human beings) who render us responsible. In the final analysis, I would argue that it is humans' acknowledgement of their very own fragility that makes them receptive to the call for responsibility from other living creatures qua vulnerable creatures.

What is equally important is that we are directed towards the 'future' of fragile beings in need of care to survive and flourish. Even though human beings share vulnerability with other forms of being, the difference is that humans as 'rational' beings can be aware of and are able to respond to and make choices about their own vulnerability and that of other beings (Buttle 2003). Finally, the intrinsic link between fragility and responsibility means that responsibility is decoupled from reciprocity. It goes without saying that the imperative on the part of humans living today to take care of the environment to ensure that there may be future generations cannot be reciprocated. Similarly, the onus on human beings to take care of non-human sentient beings, plants, other living organisms and so on cannot be reciprocated.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 30 -- #72

Towards an Ontological Grounding of a Planetary Ethic of Collective Responsibility

It is Jonas' (2001) central contention that an ethic of responsibility 'must be founded on a principle discoverable in the nature of things lest it fall victim to subjectivism or other forms of relativity' (284). An ethic of responsibility must be grounded in the nature of being, of which humankind is a part. Jonas is stipulating that it is necessary to provide a rational foundation from metaphysical premises for a new macro-ethic of collective responsibility for the consequences of humankind's collective technological interventions into nature.

What Jonas sets out to convey is the objective reality of being as a Good-in-itself. His claim is that the current ecological crisis brought about by human technology is illuminated by reference to the intrinsic value of all living beings. Only if 'what exists is of value, then *its* being will have a claim on me. . . its *value* has a *justified claim* on me' (1996: 102). According to Jonas, value exists in living nature due to each being's inclination to persist in its own being. Purposive existence (*conatus*) is not a special attribute of human beings but is present throughout living nature. ' "Value". . . contains an immanent claim on reality that says it is better for value to *be* than not to be' (102). All organisms, not only humans, have 'concern' for their own being and reach out to the world to prevent non-being. Value and disvalue are not human creations but are essential to life itself. If the different forms of living beings have no worth, to begin with, humankind cannot discover their value. More than that, humankind itself would have no value either. All organisms, then, are 'ends-in-themselves'; they value whatever contributes to their existence and well-being. In other words, Jonas extends the category of existence to all organisms.

Even if purposive existence is an attribute of all living beings, Jonas does not espouse biotic egalitarianism. Not all living beings are of equal oral standing. Although all living beings are ends in themselves, they have those ends 'by nature'. On the other hand, the principle of purposiveness has reached its highest (and most dangerous) level in human beings through the freedom to set themselves their own ends and the power to carry them out. Moreover, humans have special dignity as moral agents, according to Jonas, since human beings can be responsible to ends beyond their own vital ones. Humans can have non self-referential aims. 'Only human freedom permits the setting and choosing of ends and thereby the willing inclusion of the ends of others in one's immediate own, to the point of fully and devotedly making them one's own'(1985: 235). Human beings, then, have the capacity to appreciate the value which other

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 31 -- #73

living beings place on their own being. What, in the final analysis, follows from Jonas’ ontological grounding of an ethic of collective responsibility against the backdrop of the current ecological crisis and advances in biotechnology, is the ranking of values. In other words, even if the ethical extends to all living beings, a gradualist analysis of human responsibilities towards various living beings like fellow humans, non-human sentient beings and plants needs to be worked through, each according to its value.

Jonas’ claim that the development of a planetary ethic of collective responsibility to deal with technological developments must ultimately be derived from a weighty metaphysics is a serious bone of contention, especially, since we live in a modern postmetaphysical world. It is my contention that there is no inconsistency in referring to ‘essential properties’ of various living beings, whilst simultaneously opposing the idea of a metaphysical essence. Essentialism of some kind cannot be ruled out *tout court*. Besides, any living being with no essential properties is to be of no sort at all, in short, to be inconceivable. Essentialism simply entails that each type of living being shares the same fundamental properties. What is being advocated is a ‘moderate, non-deterministic essentialism’, as opposed to a ‘strong, deterministic essentialism’. As Sayer (1997) remarks, essentialism in the philosophical sense is an ontological doctrine which simply states that ‘objects have certain essential properties which make them one kind of thing rather than any other’ (456). Hence, the investigation of the essential properties of various living beings can make a fundamental contribution to establishing the basis of moral obligation to them and to promoting their flourishing.

Even if an ontological grounding of a macro-ethic of collective responsibility is required for the consequences of humanity’s collective technological interventions into both ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ nature’ in the risk society, moral action will not be motivated by such ontological commitment. Jonas (1996) does, in fact, acknowledge that ‘in the last analysis my argument can do no more than give rational grounding to an *option* it presents as a choice for a thoughtful person – an option that of course has its own inner power of persuasion’ (108). The claim of any value-possessing living being such as an endangered species of animal on the human being only ‘becomes concrete (1) when this being is a vulnerable one, as living beings with their intrinsic fragility always are; *and* (2) when it, with this vulnerability, enters the field of my actions and is at the mercy of my power’ (108). What is being underlined here by Jonas is that human motivation to take responsibility for any value-possessing living being is predicated upon that being’s

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 32 -- #74

fragility being acknowledged and experienced in a concrete way. To reiterate, it is vulnerability that is, ultimately, the wellspring of an ethic of collective responsibility.

Towards a Macro-Ethic of Co-Operative Responsibility

A striking omission in Jonas' ontologically grounded planetary ethic of collective responsibility for the effects and side effects of humanity's collective technological interventions into nature relates to the primordial sociality of human beings. Humans, after all, cannot be conceived of outside of a social context. It is in this regard that it is worth considering Karl-Otto Apel's macro-ethic of co-operative responsibility, a form of responsibility that applies to human beings as members of a community of communication and co-operation. To begin with, Apel (1992) contends that from Jonas' metaphysical premises 'it seems. . . completely impossible, in principle to derive. . . the duty of respecting the *equal rights of all living human beings* with regard to the future existence of humankind' (240). Jonas' 'proposed formulations. . . can only prescribe that life's and especially humankind's existence ought to continue' (241). As Apel goes on to say, it is conceivable from Jonas' metaphysical premises that unjust solutions could be enforced (for example, a racist solution of letting the people of the Developing World starve) to ensure the future existence of humanity.

This being the case, Apel argues that in attempting to ground an ethic of future-directed co-responsibility for the collective effects and side-effects of humankind's technological interventions into nature, we must not fall behind the Kantian principle of the universalizability of justice understood as generalized reciprocity and, thereby, the solidarity of *all* human beings as reasonable beings. This principle can only be grounded from the vantage-point of a strict transcendental pragmatic reflection on what human beings on pain of self-contradiction must have acknowledged as normative when they actually engage in argumentation. Let us flesh out this issue further.

Rather than ontologically grounding a macro-ethic of co-operative responsibility to deal with the consequences of techno-science in the risk society, Apel endorses a renovated transcendental philosophy which can rationally ground co-responsibility in general and can ground the formal procedural principle of discourse that governs the organization of co-responsibility in particular. What Apel has undertaken is a a re-conceptualization of co-operative responsibility by means of discourse theory. He is saying that it can be demonstrated by rational argument through a conception of co-responsibility,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 33 -- #75

which must be related a priori to humans as members of a community of speech and co-operation, that human beings ought to be and can, indeed, be reasonably responsible. Apel's (1987) essential point is that when human beings are seriously arguing they have already acknowledged an ethic of discourse and of responsibility in the sense of the universalized reciprocity of rights and duties that belongs to a potentially unlimited community of argumentation. Or as Habermas (1992) puts it: 'Only those norms may claim to be valid that could meet with the consent of all those affected in their role as participants in a practical discourse' (197). The agreement made possible in a practical discourse depends upon the participants' inviolable freedom to respond with a 'yes' or 'no' to validity claims. And the discursive enactment and organization of co-responsibility in the communication societies of advanced modernity is, by the same token, contingent upon the uninfringeable freedom of the individual.

Those human beings who seriously engage in an argumentative discourse must also presuppose that real life problems like the ecological crisis and the advancement of biotechnology can only be dealt with responsibly by reasonable argument. By seriously raising a contentious issue such as the ecological crisis in a practical discourse, the participants have, in principle, already accepted co-operative responsibility for solving the problem. Moreover, they have accepted the equality of rights and duties in problem-solving of a real community of communication. Furthermore, given the necessary counterfactual anticipation of an unlimited ideal community of communication, the participants in a practical discourse have also recognized, in principle, that all valid solutions to problems would have to be capable of being freely assented to by all members of the unlimited ideal community of communication, if they were able to participate in the discussion. And the foregoing implies that the problem-solving responsibility on the part of the members of the real community of communication extends also to the members of the unlimited community of communication who it may be assumed will exist in the future. In sum, co-responsibility, according to Apel, can only be practiced and organized discursively.

One final point is that Apel's macro-ethic of co-responsibility is restrictive (like all deontological theories) in that it prioritizes procedures for the justification of social norms/rightness claims over conceptions of the good/values. A discursively redeemable concept of the good life is incompatible with late modernity. Proceduralism is deemed by Apel and Habermas to be the only option in the communication societies of late modernity, given far-reaching

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 34 -- #76

differences in values, worldviews and forms of life. It is against this backdrop that Apel's planetary ethic of co-responsibility outlines the restrictive conditions which make it possible for different forms of life to engage in dialogue, for instance, the different views expressed on global warming. The restrictive conditions/norms are formal and procedural (not substantive) concerning the processes of communication and co-operation. To re-iterate, all the participants in practical discourses, whatever their form of life, have, in principle, an equal right to solve problems and equal co-responsibility.

A Macro-Ethic of Co-Operative Responsibility: Critical Reflections

Apel's discourse ethics revolves, as already shown, around a rational validation of a planetary, intersubjectively binding ethic of co-responsibility for the future of humanity and other living beings. It is only in argumentative discourse (a reflective form of communication) that validity claims can in principle be criticized and dealt with in a universalistic manner that transcends the limits of a particular community. That said, there is no moral principle that is adhered to for the simple fact that it is reasoned through in argumentation (Ute 2006). Abolishing or lessening threats to the survival of humans, animals, plants and all other forms of life in the risk society of the twenty-first century requires much more than openness to moral argumentation. A deontological theory like Apel's macro-ethic of co-responsibility may be very good at explaining how to ground and apply norms/rightness claims. However, it is still unable to answer fully the question as to why human beings should exercise co-operative responsibility at all for all living beings. In this respect, Apel's own answer that when one seriously argues one is by definition already determined to be moral is not the full story. What I will be suggesting in the following critical reflections is that the capacity of Apel's macro-ethic of co-operative responsibility to transfer rational insight into ethical motivation in the risk society of the twenty-first century is strengthened if much more systematic attention is focused on: bio-bodily existence and vulnerability, the human emotions, the moral imagination and advocatory representation. In other words, argumentative discourse cannot carry all of the moral weight. In the course of these critical reflections I will also engage with some of Habermas' ideas.

Bio-Bodily Existence and Vulnerability

Apel's (and Habermas') discourse ethics highlights the fact that humans are, first and foremost, rational beings. However, it is not being 'rational' but being 'vulnerable' which, in my view, primarily

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 35 -- #77

makes human beings into 'moral subjects'. The moral significance of formal discursive procedures through which co-responsibility is enacted and organized, only makes sense for those humans open to their own vulnerability and that of other living creatures in the first place. And vulnerability, that is, our disposition towards sickness, disease, disability and death, is predicated upon a bio-bodily existence. In this regard, Skirbekk (1994) notes that 'a biological bodily existence is necessary for a competent moral discussant. Those who cannot be morally harmed, since they lack vulnerability, cannot be moral subjects and therefore cannot be moral discussants' (104) see also Haber (2006). The participants in a practical discourse (moral discussants) would not be capable of fully making sense of the validity claims of other participants if they were not, to begin with, capable of being touched by their fragility. Fragility imposes itself on us in a non-argumentative way in that the relation to fellow participants in practical discourses is first of all a matter of inter-corporeality. In this regard, Keane (1984) points out that human communication 'is strikingly and sensuously "embodied"' (174). Speakers' bodies in practical discourses carry and convey meanings that influence validity claims to rightness.

Habermas (2003) does acknowledge that: 'Normative regulation of interpersonal relations may be seen as a porous shell protecting a vulnerable body, and the person incorporated in this body, from the contingencies they are exposed to' (33). But, on the other hand, he remarked much earlier on that '. . . "reason". . . has no body, cannot suffer and also arouses no passion' (1982: 221). As for Apel (2000), he concedes that any theory of discourse presupposes the bodily existence of human beings; bodily existence is uncircumventable. And he, quite rightly, simultaneously hammers home the point that an appreciation of the vulnerable, corporeal other is impossible apart from a communicatively rational context. Discourse ethics enables human beings to *become conscious* of their own vulnerability and that of other forms of life. In a word, vulnerability has to be discursively communicable.

In a similar vein, what is required of an ethic of co-responsibility practiced and organized discursively to deal with the inexorable onslaught of technological interventions into 'outer' and 'inner' nature in the risk society of the twenty-first century, is to draw out more fully the fragility of the corporeal existence of living creatures, both human and non-human. Empirical research by Macnaghten (2003), for instance, would suggest that environmental concerns such as environmental pollution, the depletion of energy resources and atmospheric warming are more likely to be experienced and felt

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 36 -- #78

strongly when they impinge upon the human body in the lifeworld, the domain of lived experience. Individuals tend to appreciate their personal environments when connected to embodied everyday practices like gardening, walking, climbing, boating and so on. According to Macnaghten, the depiction of the ecological crisis simply as a set of global issues remains abstracted and cut off from embodied, lived experience in the everyday world.

The Human Emotions

There are various traditions as to the relevance of emotions to ethics. The tradition which can be traced back to Aristotle considers moral education to involve learning to feel the correct emotion to the correct degree at the correct time. What follows is that all emotions are viewed as intrinsically relevant to ethics, not just empathy and sympathy. On the other hand, the tradition going back to the Stoics denies that emotions have any moral worth; they should be stamped out in the pursuit of the good life. The advantage of this approach lies in highlighting the importance of impartiality to ethics. This position informed that of Kant and it is arguable that it prevails in Apel's and Habermas' discourse ethics, even if the emotions (as we shall see) are acknowledged, in particular, by Habermas.

It could be argued that a rationalist prejudice is built into Apel's and Habermas' discourse ethics and, thereby, into the macro-ethic of co-operative responsibility. What Apel and Habermas espouse, to use Benhabib's (1990) apt phrase, is 'ethical rationalism', that is, 'a theoretical position which views *moral judgements* as the core of moral theory, and which neglects that the moral self is not a moral geometer but an embodied, finite, suffering, and emotive being' (356). A fundamental weakness inherent in the cognitive proceduralism underpinning discourse ethics is that the emotional bases of moral judgements are not subject to rigorous scrutiny. The inner logic of moral argumentation involves, at bottom, a cognitive task.

Even if the emotional bases of moral judgements are not given systematic attention in discourse ethics, Habermas (1995) acknowledges that the human emotions are indispensable in gaining access to the domain of the moral; they sensitize us to moral phenomena. He states that: 'Feelings form the basis of our *perception* of something as moral. Someone who is blind to moral phenomena is blind to feeling. He lacks a sense. . . for the suffering of a vulnerable creature who has a claim to have its integrity, both personal and bodily, protected. And this sense is manifestly closely related to sympathy or compassion' (174).It is worth noting here that collapsing the human

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 37 -- #79

emotions into subjective feelings is a flawed position. Emotions also have a cognitive component in that they are forms of evaluative judgements about phenomena in the world. Moreover, the human emotions are associated with bodily sensations, a behavioural component manifest in expressions via gestures, and a motivational component propelling participants in practical discourses to act. In a word, it is compassion that alerts us to and discloses the vulnerability of 'the other' which, in turn, triggers the reasoning process in moral judgements.

Furthermore, Habermas (1990) underlines the fact that the emotions play an important role in the justification of norms in practical discourses. He declares that 'empathy – the ability to project oneself across cultural distances into alien and at first sight incomprehensible conditions of life, behavioral predispositions, and interpretive perspectives – is an emotional prerequisite for ideal role taking, which requires everyone to take the perspective of all others' (174). In other words, empathy facilitates the cultivation of sensitivity to the particularities of different viewpoints in moral argumentation.

It obviously follows that the discursive practice and organization of co-operative responsibility in the risk society is likewise anchored in various emotions. Interestingly enough, Apel in response to feminists contending that 'justice' (equal rights and equal duties) is privileged in the ethic of co-responsibility at the expense of 'care', claims that 'care' 'is already there!' (Griffioen and Van Woudenberg 1990: 17).

Jonas (1983) in his endeavour to provide an ontological grounding for collective responsibility also stipulates that future ethics should be guided by a heuristics of fear subordinated, in turn, to the principle of uncertainty (31). The gist of the heuristics of fear is that there are certain risks which humans possessed of such great technological power in the risk society are responsibly not allowed to take. That is to say, 'the prophecy of doom', if it is grounded in sound reasoning, will have greater force than 'the prophecy of bliss' to motivate human beings to control the unchecked onslaught of technology upon nature. Fear, as Barbalet (1995) remarks, 'is an anticipation of a *present* threat or danger' (20). The object of fear is 'an expectation of negative outcome' and fear is the emotional response to that danger (19). It is arguable that the commonality of fear characterizes the risk society. Such an emotional climate of fear may, indeed, motivate individuals and groups of individuals to enter into practical discourses and enact co-operative responsibility discursively.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 38 -- #80

The Moral Imagination

In addition to the embodied and emotional dimensions of an ethic of co-operative responsibility practiced and organized discursively being drawn out in a much more systematic way, a specifically moral imagination also needs to be mobilized to deal with the consequences of technological interventions into 'outer' and 'inner' nature. The crux of the problem is that the nature of 'distance technology' (in both a spatial and temporal sense) is such that, as Apel (1984) puts it, 'it is now scarcely possible for humans to be directly *affected* sensuously and emotionally by the consequences of their actions' (251). There is an ever increasing gap between the world of human action via technology and the consequences of that very action in the organically conditioned sensuous-emotional lifeworld. Hence, Apel calls for 'a *rational foundation,* together with the mobilization of a *specifically moral imagination* that, among other things, would have to be able to generalize love of neighbour in the direction of love of all humanity' (1978: 83).

Mobilizing individuals/groups of individuals in different societies and cultures at the threshold of the twenty-first century to exercise co-operative responsibility through formal discursive procedures is contingent on a particular moral-imaginary horizon, an ideal community of communication or an ideal speech situation (Apel 1990). This communicative ideal state of affairs is understood by Apel in the sense of the formation of a consensus through the unconstrained constraint of argument in discourse. Engaging in reasoned argumentation about any contentious issue like the current ecological crisis is driven forward by the ideality of domination-free communication, that is, a society in which inclusive and non-coercive rational discourse between free and equal participants occurs.

Apel (1990) stresses that the moral-imaginary horizon that is an ideal communication community is a 'regulative ideal' to which nothing empirical can fully correspond. However, he simultaneously emphasizes that moral discussants in arguing must anticipate counterfactually an ideal speech situation, 'and thus to a certain extent assume the formal structure of an alternative or counterworld to the existing reality' (47). He hastens to add that this very anticipation does not refer to a 'concrete utopia' that one could envisage as the future emergent state of the social world, but 'only to the *normative preconditions* of ideal communication, whose empirical realization in a concrete society must indeed also be subject to additional preconditions of historical individualization – e.g. concrete institutions and conventions' (48). In short, the moral imagination igniting the practice and organization of co-operative responsibility

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 39 -- #81

in the risk society is rife with creative-productive tension in that the utopian realization of an ideal communication community may not be conceived and, yet simultaneously, must of necessity be envisaged.

The moral imaginary of discourse ethics incorporates all linguistically competent humans in a society of free and open communication. They are all representatives of the reasoning public sphere and as such can place in question issues of public importance like the ecological crisis and genetic engineering in practical discourses. The reason why the moral imaginary that is an ideal speech situation holds such promise in the global world of 'distance technology', relates to the fact that in Habermas' (1992) words: 'Discourse generalizes, abstracts, and stretches the presuppositions of context-bound communicative actions by extending their range to include competent subjects beyond the provincial limits of their own particular form of life' (202). There is a more universal basis for agreement to be found in the capacity of humans to communicate and reach a mutual understanding or rational consensus.

The moral imaginary horizon that is the ideal communication community incorporates those linguistically competent humans who can participate in practical discourses and, thereby, enact cooperative responsibility. What is required, in particular, against the backdrop of the ecological crisis at the threshold of the twenty-first century is a moral imagination to embrace 'all' living creatures, not just linguistically competent humans. What is called for is a leap of imagination to extend the borders of the moral community to include all living beings, even if all these forms of life are not of equal moral worth. Admittedly, discourse ethics (as we shall see below) pays attention to various living beings 'affected' by issues raised in practical discourses. However, how humans imagine their relations with other living creatures in the risk society of the twenty-first century is worthy of much more careful scrutiny. In this regard, the moral imagination might be ignited by drawing on the resources of ancient myth in which, for instance, 'humanimals' figured prominently (Murray 2007).

Advocatory Representation

According to Apel (1987), the fundamental demand put forward in any practical discourse 'consists in the directive that in principle all ethically relevant problems in the practical discourses of those *affected* by a given issue are to be solved in accordance with the *ability* of the solutions decided upon *to command the assent* of all those affected' (26). The postulate to include all those affected could involve: linguistically incompetent and nearly brain dead or

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 40 -- #82

severely damaged humans, future generations of humans, higher mammals and other non-human sentient beings, organisms in general, including plants and biological systems, and inorganic nature, in view of its importance for life and living creatures. None of these mentioned who could possibly be affected by decisions made in practical discourses can, however, participate; they are not capable of speaking in the reasoning public sphere.

The fact that those affected by a given issue discussed in a practical discourse could include future generations of humans (e.g. genetic engineering tampering with the genetic foundations of human life) and linguistically incompetent humans, weakens the consensual dimension and the principle of reciprocity built into moral argumentation (Skirbekk 1997). The fundamental criterion for entry into discourse is, after all, to be a 'moral discussant', that is, a person who is linguistically competent and who is willing to subject nonvalidated norms to consensual validation by other moral discussants. Participants in practical discourses must be able to express in their utterances semantically meaningful propositions that make discursively appraisable claims about the world. Furthermore, all those other living beings already mentioned who could be affected by matters raised in practical discourses are 'moral subjects' in that they are finite and vulnerable and, therefore, capable of being harmed in a morally relevant sense. Habermas (1995) observes, for instance, that: 'Animals confront us as vulnerable creatures whose physical integrity we must protect *for its own sake*' (106). He also notes that there are 'good *ethical reasons*' to protect plants and other species (111).

In view of the fact that so many moral subjects could be affected by the deliberations taking place in practical discourses, Apel (1992) suggests the representation of their interests through some form of advocacy. He argues for a 'relationship of responsible care-taking by good advocates' (250). The greater the difference in temporal, spatial, cultural and species terms between those who represent (moral discussants) and those who are represented (moral subjects) in practical discourses, as Skirbekk (1997) highlights, the more those representing will have to rely on 'discursive interpretations of contributions from various scientific and scholarly disciplines about harm and well-being in the various cases' (68).

Bearing in mind that conflicts between the life-interests of all the different living beings are inevitable, practical discourses provide the best forum to discuss the criteria for conferring moral status on various living beings and, thereby, our human obligations to them. To be sure, ontological issues as to the nature of different living beings (e.g.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 41 -- #83

animal ethology) will arise in the course of moral argumentation. However, the advantage of discourse ethics over Jonas' ontological grounding of collective responsibility is to accentuate the fact that the different forms of being are not just ontologically given. Rather, we can only relate pragmatically through our linguistic practices to the nature and value of different living beings and, thereby, work through our human obligations to them. Stated otherwise, gaining knowledge about the nature and value of different living creatures is impossible apart from a communicatively rational context. Being a good advocate is dependent upon the interests and worth of these creatures being discursively communicable.

It goes without saying, as Apel observes, that a broader anthropocentric perspective (as indicated earlier) will operate as a normative criterion when the human treatment of animals, plants and the like is being deliberated upon. In Skirbekk's (1994) words, what 'responsible care-taking by good advocates' entails is 'ethical gradualism'. There is more than one criterion of moral standing implying different obligations on the part of humans as moral agents to different living beings and, indeed, to inorganic nature. Sentience, for instance, is an important criterion of moral status in our collective responsibility towards animals.

The reflections in this chapter on what human responsibility might entail in the risk society we live in at the threshold of the twenty-first century have been confined to the normative level. This does not mean, however, that a strict division between ethics and politics is being advocated. Briefly, discourse ethics and, concomitantly, the macro-ethic of collective responsibility bring, as Strydom (1999) says 'a public level of responsibility' (68) to deal with the effects and side-effects on both 'outer' and 'inner' nature of the collective activities of humankind in science and technology. This is tantamount to saying that techno-science must be enframed in vibrant reasoning public spheres where not only the interests of humans but the advocatory interests of other living creatures and habitats can be taken into account (Latour 2004).

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 42 -- #84

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 43 -- #85

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3

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIOLOGICAL LEARNING THEORY: COGNITIVE SOCIOLOGY, NORMATIVITY, AND DISCURSIVITY

Patrick O'Mahony

To those oriented to a sociological theory of learning, it seems evident that there is a tradition to draw off, albeit mostly a heterodox one. Some years ago, Max Miller instanced Durkheim, Mead, the early Piaget and Vygotsky as evidence for the presence of a theory of learning in diagnosing the ontogenetic and evolutionary potentialities arising from social processes (Miller 2002). To most of the rest of the sociological community, the existence of a sociological theory of learning is understood at most in a latent sense: theorists who seek to understand the emergence of states of society as an achievement in some sense could be said to indirectly utilize a conception of learning. However, when a social scientific concept of learning is explicitly fore-grounded it is normally conceived, on the one hand, instrumentally and narrowly as in the policy-theoretical concept of 'social' or 'policy' learning (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith eds, 1993) or, on the other hand, primarily individually as in Mead and Habermas, even though the intention of both is ultimately to comprehend society supra-individually, intersubjectively and intra-subjectively as a symbolic and normative reality.

Some twenty years ago Piet Strydom, taking a lead from and closely interacting with other writers working in a sociological idiom in the tradition of Habermas, Klaus Eder and Max Miller, began the task of reformulating an explicit sociological learning theory.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 46 -- #88

This work was developed in a variety of forms, published journal or book articles, research reports and unpublished manuscripts. This earlier work of Strydom could be said to follow two main and related directions; the critique of Habermas' ontogenetic account of learning and a sympathetic reception of the work of Miller and Eder, who develop an emphatically sociological and collective account of learning (Strydom 1987; Miller 1986; Eder 1985). This was followed by a second phase that builds on the first, in which Strydom develops an account of cognitive sociology that is both reconstructivist and constructivist (Strydom 2000, 2006a and 2006b). This second phase on the whole only obliquely references the earlier development of collective learning theory, but the whole enterprise is ultimately founded upon those earlier gains. Much of the work carried out by Strydom in both these periods, and to some extent also that of the other authors writing on collective learning, involved a sympathetic reception but nonetheless critical reconstruction of Habermas' work.

Rather than beginning in the first section of this essay with an extended account of the 'epistemic contours' of the theory of collective learning, I want instead, in a first step, to derive it from a series of theoretical and methodological shifts in which Strydom focalizes it in his own work and in the broader context represented, chiefly but not exclusively, by Habermas, I will do this by addressing three dimensions of Strydom's development of a social pragmatic theory comprising, firstly, the constructivist inspired reassessment of reconstructivism; secondly, the move from moral development to the social evolution of practical reason; and, thirdly, the shift in emphasis from double to triple contingency. In a second step, I will move on to the Strydom's later cognitive emphasis, which in reality is not so much a new departure as a concretization of some of the developments of the earlier phase. These two steps will enable me in a third step to formulate, albeit in brief overview, Strydom's distinctive shaping of a theory of collective learning. In the second major section of the essay, building on the above, I will move on to a theoretical-methodological specification within a cognitive framework of the role of collective learning in the democratic public sphere. Here, I will also pursue a number of steps, firstly, fore-grounding the crucial dimension of a comprehensive macro-sociological perspective I will seek to show that other theory traditions need to be incorporated within Styrdom's basic framework to develop an adequate macro-sociological position. I will then, secondly, seek to show how such a theory can be made dynamic as a cognitive-pragmatic-discursive account of the mech-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 47 -- #89

anisms of production or transformation of cognitive models and cognitive structures by means of discursive processes. Thirdly, I will place this dynamic model within a macro-sociological model of the public sphere, giving some illustrative examples of how collective learning may be comprehended within such a framework. I will conclude with some brief reflections on what I consider to be the outstanding significance of Strydom's work, and that of the above-named authors, for advancing the claims of a normative sociology of public culture.

Social Pragmatics, the Cognitive Turn and Collective Learning

Strydom's work from at least the late 80s onwards turns towards the development of a social pragmatic framework that may be understood as a sociological variant of the normative pragmatic theory of Habermas and the transcendental epistemology of both Apel and Habermas. Strydom's concern, important for the sociological relation to critical theory, is to orient the theory and practice of the social sciences in a normative direction that would retain some of the explanatory advantages of evolutionary theory while remaining open to the non-linear dynamics of a contingent, emerging world. His work is united, as is that of Habermas, by its normative urgency both in the sense of learning from history and taking an evolution-theoretically guided stance on the challenges of the present. It is different from Habermas, as outlined further below, by a general concern with the trajectory of normative innovation within a discourse theory that remains distinctively sociological. In the following short sections, I will document the major moments whereby Strydom, departing from Habermas in both senses of the term, lays out the foundations for a discourse theory of collective learning.

Towards a Reconstructivist Constructivism

The idea of a reconstructive method has been central to the transcendental epistemology of Apel and Habermas since the 1960s. Terrence Kelly nicely describes reconstructivism in a paper primarily exploring reconstructivism in Rawls (Kelly 2001). Reconstructivism is a project shared between philosophy and the social sciences that identifies the various intuitions embedded in a particular practice so as to make explicit the implicit formal aspects of the practice. It then 'idealizes' the concepts built into this explication process into general rules of social interaction. This approach is present in the work of Habermas since the early 1970s (Habermas 1973; Alford 1985). Following Alford, Habermas uses the term 'reconstruction' to char-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 48 -- #90

acterize philosophical reflections on such transcendental questions as what cognitive abilities are necessary for science or morality to exist (Alford 1985: 330). More specifically in the sphere of practical reason, the reconstructivism of Habermas and Apel involves the transfer of the ‘moving spirit’ of the regulative transcendental idea from a priori moral intuition to the formal presuppositions of linguistic communication. This could be understood as a post-Kantian reconstructive transcendentalism focused on the necessary cognitive and intersubjective presuppositions of language use. These presuppositions are understood as a form of communicative rationality that grounds the formal and universalizable moral principles regulating social relations and the human relation to nature. In social evolutionary terms, such principles underpin the telos of moral universalization that is distinctive of modernity and which is achieved by means of communicative rationalization. The direction of communicatively realized moral universalization proceeding against the backdrop of social problems in need of a solution – e.g. violence, inequality, non-recognition, loss of meaning, global endangerment – takes the form of a social a priori that is progressively institutionalized in modernity. This process can be reconstructed and made explicit as immanent but not yet fully realized communicative rationality, with the reconstructive method providing the twin theoretical advantages of normative grounding and anticipation.

While reconstructivism in this sense remains integral to Strydom’s later cognitive turn, for long he has criticized it for over-anticipating and hence subsuming social practices.

An accentuated social pragmatics would rather give situated social practices a generative and creative role. In this way, both implicit, habitual rules and socially transcendent but at the same time open and revisable socio-cognitive structures would be recognized as shaping both the initiation and ongoing application of explicit principles of moral universalization. The revaluation of the constitutive role of social practices and the accompanying recognition of contingency and non-linear dynamics would open the path to a constructivist approach that would have communicative practices in social situations as its generative core, though this constructivist approach would still be reconstructively informed by cognitive structures. Such overarching cognitive structures, for example, political rights, social justice or ecological responsibility, are generated from the collective need interpretations articulated in human social and natural relations and as such follow a logic of collective competence that reaches beyond but does not exclude the individual and intersubjective model of cognitive competence developed by Habermas.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 49 -- #91

This reconstructive constructivism and constructivist reconstructivism marks a decisively sociological orientation – that Strydom would later methodologically supplement by frame analysis – that could both ground a three-fold collective, intersubjective and subjective pragmatism that could both clarify criteria and capacities for social action and place them within the empirically manifested social conditions of communication (Strydom 2000; Eder 1985).

From Moral Development to Social Evolution

The theory of collective learning emerges within the interstices of a social pragmatic reformulation of Habermas' ontogenetic linking of moral learning and social innovation. In an important article in the late 80s (Strydom 1987), Strydom criticizes Habermas' individualist account of learning in which the individual subject is assumed to do the learning, so generating rational potentialities that can subsequently be practically applied. Strydom, building from the early Piaget and a reception of Miller and Eder, proposes a move from Habermas' genetic individualism to a genetic interactionist perspective in which a 'collectivity or intersubjective experiential context serves, on the one hand, as the objective condition of individual learning and, on the other, is simultaneously the outcome of collective learning which is able to transpose the collective effect of individual actions not only into the object but also into the medium of learning' (1987: 269). He ascribes to Habermas the individualist position described above and claims that in conceiving of learning in this way he cannot grasp the constitutive role of collective action in bringing about normative innovation. This conception of supra-subjective learning also draws off Apel's re-working of Pierce's three-fold semiotics – signs, signified reality, sign interpreter – in which the pragmatic role of the sign interpreter in producing knowledge and learning is re-positioned as a collective process with the idea of the 'unlimited community of communication' (Apel 1980). For Apel, knowledge and learning occurs within a collective framework in which the collectivity as well as the individual learns.

Following Eder, Strydom not alone emphasizes learning as a collective achievement but also decouples learning from practice, an association that is prevalent in the individualist, ontogenetic model in the sense that practice is regarded as the external sign of internal learning. He claims instead that collective learning processes make available collectively utilizable knowledge but do not guarantee that such knowledge will actually be rationally utilized. The extent to which collective learning becomes available for rational utilization by its transposition into the normative structures of society determines

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 50 -- #92

the direction and extent of the social evolution of practical reason. Collective learning processes themselves do not guarantee a gain in practical evolutionary rationality; only transformations in collective practices do that. Following Weber's lead, Habermas, in his work in the 1970s and early 80s had already clarified the fundamental importance of the evolution of normative structures, beyond the instrumental focus on the objectified control of nature, for the constitution of society (see Habermas 1984). However, the focus on collective learning involves a weakening of the relationship between normative evolution and social practice by bringing in a third – socio-cognitive – dimension. This cognitive dimension can be understood as a fund of collective utilizable knowledge produced by learning processes but its existence does not mean that it will necessarily be used. Using a phrase of Eder's, 'collective learning potentialities', for example, vegetarian eating culture in the early nineteenth century, may find its practical realization blocked (Eder 1996). These insights are of the first importance for critical normative sociology. Instead of criticizing existing normative structures from an idealized standard derived from the formal pragmatic conditions of communication, social criticism should now focus on the socio-cognitive potentials that are collectively generated and reside within the cognitive order of the complex cultural ensembles represented by civilizations or individual societies.

From Double to Triple Contingency

From the late 1990s, Strydom (1999b) developed some of the implications of the above 'paradigm shift'. This took on two major related moments. I will address the first, the clarification of the question of contingency with respect to the public sphere, in this section, before going on to address the elaboration of cognitive sociology in the next. The idea of triple contingency critically extends Habermas' model of double contingency where ego and alter are assumed to form communicative relations geared to the exchange of validity claims against the backdrop of a situation defining and text generating cultural order. In the model of triple contingency, ego and alter relate not just to one another, but in the case of democratic communication they also relate to the validity standards and factual beliefs imputed to the general observing public. As Strydom observes, Habermas' account does not alone confine attention to contingency generated in intersubjective communication, to the relative neglect of the observer, but in the general model of the co-present exchange of validity claims it also privileges normative reconstruction over empirical description. The validity standards and fact interpretations

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 51 -- #93

held by the observing public in the model of triple contingency permeate all democratic communication as political actors are forced to recognize the centrality of public support and legitimacy.

The problem of adherence to the model of double contingency in Habermas, elaborated carefully in Strydom (1999b) poses considerable problems. In *Between Facts and Norms* (1996) Habermas provides an account of modern law in terms of double contingency and then switches to an account of the public sphere in which the public is given a prominent role. However, the model of double contingency is retained in that the public is both idealized and singularized as ‘responsibility demanding’ and set in a discursively mediated relation to the political core. The pragmatic variability generated by the existence of different subject positions amongst the public is eviscerated and the public as a pragmatic subject is eventually assumed to dissipate entirely into the model of ‘subjectless communication’ as issues progress through the selective sluice gates of public relevance. Conceived in this way, the core-periphery model taken over by Habermas from Bernhard Peters in *Between Facts and Norms* (Peters 1993) becomes a doubly contingent one; first, the public representing the political periphery can be understood in its pragmatically singularized status as engaged in a relation with the political core through the medium of public opinion and then once issues are transferred from the realm of public opinion formation, in the weak public of the mass public sphere, they again become conceived double contingently in the deliberative communication of strong publics, viz, parliament, administration, government and law (see Fraser 1990 on strong and weak publics).

The theory of triple contingency from the vantage point of this essay appears as a logical concomitant of the stronger constructivist and collectivist emphasis of Strydom’s sociological reformulation of critical theory. The expansion in the range of contingency places the public neither exclusively as a generalizable subject position nor as a diffuse carrier of ‘subjectless communication’, though it can be partially conceived in both these ways. Rather, it pragmatically expands the notion of the public as a carrier of multiple substantive identities and issue positions and elaborates the space of the public sphere as a medium of collective learning through discourse. This formulation raises a wide range of issues for Habermas’ account of the public sphere and the public sphere generally. These relate to issues of multiple kinds of resonance (Strydom 2003), the relationship between cognitive structures, normative structures, public discourse and pragmatic positions; the nature of resolution of issues to do with the situation relative coordination of validity claims

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 52 -- #94

and fact interpretations within and between multiple publics and multiple power-holders; the macro-sociological architecture within which the public sphere is located.

The Cognitive Turn

Strydom's cognitive turn proceeds by way of a critique of what he adjudges to be Habermas' normativist assumption of shared prescriptive rules guiding action. As already outlined, Habermas does not distinguish between such prescriptive rules that have the status of instituted norms and cognitive rules that can either be instituted as an overarching collective epistemic framework emerging from collective learning processes and reconstructively influencing the selection and specification of norms or exist more weakly as innovative ideas for practical realization. In general, the former may be distinguished as institutionalized cognitive structures such as frameworks of rights, justice and responsibility that have acquired evolutionary status in social practice and the latter such as egalitarian utopian communities that have not done so or have not yet done so. Strydom's constructivist cognitive approach regards cognitive rules as means, devices or tools for categorizing, classifying and ordering the world. This cognitive constructivism builds on his social pragmatism – constructivist reconstructivism, collective learning, contingency and situation responsiveness, expanded agency – and has two pivotal theoretical implications, expressed in the ongoing negotiability and reflexivity of norms and in normative innovation as a collective cognitive process. These implications in turn have two key ramifications; in a relational direction, it necessitates radical expansion in the circuit of discursive action co-ordination and symbolic alignment; in a substantive direction, it requires attention be given both to the crystallization and consequences of collective identities and the issue specific and issue transcending outcomes of public discourse.

In relation to the procedural question, both the theory of triple contingency and the emphasis on cognitive structures as a medium of learning, have the effect of re-balancing the strong proceduralism of Habermas' account of democracy. The implication of Strydom's position is that deliberation cannot be regarded as self-organizing and self-contained within the assumption of high levels of autonomy that Habermas and other deliberation theorists confer upon it. Deliberation must instead be seen as part of a wider process of discursive action co-ordination and symbolic alignment taking place across multiple arenas and responding to multiple social sites of cultural production and resonance and to multiple kinds of medi-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 53 -- #95

ation processes. Responding to such expanded considerations, the combined effect of the theories of triple contingency and of cognitive structures is to reduce the overall societal importance of the special kind of intersubjective communication represented by deliberation. This is not to say deliberation is not important. In fact, it is immensely important. It is to suggest that existing forms of deliberation do not by themselves satisfy basic normative-procedural criteria such as inclusion, impartiality, parity, openness and responsiveness to a desirable extent. Deliberation exists amidst a wide range of quasi- or non-deliberative mechanisms of political decision-making. Moreover, it also exists in a semantic and pragmatic relation to cognitive forces that press in upon it, ideologies, interests, patterns of resonance, degrees of organization of collective action and so on. The construction of the observing public in representative deliberation, for example, will depend on the state of play of the latter factors; beyond this, deliberation by the public in new kinds of public participation remains a pressing demand for the revitalization of civil society.

Strydom (2006b) draws attention to Habermas' over-extended proceduralism that emphasizes the interactionist moment in intersubjective communication rather than its substantive discursive outcomes. Habermas therefore considers the issue of discursive outcomes as formal idealizations emerging from unlimited and unconstrained interaction rather than related either to shifts in cognitive structures or the forms of rationality instituted in society. Max Miller (1992) and Bernhard Peters (2001) have also productively raised questions about the outcomes of public interaction that, especially in the latter's treatment, points beyond the idea of consensus, which like both Strydom and Miller, he continues to regard as important for social integration, to shifts in the spectrum of meaning arising from public communication. In specific circumstances, such shifts lead to a re-thinking of the cognitive foundations of society. In any event, Strydom's cognitive approach does not operate with Habermas' strong formal, institutional and idealized a priori. It instead emphasizes the openness and variability of both the mechanisms and dynamics of discourse – beyond but incorporating discursive procedures – and the *substantive* importance of discourse synthesis as manifested in cognitive structures orientated towards practical problems and that underpin institutionalized and even universalized norms.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 54 -- #96

Implications for a Theory of Collective Learning

The separate and combined implications of the theories of collective learning and evolutionary practical rationality represent a decisively sociological emphasis that corrects Habermas' over-dependence on psychological individualism in his learning theory and political-philosophical proceduralism in his theory of discursive action co-ordination. In Strydom's version, the theory of collective learning, combining social pragmatism and the cognitive turn, leads, firstly, to a weak constructivistically-informed reconstructivism, which is addressed at cognitively specified macro-ethical orientations provided, for example, by master-frames of rights, justice and responsibility. These acquire the status of cognitive structures that shape the selection and specification of norms. Discursive processes provide the constructivist dimension that is in part conditioned by such cognitive structures and partly acquires freedom to extend beyond them and react back upon them. Secondly, cognitive structures should be understood as both the medium (opus operandi) and outcomes (opus operatum) of learning processes. But cognitive structures do not have the compelling implications for action of the assumed pattern of normative evolution within the normativist paradigm; instead their evolution depends on the relation between public discourse and the trajectory of the (normative) institutionalization of practical reason. Thirdly, reversing the emphasis of the previous point, the communicatively mediated dialectical relation between the revisable outcomes of achieved ethical learning processes (macro-ethical cognitive structures) and other cognitive implications of discursive processes – ethical challenges, expressive orientations, functional codes – is pivotal to the formation and effectivity of the ethical and moral norms essential to social integration.

Cognitive Order, Collective Learning and the Public Sphere

I consider the approach briefly stated in the foregoing to be outstandingly relevant to advancing the *sociological* contribution to theory and research on public culture and the public sphere, though it is also relevant to many other sociological problems. I want to place this recapitulation of Strydom's contribution to learning and cognitive sociology in the context of ongoing work of mine directed at respecifying the sociological theory of the public sphere in a manner that would also be empirically fruitful. The following remarks, then, will be directed towards some theoretical aspects of this task, but due to space constraints will posit rather than defend some important theoretical assumptions. I will do this in three steps, the first consists of the potential incorporation of related sociological

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 55 -- #97

attempts to specify social order; the second consists of a dynamic account of reproduction processes within a unified theory of cultural reproduction and innovation; and the third consists of sketching some of the macro-sociological implications of the first two steps. I will then finish the essay with a short conclusion.

One authoritative source of external objection to the theoretical approach sketched here – cognitively sustained normative pragmatic – emanates from Luhmann’s systems theory whose naturalistic framework of systemically structured sociality favours an actor-less semantics rather than the emphatic pragmatic approach (Luhmann 1995; Miller 2002). Luhmann’s functional semantics does, however, comprehensively address the cognitive structures of formally organized domains and perhaps even the formal organization of all domains. Beyond Luhmann and yet in relation to Luhmann’s conception of social systems, we can identify the achievement of a cognitively sustained normative pragmatic organization of society – the outcome of moral learning processes – as dialectically intertwined with functional organization with the crucial question being: to what extent and in what ways can we continue to regard modern societies as normatively organized by intentional action that can be justified according to democratic standards? This dialectical process was already the case in Habermas’ *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) but here politics as a normative domain was ceded almost entirely to the sway of functional principles taking effect through the medium of power with the medium of discourse largely undeveloped (Habermas 1984, 1987). Habermas’ subsequent work returns to the normative importance of political action but to my knowledge he has not subsequently returned to the proper demarcation of systemic and normative logics in the realm of politics, in spite of a long and brilliant exegesis on the limits of the system of theoretical conception of the public sphere in *Between Facts and Norms* (1996).

