CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Hermeneutic culturalism and its double: a key problem in the reflexive modernization debate
Authors	Strydom, Piet
Publication date	1999-02-01
Original Citation	Strydom, P. (1999) 'Hermeneutic culturalism and its double: a key problem in the reflexive modernization debate', European Journal of Social Theory, 2(1), pp. 45-69. doi: 10.1177/13684319922224301
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	https://doi.org/10.1177/13684319922224301 - 10.1177/13684319922224301
Rights	© 1999, SAGE Publications. All rights reserved.
Download date	2026-11-17 10:47:20
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/7899



UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Published in *European Journal of Social Theory* 2(1), 1999, pp. 45-69.

Hermeneutic Culturalism and its Double: A Key Problem in the Reflexive Modernization Debate[1]

Piet Strydom, University College Cork

ABSTRACT

Proceeding from the debate opened by Beck, Giddens and Lash's Reflexive Modernization (1994), this paper seeks to clear the way for a more consistent and coherent concept of reflexivity in relation to the cultural-symbolic foundations of society. Seeing that Lash in his contribution to the debate inadvertently raises a key problem, i.e., the broad cognitive problem, the paper develops a critique of his hermeneutic culturalism. It focuses on the disparity between the position explicitly put forward in the debate with Beck and Giddens and the cognitive one which more or less implicitly comes into play throughout his relevant essays. The disparity shows up already in his treatment of the problem of mediation, but it comes graphically to a head in his appropriation of Bourdieu. To lend the analysis some profile and depth, the argument is supported by elements of a socio-cognitive theory which has been gaining visibility in both social theory and the philosophy of social science. While the paper is critical of Lash, its overall aim is to strengthen his contribution to the debate.

Key words: cognitive approach; cultural models; hermeneutics; mediation; reflexivity.

With their recent publication, Reflexive Modernization (1994), Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash give sufficient contours to the phenomenon to allow one to identify some of the key theoretical problems raised by the debate. One striking and currently topical problem is highlighted by Lash's contribution which not only interestingly refracts the debate but also sharply yet quite inadvertently focuses it. Whereas he on the one hand develops a plausible critique of the comparable positions taken by Beck and Giddens and thus points in one direction the debate could go, his proposal, which is highly resonant in the late twentieth-century intellectual atmosphere, on the other suffers from a by no means untypical ambivalence and hence unclarity. This paper thus proceeds from the conviction that the reflexive modernization debate can be fruitfully approached via a critique of Lash's hermeneutic culturalism. By drawing attention to the broad cognitive problem raised by the debate, an avenue is opened for making more consistent and coherent the deeper, cultural-symbolic reflexivity that Lash envisages beyond the objectivistic level attained by Beck and Giddens.

According to Jeffrey Alexander (1996: 136, 137), whose interpretation is obviously informed by the critical stance of classical and neo-classical sociologists, Lash's opposition to Beck and Giddens amounts to a brilliant critique of their utilitarian approach to reflexive modernity. Like Durkheim and Parsons earlier, Alexander's interpretation suggests, Lash counter-poses a normative approach to the utilitarian understanding of the way in which actors relate to their social world. Instead of a purely subject-object, goal-oriented or purposive-rational relation, the actor is regarded as being able to establish a connection with and to behave towards the social world only as a member of a community. The seemingly direct relation between actor and environment is thus actually a mediated one, passing as it does through the normative structures of the community to which the actor belongs. Where Lash differs from his illustrious predecessors, as Alexander (1996: 136-37) also realises, is in his understanding of the normative dimension. Instead of a strong universalistic concept, Lash leads the normative through the aesthetic dimension so as to shed some of its moral quality and instead to acquire an ethical and hence a more particularistic sense. Utilitarian relations are mediated by the ethos of the community involved and hence the community-based ethical judgements it permits.