From another direction, the more recent work of Klaus Eder emphasizes a ‘third sphere’. He understands the ‘narrative construction of the social bond’ as basic to the possibility of a public sphere (Eder 1999, 2006). Eder here understands the argumentation – that the theoretical perspective intrinsic to a normative account of collective learning ultimately depends on the formation of common social bonds through the construction of narratives of identity. The formation of such bonds within ‘identity communities’ is particularistic, even if the forms may be universal, e.g. ethnic identity, territorial identification. While Strydom has expressed doubts about what he understands to be Eder’s ‘symbolic’ turn, a normative-pragmatic approach may be productively regarded as not just contextualized

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 56 -- #98

by functional complexes as indicated above but also by the ascriptive categories of everyday identification. The task of cognitive sociology operating in a normative register then becomes one of showing how ethical learning processes anticipated in cognitive structures either do or can become effective in forms of practical – democratic – rationality in contexts characterized by non-normative functional codes and non-universalistic identities. Something like the following emerges:

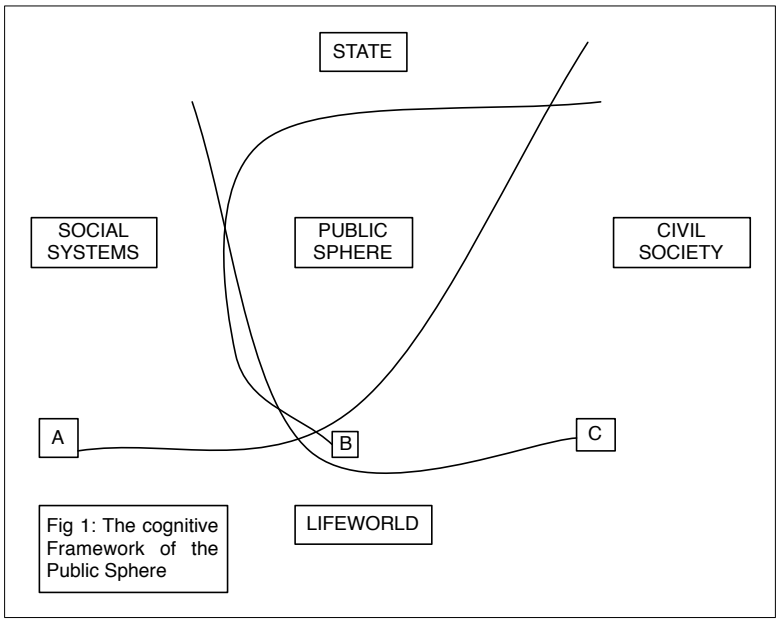
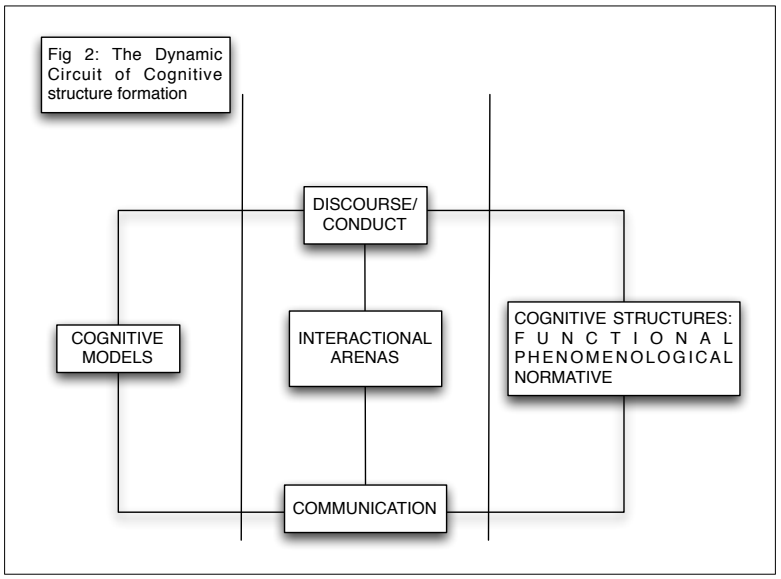


Fig 1: The cognitive Framework of the Public Sphere

The diagram represents three theory traditions within a parametric framework that essentially adds the later (OMahony1.grafflesystem-lifeworld) to the earlier (state-civil society) version of Habermas' account of the 'space' of the public sphere. Running through the diagram we observe three 'symbolic codings', (A) is functional, (B) is ascriptive identity and (C) is normative. It may be noted in passing that these also reflect three major theory traditions, functional, phenomenological and critical. These three orders of coding are taken to delineate the interoperating vectors for the constitution of socio-cognitive structures of varying kinds. While all three kinds of symbolic order operate to some degree in each of the poles – state, system, civil society, lifeworld – the nature of the space caught within

each vector shows that they gravitate towards certain of the complexes rather more than others. Hence, the normative vector mostly incorporates the lifeworld, the state and associated integrating public complex of law and media and also civil society. The ascriptive vector incorporates the space of civil society, lifeworld and state. The functional complex mainly encompasses formally organized social spheres and the state and public complex. My contention is that the emergence of macro-ethical cognitive structures that underpin the normative order takes place in heterogeneous conditions in which normative autonomy has to be gained – and constantly defended once gained – from functional and non-normative logics. However, the generation, justification and application of such cognitive structures always remain conditioned by the other complexes. This process also applies reciprocally but that is not my major interest here. It is carried discursively within the public sphere. The generation of the cognitive structures can be understood as the outcome of a discursive process of collective ethical learning and its normative institutionalization as achieved practical rationality. These dynamics are represented in the table below:



The diagram above shows what might be termed ‘the cognitive circuit of communication’. It invites a number of observations. There are two possibilities: communication as reproduction – the

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 58 -- #100

conduct loop – and communication as discursive – cognitive – innovation. To understand this in terms of the combined theories of collective learning and practical rationality requires a two-stage theory of institutionalization.

The first stage is the setting free of learning processes, discursively carried in the interactional arenas of the public sphere. Here the cognitive content of institutional orders is re-worked and potentially transformed by periphery-driven public communication processes. The second is the material realization, that may never be attained, of such learning processes in institutional designs, the institutionalization of normative action rules. The circuit of communication extends from macro-meso-micro and the reverse. Following Luhmann, we should assume that cognitive innovation can emanate from non-agential macro patterns but contra Luhmann that the normative-pragmatic integration of society requires decisive ethical and moral cognitive innovation (learning) by collective agents capable of normatively stabilizing contingency.

The cognitive communicative circuit of the genesis of discursively relevant pragmatic capacity, argumentation, coding and identity-building processes in diverse arenas and multiple outcomes cannot be properly understood outside of a macro-sociological framework, that is tentatively sketched in figure 1 above. The schemata which constitute cognitive structures are formed in the space between, on the one side, the functional codes, normative commitments and identity structures of differentiated societies and, on the other, by the reconstruction of such symbolic structures in the interdependent arenas of public discourse. We can understand collective learning as the formation of new cognitive structures that mediate between public discourse and established symbolic structures. In successful cases, such structures evolve from a diffuse and interdependent complex to a more defined and specific reality. For example, in the normative sphere we witness an emerging macro-ethics of responsibility; in the sphere of identity, we witness the rise of the credo of the self-determination of nations from its nineteenth century origins to its institutionalization in the twentieth century.

Conclusion

Strydom’s career-long interest is in the mechanisms that might sustain a society as far as possible integrated through reasons, hence in exploring the relation between macro-ethical learning processes and institutionalized practical rationality. The emergence of an ecological ethic of responsibility has been his principal empirical-theoretical interest in recent times (Strydom 1999a, 1999d, 2002).

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 59 -- #101

We can witness in the recent massive re-evaluation of this ethic in the last couple of years the projective value of a reconstructive sociology of collective learning. Today the challenge for a discursive cognitive sociology is in continuing to clarify in the first place how society understands its own learning processes and in the second place how globally and at other spatial levels these learning processes do or do not transpose into advances in practical reason, for example, one guided by ecological morality. To meet this challenge and to continue the programme of sociological innovation that Strydom himself, Miller and Eder have taken over from Habermas will require a macro-sociological re-elaboration of the public sphere that learns from other sociological theories and disciplinary interests and is compatible with methodologies such as frame analysis that promise to be empirically fruitful.

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 60 -- #102

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‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 61 -- #103

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4

RATIONAL ACTION, COMMUNICATIVE ACTION, AND THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL LIFE

THE SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF DISCOURSE AND MARKETS – A THEORETICAL ESSAY

Klaus Eder

Introduction

It will be argued that equally the theory of communicative action and the theory of rational choice are bound to the specific Western tradition of enlightenment thinking. In this the social and political bonds have been reduced to the will of an individualistic actor, which links each to the other either through discourses or through markets. This is an assumption that provokes sociological theory to think the social bond between actors as the weak bond between rational individuals. It simultaneously underrates the strong links that permeate the social practices (last but not least their religious practices as an instance of social practices) through which social relations emerge. Thus the theories underlying the concepts of market and discourse need to be re-embedded in a theory of the pre-discursive and pre-rational social bonds which are built into the narrative structure of social life.

The theoretical landscape

The roots of the actually competing explanatory strategies in sociology are Adam Smith and Hobbes. Both have given us the two

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 64 -- #106

models on which our perception of the social is based: that a social order emerges either through the rational pursuit of individual interests or that social order is based on an obligatory systems of rules which are grounded in a system of shared values. There has always been a romantic counter-model to these two dominant models: that the social is built on a sense of community, on a shared emotional attachment to a given lifeworld which is constructed and reconstructed through ongoing social interaction. These three models underlie the three theoretical paradigms that have shaped the theoretical discourse: rational choice explanations, (Parsonian) theories of social integration, and phenomenological theories of the lifeworld.

These theories are coupled with each other in an interesting way. They are complementary. The central problem of rational choice explanations, i.e. the problem of the emergence and stability of preference structures, can be solved by the strong assumption of social integration theories that societies are integrated via a collectively shared value system, i.e. legitimate power (Parsons 1937). This provides the necessary contextual stability for rational choice theories: the latter can start where the former (social integration theory) ended. However, the assumption of a generally shared consensus over values is hard to defend on empirical grounds. Phenomenology provided a way out: it saved both theories by assuming smaller units of shared values, plural lifeworlds which can even be incommensurable. Giving up the idea of a unifying centre of society the idea of a shared culture (values) could be saved on the level of a particularistic social context. These contexts enable rational choice theories to claim at least local validity for their explanations. And they allow identifying normatively integrated social systems. The grand theories work in fact in the context of particular ‘situations’.

This latter effect can be linked to another theoretical development which is ‘situationalism’ (Knorr-Cetina 1988). Situationalism offers a sociological solution to the separation of the micro (=RC) and the macro (=SI) level of social reality by linking macrophenomena such as ‘science’ to the micro-situations where science is produced. Aaron Wildavsky (1994) has followed a similar path of theoretical argument by embedding self-interested action in situations where they make sense. Self-interest is embedded in a context, and context is culturally volatile and socially contingent. To ‘improve’ RC-theories he asks not only ‘why do people go about getting what they know they want’ but also ‘why do people want what they want in the first place’, thus allowing for a diversity of motives to be operative in the attempts of people to get what they want.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 65 -- #107

Wildavsky avoids the pitfall of replacing the rational actor by simply another type of actor such as a ‘Kantian actor’. He also avoids the pitfall of empiricism by the idea, based on the ‘cultural theory’ of Mary Douglas (1988), of a limited number of ‘selves’ which account for the diversity of social forms (Wildavsky 1989, 1994; Thompson et al. 1990).

There is however a limit to this strategy of improving the theory of rational action by contextualizing it. Rational action is tied to a type of situation; there are situations where it is inappropriate to act rationally since the type of situation does not provide a role set for that kind of action. The situation that provides role sets which make rational action appropriate is the market. The sociological theory of markets (White 1981, 2002) claims that markets are role sets which distribute actors over the social landscape and shape the network of their relations over time. Rational action is embedded in markets conceived as social structures.

This strategy of embedding social action in situations is not restricted to the theory of markets. It can be used for any theory of social action, above all for the theory of communicative action (Habermas 1984, 1987). Communicative action is tied to a specific type of situation which provides particular role sets for communicative action. Communicative action in this way is embedded in a social situation of communication which is called ‘discourse’ which works in a way analogous to the ‘market’.

These two concepts, market and discourse, will be used as theories of situational accounts of particular sets of action events. The argument is that both theories of social action refer to special cases of situations where they apply. To develop the argument of the situational embeddedness of social action, two steps will be taken. Firstly, theories of social action will be looked at in terms of making sense of the interrelatedness of the actors producing such action events. This leads to a debate on markets and discourses as forms of embedding social action. Secondly, the underperformance of markets and discourses in real social situations is looked at. It is argued that markets and discourses are themselves embedded in social relations which transcend the logic of market relations and discursive relations. The answer is then finally sought in a theory of narrative bonds which provides a basis for generating situational accounts such as markets or discourses. Markets and discourses are conceived then as social constructions that have emerged from the elementary structures of the social bond in the course of social evolution.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 66 -- #108

Bringing actors back in?

Actors and types of action

The social world is made up of what actors do, not of what actors are. The essence of actors, their 'subjectivity', is relevant only to the extent that staging this capacity is part of social life. The social world consists of action events which happen regularly, which can be classified independently of the psychological intentions and drives of the actors. Actors are only needed from such a perspective as the generators of action events. Whether these actors do this because they love or hate each other, because they are rationally or emotionally motivated, because they are egoists or altruists, is a secondary issue. The real issue is what happens when, for example, a lot of egoistically motivated action events happen relative to other types of action in a historically and spatially specific situation. What counts is the distribution of action events in a situation which produces social effects beyond the motivations that make individuals act.

Yet there is a basic theoretical problem here which is the classification of social actions (or action events). Classical approaches solved the problem by using psychological criteria such as motivations. Max Weber, Talcott Parsons or Jürgen Habermas, to mention the representatives of the most important 'theories of social action', did so by distinguishing between traditional, instrumental and value-oriented action. Rational action is a special variant claiming a single motive to be decisive for human beings to produce action events. As to whether there is some ontological or evolutionary or empirical priority to one of these motivations has shaped much of the debate on social action. For explaining the way in which the social world works these debates have contributed little. Theorists in the rationalist tradition were caught up in the attempts to explain the emergence of reciprocity and even moral sentiments by reducing them either to evolutionary advantages which rational motivations provide or to leave them to emergent properties of evolutionary adaptation (Boyd and Richerson 1985; Henrich et al. 2004). Theorists in the deontological tradition were preoccupied with the problem that people tend to disagree about the quality of normative motivations. Habermas has turned this point on its head by arguing that such normative dissensus is constitutive for social life since it forces people to coordinate their normative views according to rules which they share. These rules that coordinate normative perspectives exist in institutions, in value systems, in shared interpretations of the world, which again raises the question

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 67 -- #109

of what it is that gives to these rules of rules (i.e. socially shared rules) their binding character. Habermas situates this binding character in the structure of the communicative situation as such. When people start to communicate, they address others which implies that there is an implicit 'intention' (not a psychological motive) which is to establish a social relationship. The 'performative' function of language produces situations in which the rules of communicative action operate by the mere act of communication. The constitutive rules of communicative action provide the meta-rules upon which actors rely to coordinate their normative motives and intentions.

A more abstract answer which avoids the differences due to assumption about the motives of social action has been presented by Luhmann who argues that communication is oriented towards finding some mode of continuing communication. Thus the contingency of communication is what produces the permanent search for keeping communication going. Evolutionary successful modes of contingency reduction, which are functionally differentiated , are retained for further use by emerging social systems in order to meet the need of dealing with the growing complexity of communicative events in the world. The Luhmann model cannot be really played off against the Habermasian model since the latter appears as a special case of Luhmann's abstract notion of autopoietic social systems. Other theories such as rational-choice theories can be equally seen as special cases of Luhmann's model of autopoietic systems.

Thus, we can start with the assumption that the basic problem is not the different motives that actors might have when they act but the modes of relating the diversity of motives that actors have at their disposal. Modes of coordination cannot be reduced to the diversity of motives, but rather constitute an emerging social reality which is assumed to coordinate actors even when their motivations do not coincide. Such a case has already been noticed in Coleman's attempt to explain the emergence of norms: rational actors have an interest to follow norms because it is in their interest to stick to them (Coleman 1990). When established, these norms are taken up without recourse to the initial situation in which such norms emerged. This is what characterizes the emergent character of the social: to make rules work even when the initial motivational force that created them has disappeared.

The issue of 'intersubjectivity'

The theoretical term under which this emergent reality has been subsumed is the term 'intersubjectivity'. Intersubjectivity provides a mechanism which coordinates action events in an interaction

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 68 -- #110

situation. The central thesis of normative sociology (from Weber through to Parsons to Habermas) has been to locate this mechanism in norms that provide the rules for generating intersubjectivity. Through dealing with rules human beings can modify the forms of intersubjectivity into which they have been socialized and which have been forwarded through generations as ‘traditions’. The social world is conceived as a world of shared rules which allow constructing the world as an empirical fact and as a moral fact. The philosophical basis for this perspective is Kantian philosophy and the deontological tradition of moral philosophy deriving from it. The modern version of this tradition is the Habermasian discourse theory. Intersubjectivity constitutes discourse and is reproduced through discourse. The discursive situation is thus the key to social reality and it is through discourse that social actors succeed in getting along in their social action that is oriented at their fellow actors.

An ‘economic’ version of this intersubjectivity is the idea underlying game theory. In this theoretical tradition which runs back to the non-Kantian English philosophical Enlightenment tradition, coordination is built upon trial and error in figuring out the maximum advantage an individual can realize in a given situation. Intersubjectivity is here defined as an equilibrium which is reached by rational actors in a given social situation. The situation that focussed this form of acting together has been described as a ‘market’. A market provides the mechanism through which individuals organize the space of their social action while minimizing the interference with the space of the social action of other actors.

These two models of intersubjectivity as an emergent property of social relations among actors compete in social theory as mutually exclusive accounts of social reality. Both claim different mechanisms that allow people to coordinate their mutually exclusive action orientations, be it diverging interests or be it diverging normative ideas of good and right. Yet, theorists increasingly take into account the complementarity of both models. Discourse as market or market as discourse are theoretical topics which force us to look more closely at how markets are mediated by meaningful social relationships and how discourses are shaped by interests and sentiments. All this invites us to think about a third way of explaining the emergent property of social reality in ongoing social actions, a third way that overcomes the dichotomy of discourse and market, social relations that are overculturalized and social relations that are underculturalized. Normative theories and rationalist theories provide two extremes of a continuum which has to be made explicit and defined.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 69 -- #111

The thesis is that this continuum can be identified as a narratively constituted world which provides the elementary social bonds for discourse as well as market.

The open problem of relating action events: the narrative bond

There are some empirical indications why these two models are insufficient. A first argument has to do with the observation that people do not successfully coordinate their views through communicative action in the sense of argumentative solutions to diverging norms. They rather stick to norms that they have already internalized. Normative debates do not solve the collective action problem – on the contrary they often foster the problems linked to acting together. Whether it is an individual who does not succeed in living together with others in a marriage, or groups who do not want to live together or nations who do not want to cooperate, the issue remains: what enables these individuals, groups or nations to act at all against the respective others. What binds people together seems to be based on something that is inaccessible for normative debates. Pre-normative bonds transcend normative discourses – they already exist before social actors enter discursive social relations.

A second argument refers to the idea of the invisible hand of the market. This invisible hand needs the visible hand of the state or some other institution to work. This is an old argument which has been at the core of institutional economics emphasizing the need for institutions in order to produce the effects that a market is supposed to produce (North 1990). Here markets are grounded in well-designed institutions which again poses the question of where these institutions come from. The argument that it is rational to have them is begging the question. Yet, markets do something important from a sociological point of view: markets separate cooperating people from others cooperating among each other, thus dividing up the available space for social action and minimizing interference (White 2002). Markets, wherever they come from, are a social structure, a structure of social relations in which patterns of reciprocal observation are fixed. To organize social relations as reciprocal interests is a highly demanding social arrangement: it requires stripping social actors from their history and constituting them as ‘individuals’ following their interests in a social situation. This arrangement has become centrally important in modern societies (this does not mean that individuals do not exist in non-modern societies) and some commentators, from Adam Smith to Karl Marx and further on, even believed it to be its central social form.

There is a theoretical strategy to avoid these modes of narrowing

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 70 -- #112

down the social link (or relation) to either rational individuals or to reasonable ‘Kantian’ actors. The key analytical term is ‘subjectivity’. Subjectivity broadens the concept of the actor to include any action events that make him a particular actor. This, in fact, avoids actor-theoretical shortcomings in the tradition of sociological theory, but it does not help us much in grasping the social link. Subjectivities are linked to each other in contingent ways. It allows, in the Luhmannian sense, that they always produce contingency which generates the need for social relations. But the pattern remains in the dark.

The following proposal is to argue that social actors make sense of their action events and of the action events of others by invoking narrative frames of plausibility that have been learned in the course of becoming part of a ‘culture’. Actors produce signifying practices in which they organize the world around them which is either resistant to arguments or to real interests. This is what I call the narrative bond which is the stuff out of which social relations are made. This theoretical proposal allows us to link discourse and market by the simple fact that both rely on an already constituted social world which allows human beings to make sense of action events before they enter in high (reasonable) or low (rational) communication.

To develop this argument I will first turn to the deficiencies of the two ideal games that dominate social theory and then take up the issue of the social bond on which such ideal games are based.

Ideal games that ideal actors play: Markets and discourse

Markets versus discourse

Social theory works as argued above with two competing idealizing notions of social relations: market and discourse. Market and discourse are concepts that are constructed using the clause of ’ceteris paribus’. This clause allows abstracting from real life situations and formulating an ideal notion of social relations among abstract universal selves. Both ideas have come up with the emergence of the autonomous individual in the Western enlightenment tradition. Their common ancestry is given by the common reference to ‘rationality’ which has found two competing interpretations: the rationality of an actor who is freed from constraints and capable of acting on nothing but his own interests (which does not exclude acting in the interest of all); and the rationality of an actor who is capable of making use of his ‘reason’.

That markets work under the condition of ‘ceteris paribus’ means that they work as long as you disregard those factors that

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 71 -- #113

distort self-interested action. Thus markets are bound to situations undistorted by traditional and other non-rational orientations. In the ideal world of the market the actors act only in their own interest which includes the interest of all since any reduction of the common good would interfere in the long run with one’s own interests. The market then provides the mechanisms through which this coordination of self-interests works in time.

In the same vein discourses work under some highly specific conditions which Habermas has called the situation ‘free of concrete action constraints’ (’handlungsentlastete Situation’). In the ideal world of discourse actors communicate only in the light of universalizable norms which restrict the link between acts of communication to validity claims that must be accepted by the other because he is forced to share them by the mere fact of engaging in communicative action.

Both concepts have turned out to be strong concepts for identifying some of the mechanisms explaining the dynamics of modern societies. Yet, they differ fundamentally in the conceptualization of the mechanism of coordination at work. The invisible hand of the market is put against the transcendental condition of the possibility of reasonable (rational) action in the world. This difference is at the basis of much controversy over whether the notion of the market can be assimilated to the notion of discourse or whether the notion of discourse can be assimilated to the notion of the market in social theory. In the following, another strategy is taken: to ground both mechanisms in a more abstract concept of situational accounts that covers both notions as sub-cases of a more general phenomenon.

Blending markets and discourses – the system-theoretical solution

A theoretical strategy to find some conception overcoming this difference is found in the concept of ‘social systems’, especially in the version that Niklas Luhmann has given to it (Luhmann 1995, 1997). Systems are self-organizing entities which use the elements out of which they are made for their construction over time. This is exactly what markets and discourses do. Markets use the elements, i.e. self-interested actions, as elements for their construction over time. The market is a mode of the self-organization of rational interaction which closes this kind of interaction event off from action events that are different. It is a system made up of nothing else but rational action events. An analogous argument holds for discourse. Discourse is made up of communicative actions in which validity claims are made. Discourse organizes itself as a system by nothing other than such events, thus closing itself off from

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 72 -- #114

non-discursive events in the world.

This system-theoretical conceptualization does not really tell us anything new about markets and discourses. Yet, it allows re-interpreting the idealizing assumptions that underlie the utilitarian and the deontological tradition as functionally equivalent ways of relating communicative events in the world. The theoretical advance proposed here is that not actors, but action events are related and distinguished from non-social modes of relating action events. In this sense the system-theoretical account offers nothing more and nothing less than a methodological argument for analyzing markets or discourses as social realities ‘sui generis’.

Thus, the system-theoretical account of social situations is tied to some assumptions about the type of events through which systems constitute themselves. Taking markets and discourse as systems that are distinct requires an additional theory which is the theory of functional differentiation. Functional differentiation explains why these two different modes of relating action events are irreducible to each other: rational action is functionally specified in the sphere of the economy, whereas communicative action is tied either to the sphere of politics (based on practical reason in the Kantian sense), to the sphere of science (based on pure reason) or to the sphere of art (based on aesthetic judgment). Thus, any social system emerging in the course of social evolution seems to produce an ‘ideal game’ that is played by ‘ideal actors’.

The assumption of a diversity of ideal games which ideal actors play, in a theory of functional differentiation of autopoietic social systems, runs into a difficulty: these systems do not tell us about the social bond that holds people together beyond their particular involvements in functionally specific systems. In his work Luhmann especially notes this problem when dealing with the public sphere (public communication) and with religion (private communication) (Luhmann 2000a, 2000b). Both crosscut functionally specific systems and provide some basic understanding within which the practical problems of life are perceived and experienced. This ‘cultural framing’ transcends the specific language games of markets and discourses that have emerged in the course of evolution. It rather provides an elementary language which provides the ‘context’ for differentiating systems with their functionally specific language games.

Thus, we have to take into account an ‘undifferentiated sphere’ beyond functionally differentiated systems. This sphere is neither rational in the utilitarian/game-theoretic sense nor communicative in the deontological sense. Whether this sphere is considered to be

a system is a secondary issue. The important point is that it does not fit the theory of functional differentiation. Differentiating out functionally specific systems necessarily poses the question: from which world do such systems emerge? There is a 'rest' in functional differentiation which remains to be specified. The argument that modernity is characterized by the predominance of functionally differentiated systems does not contradict the idea of such a 'rest' – on the contrary. The critical accounts of 'modernity' do nothing other than to point out elements of such a 'rest'. By differentiating out ideal games which rationalist or deontological actors play, the social world of elementary social relations has become visible as never before. It is a world in which a constitutive mode of communicating with the other is set: people linked to each other by some kind of elementary language game.

Going beyond market and discourse: what binds people into networks

How to get at this elementary language game? As argued, this language game is embedded in basic social relations among human beings. The term network provides a concept for addressing this issue of elementary social relations. Networks manifest regularities that emerge whenever human beings relate with each other, whether in functionally differentiated systems such as science (Knorr-Cetina 1993) or for market and discourse this holds also. Markets and discourses are networks which are based on selective language games.

The argument is that such selective language games presuppose a conception of a non-selective language game upon which markets and discourses can be built. Taking seriously the claim that real actors construct 'uno actu' markets and discourses from networks of social relations, implies a strong theoretical programme: to assume a language game that constitutes the social relations from which real actors construct under certain conditions functionally specific ideal games such as markets or discourses. The ideal games that ideal actors play are embedded in real games that real actors play.

Real games that real actors play: The narrative bond

Cheating, fighting, loving. . . : understanding the world we share

When we observe markets or discourses, then we observe actors following certain role prescriptions that are specific to these two types of ideal games. In these ideal games people also play real games: the encounter between thief and victim or mother and son,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 74 -- #116

between right-wing radical and bystanding public or professor and student. Real games which real actors play are numerous: they cheat, fight, love, care, are unhappy etc. While doing these out of necessity they enter neither markets nor discourse and yet social life goes on. They live in a world in which they behave as real actors, relate to each other as real actors and play games before they enter the idealizing games of rational action and communicative action. They do what Bourdieu has described as permanent struggles in a social field which is not a struggle over interests (which it can become too) but which is a struggle within a story that holds in a particular situation.

We can describe an endless number of such situations which share one property: they do not rely in the final instance on some inbuilt drive to rational action or on a will to reach consensus, but on a shared interpretation of a situation which these actors have internalized in the course of growing up in a social environment. This shared interpretation of a situation is based on an understanding of a situation that is made sense of ‘equally’ by those going through such situations.

By establishing a social bond we store this link in our memory as something that has worked or did not work. We make sense of such experiences in terms of stories that store such relations. Our interactions with others work as long as we can rely upon stories that make sense of the action events that we produce in our action. This holds also for any ‘economic’ or ‘communicative’ action event. They work to the extent that the social link is based on shared story. This is the guarantee to not talk at cross purposes and to not misunderstand continuously the rational motive of the other. Thus social bonds are based on a narrative bond that precedes the ideal games that we play. The narrative bond allows playing real games. Narration is the elementary language game through which social relations are established and reproduced. Narratives provide structural accounts of situations which orient actors in the story as well as actors who know these stories. Living with stories is the constitutive moment of social bonds.

Making sense of the narrative bond – embedding market and discourse

The narrative bond should work as any language works: stories have to be told, and are thus linked to the structure of language. This structure requires nothing more than subjects, objects, actions and some rules that relate them. Narratives are defined by a very specific set of rules that links actors and objects by some actions. Narratives

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 75 -- #117

tell about nothing other than about social relations, and often do so in terms of heroes fighting against villains, winning or losing, and creating social situations within which people make sense for further interaction. Thus, situations are recognizable for people since they fit the narrative scripts which organize the social world they live in. Stories help to structure the world around us and to orient actions in such a way that interaction can go on, either in a peaceful or in an inimical way. Stories underlie equally groups of religious believers in new religious movements as well as feuding groups in Sardinia. They tell people that the way they act is the way things have to take place. They are rather resistant to empirical evidence as well as moral arguments. They are defended with fervour since they are linked to some basic rules of organizing social relations that have to be saved from irritations.

Some societies offer possibilities to distance from such narrative bonds by offering a narrative-free world of economic exchange or argumentative debate. Such possibilities allow for freedom from and for reflexivity toward the narrative basis of social life. Market and discourse do exactly that. Yet, they remain tied to the narrative bond that they cannot do away with without risking to destroy the social bond. Markets are embedded in the narrative structure of the lifeworld as well as discourses are.

Actors in markets, whether they are producers or consumers, follow narrative rules when they choose goods for production or consumption and when they set the price for goods. Markets help to maximize the possibilities for rational action to enter stories – but then it has to fit the story, otherwise the product will not survive the market. The stories vary, and a good analysis shows why specific markets work in different ways.

In discourse, actors, whether speakers or the public, equally follow narrative rules that guarantee the conditions for further debate. Without some basic understanding of what the other says, without some narrative fidelity, people do not succeed to talk with each other. Discourse is much easier among people who are culturally homogeneous than among people of highly diverse backgrounds. Discourse easily breaks down before even entering the argumentative level. The strength of the narrative bond is the basic variable explaining the working of discourse, the construction of a consensus of a dissensus, a situation in which people can argue about what they disagree upon.

Markets and discourse are embedded in narrative bonds and offer possibilities for intervening into these narrative bonds by adding either rational motives or moral arguments to the story.

Sometimes they change the story, yet they never step out of the story. Some political philosophers believed that they would do so by developing the idea of the ideal market or the idea of the ideal discourse as the basic relationship that creates social bonds. The reflexivity of this reflexivity turns us however back onto narratives: also, discourses are part of narratives organizing the social life of a particular people at a certain time.

Social networks, in which markets and discourse are embedded, are constituted through narrative bonds that are actualized in concrete social situations. Therefore a theory of situational accounts is needed that gives an explanation of the making of the social bond which constitutes markets and discourses as special situations made out of narratively constituted networks.

A theory of situational accounts

Taking market and discourse as special forms of situations which emerge in the course of social evolution implies a theoretical move away from the debates which claim theoretical primacy either to market or discourse. It leads us beyond such claims toward a theory of situational accounts. Such a theory of situational accounts does not stop short of the observation of everyday interaction. It extends to discourses as well as markets as special modes of establishing social relations. This allows embedding the logic of rational choice and the logic of rational debate in narrative networks of social relations, or in short: in narrative networks. Therefore, the elementary structures of social communication point to a level of analysis that is grounding rational choice and argumentative debate: the analysis of the narrative forms organizing social communication.

Social evolution specifies the functions and the scope of networks generated by these elementary structures of social communication. By generating markets as narrative networks, the exchange of goods and services is organized in a socially meaningful way. By generating discourses as narrative networks, the exchange of arguments is made a meaningful exercise. By restricting the scope of relevant action events in such situations, markets become specialized on rational choices and discourses on good arguments. These two cases are historically consequential modes of generating social networks. Yet, they are not the theoretical key to understanding the mode of organizing social relations. They are derivatives of a more elementary form, i.e. general narrative networks. Narrative networks provide the prerequisites for entering the risky game of rational choice or the risky exchange of arguments. Another situation worthy of closer inspection is reciprocity, in concrete interaction situations, which is

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 77 -- #119

at the basis of much theoretical debate on community life and social capital in modern societies. From the theoretical point of view of this essay this is just another case of a narrative network in ongoing processes of generating action events by social actors.

A theory of situational accounts is a narrative theory which explains the variation of the elementary structures of social situations over time. Their rules might be grasped by taking serious the narrative mode communication which precedes any functionally specified mode of communicating with others such as rational choice or argumentative debate. It takes us back to what real people really do.

'On the shoulders of giants'

This essay does not claim to have invented something new. On the contrary, arguing this way is like sitting 'on the shoulders of giants' (Merton 1965). The giants are Durkheim (1968 [1912]), Mauss (1969) and Lévi-Strauss (1967, 1971). This trias of social thinkers has sensitized us for the way in which social relations are mediated by symbolic forms. Reciprocity rules are cultural constructions that provide a narrative bond, an argument that Mauss has forcefully presented. A similar argument was taken up by Lévi-Strauss in his analysis of the elementary structures of kinship and then extended to the narrative bonds created by mythical representations of the world, which is a world full of narratives underlying the social relations among people. And finally, it is Durkheim who provided the foundations for these theoretical ideas when looking into the elementary forms of religion.

Arguing that social relations are mediated by stories not only reminds us of the basic stuff out of which human communication is made, but also the experience that it is through stories that we acquire our capacity to relate to other people, and of the fact that such ideas are around already. Looking anew at the three giants might help to push this old idea once again toward a theory of the social bonds which avoids the idealizing assumptions of RC-theory and communicative action theories as well as the reductionist assumption about our genetic heritage that are so fashionable these days.

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 78 -- #120

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 79 -- #121

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5

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GLOBAL ETHICS FOR CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

Gerard Delanty

The idea of a global ethics is in need of some clarification. In accordance with modern deontological ethics, global ethics does not posit a universal condition that must be realized. Most conceptions of global ethics have a political and critical character rather than being primarily grounded in universalistic principles that transcend specific contexts. For this reason the question of global ethics is particularly interesting for critical social theory, which has traditionally been concerned with the critique of the present from the perspective of critical-normative idea of a just society. In this chapter I argue that global ethics is primarily an expression of cosmopolitan political community and can be seen as a form of socio-cultural transformation. Societies can learn through ethics, as Habermas has claimed and, as Piet Strydom has argued, collective learning takes the form of cognitive shifts which are primarily worked out in the communicative processes of the public sphere. Global ethics is one such form of collective learning by which global issues enter into specific contexts. The outcome, I argue, is a cosmopolitan public sphere increasingly based on consciousness of the need for global ethics.

The notion of global ethics must be distinguished from a false universalism, that is a western conception of the world. In this respect, cosmopolitanism as the context to understand global ethics is relevant in that what is suggested by the term is a post-universal ethics where there is a greater recognition of the context in which ethical claims are made. Rather than a universalization of the particular – as in the universalization of western values – a global ethics arises from the particularization of the universal. In addition,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 82 -- #124

there is the question of the political subject: governments, non-states collective actors, humanity, individuals. This is the question of who are the actual social carriers or agents that give global ethics substance, whether an institutional framework such as a legal normative order or social processes. The argument proposed here shifts the emphasis away from specific actors to the public sphere itself as the context in which to locate global ethics.

The debate about global ethics is often confused as several problems – normative-philosophical, sociological, legal-political – are conflated. For instance, is the aim of a global ethics to find *within* the existing cultures of the world a common value system that can be called global and which might be the basis of a global ethics? Is the aim of a global ethics to impose a *western* human rights regime on the rest of the world? Is the aim simply to create a normative framework to promote *diversity*, and thus consisting of a commitment to something like ‘unity in diversity’? Or is the aim to create an entirely *new* ‘one world’ value system that people might choose if they were free to do so, as Peter Singer (2003) believes? There are complicated normative, cognitive and socio-cultural questions at stake here.

Part of the solution to these problems consists of distinguishing between a global universalism and a post-universal cosmopolitanism. The argument will be that global ethics should be conceived of in terms of a broader notion of cosmopolitan community and of which it is one strand. Cosmopolitanism consists of ethical, legal and political dimensions, but is an essentially open-ended process that is incomplete and what we are witnessing today are only diverse manifestations of it. Global ethics is not then an expression of a higher principle of justice that is in tension with local attachments and loyalties, but is expressed in cosmopolitan loyalties which are both local and global. In this sense, global ethics is compatible with modern deontological ethics in so far as it is a reflexive application of universal principles and as such entails a certain relativization of universalism.

Locating Global Ethics

The strongest argument against a global ethics comes from the political right. The most well known argument against a global ethics is the ‘clash of civilizations theory’, which claims that the major regions of the world rest on civilizations that are based on incommensurable values. In this approach civilizations are locked in a cultural conflict over basic values. This is a ‘neo-orientalist’ argument in that it makes the incorrect assumption that civilizations

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 83 -- #125

are coherent wholes when in fact they are internally divided. An argument that also derives from the right, albeit from the radical right in Europe, is that the major cultures of the world are incommensurable and need to be kept separate in order to protect them.

It may be suggested that the idea of global ethics is replacing the idea of Western Civilization as a singular and universalistic condition. The relativization of civilization as plural has been linked to reconsiderations of the ontological assumptions of the values on which civilizations are supposed to be based. It is becoming increasingly difficult to see these values as primordial or given. The current opposition to the US war against Iraq is proof of the inadequacy of the notion of ‘The West’ as a coherent civilizational entity. The civilizational perspective is important. A critical and reflexive view of the idea of civilization as a condition that is not underpinned by a specific cultural, political or geographical set of given facts suggests a view of civilizations as on-going processes which create the very terms that define them. This points to an anti-essentialist notion of civilization as a transformative process in which various elements and dynamics shape a broad spectrum of societies in terms of their cultural orientations and institutional patterns (Arnason 2003). So civilizations are not defined as closed systems locked in conflict with each other and based on primordial cultural codes. Civilizations have also been shaped in inter-civilizational encounters: they are not self-positing. Virtually every major world civilization has been influenced by another civilization. Thus any account of civilizational history will have to address the inter-civilizational dimension as much as the intra-civilizational. It can be noted that civilizations, and in particular encounters between civilizations, have been important carriers of globalization, including the consciousness of globality.

It has been increasingly recognized that globalization is not a recent development, but goes back a long time and can be related to the rise and expansion of the early world civilizations. Civilizational encounters arising as a result of trade, diasporic movements, world religions, imperial expansion were early instances of globalization. The rise of global connections was a direct consequence of civilizational encounters. Such encounters, which cannot be all explained in terms of wars and violent clashes, were decisive in shaping the worldviews of those civilizations that came into contact with each other. It has very often been the case that arising out of these encounters new civilizational forms emerged or new orientations within existing civilization took place (cognitive frames). Increas-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 84 -- #126

ingly, the logic of the encounter (adaptations, direct borrowings, cultural translations, mutual learning) has shaped the civilizations of the world.

There is then considerable reason to locate global ethics in the context of the development and interaction of civilizations. With respect to the various civilizations that make up the wider civilizational constellation, the internal pluralization of those civilizations must be emphasized. This internal pluralization can in part be explained by the wider inter-civilizational context, but it is more than this. Indeed, the very notion of a civilization suggests a diversity of social and cultural worlds that also bear some common patterns. As mentioned earlier, it has been argued by various scholars that civilizations have at their core certain cultural orientations that are common to the various social worlds of which they are composed (Arnason 2003). These orientations by no means provide stable reference points that constitute a received body of traditions such as a heritage or a self-enclosed world that remains unchanged. In the case of Europe this is strikingly evident in the Christian tradition, often seen as the defining aspect of European civilization. From a civilizational perspective this tradition has been internally highly pluralized and its core ideas have given rise to conflicting interpretations of the world. Globalization can be seen as giving rise to such conflicting interpretations of the world; it gives leads to the raising of ethical questions and presents challenges to given value systems.

The context to locate global ethics is in such conflicting interpretations of the world rather than in a particular set of global values as such. Global ethics emerges when different cultures come into contact and where what is shared or common is less given values or beliefs but ways of seeing the world. This suggests above all a conception of global ethics in terms of communication and, from the perspective of Piet Strydom’s social theory, cognitive frames.

Communitarian and Liberal Positions

At this point we can consider one of the main objections to global ethics. Communitarian political philosophy has been concerned to refute the very idea of a global ethics. Michael Walzer, a leading liberal communitarian thinker, argues that there are no global values upon which a global ethics can be based (Walzer 1983). Walzer distinguishes between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ ethics, depending on how embedded they are in community. Thick ethics is one that is firmly rooted in a living community and is therefore more real than thin ethics. He sees ethics as necessarily ‘thick’ and a global ethics cannot be ‘thick’ because it cannot be rooted in a cultural form of life.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 85 -- #127

While he does not deny that people have moral views and feelings about people in other parts of the world, these sentiments do not amount to anything more than a ‘thin’ morality and certainly not to a global ethics.

A counter argument to this view is that, firstly, Walzer reduces consciousness of global issues and concerns to trivial concerns. His assumption is that global issues are simply not important and that people primarily identify with local issues. This perspective totally neglects the tremendous impact of global issues and sets up a stark dichotomy between the local and global. He does not see that even a ‘thin’ morality can be sufficiently ‘thick’ to be significant.

A second problem is that Walzer conflates culture with an underlying consensus. This view of culture as an ordered system of symbolic meaning has been heavily criticized. Culture is diverse, fragmented and based on contested values and fragile loyalties. This pluralization of culture has entered the sphere of democracy, presenting new challenges (see Gutmann 2003). Culture is no longer exclusively a basis for thick identities. A more differentiated view of culture draws attention to its contested nature. Such a view of culture would see global ‘thin’ ethics as being as ‘thick’ as many allegedly thick moralities.

The communitarian position can be contrasted to liberal approaches. From the perspective of moral universalism, John Rawls has given an argument that offers a basis for global ethics (Rawls 1993, 1999). While Rawls’ earlier work was based on a culturally neutral theory of political justice which presupposed the nation-state, he moved towards a greater recognition of the need for a conception of ethics that could address conflicts between different cultural worlds and which was not limited to the confines of the national polity. This is especially evident in his last major work, *A Law of Peoples*, (Rawls 1999) and an earlier essay in which he advocated the idea of an ‘over-lapping consensus’ and is relevant to the debate on global ethics (Rawls 1987). Rawls argues for a minimal universalistic ethics that is based on the recognition that despite the huge differences that divide them people do share common ground. In this view, a global ethics might be constructed on the foundations of whatever common ground can be found between people who otherwise share very little.

While this argument is very useful in seeing how cultural conflict can be reduced with zero-sum conflict translated into negotiable conflict and commonalties gradually built upon, it mostly pertains to cases of cultural or moral conflicts over conceptions of the common good. It does not provide a basis for a global ethics in

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 86 -- #128

areas where there are no major conflicts but where the challenge is to find common solutions to societal problems. Many of the challenges of a global ethics are not in fact impeded by the lack of common cultural values. Rawls' model, moreover, assumes that the common principles already exist in some form and only need to be generalized. It is not a position that challenges existing ethical assumptions and, despite his accommodation of major conflicts over competing conceptions of the common good, does not seek fundamentally new or global perspectives.

Although different in their approach to the idea of a global ethics, Rawls and Walzer are not so far apart. Neither position fully accepted a firm cultural foundation for global ethics. Rawls' deontological moral universalism did not give much room for global culture other than a recognition of the need for common ground. It is the nature of this common ground that it cannot be 'thick' in Walzer's sense. The result, then, is a self-limiting global ethics that would have to be too thin to be meaningful or relevant to the proliferation of numerous developments that articulate in different ways global ethics. Such developments cannot be understood in terms of a notion of common ground, but are indicative of new cognitive models of the social world.

Universal Cultural Values Approaches

Anthropological arguments offer an interesting alternative to the liberal position, but ultimately suffer from the same problems. Rather than look for universal moral values in global culture or in natural law or some kind of universal human traits, a recent tendency in political theory is to look for different cultural versions of universalistic values. These attempts aim to reconcile relativism and universalism (see Cowan 2001). With regard to the debate about human rights, for instance, some critics argue that universal moral values exist in all human cultures and although the specific form these values take differs, they are nonetheless universalistic in spirit (Renteln 1990).

Thus UNESCO and the UN supported World Commission for Culture and Development argue that a global ethics has a foundation in the recurrent moral themes in all the major religions of the world. It has been noted by many scholars that the ontological and transcendental visions of the great religions of the world – Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity – all recognize in different ways the idea of human vulnerability, the fundamental equality of all human beings and the desire to alleviate suffering. There is, for example,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 87 -- #129

an interesting literature on Confucian conceptions of civil society and human rights (Madsen 2002; de Bary 1998).

While these arguments tend to run into difficulty when they attempt to base a legal order (such as human rights) on traditional cultural values, such as those associated with religious cultures, a sound cultural basis has been established for values that are global. A particularly good example of such an approach is Sissela Bok's argument in her book *Common Values* (Bok 1995). She outlines three kinds of global values: those relating to duties of mutual support and loyalty, values relating to constrains on violence and dishonesty, and those relating to procedural justice. From this perspective we can begin to see how a global ethics might be conceived and which is not open to the charge of either minimalism or exaggerating cultural differences.

The theologian, Hans Kung, in *Towards a Global Ethic* has also proposed a similar notion of a global ethics (Kung 1993). He outlines four shared principles essential to a global ethic: affirming respect for all life, economic justice and solidarity, tolerance and truthfulness, and equal rights and partnership between men and women. This is an interfaith and transcultural kind of a global ethics, which is oriented towards achieving global understanding.

The main drawback with the cultural values approaches is that such approaches tend to look for a global ethics on the level of cultural recognition, or intercultural understanding. The assumption appears to be that a global ethics already exists within the cultural traditions of different civilizations or ethnic groups and all that is required is the recognition of this. Hans Kung, for instance, argues that all the major religions have a global ethic because they believe in a God. It is difficult to see how a global ethics understood in such cultural terms might be related to the legal and political dimensions of globalization. At best such arguments establish contra neo-orientalism that there is no civilizational obstacle against the possibility of global ethics. However, such approaches do have merit in demonstrating a wider conception of global ethics than in the narrow liberal model.

Global Ethics as Collective Responsibility

While much of the universal values approach is concerned with the relativism-universalism problem, which it attempts to dilute, Hans Jonas in a classic work defended the possibility of a global ethics of collective responsibility (Jonas 1985). One of the first major works on a planetary ethics, Jonas was particularly responding to the rise of global threats to humankind, especially those emanating

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 88 -- #130

from modern technology. In his view philosophical thinking on ethics, dominated by the Kantian tradition, has been too confined to a narrow notion of the subject of responsibility. He defended the case for a collective ethics and one that was global in terms of its responsibility, for only a global ethics could provide an adequate solution to the problems facing the world. While this was an important work in opening up ethics to the new challenges, it remained trapped within a limited horizon, seeing the aim of global ethics solely in terms of human survival. Jonas assumed, too, that a global ethics might simply be based on a new version of the Kantian ‘moral imperative’.

More recent theories of responsibility have shifted the debate on collective responsibility beyond Jonas’ limited vision to a concern with risk and wider political and ethical concerns. In recent times, inspired by a revival of interest in the Kantian notion of a cosmopolitan world order, the idea of a global ethics is discussed in terms of a universal normative order that is closely linked with globalization (see Archibugi 1998; Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann 1997). These positions vary from those of David Held and Anthony Giddens, who tend to assume that global culture or global civil society, will produce new normative principles, to weaker claims, such as those of Castells, about the nature of global flows. Such accounts – which are not explicitly concerned with global ethics but with global governance – suffer a too strong faith in the promises of globalization to deliver a global ethics and moreover assume that a global ethics derives from global processes and one world ethics.

Peter Singer is one such example of an approach that seeks to find a global ethics emanating from the moral and political necessity to find global solutions to global problems (Singer 2003). In his book, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* he argues a global ethics is a response to the need for a global ethical solution to global problems associated with climate change, the role of the World Trade Organization, human rights and humanitarianism, and foreign aid. His argument is that nation-centric solutions are no longer morally compelling and we need to adjust our ethics to the reality of the global world.

This, too, is where Piet Strydom has made a contribution with the argument that collective responsibility should be understood in socio-cognitive terms as a development arising out of the cultural horizons of contemporary society in much the same way as the early discourse of rights emerged out of the cultural horizons of the previous two centuries (Strydom 1999). This perspective has been heavily influenced by the discourse theories of Apel and Habermas,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 89 -- #131

which will now be considered.

Discourse Ethics and Global Ethics

In a series of papers on discourse ethics and global ethics Karl-Otto Apel has argued that a global ethics must be conceived both in terms of an anti-foundational ethics and, what he has called, a discourse ethics, which correspond to developments that are characterized primarily by communication and which are not constrained by national borders (Apel 1978, 1987, 1988, 1992, 1996a, 1996b, 2000, 2001). Apel believes that a global ethics is not rooted in specific cultural worldviews and is, like all kinds of ethics, procedural rather than substantive. In this sense, he argues that global ethics is ‘thin’ but this does not mean it is thinner than any other kind of ethics. Moreover, he argues a global ethics is empirically demonstrable in the growing volume of transnational debates, movements, and politics; it is not then just idle speculation or a hopelessly utopian project but a real force in the world.

This is one of the most promising conceptions of global ethics and one that is capable of distinguishing between the different normative levels, ethical, legal and political. What is distinctive about it is that it is primarily a discursive ethics: consensus is not the basis but the goal to be reached. For Apel, a discourse ethics that is global, will be the basis of a binding international normative order. Where he differs from globalization theories is that in this approach a global ethics is the basis of an international normative order and not the result. In fact, he speaks of a ‘second order’ globalization, counter-acting the economic or ‘first order’ globalization. In his view, then, globalization is a challenge for a global ethics, the aim of which is to bring global forces under morally binding values.

The version of a discourse ethics represented by Habermas departs only in one respect from Apel’s. Where Apel sees the goal of a global ethics to be a legally binding order, for Habermas it is the nature of discourse that it can never be concluded. The radical openness of the discourse ethics presupposes a degree of indeterminacy. Thus where Apel anticipates the closure of the discourse ethics, Habermas sees it as an on-going dialogic rationality, the aim of which is not necessarily closure in a legal framework or political process. This is apparent, for example, in the different reactions of Apel and Habermas to the Kosovo war, with the latter taking a less stronger position on the need for a political response in the absence of a legal framework (Apel 2001; Habermas 1999).

In this view global ethics must be understood in terms of on-going debates, the emergence of a global public sphere (as distinct

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 90 -- #132

from a global legal order) and socio-cognitive evolution. Whether on a national, local or global level, a discourse ethics is the on going raising of truth claims which is realized in the communicative cultural logics of modernity, such as self-confrontation, reflexivity and the permanent critique of cultural values. For Habermas, all that is left of moral universalism today is precisely this capacity for critique. There is a debate, which we will not enter into here, as to whether Habermas' notion of a universal dialogic rationality betrays an 'Occidental understanding of the world' or whether it can be generalized to all societies that have crossed the threshold of modernity (Delanty 1997). The answer to this question will obviously depend on what we mean by modernity and whether it can lose its occidental and orientalist assumptions.

The Challenges Facing Global Ethics

A few preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the previous discussion. It is now widely accepted that ethics today must entail a largely procedural dimension and cannot be based on foundational principles. Substantive conceptions of ethics as rooted in particular cultural traditions are too restrictive, in the context of culturally mixed societies and competing conceptions of the common good, to be a basis for widespread acceptance. While ethics may be based on certain moral values, modern conceptions of ethics are almost entirely post-traditional and procedural. Deliberative theories of justice and ethics, such as Apel and Habermas' notion of a discourse ethics, are the strongest statement of this view of ethics, which is particularly relevant to global ethics. A global ethics is a non-foundational ethics which demands the recognition only of common ways of dealing with problems rather than an appeal to an underlying consensus.

A global ethics must be capable of resisting false universalisms. Only very recently is the universalization of the western view of the world being resisted. One of the tasks of a global ethics is to provide a basis for the critical scrutiny of all societies, both western and non-western. For this reason the notion of universalism needs to be replaced with the limited universalism of 'cosmopolitanism' – a concern with the limits of one's own culture. There is no reason why certain values cannot be promoted without justifying them as 'western' or as 'rational' but simply because, as Rorty has argued, they work best and can be defended on pragmatic grounds (Rorty 1998).

One of the biggest problems for global ethics is the question of its social carriers. What is the evidence that a global ethics exists?

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 91 -- #133

Is it a purely utopian aspiration – at best as Peter Singer thinks a response to its necessity – or is it a real force in the world? We can find some evidence that a global ethics actually exists but it is important to stress that this exists only as an emergent process and is evident in the expression of new kinds of cosmopolitan community. A global ethics is not an ethics that exists exclusively on a particular dimension of globalization. While global forces certainly have awakened a global ethics, it is rather to be found in the ethical consciousness within all political communities throughout the world and consists of their capacity to look beyond the limited horizons of the local context. The subject of global ethics can thus be anyone and is not a particular globally mobile actor. A global ethics is the ultimate consequence of the dialogic rationality of modern ethics. Contemporary political communication in the public sphere provides huge evidence of global ethics.

The significance of global ethics cannot be fully accounted for in purely moral terms. It is above all a creation of the rise of cosmopolitan community. This has at least three major dimensions, legal, political and ethical. Legal cosmopolitanism is reflected in the increasing salience of international law and globally enforceable legal norms. This is one of the oldest traditions of cosmopolitanism, with its origins in Kant. Political cosmopolitanism is represented in the emergence of global civil society, as reflected in global social movements, international non-governmental organizations, and governance beyond the nation-state. Ethical cosmopolitanism is the concrete form global ethics takes and is induced by globalization. Globalization entails a tension with cosmopolitanism. Where globalization is a global force, cosmopolitanism arises in the reaction of the local to the global. Cosmopolitan community is community that is produced in the interaction of the local with the global (Delanty 2003).

Globalization can be defined simply as the intensification of modernity across the entire world, in all spheres ranging from capitalism to technology and science and communications and popular cultures. Global modernity is the emergent form of modernity today and is nothing more than the fact of intensified interconnections resulting from accelerated social transformation and diminishing boundaries between the different parts of the world. But this means the continued transformation of localities and globalities. Globalization is articulated through such processes as cross-fertilization and societal interpenetration, dynamics of differentiation and integration, all of which produce convergent and divergent patterns. Its diverse forms are varied and shaped by whatever responses lo-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 92 -- #134

calization generates. This connection of the local and global has been much discussed (see Robertson 1992) and does not need to be repeated here other than to mention that globalization, which entails agency, is articulated in local contexts, leading to different kinds and degrees of indigenization, creolization, vernacularization, hybridization, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism etc. Globalization is not universalistic; it does not rest on a universal moral or cultural foundation; as a tendentially global dynamic and consciousness it is as much an agent of localization/particularization as universalism. Yet on the other hand it intensifies the longing for universalistic ideas and frameworks, while making their realization impossible. Globalization induces cosmopolitanism which is to be found within, not beyond, all societies and cultures.

It is possible in a limited sense to speak of a global ethics as a macro-political ethics emerging with global modernity taking on an enhanced momentum. There are many ways global modernity can lead to, what Jürgen Habermas calls, a limited universalism based on the communicative rationality contained within the socio-cultural structures of all societies that have crossed the juncture of modernity. In his social theory modernity entails the setting free of these cognitive potentials on the global stage. While the resulting developments cannot always be too easily seen in terms of a dialogic rationality, the indeterminacy and contingency of global modernity does suggest something like a global ethics of debate based on flows of communication. There is, in principle, no reason why global modernity cannot be seen in terms of communication since it is widely believed that globalization is not necessarily leading to a universalistic moral order or some kind of a global order. The consciousness of modernity has been intensified as a result of developments as diverse as information and communication technologies, especially the Internet, migration, multiculturalism, tourism, global warming and risk.

Conclusion

My conclusion is that the signs of a global ethics are evident in many cosmopolitan currents in the world today. It is more than the sum of individual ethics but is not a collective ethics as such or a basis for a global order of governance. A global ethics is evident in ways of thinking, feelings, social movements and struggles, in soft laws as well as in international laws, tribunals and treaties. A global ethics is an emerging ethics and cannot be easily translated into legal and political forms since it is as yet largely a cultural phenomenon, or in Strydom’s terms a cognitive process, and does not have a clearly

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 93 -- #135

specified subject or institutional form.

Global ethics represents an important challenge for critical social theory. Habermas introduced a strong ethical dimension into critical theory, which previously had failed to connect the moral point of view with a conception of the political. Grounding ethics in communication, as the context in which all normative models of society are formed, ties ethics to the cultural and political project of modernity. Piet Strydom's work is characterized by this concern with the communicative nature of ethics. His distinctive contribution has been to develop a critical theory of communication around a cognitive theory that emphasizes macro-frames which structure communication under conditions of political contestation and as they do so the social world is discursively constructed. This approach suggests the salience of global ethics for an analysis of contemporary society, for global ethical discourses are becoming increasingly embroiled in the shaping of the social world. From the perspective of a cognitively oriented critical communication theory global ethics can only occur in the plural and in ways that undergo transformation in the process of emergence. So, rather than look at global ethics in terms of universal moral principles or in terms of common cultural values, from the perspective of a critical social theory it is best seen as a process of social construction in which communicative processes intertwine with moral and political standpoints. The discursive construction of the social world takes place within the wider context of global communication. Global ethics plays a major role in the discursive construction of the social world by structuring and contextualizing public discourse, as examples ranging from human rights, environmental concerns, health and security, social justice and solidarity illustrate.

As Strydom has argued, such processes of discursive transformation are open-ended due to the contingency that is the outcome of public sphere. The upshot of this is that global ethics can take a huge variety of forms, from the micro-level of individual identities to global protest movements and inter-governmental policy-making as well as forms of consumption. It is likely to be one of the principal contexts for social identities in the future and a promising ground for sociological research on globalization.

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 94 -- #136

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 95 -- #137

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6

RATIONAL ACTORS AND PARADIGM WARRIORS: REVISITING AND GENDERING SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES

Louise Ryan

Introduction

This chapter examines the issue of gender in social movement research and, drawing upon the work of Piet Strydom, argues for a gendered analysis of the configuration of old and new social movements. Despite the fact that large numbers of social movement activists and supporters are women, social movement theorists have been slow to analyze the gendered dynamics of movements. With a few exceptions, most leading social movement theorists are men and in some cases they unwittingly acknowledge their masculinity by referring to themselves as 'paradigm warriors'(Goodwin and Jasper 2004). As one commentator has argued, these male theorists appear to reside in a 'gender-neutral' (Charles 2004) universe. Specific schools of thought such as Resource Mobilization Theory and its off-shoot Political Process Theory have been criticized for their conceptualization of a rational political actor (Gould 2004). This conceptualization not only neglects the emotional component of movements (Gould 2004), but also obscures actors' gendered identities (Charles 2004). It is surely all the more ironic that the identity-oriented paradigm of social movement theory has been equally slow to analyze gender-identity. This may be in part because the focus on 'new' social movements has led theorists to concentrate on a narrow range of movements and ignore other movements that do not fit easily into this framework.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 98 -- #140

In attempting to challenge this gender-invisibility, Taylor (1999) has argued for a feminist re-appraisal of social movement theory. In her own work she focuses on women’s movements and highlights the ways in which gender underpins the identity, culture and dynamics of these movements. In this chapter, I explore the benefits of a gendered analysis of social movements and consider some of the implications for social movement theory. Firstly, I argue that the focus on new social movements underestimates the diversity and complexity of so-called ‘old’ social movements. Secondly, I suggest that a gender-sensitive approach to social movements reveals some of the continuities between new and old movements. The work of Piet Strydom is particularly useful in helping to challenge the linearity of many social movement theories. In my research, I draw on Strydom’s analysis to explore the early women’s movement and challenge not only the conceptualization of this as an ‘old’ movement but I also examine the issues of gender identity and gender politics that underpinned this movement in the early twentieth century.

As an undergraduate student at University College Cork in the mid-1980s, I found Piet Strydom truly inspiring. His courses were challenging and complicated and not for the faint-hearted. His lectures necessitated total concentration and his essay topics required students to read the mighty tomes of Habermas and other cutting edge European thinkers. Several years later when I decided to do my PhD in sociology, I was drawn back to UCC by the opportunity to work with him once again. By this time I had immersed myself in feminist theory and gender politics. Choosing a man as my supervisor may have seemed odd, but at that time Piet Strydom was supervising several feminist theses. For a sociologist, my choice of subject matter also appeared somewhat unusual. I was told that the Irish suffrage movement was the appropriate domain of historians not sociologists. I countered this criticism by explaining that I was analyzing the suffragists using the identity-oriented school of social movement theory. However, I was then told that it was anachronistic to apply theories derived for ‘new social movements’ to a historical movement. He never doubted the logic of what I was attempting to do. His supervision was invaluable. He was very giving of his time and always seemed to make himself available to his many post-graduate students. As a PhD supervisor myself now, I marvel at just how much time he spent with all his students. Sitting in easy chairs in his office, there was a calm atmosphere and never any sense of being hurried or harried. However, these were not cosy little chats, one had to be fully alert for a supervision session with Piet Strydom. His sharp mind probed and prodded my

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 99 -- #141

many draft chapters. He offered insight and enabled me to analyze complex concepts and theories. He was generous and supportive, while always pushing me to develop my ideas further, probe more deeply and analyze more critically. Spending an hour with him was a real work-out for the brain. I emerged inspired, if somewhat drained.

Over the last decade I have been delighted to see Piet Strydom gain the international recognition that he truly deserves. His many books and articles will, I am sure, inspire many more budding sociologists. Since completing my PhD, I have continued to teach and research in the area of social movements. In my work I have argued that a case study such as the suffrage movement challenges notions of what constitutes an ‘old movement’. In addition, I suggest that the new social movement theoretical framework may prove very useful in facilitating a deeper and more wide-ranging understanding of the suffrage movement (Ryan 2001, 2006a). Rather than a simple ‘votes for women’ lobby group, the suffrage movement can be understood as complex and multifaceted; illustrating several of the characteristics usually only associated with ‘new’ or contemporary movements.

Social Movement Theories

The study of social movements is one of the most lively and interesting areas of sociology. Since the 1960s social movements have been a rich vein for empirical research and theoretical analysis. Social movements provide a framework for understanding the dynamics of various social issues including: civil rights, feminism, environmentalism and the peace movement. Like many of the movements it studies, social movement theory is fractured, highly charged and argumentative. It is divided by competing concepts, paradigms and priorities. These divisions are often reinforced by the influences of certain ‘founding fathers’.

The study of and approach to social movements has changed utterly during the last fifty years. Classical perspectives were initially established during the inter-war years to account for the rise of fascist and communist organizations in America (Hourigan 2003). Prior to the 1960s, one of the most influential thinkers in the area of collective action was Smelser. He employed a structural-functionalist concept of collective behaviour focusing on structural strain and individual discontent. The relationship between the individual’s discontent and consequent participation in collective action was explained through a rather haphazard process of communication such as rumours. For Smelser collective action was usually

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 100 -- #142

spontaneous and resulted in irrational and abnormal behaviour, for example, riots.

However, in the 1960s the rise of collective action through the civil rights and anti-war movements forced social scientists to reconsider the complexities and diversities of these forms of social protest. Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), associated with theorists such as McCarthy and Zald, came to prominence in the USA in the early 1970s. According to this perspective, social movements were instrumental groups made up of 'rational actors' who, being excluded from elite politics, employed the available resources to further their own interests. The sudden emergence of these movements was seen as the result of a shift in the societal resources and political opportunities that facilitated collective action. During the early 1980s, a new strand of RMT emerged, associated with the work of McAdam and Tarrow, this has come to be known as Political Process Theory (PPT). Based predominantly on studies of the American civil rights movement, this approach focused on the macro-structural factors that either facilitated or hindered social protest (Goodwin and Jasper 2004). The RMT approach to the study of social movements has been very influential and, for example, has been used to analyze and explain the rise of the suffrage movement in the USA (Chafetz and Dworkin 1986).

However, that is not to imply that RMT and PPT are easily applicable to feminist research. While the focus on the 'rational actor' has provided PPT with a necessary corrective to the view of social movements as irrational, erratic and dangerous mob rule, Gould (2004) argues that the 'rational actor' obscures an insight into how actors actually think and feel. She uses her research on the AIDS awareness movement, ACT UP, to engage with the concept of the 'rational actor' and the question of emotions in social movements. She argues that a study of emotions provides an insight into the meaning that social movements have for their participants. According to Charles (2004) the concept of the rational actor cannot be assumed to be gender neutral. It is based on an image of masculine rationality and thus excludes any consideration of so-called feminine attributes such as emotions. I will return to this critique of the 'rational actor' later in the chapter.

RMT and PPT can be further criticized for their ethnocentricity (Hourigan 2003). There is a tendency to universalize from the North American experience, while little attention is paid to European analyses of social movements (Goodwin and Jasper 2004). As I have argued elsewhere, the omission of wider analyses and theorization is a particular weakness of PPT (Ryan 2006b). Much of the current

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 101 -- #143

debate within PPT centres on the dichotomous construction of 'political' versus 'cultural' and it would be unhelpful if this split became further polarized as American versus European. However, it is easy to see how this handy spatial split could occur and continue. In my view, the work of American theorists such as Craig Calhoun (1995) and Verta Taylor (1999) could be utilized to bridge the gap between these two competing paradigms of social movement theory (Ryan 2001).

New Social Movements

> Whereas so-called 'old' social movements attempted to gain access to the state through parliamentary politics and focus mainly on economic redistribution, 'new' social movements focused increasingly (though not exclusively) on issues like social identity, culture, lifestyle and human rights concerns. Such movements tend to be defined by their focus on post-material values, their detachment from an identifiable political ideology, and their use of novel and unconventional methods of political action (Todd and Taylor 2004: 19).

The work of French sociologist Alain Touraine (1985) and the Italian Alberto Melucci (1980, 1985) has been instrumental in theorizing NSMs (New Social Movements). According to Touraine, in modern times there have always been two main movements – elite and social movement vying against each other. From the middle of the 1800s to the 1960s the main social movement was the labour movement that vied against the capitalist state. However, Touraine claims that there has recently been a shift away from this type of conflict to a new scenario. In post-industrial western societies groups like the anti-nuclear movements emerge to oppose the technocratic elites who control information and decision-making in society (Touraine 1985, 1998).

Against the backdrop of the students' movement and anti-nuclear movements in Europe, the school of New Social Movement (NSM) theories developed in the 1970s-1980s to explain the emergence of these new and different forms of social protest. However, the theorists associated with the NSMs perspective are based in different countries, writing in different languages, so it has not been as cohesive as RMT or PPT (Hourigan 2003). Nonetheless, NSM theory has been highly influential and continues to inform many studies of protest groups and social mobilization (Della Porta and Diani 1999; Todd and Taylor 2004).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 102 -- #144

Melucci (1980) in his early influential essay, 'The New Social Movements: a theoretical approach', claimed that NSMs were marked by direct participation and a rejection of representation. 'Hence, the importance of direct action and of direct participation, in other words of the spontaneous, anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchical nature of the protests originating in these movements' (220). In the face of criticism he has been forced to defend many of his earlier arguments (Melucci1995a), still presumptions about leadership and organizational structure continue to inform images of contemporary social movements and, therefore, perceptions about how earlier movements were organized.

Similarly, the German theorist Claus Offe wrote that NSMs are marked by concerns about the body, nature, identity, culture and sexuality. Prominent among their values are autonomy and an opposition to control, regulation, manipulation and bureaucratization:

> The NSMs consist of participants, campaigns, spokespeople, networks, voluntary helpers and donations. Typically in their internal mode of action, NSMs do not rely, in contrast to traditional forms of political organization, on the organizational principle of differentiation, whether in a horizontal (insider versus outsider) or in the vertical dimension (leaders versus rank and file members)' (Offe 1985: 829).

In contrast to the 'old paradigm', Offe adds that NSMs display a 'poor' and at best 'transient' demarcation between leaders and members. He argues that formal organization and large-scale representative associations marked the internal modes of action of 'old' movements, while informality, spontaneity and a low degree of vertical and horizontal differentiation mark 'new' movements.

Theorists such as Offe, Melucci and Touraine assume that NSMs differ markedly from earlier movements. Of course, the main movement with which these newer movements are compared is the labour movement. The distinction between new and old movements is intended as far more than merely temporal, it symbolizes a significant shift in the interests of social movements (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 23). Drawing on the work of Habermas, many theorists assume that NSMs are responding to increasing administrative intervention in the social and symbolic processes, the so-called colonization of the life world. NSMs accept the state and the economy but want to create more space in civil society for social autonomy, plurality, right to difference, etc. based on the universal principles of the formal democratic state (Arato and Cohen 1984)

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 103 -- #145

In a recent examination of the relationship between politics and social movements in Britain, Todd and Taylor (2003) employ the concept of NSMs to explore the transformation of political activity. Drawing on the work of Giddens, they put forward the view that people are no more apathetic or alienated than before but express their participation in civil society in different and diverse ways. They suggest that people in Britain are more involved in collective activity (though not party politics) than in the past. Instead of engaging with the economic battles of traditional politics many people are turning towards issue-based politics (such as 'race', animal rights and environmentalism) promoted by NSMs. 'Rather than consisting in competing for state power, individuals and groups are finding new ways to affirm themselves and realize their potential' (24).

However, I find Todd and Taylor's acceptance of the old/new dichotomy highly problematic. In addition, it sits uncomfortably with several of the chapters in their edited collection, most notably Martin's (2004) chapter which begins with the bold statement 'the term new social movements is problematic' (29). Disagreement between editors and contributors is perfectly acceptable if it is acknowledged and discussed but in this case there is little or no discussion or even acknowledgement of these marked differences in opinion, approach and definition. The weakness of this book is symptomatic of how the term NSM has tended to be used by researchers, theorists and commentators.

However, whilst theorists like Melucci continue to emphasize that NSMs represent new forms of mobilization and action, others are critical of the dichotomy between new and old social movements (Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Bagguley 1992; Ray 1993; Calhoun 1995; Martin 2004). Using the cognitive praxis framework Eyerman and Jamison (1991) have attempted to compare old and new social movements. However, like many of those discussed above they focus attention on the environmental movement as an NSM and the labour movement as an old social movement. By so doing, they immediately face qualitative differences between the two movements. They refer to the early women's movement as an example of a nineteenth century social movement but they fail to explore the movement in any way. The similarities of the old and new women's movement are therefore not discussed within the dimensions of the cognitive praxis framework. However, despite selecting very different types of social movements to represent old and new social movements, they discover some similarities. They say: 'It is our contention that, like the new social movements, the old social movements also provided space for new thought to emerge, and indirectly for new institutions,

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 104 -- #146

vocations and scientific theories' (80).

They expand further on old social movements, claiming that such movements 'opened new public spaces in which new social and political identities could take form' and thus 'redefining politics and reconstituting the political arena' (151). Through the work of these early social movements women won acceptance in the political arena. While this at least acknowledges the importance of early social movements, it comes close to the point made by Jean Cohen (1983) that old social movements were primarily concerned with the inclusion of the excluded. This point is reiterated by Eyerman and Jamison (1991) in the following quote:

> In addition to their concern with politics in this narrowed meaning, the social movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were active in what are now called cultural areas as well. They were concerned with issues of education and access to 'bourgeois' culture (153).

But despite the similarities which Eyerman and Jamison discover between old and new social movements, they are at pains to reiterate the differences between the movements.

'Contemporary social movements are new because they occur at a distinct stage in societal development, involve new actors equipped with different orientations and identities, and aim at achieving quite different ends than old movements' (153).

Thus despite the usefulness of cognitive praxis frameworks in comparing old and new movements, I believe that this approach is weakened by a linearity which appears to accept the development from working class movement to ecology movement as a fairly unproblematic progression. While attempting to overcome the ahistorical approach to NSMs, Eyerman and Jamison (1991: 61) seem to accept Touraine's notion that in each period one dominant social movement represents the struggle inherent in that society be it industrial or post-industrial society.

Any simplistic, polarized construction of old and new movements omits the continuities and similarities that persist over time across various movements. This weakens the explanatory power of NSM theory in two key ways. Firstly, narrow constructions of new social movements simplify the diversity of social movements in contemporary society. Martin (2004) in common with several critics has argued that the conceptualization of 'new' social movements needs to be reassessed. Theorists like Offe and Melucci have constructed NSMs as lifestyle and identity oriented. These movements

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 105 -- #147

are perceived as being concerned with 'post material' issues such as alternative health care, etc. and seek to defend civil society against colonization by the state. Melucci argues that his original analysis of NSMs has been much misunderstood and simplified both by those who use the concept and those who have criticized it (Melucci 1995a). He says that it was only ever intended as a temporary critical tool to help understand the types of movements that were emerging in the late 1970s and early 1980s, i.e. in the post-industrial, information society. However, regardless of how Melucci himself may have intended the concept to be used, there is no doubt that the term NSMs has been taken on by a wide range of theorists and has influenced the way a generation of social protest has been analyzed and understood. While Melucci continues to defend the newness of NSMs, one of problems with his work that leaves it open to so much criticism is its 'high level of abstraction' (Martin 2004: 42). It is rarely applied to detailed case studies of particular movements. Recent empirical research suggests that many NSM theorists have been highly selective in their examples of 'new' movements and fail to consider the wide array of contemporary movements that continue to be concerned with 'old' issues. For example, Martin (2004) shows that many 'new' movements such as the peace and environmental movements continue to campaign around material issues such as global poverty and Third World debt (42). Women's movements continue to campaign around material issues such as reproductive health, welfare and safety.

The second way in which the old/new movement dichotomy weakens the explanatory power of NSM theory is through narrow constructions of 'old' social movements that have led to the simplification of these diverse and complex movements. Because older social movements were assumed to have a dominant and centralized leadership structure, it has been assumed that these movements can be understood simply by studying the decisions of the leaders. As I have argued at length elsewhere, this assumption about leadership underestimates and misrepresents the loose nature of leadership and the diffuse nature of decision-making within some 'old' social movements (Ryan 2001). I believe that before we embark on an appraisal of NSMs it is necessary to firstly understand what old social movements really stood for. Old social movements have been described as campaigns for material and instrumental needs, centred on issues like citizenship. However, if old social movements are defined simply in terms of the labour movement then this is not representative of all the many smaller social movements

that existed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Indeed, as Larry

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 106 -- #148

Ray (1993) argues, movements like the women's suffrage movement were not only concerned with citizenship but also raised issues around identity. The difference between the 'old' women's movement and the 'new' women's movement, he claims, may not be as marked as some theorists have implied. He strongly disputes the old/new dichotomy: 'claims to novelty are exaggerated and ahistorical since contemporary demands have long histories, and movements like environmentalism, pacifism, feminism were significant around 1890–1900 or before' (61).

According to Nickie Charles (2004), the identity-oriented school of social movement theory has not developed a gendered approach. This is remarkable given the fact that women are very active in the movements so beloved by NSM theorists, e.g. peace and environmental movements. Despite their interest in identity, most male theorists ignore gender. As Charles says 'it is almost as if social movement theory exists in a parallel gender-neutral universe' (262). The failure to focus on gender and feminist issues means that the continuity of issues and campaigns within women's movements has not been fully explored by NSM researchers.

Gendering social movements

In her work on social movements, collective action and identity, Verta Taylor (1999) comments that the study of social movements has remained remarkably 'gender-neutral':

> Despite considerable interest in women's movements, until recently political sociologists and sociologists of social movements rarely evoked gender as a force in the emergence and development of social movements. This is not surprising, since the field of social movements, especially compared with other areas of study, has been remarkably untouched by the gender scholarship produced in the social sciences over the past decade (8).

Taylor argues that movement mobilization, leadership patterns, strategies and ideologies are all gendered. The failure to analyze these gendered roles and processes has meant that important aspects of social movements have been ignored or simplified. In developing a theory which addresses the intersection of gender and movements, she draws upon 'recent theoretical formulations that combine the insights of classical collective behaviour theory, resource mobilization theory, and new social movements theory' (12). First, in examining

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 107 -- #149

political and cultural opportunities she explores how shifting gender differentiation and gender stratification contribute to the mobilization and formation of collective identities. Second, she examines gendered mobilization structures, arguing that mobilization may be underpinned by inequalities embedded in the informal and formal organizational structures of the movement. She draws on Joan Acker who has argued that 'gender divisions and hierarchies are a subtext in the structure of all organizations' (18). Taylor suggests that some women's movements may set out to challenge these gendered structures and so create more diffuse, loose, local and fluid movements. In the third aspect of her theoretical framework, Taylor draws upon the school of NSMs to understand issues of identity formation. Similarly to Melucci (1995a, 1995b),Taylor suggests that people do not bring ready-made identities to a movement but that identities are formed through the collectivity. The processes through which those identities come to be gendered are very significant and cannot be ignored. Taylor concludes:

> The ignoring of a wide range of women's collective action by mainstream social movement scholars has led to a preoccupation with movements operating in the political and economic arenas rather than the cultural arenas, an emphasis on formal organizations and exclusion of more fluid and diffuse forms of association, the accentuation of cognitive factors and negation of emotions in social protest and a focus on institutional change strategies rather than identity politics (26).

Taylor's analysis is particularly apt in relation to 'old' or so-called first wave women's movements. Using the concept of 'movements in abeyance' she has explored the latent feminist activity that took place in the United States during the apparently nadir period between the first and second waves of the women's movement. Her research shows that feminist activism during the 1940s-60s provided a crucial seedbed for the growth of the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Thus the so-called second wave feminist movement did not emerge out of a vacuum but had roots that stretch back to the nineteenth century. Taylor's view of 'movements in abeyance' is helpful in highlighting the links and continuities between old and new women's movements.

A dichotomy which constructs NSMs as 'cultural' and old movements as 'political and economic' not only ignores the cultural dimension of earlier movements but also negates the continuities between movements across time. Movements such as the suffragists

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 108 -- #150

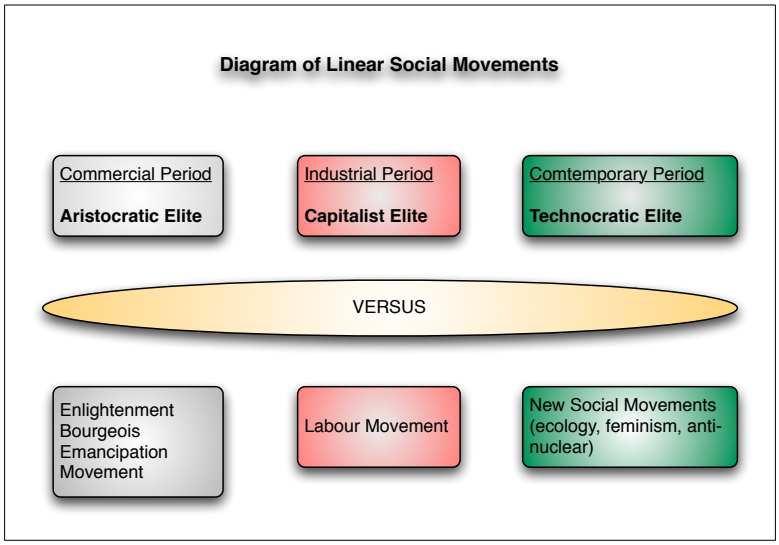
engaged with culture as well as politics and economics. To dismiss the movement as simply a political reform group underestimates not only the breadth of their interests, but also the diversity of their campaigns. As Karen Offen (1992) has argued, the tendency towards a dichotomy of old and new women’s movements has lead to the unhelpful split between so-called first wave and second wave feminism. This linearity not only grossly misrepresents the complexity of the early women’s movement but also obscures the continuities that may exist across time.

Challenging linearity

Nonetheless, many of the concepts developed by NSM theorists are extremely valuable and the analysis of collective identity formation, self-reflexivity and submerged networks as cultural laboratories is very useful in understanding the internal dynamics of social movements. However, the extent to which this analysis is only relevant to ‘new’ movements remains a contentious issue. In attempting to explore the continuities that may exist between ‘old’ and ‘new’ movements it is important to re-examine the linearity embedded in the work of Touraine and Habermas. In this section I will draw on the work of Piet Strydom and others to challenge the simplistic old/new binary.

If the work of Touraine, Habermas and other members of the school of new social movement theory are combined then the following diagram of the development of social movements may be seen.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 109 -- #151



This configuration of the development of social movements has been criticized by Strydom (1990) for its ‘crude linearity’ (159). Instead, Strydom’s (2002) work highlights the usefulness and fruitfulness of ‘non-linear modes of thought’ (105). In addition, he also rejects ‘the equally rough cyclical explanations’, according to which ‘new social movements are a pendulum-like reactive reappearance of age-old anti-modern discontent’ (1990: 159). Instead, building on the work of Klaus Eder, Strydom supports a synthesis approach that combines the complementarities of both explanations. He argues that:

> The history of modernity is not merely the history of major progressive social movements such as the bourgeoisie and the labour movement, but the history of the interrelation of these major social movements and counter-movements opposed to them, such as the early romantic movement, the social utopians, the anarchists and the avant-garde (1990: 159).

The major movement of any social period ‘pitted an alternative project against the dominant modernizing elite’, counter movements such as utopians or the avant-garde were challenging the elites while simultaneously engaged in a critique of the major social movement (159). As Eder (1993) has argued ‘counterculture movements have existed since the beginning of modernity. The social movements that created civil society have always been accompanied by sectarian

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 110 -- #152

groups looking for a more spiritual form of life in civil society' (136).

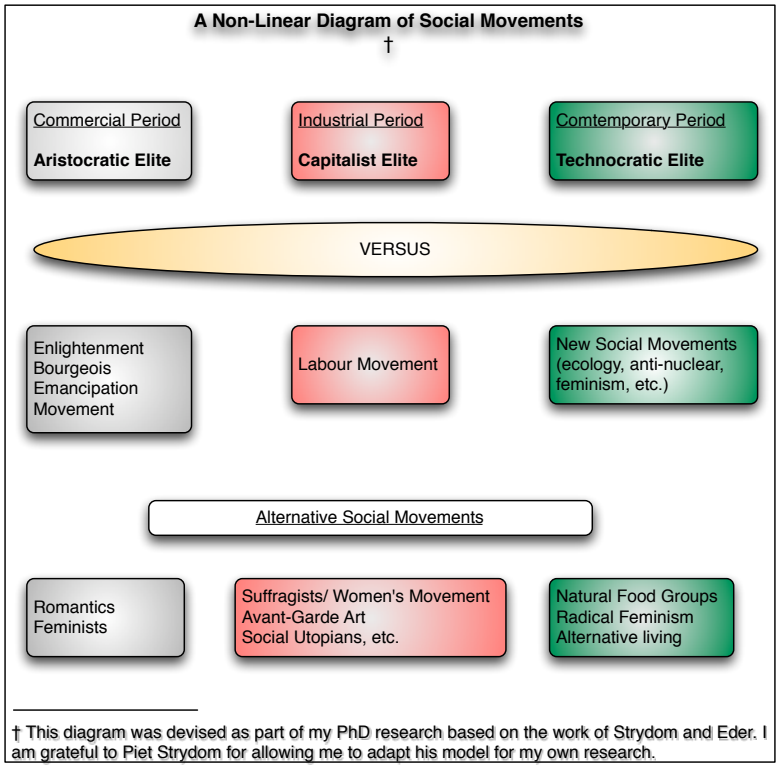
These counter-movements were concerned with aspects of modernity screened out by the dominant movements but they were by no means irrational or regressive actors. According to Strydom (1990), these counter-movements 'were concerned with the basic relation human beings establish with their world and which structures their outlook' (160). For example, counter-movements have focused on the question of nature for the last three centuries, however, only in recent decades has this issue eventually become a major concern. While the elite and the labour movement clashed on issues of workers' rights, counter-movements considered the impact of industrialization on our relationship with nature. Thus, as well as rejecting both linear and rough cyclical approaches to the study of social movements, 'the synthetic approach distinguishes between a dominant and a suppressed modernity' (160). While Strydom's research focuses primarily on nature, risk and the environment, he acknowledges that other movements, such as the feminist movement can also be explained within this synthetic approach (Strydom 1990).

This approach has been very helpful to me in my analysis of the suffrage movement as a social movement. The polarized construction of old and new movements omits the continuities and similarities that may exist across movements over time. As I have argued elsewhere suffragists, while pursuing legislative and political reform, also had cultural dimensions, for example challenging the social construction of gender (Ryan 2001). Narrow constructions of 'old' social movements have led to the neglect of these more complex dimensions of the suffragist movement. If we define old social movements purely in terms of the labour or chartist movement then this may not be entirely representative of all the many smaller social movements that existed in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The feminist movement has been in existence for over 150 years, though most of that time it had been quite latent. Apart from the mass mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s, women had previously mobilized in many countries world wide (including developing countries like India) at the beginning of the twentieth century in pursuit of legislative reform and cultural/attitudinal change. The synthetic approach devised by Strydom and Eder may facilitate an analysis of the early feminist movement as a social movement that has been almost ignored up to now. While Eder develops his theoretical analysis of social movements through the ecological movement, he has little to say about feminism and the emergence of the women's movement

as a counter-movement over time. While Habermas sees feminism in the tradition of classical emancipatory movements, Strydom (1990) points out that 'the dialect of movement and counter-movement applies also to the feminist movement – a movement consisting of various branches, the most important of which are definitely not the emancipatory ones' (161).

Thus from the following diagram it can be seen that alternative social movements have existed throughout modern history. These groups have frequently not shared in the debate or struggle between the main social movement and the dominant elite.



These alternative or countercultural social movements have been largely ignored by sociologists because they were surpassed and pushed off the public agenda by the larger class and labour issues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which came to dominate public debate and hence historical accounts of that period.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 112 -- #154

This synthetic approach represents an important corrective to the linearity of the old/new dichotomy and provides an example of how continuities may be traced across social movements over time.

The women’s movement

Craig Calhoun (1993) cites the women’s movement as an example of an early social movement that illustrates continuities over time . However, as feminist scholars such as Nickie Charles and Verta Taylor have argued the invisibility of gender issues within social movement theory may explain why the women’s movement has not been fully researched as an example of a social movement.

Ray (1993) has suggested that the differences between the old and new women’s movements may not be as marked as some theorists have implied. He shows that early women’s movements such as the suffrage movement were not only concerned with citizenship but also raised issues around identity. Research on suffrage activism has tended to focus largely on the pursuit of the vote. Thus the movement may be misunderstood not only as a single-issue pressure group but also as a reformist campaign demanding inclusion in formal democratic institutions. However, a new historiography of the early women’s movement has been emerging over the last decade. This work reassesses the complexity and multifaceted nature of feminism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Offen 1992). My research has sought to go beyond the narrow focus on enfranchizement to uncover the complexity of identities, actions and motivations behind the suffrage movement (Ryan 2001). Drawing on the theorization developed by Strydom and Eder, I have argued that the early women’s movement represented an alternative or countercultural movement which engaged with and frequently criticized the dominant discourse and agenda of the government and the main social movement of that period, for example, the Irish nationalist movement.

I have written at length about the early women’s movements in Ireland and Britain and it is not my intention to go back over those discussions here (Ryan 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997). I will instead offer a short summary. I have also drawn upon Calhoun (1995) to question whether or not the following criteria are unique to NSMs; Issues of Identity, Defending the Lifeworld, Politicization of Everyday Life, Non-Class based mobilization, Non-hierarchical/Non-instrumental, Direct Action, Overlapping Commitment.

Issues of identity were clearly important to all suffragists, terms like ‘suffragist’ and militant ‘suffragette’ were powerful signifiers not only of strategy but also belief and commitment to a controversial

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 113 -- #155

cause. However, issues of identity ran deeper than that and the notion of being a 'feminist' as opposed to simply a suffragist illustrated the concern with a wider array of interests than just enfranchizement. The extent of differences between the sexes was hotly debated and such analyses were often complex and indeed contradictory. Feminists frequently argued that men and women were simultaneously different and equal. The qualities of female identity were seen as both equal and in some cases superior to traditional masculine qualities (Ryan 1996, 1997).

Pacifist campaigns against World War 1 offer just one example of the many global links between feminist groups in the early twentieth century (Delap, Ryan, and Zackodnik 2006). Gatherings like the Hague Peace Congress and the Zurich Peace Congress, and organizations like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, gave feminists a transnational platform. Melucci (1995) argues that there is a planetary or transnational dimension to NSMs. But clearly movements such as the suffragists had begun to develop a transnational focus long before the age of global communications.