This interpretation might well accord with Lash's self-understanding. In my view, however, neither Alexander's interpretation nor Lash's self-understanding is an adequate guideline for coming to terms with the position Lash puts forward. For far from simply following the classical and neo-classical, Lash centrally draws also on a very different strategy. It stems from the achievement not of the dominant sociological tradition but rather of the counter-tradition of micro approaches - from

pragmatism and the Chicago School through the sociology of knowledge and phenomenological sociology to linguistic sociology, social constructivism, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, cognitive sociology and constructionism - which themselves have been transposed recently to the macro-level. Rather than setting themselves off from social utilitarianism and thus emphasising the normative dimension, as did the dominant tradition, these approaches problematised the function of norms in social action and interaction, irrespective of whether universalistic or particularistic, by rejecting the assumption that norms are consistent and exert a determining influence (Joas 1992: 58). They thus cleared the ground for an alternative conception of social theory which has become progressively more important in parallel with developments in philosophy, history of science, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, science studies, and so forth. Central to this alternative conception, it should be noted, is neither the utilitarian nor the normative but rather the cognitive. The latter concerns the classificatory categories or schemata or, more broadly, the cultural models by means of which people experience, perceive, interpret and thus make sense of both their natural and social world as well as of themselves. This dimension represents, despite his self-understanding, the decisive dimension of Lash's position. He effectively taps into it by way of Durkheim and Mauss's famous contribution on primitive classification and in particular Bourdieu's influential work.

In the following critique, I propose to explore some of the manifestations and consequences of the disparity between the hermeneutic communitarian or culturalist position that Lash explicitly puts forward in the course of his debate with Beck and Giddens and the cognitive one that more or less implicitly comes into play throughout his two influential essays under consideration here. With reference to some relevant recent interdisciplinary contributions, indications will be given towards a more systematic and coherent development of this suppressed yet irrepressible alternative.[2]

PART 1: THEME AND VARIATIONS

In his quite complex critique of the theory of reflexive modernization and his own proposals to correct it, Lash proceeds from an assumption that is not altogether unfamiliar to the tradition against which he pits himself. It is the threefold conceptual configuration of the cognitive, the normative and the aesthetic which was made famous by Kant's three critiques and Hegel's philosophy of mind, made its reappearance in Neo-Kantians such as Weber, and in different ways came to play a central role in social theory from Parsons to Habermas. Given the strategic decisions he makes in developing his theoretical position, however, Lash introduces a twist which has the effect of distributing the emphasis in a particular way. Rather than the

cognitive, normative and aesthetic, he (1994a: 165) speaks of the ‘cognitive, aesthetic and hermeneutic-communitarian 'moments''. He indeed insists that, while regarding all three moments as essential, his emphasis on the hermeneutic or communitarian dimension is occasioned by the contemporary tendency in the social sciences towards the over-valuation of the cognitive-utilitarian and of aesthetic-expressive individualism. Yet this does not significantly affect the peculiar distribution of emphasis that is characteristic of his theoretical position.

Lash's contribution to the reflexive modernity debate is best seen against the background of the above-mentioned threefold configuration, while the theoretical position he develops and in particular its various implications become intelligible only in the light of his variations on this principal theme. The following analysis (PART 1) will thus be opened with a consideration of Lash's critique of Beck and Giddens (1) and will then successively dwell on his particular understanding of the threefold theoretical scheme (2 and 3) and the various moves that he makes in relation to it - i.e., from the cognitive to the aesthetic (4) and from the aesthetic to the hermeneutic (5). In the course of this analysis, a series of questions will be raised which will in turn make possible a critique in PART 2 of the paper.

1. Critique of Beck and Giddens

In terms of the figure of thought of the cognitive, the normative and the aesthetic, Lash criticises Beck and Giddens for sailing under the flag of the cognitive. The critique is for the most part methodologically focused, but by locating their work in the broader Enlightenment tradition, to which in turn can be opposed the Enlightenment-critical counter-tradition of authors such as Nietzsche, Adorno and Heidegger, he is also able to extend it both in an epistemological and a substantive direction.

(i) Methodologically, a series of related distinctions that are basic to the writings of Beck and Giddens serve as Lash's object of critique. Among them are the dichotomies between tradition and modernity, the social actor and expert systems, and self-reflexivity and structural reflexivity. All of them are questioned since each in one way or another presupposes an approach to social reality that accepts a direct or unmediated relation between actor and social world. The actor is regarded as relating to his or her environment in a strictly conceptual and instrumental or utilitarian manner rather than as engaging in creative social action which is structured in terms of cultural forms yet exhibits a wide margin of contingency. In the course of his critique, Lash calls on a variety of examples of the kind of mediating cultural structures, forms, or mechanisms he has in mind. They stretch from information and communication structures characteristic of the late twentieth century mode of

information through communal relations of commitment and trust to conceptual symbols, mimetic symbols, and unthought classificatory categories or schemata. In due course, I shall return to the problem of mediation which is at the core of Lash's position.