According to Calhoun (1995), NSMs are assumed to be particularly involved in 'politicizing everyday life'. However, as he points out, feminist groups have long been associated with the slogan 'the personal is political'. While this may be considered unique to post-1960s NSMs, there is evidence to suggest that so-called 'first wave' women's movements were also concerned with the complex relationship between privacy and the public sphere (Offen 1988; Holton 1992). In discussing the activities of early twentieth-century Irish feminists it is important not to focus exclusively on their campaigns for access to the formal political sphere and extending the roles of women in the public sphere generally. I challenge Cohen's (1959) claim that the suffrage movement was merely concerned with the inclusion of women in formal political institutions. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) have also described old social movements as being concerned with access to 'bourgeois culture' (153). Nonetheless, this emphasis on access and inclusion underestimates the degree of feminist critique. These women certainly sought inclusion on juries and all public bodies and committees. In addition, there was also a critique that went further and challenged male defined morality, male defined laws and rules, male controlled work practices (Ryan and Ward 2007).

For example, several feminists called into question the public/private split. By calling public attention to private abuses of women and children in the home, they offered a critique of social structures rather than merely demanding inclusion in them. These women

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 114 -- #156

attempted to reveal the widespread nature of domestic violence in Irish society and pointed to economic dependency as a key factor in forcing women to keep their abuse silent and hidden. In other words, early twentieth century feminists challenged the dominant codes of knowledge, authority and morality in society. They wanted to change society rather than merely be included in it; ‘society as at present constituted must go’ (Sheehy Skeffington 1913).

It may appear, on the surface, as if feminists wanted to enhance the regulation of all aspects of life in order to protect women and girls against violence and abuse. However, I argue that, in common with many social movements, their agenda blended together both a defence of the integrity of the lifeworld and demands for its regulation. As Strydom has argued, the women’s movement had many branches and facets not all of which were emancipatory (Strydom 1990).

Calhoun indicates the range of strategies and tactics employed by social movements in the nineteenth century. He points to the suffrage movement as a good example of direct action tactics (Calhoun 1995). In the Irish context militancy was not as widely used as in Britain. Most suffragists were constitutional rather than militant suffragettes. Nevertheless, women did employ a range of inventive strategies aimed at achieving publicity for their various campaigns. Within the conventions of early twentieth century norms and values, women continued to be denied space within civil society. Therefore, every march and public gathering addressed by women was a defiance of tradition. Throughout its eight-year history, the *Irish Citizen* newspaper (1912–1920) testifies to the inventiveness of women and their ‘direct action’ methods of gaining publicity.

Membership of the suffrage movement was fluid and flexible and, although each group had its own elected committees, presidents and secretaries, the movement as a whole was fairly non-hierarchical. As I have argued at length elsewhere, there was no one leader, though clearly some suffragists were more famous than others, several different women exerted influence over the movement (Ryan 2001). As editor of the *Irish Citizen* for many years Hanna Sheehy Skeffington might be seen as particularly important. However, as the founder of the umbrella group Irish Women’s Suffrage Federation, Louise Bennett was certainly influential. As one of the oldest campaigners, Anna Haslam was revered by many. The diversity and fluidity of membership reflected the range of different but overlapping campaigns within the movement. Pacifism, nationalism, trade unionism, child welfare, education campaigns, and temperance were all important aspects of feminism and members were often involved in

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 115 -- #157

several of these either simultaneously or serially.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been two-fold. Firstly, drawing on the work of Strydom and Eder I have sought to challenge the linearity that underpins much of the old movement/new movement split. I have argued that in many cases, different movements are used by researchers to illustrate old and new movements, such as labour and ecology, thus the continuities that may exist over time within a movement such as the women's movement have been overlooked. This relates to my second aim in highlighting the absence of a gender sensitive approach to the study of social movements. Most social movement theorists are men and although some of these 'paradigm warriors' pay lip service to the women's movement, they rarely embark on a serious analysis of feminist movements. Behind this apparent gender-neutrality there is often an assumed masculinity embodied in concepts such as the rational actor. This obscures and simplifies the complexity of gender issues within social movements not only in the present but also in the past.

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 116 -- #158

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7

LINKING KNOWLEDGE, COMMUNICATION, AND SOCIAL LEARNING: CRITICAL THEORY'S IMMANENT CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM'S ADMINISTRATIVE STATE

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In spite of varying political experiences and frames of reference, first, second, and now third generation critical theorists have always retained the Marxist intention to not only make sense of the social struggle for justice and equality, but also to make a critical contribution to it. As Eder (2007) explains it, 'the first really "social" theory, the social theory of Marx, is transformed from its initial nebulous steps into a theory doing the job Marx wanted it to do: not only to explain the social world, but also to understand why people engage in changing it' (405). Although it has been radicalized and extended, Marx's ideological critique still offers the starting point for an immanent critique of capitalism's contemporary structures and inequalities.

Indeed, critical theory today continues this legacy of immanent critique by placing the praxis of the knowing and acting subject at the heart of critical sociological research. The social actor becomes the primary agent linking everyday meaning making practices, knowledge production, and normative integration. From Horkheimer's insights into the 'administered society', Adorno's fears about the damaging impact of a technocratic consciousness, and Strydom and Eder's work on the social construction of nature, critical theory has

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 120 -- #162

always forged a clear connection between knowledge production and social praxis.

Even first generation critical theorists like Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse did not simply wish to account for, or explain the process of knowledge formation. Additionally, they set out to evaluate its potential, and critically assess its integrative role, radicalizing the Kantian concept of immanent critique along the way. The latter was intended to demystify the apparent objectivity of modernity's administrative rationality by showing it to be constituted by the actions and cognitions of strategic actors. In the case of the early critical enterprise, immanent critique was intended as an emancipatory critique, one that sought to reconstruct social theory in a way that would incorporate some of the more compelling insights of Marx, Weber and Nietzsche.

Inheriting the Frankfurt School's critique of positivism, as a 'blindly pragmatized thought' whose clarifications on the nature of social life depict social action without the actor and praxis without the author. Habermas sought to re-insert agency into the equation. His interest in a philosophy of praxis and its relationship to knowledge and understanding was defined, at least initially, in terms of an 'anthropology of knowledge production' (Wiggershaus 1994). Adorno (1982) refers to positivism's 'desubjectivization' of the research subject and its tendency to de-humanize the subject in *Against Epistemology: A Meta-Critique*. Habermas would later refine this position through an empirical-analytical emphasis on 'cognitive interests' or 'knowledge interests'. With the publication of his *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (1979), Habermas now began to explore various forms of cultural knowledge or 'rationality structures', sometimes referred to as transcendental 'structures of consciousness', and to differentiate these from the cognitive reasoning of the individual.

While Adorno's explorations of critical theory's immanent critique of technocratic consciousness, in particular, would remain embedded in the philosophy of consciousness, Habermas would alternatively ground his critique in the inter-subjective context of daily linguistic exchange. For Adorno, the only protection offered to reason against the spread of an instrumental rationality was in the aesthetic realm. In contrast, Habermas believed that reason did not have to make such a retreat, given its inherently dialogic nature. Once the definition of emancipation as the increased technical mastery of nature was rejected by the Frankfurt school, there appeared to be no other moment of human rationality to appeal to besides aesthetic reason. Habermas argues that the critique of instrumental

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 121 -- #163

reason need not appeal to a utopian reconciliation with nature. For Habermas, instrumental reason can only be effectively challenged through a communicative reason rather than a purely subjective one. A communicative reason had the potential to openly fight against the excesses of an instrumental rationality embodied in the reasoning of the capitalist administrative state. Habermas in this instance makes a key contribution to critical theory's reformulation of a concept of social action based on a model of communicative action and a politics of radical inter-subjectivity.

Strydom (1999) has further developed this re-orientation in critical theory, towards a politics of inter-subjectivity, by introducing the concept of the 'extended other' into the debate on modernity's communicative potential. This thesis argues that the public is always present in some form in contemporary communication processes. New media technologies continue to diminish the significance of spatial remoteness by bringing increasingly global publics into the spectrum of the present. As a consequence, the reverence shown towards absent and anonymous publics has become so extensive that it has profoundly altered the conditions of reproduction of the modern 'communication society' (Strydom 1999:5).

In *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1987), Habermas began to shape the foundations of his theory of communicative action. Using insights derived from the tradition of hermeneutics, and Gadamer in particular, he sought to understand the process of knowledge production and understanding within the context of a linguistically mediated inter-subjective exchange of meaning in everyday life. Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1984) like Habermas, acknowledge those structures of autonomy and rationality in the lifeworld that provide meaning and logic to protagonists of a 'politics of transfiguration' (Benhabib 1986). In their struggle to realize modernity's unaccomplished emancipatory potential, such critical actors juxtapose societal norms with actual social relations and highlight any discrepancies. Discursive communication plays a vital role in this regard, as highlighted by Eder (1996), Strydom (2002), Snow and Benford (2000), Ridgeway (2006), all of whom stress the significance of frames of meaning or schemas of interpretation to the cognitive project of social communication.

Parallel to capitalism's promotion of an instrumental rationality, with its excessive means-end, calculating reasoning designed to satisfy the imperatives of modernity's administrative structures, runs a 'communicative rationality' that celebrates modernity's capacity for dialogue and democratic change, especially when it is infused with a politics of fulfilment and transfiguration. Critical theory, as

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 122 -- #164

it has been defined through the work of Habermas, Benhabib, Strydom, and Eder, continues to celebrate modernity's communicative potential by accentuating the validity of an everyday production of knowledge to a philosophy of social praxis. Indeed, this emphasis on the everyday to meaning-making practices has encouraged a reformulation of abstract social theoretical categories like social structure, formal and substantive rationality, alienation, and the communicative dimensions of liberal democracy in terms of their social activation at the ground level in 'live' discourse contexts.

Following the linguistic turn in the critical tradition, spearheaded by Habermas, contemporary critical social research evaluates the current demands for justice and a recognition of human worthiness in terms of the ontological condition of inter-subjectivity, that is, social practices of mutual understanding, conflict, and learning in everyday social meaning making practices. This greater attention to the process of inter-subjectivity and social relations between actors reaches a new climax in Eder (2007) and Strydom's (2007) expositions of cognitive social theory and Miller's (2002, 2007) insights on 'collective argumentation' and social learning. Collectively, this renewed emphasis on social communication as an evolving, yet dynamic process of negotiation of cognitively ordered meaning systems encourages critical theory more generally to reflexively rethink the contemporary nature of social reality, rationality and critique, as well as the constitutive role of the social actor in this global cosmopolitan era (See Beck and Sznaider 2006; Delanty 2006; Thompson 2005).

Linking knowledge with social praxis: A critical approach to framing

A critical approach to frame analysis uncovers the vital links between the culturally produced product knowledge and the active cognitive process of interpretation. According to this perspective, the significance of frames lies far beyond the contingency of immediate situations in that they provide actors with the necessary 'cognitive tools' with which to make sense of the social world around them (Eder 2007). The 'critical' approach to framing builds on insights derived from various traditions including socio-linguistics, critical hermeneutics, the social constructionist paradigm, combining these with a Habermasian model of discursive communication to add empirical credibility to critical theory's ethos of emancipation. This critical framing approach to research thus remains true to the central normative project of critical theory in its evaluations of the diagnostic and prognostic dimensions of the discourse actor's knowledge interests, especially their emancipatory potential. Snow and Benford

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 123 -- #165

(1988) distinguish between 'diagnostic framing' (the identification of a problem and the attribution of blame) and 'prognostic framing' (outlining a better future scenario).

Cognitive frames of meaning, as identified by Goffman (1974), are seen by Eder (2007) as arising from deep within the culture and the inter-subjectivity of everyday communication processes. Interpretative frames constitute important structures of consciousness articulated in and through discourse. They represent key cognitive resources used by social actors to interpret the social world. Operating from a classically critical social theory perspective, Strydom (2004) describes this approach to framing as a 'reconstructive-empirical sociology, one that makes use of public discourse and frame analysis, as well as institutional analysis' to evaluate an 'objective societal framework' (26).

One of the chief distinguishing features of this critical framing approach to social communication is its concern with the 'pre-interpreted world' which forms a relatively familiar backdrop against which actors creatively weave both inherited and invented cultural fibres or resources together to frame their distinctive perspectives on an issue. As Snow and Benford (1988) highlight, collective action frames provide the actor with an interpretative tool with which to simplify and condense aspects of the 'world out there' in ways 'intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner by-stander support and to demobilize antagonists' (198). Strydom (2004) describes such creative practices of meaning making, involving an activation of culturally available as well as new structures of rationality, as contributing to social learning processes and revisions to modernity's knowledge order over time.

As an epistemological approach to research, a critical frame analysis evaluates more general, theoretically significant categories like collective learning, resource mobilization, cultural schemas, etc. in terms of how they can be linked to the social actor's meaning-making practices in everyday life. In other words, the flow of meanings in everyday life are allowed to guide the development of critical social theoretical insights, forcing critical theory to confront its own idealizations with empirical detail on real life social processes. Essentially, what this means is that critical theoretical schemas are viewed in relation to how the social actors, using a variety of everyday shared cultural resources, are conditioned by their 'habitus' in how they respond to social change, conflict, even crisis; how the actor 'acts out', in a culturally significant and cognitively rule bound way, various social struggles, perceptions, thoughts, norms, and facts at the ground level in 'live' discourse contexts, so to speak. Individuals in

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 124 -- #166

these circumstances learn together and thereby generate collective learning processes on account of their participation in such social interactions.

Continuing to work with generalized social theory categories, a critical approach to frame analysis draws parallels between lay beliefs and ordinary language frames on the one hand, and theoretical components of a critical theory perspective, on the other.

Coupling critique with crisis: Evaluations of the State's current administrative rationality, as a new wave of crisis unfolds

In *Legitimation Crisis* (1976), Habermas explains how the individual's experience of 'lived crisis' is a socially significant pre-condition to practices of social learning. 'Lived crisis' here signals the emergence of feelings of exploitation, injustice, resentment, insult within the lifeworld of individuals, and can be distinguished from 'systemic crisis' which relates to a malfunctioning of objective contexts of relations, such as economic relations (Benhabib 1984).

Individuals interpret their needs, desires, motives for their actions in the light of values and norms available to them socio-culturally. While 'lived crisis' may be experienced individually at least initially, it is interpreted socially in communication with others. In this way, actors' sense of injustice or moral injury emanating from within their lifeworld is extended into the public realm. It is through communication and discourse that actors share their sentiments of neglect and dissatisfaction with certain societal norms (that is, their experiences of a 'lived crisis') and thereby make them a component of inter-subjective learning. Critical theorists such as Eder and Strydom have assessed this generative capacity of the lifeworld to stimulate cognitive learning processes, for instance in relation to an ecological communication.

In *Legitimation Crisis* (1976), Habermas posited the existence of a fundamental tension between the lifeworld and the corrosive impact of an administrative structure geared towards the impersonal demands of the market and capitalist growth. Because of its emphasis on economic expansion, the administrative system is said to offer too few possibilities for problem solving than are necessary for its continued efficiency and legitimacy. In this seminal text, Habermas not only diagnoses an impending social crisis, he also evaluates this experience of crisis in the light of its future emancipatory potential. In this way, Habermas sought to establish a more organic link between critical theory's interpretation of 'critique' and the social experience of 'crisis'. This objective saw that the explanatory-diagnostic dimension to critical theory was re-accentuated in the

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 125 -- #167

work of Habermas. Just as Marx's critique of fetishism had sought to unpackage the laws of capitalism, Habermas' critique of administrative rationality, seeks to demystify the pseudo-objectivity of late capitalism's functionalist enclosure and render social actors responsible for their actions. Habermas foresaw a dangerous contradiction emerging between this administrative system's steering mechanisms, increasingly attuned to the beat of the capitalist market on the one hand, and meaningful values, purposes, and ways of life derived from stable cultural identities, on the other.

If only to validate Habermas' insights more than thirty years after the publication of *Legitimation Crisis*, current administrative structures again seem in danger of losing their legitimate authority and potential for justification. Arguably, this has been due mainly to the way current administrations' justificatory regimes are framed. In the Irish political context, such regimes are primarily geared towards evaluations like 'value for money', efficiency, 'good housekeeping', the need to 'balance the books'. Ireland's health care services have been singled out for major institutional reform on the grounds that this is the highest area of public expenditure, both of revenue and major capitalist development programmes, today. With both income expectations and public finances forced to adjust recently to a slower rate of economic growth, Irish state spending on health must be curtailed if Ireland's long-term economic survival is to be secured, according to Government reasoning. In the process, Ireland's health care services are being made more vulnerable to market forces as key service components are prized open to attract private market investment. In spite of Government's call for prudence, Ireland spends just 8.3 per cent of GDP on health care, which is less than most other European countries apart from the UK (Measuring Ireland's Progress 2007; Transforming Health 2007). Forging ahead with Government's plans to rationalize health care services, the State is said to be working with the Health Service Executive to 'measure, manage and reduce' the time it takes to admit and discharge patients from hospital (Transforming Health 2007: 39). The Minister for Health and Children aims to achieve 'service guarantees' that can be sustained only if there is 'overall budget discipline and a drive for efficiency, effectiveness and value for money' (27).

The Irish government's position on the marketization of public health care is carefully articulated through a discourse on service provision, services created with the reported interests of the citizen's 'independent living' in mind. The desire to provide as many services as possible in the community, outside of expensive long-term hospital care, is dismissed by opponents as a violation of citizens'

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 126 -- #168

rights to proper health care. The use of tax incentives to promote the development of private 'super-clinics' and the increasing trend towards 'for-profit medicine' are developments which opponents rigorously condemn (McManus 2006).

Like all justifications, government discourse on managerial efficiency and 'sound system design' requires a factual validity that, in the case of the health care service for instance, remains unconvincing. The trend towards the privatization of the health care service is portrayed as part of 'the European trend'. It is said to be 'against European developments to cut off a role in public health policy for the private sector' (PD 2007: 41). Such evaluations also presuppose a generalization of interests around market imperatives, which is currently alienating many of its publics in Irish society.

Up close and personal: Ireland's current public health care crisis

In the Irish policy context, public health management discourse has become increasingly politicized since the late 1980s. Components of this discourse have proven to be highly controversial and enter public consciousness usually via a high profile media debate. What emerges is an increased demand for public justification of the rationale behind the actions and decisions of the state to cut public spending and restrict service sector recruitments. Dissatisfaction with the public health care system is based on a knowledge that derives from the socio-cultural lifeworld of citizens. Such knowledge stems from context-specific episodes of cognitive learning, where citizens' direct perceptions and experiences of institutional inefficiency and neglect are collectively shared, via discourse with other actors and used to validate a claim of injustice against Irish citizenship entitlements. Through an intimate connection with the experience of neglect and risks to health in public hospitals for instance, excessive waiting lists for life threatening operations, or growing public awareness of the dangers posed by new pathogens like *methicillin* resistant *staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, otherwise known as MRSA in public hospitals, critical actors connect their immediate everyday world with a normative world in need of interpretation. For instance, negative experiences become important experiential links between the normative safeguarding of public expectations on health care entitlements and a cognitive learning on the reality of hospital management, patient care, quality of service, as well as the consequences of Government's long-term policy on health care. Collectively shared cognitive suppositions about the nature of Ireland's health care service, for instance, including a growing cognition of the risks posed by infections like MRSA, make

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 127 -- #169

a vital contribution to both inductive and deductive variants of knowledge shared by actors in the public domain.

Because the instrumental reasoning of the administrative state is geared mainly towards systems maintenance while its legitimation practices are pre-occupied with the 'reasons for' a further marketization of social services, it seems unable to adequately address such public grievances. Indeed, the growing cognitive awareness of crisis and neglect provides vital counterfactual evidence to contradict the justifications offered by the administrative system for its new action models for health care provision. Such criticisms would seem all the more pertinent given the extent today to which a globally triumphant capitalism, following the collapse of state-socialist alternatives, has managed to realize its dream of a truly 'market society', as Knorr Cetina (2006) describes it: the capitalist market system, now more robust and invigorated than ever, has become a kind of ringmaster, disciplining governments and their administrations to conform with the greater needs of the economy.

The administrative state today, vaguely resembling its post World War II predecessor, has come to embrace what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) define as a 'new spirit of capitalism' (enterprise culture, lean efficient management, values like flexibility, cost effectiveness, high performance, speed of service delivery, figures and statistics) and shows a general reluctance to curtail its worst effects. This 'new spirit of capitalism', emerging from a post-industrial phase of capitalist development operative since the 1980s, places an emphasis on flexible organizations, networking, and less hierarchical levels to administration. The 'new spirit of capitalism', which continues to sustain capital accumulation and the principles of its legitimation, is as influential as its predecessors, in that it does not just represent a set of beliefs shared by a few, but rather represents a distinctive mentality, even a govern-mentality that connects the value complexes and institutional practices of the micro political context of administration with the disciplining logic of global capitalist markets.

The social consequences of this new spirit of capitalism are clearly visible in the administrative state's ongoing project and drive to enact new 'action models' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2002) for the various service sectors like health and transport. Such action models centre on a new health reform agenda and business plan that introduces health impact assessments, new auditing procedures of functions and structures of administration in the health system, annual accounts of funding and allocations, income guidelines, a review of clinical pathway systems by service providers, one-day

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 128 -- #170

procedures, best practice models for customer care, standardized performance indicators, as well as a strategic partnership with private hospital providers. Such models are partially symbolic in character in that they promote new presentations outlining how public health, for instance, should be organized (that is, in line with an economic neo-liberal worldview). The symbolic dimension to such action models, applying a calculating instrumental rationality to service provision, provides a set of coherent cognitive frames of meaning for guiding policy action on health. Such frames, including a social partnership frame and a free enterprise frame, gradually remove any moral condemnation of the pursuit of profit, or the transformation of health or education into a market commodity.

In 2006 the Irish Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, (Harney 2006), captured the essence of this ‘new spirit of capitalism’ when she explicitly drew a parallel between Europe’s more effective health care systems and ‘the best companies in the world’. Both are said to share the same ethos, as she accounts for the various ways in which ‘customers’ and ‘patients’ can be used as interchangeable descriptive categories. The Minister recommended that we draw strength and solidarity from our common position as ‘stakeholders’ in Ireland’s health care service – one that now reportedly costs the government 25 per cent of its total daily public expenditure. The Minister goes on to say that like all businesses, the health care system is immersed within a high-risk culture, one focused on the issue of patient safety. While opponents define this theme of patient safety in terms of state responsibility, Government in this instance advises us to ‘get away from a blame and recrimination culture’ and accept risk as part of the learning cycle. In this address she stated that: ‘We need to acknowledge that adverse events will happen and to have a culture that can deal with that. In the airline industry, for example, you are not only required by law, by virtue of contract of employment, to report adverse events you are rewarded for doing so and it is not seen as a black mark against you’ (Harney 2006: 8).

New action models for health care provision gradually redefine whole areas of social responsibility as matters of personal provision, reflecting self-determined decisions and in the process, attempt to create congruence between the responsible moral individual, an economic individualism, and the pursuit of ‘independent living’ (QF 2001).

In addition to having a strong symbolic dimension, such action models promoted by the administrative state are also structural in nature in the sense that they induce new institutional procedures,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 129 -- #171

routines, and modes of practice including a rationalized specialization of tasks, the breakdown of large integrated work units into a series of smaller groups that are connected through a network of contracts (temporary employment contracts, subcontracting, outsourcing activities no longer considered the main business of health care professionals for instance), and new management structures, like the Health Service Executive, which was established by the Health Act 2004. Once old institutional practices come to be seen as having failed in one of their primary aims, that is, the minimization of costs, they cease to make sense from the point of view of this new spirit of capitalism and the changing economic climate. Particularly with the introduction of the Irish State's new health reform agenda, traditional institutional practices become vulnerable to re-engineering or restructuring programmes (Offe 2005).

As a component of the more general marketization of social services, the rationalization of public health care provision has drawn quite a lot of attention recently. Social theorists like Colin Leys (2001) and Steven Lukes (2005) go so far as to say that the 'ethic of public service' has been so distorted by market relationships and the associated language of commodity producer and consumer that we need to remind ourselves what citizenship consists of today; what are its requirements and preconditions?

A questioning of this regime on the grounds of citizenship entitlements is also simultaneously the preoccupation of many protest actors whose critique is anchored in socio-cultural lifeworld experiences. This group of actors expresses alarm at the extent to which citizenship rights, including the right to sufficient health care services, have been eroded by a capitalist principle of marketability. In spite of its enthusiastic embracement of this 'new spirit of capitalism', Ireland's administrative state, like that elsewhere, remains embedded in a social and political context that is often less than sympathetic about such new practices and modes of reasoning. Indeed, the 'organized irresponsibility' (Beck 1992, 1996) of attempts to make health care provision bend to the requirements of flexible capitalism has given rise to many unforeseen problems in the Irish context, for example, the spread of epidemics, antibiotic resistant pathogens, poor service delivery, misdiagnosis, problems with subcontracts and outsourcing, poor levels of communication and a lack of cooperation between service providers.

A social critique of Ireland's reform agenda for the health care services has arisen directly from a discourse on democracy and civic entitlements. We may say that the roots of such a discourse remain firmly embedded in the socio-cultural lifeworld, as Habermas (1976)

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 130 -- #172

had predicted more generally. Indeed, the Irish government, in a policy document outlining its health strategy for a seven year period from 2001 briefly acknowledged such a lifeworld critique and refers to certain health inequalities which have been identified recently, *viz*., the issue of eligibility and barriers to accessing health care services, describing these as a major bone of public contention into the future (QF 2001).

The institutionalization of a distributive justice frame in the first half of the twentieth century ensured that the amorality of the market was resisted by a publicly funded ethos of welfare provision that provided basic social services to citizens in need. Collective consciousness of government's commitments to an institutionally embedded, material form of distributive justice for its citizens remains pervasive and contradictions that arise between this and a new neo-liberal agenda of marketization often lead to social conflict.

Indeed, the Irish Government's efforts more generally to infuse health care services with a 'new spirit of capitalism' becomes a source of intense political conflict between the state and its sympathizers on the one hand defending a re-organization of its management structures along more commercial lines, and opponents on the other, condemning such efforts on the grounds that they are an infringement on the public's entitlements to basic 'citizen services' (Crouch 2003). A more politically organized corpus of opponents adopts a frame of capitalist invasion to describe developments in the Irish health care services since the late 1980s. This coalition, including groups like the Irish Patients Association and Families Against MRSA, queries the extent to which Government's new 'health reform agenda' realizes the civil liberties of Irish citizens, and argues instead that the ongoing marketization of Ireland's health care services reduces Irish citizens to market players, recognizing them only as consumers rather than as equal recipients of health care entitlements.

Protest in this instance, has entailed a re-activation of more latent, yet publicly available democratic principles of equality, justice and fairness. In a relatively acrimonious climate, the state defends its decisions on health care policy reform on the grounds that it must 'balance the books' in such a way that health care does not become a burden on the state. The Irish Minister for Health and Children presented the issue in the following terms: 'We've long past the day for action. I think most people know that there is no alternative. Essentially if we keep going the way we are, its going to hit 16 per cent of GDP in Europe by 2020 and 20 per cent in the US and it isn't sustainable' (Harney 2006: 51). It is at this point that the

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 131 -- #173

state attributes a preponderant role to explanatory factors beyond our personal control, like global macroeconomics, technological or demographic changes (Boltanski and Chiapello 2002); forces which we must adapt to or face economic ruin. Externalizing responsibility for such structural changes was a strategy also employed by the Progressive Democrats, the then junior coalition partner in the Irish government, during the 2007 General Election campaign. 'We have seen innovation in the interplay between public and private sectors. This is now the European trend... It is against European developments to cut off a role in public health policy for the private sector' (PD 2007: 42).

In opposition to this kind of historical determinism comes the critical actors' increasingly vocal attribution of blame and responsibility for crisis to the state and any ideological agenda it may have. Opponents, no longer content with the state's argument on global economic trends, force state actors into a position of defence. They demand a fuller justification for the state's ideological position and indeed its role in creating such crises. Protest actors like Families Against MRSA, the Irish Patients Association, Action UK, the British Medical Association, and World Alliance for Patient Safety, have been strategic in leading the national, and indeed, international debate on MRSA in public hospitals, for example, into a wider political debate on crisis in the health care sector, and onwards and upwards into a legal debate on citizens' rights. In this instance the critical actor re-interprets scientific discoveries about the presence of MRSA through a new mode of reasoning. This extends the chains between cause and effect when it strategically applies wider processes of signification, above and beyond a scientific explanation, to the process of understanding the 'why' of MRSA from a socio-political standpoint.

Experiences of neglect or professional negligence, characteristic of a 'lived crisis', are evidenced as a source of injustice against citizens' entitlements. The current health care service is defined as 'unjust' because of the suppression of patients' rights to be informed, and as 'unethical' because of hospital management knowingly allowing MRSA infection to spread in hospitals without taking sufficient measures to control or eliminate it and other epidemics, as well as 'unlawful' from a legal standpoint. Together these various dimensions of the problem of MRSA are portrayed as 'unintended consequences' of the breakdown of bureaucratic efficiency and accountability in the health care service.

The extreme rationalization of public health care in the name of speed, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, etc., while welcomed by Health

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 132 -- #174

Minister Mary Harney (2006) as introducing ‘a radical simplicity’ to health care management and delivery, for opponents it has brought Weber’s (1930) diagnosis of a loss of meaning, empathy, an ethics of care and collective solidarity to a whole new level of articulation. The ‘irrational’ rationality of the health service administration from the point of view of values of freedom, justice, equality, and respect for human integrity is currently being laid bare by the critical actor. At least in the Irish political context, bureaucratic failure is being symbolically annexed to a capitalist manufacture of uncontrollable health risks and uncertainties.

Learning through crisis: Framing citizenship and injustice through public health care

Such a critique of the bureaucratic state’s rationalizing tendencies is not an outright rejection of modernity’s cultural legacy but indeed, its completion, according to Habermas. One can distinguish the distortions ignited by a one-sided rationalization of the economy and administration under capitalism from the rationalization of the lifeworld. In this instance, it is the destructive impact of capitalism which comes under attack, rather than the rationalization of the lifeworld.

Such a socio-cultural critique continues to raise questions of accountability, responsibility, democracy, transparency and in this sense, such actors collectively become social carriers of an alternative body of cognitive structures on public health care provision. The latter reflect such actors’ ‘prognostic framing efforts’ (Snow and Benford 2000). For instance, they call for a fundamentally more equitable system based on a substantive justice embodying ideas of equity and respect for the sick and the vulnerable, rather than a neo-liberal philosophy. The desire is for a more communicative rationality to be applied to public health care management more generally.

Actors’ diagnostic framing efforts have led to the development and articulation of an ‘injustice frame’ (Gamson et al. 1982, 1992; Klandermas 1999) in relation to the health care sector. Like all injustice frames, this frame demarcates a clear ‘victim’ of bureaucratic injustice and amplifies this victimization through high profile cases. Victimization becomes a prominent part of a more international dialogue on health care provision, citizenship rights and entitlements. The inspiration for a new frame of justice being applied to health is a cumulative pattern of local responses to perceived social injustices, all of which remain rooted in lifeworld experiences of neglect and moral injury.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 133 -- #175

While surrounding circumstances may vary from case to case and context to context, the overall demand for public health care justice crystallizes the analogous experiences of many groups into common frames of justice with resonance and mobilizing capacity at both the local, national, and increasingly, international levels of the debate. The critical actor coalition's frames in this instance have a high degree of cultural resonance due to the scientific credibility of their framing practices, and the relative salience of the issue of public health. Their empirical referents, to concrete cases, lend themselves to being read as indicators of their diagnostic frames. The resonance of issues like MRSA or hospital overcrowding is conditioned by how congruent it is with the public's everyday experiences with the health care services. That is, the degree to which it enjoys an 'experiential commensurability' (Benford and Snow 2000).

Symbolic constructions of justice-injustice, in this instance, are fashioned simultaneously from the bottom up (local actors discovering a pattern to their respective grievances with the health care services) and from the top down (as a citizenship entitlement legally inscribed in our constitution). A shared definition of the problem encourages these actors to form more generally shared systems of categorization on inequality and injustice. As Ridgeway (2006) argues, actors in such social relational contexts not only combine existing schemas or frames, such as justice frames, to construct a local definition of a problem, they may also extend such existing frames beyond primary interests in a way that abstracts from the local experience.

This particular injustice frame contains specific claims to the distinct character of public health care grievances. These claims include:

1. the right to accurate information about a situation (hygiene, cause of death, injury, misdiagnosis, etc.);
2. a prompt, respectful and unbiased hearing when claims of negligence are being made;
3. democratic participation in deciding the future of our health care services and;
4. compensation from government for having inflicted injuries on victims and their families.

These various dimensions of health care injustice are unified by a strong emphasis on citizen rights, democratic process, and respect for the experiential knowledge of reality of those most directly affected by health care problems. All of these claims are firmly

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 134 -- #176

grounded in existing cognitive structures on fairness, justice, and rights.

Betrayal of the dream of health and longevity, given its cultural significance as a more general marker of progress in the western capitalist world, makes an inadequate health care service a powerful blow to individual dignity and violates the latent symbolic coupling of justice and health. Injured parties describe a process of cognitive awareness, a realization that capitalist social imaginaries of prosperity and longevity have been inverted and all that is assumed to institutionally embody safety, existential security, care, and sound medical treatment, (for instance, the public hospital) are turned into their opposite; are exposed as components of a sick body, an infected site, a source of contamination, even death. Indeed, protesters use this highly evocative imagery of transformation from ‘dream’ to ‘nightmare’ to arouse public reaction/outrage at the discovery of viral contamination, overcrowding in Accident and Emergency (Casualty) rooms, inferior patient care, poor staff to patient ratios, and lack of hospital hygiene. The mobilizing potential of such imagery partly stems from citizens’ deep sense of betrayal, loss of meaning, and the direct experience of neglect by a publicly funded health care service.

The fact that the current social critique of public health care crisis is grounded in direct experiential knowledge of mistreatment, misdiagnosis, or malpractice etc., (all side-effects of an overly rationalized system of heath care), is of particular interest to a critical social theory perspective. The critical actors’ knowledge and experience of neglect in this instance derives from their participation in the ‘cognitive reference system’ of the socio-cultural lifeworld (Habermas 1987:136). Honneth (1995) explains how such experiences of insult to the dignity of the self are articulated to attest to those aspects of administrative procedures considered to be morally unacceptable. The collective realization that all is not well with the health care services illustrates Klanderman’s (1997) idea of ‘cognitive liberation’ – waking from the dream to an unacceptable and morally offensive institutional reality.

Conflict now centres on the apparent failures of health care administrations, failures which seem to multiply daily as malpractices become a costly embarrassment or indiscrete element of a system that continues to slide into system malfunction in a very public and media sensitive manner. As legal battles are waged against the state and evidence of malpractice mounts up, a space for alternative critical perspectives and lines of argumentation is beginning to emerge. Hence, in the midst of such crisis, a certain degree of social

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 135 -- #177

learning becomes evident. As Max Miller (2002) reasons, conflict in this instance becomes a dissensus-driven mechanism of learning through discursive exchange between the state on the one hand and competing social actors on the other.

The crucial question, of course, as Miller (2002) highlights, is who actually learns? Not all actors may be open to a process of learning to the same degree. This is why in the recent examples of MRSA infection of Irish hospital patients law has been called upon to resolve disputes with government administration. The Irish State has learned to accommodate a 'non-institutionalized opposition' to its structures of bureaucratic rationality and institutional models of action which it continues to support in spite of evidence of malfunction. As Habermas argues in *Legitimation Crisis* (1976:129), not only can it learn to live with this kind of opposition; it can also survive without fundamentally addressing the problems which inspire such opposition in the first place. So is it a case of protesters' grievances bouncing off of rubber screens? The fact that opponents are now bringing their grievances to a legal context would suggest that administration's apparent indifference will not be tolerated by aggrieved citizens. Such actors now activate latent citizenship entitlements to equality and an impartial hearing before the law, as well as other civic liberties.

Law ensures that a moral reasoning will be applied to health issues to address citizens' grievances. Conflicts will be resolved legally. In many instances, law is thought to be the only secure medium guaranteeing citizens' civic autonomy. Law, in this instance, is called upon to perform an 'integrative role', as Habermas (1998) explains, to restore legitimacy and sentiments of justice especially when the Irish political process fails to overcome the crisis tendencies of public health care administration. At least in relation to recent legal cases taken by private citizens against Ireland's various former health boards, legal discourse, has temporarily been nourished by 'the communications of unsubverted publics' rooted in 'the associational networks of civil society' (Habermas 1998:441).

Conclusion

Crisis management increasingly becomes the daily reality for the Irish health care service due to its growing estrangement from the socio-cultural lifeworld. Critical actors argue that the deployment of administrative power in this country is more attuned to an economic imperative than a communicative one, thus amplifying public sentiments of alienation, injustice and inequality. From a critical theory perspective, this development is interesting because

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 136 -- #178

of the capacity of a 'lived crisis' in this instance to generate both sentiments of moral injury and ignite a 'politics of fulfilment'. In the proven absence of a sufficient ethics of care and patient empathy to offset the deep impersonalism of Ireland's overly rationalized system of public health care administration, law is frequently called upon to establish a solidarity between 'strangers' (Habermas 1998) who are bound up in contractual relationships, like those between the health care professionals and their patients in this context.

This chapter attempts to explore certain lines of continuity that connect the insights of early and more contemporary critical theory and research focused on the social costs of the state's instrumental rationality. For instance, recent social research conducted by critical theorists like Eder (1996) and Strydom (2000) reflects their efforts to expand the contemporary social relevance of critical theory's explanatory-diagnostics – its emphasis on crisis and the articulation of discourses on rights, justice and responsibility. As well as its anticipatory-utopian dimensions – efforts to reconstruct the internal dynamics of contingent social learning processes and episodes of social conflict. The persistent crises and 'pathogenesis' of modern society which Strydom (2000) highlights, an example of which has been explored here, has been sustained, he argues, by 'the absence of a participatory politics of conflict and a more general culture of contradictions'(266). This diagnosis is followed by a focus on processes of communication between actors, as the emphasis characteristically shifts from 'critique' to 'critical reflection'. As Strydom (1999) highlights, such processes of communication designate the central activity through which controversial validity claims, rules of argumentation, and cognitive frames of meaning are disputed, challenged and debated in public.

In relation to crisis in the Irish public health care sector, there is accumulating evidence of a degree of societal learning. Recently added to a diagnosis of social crisis in the Irish institutional context is an evaluation of the present state of public health care in the light of its future potential. Processes of social learning in this instance may prove to be an important first step to a re-politicization of the Irish political sphere more generally which does appear to have fallen foul of a debilitating pathogenesis in recent decades, as Strydom (2000) maintains.

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 137 -- #179

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8

RIGHTS, RECOGNITION AND CONTINGENCY: OPENING A DISCUSSION ON A RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS

Séamus Ó Tuama

Introduction

Neither a cosmological justification of rights as deriving from god nor a natural law justification of rights is defensible in this posttraditional era. Hannah Arendt (1973) spoke of 'a right to have rights' (296) in the context of the human misery of the Holocaust and the displacement of peoples following World War II. The point she raises though has relevance throughout human history, even prior to the emergence of bills of rights as she clearly demonstrates (297). Her incisive discussion disrobes bills of rights, extricating rights from a tight legal set of definitions and instead presenting them in human terms. In relation to stateless people or others deprived of human rights she says: 'their freedom of opinion is a fool's freedom, for nothing they think matters anyhow' (296). In terms of fundamental rights, it is not enough that they are legally enforceable. At their most fundamental level all humans require recognition, a human who is not respected, has his or her dignity assaulted. This is important at two levels. It is important in terms of the quality of life, autonomy and identity of each individual and it is also important in terms of how we begin to formulate clear and irrefutable justifications for human rights. To begin to chart such a justification I will explore firstly the concepts of recognition, respect and dignity and secondly how they are socially and politically framed communicatively.

After World War II great strides were made to enshrine human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set an international standard, many countries adopted new constitutions and bills

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 142 -- #184

of rights or significantly advanced existing ones. However despite all these advances, concerns continue to arise about human rights. The twenty-first century opened with a whole range of human rights issues from the treatment of prisoners in connection with the so-called war on terror (Guantanamo Bay, Extraordinary Rendition, Abugraib); human rights abuses in major powers like Russia and China being relegated behind economic interests; Genocide in Darfur (so soon after Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia); the continuing dismal outlook for the majority of the world's population in less developed countries; issues like discrimination against girls and women; rogue states like North Korea and Burma systematically denying rights to their citizens, the list could go on. On the other side we may count many important advances, at national level new constitutions, bills of rights, human rights legislation, stronger courts and public opinion in support of human rights. On the international plane the emergence of the United Nations with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and important advances like the legally binding Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) and European Court of Human Rights, the International Criminal Court (and its predecessors from Nuremberg onwards), greater recognition for cultural, racial and religious minorities and greater public awareness of human rights violations have all helped to improve the landscape. Yet clouds hang over human rights, we certainly cannot claim that they are universally respected nor that the trend is necessarily inevitably towards their expansion or adherence to at either national or international levels. In the developed world for instance we see instances of a reduction in legal guarantees for certain categories of people (especially suspected terrorists) and the situation vis-a-vis non-nationals has tended to become more stringently codified, but not necessarily more liberal.

The instruments for recognizing, defending and enforcing human rights are essential for a decent human rights regime. Establishing such frameworks universally is a slow process. In the end this can only happen if we can defend human rights in all and every circumstance for every human being. That task was not begun today, major liberal figures like Locke and Kant already set out universalistic arguments for human rights in the eighteenth century. But as Arendt (1973) points out: 'human rights cannot be expressed in the categories of the eighteenth century because they presume that rights spring immediately from the "nature" of man' (297).

What she essentially challenges is both the idea of god given rights and rights deriving from natural law. The problem this leaves

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 143 -- #185

is that these are the bases on which liberals justified human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, some articles of which are openly dismissed even in states with high standards of human rights. The key point is that there is still no clear recognition that all humans are truly equal.

To pursue the goal of sketching a starting point off which we can defend the right of all humans to have rights I wish to explore two theoretical spheres. The first concerns establishing a fundamental benchmark for human rights, which I believe to reside in the concept of recognition, and which I think is missing in most rights theories. Second is the process through which recognition is mediated and this I believe can be found in the communicative contingency theories of double contingency (largely corresponding with individual rights) and triple contingency (largely corresponding with solidaristic rights).

Rights, Recognition, Respect and Dignity

On what basis can we claim rights? On what basis do we owe solidarity to our fellow humans? For Arendt it comes back to humans sharing the human condition and thus having an innate right to human rights. She says ‘the right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself’ (298).

This essentially poses two challenges, firstly to develop a sustainable justification for human rights in a posttraditional world, which secondly can secure a genuinely universal realization of human rights. While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from the opening words of the Preamble and Article 1 state this intention: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ (Article 1) it is clear that neither the spirit nor the letter of the declaration have been taken very seriously by many members of the United Nations. While rights can be declared universal they are interpreted and implemented in legal contexts defined by political boundaries and agreements. This means that the right to have rights is not universally interpreted, leaving us with a world where the most fundamental rights are arbitrarily denied by many regimes, terrorist and criminal groups. And while it is not always highlighted in rights discourses, the issue of respect in both the private and public domains has a serious impact on the realization of human rights for individuals. This is a topic which Honneth (2007) explores with reference to the family, where he presents two paradigms a Kantian (Legal Model) and a Hegelian (Affective Model). His discussion highlights a deep problematic between Kant’s legal-rights approach

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 144 -- #186

and Hegel's 'mutual guarantee of care and devotion' (153). The key point of Honneth's discussion is: 'that individual subjects have to be able to lay claim to the principles of universal justice whenever they see themselves no longer recognized with the dignity of a legal person' (156).

Brunkhorst (2005) says that an international legal framework exists that excludes the possibility of anyone landing in a context where they could be treated as a 'stranger with no rights', but this merely masks a fundamental problem. That problem goes right back to Hobbes's discussion on the state of nature and the social contract: 'It only provides legal permission for an independent exercise of power by those who are strong enough to enforce their own rights or the rights of those they want to help' (143).

We have essentially two problems. We have not given sufficient attention to a defensible justification of rights in a posttraditional context nor do we have the means to universally enforce those rights that we have enumerated. They are not totally distinct problems. Both are pressing issues that impact on the gains we have made in the recognition and enforcement of human rights. Terrorists on a constant basis dismiss human rights and too often states respond by rolling back hard won civil liberties. On a global level the majority world continues to suffer starvation, malnutrition, disease, lack of education, social and health services, war and a general lack of real life chances in the face of the basic rights enumerated in Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The denial of rights continues within states for a variety of reasons including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, language, education, wealth among others. In simple terms we have made substantial progress since the middle of the twentieth century, but we are still abandoning millions of people in terms of recognizing their rights. We are at a point where there is an urgency to push on with the rights agenda, not a moment for reflection or retrenchment. In order to do that we need to come back to the fundamentals, that is, as Arendt (1973) puts it, on what basis do humans have 'a right to have rights' (296).

The problem we face must be contextualized in a changing global political climate. We are at an historical moment in which the nation state is undergoing significant change, with more than one possible way forward. One way, I might say more hopeful from a rights perspective, is in the direction of cosmopolitanism as discussed by Delanty and Beck (2006) another less hopeful scenario like that identified by Hannah Arendt. Benhabib (2004) speaks of Arendt's analysis of the conquest and plunder of Africa by European states,

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 145 -- #187

in which civilized white men engaged in outrages against the local populations that would not be tolerated at home. Arendt borrows the phrase 'The Heart of Darkness' from Joseph Conrad to label this type of activity, which she sees returning to Europe itself through the inter-war totalitarian movements. The denial of respect for the majority of the world's population today is a reenactment of the 'heart of darkness', by other means, and like the emergence of totalitarianism in the last century is equally capable of infecting the developed world. Unless we have clear irrefutable justifications for rights and means for maintaining them both morally and legally then we are always exposed to the possibility of regression. If social and cultural rights could be retrenched at the end of the twentieth century in the face of an economic crisis, in part precipitated by the oil crisis of 1973, then it seems improbable that our full complement of rights would survive in an exacerbation of global conditions emerging in the context of the risk society, be that through environmental factors like an ecological disaster or a climatic crisis, exhaustion of fossil fuels, or our capacity to deal with the debt crises or war or migration. On top of all this we have serious issues around the nature of government, constitutionality and the role of international law.

Arendt's concept of 'a right to have rights' resonates today as loudly as in the period in which she wrote. The fragmentation of populations and displacement of individuals has increased in momentum at the turn of the twenty-first century. Not even the international recognition of refugee status has managed to protect refugees. European states and the developed world in general still exhibit the 'heart of darkness' in terms of policies towards the developing world in battles over resources, debt, war, the HIV/AIDS crisis. This point was made forcibly by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in his speech to the United Nations on 31 July 2007, in which he recounted failures by the developed countries to address the crisis of the less developed world: 'So it is time to call it what it is: a development emergency which needs emergency action' (Brown 2007).

In the face of this emergency it is not surprising that large numbers of economic migrants wish to gain access to the same life chances as those lucky to be born in the developed world, but they have not been universally welcomed, despite many potential social and economic benefits (Weinstein 2002). Even within the European Union member states placed barriers in front of citizens of new member states preventing them from travelling to take up work (Jileva 2002). Many states have enacted laws to reduce the rights

of migrants to have rights, for example eliminating birth right to citizenship for children born of non-national parents, as happened in Ireland in 2004. This heart of darkness continues to exhibit itself in national policies on migrants (Pajnik 2007), but not just migrants it also extends to citizens and residents and especially Islamic ones.

Even in those places where rights are respected for citizens the same protections often do not extend to migrants. This is justified through the creation of boundaries that mark off territory and re-define rights not as universal, but specific, for some the rights may approach the ideal of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but for outsiders they may be limited. It is contradictory to pronounce human rights as universal on one hand, while simultaneously delimiting rights to some human beings for instance on the basis of accident of birth, economic disadvantage or gender.

The idea of formal equality is central to liberalism, yet that formal equality is not always distributed equally. Formalistic obstacles by way of law, constitutions and political boundaries for instance are frequently used to avoid accepting mutual responsibility for this deficiency. It would be erroneous to suggest that the trend is entirely negative in terms of formal rights, it is still the case that the panoply of formal rights continues to expand. This does not mean that the spread is always uniform nor that certain groups don't continue to suffer systematic disadvantage. This clearly has ongoing implications for the life experiences of very many people. It also indicates that while human rights can be stated to be universal, and that formal rights are essential to liberal rights, exceptions are made for political, cultural, religious, economic or other reasons, thus pragmatically dismissing the universal aspect of rights (universality and the exception are mutually exclusive) and abridging formal rights to certain categories of citizens or certain categorization of human beings. Both the practical and theoretical aspects of this problem are at variance with instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the conception of human rights as being universal, immutable and inalienable.

In the developed world there has been an ideological and pragmatic relegation of social rights from the latter part of the twentieth century as is evident in the decline of the welfare state. Ideologically those rights can be designated as extraneous to liberal rights, or from a neo-liberal perspective perhaps as a counterweight against the full realization of rights. If we look at this from the perspective of Hayek for instance, his primary concerns are the promotion of liberty, resistance to collective tendencies and by extension greater reliance on market forces. His view is based on individualism and

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 147 -- #189

individual effort, it eschews any distortion of the market, holding that societal progress is an aggregative process rather than an integrative one. 'The market and the price mechanism provide. . . a sort of discovery procedure which both makes the utilization of more facts possible than any other known system, and which provides the incentive for constant discovery of new facts' (1978: 236). His philosophy relies on rational actors being at liberty to make rational choices, not just for their own freedom, but for the good of society: 'liberty is essential in order to leave room for the unforeseeable and unpredictable. . . It is because every individual knows so little' (1960: 29).

He endorsed the idea that any individual can at best have only a partial perspective on what might be termed the common good. This is because any individual cannot be expected to understand the full range of issues and secondly because the idea of the common good is nebulous, leaving but few areas of common agreement. From this perspective he sees the idea of central planning as a hopeless venture. He dismisses the notion of a single ethical code as equally problematic as 'no such complete ethical code exists' (1991: 43). Democracy exists in a sort of straitjacket, as it cannot really deliver the level of governance required in a complex society. On one side this presents the idea that 'the responsible authorities must be freed from the fetters of democratic procedure' (1991: 50). For Hayek democracy should not be viewed as a 'fetish' but recognized as 'a utilitarian device for safeguarding internal peace and individual freedom' (1991: 52). Although he contests the idea of the common good, his position would seem to place 'freedom' as the goal of society, and thus the ultimate common good. His solution is primarily directed at reducing the role of the state, a reduction of regulation and the advance of freedom through formal equality. Pursuing this utilitarian orientation makes redundant the need for social rights, but it also undermines the premise for formal liberal rights. Sustaining liberty has a utility in terms of the operation of the market and ceding to it the capacity to achieve certain goals that may deliver a common good. But it seems that it is utility rather than humanity that occupies the central core of the philosophy. Liberty is not in this understanding a right owing to all humans on the basis of their common humanity and inherent equality, but a tool for achieving a utilitarian goal, an effective market and a consequent common good (even if this is not necessarily explicitly recognized). If utility could be achieved through the denial of liberty, as many political regimes espoused, then we are left bereft of a grounding principle to underpin human rights. Their value is utilitarian rather

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 148 -- #190

than essential.

I contend that this is both erroneous and potentially deleterious to a human rights regime. Its foundations are more about where we are in terms of rights rather than a principled argument supporting rights. It points to a fundamental flaw in the grounding of rights in a posttraditional society, transcendental assumptions no longer apply, and the arguments in support of formal rights seem to be grounded in utility. This problem partly arises on the assumption that rights are built on a chronological base, in which social rights are an add-on. But we are left without a base onto which the scaffold is built. This problem I believe can be addressed with reference to the concept of recognition developed by Honneth. What his analysis provides is the seeds from which we can acknowledge both the essence and essential nature of rights as humans. It also inverts the assumptions that T.H. Marshall (1973) proposed and is ironically supported by his opponents. Social rights far from being an add-on are in fact an act of recognition of the factual equality of all humans and it is from that starting point we can develop a theory to support formal rights rather than *vice versa*.

Mutual recognition is essential to participation in human society. It is the essential building block of human society being at once the means by which we participate socially and develop our self-image. Through the process of mutual recognition we come to understand the nature of human interaction, we develop concepts around rights and responsibilities initially at the level of our interaction with others. This needs to be understood at a basic level, our day-to-day engagement with others from infancy, prior to any theoretical abstraction around such concepts or indeed their legal status. Honneth (2002), who has been at the fore in clarifying the meaning of recognition and respect, essentially works with the young Hegel's 'three modes of recognition – love, rights and solidarity' (501). Through this triumvirate we begin to see the levels at which recognition operates and how it underpins the very essence of human society. And has deep consequences for the practical meaning of society and citizenship.

Recognition goes to the very heart of what it is to be a citizen as well as what it is to be a human being. Honneth rightly points out, that a person can only be called free 'in the full sense of the word' where she knows that she is recognized by others in a way that she can rationally reconcile with her own self-concept (509). This has profound importance if we claim to value a society based on equality, democracy and rights. This latter point of course raises many other issues.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 149 -- #191

Honneth contextualizes recognition as an essential aspect of a social contract. He says that the act of mutual recognition enables individuals to become members of society as it allows for 'an awareness of how rights and duties are reciprocally distributed' (501). This is a very serious contention. It makes a statement about how society emerges and is sustained. In that regard it is as much about the social contract as Hobbes or Locke and is probably no less controversial. In the first instance it holds within it a contention about the meaning of rights and places the beginning point of rights at a fundamental level, it is about the essentials of humans as social actors and about the meaning of society as a social construct reliant upon the support of its members. In short he says that: 'a given society's chance of meeting with the uncoerced support of its members depends on its ability to organize the relations of recognition' (501).

It depends on individuals being able to achieve 'positive forms of relation-to-self'. This is a complex idea, with many manifestations, including the dichotomy between the Kantian (legal paradigm) and the Hegelian (affective paradigm) discussed by Honneth (2007) and in debates between cultural relativists and proponents of universal rights. There are symmetries between both dichotomies as Donnelly's (1984) summation of the relativist position shows, vis-a-vis Honneth's (1984) application of the Hegelian paradigm to the family: 'If traditional practices truly are based on and protect culturally accepted conceptions of human dignity, then members of such a community simply will not have the desire or need to claim such civil rights' (417).

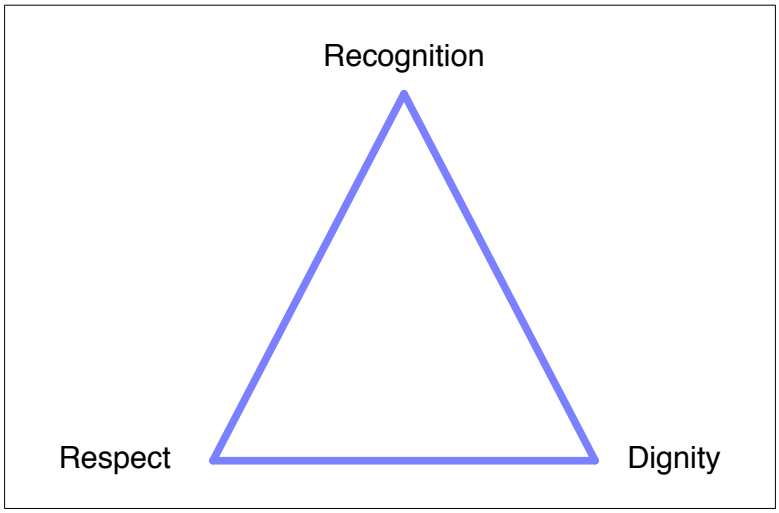
The two related terms of dignity and respect also need some clarification, especially in the context I will use them here. Pritchard (1972) uses the term dignity, which is related to Honneth's concept of recognition. Dignity is what is recognized. It is at the core of much liberal thought, we see it in Locke's famous quote on life, health and liberty:

> The state of Nature has a law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one, and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions (Locke 1690, Second Treaties, Chap 2: 6).

Dignity is the essence of the 'being all equal and independent' conceptualized by Locke. It is the label to describe what makes us inherently human and of sharing essential human qualities in

common – the commonality of the human experience as opposed to the particularity of the individual. It resides with the individual as a part of that collectivity, regardless of his or her particular circumstances. The third term 'respect' to me signifies that which we owe to each other as humans, given our common dignity. It resonates of Kantian philosophy: 'Every human being has a legitimate claim to respect from his fellow human beings and is *in turn* bound to respect every other' (Kant 1996: 209).

The three concepts are related in that *dignity* is concomitant with being human, *recognition* is the act of recognizing dignity and *respect* has an obligatory dimension in that all humans being of equal dignity are due respect as fellow humans, which emerges through the act of recognition.



I do not suggest that these distinctions are always reflected in the literature and may in fact be presented interchangeably.

Miller (2001) suggests that individuals encounter disrespect predominantly in mundane contexts where their 'experiences of everyday injustice involve some form of disrespectful treatment' (530). He identifies the three spheres of 'voice', 'interpersonal sensitivity' and 'accountability' as being central to individuals' need for recognition. Voice refers to the right 'to have their say and to be listened to in their dealings with others' (531), this matters even if it does not effect the outcome. Interpersonal sensitivity is about people's belief that 'they are entitled to polite and respectful treatment from

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 151 -- #193

others' (531). Accountability holds that individuals 'are entitled to explanations and accounts for any actions that have personal consequences for them' (531). What is very important in Miller's analysis is that he places the business of respect and recognition at the level of personal self-regard rather than at the level of external indicators. This again emphasizes its fundamental quality and consequently its place in the development of concepts of rights. He points out that individuals feel a greater sense of indignation through the intrinsic statement against their feelings of prestige than from the fact that they have received less than they had anticipated in an exchange context: 'the perception of distributive fairness often has less to do with an outcome's exchange value than with its symbolic or status value' (530).

To carry this discussion forward it is useful to review two practical applications of the concepts of dignity and respect as applied to the operation of the legal system (both in the USA). These are relevant as recourse to law for redress, recognition and enforcement of rights is a *sine qua non*. Pritchard (1972) looks at the relationship between dignity and justice, while Taslitz (2003) looks at respect in the application of law.

Pritchard holds that justice cannot be achieved in the absence of a sense of human dignity 'principles of justice should reserve a prominent place for human dignity. If this is not done. . . claims of justice will be at best legalistic and at worst arbitrary' (Pritchard 1972: 300–1).

He also explores how low self-regard or sense of dignity can reduce both the recognition of injustices against the self, but also injustices against others.

Pritchard's definition of dignity and self-esteem are useful both in distinguishing their difference and establishing the centrality of dignity. His clear premise is that all people have dignity, it is an innate quality of being human. The importance of this and his later exploration of the practical human experience of having one's dignity affronted pushes us to place dignity as a fundamental catalyst both for the emergence of rights and why rights can be considered inalienable.

He presents human dignity in the context of a pre-political moment: 'One can feel resentment, shame, or pride without explicitly spelling out to himself either that or why he is feeling like that' (301). This is not a very extensively explored approach to rights, but I believe it is an essential starting point, a position also found in Honneth's work. Pritchard also is clear that human dignity resides in everyone regardless of his or her status: 'It is something shared by

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 152 -- #194

all men regardless of the office they may hold or the social standing they may have’ (301). Following Lynd (1958) he links the concepts of shame and loss of self-esteem to ‘a feeling that one has lowered or even lost his dignity’ (302).

Pritchard refers to personal integrity in his analysis. This is a topic of considerable importance today given the growing encroachment on personal integrity for instance by increased surveillance of everyday activities. This may range from closed circuit television on streets, in shops and the workplace to deeper more penetrating surveillance like monitoring of private telephone conversations, emails, text messages and even library borrowing records.

States are in part responsible for increased surveillance of citizens. It is currently being justified as a means of countering terrorism and/or acting against organized crime. This justification has validity and there is little doubt that crime can be reduced through surveillance. However, that is not the end of the issue, there are also issues around respecting human dignity and allowing individuals to get on with their lives with as much integrity as possible. The stock answer is that if a person is not doing something illegal then they have nothing to fear. That answer is based on very weak premises. What of John Locke’s fear of association with his most famous contributions to liberalism, had his political opponents greater access to means of surveillance and forensics would he have risked that project? What of Nelson Mandela breaking the law, a law that only much later and after considerable bloodshed and pain, could be finally declared illegitimate. People taking risks and doing, saying and writing things that breach the mores of their societies are engaged in a change process. It would be foolish to say that this is always beneficial, it is easy for instance to point to something like child pornography or racial hatred as repressive manifestations. However, the history of civil society is paved with examples of people speaking out against the accepted norms of the day and against the economic and political interests of their societies for the ultimate good of humanity. Shifts in the political, religious and cultural values that have delivered liberal civil societies owe much to activities that in their own day would be considered clandestine. Efficient surveillance would at the least have delayed such developments. This justification needs to be measured not only in free societies but also repressive ones. It needs to be measured against the capacity for legal and political rights to obtain effectively, even in free societies. A proper balance between a demonstrable and defensible common good and personal autonomy needs to be struck. This is one of the key ideas of liberalism and the curtailment of which, liberals rightly object, is one of the most

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 153 -- #195

obnoxious and destructive aspects of repressive regimes past and present. Going down the road of deep level surveillance presents crime prevention and security advantages but it has substantive costs.

Before leaving this topic it is important to note that both private citizens and corporations also engage in surveillance activities and the consequences have implications for personal autonomy. Surveillance by private citizens includes the distribution of compromising and offensive images and information about individuals through mobile phones, personal web pages, social networking websites, blogs and so on. There are a host of other types of surveillance activities by those engaged in crime, including the targeting of vulnerable individuals and populations like children, the elderly, homeless people and minorities.

A global industry operates on the basis of delving into the private lives of celebrities, often it must be admitted at their own invitation and frequently for considerable fees. It has been a driving force in transforming the magazine industry over the past number of years, even if it now seems to be reaching a peak (Ives 2007; Long 2007). There are few boundaries in delving into every aspect of celebrities' lives from the most intimate details of their personal lives to their mundane activities and those of their networks of friends and relatives. Full colour pictures of suspect provenance, revealing aspects of personal lives that at best have only tangential news interest, but are more likely to be of high exposé value are typical of this genre. In a report on the *Reuters Newsmakers Event* 'Who needs journalists anyway' journalist John Thompson includes a quote from *Guardian* newspaper's digital publishing director Simon Waldman on a strategy used by celebrity magazine *Heat*:

> It's a combination of news values and the way the market functions. Heat magazine will pay 200 for an unposed photograph of a celebrity. You wonder where all this is leading if any minor celebrity has to put up with having a cameraphone stuck in their face wherever they go. Is this really the society we want to live in? (Thompson 2006)

Taslitz (2003) discussing law and respect in the American context explores the importance of respect in the application of justice, specifically in terms of how the police address individuals and groups within society. 'Each person feels respected when he is treated as significant and of equal worth with every other person. . . But respect

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 154 -- #196

is also about inclusion, about being considered full members of the wider political community' (27).

His discussion is particularly relevant as it puts 'respect' into a debate about the just and equal application of the criminal law both for groups (most especially minority or excluded groups) and individual members of those groups. In short he highlights serious deficiencies in the American legal system in terms of how certain groups and individuals are more likely to be designated as criminals. He proposes that the state has an obligation to 'embrace salient groups as equal partners', while at the same time 'individuals must also be treated as unique, judged for what they do rather than what group they belong to' (29).

What Taslitz is highlighting is a set of practical outcomes for individuals and groups when the legal system, in both the police (and other executive arms) and the courts, fails to recognize those individuals and groups as full citizens (or full humans) worthy of the same respect as all other human beings. Even under the strong protection of the American constitution they nonetheless experience rights on a lower plane than other citizens and are more vulnerable to their violation. A point reiterated by Birzer and Birzer (2006): 'The general scholarship on the United States criminal justice system offers evidence of a long history of not only racial, but also cultural and class group biases in its administration' (644).

Goodey (2001) is more equivocal in terms of the experience in Britain, but nonetheless acknowledges:

> . . . the black community have repeatedly expressed their anger towards what they perceive as over-zealous policing of their community. However, if one were to compare the Asian experience of policing with that of the Afro-Caribbean community, one would be hard pressed to find the extent and degree of complaints in any research to date. . . it could indicate the unwillingness of particular groups within the Asian 'community' to complain about the police (443).

At issue here is not just a denial of recognition on the side of the police, but a hitherto reluctance or inability by members of the Asian community to call on their political and legal rights. At an international level Henrard (2000) refers to the concept of 'indirect discrimination' in the context of human rights standards. These she points out can initially seem 'neutral but have a disproportional effect on a group or person (and this without objective and reasonable justification)' (77).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 155 -- #197

Tyler and Wakslak (2004) found interesting results in terms of the perception that the police profile certain individuals or groups as being likely criminals. One key point is that profiling generally reflects 'negatively on the police, and as undermining legitimacy', which is not surprising. What is more concerning is that white Americans changed their views of profiling significantly in the Post-9/11 period from seeing it as 'police prejudice' to seeing it more as 'associated with the need to identify terrorists in a situation in which ethnic and cultural factors are diagnostic of possible terrorist activity' (275).

Some of the more pertinent nuances of the meaning of respect were not drawn out by Tyler and Wakslak, however they do point to some outcomes that reveal its connections with human rights in the context of the discussion here. They speak of disrespectful treatment of citizens by police sending 'a negative message' (277). Far more importantly they point to a dialectical moment in which a citizen constructs an encounter negatively 'when they are treated without respect' (277). In this case the citizen may wrongly label the encounter as being a result of police profiling, but what is more pertinent is that the citizen knows there is something inherently wrong with the encounter, even if he or she cannot accurately articulate exactly why it is wrong. A point made by Honneth (1994) when referring to 'the violation of intuitive notions of justice' (262) that arises through a denial of respect or social disrespect, 'connected to respect for one's own dignity, honor, or integrity' (262). This point on social disrespect points to a pre-political conceptualization of the meaning of respect.

Honneth finds common ground with both Ikäheimo (2002) and Laitinen (2002) in defining recognition, in Hegelian terms, as: ' "attitudes" of love, legal respect, and esteem in the one basic attitude (albeit with differing emphases) that can be conceptualized generically as "recognition" ' (Honneth 2002: 506). However the precise meaning of the term recognition is somewhat contingent, dependent as it is on linguistic meaning, or for instance on whether it is related to early childhood experiences of identity formation, or whether it is a moral struggle. The exact nature of the meaning of recognition needs much more elaborate exploration than I can engage in here.

A key issue I see in Honneth's exploration of the theme, from a contemporary political perspective, is the need to contextualize it in an action setting. In seeking the good life or self-understanding as a communicative process it is necessary in Honneth's terms that the individual be protected both in terms of civil-legal type

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 156 -- #198

rights congruent with classical liberalism, but also 'a basic standard of living' which might be equated with Marshall's notion of social rights or indeed to the sorts of economic independence envisaged by Rousseau. He emphasizes the necessity for legal guarantees because they ultimately offer the context in which the individual is at liberty to pursue an individualized notion of the good life. Entering into this discussion, although not drawn out particularly by Honneth (1995), is the communicative context. He alludes to this by way of pointing out that it is not merely a process of 'monological choice' (236). Not being one of monological choice poses deeper questions about the communicative process. As Habermas (1990) puts it 'those very relationships of reciprocity and mutual recognition around which *all* moral ideas revolve in everyday life' (130).

McCarthy (1990) offers a lucid account of the nature of social recognition and builds links between the individual and society. He reiterates the relationship between socialization and identity formation – 'personal identity is from the start interwoven with relations of mutual recognition' (*x*). In the following passages he explains the centrality of 'mutual recognition' both to individual identity and society. It is a 'reciprocal vulnerability that calls for guarantees of mutual consideration to preserve both the integrity of individuals and the web of interpersonal relations in which they form and maintain their identities' (*x*).

His brief discussion highlights both the nature of recognition and its societal context. Indicating that recognition is clearly a communicative process and very importantly that the communicative process can be understood both in the realms of double contingency and triple contingency. He emphasizes the centrality of recognition stating that 'it is precisely notions of fairness, impartiality, respect for the integrity and dignity of the individual' that underpins the capacity of a society to tolerate otherness and difference (*xii*, f/n 12).

Communicative Contingency

The concept of double contingency is closely associated with the work of Talcott Parsons in the middle of the twentieth century, but as Vanderstraeten (2002) points out it also finds a place in the work of Niklas Luhmann. The idea is an important one in terms of how we understand the social. It is a bridge between social psychology and sociology, but also has direct implications for the political realm. Vanderstraeten neatly defines the context of double contingency: 'When one focuses on the interaction of ego and alter, the analysis has to shift from the orientation of a single given actor

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 157 -- #199

to the consideration of two or more interacting actors as a system' (79).

Interaction between ego and alter is contingent in so far as it 'transcends the purely individual or subjective level' (80). All social interactions are uncertain or contingent as no one can be absolutely certain of how the other will react to or understand what is being communicated. It is doubly contingent in so far as the engagement of ego and alter opens up contingency firstly on the part of ego and alter and secondly in terms of what they communicate and understand. Parsons and Shils (1951) offer a cogent encapsulation of this; 'ego's gratifications are contingent on his selection among available alternatives. But in turn, alter's reaction will be contingent on ego's selection and will result from a complementary selection on alter's part' (16).

The description of this communicative process and its centrality to the creation of the social is vouchsafed. The term double contingency itself is a bit misleading, because while it captures the nature of interaction with the use of the term 'double' (ego and alter) the arising contingency operates not in a binary fashion, like a reflection on a perfect mirror nor even one with a double lens, but is in fact more like reflection off a multiplicity of surfaces. Parsons (1951) more explicitly refers to 'the *second* contingency factor' (94) that is the action of alter vis-a-vis ego, which gives 'double' a more concrete reference point. In Vanderstraeten's words 'the contingency of what an actor actually does in the context of an elementary interaction situation and the contingency of the other's reaction' (80), this he suggests to be 'double "double contingency" '(81), but even that does not capture the chaotic potentialities of communication. Parsons addresses the chaotic potentialities by suggesting that communicative interaction is social in nature and thus governed by a normative set of rules largely shared by ego and alter.

For an interactive relationship 'a common system of symbols is the precondition' (Parsons and Shils 1951: 105), emphasizing that they see it as dependent upon a normative or cultural set of rules and expectations. Parsons (1951) claims that for an interaction system to be 'stabilized is for the interests of the actors to be bound to conformity with a shared system of value-orientation standards' (38). Interaction in that sense is not in a chaotic context, but rather has twin stabilizing features for both ego and alter in that both can hold 'realistic possibilities' for the interaction and simultaneously the anticipation of a shared 'meaning'. This does not discount a nebulous landscape of communicative outcomes influenced by a myriad of factors including subjective, cultural, environmental and temporal

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 158 -- #200

ones. However within this constellation there is a normatively shaped set 'of complementary expectations, not only that ego and alter should *communicate*, but that they should *react appropriately* to each other's action' (Parsons and Shils 1951: 106). A failure within this social system through a violation of shared norms, relates to Honneth's concept of recognition, for ego: 'violation of the norm causes him to feel shame toward alter, guilt toward himself' (106). This aspect is elaborated in greater detail in the later discussion by Parsons and Shils on 'Personality as a System of Action'. In specific terms they address the concept of recognition as it impacts on the individual 'where the expectations of the actor concerning himself do not correspond to the expectation others have formed concerning him'(151). The personal categorization of the individual as described here is closely related to Honneth's concept of 'social disrespect', but described in different linguistic terms as resulting in: 'ambivalences in the actor's own categorization of himself' and 'contradictory allocative standards and consequent instabilities of behavior and internal conflict, as well as conflict between the actor and the members of his collectivities' (151).

Luhmann (1995) deals with the impression that 'ego and alter, on both sides, as fully concrete human beings' is easily deducible for the construction of double contingency, but which is 'neither entirely false nor entirely true' (107).

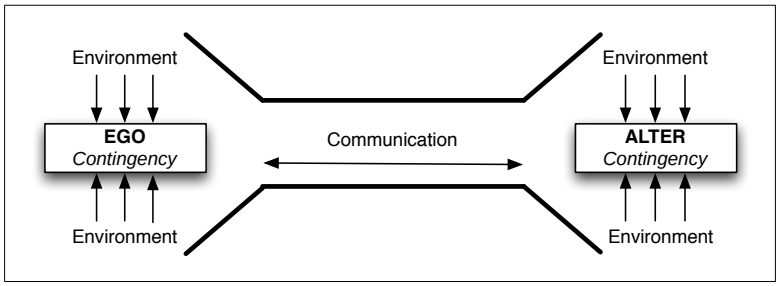
He also rejects the notion that 'double contingency' can be seen as a simple reciprocal process. He dismisses the analogy of the mirror to make this point. He highlights the distorting potentials because 'a distorting mirror does not grasp the distortion of other mirrors' (107) and that a reciprocal orientation is essentially a 'reduction of complexity' (108). He also critiques 'symbolic interactionism' pointing out that both ego and alter 'experience *double* contingency' (108). He makes a very useful contribution to an understanding of double contingency, which also casts light on the concept of triple contingency. He is closer perhaps to Strydom's theory than is Parsons' formulation. Luhmann states that 'the complexity of such situations rules out the participants' reciprocally fully understanding each other, indeed, understanding every variant of system performance that each individual contemplates' (109).

He proposes a solution by way of introducing the idea of black boxes. This is innovative and pushes the theory forward, but also ironically exposes it to the limitations highlighted by Strydom. While the black boxes liberate the notion of contingency from the possibility of conceiving communication as sonar signaling, where ego is the chief communicator, bouncing a signal off a

contingent surface, but still largely responsible for interpretation, it is still a somewhat closed system in Luhmann's model. In the black boxes 'each determines its own behavior by complex self-referential operations within its own boundaries' (109). These black boxes 'remain separate: they do not merge; they do not understand each other any better than before' (110).

Luhmann describes the communicative process whereby the two parties (in double contingency) 'observe as input and output in the other as a system in an environment and learn self-referentially' (110). What he means by 'in an environment', he does not elaborate. It seems that he is just short of anticipating Strydom's idea of the public or the public sphere, but does not make that final step. He immediately points out the contingent nature of social systems, having 'no basal certainty' and 'no prediction of behavior', but then inserts that they 'are controlled only with reference to the participants' *own* behavior' (110). This seems to suggest at one level a realization of the existence of the public (environment), but does not take on board its impact in the way anticipated by triple contingency. When he again discusses environment, it seems clearer that this could include the public: 'experience related to the environment, in addition to action, becomes relevant' (113). In discussion he raises the anticipation of the public (though not explicitly stated) as an influential factor: 'The social dimension of all meaning concerns the entire world, the entire extensiveness of one's own experience, and the estimated experience of others, beginning in the concrete here and now' (113).

It seems that Luhmann, has already abandoned the double contingency of Parsons, but has not quite embraced the triple contingency of Strydom. Environment we can presume includes the public, but his double contingency model, is still restricted to black boxes, funneling communication, albeit absorbing environmental factors. It does not allow for the interplay of the public in the dynamic form suggested by Strydom.



''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 160 -- #202

Some important points connecting 'double contingency' and Strydom's later development of 'triple contingency' are already present in Parsons and Shils's (1951) discussion on the 'structure of the interactive relationship'. They acknowledge that while 'interaction of ego and alter is the most elementary form of social system', they simultaneously recognize that features of this are present in 'more complex form in all social systems'(105). The recognition that contemporary societies 'are increasingly assuming the form of communication societies' (Strydom 1999: 2) forces us to understand the public in a new way. Strydom presents this new role of the public as 'triple contingency', which supercedes the concept of 'double contingency'. This concept is especially important for the discussion here as it links with Honneth's concept of recognition, to give a political impetus to a grounding of rights.

In order to fully understand the communicative context that gives rise to recognition, dignity and respect we need to look at this in the context of both double and triple contingency. As discussed above this can be seen in terms of double contingency corresponding with the process of recognition, which leads to individual rights and triple contingency corresponding with recognition within the collectivity leading to solidaristic rights. Social contract theories going back to Hobbes, Locke or Rousseau and even citizenship theories going right back to ancient Greece are contextualized within a collective context. In other words being a citizen of Athens only had meaning within a polis. This is still true today, even if an individual carries with him or her a cache of rights outside their home political entity. Rights are recognized not as an individualized contract, but on the basis of a common contract within a collectivity, this applies both to citizens within their home polity and individuals in foreign polities. Legally while benefits and biases may apply, they ought formally to be on the basis of common not particularistic principles, i.e. a person may be prevented from taking up residence in a particular state, not because the official did not like that person but because persons in that particular category are so disbarred. In other words rights are recognized and or denied on the basis of an individual being recognized as a human being (regardless of their rights), which is akin to a double contingency communicative process, but the rights against which they are measured are collectively agreed ones which have been subject to some degree of public discussion and agreement (for instance a bill of rights, a constitution or a legal code), which lies within the realm of triple contingency. Arbitrary denial of recognition to an individual or individuals likewise falls within a double contingency communicative space, while systematic denial

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 161 -- #203

of rights to collective categories (even if expressed to individuals in an apparent individualized way) is within the communicative space of triple contingency.

Rights can neither derive from a cosmological foundation as is assumed for instance by natural law theories, which ultimately underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights nor can they derive entirely through discursive processes as assumed by Habermas. What Strydom (1999) presents to us, from a political perspective, is a theory of action: 'It is precisely in the principle of the public or the "universality of non-expertise" as Fuller (1993: 285) calls it, that the concept of triple contingency finds its starting point' (21, f/n 1). This action is about settling certain public issues: 'The public renders determinate, in quite unpredictable ways, what is at first indeterminate in public communication' (6).

In this theory the public plays a central role in making sense of issues of contestation, and in bringing some degree of settlement to the contestation, even if temporarily. So while the principles of double contingency continue to play, a third view, that of the public comes into play. It seems to me that the public makes sense of the communication by both forcing the contesting parties to present their case in a publicly sensible way and secondly the public interacts, deflects and makes sense of the communication. As Strydom points out in 'unpredictable ways', in that sense the public is not so much a mirror reflecting light as a set of prisms refracting it. What emerges is a 'struggle for meaning' forged in 'a process of communication' which involves not just the main participants but also 'the observing public' (17).

Conclusion

In the twentieth century, especially after World War II, the ideas of government that gestated in Europe were championed as the best form of government. This was a society governed in the words of Abraham Lincoln a century earlier as 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' (Lincoln 1863), based on an independent legal framework and built on both the premise of equality and a set of rights to support that premise. Then, as now, it was not universally accepted nor did it ever have anything like global application. This was apparent even in the drafting (Third Committee stage) and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 (Glendon 2001).

Contestation and contestability are the bedrocks of such a model and if we tend towards an optimistic view they are the catalysts to open up new frontiers in the recognition of humanity. Being

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 162 -- #204

faced with trenchant ideological challenges is not necessarily bad, the alternatives show us the value of the freedoms we have, and threats show us the fragility of what has been won and could be lost.

We are in a time when the premises of a rights based democratic way of life is challenged. The most outrageous challenge comes from religious fundamentalists, who hold that the answers to all human questions can be found in sacred texts. Islamic fundamentalists are not the sole source of this; Christian, Jewish and other fundamentalists also question the secular way of life and the liberal worldview. Neoconservatives and Neoliberals too question many of the premises of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, national constitutions and bills of rights. Both sets of arguments against human rights are strengthened by the weakness of the case in favour of human rights as they still depend on 'the absolute and transcendent measurements of religion or the law of nature [that] have lost their authority' (Arendt 1973: 299). What I have sought to do here is to present two pillars of a justification process that I believe can begin to address the essential loss of authority of the liberal justification of human rights. This is not nearly the complete picture, it is merely a staging post. It starts from Arendt's essential question on what basis do humans have the right to have rights. Human rights will never be safe until we answer that with an irrefutable authority that relies neither on sacred script nor natural law.

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 163 -- #205

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 164 -- #206

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9

MODELLING 'TRIPLE CONTINGENCY'

Loet Leydesdorff

In Chapter 3 of *Soziale Systeme*, Luhmann(1984) discussed 'double contingency' as central to the emergence of social systems. Borrowing the concept from Parsons, he provides it with a completely new solution. In my opinion, the simulations in terms of expectations accord with this solution. Paul Hartzog sent me a short piece in which he explains Luhmann's solution in English (Hartzog 1997). It made me aware that Luhmann moves fast in this chapter from 'double contingency' towards the emergence of social systems without a specification of the mechanism. Luhmann warns against Von Foerster's too fast movement (f/n 12: 157). According to Luhmann, the social system would 'emerge' from double contingency (in the singular!).

In a previous communication (cf. Leydesdorff 2008), I specified the interaction mechanism between two anticipatory systems contained in a double contingency as follows:

$$x(t) = a(1 - x(t+1))(1 - x(t+1))$$

The next state of the system is determined by the selective operation of expectations upon each other in a dyadic interaction. The simulations are robust and show that the system can move erratically from the one side to the other side. If one wishes, one can play with the parameters in the Microsoft Excel sheet and follow the consequences at `http://www.leydesdorff.net/temp/doublcont.xls` .

I guess that a double contingency can go on forever when no third party comes into play. Piet Strydom(1999) used the term 'triple contingency' for explaining the emergence of a modern communication society in the 16th and 17th century. The third

party becomes abstracted as a public. In principle, one could model a triple contingency analogously, using:

$$x(t) = a(1 - x(t+1))(1 - x(t+1))\ (1 - x(t+1))$$

This leads to a cubic equation of $x(t+1)$ as a function of $x(t)$. Cubic equations have analytical solutions (There is a freeware add-in in Microsoft Excel for solving them). The solutions may imply $i = \sqrt{-1}$, and thus be in the complex domain.

For all values of the bifurcation parameter a the system is highly unstable and quickly degenerates into a complex one. One interpretation would be that triple interactions provide a short-term window for organization (decision-making) to step into the system. The relation between interaction and organization would then be conditional for the emergence of the social system.

A formulation for organization could be:

$$x(t) = a(1 - x(t))(1 - x(t+1))(1 - x(t+1))$$
$$\frac{x(t)}{(1 - x(t))} = a(1 - x(t+1))(1 - x(t+1))$$

By replacing $\frac{x(t)}{(1-x(t))}$ with y, the solution is similar to the one for double contingency, but *mutatis mutandis:*

$$x(t+1) = 1 \pm \sqrt{\frac{x(t)}{a(1 - x(t))}}$$

This formula is in the simulation as stable as double contingency for values of $a \geq 8$, but I don't yet have an analytic solution for this. For lower values of a, the system vanishes. Using an internal degree of freedom, the system might be able to change its value of a endogenously and thus alternate between double contingency and its disappearance.

In summary, in the case of a triple contingency, the system can show the behaviour of a window for organization to step in by using three incursive terms (based on expectations), or bring a double contingency to an end by bringing a historical contingency (modelled as a recursive term) into play. Using the internal degree of freedom for changing the value of a, the social system would also be able to generate double contingencies (interactions) endogenously.

From entropy statistics, we know that a system with three dynamics can generate a negative entropy in the mutual information

among the three (sub)dynamics. (I use this as an indicator of self-organization in other studies). However, there is still a missing link between the above reasoning and the emergence of a social system as a possibility because the complex system is not yet generated. I suppose that I have to bring the social distribution into play and not write $x(t)$, but $\sum_i x_i(t)$.

This piece originated as a contribution to the online 'Diskussionsforum zur soziologischen Systemtheorie Niklas Luhmanns' in early April 2007. The title has been added here. The elaborated version, 'The Communication of Meaning in Anticipatory Systems: A Simulation Study of the Dynamics of Intentionality in Social Interactions', Vice-Presidential Address at the 8th International Conference of *Computing Anticipatory Systems (CASYS07)*, Liège, Belgium, 6–11 August 2007, to be published in the *Proceedings of the American Institute of Physics* (2008), is available as a preprint version at `http://www.leydesdorff.net/casys07`

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10

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN LATIN AMERICA

José Maurício Domingues and Andrea Coutinho Pontual

Introduction

Responsibility has become a major topic in world politics and culture, with the environment featuring prominently in it. This is true at the discursive level, and has also influenced social struggles, institution building, and the making and implementation of policies. Latin America has been part of this process for many years, although the literature on the topic is fragmentary and lacks both good empirical generalizations and conceptual discussions. Our aim here is to contribute to overcome this limitation.

Firstly, we present our conceptual view of responsibility and the public sphere. Secondly, we apply these conceptual constructs to an understanding of the environmental question in Latin America. The problems that beset the region regarding responsibility are discussed in the last section.

Two conceptual questions: Responsibility and the Public Sphere

Responsibility

Responsibility has been a permanent topic in the social thought of modernity. Its meaning has changed over time and has come to the fore in the last decades. In liberal thought responsibility was attached almost exclusively to the individual, who alone was responsible for his actions and his destiny. The state should merely

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 170 -- #212

enforce the law, guarantee freedom and security, and maintain peace. Eventually, much more than before, responsibility was transferred to the state as part of its increasing role in the ordering of society and social welfare. The first definition of responsibility belongs to the first phase of modernity; the second, to its second, state-organized phase. Since then responsibility has become a pervasive issue in social discourse, but the modern view of the boundless domination and exploitation of nature did not change in this period. Strydom (1999, 2000) has spoken of three eras of discourse within modernity: the rights discourse, the justice discourse and, finally, our present one, that of the responsibility discourse. This is closely related to the fact that we increasingly live in a 'risk society', due to the increasingly pervasive unintended effects of the once supposedly absolute mastery of nature (Beck 1986; Strydom 2002: 128–30). This corresponds to and partially characterizes the third phase of modernity, marked by extreme complexity, a pluralization of issues and agents in the private and the public spheres (Domingues 2006).

In this context, 'collective responsibility' became an issue in Jonas' (1979) philosophy, in which nature appeared as threatened by the Promethean drive of modernity. His work, however, did not evince democratic leanings. Apel (1988) changed the approach to the topic, introducing a radical democratic perspective *vis-a-vis* responsibility, in which intermediate collectivities had a central role to play. Environmental issues remained at the core of his reflection. Nevertheless, he stressed the need for continuous economic growth, rejecting any neo-Malthusian perspective.

The link between responsibility and risk was woven with the appearance of the modern environmental discourse in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Henceforth environmental responsibility spread its ideals to all sectors of society. This concept and the ideas behind it have evolved over time; have been articulated in politics and policies, in societal identities, professions and public spheres. International discourse on the theme can illustrate this evolution. The 1972 document *Limits to Growth* suggested a possible state of global stability amid a 'zero growth' solution, an untenable position, since it was considered to restrain the development of Third World countries. A rift soon appeared between the North and the South over the weight to be given to the environmental question. This discussion took place in the context of state responsibility for the protection of nature and natural resources. Third World countries, especially from Latin America, were key players in a change of perspective brought about by the World Environmental Commission – the Brundtland Commission (1982–87). The notion

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 171 -- #213

of 'sustainable development' thus emerged, trying to balance both sides of the equation, the environment and the economy. However, much work was left to transform the concept into actions on the ground. This was one of the main issues discussed during the 1992 United Nations Rio Conference (Earth Summit), which brought the term 'sustainable development' into the mainstream and produced the Agenda 21 policy document. Despite these efforts, the vagueness of the concept of sustainability persisted, alongside its impact on public debates and piecemeal institutionalization (Nobre *et al*. 2002; MacDonald and Nielson 1997: 274–5). One may even argue that the new centrality of the environmental discourse as a new modern 'master frame' and its institutionalization may have happened to the relative detriment of the environmental movement and deeper changes in the relation between nature and society (Eder 1996: Part III).

The public sphere

Paramount in the discussion of the public sphere in the twentieth century was Habermas' (1962, 1981, 1992) sustained effort to place it at the core of critical theory. He has always been adamant on the definition of the public sphere as a place of *rational argument* and *consensus-building*. *Conflict* was at best a problem for his framework, although he came to accept compromises as the possible outcome of public debates. In contrast, Eder (1986) gave pride of place to conflict and conflict resolution as producing new 'collective learning processes' in his explanation of the German *Sonderweg* and transition to modernity. In his analysis of the concept of public sphere, though somewhat critical of Habermas' normative and contra-factual position, Eder (2005) does not stress his former very productive point. Other authors have argued against several features of Habermas' theory: a more decentralized and pluralistic view of the public sphere has derived from this (see Avritzer and Costa 2005). Others have pointed to the emergence of institutional settings for 'reflexive' public debate, conflict and consensus, thematizing also environmental issues, following the crisis of neocorporatism in Europe. In this, however, the extent and nature of the thematization of environmental issues is open to question (Eder 1996: Part III; Strydom 2002: especially 132–8).

We shall introduce some further elements in this discussion. To define the public sphere we aim to go beyond an exclusive focus on communication and the networks of collaboration that often, more or less explicitly, are aired as characterizing it. Public spheres, we would like to argue, are more complex than this. Thus, contrary to

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 172 -- #214

a perspective according to which money and power merely colonize and destroy its foundations, the market – coordinated by voluntary exchange – as well as hierarchies – based on command – are also elements that constitute the public sphere, along with networks – based on voluntary collaboration and projects. The introduction of such notions, at an *analytical level* (see Domingues 2006: ch. 8), lends a more sociological slant to its definition, helping us to escape from an overly philosophical and idealized notion of the public sphere.