(ii) Taking the critique a step further, Lash attacks the epistemological presupposition of a subject-object relation which not only informs Beck and Giddens's utilitarian approach but also eventuates theoretically in their objectivistic treatment of reflexive modernization. In its stead, he adopts a hermeneutic epistemology which proceeds from the assumption that 'the knower is in the same world as and 'dwells among' the things and other human beings whose truth she seeks' (Lash 1994a: 157). Indeed, he explicitly aligns himself with the early Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology (Lash 1994a: 117, 148, 151, 157, 164) in a move that represents the most basic and most central alliance that he strikes in the essays under discussion. It is therefore a relation that is of the greatest importance for an adequate evaluation of Lash's work. It is remarkable that he refers to Heidegger where it would not be untypical today, especially in the wake of the signal contribution of Apel, Habermas, Bernstein, Rorty and Hesse and the emergence of the post-empiricist philosophy of science, to display an awareness of the joint significance of hermeneutic phenomenology and pragmatism.[3] Although Lash is regarded by some (e.g. Alexander 1996) as one of the leading theorists in contemporary European sociology, he adopts a distinctly American version of Heideggerian practical hermeneutics first presented by Hubert Dreyfus (1979, 1980, 1981) as contrasting with Quinean theoretical hermeneutics.[4]

(iii) At the substantive level, finally, Lash sees Beck and Giddens's attachment to the dominant epistemological and utilitarian tradition as eventuating in a commitment to modernity that is essentially uncritical. This is more readily apparent in the case of Giddens who positively embraces abstract expert systems, including sociology, as embodying trust relations and hence as the only means whereby the pressing contemporary problem of ontological insecurity can at all be dealt with. But the same is true even of Beck, in spite of the fact that he takes pleasure in registering an increasing freedom from and critique of science, technology and the political system. What he envisages is a risk society in which environmental hazards are minimised to such a degree that it would be possible to speak meaningfully of the further modernization of society. Following Maarten Hajer, whom Beck (1996) has in the meantime started to find more and more appealing, this could be called 'ecological modernization'. For Lash (1994a: 140), however, Beck and Giddens's respective theories of reflexive modernization are ultimately uncritical since both focus on reflexivity in the context of modernity as the means through which tradition

is transformed rather than through which such phenomena as commodification, bureaucratisation and the reification of forms of life are suspiciously penetrated.

Considering his multi-level analysis, it is not surprising that Lash makes use a whole series of adjectives to express the various strands of his critique. Depending on whether in an epistemological, methodological or theoretical context, what he regards as the essential one-sidedness (Lash 1994a: 140) of both their positions is critically identified as being objectivist, realist, conceptualist, rationalist, scientistic, utilitarian, or universalistic. But if there is one single characterisation that he prefers to apply in all of these different contexts and that therefore best encapsulates the animus of his critique, then it is represented by the word 'cognitive' and its cognates. The fundamental objection that Beck and Giddens's work is essentially one-sided in the sense of being cognitive captures the very thrust of Lash critique.

Before going into what Lash understands by this, let us note that it is precisely his characterisation of the positions of Beck and Giddens as cognitive in a very specific sense that he sees as compelling him to make a lateral shift towards its opposite, namely the aesthetic, and from there again to the hermeneutic.

2. Lash's Understanding of the Cognitive

Lash's understanding of the cognitive is in line with the argument regarding the hermeneutics of practice that Dreyfus (1979) developed already in the 1970s. In fact, right from the start Lash takes a step that weakens his ability to recognise the cognitive approach to culture and thus to arrive at a more rounded and coherent account of his own position. It consists of the adoption of a rather narrow traditional sense of the concept, without any reflection on its limits or any investigation of late twentieth century cognitive developments towards a broader understanding.

While references make their appearance virtually everywhere, Lash does not develop his idea of the cognitive in a systematic manner. On the contrary, it is in a fairly haphazard way fitted out with a range of varying attributes. On many occasions, Lash (1994a: 136, 140, 144) conceives of the cognitive in strictly traditional terms as having to do with conceptual thought, probabilistic calculation, a utilitarian orientation towards reality, and hence as being carried by the calculating subject. On other occasions, he (Lash 1994a: 111) sees this same complex extending in the spirit of the Enlightenment tradition to modernity's universals. Those who proceed from cognitive assumptions tend to associate universalistic considerations with modernity. More generally, he regards cognitivism as being on a par with a rationalistic or scientistic orientation (Lash 1994b: 199-200).

It is on the basis of this narrow conception that Lash sharply articulates criticisms of positions which in his view entail cognitive assumptions. Two of these

criticisms are of particular interest here. In the case of a cognitive position, according to the first criticism, '...a subject is presumed, outside of a world...', which means that it is concerned with 'individualized, subject-object forms of social knowledge' (Lash 1994a: 156). In terms of the second criticism, he maintains that a cognitive position, being rationalistic or scientistic, is uncultural and by the same token unhermeneutical (Lash 1994b: 199, 200). According to him, 'new and emergent fault lines' separate the scientistic cognitivists from the hermeneutic culturalists. By way of these two criticisms Lash advances claims that are sufficiently systematic to serve as a starting point for the introduction of an alternative point of view. The latter derives from the cognitive approach that has undergone a spurt of development in the course of the twentieth century, particularly during the last two to three decades. Under no circumstances, however, does it admit of being reduced to Lash's understanding of the matter. And what is more, it exposes his perception of new and emergent fault lines as a misjudgement of late twentieth century intellectual developments.

To avoid possible misunderstanding, it is advisable to point out that a critical analysis of Lash is not presented here in defence of Beck and Giddens. On the contrary, I tend to agree with Lash's critique of these two authors. What I am seeking to draw attention to instead is the fact that, while Lash employs a traditional understanding of the cognitive to develop a plausible critique of Beck and Giddens, he allows this understanding to mislead him to the detriment of a coherent articulation of his own position into rejecting the late twentieth century cognitive approach as a whole. It is not simply that he lacks an appreciation of the fact that various developments upon which he himself draws make full sense only within the framework of what has been called 'the cognitive paradigm' (De Mey 1982; also Shweder and LeVine 1984; Holland and Quinn 1991; Eder 1996). Even more interesting is the fact that his continual attempt to suppress it eventuates in the spectacle of the sporadic reassertion of this irrepressible approach throughout his contribution to the reflexive modernization debate.

3. Introducing the Cognitive Approach

To introduce the cognitive approach,[5] let us consider Lash's above-mentioned two criticisms.

(i) The first criticism involves Lash's claim that any position proceeding from cognitive assumptions remains irredeemably caught up in traditional epistemology and therefore upholds a subject-object form of knowledge. In so far as cognition was traditionally emphasised in epistemology and in so far as Beck and Giddens still remain attached to this assumption, he might indeed be correct. Yet this does not

imply that his criticism can be extended indiscriminately. New departures in pragmatism (Peirce, Mead), phenomenology (Husserl, Schutz), hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger) and the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim) during the early twentieth century, their reinforcement by innovations in philosophy (Wittgenstein, Toulmin), psychology (Piaget) and the history of science (Kuhn) under the impact of transformational linguistics (Chomsky) and computer technology (Minsky), and finally wide-ranging disciplinary and interdisciplinary developments,[6] all contributed decisively to the emergence of a new, differentiated cognitive approach which can no longer be understood in terms of the traditional conception of the cognitive. The emergence of this new approach was predicated on a rather complex fundamental shift of emphasis, but there is one strand that is of particular interest here. It consists of the displacement in the course of the demise of epistemology of precisely the assumption of the solipsistic subject-object relation by a concern with the organising activity of the subject who is itself understood as embedded in a collective world view and corresponding form of life (Piaget 1970; Nowotny 1973: 291; De Mey 1982: 26-27).