In 'real public spheres', therefore, the market is present in the making and the participation of business, the media and NGOs (Non Government Organizations); hierarchies appear in the state, NGOs, social movements and companies – as well as between them, while networks predominate in the voluntary collaboration of citizens and collectivities, often organizing social movements and alternative media. Reflexivity is not inimical either to the market or to hierarchies, although the prevalence of networks tends to be more promising insofar as they allow for communicative interaction on an enlarged basis of freedom. Conflicts usually initiate communicative processes in the public sphere; sometimes consensus, sometimes compromise, comes out of them (although at times issues simply do not evolve). It is also possible that public debate even generates more conflict. The political system (including the executive and the legislative branches as well as political parties), the judiciary and state bureaucracy must be taken into account so as to obtain a complete picture of the public sphere. Indeed, the state often shapes public spheres, which may be to some extent its own creation.

Finally, although true consensus may result from conflicts, and in spite of the fact that axiological, normative and discursive dimensions are certainly crucial, power, differential resources and irreducible interests must also be reckoned with. Conflicts usually have winners and losers, majorities and minorities. Players are not static and conflict is not necessarily a zero-sum game; but even so it is likely that someone takes greater advantage (or loses less) in concrete outcomes. The realization of values may be one end to which means are chosen, but the latter may become ends in themselves, such as access to power positions.

Latin America and the environment

In Latin America the state was usually prominent in the initial answers to the environmental debate. The unfolding of the issue depended, however, on the variable mobilization of societal forces.

Against the backdrop of increasing awareness about global envi-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 173 -- #215

ronmental problems and risks, the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference strongly urged all states to create national legal frameworks and pushed for governmental action related to environmental protection. Afterwards there was pressure to see such measures implemented, some of which were even perceived as a threat to national sovereignty (cf. the debate about the Amazon region, which the Brazilian government answered with the creation of protective legislation and responsible agencies). Since the 1980s endogenous environmental social movements and an array of NGOs mushroomed in the region within the more general process of transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy. Although environmental issues have not achieved a paramount role in electoral debates, they have been raised in the media and became of widespread social concern, with varying degrees of importance, which states have to some extent addressed so as to enhance their own legitimacy. The specific features of Latin American environmentalism have led to its conceptualization as a ‘socio-environmentalism’, meaning concern with poverty and environmentally-sensitive development. As a result of this two-pronged system of influences, institutional arrangements rapidly advanced throughout the region: by the end of the 1980s all countries had at least created environmental agencies, half a dozen had elevated environmental policy to cabinet rank and even more had a Ministry of Natural Resources. Sustainable development eventually became a centre piece of environmental discourse (Leis 1991; Price 1994; Mumme and Korzetz 1997: especially 40–3, 51).

Viola (1997: 88-91) divided the region’s countries into four groups:

1. Brazil, Mexico and Costa Rica, where environmentalism was well established, counted on a network of activists, and international actors played an important role;
2. Venezuela, Chile and Uruguay, which were similar to the former, but were not internationalized;
3. Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, where there was virtually no concern with the environment;
4. Panama, Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, Guyana, Surinam, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize, with small groups of militants and little impact on public opinion.

   According to Mumme and Korzetz (1997), however, Ecuador has had a long history of engagement with environmental issues, with the opposition of indigenous groups to the exploitation of oil in the forests. In any case, much has changed in the last ten years, especially in the Andean republics with the

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 174 -- #216

rise of powerful ‘indigenous movements’, and in Argentina.

Closely connected to such processes was the re-emergence, spread and pluralization of the public sphere, wherein social movements, NGOs and several media were able to thematize environmental problems (Avritzer and Costa 2005). The rights discourse, in tandem with the justice discourse and the responsibility discourse all came to the forefront of political debate. Environmental concerns were translated into constitutional regulations, legislation, and new regulatory agencies; governmental intervention in social life and environmental issues, as well as the activism of the judiciary, found new sources of energy and legitimacy – as well as criticism. A new generation of ‘diffuse’ rights, which included the environment was thereby defined (cf. Bobbio 1969). Besides, at this moment in time the traditional corporatist state-controlled regimes faced a deep crisis, with varying results (more radical in Brazil and Argentina, less disruptive in Mexico). In this context, in a much more complex society, the bridges between state and society have had to be rebuilt (Domingues 2005).

It was at this moment that NGOs became prominent worldwide. Some of them have been capable of exerting leverage over the policies of multilateral organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. On the other hand, some ‘southern’ NGOs have been financed by these multilateral institutions, as well as by ‘northern’ NGOs. This implies at times agendas with low internal public legitimacy for local NGOs, stalling the development of endogenous priorities (Nelson 1997; Nielson and Stern 1997; Vianna 2000). Especially problematic is the power held by multilateral financial agencies and the conditions attached to their loan schemes. Their ‘influence’ is exercised discretely, away from the public eye. Paradoxically, sometimes they may contribute to the creation of local public spheres, while they themselves are not actually open to local and national agendas. A rather imbalanced relation between Latin American national agents and international agencies stems from this (Stallings 1992).

Environmental concerns have been played against the backdrop of a view of natural resources as plentiful in most Latin American countries. Large-scale construction of infrastructure and, when possible, industrialization, predatory use of natural resources and the perspective of their inexhaustibility, have been traits of their models of development. Acute pressure for development arises from the problems of poverty endured by large sections of these populations and skewed patterns of consumption due to an extremely unequal

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 175 -- #217

income distribution. More recently, a strong orientation to primary exports and commodities above all else, within a neoliberal trade regime, was resumed and has been at the forefront of economic growth, putting further pressure on environmental resources and producing damaging side-effects: urban degradation, increasing deforestation and soil erosion, the loss of biodiversity; at the formal side, the low regulation of transgenic seeds and products, pressure for changes in environmental laws towards laxity and weak enforcement. Government commitment to growth within this reinforced international division of labour has been strong, to the detriment of environmental concerns, even when voiced by other state agencies (Viola e Leis 1991; Castro Herrera 2003).

A tension exists within the state between its two roles of protecting the environment and promoting development. Serious shortcomings derive from this: legislation often remains a ‘dead letter’, with environmental policy becoming merely symbolic. In other words, the state faces demands from diverse sectors of society, deflects pressures from reformists by passing legislation and creating institutions, but then frequently fails to enforce the law. The judiciary plays an increasingly important role, but cannot appear as a thorough solution. Of course, a further source of policy failure at the implementation level is the limited capacity of the public sphere and the agents that fight for environmental change to monitor and influence state policy in practice. This is another unfortunate example of the Latin American tradition of placing more weight on formal and legal aspects of institutions than on their actual functionings. In so far as few resources are applied to enforcement little else may be expected. The reduced capacity of the Latin American state to intervene deeply in social life, and its limited ‘infrastructural’ power, takes its toll here as it does in other areas where it is badly needed. As a result, *informality* spreads out and powerful state and societal agents, usually capitalist firms, frequently manage to evade the consequences of their actions (Mumme and Korzetz 1997: 51–2; Laplante and Garbutt 1992; Mann 2005). This does not mean that there have not been decisive advances in Latin America concerning the protection of the environment and the spread of the concept of responsibility. Indeed, they have happened. But the aforementioned problems limit their impact.

What follows is a more specific treatment of these issues in relation to Brazil, with Mexico and Venezuela complementing our analysis.

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 176 -- #218

Brazil: environmental institutionalization, movements and the public sphere

Brazil has been one of the countries in the region with a stronger environmentalist movement, due to state commitment to the topic; subsequently, it has also made considerable advances in terms of legal and administrative provisions. The Special Secretary for the Environment (SEMA) was created in 1973, just after the Stockholm Conference. It was directly linked to the presidency of the republic, as a token instrument *vis-a-vis* the big development projects. In 1981, still under the military, and within the ‘command and control’ paradigm of environment management, the National Environmental Law (LPNMA) was enacted. It created the National Council for the Environment (CONAMA), which made provision for the participation of civil society and subsequently became the major national forum for consensus building on policy. State and local bodies were also envisioned. The law instituted the main instruments of public regulation: the environment license (which included public consultation), ecological zoning, the mandatory character of environmental studies and assessment reports, as well as penalties for environmental damage. This was considered a very innovative body of legislation at the time. In 1985 civil class action also became law and, consequently, an important instrument for societal agents’ intervention against environmental damage. After the defeat of the military regime, in 1988, Brazil gained a new Constitution permeated with environmental concerns. Article 225 of Chapter VI affirmed that a ‘healthy environment’ was a right of every citizen and that the state was responsible for its preservation, and also its preservation for future generations. It revived the former environmental legislation and created the Public Attorney Office (*Ministério Público*), which cares for diffuse rights in this as in other subjects. The Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) was created in 1989 as the executive organ of the new Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic for the Environment (SEMAN), changed into the Ministry for the Environment (MMA) in 1992. In 1998 a new law dealing with environmental crimes was introduced, it included regulating administrative responsibility for the organizations and also making their executives responsible by law for their decisions in relation to the environment. Public hearings were made mandatory in relation to the licencing of activities potentially harmful to the environment on a significant scale, as defined by the CONAMA and the environmental agencies of the state (see Brito and Câmara 1999; Acserald 2001; Little 2003; Santilli 2005).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 177 -- #219

Connected to these institutional developments the 1980s witnessed the rise of the 'ecological' movement, within a broadened and freer public sphere. Originally a handful of groups denounced environmental degradation, but the first half of the 1980s saw an expansion and politicization of the movement in the context of the democratic transition. According to Viola (1987, 1997), 'Ecopolitics' was the next step, with militants joining political parties and decisively impacting the constitutional process. His hypothesis is that environmentalism was a leitmotif which disseminated across different sectors of society, the state and the economy, through the impact of the environmental movement (a strategy not followed by those who created the Green Party, which might explain the organization's failure to become relevant).

Socio-environmentalism was an important aspect of the Brazilian movement. After the 1992 Rio Conference – which boosted the legitimacy of the movement and the role of NGOs – a convergence between distinct sorts of agents came about towards a more sustainable environmental policy, especially around Agenda 21. Originally important in the centre and the south of the country, and based to a great extent on the middle classes, the movement spread in the 1990s to the north, including rubber tapers and indigenous communities, with strong international funding. Its impact on public opinion, the media, other social movements, was deep. Urban degradation, deforestation and biodiversity and the assassination of environmentalists have been the main issues on the Brazilian environmental agenda.

While environmental concerns became part of societal reflexivity mediated in the public sphere, environmentalism penetrated the state and many of its activists reached top positions in the political decision-making agencies and bureaucracies. Whether the latter speaks of its success or co-optation is open to question. Other former activists became regular consultants to the state. On the other hand, professionalization in NGOs (often exogenously funded) became overwhelming. Overall, the environmental movement has had a contradictory fortune. It has contributed to the impact of the issue in public opinion, has occupied the commercial mass media, has created a parallel media and its own fora of debate, as well as originated strong NGOs, but the movement's capacity for popular mobilization and, to some extent, its influence in the larger public sphere have declined since the 1990s (Neder 2002).

We must now ask how the public sphere has performed in mediating, elaborating discourses, processing conflicts and achieving consensus in Brazil. This must be analyzed at local and national

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 178 -- #220

levels.

Researchers who studied environmental issues in the public sphere at the local level are not particularly optimistic. Alonso and Costa (2003: 122–5; 2004) argue that, irrespective of advances, those mechanisms are flawed in terms of efficacy and legitimacy, generating conflict instead of consensus. In public hearings, discord rather than agreement has in fact occurred, since divergences of interest and value are strong. In addition, lack of adequate popular educational background to understand issues and participatory mechanisms, plus a low level of public commitment, prevents people from taking an active part in discussions that may directly interest them. Fuks (1998) underscores similar problems: social awareness, he says, decreases sharply in poorer areas and more especially when the Public Attorney’s office plays a key role in these areas in the defining and processing of conflicts related to the environment. Fuks explores the importance of environmental discourse, where old problems take on environmental components or become themselves environmental as a means to grab attention and to be processed. He contends that commercial media is one of the main vehicles for public debate regarding areas of social conflict.

At national level, we find limits to collective environmental responsibility too. As aforementioned, the CONAMA has lost much of its power in recent years. Difficulties thus arise when private interests face only locally-based environmental opposition, since the fora for discussion are mainly for local issues rather than on large-scale questions and there are actually no national public fora for debates about strategic environmental-economic choices. Take the case of the Amazon region and soy cultivation. Despite the constitutional definition of the rain forest as a ‘national heritage’, the annual rate of deforestation in the first few years of the century has been over twenty thousand kilometres square, more than 80 per cent of which is in three states–Mato Grosso, Rondônia and Pará (http://http://www.inpe.gov.br/). One of the causes of this deforestation rate is the encroaching cultivation of soybeans at the rainforest edge. It is also a case of development pressure with no strategic planning, where private and collective interests may be in conflict. The lack of enforcement of environmental legislation, coupled with informality, often results in business interests easily winning the environmental contest. The sustainable development discourse is hence heavily underplayed and different government ministries take conflicting stances on the environment (in the soya case, the Agriculture Ministry being at odds with the Environment Ministry) (Baker 2004). One could further argue that the forum for

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 179 -- #221

discussion of issues with national repercussions should be a duly elected Congress, but environmental considerations carry very little weight in the electoral process, there are few deputies elected under the environmental banner and the Green party is weak. Congress pays correspondingly little attention to environmental matters and the public is left in the dark.

Overall environmental responsibility in Brazil seems to be confined to certain sections of the state and society, while completely lacking in others. It certainly does not amount to an all encompassing collective process. Legal liability for environmental damage is a fact but in practice many aspects of the law are considered merely ‘educational’. Reflexive institutions have been developed and their participation in governance increased, but their range is limited. Symbolic elements and informality appear as key concepts to understand the workings of an apparently highly participatory process. Conflicts, divergent interests on environmental issues and values, are mishandled by the system or tackled in a rather partial manner. Powerful interests and customary values, which heavily favour economic development free from responsibility considerations, are expected to largely predominate when decisions are taken, leaving the process ever open to corruption. Furthermore, when decisions contradict market forces and state hierarchies, very often they are not enforced. A partial realignment of the Brazilian economy, into the newer globalized scenario, and the pressure for a surplus in trade account, has only made things worse. Changes in this pattern seem to depend on a renewal of the environmental movement and the growth of its influence within the broader public sphere.

Mexico: pre-emptive reform

Mexico has had environmental state agencies and legislation since the 1970s. Similar to Brazil, its institutions in this field are as a result of successive reforms which were to a great extent exogenously driven, especially at the beginning, following the 1972 Stockholm Conference. Their emphasis was on demographic pressures on specific ecosystems and industrial pollution causing atmospheric contamination, mainly in Mexico City. In 1972 the Secretary for Environmental Improvement was established and, six years later, the Inter-secretarial Commission for Environmental Sanitation was created. In 1982, the Federal Law for the Protection of the Environment was promulgated. The Secretary for Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE) also came into being at this time. In 1984, a national campaign was launched to increase public awareness and stimulate the organization of, what was in fact, a state controlled

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 180 -- #222

environmental movement. In 1987 the de la Madrid government, through the National Ecological Commission (CNE), proposed the programme One Hundred Necessary Actions, envisaging the participation of other levels of government and society. During the Salinas government many changes occurred regarding public policies for the environment. The General Law on Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection was passed, which made the conceptual advance of granting the environmental issue an encompassing status, including socio-economic considerations. Under the aegis of SEDUE (the Secretary for Social Development – SEDESOL since 1992), the government's national development plan included environmental issues for the first time and created two subordinate agencies: the National Ecological Institute (INE), to regulate environmental policies, and the Federal Attorney's Office for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA), to enforce the law. In 1994 reforms were consolidated with the creation of the Secretary for Fisheries, the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAP, shortly afterwards SEMARNAT). Sustainable development underpinned this institution-building process, and over time air pollution has continued to dominate the policy priorities (Lezama 2006: 136–42; Mumme 1992). Since Mexico joined the United States and Canada in free trade agreements, it has been experimenting with voluntary mechanisms (that is, not based on strict enforcement), starting with the National Programme for Environmental Audit (PNAA) (Lezama 1999).

According to Mumme (1992), the de la Madrid campaign and especially the Salinas (1988–1994) reforms (more formal than substantive), had mainly pre-emptive goals. They wished to gain legitimacy for a faltering authoritarian regime (albeit elected), which had opted for neoliberal reform and political openness, without fully considering the implications of their discourse. At the core of their policies was the co-optation of the nascent environmental movement and the neutralization of the potential impact of its discourse and agenda, a recurrent tactic of the Mexican corporatist state regarding social movements. As usual, groups that preferred a more grassroots oriented approach and avoided being co-opted were excluded from the government-convened fora and consultations. Mixed outcomes resulted, however: while the Salinas government's commitment to environmental care remained essentially symbolic, his period in office helped place the issues the environmental movement wanted to raise firmly in the public sphere. Faced with pressures for continuing development, Mexican governments have turned a blind eye especially to the harsh environmental impact of the expansion of the 'maquiladora' industry on the border with the United States, a

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 181 -- #223

key aspect of the export led growth of the Mexican economy in recent decades.[1] Even in the case of air pollution, the government has allegedly treated the problem in the capital less seriously than if environmental responsibility had been properly taken into account. The state has by and large managed to bypass conflicts and legitimize itself by paying lip service to environmental concerns with this mainly symbolic use of legislation. But while the state shrugs its responsibility, social movements have to some extent succeeded in keeping the issues alive in the public sphere (Lezama 2000).

Venezuela: the public sphere and sustainable development

The Venezuelan case is particularly interesting to close our discussion. In 1976, with the introduction of the Organic Law on the Environment (LOA) and the Ministry for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, Venezuela had its first elements of environmental legislation. In the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution (which broke with the previous oligarchic republic) environmental concerns stood out. Environmental movements were organized in several distinct styles and networks were built to achieve a proper level of coordination. Through the mass media they managed to have a relevant impact on public opinion, especially at the symbolic level. The sustainable development discourse was thus introduced and the movement emerged as a relevant public actor (Pilar García 1992; García-Guadilla 2001). But relations with the state have not been easy.

These uneasy relations are best exemplified by the problems encountered in the proposed construction of an electricity transmission line, linking Venezuela and Brazil, through the Amazonian Great Savannah. On one side the government is promoting the project and on the other the environmentalists and indigenous groups are opposing it. The Constitution, as well as agreements with UNESCO, allow for studies about environmental impact, which are then demanded by some of the indigenous leaders, backed especially by NGOs. These leaders were in place through some process of ‘direct democracy’, while others were co-opted by the government, which passed off talks with part of the indigenous leadership as being enough to legitimize the construction of the transmission line. This solution was plausible because, despite constitutional provisions, there is no infra-constitutional legislation translating them into imperative state practices. A problematic situation arises from this: the environmental movement emphasizes the ecological and participatory dimensions of sustainable development, while the government stresses economic growth; the government favours consultation,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 182 -- #224

whereas movements demand a role in the decision-making process (García-Guadilla 2001).

This example shows that the symbolic element of legislation is once again played by the government, hierarchically, in order to bypass social movements and their social networks. Beyond that, a tension between the diverse elements of the term ‘sustainable development’ comes to the fore, highlighting in concrete terms and in the debate within the public sphere an almost useless and illusory character. It starts as a consensual slogan, but ends up as a conflict-ridden phrase. Responsibility is of course caught up in this division, since it is not clear where it resides – with the state, with social movements, or with a mix of both. Could a stronger public sphere sort out such internal contradictions or is sustainable development and related issues such as collective responsibility doomed when push comes to shove in actual conflicts? Although this is indeed quite possible, maybe the development of social movements in Latin America will prove that such a hypothesis is premature and overly pessimistic and they will carry collective responsibility onto a new level of normative and empirical maturation.

Final Words

The net balance of our discussion points to the indubitable relevance of the question of responsibility in Latin America in the present stage of modernity. In this region, the same as worldwide, the global environmental movement has had a powerful impact on state institutions and policies, depending a lot, too, on endogenous social mobilization. But in the countries where the issue has been tackled in greater depth and for a longer period of time the variable strength of the environmental movement and the somewhat limited character of the public sphere, especially with respect to this issue, have become manifest. There is, however, a real possibility, we believe, for a distinct unfolding of the relation between society and nature in Latin America. Although development is and cannot but remain a paramount issue on the public agenda, concerns with the degradation and overexploitation of nature are very pertinent and widespread.

To sum up, a number of issues may be listed that characterize the shortcomings of the practical workings of responsibility in Latin America. Firstly, the strong symbolic character of legislation, as stressed above – that is, strongly ‘symbolic’ precisely because it is often confined to this dimension, without being actually enforced. The fact that ‘collective’ responsibility has been trusted basically to the state apparatus, highly hierarchical but with limited infrastruc-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 183 -- #225

tural power, with several zones of informality (including corruption) and traversed by conflicting values and priorities within its branches is a second serious shortcoming. The net result of this is that lip service is often paid to the most far-reaching problems and issues even though their legitimacy is not in question and the potential for more decisive and bolder measures exists.

Finally, we must focus on development. The discourse on sustainability was in part a creation of Latin America, becoming a centrepiece of public rhetoric and of the shift in the notion of responsibility. Sustainable development consisted in an attempt to find a way out of a polarization between the two terms comprised in its own phrasing, but it is not clear how that difficult combination may find proper solutions without a deeper change in the industrial and cultural framework. This stalemate is not exclusive to Latin America. However, the placement of this region in the new division of labour of present-day capitalism has pushed it to resume its position as a producer and exporter of commodities, as well as of low technology industrial products, reinforcing underdevelopment. When we compare such economies to those of the central, richer and more advanced countries, the equation becomes more tense. In this scenario, capitalist companies easily disregard environmental problems and legislation, being in principle legitimized by their sheer contribution to economic growth. Nowhere in the world have development and sustainability been adequately reconciled. But poverty and inequality, dependency on natural resources and the subordinate position of the region in global terms, compound the Latin American conundrum and make it harder to find solutions.

Environmental issues in Latin America are part and parcel of the pluralization of agents and questions being brought to public debate in an increasingly complex society, in what we have called the third phase of modernity. They compete for attention in the public sphere with other, equally pressing and at times older issues, such as inequality and poverty, as well as the widespread idea of socio-environmentalism in the region. Whether they will attain greater visibility hinges of course on the growth and independence of the environmental movement and its capacity to move social agents and build networks, in other words, to improve the capacity for grassroots mobilization, persuasion and communication in a wider public sphere, but also to monitor and foster policy implementation, beyond reliance on the state to legislate and implement measures in support of environmental care. The constraints to responsibility ideas, as identified in this article, especially the largely symbolic character of legislation, the pressure for development reinforced by

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 184 -- #226

trade liberalizations, its excessive dependency on the state and the leading role of foreign NGOs in agenda setting, are likely to linger on. But, even if the state has been central to the institutionalization of the environmental discourse and simultaneous dampening of its disruptive potential, conflicts have not been eliminated and remain a potential source of further and deeper change.

Habermas (1992, especially ch. 8) has indeed made his concept of the public sphere more complex. He introduced other elements such as the 'more or less discursive' character of debates, the notions of political 'centre' and societal 'periphery', 'social power', 'civil society', 'influence' as well as recognizing the usual presence of the mass media and a specific political dimension, that is a parliament within a constitution. But, while the latter is pervaded by 'instrumental' action, it is seen as a place where the core of the independent public sphere 'resonates'. And what matters for that core is, after all, its 'communication structure' and links with the 'lifeworld', defined mainly in normative terms.

NOTES

1. The term maquiladora describes favourable tax and regulation regimes for corporations that import goods to Mexico for processing or assembly, which are subsequently exported usually to the United States.

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11

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE IN IRELAND: COMMUNICATION IN THE 'SHADOW OF HIERARCHY'

Gerard Mullally

Introduction

Strydom identifies an interest in responsibility within the discipline of sociology stretching back to writers like Durkheim, Weber, Parsons, Gehlen and Habermas, however, he takes as his starting point the work of Karl-Otto Apel and Hans Jonas which is linked closely to the development of ecological discourses at the end of the twentieth century (1999: 65). Although the relationship between risk and responsibility permeates much of his writings in the late 1990s the theory of responsibility is given its first systematic outline in the 1999 article 'The Challenge of Responsibility for Sociology', then set briefly against the background of sociological theories of discourse in *Discourse and Knowledge* (2000) and developed at more length in *Risk, Environment and Modernity* (2002).

This chapter begins by (a) outlining Strydom's development of the idea of co-responsibility in relation to the concept of sustainable development and examining the emergence of societal reflexivity fostered through the contemporary discourse of risk. It then moves on to (b) consider the emergence of co-governance as a steering mechanism that has grown in importance in contemporary society (Bang 2003). The specific focus is on the challenge of co-ordinating societal responsibility for sustainable development in conditions of complexity, uncertainty and growing ambivalence. It also considers the argument that a normative programme such as 'governance

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 190 -- #232

for sustainable development' must take 'reflexive', 'recursive', and 'discursive' social processes seriously if we are to embed responsibility in appropriate institutional forms. We then move our attention specifically to the Irish context (c) to examine related shifts in Irish governance where there is increasing attention to the emergence of a distinctive type of steering, and a debate as to whether it might be labelled 'post-corporatist'. This provides the basis for (d) examining specific cases of public communication on sustainable development ranging from the practices of social partnership, to the public communication by business of their Corporate Social Responsibility, to discursive struggles in the politics of waste management in Ireland. The focus of this examination is to determine whether we might be witnessing a more reflexive approach to the governance of sustainable development in an emergent social order.

Sustainability, Responsibility and Post-Corporatism

Sustainability or sustainable development, according to Strydom (2002), is above all a cultural form: 'consisting of words, concepts, propositions, theories explanations, justifications meanings and symbols, that provides legitimation to a range of distinct actors and agents to engage in certain kinds of actions and to create certain kinds of institutions' (128). While sustainability is a new cultural form that has been developed from the 'intellectual, theoretical empirical idea of a complex or a system to be preserved intact, it is complemented by an emergent cultural form based on a normative idea of moral obligation; that is responsibility or rather co-responsibility' (128). Co-responsibility stresses the dimension of shared or common problems, but also retains a participatory role for the individual in public communication and in the discursive shaping and treatment of those problems (Strydom 1999: 68).

Responsibility as a cultural form 'has become available due to the efforts of a range of different actors or agents participating in the risk discourse to ascribe responsibility or blame to each other in the face of universal, global and irreversible risks' (Strydom 2002: 130). One way of institutionalizing responsibility is through the discursive organization of co-responsibility within an appropriate social, ethical and practical framework (134). As a result of sustainable development discourse, contemporary debate has focused less on proving the existence of environmental problems, and more on 'the nature of environmental responsibility, the predominant focus for that responsibility and the best methods of undertaking it' (Lightfoot and Burchell 2005: 77–78). Responsible governance thus requires 'interactive socio-political structures and processes stimulating com-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 191 -- #233

munication between actors involved, and the creation of common responsibilities next to individual and separated ones (Kooiman cited in Crozier 2007: 4).

The challenge of steering sustainable development involves, for Voßand Kemp (2005), a step away from the modern approach to rationalist problem solving to embrace 'reflexive problem-handling' (7). This implies at least two distinct but interrelated understandings of reflexivity: first and second-order reflexivity. *First-order reflexivity* relates to 'the dealing of modernity with its own implications and side effects, the mechanism by which societies grow in cycles of producing problems and solutions to these problems which produce new problems' (8). Reflexivity of this type is 'reflex like', it captures 'the unconscious or unintended consequences of industrial modernization, or what Beck labels the 'self-confrontation aspect of reflexive modernization' (Hendriks and Grin 2007: 335). Meadowcroft (2007a) argues that 'the steady stream of societal problems (pollution, environmental degradation, planning failures) associated with "first-order reflexivity" can be understood as providing the impetus for the emergence of the very idea of "sustainable development", for this concept denotes a kind of societal advance that will not undermine the conditions for future progress' (60).

Second-order reflexivity entails the application of modern rational analysis not only to the problems that are self-induced 'but also to its very own working, conditions and effects' (Voßand Kemp 2005: 8). As such, it refers to the self-critical and self-conscious reflection on processes of modernity. It evokes a sense of 'agency, intention and change' where actors reflect not only on the self-induced problems of modernity but also upon 'the approaches, structures and systems that reproduce them' (Hendriks and Grin 2007: 335). Meadowcroft (2007a) contends that a key element of 'second order reflexivity' was embedded in the concept of sustainable development from the outset by not just recognizing environmental risk but also reflecting on 'what was really valued and then to intervene consciously to adjust the emerging future' (160).

In practice this can result in the creation of innovative institutional procedures outside the state in a public (discursive) context (Eder 1996: 204). These institutions are variously described as reflexive institutions, discursive institutions, 'reflexive institutional arrangements' (Strydom 2002: 135–5), or more loosely 'reflexive arrangements' (Hendriks and Grin 2007). In the case of reflexive and discursive institutions we are talking about a shift from modern formal goal oriented institutions to more reflexive informal ones, oriented towards 'the appropriateness and reasonableness of

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 192 -- #234

action and the generation of an implicit understanding and agreement of those involved' (Strydom 2002: 134). Hajer contends that despite operating within limits, reflexive institutional arrangements are the most suitable to deliberate decision-making in the risk society because they can accommodate 'the increase in cognitive reflexivity, argumentation and negotiated social choice' (cited in Strydom 2002: 135). Meanwhile, Hendriks and Grin (2007) are concerned with how reflexive governance works in practice alongside a dynamic governance landscape since 'steering for sustainability typically surfaces as moments of reflexivity among a sea of everyday politics' or as *reflexive arrangements* (334).

As they point out 'sites of second order reflexivity are situated and connected to existing spaces of political debate where first order reflexivity unintentionally surfaces' (338). In the first instance, we are talking about creating institutions specifically with governance *for* sustainable development in mind, whereas in the second instance we are talking about the challenge of sustainable development for existing practices of governance. In either case, their point of departure is that these developments are not only relevant to environmental matters, but are symptoms of ongoing political modernization in contemporary society (334).

Governing, Governance and Sustainable Development

Traditionally the concept of governance denoted the process of governing, with the latter primarily associated with governmental steering by regulation and sanctions (Lafferty 2004: 5). In structural terms, this is referred to as 'governance as hierarchy' whereby governance: 'conducted in and through vertically integrated state structures is an idealized model of democratic government and the public bureaucracy. . . this was essentially governance by law; instead of bridging the public private border, this type of governance strictly upheld that distinction' (Pierre and Peters 2000: 15).

A familiar structural form of contemporary governance is the idea of governance as networks (19). Governance is a multi-stakeholder process with actors drawn from the market, civil society and government, that: 'broadens the capacities and responsibility for action in society' (Crozier 2007: 3). Governance is not completely new in the sense that it describes historical patterns of corporatist decision-making, as well as traditions of cooperation with voluntary associations and groups in civil society (Torfing 2006). Torfing suggests that what is new, is that governments in many countries increasingly perceive governance as 'an effective and legitimate form of governing society' (113).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 193 -- #235

Governance theory emphasizes 'joint' or co-governance by state and non-state actors, and the self-governing capacities of society (Evans et al. 2007: 13). The language of governance allows 'practitioners and theorists alike to unlearn embedded intellectual reflexes and stimulates them to rethink governing, politics and administration against the background of changing societal processes' (Hajer and Wagenaar 2006: 6).

A theory of network governance identifies 'a specific mechanism for the diffusion of ideas and principles; communication through discursive interaction' (Trenz and Eder 2004: 8). By mobilizing discourses and counter-discourse to legitimate their positions participants in communicative networks 'bridge institutional and non-institutional spaces of collective action situated at different levels of governance' (8). Governance networks tend to blur the boundary between state and society and act as 'a platform for resource exchange and risk sharing' as responsible co-producers of policy solutions (Torfing 2006: 115).

Bang (2003)offers a definition of 'governance as networks of political communication' as:

> expressing the *reflexive* self ordering of social relations by individuals and groups, cooperating and exercising their self rule in terms of their reciprocal interdependence, *deliberation* and sense of common destiny and on the basis of continuing consultation, dialogue and resource sharing. Governance implies a variety of *recursive practices* oriented to both the creation of identity and the enhancement of the governing faculties of individuals and groups to produce effective and relevant outcomes through processes and projects in which they are interacting (20 [my italics]).

Traditional hierarchical institutions of government don't simply fade away, neither do they 'suddenly become bottom-up in nature, nor are they disintegrating into centre-less systems governed from below' (Bang 2004: 159). On the contrary, 'the survival and success of systems today require the introduction and spread of new, more communicative and cooperative modes of re-centring from above' (159). In practice governance networks take different *empirical* forms in different countries, at different levels of governance within different policies areas (Torfing 2006).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 194 -- #236

The Challenge of Sustainable Development for Governance: Complexity, Uncertainty and Ambivalence

While it is useful and commonplace to begin with the well-worn definition of sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, it is often at the point of implementation in everyday-life that the concept becomes most problematic'. Sustainable development presupposes a transition 'that is on the one hand extremely value laden and purposeful, while on the other being open, interactive and contextually adaptable' (Lafferty 2004: 20).

Meadowcroft (2007b) points out that while sustainable development is a complex and contested concept 'it was essentially designed as a normative reference point for environment and development policy making' (300). Lafferty (2004) suggests that, as a programme for change, we are talking about the need for 'effective political initiatives to ameliorate the negative impacts on life-support systems of over-and-under development within an ethical context of global and generational equity' (17). Sustainable development as an implementation challenge amounts to 'a decoupling of the "pressures" of existing economics and social "drivers" on natural life support systems' (19–20). The integration of sectoral policy is a means to achieve decoupling, but as Lafferty argues 'the point is not to decouple and leave uncoupled but to create a new environmental-economic-social constellation' (20). Therefore, in addition to issues of responsibility and political coordination across domains 're-coupling presupposes radical new images and understandings of sustainability in practice' (20). While the goals and principles have been put forward by the World Commission on Sustainable Development and the Agenda 21 process, 'the functional building blocks are extremely complex, unpredictable and the "decoupled" actors and their interests must be reconstituted within different ecological and natural resource settings' (20).

Sustainable development problems often involve the complex interaction between very different elements from the domains of society, technology and nature (Voßet al. 2007: 197). The structuring of these interactions is important because feed-back loops and the emergent dynamics of systems can themselves make interventions risky (197). In practice this means finding 'manageable ways of taking into account changing cognitive circumstances, changing empirical circumstances and persisting uncertainties' (O'Toole 2004: 45). In this context, governance for sustainable development must be able to accept that 'the future is largely unknown and un-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 195 -- #237

knowable, and recognize that our collective capacities to know what is to come are limited’ (Meadowcroft 2007b: 302). Sustainability as an orientation for development delivers ambiguous goals (Voßand Kemp 2005: 15) and consequently steering will have to contend with *ambivalence* and *conflict* (Voßet al. 2007: 194). A process that entails no less than the structural transformation of whole sectors of society means that the horizontal distribution of power along different realms and functional sub-systems, and the vertical distribution of power among different levels of government impact on the ability to influence the shape of future development (198).

The Challenge of Governance for Sustainable Development

Governance for sustainable development is concerned not only with the design and implementation of government policy, but *also* with collective processes of monitoring, reflection, debate and decision that establish the orientation for policy (Meadowcroft, Farrell and Spangenberg 2005: 5). The specific model for sustainable development considered here is the ‘Rio model of governance’ that emerged from the Earth Summit in 1992 (Jänicke 2006: 1). Jänicke points out that the ‘Rio model of governance’ is a knowledge-based model of steering rather than one based on power and legal obligation, essentially a voluntary process of policy innovation, lesson drawing and policy diffusion (4). Yet, governments are still key actors in these processes, and planning towards a sustainable society thus takes place in the interaction between government and governance (Evans et al. 2007). Capacities to influence societal change in the direction of sustainable development are, however, distributed between different governance levels (e.g. nation states and the EU), as well as between functional domains, such as production, consumption and political regulation and between different actors within these domains (Voßand Kemp 2005: 16). The capacity for action: ‘of governments, businesses or other societal actors, depends on their ability to manage open informational loops, where power and knowledge are generated’ (Crozier 2007: 13).

Reflexive Governance: The Challenge of Democratic Coupling in a Complex World

In the contemporary world, solutions for many environmental problems cannot be found within the boundaries of the nation state, ‘forcing established institutions to take part in transnational networks of governance in which power is dispersed’, for example the EU or the UN (Hajer and Versteeg 2005: 182). As governments go increasingly transnational to make decisions in relation to issues like

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 196 -- #238

sustainable development, there is a sense that they move away from the democratic traditions of national communities, as they go more local to implement decisions in a democratically effective manner they are judged on their capacity to deliver (Bang 2003). This has placed the state in a state of constant ambiguity:

> For how can it decide more globally and implement more locally in and through a representative democracy which is organised on a left-right access, derives its legitimacy from the national political community and is geared to protect and expand free access to the exercise of influence on the input side of political processes (Bang 2003: 13).

The uncoupling of states from their national communities gives rise to particular coordination problems and challenges because it undermines democratic legitimacy and the effectiveness of decision-making. Although the concept of sustainable development indicates the kinds of issues that should be of concern, 'its practical bearing cannot be established independent of the concrete life circumstances of a particular society and the needs, interests and values and aspirations of its members' (Meadowcroft 2007a: 161). It is therefore a subject to democratic legitimation. At the same time, from a functional perspective: 'various social sectors, strata and organizations must be involved because the knowledge required to establish pathways to sustainability is dispersed throughout society' (161).

The problem of uncoupling gives rise to the challenge of the re-coupling of various consequential collective actors in various configurations, at and between different social locations, e.g. the economy and civil society, and at different levels of society. Negotiation in governance networks that combines bargaining and consensus-seeking deliberation gives rise 'to a precarious framework of rule-governed interaction that facilitates self-regulated policy making that always takes place in the "shadow of hierarchy" and gives rise to a kind of "bounded autonomy"' (Torfing 2006: 111). This can be more, or less formal, and depending on the concrete empirical form may result in an increasingly loose coupling of decision-making processes and public debate (Eder 1996: 211–212). Nevertheless, coordination cannot rely on institutionalized hierarchies alone, but must take place in networks linked together 'in processes of interactive strategy development' (Voßand Kemp, 2005: 17). This is the creation of *reflexive governance modes*: geared towards continuous learning in the course of modulating ongoing developments, rather than towards complete knowledge and maximization of control' (9).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 197 -- #239

Thus, reflexive governance is about 'the organization of recursive feedback relations between distributed steering activities' (6). Practical examples include constructive technology assessment, deliberative policy making, social appraisal of technology and Local Agenda 21 (Hendriks and Grin 2007: 335). There is a strong resemblance between the notion of reflexive governance (Voßand Kemp 2005) and the idea of governance as networks of political communication (Bang 2003). What both require is a stronger appreciation of the socio-political contexts in which these types of governance are embedded and the struggles involved in reconfiguring institutional arrangements (Hendriks and Grin, 2007: 337).

Recursive Governance: The Challenge of Knowledge, Trust and Path Dependence

The growing complexity and intensified uncertainty of contemporary society increases the demand for knowledge in decision-making. In this context there is also a growing demand from society for the inclusion of non-official and competing voices in decision-making (Crozier 2007: 4). The consequence is a shift from the relatively closed networks of experts and decision-makers to more open, multi-lateral knowledge networks as inputs to policy making and deliberation (4). In the older model, facts were assumed as self-standing and definitive, in the new model truth claims can and are being challenged and trust can become an issue (Crozier 2007: 11). Politics and policy-making are not just about problem-solving, but are also increasingly about the generation of trust (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003: 17). The difficulty is that new political practices are not created in a vacuum; they have to interface with existing practice if they are to achieve some degree of efficacy, coherence and functionality. If distrust is already embedded in a context then the prospects for effective institutional innovation are all the more precarious.

Existing institutional, cognitive, technical and economic patterns may work as a selection environment for innovations and future change (Voßand Kemp 2005). This means that 'not only does history matter in some undefined way, but that socio-ecological transformation is path dependent, i.e. future developments are influenced, enabled and constrained by structures that have grown out of specific historical developments' (Voßand Kemp 2005: 13–14). The way in which the past shapes the present and thus 'the deliberate process of [path] creation may be constrained such that existing institutional arrangements are reproduced in a new context' along with their limitations and weaknesses (Skelcher, Navdeep and Smith 2005: 576). Pre-existing institutional orders are fundamentally im-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 198 -- #240

portant to the creation of paths towards sustainable development. Pre-existing procedures, processes and institutional arrangements are, however, also knowledge technologies that are susceptible to recursive action (Crozier 2007: 2). In other words, institutions cannot simply be self-referential, they must also be able to generate sufficient knowledge and power through learning, if they are survive in complex and ever more contingent circumstances (12). The process of recursion may push these forms to their absolute limit or indeed transform them into something entirely different (Crozier 2007). One of the consequences that can be involved in this type of recursion is the generation of new starting conditions. The fluidity of the social context, not only poses management problems, but also offers new strategic opportunities to manage given that the context is altered by the effect of action (Crozier 2007: 6).

Discursive Modernity: the Challenge of Co-ordinating Distributed Capacities

The public discourse of sustainable development has resulted in a shift away from the formal rationality of the previous 'command and control' governance, in relation to environmental regulation, to embrace softer 'steering-mechanisms' like voluntary agreements between industry and government (Flynn 2007), and the mobilization of civil society for sustainable development (Lafferty 2004). This does not imply the abandonment of regulatory power, indeed it remains central to policy-making (Jänicke 2006: 6), but it is now one among a mix of policy instruments and steering mechanisms employed in governing sustainable development (Lafferty 2004; Voßet al. 2007).

The shift from 'formal' rationality to 'procedural' rationality can be seen in the emergence of different modes of coordinating interests. Historically, we have the consensual model of accommodating corporatist interests and the adversarial model based on public enquiry. A third possibility is 'a new type of interconnection between civil society (represented by protest actors), the economy (represented by industrial actors, including trade unions) and the political system (represented by modern state agents) (Eder 1996: 209–212). This model proposes that corporatist forms of steering give way to new post-corporatist forms that engage the types of actors mentioned above. Reflexive institutions are the characteristic forms of a post-corporatist order, however, 'their structure and processes are still to be understood and explained' (209–212). Post-corporatism is a much looser structure than previous forms of co-ordination, it is an institutional order penetrated by communication rather than be-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 199 -- #241

ing connected purely through formally organized relations (Strydom 2002: 135).

The coordination of reflexive institutions in a post-corporatist order could be termed reflexive governance (Voßand Kemp 2005; Voßet al. 2007). However, as we step from the normative to the empirical there are at least three clear limitations to the conceptualization of reflexive governance as it stands (Hendriks and Grin 2007). Firstly, it downplays or ignores the diverse and dynamic political landscape in which reflexive arrangements find themselves (336). Secondly, the assumptions of reflexive governance in relation to the way contemporary policy making works are questionable, because it underestimates the ambiguity over the role of the state in contemporary politics and the ambivalence of non-state actors to state initiated projects. Thirdly, civil society is simply instrumentalized, since actors are called upon to cooperate in reflexive governance and assist by reforming practices and structures (Hendriks and Grin 2007 336–7).

If we are to take socio-political contexts into account, we must situate reflexive institutions in a broader democratic system (Hendriks and Grin 2007: 337). This comprises multiple interconnected and overlapping spheres of public discourse, or discursive spheres consisting of formal, informal and mixed modes of deliberation (Hendriks 2006). Formal modes include scientific inquiry, arbitration or consensus; informal modes promote an exchange of ideas or arguments; mixed modes are exemplified by discursive designs like citizens juries and provide a context for diverse actors to come together and cross-fertilize macro and micro public conversations (Hendriks 2006: 501–503). The notion of 'integrated deliberation' as a system of overlapping discursive spheres that takes account of all of these modes of deliberation is a *theoretical* interpretation rather than a description of what in practice is a highly unstructured dynamic process (Hendriks and Grin 2007: 338). Nevertheless, it is consistent with Strydom's argument that discursive modernity might be an appropriate portrayal of the contemporary world since, 'both risk and responsibility have roots in reality that emerge from inter-subjective processes of attribution and require critical inter-subjective testing' (2002: 147).

Irish Governance as a Post-Corporatist Order?

The Irish social partnership model has provided the framework for formal relations between the government, business and civil society at both national and local levels (Daly 2007). This represents a growing shift from *governance as hierarchy* to new more flexible forms of

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 200 -- #242

governance in Ireland (Adshead 2003: 126). It has been suggested, that the Irish model of social partnership differs from its European counterparts because it conjoins negotiation, problem-solving, and consensus seeking governance in deliberative democratic forms and has also been labelled post-corporatist (O'Donnell and O'Reardon 2000). Roche and Cradden (2003), who are perhaps the most dismissive of the concept, give a useful shorthand summary of the main features of the Irish case for post- corporatism. The first relates to the deliberative and problem solving qualities that exist alongside the more traditional bargaining function of Irish social partnership. The second feature is that the range of interests now implicated in Irish social partnership goes beyond those 'arising from the functional interdependence between labour and capital' (Roche and Cradden 2003: 86). The third feature of the Irish experience is the emergence of new relationships between government policy-making institutions and interests, at various levels from national to local (86).

The characterization of Irish social partnership as post-corporatist has spawned studies investigating the emergence of a post-corporatist order. Although there is a clear affinity to Eder's sociological characterization, none of the Irish studies, predominantly drawn from Irish political science, have crossed the divide. These studies cover fields as diverse as social partnership arrangements (Adshead 2006), anti-poverty strategy (Adshead and McInerney 2006), local government (Larkin 2004), and local development (Teague 2006). While there is ample evidence of the development and spread of a 'co-ordination reflex' in Irish governance in reaction to various public policy problems (O'Mahony 2007), the question is whether taken together they might signify the emergence of reflexive governance in Ireland? Hitherto the opinion from Irish studies ranges from outright rejection (Roche and Cradden, 2003), or rejection in discrete policy fields (Teague 2007), to a cautious acknowledgement that post-corporatism might better describe the Irish situation than available notions of corporatism, neo-corporatism and competitive corporatism (Adshead 2006: 337).

Meanwhile, cognate studies in social science focusing on the evolution of deliberative democratic forms in environmental politics have begun to emerge (Murray 2006; Scott, Russell and Redmond 2007). These studies do not explicitly connect with the debate on 'post-corporatism' in either its political science, or sociological manifestations but are occupying common ground. Meanwhile, deliberative practices are spreading to domains as diverse as land-use planning; economic strategy development; Local Agenda 21

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 201 -- #243

work; community development; urban and rural development; and environmental management processes like Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Ireland (Scott, Russell and Redmond 2007: 167). By linking Irish academic debates in different disciplines on these emergent social practices with the broader literature explored here, we might be able to gain a vantage point on the potential for reflexive sustainable development in Ireland.

Situating Civil Society

Civil society is 'the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self supporting and bound by a legal order or set of rules' (O'Flynn 2006: 144). Public spheres are the more politicized arenas in civil society often located closest to the state, i.e. interest groups, social movement networks as well as everyday citizens who engage with the state when they can (Hendriks 2006: 489). Non-institutional forms of civil society include direct action, social dialogue and analysis through alternative social and political forums and campaigning and advocacy (Daly 2007: 10).

In Ireland, the voluntary and community organizations are the 'core' of civil society, where the voluntary sector is largely identified either with charity or service provision, and the community sector is more concerned with politicization, advocacy and innovation with a particular focus on policy (Somers and Bradford 2006: 70). The community and voluntary sector have become increasingly intertwined with the state at various levels to the extent that 'any boundary between the "state" and "civil society" has become highly porous, sometimes ambiguous, and in some circumstances, somewhat meaningless' (Somers and Bradford 2006: 80). This has led to a kind of ambivalence within civil society regarding participation in social partnership (Meade 2005). In her view, the community and voluntary sector have been afforded token recognition but it is a presence without influence, participation without power (2005: 351). There is growing concern, at least in the literature characterizing the experience of civil society in social partnership, about the extent to which 'the capacity of voluntary and community organizations for self-organization, independent action and dissent outside of the social partnership framework and other partnership arrangements has been compromised' (Daly 2007: 10).

Locating Environmentalism in Irish Civil Society

One might expect that environmental NGOs (Non Government Organizations) would have a particularly important role to play

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 202 -- #244

in any system of governance for sustainable development. Irish environmentalism has recently been identified among the weakest sub-sectors in Irish civil society (Mullally and Motherway, 2009). Environmentalist organizations are notably absent from existing social partnership arrangements like the National Economic and Social Council and the National Economic and Social Forum (Garavan 2007). While environmental organizations do participate in the National Sustainable Development Partnership, they are not in a position to negotiate with other social forces in society that they might regard as responsible for environmental problems (see below). This political marginalization reflects a structural weakness since environmentalism lacks a coherent national level of co-ordination (Flynn 2007). As a result of the informal character of much environmental activism in Ireland, the main concern is to create new opportunities for public awareness by offering a distinctive viewpoint for public engagement and dialogue rather than trying to ‘represent existing opinion among specific sections of the public’ (Tovey 2007: 190). Therefore, ‘national-level environmental organisations must be seen as vehicles for activism within the formal public sphere and thereby bearers of an instrumental purpose rather than a representative function’ (Garavan 2007: 850). Organized environmentalism exhibits high levels of distrust towards the state because of negative experiences of interaction (Tovey 2007: 185).

The forms of Irish environmental organization are, however, also tactical since ‘there is a continual evolution in forms of activism in response to new knowledge, new opportunities, and new shifts in the configuration of political power’ (Garavan 2007: 846–847). Flynn argues that the predilection among Irish environmentalists for engaging in risk discourse, i.e. being advocates *against* environmental threat, predisposes them to a type of reactive activism and creates an unsympathetic resonance structure for their position in Irish society (2007: 179). He reasons that rather than engaging reactively in *tactics* related to specific issues, environmental organizations should reorient themselves strategically to become advocates *for* sustainable development. This assumes that a context conducive for such advocacy exists, when the reality based on his analysis is that hitherto the structural opportunities for participation have been largely reactive. What then is the situation with regard to evolving or emergent possibilities of reflexive governance for sustainable development?

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 203 -- #245

Communicative Interfaces

Flynn (2007) has recently offered a critique of, and reform agenda for, the institutional basis of environmental and sustainable development policy in Ireland. My purpose here is to provide some empirical reference points to ground our understanding of the emergent possibilities and limitations of reflexive governance in an integrated system of deliberation. Therefore, by exploring some recent examples of communicative interfaces between different collective actors (the state, civil society and business) we can begin to consider the utility of the post-corporatist thesis. The question is where to begin?

Meadowcroft (2007) suggests that national processes and strategies for sustainable development could be regarded as instances of reflexive governance. Sustainable development processes ‘with their institutionalized cycles of goal definition/ policy designation/ implementation/ review and revision can provide an interactive mechanism for publicly taking stock and orienting efforts for social transformation’ (2007a: 161). As well as providing for inputs from advisory bodies, strategies for sustainable development ‘can also create mechanisms for integrating stakeholders and citizens into a structured review of social practices related to sustainable development’ (161).

Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland was published in 1997. The primary focus was on the integration of the environment into various policy sectors (agriculture, forestry, marine resources, energy, transport, tourism and trade). An interim review of the strategy formed the basis of the government’s submission to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The review outlined the uses of a more varied mix of policy instruments than had hitherto been the case, detailing a range of voluntary and participative instruments alongside instruments to improve existing regulatory measures. *Comhar: the National Sustainable Development Partnership* was established ‘to advance the national agenda for sustainable development, to evaluate progress in this regard, to assist in devising suitable mechanisms and advising on their implementation, and contribute to the formation of a national consensus in these regards’ (Comhar terms of reference: `http://www.comhar-ndsp.ie//`). Although a specific adaptation of the Irish model of social partnership, Flynn contends that it remains a marginal entity in the overall system, albeit one that makes ‘a laudable contribution’ (2007: 178). Nevertheless, partnership remains central to the official discourse on sustainable development (DOELG 2002: 105). With this in mind, the focus now turns to three different instances of communication at the interface with civil society: (1) local social partnership; (2) cor-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 204 -- #246

porate social responsibility reporting; and (3) public discourse and mixed modes of deliberation in the politics of waste management.

Local Social Partnership: Input, Influence and Distributed Capacity

The introduction of City and County Development Boards (CDBs) in 2000 represents an attempt to build consensual problem-solving institutions with strategic intentions at the local level of governance in Ireland. CDBs are networking and strategic planning organizations charged with a responsibility of formulating and keeping under review a long-term strategy for local development, but have *no* executive authority (Acheson and Williamson 2007: 32). The CDBs and their strategies are of particular interest because: they are localizations of the Irish model of social partnership, and the strategies are explicitly considered as vehicles for promoting local sustainable development (Mullally and Motherway, 2009).

CDBs, were consciously designed to be deliberative and participative (Larkin 2004). Their legitimacy derives primarily from the presence of elected representatives from city or county councils on their boards (Acheson and Williamson 2007: 39). Local economic development and public service delivery agencies have a much more extensive role on these bodies than the social partners (39). Moreover, only two of the 24 places on the CDBs are allocated to the community and voluntary sector, which is contingent on the sector being organized in a Community Forum (39). Community Forums are city or countywide structures created with national level funding ‘to facilitate participation, feedback and accountability among community and voluntary organizations’ (Adshead and McInerney 2006: 14). The community and voluntary sector have limited bargaining power in the CDBs because there is no programme money to disperse (Acheson and Williamson 2007: 40). Participants have identified the development of trust, often associated with the idea of social capital, as a positive effect of engagement with the CDB process (Mullally and Motherway, 2009).

The strategies emerged from structured consultation processes. They encompass: agreed vision, goals, objectives and actions; and, have built in mechanisms for monitoring, review and revision. An analysis of all 34 City and County Development Strategies shows that only one did not mention sustainable development, while 41 per cent identified sustainable development as a principle of the strategy and 21 per cent specifically mention the National Sustainable Development Strategy (Murphy and Weyman 2005: 6). Meanwhile 79 per cent of the strategies specifically mention Local Agenda 21 (LA21) with 62 per cent having specific LA21 initiatives.

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 205 -- #247

Following the interim review of the strategies in 2005–6, some CDBs strategies are moving to integrate LA21 initiatives more centrally, whereas others where LA21 had previously been prominent have abandoned the concept entirely.

There are a number of limitations to the CDBs and their strategies. There is a sense within the community and voluntary sector that there is little resonance or awareness of the role, purpose and activity of the CDBs amongst the wider community (Acheson and Williamson 2007: 35). There is also a gap between 'participation opportunities and participation outcomes' that replicates the experience in other policy fields (Adshead and McInerney 2007). While they represent an innovative form of public participation their effectiveness in relation to sustainable development is questionable. Arguably, CDBs are more about fostering social capital than sustainable development, less about integration than institutional accommodation at a remove from real influence (Mullally and Motherway, 2009). The ability to turn social capital into action for sustainable development (agency) denotes 'the capacity of persons to transform existing states of affairs, the capacity to plan and initiate action, and the ability to respond to events outside of one's immediate sphere of influence to produce a desired effect' (Newman and Dale 2007: 81–82). The 'hierarchy of governance participants' in CDBs suggests that inadequate attention has been paid to power relations (Adshead and McInerney 2006: 24). Factoring in the weak state of vertical in Irish multi-level governance, the disjuncture between input, influence and implementation becomes clear. Nevertheless, these types of institutions might reasonably be considered as building 'communicative bridges between the state and civil society' (Khan cited in Ó Brion 2006:169).

CSR: Business, the Ambiguous State and Civil Society

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to the recognition by business and industry of their role in sustainable development in terms of the voluntary and self-regulatory practices they adopt. (Mullally and Mullally 2006: 9). CSR, on a *normative* level, is about fulfilling societal responsibilities; on a *pragmatic* level it is the ability to respond to societal demands to pursue corporate objectives; and at a *practical* level, it is a reporting instrument for communicating information on the non-financial aspects of company activity (O'Dwyer 2003: 525). CSR in Europe tends to include stakeholders from the state, economy and civil society in a neo-corporatist approach to steering practice (Van Tudler and Van der Zwart 2006: 226). Despite the centrality of social partnership

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 206 -- #248

in public policy and sustainable development, it has not shaped the evolution of corporate social reporting. Nevertheless, review and evaluation processes can create inputs into public discourse and contribute to societal reflexivity: in effect 'deliberation without participation' (Lehtonen 2006).

CSR reporting is not mandatory in Ireland, it is conducted with reference to international initiatives, programmes and standards, and therefore the role of the state in the process is ambiguous. The status of reporting is therefore questionable and could be regarded not just as self-organizing, but also as self-referential communication or public relations. On the other hand, the process and practice could potentially be considered reflexive and discursive: it encourages businesses to reflect on their performance in relation to sustainable development; to build in mechanisms for continual improvement in relation to their responsibility; and, to communicate this information. Thus, it creates the conditions for deliberation, but it does not involve the direct participation of civil society. CSR reporting is therefore significant because of the *performative* action undertaken within recursive processes of reflection, communication and readjustment of practices on a cyclical (annual) basis, rather than as a measure of the actual *performance* in relation to sustainable development.

From a civil society perspective, CSR gives rise to concern in relation to its capacity to deliver on sustainable development objectives because it can be used 'to distract from more transformative approaches and diffuse regulatory innovation' (Bendell and Kerins 2005: 16). There is a strong preference for mandatory rather than voluntary reporting among the Irish NGOs sector but this is unlikely to impact the CSR regime for the reasons outlined above (O'Dwyer 2004: 19–20). A possible source of societal demand for CSR is from consumers. A survey published in 2003 showed that 60 per cent of Irish adults believe that industry and commerce do not pay enough attention to their social responsibilities (BITC 2003). The Irish regime is still an emergent phenomenon with low levels of reporting and a few forerunners taking the lead. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly sophisticated, tending towards communication rather than mere public relations. A limiting factor is the presence of a strong coalition of actors ensuring that it remains a voluntary process and weak to non-existing societal demand for mandatory reporting (Mullally and Mullally 2006).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 207 -- #249

The Politics of Waste Management: Collective Action, Ambivalence and Antagonism

Waste management politics in Ireland, in contrast to the pivotal role accorded to civil society and partnership in national discourse on governance for sustainable development, arguably marginalizes civil society and constructs the local scale simply as a site of implementation (Davies 2007: 69). If the previous examples exemplify processes building communicative bridges, then waste management politics represent a communicative abyss! At a national level, attempts to overhaul the waste management system can be traced back to the Waste Management Act (1996) and the Waste Management Regulations (1997) a central feature of which was to move towards the implementation of the EU waste hierarchy (Boyle 2002). The government decided 'to scale the problem of waste management at the regional level' (Boyle 2002: 183). The inclusion of incineration as part of these plans was the catalyst for the mobilization of anti-incineration campaigns.

Boyle (2002) analyzing the discursive structure of the controversy identified three main points of contention: the spatial location of waste management infrastructure; the toxicity of waste; and, the issue of waste as a public good. The first conflict concerns the discourse of *responsibility* and where it should reside. On one side, anti-incineration campaigners focused on alternatives to incineration in the waste hierarchy as a way of taking responsibility, simultaneously resisting the NIMBY (Not-In-My-Back-Yard) label (Davies 2006: 714). Their opponents alleged that opposing incineration was a dilution of civic responsibility (Boyle 2002: 186–187). The second conflict centred on the discourse of *risk*. Proponents of incineration placed faith in technological progress based on technical assessments of risk, whereas anti-incineration campaigners focused on the uncertainty in relation to the long-term effects of the technology: a position openly embedded in a lack of trust in regulatory authorities, scientific experts and industry (Davies 2006: 714–5). The third conflict centred on the discourse of waste as a *public good*. The contention that disproportionate responsibility was being placed on local communities for the management of waste faced the argument that waste was the collective responsibility of society, but the solution was the commoditization of waste in emerging markets (Boyle 2002). In any event, responsibility for local decision-making on waste management was removed from the local democratic arena through the Waste Management (Amendment) Act 2001.

Not only was the local democratic process short-circuited in this instance, the context for proactive public participation as well as

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 208 -- #250

local representative democracy was fundamentally altered creating an inhospitable context for reflexive governance. This has been illustrated by the experience of constituting a citizens jury on the issue of incineration in Dublin (Murray 2006). In theory a citizens jury represents a mixed mode of deliberation where citizens, experts and decision-makers engage in a structured exchange of views on an issue and arrive at a rational outcome. In this case, the lack of institutional decision-making capacity between participants meant that not only did the deliberation fail to gain legitimacy in the community because the point of decision-making remained insulated from their influence, but it was regarded by participants and the observing public as a public relations exercise (Murray 2006: 449). Deliberation should complement, not replace representative democracy – the removal of decision-making powers from elected representatives through the amendment of the Waste Management Act meant that any subsequent arrangement would not only struggle for legitimacy, it would be the source of ambivalence towards decision-makers and of antagonism in civil society (464).

Conclusion

Strydom's sociological theory of responsibility and the attendant prospect of reflexive institutions in a post-corporatist social order provide an orientation to the possibility of reflexive (and hopefully better) governance *for* sustainable development in a discursive modernity. The investigation of a specific socio-political context suggests that the horizon that this opens up remains unattainable in the content of residual practice, where a predilection to governance by reflex thwarts its more enlightened cousin. My purpose is not to be churlish – progress *has* been made in the Irish context. The model of integrated deliberation, a theoretical rather than an empirical standard, recognizes but doesn't reify or fetishize distributed capacities and power imbalances. Nevertheless, the decisions we make now, constrain the possibility of organizing effective *and* legitimate responses to the challenge of sustainable development in the future. My intention has not been to cast a 'pox on your hierarchal house', government remains *the* critical node in governance *for* sustainable development. Rather, it is to illuminate the disjuncture in 'joined-up' governance and beg the question: where do we go from here? Thanks Piet!

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12

THE CALLING OF A NEW CRITICAL THEORY: SELF-DEVELOPMENT, INCLUSION OF THE OTHER AND PLANETARY REALIZATIONS

Ananta Kumar Giri

> The social process of the discursive construction of reality is a transformative cognitive process. On the one hand, it draws on existing knowledge and cognitive structures and, on the other, it generates new knowledge and new cognitive structures and brings about their selective coordination (Piet Strydom *Risk, Environment and Society*, 2002:150).

Introduction and Invitation:

Piet Strydom has made valuable contributions to continental traditions of critical-social theory. His concept of 'triple contingency' and his subsequent contributions on 'triple contingency learning', resonance, socio-cognitive critique, and emergent frames of co-responsibility are valuable contributions to critical theory. As a heart-touching teacher and fellow seeker Strydom has inspired so many of us around the world to explore new horizons of learning. What is touching is the way Strydom combines critical engagement with a deep passion for an emergent normativity, one which invites us to transform our sociological analytics to a new normative height and depth. In outlining the contours of a new socio-cognitive critique Strydom (2002) pleads for a non-judgemental critical engagement:

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 214 -- #256

> Far from judging and condemning the ideology of a particular actor or agent it is a matter of closely studying a variety of related cognitive processes and structures. Included are the frames and normative codes of all participants, despite their conflicting interpretations of it (156).

Strydom (2000) urges us to understand the limits of rights and justice frames of modernity and open ourselves to the emergent frames of co-responsibility. More recently Strydom (2006) tells us how 'different configurations of public spheres allow distinct learning processes' and invites us to accept the challenge of triple contingency learning: 'Triple contingency learning represents the collective learning mechanism which brings us closest to the communicative self-constitution and self-organization of society. It harbors the "cosmopolitan" promise of a transformative moment in which a "creative combination of different forces" occurs' (9).

Continuing this inspiring spirit of a deeper normative critique and transformation, Strydom urges us to go beyond the contest of faculties, especially arts and sciences, and nurture a different relationship with science, scholarship and time. For Strydom, 'Science is a much slower field than politics, not to mention economics' (2004b: 8). When science is 'being steadily accelerated and stresses up well beyond its own time culture' social scientists have to contribute to the epochal need of 'the unhastening or deceleration of science' (8).

In reflecting upon the issue of a contest of faculties between the arts and the sciences, Strydom invites us to a new 'chrono-politics.' But invites further consideration from us in that the proposed new 'chrono-politics' has to be a part of multi-dimensional strivings for cultivating a new relationship with time, a time and space of mutual nurturance and generosity. Cultivating a new relationship with time calls for appropriate self-cultivation and spaces of value formation. This is not only a political process but also a spiritual process. Similarly, the emergent frames of responsibility are not only socio-political but also spiritual and do not emerge only in public spheres, even of Strydom's reformulated concept of public communication, but also involve practices of self-development and transformation which are not reducible to the public. These are also not solely epistemic processes; they involve ontological processes of self-cultivation and self-transformation. Strydom's inspiring critical theory, like much of continental critical theory, is still primarily epistemic and its brilliance can be now transformed into manifold

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 215 -- #257

creative pathways of an ontological epistemology of participation going beyond the dualism of ontology and epistemology, I have pursued this discussion elsewhere (Giri 2004a, 2007) and will return to it later. Strydom's deep engagement with environment calls for a foundational border-crossing, for example transforming anthropocentrism to a new political and spiritual struggle for the dignity of life and 'cross-species dignity' (Giri 2006; Nussbaum 2006). Strydom's plea is for a non-judgmental critical theory – one which listens to all contending voices rather than quickly identifying with an a priori 'legitimationist' perspective. This is the critique Strydom (1999) applies to Habermas' approach to public sphere and can be illumined by a 'multi-valued logic' (Mohanty 2000). Strydom's critical theory can realize many of its potentials by building on and contributing to self-development, inclusion of other and planetary realizations.

The Calling of a New Critical Theory: Learning With Piet Strydom

Strydom (2002) writes:

> Since the late 1980s, finally, I have sought to extrapolate and develop what I provisionally call the new cognitive sociology from the cognitive turn in sociology and subsequent advances. Rather than concentrating on practices as such, whether communication, discursive negotiation, strategizing, competition, conflict or networking, none of which is of course jettisoned, the focal concern here is the variable structural models of practical action (149).

In developing a new critical theory at the heart of which lies what he calls socio-cognitive critique, Strydom (2002) creatively builds on both (what he calls) the new cognitive revolution and social constructivism, and, at the same time imparting to this confluence his own characteristic originality. For him the cognitive turn questions:

> the function of norms in social action and interaction by rejecting the traditional assumptions of norms as being consistent and extending a determining influence. Instead, it emphasized the need to develop a sensitivity for and an ability to identify the whole range of culturally defined alternatives to practices and the construction and organization of society. Casualties of the change were such modernist notions as the unitary concept of modernity, the linear concept of progress, the progressivist or

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 216 -- #258

> developmental concept of evolution, the identification of modernity and universalism and so forth (180).

Such questioning resonates with some of the most important themes in contemporary critical theory such as contingency, disjunction between facts and norms, the work of antinomies in self, culture and society, and the critique of linearity (Giri 2007; Beteille 2000). Strydom gives a cognitive thrust to social constructivism: 'Constructivism, in my view, is best seen from a cognitive theoretical point of view that acknowledges both intersubjective understanding and the objectivity of reality with which we maintain pragmatic relations' (2002: 151). Thus with care, Strydom prepares the following pathways of socio-cognitive critique:

1. It is based upon a 'relational conception of the social world, with the emphasis therefore being less on static substances and entities'.
2. It is both a 'critique of the status quo and a critique of utopianism'.
3. 'To fulfill the requirements of socio-cognitive critique, the whole network of different cognitive processes and structures is investigated.' Socio-cognitive critique advances an 'understanding of the critical task of sociology' by 'distinguishing different types of cognitive structures or models'.
4. Socio-cognitive critique leads to the generation of explanatory models which in turn have 'epistemic authority.' 'But the sociologist has no exclusive possession of epistemic authority. Observers and commentators as well as the observing, evaluating and judging public to the very degree enjoy this same privilege. In fact, often the epistemic authority of the sociologist depends on such a third point of view' (157).

Socio-cognitive critique is thus related to the work of 'triple contingency' in self, culture and society, as well, this mode of critique is itself a mode of triple contingency learning. As previously outlined, triple contingency learning is a multilateral learning process in which participating actors and institutions learn from and with each other in a multigonal way embodying an emergent self-constitution and self-organization of society. Socio-cognitive critique is thus a creative process of self-creation in society (more on triple contingency later). Further, socio-cognitive critique not only emerges out of vibrant public communication but also makes sociology public:

> The public role of sociology commences with the making visible of the whole spectrum of different experiences,

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 217 -- #259

> perceptions, frames and knowledges. This is achieved by locating and heightening the tensions and relating the intersecting lines of creativity and conflict to each other. By adopting such a minimalist mediating role, sociology’s aim is to break down the ethnocentricity of perspectives and to contribute to the development of reciprocal perspectives (158).

At the core of this new critical theory is Strydom’s (1999) formulation of the concept of ‘triple contingency’. He presents it as follows:

> the concept of double contingency needs to make way for a more adequate replacement – namely triple contingency. In the first scenario, two social actors, communicatively acting subjects or black boxes, A and B, face or encounter one another or enter into some relation with each other as “I” and “Thou”. In the basic situation of triple contingency, by contrast, there is a third perspective borne by C, who observes what A and B are saying. By so doing C has a constitutive impact on the social situation (8).

Though this third point of view at an earlier stage of Strydom’s formulation ‘represents society’ (8), at a later stage it represents a discursively engaged and learning public which is not just a representation of society. Strydom also asks is ‘the third point of view: within or beyond society?’ He tends to agree with Habermas that the ‘third point of view represented by internal transcendence’ is located within society. But what about those processes of critique, creativity and transformation which cannot be fully captured within the internal modes of definition and justification of society? Strydom’s concept of triple contingency invites a transcendence in self, culture and society, one which is not just ‘internal transcendence’ of the Habermasian kind but embodies border-crossing dialogue and interpenetration between, within and beyond society, immanent practice and varieties of transcendence.

Though Strydom (2001) builds upon Habermas he nonetheless raises some significant questions about Habermasian critical theory. For Strydom, Habermas does not really understand the distinction between public sphere and public: ‘while writing eloquently about double contingency as well as the public sphere, Habermas surprisingly neglects to capture the role of public in communication

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 218 -- #260

societies in a comparably sharp manner' (166). He holds that Habermas gives priority to 'the moral philosophical third point of view to the exclusion of the third perspective of members of society or citizenry' (183). He applies a constructivist and cognitive approach to triple contingency. He considers the Habermasian approach to public sphere and triple contingency to be 'legitimationist' when Habermas privileges social movements in the discursive construction of important concerns of society. For Strydom, we cannot privilege only social movements: 'other actors or agents who participate in the process of social construction, such as industry, the state, science, the legal profession and the media, should likewise be regarded as vehicles of cognitive processes' (150–151). Furthermore, for Strydom (1999), in Habermas, 'the cognitive is narrowly understood in terms of the individual mind rather than in terms of the more sociologically relevant phenomenon of social knowledge and cultural models' (12).

Responsibility is an important aspect of the critical theory of Strydom. Building upon Karl-Otto Apel, he presents responsibility as co-responsibility which is in tune with his other related strivings in critical theoretical engagement such as resonance and self-creating public. Strydom (2000) challenges us to acknowledge the limits of rights and justice frames of modernity and to transformationally supplement these, not replace, with the emergent visions and practices of responsibility. For him, the rights frame had emerged in the early modern revolutions e.g., the Revolt of the Netherlands, the English Revolution and the French Revolution. The justice frame had arisen in the wake of the industrial revolution in 'late eighteenth-century England and continued unabated yet in a sublimated form until the second half of the twentieth century, focused on the problem complex of exploitation, pauperization and loss of identity' (20). These two discourses have inspired and influenced socio-political movements in the modern world, including interventions on development. Today their limitations are emerging in the challenges posed by responsibility, for example in relation to the environmental crisis and in the discourses around rights and justice. In Strydom's pregnant formulations, 'The theory of justice is today making way for another, still newer semantics in the form of the moral theory of responsibility which is crystallizing around a number of intertwined debates about the problem of risk' (20).

Reflecting on contemporary conditions of risk, and his emergent frame of responsibility, Strydom writes:

> the competition and conflict point to a new evolution-

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 219 -- #261

> ary departure. The production of risks as well as the authoritarian paternalism by means of which they are institutionally being dealt with have both been revealed as being guided by structures that indeed originated from evolutionary learning processes yet do not possess the universal cognitive import we have assumed until recently. Since these cognitive structures have contributed to both the generation of environmental crisis and to its poor management, they are in need of revision and fine-tuning. The limits around science, technology, industry, capitalism and state or, more generally, the experimenting society must be redrawn in a more precise manner by a new guiding and direction-giving structure developed in practical discourse. Collective responsibility, or co-responsibility, stands for this sort of cognitive structure (Strydom 2002: 153).

Strydom (2006) states that risk communication is not simply about ‘problem-solving’ but is also about ‘creating and bringing a world into being’ (4). Risk communication, in common with the broader genre of public communication, involves ‘learning under contingent conditions’ where ‘different configurations of public sphere allow distinct learning processes’ (6). Resonance plays an important role in such processes of communication and mutual learning.

Strydom (2004a) quite creatively presents six concentric circles of resonance at work in contemporary communicative societies:

> The smallest circle represents... the formal political or decision-making institutions... The second circle covers... institutions such as statutory bodies, foundations, universities, chambers and so forth which fulfill delegated state functions or have been granted self-administration rights. They could likewise provide the necessary basis for system or institutional resonance. The third circle, representing civil society where it meets the public sphere, embraces a diversity of radically different social actors or agents, from active citizens, associations, organizations and social movements, on the one hand, to business organizations and corporations, on the other. Here business organizations and corporations make available the resonance structure of system or institutional resonance, while active citizens and the associations and organizations growing out of civil society serve as the structural basis of Habermas’ civil society

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 220 -- #262

> resonance and, directly corresponding to it, what Eder conceives as 'extra-constitutional resonance'. The fourth concentric circle represents the lifeworld in which civil society and, by extension, the public sphere are rooted. The penultimate or fifth circle represents the cultural foundations of the lifeworld, civil society and the public sphere, and as such it provides the cultural resources – i.e. cultural models, schemes, codes, or Gamson's themes and counter themes – upon which actors or agents draw and which they activate in public communication. The sixth and last concentric circle, however, brings to the fore a resonance structure that is of still greater significance, particularly in contemporary communication society, yet is often forgotten, perhaps because it is theoretically not well understood. It represents the public in the sense of the lay egalitarian public audience who observes the actors, agents or players in the public arena, evaluates and judges them, and thus takes a position on the relevance and value of their respective contributions to public communication (Strydom 2004a: 7–8).

New Critical Theory and the Calling of Transformations

In his representation of resonance, Strydom uses the notion of 'concentric circles'. But these circles are not interpenetrative. Furthermore, in these models of concentric circles, there is no circle of self. Strydom is part of the European Enlightenment tradition which provides an automatic privileging of the public to the exclusion of engagement with self. Here what Ramshrov Roy writes about *polis* and self is helpful, he suggests that public order is threatened by the split between:

> man's concern for his own good and that of the good of others. But can this threat to the public order be mitigated, if not completely eliminated, by the installation of the Polis? For Aristotle, transcendence of self-interest is consequent upon participation in public affairs [but] the shortcomings associated with personal character cannot be expected to be rectified by the public realm, if it lacks necessary support from individuals reborn as citizens. To be reborn as a person who, rising above his self-interest, becomes attentive to and actively seeks to pursue collective good, is, then, to willingly accept a life dedicated to the cultivation of *dharma* (Roy 1999: 5).

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 221 -- #263

But the notion of 'concentric circles' is indeed a transformative one and it helps us understand the simultaneous logic of autonomy and interpenetration. In fact the participants in public communication, including the conditions of triple contingency, are not isolated agents, the reciprocal perspectives that Strydom aspires to are possible because of an ontology of autonomy and interpenetration that characterizes the fields that Strydom talks about. Thus Strydom needs to transform his concentric circles into interpenetrative ones. The public resonance that Strydom wants to generate needs adequate self-development such as the capacity to listen and self-transform. Just 'performative competence' to argue, in the public sphere, is not enough for resonance to realize its potential. Without the self-development of participating agents such as the capacity to listen and to overcome one's egocentric, ethnocentric and anthropocentric perspectives public resonance as multi-dimensional striving cannot really realize itself.

This calls for a multi-dimensional perspective which is in tune with Strydom's aspiration to go beyond any *a priori* and one-dimensional privileging. If socio-cognitive critique has to be open to all contending frames and models of discursive articulations and social constructions, then it needs a multi-valued logic instead of the binary logic of 'either-or' which dominates modernist epistemology. Strydom's critical engagement strives to go beyond a simple 'either-or' logic, for example the state versus social movements, in the field of risk communication, but this could be further strengthened by accompanying foundational efforts in a multi-valued logic which relates to all the participants and their truth claims as 'partly true, partly false, and partly undecidable' (Mohanty 2000: 24).

Multi-valued logic is based upon non-violence in ontology and intersubjective relations and non-injury in modes of thinking, especially epistemic engagement. Multi-valued logic helps us in overcoming epistemic violence, the violence we inflict upon reality which is ontologically multi-dimensional where different dimensions are related to each other in a spirit of autonomy and interpenetration. Multi-valued logic is itself a work of ontological epistemology of participation where epistemic engagement with the partial nature of our truth claims, including the attribution of falsity, is accompanied by appropriate ontological preparation which facilitates such an epistemic engagement and modes of reasoning.

Strydom's critical theory, like much of continental critical theory such as Habermas', is primarily epistemic. Like Habermas, Strydom is open to pragmatics but is silent about ontology. His focus on learning, especially collective and cooperative learning under con-

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 222 -- #264

ditions of 'triple contingency', intimates that learning is mainly an epistemic process, but doesn't it also involve ontological processes of self-development and self-transformation? In this context, what Ankersmit (2002) writes deserves our careful attention:

> Nevertheless, becoming acquainted with the possibility of many such points of view will, add each time, a new, though tiny stone to the mosaic of our personality. And in the end this cannot fail to have its effect on the kind of person that we are (235).

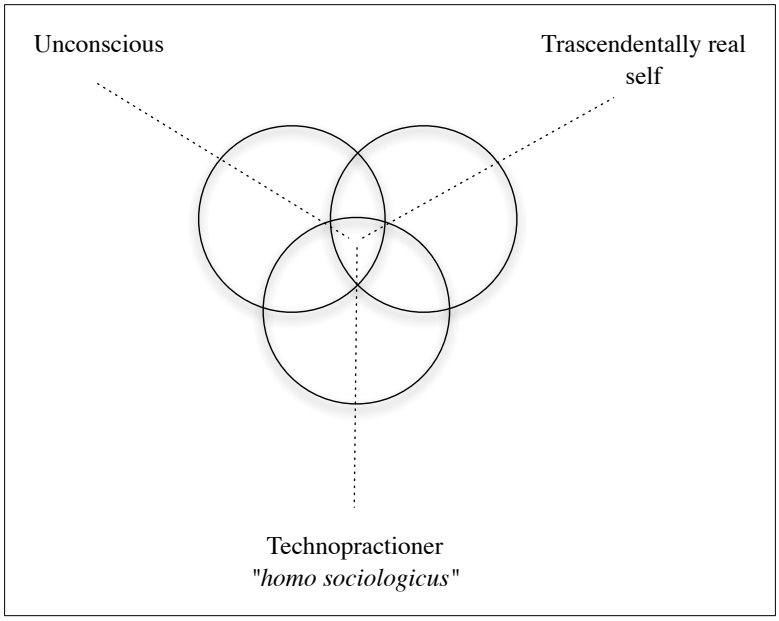
Like much of modernist continental critical theory Strydom's critical theory is silent on ontology but it is helpful here to take note of the transformations that both epistemology and ontology have undergone in recent times. In the field of epistemology we see a move towards 'virtue epistemology' and in the field of ontology towards varieties such as 'practical ontology' and 'ontology of self-expansion'. These transformations have helped us to go beyond the dualism between epistemology and ontology and work towards varieties of border-crossing of an ontological epistemology of participation. Strydom's critical theory of socio-cognitive critique can realize its many promising potentials as well as overcoming some of its understandable limitations, by exploring the pathways of the emergent ontological epistemology of participation.

Strydom's socio-cognitive critique rightly pleads for inviting a multi-dimensional perspective, but such a mode of engagement calls for an appropriate ontology of reality. I suggest that this is an ontology of multi-dimensionality which is then, the following diagram of the development of social movements at the same time, an ontology of autonomy and interpenetration. Here we can take Strydom's own example in the field of a resonant public. To the six circles that Strydom presents, let us add the circle of self and present these seven circles not only as concentric circles but also as interpenetrative circles. The ontology of the public consists of, at least to begin with, these seven domains of vision and practice characterized by a multidimensional ontology of autonomy and interpenetration.

To elaborate this multidimensional ontology of autonomy and interpenetration, let us take the example of self. Self has, at least, three dimensions in its multi-planar existence – the unconscious, the role player/techno-practitioner, and the transcendentally real self. But how do they relate to each other? Does one totally exhaust the other or is one opposed to the other? The relationship between these dimensions is one of autonomy and interpenetration, i.e. these

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 223 -- #265

dimensions of subject exist as concentric and interpenetrative circles having simultaneously an autonomous and relational existence. For example, whatever we do as role occupants and technopractitioners is influenced by both the dimensions of the unconscious and the trancendentally real self. Building on transformations in psychoanalysis and spiritual traditions of the world, Chitta Ranjan Das argues that the Unconscious itself is the repository of not only the libido or the irrational but also the highest possible in self, world and cosmos. But neither of these exist in a situation of either-or; they do not embody a dualistic logic nor can one be unproblematically reduced to or subsumed under the other (for more on this see Giri 2004, 2007).



For Strydom (2002), ‘socio-cognitive critique’ provides ‘epistemic authority’ which is not only the exclusive possession of the sociologist, it also animates all discerning participants. But how do we come to terms with the possible dangers of authoritarianism in epistemic authority? Does not epistemic authority invite a critique and transformation, parallel to the critique of authorities that we face in movements of transformations? Should it not be accompanied by an integrally connected move of epistemic humility? In

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 224 -- #266

the context of this discussion it is important to acknowledge the critique of ethnographic authority by George Marcus and Michael Fischer and religious authority by those concerned with secularism, spiritual transformations and critical philosophers such as Derrida and Bhaskar.

An important challenge here is the challenge of participation? How can our mode of critical engagement be simultaneously critical and participatory while avoiding the pitfalls of a spectatorial and judgmental critique from above or afar? Commenting on Habermas' legitimationist approach to the public sphere where he already identifies with normative social movements, Strydom (1999) writes: 'Constructivism, by its very nature, forbids the social scientist to adopt an identificatory procedure'(14). But Strydom still leaves untouched the challenge of participation. In order that critique can be transformative it needs to be simultaneously critical and participatory and here the pathway of an ontological epistemology of participation can suggest a way out to us. I have argued that an ontological epistemology of participation can help both observing social scientists and participating activists overcome their initial arrogance and closure, transform their self-identity and learn with each other (Giri 2004b).

Strydom's concept of triple contingency urges us to realize the third point of view. But what is the ontology of the third so that it again is not related to the first and the second in a dualistic way and with an a priori judgment? Furthermore, if the third point represents only the observing third actor C, who is observing A and B? Do not A and B have the need to also cultivate an observant self in their own selves? For the realization of triple contingency we thus need to cultivate a third observing mode of being both within the first and the second. In this context the question that Bourdieu (2003) asks of participant observation is relevant: 'How can one be both subject and object, the one who acts and the one who, as it were, watching himself acting?' (282). Bourdieu himself does not address this issue and he is primarily confined within 'epistemic reflexivity' without an accompanying ontological nurturance. But to be able to act and observe one's own action requires cultivation of what is called *sakhi purusha* (witnessing self) in Indian spiritual traditions and what Adam Smith (1976) calls 'impartial spectator'. Triple contingency has thus to overcome the dualism of action/argumentation and observation and cultivate a third point of view of critical observation and sympathetic participation in discursively engaged/active self and society. This also calls for the cultivation of a space of transcendence in self and in society so that critical observation is an integral part

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 225 -- #267

of self and society and that it does not have to come only from the external observing agents.

Strydom's socio-cognitive critique builds upon potentials in contemporary cognitive social theory. But if cognition is not related again in a spirit of autonomy and interpenetration to other domains of life such as emotion it can be limiting. In this context some of the problems of Habermasian critical theory, such as the valorization of discursive intersubjectivity without the nurturance of emotional intersubjectivity, persist in Strydom's socio-cognitive critique. There is possibly an evolutionary challenge for humanity to combine cognition with emotion and generate knowledge which also flows from the feelings of our heart. A new critical theory could help us in this evolutionary journey in self and society.

Strydom's socio-cognitive critique emerges from the backdrop of what he calls the contemporary experimenting knowledge society. He urges us to understand plural knowledges in our contemporary societies: scientific knowledge, legal knowledge, social knowledge, cultural knowledge and democratic common sense (Strydom 2004b: 6). But we do not find self-knowledge here. Critical theory involves a critique of knowledge and of power. But this critique also involves a foundational critique of knowledge itself, for example, knowledge not only as emancipatory but knowledge as binding. We do not find a foundational critique of knowledge in either Strydom or Habermas (cf. Giri 2004c). Such a foundational critique of knowledge is suggested in the following lines of *Ishopanishada*–one of the foundational texts of spiritual universality coming from India: *Andham Tamah Prabishyanti Jo AVidyam Upasate, Tato Vuya Ibate Tamah Jo Vidyaam Ratah*. It means: those who worship ignorance are steeped in darkness but those who are steeped in knowledge are also steeped in darkness. Critical theory also involves a foundational critique of self, for example, a critique and transformation of the limitations of our own egocentricity born of our confinement within one dimension of self only – be it role occupant, unconscious or transcendental.

Strydom urges us to understand the significance of responsibility for sociology. But he discusses responsibility primarily as a frame in tune with his cognitive sociology. But how do we cultivate responsibility as modes of being and becoming in self and in society? Here again, is responsibility only a matter of frame or framing or does it also involve appropriate self-preparation? Furthermore, what is the link between suffering and responsibility? For the embodiment of responsibility are we not invited to co-suffer with our fellow beings as Levinas and Gandhi, in their different ways, have urged

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 226 -- #268

us to realize (Giri 2002; van Ufford and Giri 2003)? In Strydom's co-responsibility we are called upon to embody it also through co-suffering and thus contribute to mutual transformation and world transformation.

The Calling of a New Critical Theory: Self-Development, Inclusion of the Other and Planetary Realizations

Critical theory is not only an epistemic engagement, it is simultaneously an ontological engagement; it is a dynamic work of an ontological epistemology of participation. Self-development is a neglected theme in critical theory as it is in the broader discourse of social theory and human development. Building upon the work of savants and inspiring seekers such as Strydom we can work towards a new critical theory, which contributes to and builds upon self-development, inclusion of the other and planetary realizations.

Self-development here refers to multi-dimensional self-develop/-ment of both the critics and the actors. What is self? Does self refer only to the egoistic dimension of the individual? Does it mean only *homo sociologicus*, *homo economicus*, or the '*technopractitioner*'? Faubion (1995) presents this model of the subject building upon the works of Habermas and Bourdieu. Self is all of these, but is not exhausted by these. It has a transcendental dimension, a dimension of transcendental and transversal connectivity to the other, to society, to nature, to the world and to the cosmos, what Roy Bhaskar (2002a) calls 'transcendentally really self'. Self-development means development of all these dimensions of self in a spirit of autonomy and interpenetration and non-dual realizations. Self-development thus includes processes of capacity building in various techno-practical fields of life such as economy, polity, organization, state, civil society and now in the field of interlinked globality and a cosmic humanity. Self-development involves the capacity for freedom as well as responsibility. In the economic field, it means gaining economic independence and market freedom. In the political field it involves the development of the capacity for appreciation for as well as realization of rights, justice and citizenship and the deepening and broadening of these from their earlier state-centeredness to fulfill the needs of a global humanity.

An important challenge here is to overcome the binding of the concentration of power and to strive towards the realization of what Dallmayr (2001), building on Heidegger, calls 'power free existence'. This also involves a critique of the logic of sovereignty at the level of self and nation-state and striving towards the realization of shared sovereignties (Giri 2007b). This aspect of self-development

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 227 -- #269

has a long lineage in the philosophical and spiritual traditions of the West and the rest of the world. Examples include the Christian concept of 'kenosis' or self-emptying (Vattimo 1999; Wilfred 2000), the Confucian emphasis on self-cultivation (de Barry 1991) and Foucault's (1986) plea for developing self-restraint on the part of the holders of power. What Toynbee (1956: 74) writes deserves our careful attention:

> In human life, Suffering is the antitheses of Power, and it is also a more characteristic, and more fundamental element in Life than Power is. Suffering is the essence of Life, because it is the inevitable product of an unresolvable tension between a living creature's essential impulse to try to make itself into the center of the Universe and its essential dependence on the rest of creation and on the Absolute Reality on which all creatures live and move and have their being. On the other hand, human power, in all its forms is limited and, in the last resort, illusory. Therefore any attitude towards Life that idolizes human power is bound to be a wrong attitude towards Suffering and, in consequence, a wrong attitude towards Life itself (Toynbee 1956: 74).

The project of self-development is linked with a project of inclusion of the other which in Habermas' recent formulations is not just universalistic but also sensitive to difference, defending 'a morality of equal respect and solidaristic responsibility for everybody' (Habermas 1998: 5). But both the project of self-development and inclusion of the other can be locked in a self-justificatory closure, for example authenticity in the case of the former, and emancipation in the case of the latter. For example, the movement of self-study in India, *Swadhyaya*, can do a lot in terms of inclusion of the other, especially those of low-caste (Giri 2007c). Similarly, the project of inclusion of the other as articulated by Habermas needs a lot more self-development in order that it can realize its own aspiration of respecting the otherness of the other. A case in point is Habermas' approach to other religions. Habermas writes in his *Religion and Rationality*: 'We no longer confront other cultures as alien since their structures still remind us of previous phases of our own social development. What we *do* encounter as alien within other cultures is the stubborn distinctiveness of their religious cores' (Habermas 2002a: 156). When pressed to the limits, despite his post-metaphysical thinking, Habermas acknowledges the significance of the Judaeo-Christian tradition for the project of modernity but he

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 228 -- #270

seems not to offer the same acknowledgment of other traditions such as Buddhism. Inclusion of the other is thus a multi-dimensional process of dialogue and transformations involving dialogues across cultures, religions and civilizations. It also involves initiatives and struggles to build inclusive economies, polities, and communicating publics from the local to the global. In his critical theory Strydom is concerned about inclusion of the other and this concern can be further realized by taking part in trans-civilizational dialogues and related processes of transformations.

Today self-development and inclusion of the other must include planetary realizations. Alberto Melucci writes in his *The Playing Self: Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society*:

> We live on a planet that has become a global society. An ecology of economic, political, and technological choices cannot operate independently of an ecology of the everyday, *of the words and gestures with which we call into being* or annihilate the inner planet. *To pay attention and respect to details*; to be aware that we are part of a whole and we need to connect the different elements into this whole, *to value the path and not only the end* (1996: 69; emphases added).

Planetary realizations are not unitary and simplistic processes: they involve complexity, difference and uncertainty which demand from 'individuals the capacity to *change form* (the literal meaning of metamorphosis)' (Melucci 1996: 2–3). Planetary realizations also involve realization of the inner planet 'consisting of the biological, emotional and cognitive structures that underlies the experience and relations of us all' (56).

Strydom's reflections on risk, environment and responsibility can be looked at from this emergent calling of planetary realizations which involves transformation of anthropocentrism and post-national transformations. Critical theory as planetary realizations also involves trans-civilizational dialogues and planetary conversations about the foundational assumptions and themes of critical theory such as justification, argumentation, human interest and triple contingency learning.

Alphabetical Index

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''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 229 -- #271

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INDEX

A
accountability, 131
Acheson, N., 204, 205
Acker, J., 107
Acserald, H., 176
action, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14–18, 27–29, 31, 38, 39, 49, 52–55, 58, 63–72, 74–77, 99–103, 106, 107, 112, 114, 120, 121, 126–128, 130, 135, 145, 158, 159, 161, 173, 176, 184, 192, 195, 198, 201, 205, 206, 215, 224
Action UK, 131
activism, 97, 107, 202, 224
actor, 7, 15–17, 55, 63, 65–75, 91, 97, 100, 119, 120, 122, 123, 129, 131–135, 156–158, 181, 190–192, 195, 196, 198, 203, 206, 214, 216, 217, 219, 220, 224, 226
adiaphorization, 28
administered society, 119
administration, 51, 124, 125, 127–129, 132, 134–136, 154, 193
administrative, 102, 119, 121, 124, 125, 127–129, 134, 135, 176
administrative rationality, 120
administrative structures, 121
Adorno, T., 119, 120
Adshead, M., 200, 204, 205
aesthetic, 16, 72, 120
Agenda 21 (LA21), 171, 194, 200, 204
agent, 1, 3, 11, 13, 15, 16, 30, 41, 82, 190, 198, 214, 219, 220, 225
Alford, C.F., 47
Alonso, A., 178
alter, 18, 50, 157, 160
altruism, 66
Amazon, 178
Amazonian Great Savannah, 181
ambiguity, 196
anarchists, 109
anthropocentrism, 215, 221, 228
anthropology, 11, 17, 86, 120
anti-nuclear, 101
antinomies, 216
Apel, K.-O., 3, 25, 26, 28, 32–41, 47, 88, 89, 170, 189, 218
Arato, A., 102
Archibugi, D., 88
Arendt, H., 141–145
Argentina, 173, 174
argumentation, 32–34, 40, 228
Aristotle, 36
Arnason, J., 83, 84
art, 72
authenticity, 227
authoritarian, 219
authority, 216, 223
autonomy, 27, 29, 52, 57, 70, 102, 121, 135, 141, 152, 153, 196, 221, 222, 225, 226
autopoietic, 19, 67, 72
avant-garde, 109
Avritzer, L., 171, 174

B
Bagguley, P., 103
Baker, M.M., 178
Bang, H.P., 189, 196, 197
Barbalet, J., 37
Bauman, Z., 28
Beck, U., 122, 129, 144, 170, 191
behaviour, 37
behaviourism, 5
beliefs, 4
Belize, 173
Bendell, J., 206
Benford, R.D., 121–123, 132, 133
Benhabib, S., 36, 121, 124, 144
Bennett, L., 114
Berger, P., 8

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 232 -- #274

Beteille, A., 216
Bhaskar, R., 226
binary logic, 221
biodiversity, 175, 177
bioethics, 28
biosphere, 25, 26, 28, 29
biotechnology, 27, 31, 33
Birzer, G., 154
Birzer, M., 154
Bobbio, N., 174
body, the, 102
Bohman, J., 88
Bolivia, 173
Boltanski, L., 127, 131
Bourdieu, P., 1, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 20, 74, 121, 224
bourgeois, 109, 113
Boyd, R., 66
Boyle, M., 207
Bradford, S., 201
Brazil, 173–176, 179, 181
  Congress, 179
  Green Party, 177
  Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), 176
  Ministry for the Environment (MMA), 176
  National Council for the Environment (CONAMA), 176, 178
  National Environmental Law (LPNMA), 176
  Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic for the Environment (SEMAN), 176
  Special Secretary for the Environment (SEMA), 176
British Medical Association, 131
Brito, F.A., 176
Brooks, R.A., 27
Brundtland Commission, 170
Brunkhorst, H., 144
Buddhism, 86, 228
Burchell, J., 190
bureaucracy, 132, 135, 172, 177, 192
business, 199, 205
Buttle, N., 29

C
Câmara, J.B.D., 176
Calhoun, C., 101, 103, 112–114
Canada, 180
capitalism, 101, 119, 121, 125, 127–130, 132, 134, 219
  new spirit of, 127, 129
Castells, M., 88
celebrity, 153
Chafetz, J.S., 100
Charles, N., 97, 100, 106, 112
chartist, 110
Chiapello, E., 127, 131
child welfare, 114
Chile, 173
Christianity, 84, 86, 227
Cicourel, A., 3, 9
citizen, 131, 133, 135, 203
citizenship, 105, 106, 112, 129, 132, 135, 226
civil rights, 99
civil society, 87, 88, 91, 110, 114, 121, 192, 196, 198, 199, 201–203, 205, 206, 208, 219, 226
civilization, 26, 83, 84, 228
  clash of civilizations, 82
Clark, N., 26
class, 104, 111
climate change, 88, 129
co-governance, 189, 193
cognitive, 1–17, 19, 20, 36, 46–48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 81, 82, 88, 90, 92, 93, 103, 120–124, 126–128, 132, 134, 136, 192, 194, 213, 216, 218, 219, 225
  cognitive frames, 4, 7, 9, 14, 15, 17–19, 49, 54, 59, 84
  cognitive proceduralism, 36
  cognitive sociology, 225
  cognitive turn, 1, 3
  cognitively, 5, 10, 19
  new cognitive revolution, 215

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 233 -- #275

structures, 10, 12, 20, 47, 52, 54, 58, 214
typology, 12, 19
Cohen, J., 102, 104, 113
Coleman, J., 67
collective, 46, 47, 49, 52, 54, 55, 58, 171, 182, 193, 207
collective action, 16, 99, 100, 123, 193, 198, 207
collective behaviour, 99, 103
collective responsibility, 30, 37, 41, 207
Colombia, 173
Comhar, 203
common good, 71, 85, 86, 90
common sense, 2, 8, 9, 11, 16
communication, 3–7, 9, 10, 12, 15–20, 32–35, 38, 39, 41, 48–51, 53, 57, 58, 65, 67, 69–74, 76, 77, 81, 84, 89–93, 99, 119, 121–124, 129, 132, 135, 136, 143, 155–161, 171, 172, 183, 184, 190, 193, 197, 198, 203, 205–207, 214–217, 219–221, 228
communicative action, 5, 6, 9, 39, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71, 74, 77, 121
communicative societies, 219
community, 34, 64, 77, 81, 84, 91, 201, 205, 207
community development, 201
compassion, 36
competition, 215
complexity, 67, 98, 108, 112, 115, 158, 170, 189, 194, 197, 228
Conein, B., 2
conflict, 5–7, 12, 14–16, 18, 82, 83, 85, 101, 122, 123, 130, 135, 136, 158, 171, 172, 178, 182, 184, 195, 207, 215, 217, 218
Confucianism, 86
consensus, 38, 39, 53, 64, 74, 75, 85, 89, 90, 171, 172, 176–178, 196, 199, 200, 203
constitution, 10, 114, 176, 184
constructivism, 3, 4, 46, 49, 52, 54, 215, 218, 224
consultation, 193
consumers, 206
consumption, 75, 93, 174, 195
contingency, 5, 18–20, 33, 38, 46, 48, 50–52, 58, 64, 67, 70, 92, 93, 122, 143, 156–161, 213, 214, 216–219, 224, 228
Convention on the Rights of the Child, 142
cooperation, 192
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), 190, 205, 206
corporatism, 192, 205
cosmic, 226
cosmopolitanism, 81, 82, 90–92, 144
cosmopolitan, 81, 82, 88, 91, 92, 122, 214
Costa Rica, 173
Costa, V., 171, 174, 178
counter-movements, 110
counterculture, 109, 111
Cowan, J.K., 86
Cradden, T., 200
creativity, 217
crisis, 124, 127, 131, 132, 134, 135, 218
crisis management, 135
critical social theory, 8, 9, 19, 25, 47, 51, 81, 93, 119–124, 135, 136, 213, 214, 216, 217, 220, 221, 225, 226, 228
early, 120
facts and norms, 216
first generation, 119, 120
Frankfurt School, 120
immanent critique, 119, 120
critical-normative, 81
Crouch, C., 130
Crozier, M., 191, 192, 195, 197
culture, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9–15, 17–20, 37, 40, 47, 52, 54, 64, 65, 70, 72, 75, 77, 81–88, 90, 91, 93, 101, 102, 104, 107, 108, 110, 120, 122, 123, 128, 132–134, 169, 190, 216, 217, 225, 227, 228
cultural change, 110

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 234 -- #276

sociocultural, 3, 5, 8, 12–15
customer, 128
cyberspace, 27

D
D'Aluiso, F., 27
D'Andrade, R., 2
Dale, A., 205
Dallmayr, F., 226
Daly, S., 199, 201
Davies, A., 207
de Bary, T., 87, 227
De la Madrid, M., 180
debate, 190, 192, 195
decision-making, 105, 192, 219
deforestation, 177, 178
Delanty, G., 20, 81, 90, 91, 144
Delap, L., 113
deliberation, 52, 53, 193, 196, 197, 199, 203, 204, 206, 208
deliberative, 90, 204
Della Porta, D., 101
democracy, 10, 122, 129, 130, 133, 147, 192, 195, 196, 200, 208
democratic, 102, 121, 225
deontology/deontological, 33, 34, 66, 68, 72, 81, 82, 86
development, 106, 108, 145, 174, 179, 194–196, 218
  debt, 145
  resources, 145
  war, 145
dialogue, 121, 193, 228
Diani, M., 101
diaspora, 83
difference, 227, 228
dignity, 30, 141, 143, 149–152, 160, 215
direct action, 112, 114, 201
discourse, 2–7, 9, 10, 12, 14–20, 32–41, 47, 51–55, 58, 62–65, 68–76, 88–90, 93, 112, 122–126, 129, 135, 170, 171, 173, 174, 178, 180, 181, 183, 184, 189, 190, 193, 198, 199, 202–204, 206, 207, 213, 215, 218, 219, 221, 224, 226
  moral, 34, 40
  norms, 37
  participants, 35, 40
  practical, 37
  pre-discursive, 63
  public, 123
  reciprocity, 40
discourse', 65
discrimination, 154
discursive, 5–7, 10, 14–20, 33, 35, 37, 38, 40, 46, 47, 52–54, 57–59, 63, 65, 68, 69, 72, 89, 93, 122, 135, 161, 169, 172, 184, 190, 191, 193, 198, 199, 206–208, 213, 215, 218, 221, 225
disrespect, 150
dissensus, 66, 75
distance, 25
diversity, 64, 65, 67, 72, 82, 84, 104
domestic violence, 114
Domingues, J.M., 170, 174
Donnelly, J., 19, 149
double contingency, 18, 19, 46, 50, 51, 143, 156, 160, 165, 166, 217
Douglas, M., 65
Durkheim, E., 7, 45, 77, 189
Dworkin, G.A., 100

E
Earth Summit (Rio Conference), 1992, 195
ecological crisis, 14, 25, 26, 30, 31, 33, 36, 38, 39
  anthropocentric, 26, 41
  biodiversity, 26
  biotic egalitarianism, 30
  ecosphere, 26
  endangered species, 31
  energy resources, 26, 35
  environment, 26, 36
  extinction, 26
  global warming, 26, 34, 35
ecology, 28, 104, 110, 115, 124, 177, 179, 181, 189, 194, 228
  ecological crisis, 36

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 235 -- #277

ecological overdraft, 26
economics, 68, 74, 75, 87, 89, 103, 107, 124, 125, 127, 128, 131, 132, 135, 194, 196, 198, 214, 226, 228
industrial actors, 198
economy, 103, 179, 226
Ecuador, 173
Eder, K., 2, 3, 7, 14–18, 20, 45, 49, 50, 55, 59, 109, 110, 112, 115, 119, 121, 122, 124, 136, 171, 193, 196, 198, 200, 220
education, 104, 114
ego, 18, 50, 157, 160
egoistic, 66
egocentricity
egoist, 66
El Salvador, 173
elite, 101, 109, 110
emancipation, 120–122, 225, 227
emancipatory, 111, 120, 122
emotion, 15, 20, 34, 36, 37, 64, 97, 100, 225
empathy, 36, 37
empire, 83
empirical research, 3, 4, 16, 35, 38
English Revolution/Glorious Revolution, 218
environment, 14, 29, 93, 110, 169, 170, 173–176, 178, 189, 194, 201, 202, 215, 218, 228
environmental crisis, 219
environmental law, 172, 173, 176–178, 180–183
environmental organisations, 202
environmentalism, 93, 99, 103, 105, 106, 170–173, 175, 177–184, 190, 192, 194, 200–202
epistemology, 4, 5, 8, 10, 19, 20, 123, 214–216, 221–224, 226
equality, 14, 33, 86, 119, 130, 132, 135, 146–148, 161
egalitarian, 14
equity, 132
essentialism, 31
anti-essentialist, 83
ethics, 25, 28–30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39–41, 57, 81–93, 194
macro-ethic, 30–34, 36, 41
proximity, 25
rational, 35
responsibility, 33
ethnocentricity, 100, 217, 221
ethnomethodology, 9, 11
eugenics, 26
Europe, 83, 84, 128, 205
European Convention on Human Rights, 142
European Court of Human Rights, 142
European Enlightenment, 63, 220
European Union (EU), 195, 207
Evans, B., 193, 195
evolution, 5, 6, 65–67, 72, 76
evolutionary theory, 6
experimenting society, 225
exploitation, 218
Eyerman, R., 16, 102, 103, 113

F

factions, 12
Families Against MRSA, 131
Farrell, K.N., 195
feminism, 37, 98, 99, 106, 110, 113–115
early/first wave, 107, 108, 112
feminist theory, 98
links between old and new, 107, 108
second wave movement, 107, 108
Flynn, B., 198, 202, 203
foreign aid, 88
Foucault, M., 227
foundations, 219
fragility, 29, 31
frames, 1–4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15–20, 54, 70, 84, 93, 119, 121–124, 128, 130, 132, 133, 136, 171, 213, 214, 217, 218, 221, 225
conative framing, 16
macro frames, 17–20

"criticalturns" -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 236 -- #278

master frames, 7, 15–20, 54, 171
Fraser, N., 51
free enterprise, 128
freedom, 14, 30, 33, 54, 75, 113, 132, 141, 147, 162, 170, 172, 226
French Revolution, 218
Fuks, M., 178
Fuller, S., 161
functionalism, 1, 67, 72, 73
future, 34, 38

G
Gadamer, H.G., 121
game theory, 68
ideal games, 70, 72–74
Gamson, W., 4, 16, 132, 220
Gandhi, M., 225
Garavan, M., 202
Garbutt, J., 175
Garfinkel, H., 9
Gehlen, A., 189
gender, 97, 98, 100, 106, 107, 110, 115
gender identity, 97, 106
gender politics, 98
gender stratification, 107
generational equity, 194
genetic modification, 175
genetics, 5, 6, 26, 27, 39, 40
geography, 83
Giddens, A., 2, 7, 13, 17, 88, 121
Giri, A., 215, 216, 224–227
global, 19, 26, 28, 34, 36, 39, 59, 81–93, 105, 113, 121, 127, 131, 190, 194, 226, 228
global ethics, 81–93, 228
globalization, 83, 84, 87, 89, 91–93
God, 87
Goffman, E., 2, 9, 13, 14, 123
Goodey, J., 154
Goodwin, J., 97, 100
Gould, B., 97, 100
governance, 91, 92, 189, 190, 192–200, 202, 204, 205, 207, 208
recursive, 197
government, 82, 91, 93, 101, 103, 112, 125, 126, 128, 130, 131, 133, 135, 161, 192–195, 198–200, 208
Great Britain, 103
Griffioen, S., 37
Grin, J., 191, 197, 199
growth, 183
Guatemala, 173
Gutmann, A., 85
Guyana, 173

H
Haber, S., 35
Habermas, J., 2–6, 9, 10, 12–14, 16, 18, 19, 26, 27, 33–37, 39, 40, 45, 47, 49, 50, 52, 53, 55, 56, 65–68, 71, 81, 88–90, 98, 102, 108, 111, 120, 122, 124, 129, 132, 134–136, 156, 161, 171, 184, 189, 215, 217, 219, 221, 224, 225, 227
Hague Peace Congress, 113
Hajer, M., 192, 193, 195, 197
Hans, J., 189
Haraway, D., 27
Harney, M., 128, 130
Haslam, A., 114
Hayek, F.von, 146
Hayles, N., 27
health, 93, 125–136
health care, 105, 126, 128, 130, 131, 133–136
health management, 126, 129
health professionals, 129
health reform, 129, 130
health services, 125, 128, 129, 131–135
patients, 125, 128, 130, 131, 135, 136
reproductive health, 105
Hegel, G., 143, 148, 149
affective paradigm, 143, 149
recognition, 148
Heidegger, M., 226
Hendriks, C., 191, 197, 199, 201

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 237 -- #279

Henrard, K., 154
Henrich, J., 66
hermeneutics, 121, 122
Herrera, C., 175
hierarchy, 107, 112, 114, 192, 196, 207
Hinduism, 86
history, 5, 6, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 38, 66, 76, 83
HIV/AIDS, 100, 145
Hobbes, T., 63, 144, 149, 160
Holocaust, 141
Holton, S., 113
home, the, 113
homo sapiens, 6
homogeneity, 75
Honduras, 173
Honneth, A., 134, 143, 148, 149, 151, 155, 158, 160
  mutual recognition, 149
  social disrespect, 155, 158
Horkheimer, M., 120
Hourigan, T., 99, 100
human beings, 29–32, 34, 35, 37, 226, 228
  humans and robots, 27
  post-human world, 27
  sociality, 32
  vulnerability, 29, 34, 35
human rights (see rights), 19, 82, 86–88, 93, 101, 141–144, 146–148, 154, 162
humanitarianism, 88
humanity, 31, 32, 34, 38, 82, 143, 147, 152, 161, 225, 226
humility, 38, 223
Husserl, E., 3

I
ideal communication, 38
ideal speech, 38
idealism, 4, 11
identity, 11, 15–17, 20, 26, 85, 93, 101, 102, 104, 106–108, 112, 113, 218
  collective identity, 16
ideology, 8, 106, 119
Ikaheimo, H., 155
incineration, 208
inclusion, 113, 228
India, 110, 227
indigenous, 92
individualism, 63, 66, 68–70, 146
  individual, 7, 9, 10, 16, 29, 33, 49, 64, 68–70, 82, 92, 93, 120, 128, 193, 218
Industrial Revolution, 218
industrialization, 110
industry, 191, 219
inequality, 119, 183
injustice, 133
innovation, 58
institutions, 66, 69, 83, 93, 135, 190–193, 195, 198–200, 204, 219
instrumental reason, 127
Integrated Coastal Zone Management, 201
inter-subjectivity, 67, 68, 120–123, 216, 225
International Criminal Court (ICC), 142
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 174
internet, 92
interpenetration, 217, 221, 222, 225, 226
interpersonal sensitivity, 150
interpretation, 1, 4, 5, 8–14, 48, 50, 52, 66, 70, 74, 84, 121, 122, 124, 126, 159, 199, 214
intersubjectivity, 5, 7, 10, 12, 17, 34
Iraq, 83
Irish/Ireland, 98, 112–114, 125, 126, 128–132, 135, 136, 190, 199–203, 205, 207
  City County Development Boards (CDB), 204, 205
  Health Act 2004, 129
  Health Service Executive, 125, 129
  Irish Patients Association, 131

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 238 -- #280

Minister for Health and Children, 125, 130
National Economic and Social Council, 202
National Economic and Social Forum, 202
National Sustainable Development Partnership, 202
National Sustainable Development Strategy, 204
Waste Management (Amendment) Act 2001, 207
Waste Management Act (1996), 207
Waste Management Regulations (1997), 207
Islam, 86
Ives, N., 153

J
Jänicke, M., 195, 198
Jamison, A., 16, 102, 103, 113
Jasper, J.E., 97, 100
Jenkins-Smith, H., 45
Jileva, E., 145
Jonas, H., 25, 28, 30–32, 37, 41, 87, 170
Judaeo-Christian, 227
Judaism, 86
judiciary, 172, 174
just society, 81
justice, 12, 14, 15, 32, 37, 48, 52, 54, 82, 85, 87, 90, 93, 119, 122, 130, 132–136, 144, 151, 153–155, 170, 174, 214, 218, 226
procedural justice, 87
justification, 125, 217, 228

K
Kant, I., 3, 4, 16, 32, 36, 65, 68, 70, 88, 91, 120, 143, 149, 150
respect, 150
Keane, J., 35
Kelly, T., 47
Kemp, R., 28, 191, 195–197
kenosis', 227
Kerins, K., 206
Kettler, D., 18
Klandermas, B., 132
Knorr-Cetina, K., 64, 73
knowledge, 1–5, 8, 11–13, 15, 41, 49, 119–123, 126–128, 130, 133, 134, 196–198, 213, 218, 225
classical tradition, 2
structures, 8, 9, 13
Kooiman, J., 191
Korzetz, E., 173, 175
Kosovo, 89
Kung, H., 87
Kurasawa. F., 27

L
Lévi-Strauss, C., 77
labour, 101–103, 105, 109, 111, 115
Lafferty, W.M., 194, 198
Laitinen, A., 155
language, 3, 8, 39–41, 48, 67, 72–74, 101, 122, 124, 129, 144, 193
language games, 72–74
Laplante, B., 175
Larkin, T., 200, 204
Lasch, K., 16
Latin America, 169, 170, 172, 175, 182
Latour, B., 27, 41
law/legal, 14, 82, 87, 89, 91, 135, 143
international law, 91, 92
leadership, 102, 105, 106
learning, 5, 7, 17, 18, 36, 45–47, 49, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 70, 119, 122–124, 126, 128, 132, 135, 136, 171, 198, 200, 213, 215–217, 219, 221, 228
collective learning, 81, 123, 214, 221
mutual learning), 84
Lebenswelt, 3
legal system, 151
legislation, 110, 172, 174, 182

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 239 -- #281

legitimacy, 64, 196, 204
legitimation, 7, 11, 27, 215, 218
Lehtonen, M., 206
Leis, H.R., 173, 175
Levinas, E., 225
Leys, C., 129
Lezama, J.L., 180, 181
liberalism, 14, 84–87, 122, 142, 146, 147, 149, 152, 156, 162, 169
liberalization, 184
  trade, 83, 175, 184
liberation, 134
liberty, 12, 14, 146
lifestyle, 101, 104
lifeworld, 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 17, 36, 38, 56, 64, 75, 102, 112, 114, 121, 124, 126, 129, 130, 132, 134, 135, 184, 220
  colonization of lifeworld, 9
Lightfoot, S., 190
Lincoln, A., 161
linearity, 108, 112, 115, 216
Little, P., 176
lived crisis, 124, 131, 136
local, 64, 82, 85, 90–92, 204
Locke, J., 149, 152, 160
logic, 36, 48, 65, 76, 84, 98, 121, 127, 215, 221, 223, 226
Long, D., 153
love, 38, 66, 73
low-caste, 227
Luckmann, T., 8
Luhmann, N., 18, 19, 55, 58, 67, 70–72, 156, 158, 159, 165, 167
  double contingency, 158
Lukes, S., 129
Lutz-Bachmann, M., 88
Lynd, L., 152

M

MacDonald, G.J., 171
Macnaghten, P., 35, 36
macro-ethic, 32, 36
macrosociology, 3, 7, 11, 12, 17, 18
Madsen, R., 87
Mandela, N., 152
Mann, M., 175
Mannheim, K., 2, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16, 17
maquiladora, 180, 184
Marcuse, H., 120
marginalization, 202
market, 27, 28, 62, 63, 65, 68–76, 124–130, 146, 147, 153, 172, 179, 192, 207, 226
  invisible hand, 69, 71
  marketization, 125, 129, 130
marriage, 69
Marshall, T., 148, 156
Martin, G., 103, 105
Marx, K., 69, 119, 125
Marxism, 5
masculine rationality, 100
mass mobilizations, 110
Mauss, M., 77
McAdam, D., 16, 100
McCarthy, J., 156
McCarthy, J.D., 100
McInerney, C., 200, 204, 205
McManus, L., 126
Mead, M., 45
Meadowcroft, J., 191, 194–196, 203
media, 121
Meja, V., 18
Melucci, A., 16, 101–103, 105, 107, 113
Menzel, P., 27
Merton, R., 77
metaphysics, 31
metatheory, 3, 5–7
Mexico, 173, 174, 179, 181, 184
  Commission for Environmental Sanitation, 179
  Federal Attorney's Office for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA), 180
  General Law on Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection, 180
  Madrid, de la, 180
  Mexico City, 179

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 240 -- #282

National Ecological Commission (CNE), 180
National Ecological Institute (INE), 180
National Programme for Environmental Audit (PNAA), 180
Secretary for Environmental Improvement, 179
Secretary for Fisheries, the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAP/SEMARNAT), 180
Secretary for Social Development (SEDESOL), 180
Secretary for Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE), 179
microsociology, 3, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17
migrants, 145
migration, 92
militancy, 114
military, 27
Miller, M., 7, 20, 45, 49, 53, 55, 59, 122, 135, 150
mobilization, 38, 101, 107
modern, 27
modernity, 8, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25–27, 31, 33, 68, 69, 71, 73, 77, 90–93, 109, 110, 120–123, 132, 170, 183, 189, 191, 192, 198, 199, 208, 214, 215, 221, 227
Mohanty, J. N., 215
Mohanty, J.N., 221
morals, 16, 25, 27–31, 34–41
moral action, 31, 41
moral argument, 36
moral community, 25, 39
moral imagination, 38, 39
moral philosophy, 25, 32
moral theory, 218
morality, 66, 68, 75, 85, 86, 88–90, 113, 134, 190, 218
Moravec, H., 27
Morris, A., 16
Motherway, B., 202, 204, 205
motivation, 31, 34, 37, 64, 66, 67, 74, 75
MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus), 126, 131, 133, 135
Mueller, C., 16
Mullally, G., 202, 204–206
Mullally, T., 205, 206
multi-dimensional, 222
multiculturalism, 92
Mumme, S., 173, 175, 180
Murphy, J., 204
Murray, M., 39, 200, 208

N

narrative, 63, 69, 70, 73–77
narrative bond, 65, 69, 70, 73–75, 77
nation, 69, 85, 89, 90
nation state, 85, 91, 195
national, 1, 19, 85, 89, 90, 131, 142, 146, 162, 173, 174, 177–180, 196, 199, 200, 202–204, 207
nationalism, 112, 114
natural resources, 174
nature, 3, 5, 6, 14, 25–28, 30–32, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 50, 51, 56, 85, 86, 88, 89, 93, 102, 105, 110, 112, 114, 119–122, 126, 128, 142, 144, 145, 148, 149, 155–157, 159, 162, 170, 171, 182, 190, 193, 194, 221, 224, 226
Navdeep, M., 197
Neder, R.T., 177
Nelkin, D., 15
Nelson, P.J., 174
neo-classical social theory, 19
Neoconservatives, 162
Neoliberalism, 130, 162, 175
Netherlands, Revolt of the, 218
networks, 65, 73, 76, 102, 108, 193, 195–197, 215
New Social Movements (NSM), (see social movements), 101–103, 108

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 241 -- #283

Newman, L., 205
NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), 172, 174, 177, 181, 184, 192, 201, 206
Nicaragua, 173
Nielson, D.L., 171, 174
Nietzsche, F., 120
Nobre, M., 171
non-human sentient beings, 26, 29, 31, 34, 40
normative, 32, 35, 41, 45, 50, 52, 55, 56, 58, 64, 66, 68, 69, 81, 82, 88, 89, 93, 119, 122, 126, 189, 213, 224
  structures, 50
norms, 2, 4, 6, 10, 14–16, 18, 20, 25, 28, 32–35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 51–55, 67–69, 71, 89, 91, 114, 121, 123, 124, 152, 158, 215
North, 69
nuclear risks, 26
Nussbaum, M., 215

O

O'Brion, D., 205
O'Donnell, R., 200
O'Dwyer, B., 205, 206
O'Flynn, I., 201
O'Mahony, J., 200
O'Reardon, C., 200
O'Toole, J., 194
object, the, 1, 37
objectivity, 30, 216
obligation, 41, 190, 195
Occidental, 90
Offe, C., 102, 104, 129
Offen, K., 113
ontology, 4, 6, 27, 30–32, 37, 40, 41, 66, 83, 86, 122, 215, 221, 222, 224, 226
Orientalism, 82
  neo-orientalism, 82, 87
other, the, 213, 226–228
Outhwaite, W., 6

P

pacifism, 106, 113, 114
Pajnik, M., 146
Panama, 173
paradigm warriors, 97, 115
Paraguay, 173
parliament, 184
Parsons, T., 18, 19, 64, 66, 68, 157–160, 165, 189
  double contingency, 157, 159
participation, 178, 204, 205, 221, 222, 224
participatory process, 179
particularistic, 64
partnership, 128
paternalism, 219
peace, 106
peace movement, 99, 106
Peirce, C., 10
performance indicators, 128
personal integrity, 152
Peru, 173
Peters, B., 51, 53, 192
phenomenology, 2, 3, 64
philosophy, 3, 17, 32, 47, 68, 82, 84, 88, 120, 122, 132, 147, 150, 170, 227
  political philosophy, 76
Piaget, J., 10, 45, 49
Pierce, C.S., 49
Pierre, J., 192
Pilar García, M., 181, 182
planetary ethic, 31
pluralization, 84, 85
policy, 128, 194, 195, 201
political, 81–84, 86–89, 91, 93, 101, 104, 106, 107, 192, 193, 201, 228
Political Process Theory (PPT), 97, 100, 101
political science, 200
political struggle, 215
politics, 101, 103, 104, 121, 125, 192, 197, 199, 207, 214
polity, 85, 226
positivism, 120
post-corporatist, 198, 200, 203, 208
post-human world, 27

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 242 -- #284

post-industrial, 127
post-metaphysical, 227
post-national, 228
poverty, 105, 174, 183, 200
power, 7, 10, 18, 19, 25, 30, 31, 37, 52, 55, 64, 103–105, 135, 144, 172, 174, 175, 178, 179, 183, 184, 195, 198, 201, 202, 204, 205, 208, 225–227
pragmatics, 6, 221
praxis, 103, 120, 122
Price, M., 173
Pritchard, M.S., 149, 151, 152
privacy, 113
problem-solving, 5, 33, 34, 124, 191, 200, 219
proceduralism, 53
production, 120, 121
progress, 215
Progressive Democrats, 131
protest, 101
psychology, 8, 66, 67
public, 190
public communication, 220, 221
public policy, 197, 200
public relations, 206
public sphere, 10, 19, 39–41, 51, 56, 72, 81, 82, 89, 91, 93, 113, 159, 169–172, 174, 176, 177, 180–184, 201, 202, 214, 217, 219, 220
public, the, 7, 10, 16, 17, 19, 20, 54, 72, 75, 190, 199, 206, 214, 216, 217, 219–222, 228
publics, the, 121

R

rainforests, 26
rationalism, 191, 208
rationality, 39, 48, 50, 53, 54, 56–58, 63–76, 89–92, 120–125, 128, 132, 135, 136, 198, 227
  instrumental rationality, 120, 121, 128, 136
  irrational rationality, 132
  procedural, 198
  rational action, 65, 66, 71, 72, 74
  rational actor, 65, 100, 115
  rationalism, 32, 36, 41, 125
Rawls, J., 85
Ray, L., 103, 112
RC-theories, 64, 77
realism, 5
reality, 5, 38, 216, 222
reason, 16, 35, 37, 39, 46, 48, 50, 54, 59, 70–72, 81, 84, 90, 92, 120, 121, 129, 149, 221
  dialogic nature, 120
reciprocacity, 217
reciprocity, 66, 69, 76, 77, 221
recognition, 141, 143, 149, 150, 154, 155, 158, 160, 201
  communicative process, 156
  denial, 154
  mutual, 148, 149, 156
  social, 156
reconstructivism, 46–48, 54
Redmond, D., 200
reductionism, 77
reflexivity, 20, 52, 75, 76, 82, 83, 90, 108, 122, 172, 177, 179, 189–192, 195, 197–202, 206, 208, 224
  pre-reflective, 2
  reflexive modernization, 191
reform, 180
regulation, 102, 175
relativism, 87
relativity, 30
  ethics, 30
relativization, 82, 83
religion, 63, 72, 75, 77, 83, 86, 228
religious fundamentalists, 162
Renteln, A., 86
representation, 34, 39, 41
representative, 53
resonance, 133, 218, 219, 221, 222
Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT), 97, 100, 101, 106
respect, 27, 132, 141, 143, 149–151, 154, 155, 160, 227

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 243 -- #285

legal system, 154
social disrespect, 155
responsibility, 15, 25, 27–41, 87, 88, 128, 129, 131, 169, 170, 182, 183, 189, 190, 194, 199, 204, 206–208, 213, 214, 218, 225–228
co-operative responsibility, 32–34, 36–39
co-ordinating, 189
co-responsibility, 32–35, 37, 189, 190, 213, 218, 219, 226
collective responsibility, 25, 32, 41, 87
ethics, 30, 32
Richerson, P., 66
Ricoeur, P., 25, 29
Ridgeway, C., 121, 133
rights (human rights), 15, 19, 32, 33, 37, 48, 52, 54, 82, 86–88, 93, 100, 101, 103, 110, 126, 129, 131–134, 136, 141–149, 151, 152, 154–156, 160–162, 170, 174, 176, 214, 218, 219, 226
abuses, 142
bills of rights, 141, 142, 160, 162
constitutions, 142
cosmological justification, 141
fundamental rights, 141
fundamental rights , 143
ideological challenges, 162
social rights, 146, 148
universal rights, 142, 146, 149
Rio Conference (Earth Summit) (1992), 171, 177
Rio Conference (Earth Summit), 1992, 195
risk, 15, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 39, 41, 92, 128, 132, 170, 189, 190, 192–194, 199, 202, 207, 218, 221, 228
risk society, 25, 28, 32, 34, 35, 37–39, 41, 145
Robertson, R., 92
robo sapiens, 27
Roche, W.K., 200
Rorty, R., 90
Rousseau, J., 156, 160
rules, 3, 9, 14, 15, 52, 58, 64, 66–68, 74, 75, 77
meta-rules, 67
rural development, 201
Russell, P., 200
Ryan, L., 99, 100, 105, 110, 112, 113

S

Sabatier, P., 45
sakhi purusha (witnessing self), 224
Salinas, C., 180
Santilli, J., 176
Sardinia, 75
Sayer, A., 31
schemata, 2
scholarship, 214
Schutz, A., 2–4, 7, 8, 12, 13, 16
science, 6, 8, 14, 16, 18, 20, 25–28, 32, 40, 41, 64, 72, 73, 214, 219, 225
Scott, M., 200
sectarian, 109
security, 93
self, 216, 220–222, 224–226
sakhi purusha (witnessing self), 224
self-development, 214, 221, 226–228
self-interest, 64, 71
self-transformation, 214, 221
seven circles of, 222
six concentric circles, 219
sensitivity, 37
sexuality, 102
Sheehy Skeffington, H., 114
Shibasaki, F., 27
Shils, E.A., 157, 160
Singer, P., 82, 88, 91
situational accounts, theory of, 65, 71, 76, 77
situationalism, 64
Skelcher, C., 197
Skirbekk, G., 35, 40, 41

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 244 -- #286

Smelser, N., 99
Smith, A., 63, 69, 224
Smith, M., 197
Snow, D., 16, 122, 123, 132, 133
social, 1–20, 25, 28, 29, 32, 33, 38, 45–50, 52–55, 57, 62–77, 81, 82, 84, 86, 90–93, 97–105, 119–125, 127–130, 132–136, 152, 153, 155–159, 218, 225
  social actors, 2, 3, 5–7, 13, 15–17, 19, 20
  social construction of reality, 8
  social life, 1–4, 10, 16, 18
  social theory, 122
social action, 65–69, 215
social bond, 55, 63, 65, 69, 70, 72, 74–77
social capital, 205
social conflict, 130
social construction, 119, 221
social differentiation, 102
social integration theory, 64
social movements, 12, 16, 97–101, 103, 104, 106, 111–113, 218, 221, 224
  comparison between old and new, 103, 115
  New Social Movements (NSM), 98, 101, 103–106, 108, 112, 115
  Old Social Movements (OSM), 98, 101, 103, 104, 112, 115
social partnership, 190, 200, 202–204
social protest, 99, 105, 107
social reality, 64, 67, 68
social science, 1, 4, 6, 8, 14, 16, 18, 20
  social scientific, 6, 8, 14, 16, 18, 20
social scientists, 214, 224
  identificatory procedure, 224
social services, 129, 130
social systems, 55
social theory, 25, 124, 129, 213, 215, 221, 225, 226
social world, 216
socialization, 16–18
society, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18–20, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37–39, 41, 64, 69, 71, 75, 77, 81, 83, 86–88, 90, 91, 93, 121, 122, 127, 135, 189, 191, 192, 194, 196–198, 202, 205, 214, 215, 217, 220, 224–226, 228
  civil society, 135
  communication, 34
socio-cognitive, 213, 215, 216, 221–223, 225
socio-cultural, 81, 82, 92
socio-environmentalism, 183
socio-political, 197, 208, 214, 218
sociology, 1–3, 6–8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 45, 63–65, 68–70, 82, 93, 106, 119, 123, 189, 208, 213, 215, 216, 223, 225
  cognitive sociology, 2, 3, 6, 19, 20, 215
  critical sociology, 1
solidaristic, 227
solidarity, 32, 87, 93, 128, 132, 136
Somers, J., 201
sovereignty, 226
Spangenberg, J., 195
spiritual, 110, 215, 224
stakeholder, 128, 192, 203
Stallings, B., 174
state, the, 16, 27, 38, 53, 56, 57, 69, 85, 91, 101–103, 105, 119, 121, 124–132, 134–136, 143, 144, 146, 147, 149, 154, 160, 169, 170, 172, 174–177, 179–184, 191–193, 196, 198, 199, 201–203, 205, 206, 218, 219, 221, 226
Stern, M.A., 174
Stevenson, N., 26
Stockholm UN Conference (1972), 173, 176, 179
Stoics, 36
strategizing, 215

‘‘criticalturns’’ -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 245 -- #287

strategy, 130
structuralism, 1
structure, 1, 56, 216, 219
Strydom, P., 1, 3, 12, 14–16, 18–20, 26, 29, 41, 45, 47, 49–51, 53–55, 59, 81, 84, 88, 93, 98, 109, 110, 112, 114, 115, 119, 121, 123, 124, 136, 159–161, 165, 170, 171, 189, 190, 199, 208, 214, 216–218, 220–225, 228
  triple contingency, 159, 160
student movement, 101
subjective, 121
subjectivity, 2, 13, 15, 30, 66, 70
suffrage, 98, 99, 106, 107, 110, 112, 113
  Irish Women’s Suffrage Federation, 114
Surinam, 173
survival, 193
sustainable, 195
sustainable development, 173, 181, 183, 189–192, 194–196, 198, 201–208
Swadhyaya, 227
Swidler, A., 13
symbolic, 179, 183
symbolic meaning, 85
systems, 64, 66, 67, 71–73, 122, 124, 127, 134
  system-theory, 71, 72
Sznaider, N., 122

T

Taoism, 86
Tarrow, S., 100
Taslitz, A., 151, 153, 154
Taylor, G., 101, 103
Taylor, V., 98, 101, 107, 112
Teague, P., 200
techno-science, 27, 28, 41
technological, 228
technology, 25–28, 30–33, 35, 37–39, 41, 88, 91, 120, 183, 194, 197, 198, 207, 219
  biotechnology, 26
  irreversible risks, 26
  reasoning, 38
temperance, 114
tension, 175, 182
Third World/Developing World, 32, 105, 170
Thompson, J., 122, 153
Thompson, R.S., 65
time, 214
Todd, M., 101, 103
tolerance, 87
Torfing, J., 192, 193, 196
Touraine, A., 11–14, 101, 104, 108
tourism, 92
Tovey, H., 202
Toynbee, A.J., 227
trade, 88
trade unions, 114, 198
tradition, 63, 66, 68, 70–72, 84, 88, 90, 228
transcendence, 217, 222, 224, 226
transcendental, 2–6, 32, 86
transformation, 214, 220, 222, 226, 228
transformative process, 213
transgenic, 175
transmutation, 27
transnational, 89
Trenz, H.-J., 193
triple contingency, 18–20, 46, 51, 53, 156, 158, 160, 161, 165, 166, 213, 216, 217, 221, 222, 224
truth claims, 221
Turner, S., 6
Tyler, T., 155
typology, 12, 13, 15

U

underdevelopment, 183
understanding, 120
UNESCO, 181
United Nations (UN), 86
United States of America (USA), 83, 100, 101, 107, 180
universal, 70

''criticalturns'' -- 2009/6/9 -- 18:28 -- page 246 -- #288

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 142–144, 146, 162
universalism, 32, 33, 71, 81, 82, 85–87, 90, 93, 102, 190, 216, 227
  false universalisms, 90
universality, 4, 5
universities, 219
urban degradation, 177
urban development, 201
Uruguay, 173
Ute, 34
utilitarian, 72
utility, 203
utopia, 39, 89, 91, 109, 121, 216

V
validity, 64, 71
validity claims, 34, 35
values, 64, 66, 81–84, 90
Van der Zwart, A., 205
Van Tudler, R., 205
van Ufford, Q., 226
Vanderstraeten, R., 156
Vattimo, 227
Venezuela, 173, 181
  Bolivarian Constitution, 181
  indigenous groups, 173, 181
  Organic Law on the Environment (LOA), 181
Versteeg, W., 195
Vianna, A., 174
victimization, 132
Viola, E.J., 173, 175, 177
violence, 83
virtue, 222
Voß, J.-P., 191, 195–198
voice, three spheres of, 150
voluntary sector, 204, 205
volunteers, 102
vote, 112
vulnerability, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 86, 156
Vygotsky, L., 45

W
Wagenaar, H., 193, 197
Wakslak, C., 155
Waldman, S., 153
Walzer, M., 84–86
Ward, M., 113
waste management, 190, 204, 207, 208
Weber, M., 50, 66, 68, 120, 132, 189
Weinstein, E., 145
welfare, 105
West, the, 25, 28, 63, 70, 81, 83, 90, 134, 227
Westra, L., 28
Weyman, G., 204
White, H.C., 65, 69
Wiggershaus, R., 120
Wildavsky, A., 65
Williamson, A., 204, 205
Wolff, K., 2, 8, 16, 18
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 113
women's movement, 98, 112
World Alliance for Patient Safety, 131
World Bank, 174
World Commission for Culture and Development, 86
World Commission on Sustainable Development, 194
World Environmental Commission, 170
World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002, 203
World Trade Organization (WTO), 88
World War II, 19, 27
Woudenberg, van R., 37

Z
Zackodnik, T., 113
Zald, M.N., 100
Zoroastrianism, 86
Zurich Peace Congress, 113