Far from presupposing a distinction between subject and world, with the subject being outside the world, as Lash thinks, the cognitive approach proceeds from the assumption of a world view plus form of life which precedes any distinction that may be made between subject and world. Any such distinction proceeds from the world view and form of life and can only be made within those confines. Having undergone a radical transformation, the problem of knowledge in the cognitive approach thus differs sharply from what Lash imagines. Rather than the problem of how something out there in the world manages to get inside the subject, the question arises as to how something that forms part of the world is able to develop an orientation towards, a model of, and a mode of behaviour in relation to the whole within which it locates itself as differing from the world. And what complicates this problem still further is the fact that there is not just one something that forms part of the world, but many. Rather than a sole subject, there is a plurality of distinct culturally and socially bounded cognitive processes.

(ii) The second criticism entails the equally erroneous claim that any position involving cognitive assumptions is uncultural or perhaps even anti-cultural. Again, Lash might well be correct in criticising Beck and Giddens for being insensitive or, at least, not sufficiently sensitive to culture, and in fact I tend to agree with him on this. But the fact that this judgement is correct does not mean that it applies with equal force also to the late twentieth century cognitive approach. Indeed, I am convinced that Lash should be resolutely corrected here. There is enough evidence of the availability of a sociologically significant cognitive theory of culture and, indeed, of

the fruitfulness of this approach to culture to do so in a justifiable way.[7] It could be argued even more strongly that the marked increase in cultural sensitivity in so many disciplines during the second half of our century can to a significant degree be attributed to the cognitive turn in intellectual life. Speaking as a sociologist of scientific knowledge, Helga Nowotny (1973: 282-83) for instance pointed out many years ago that it was the emergence of the cognitive approach that fractured the conventional assumption of linear progress - which implies among other things also the tradition-modernity distinction, an unmediated relation between actor and environment, and the identification of modernity and universalism - and in its stead underlined the need to develop an ability to identify the whole range of culturally defined alternatives. The cognitive approach in its proper social scientific form, contrary to Lash's claim, is by its very nature a culturally sensitive approach.

It is most remarkable that Lash himself unwittingly employs what is actually a cognitive theory of culture. The conceptual triad of the cognitive, the normative and the aesthetic of which he makes such basic use is in fact a cognitive model (see e.g. Habermas 1984/87, Eyerman and Jamison 1991, Eder 1993, 1996). Forming part of a cognitive theory of culture, these three moments refer to cognitive patterns taking the form of cognitive structures, cultural models or schemata of different types. Included among them are not only the cognitive in the narrow sense of the word, but also the normative and aesthetic - or rather the aesthetic-conative. The fact of the matter is that culturally available and culturally acquired knowledge, far from being of a purely rational representational kind, as Lash at times seems to think, equally takes the form of myths and codes as well as directions and motivations shared as meanings or habits acquired through interaction (see e.g. Holland and Quinn 1991, Shweder and LeVine 1993). These cognitive patterns (rather than merely norms) on the one hand guide and give direction to fundamental cognitive processes and on the other are reconstituted and changed by such processes in that it is through them that the patterns are imposed in the first place and through which the context within which they exert their structuring effect is periodically altered. This suggests that the cognitive approach is a complex one that is concerned with both the generative capacity and the organisation of culture, with both constructive practices and cognitive structures or cultural models. Of particular importance here, given Lash's culturalist opposition to utilitarianism, is that the cognitive approach focuses on cognitive processes in the production, change and organization of social reality rather than on its normative integration.

In order to demonstrate the relevance of the cognitive approach to the discussion of Lash in this paper, however, it is necessary at this stage first to return to his strategy of laterally shifting from the cognitive to the aesthetic and from there

again to the hermeneutic-communitarian moment, and then to critically analyse his sustained objection against cognitivism from his chosen standpoint of a Heideggerian practical hermeneutics supplemented by Bourdieu - what he (Lash 1994a: 166) calls a 'radical hermeneutics of retrieval'.

4. From the Cognitive to the Aesthetic

In Lash's view, the theory of reflexive modernization put forward in different variants by Beck and Giddens is irredeemably lopsided due to a partial emphasis on the cognitive dimension. For him, the result of this distorting one-sidedness is both wide-ranging and thoroughgoing.

Epistemologically, they proceed in an objectivistic or realist manner; methodologically, a utilitarian approach falls into place; theoretically, modernity is treated as a historical epoch with which is uncritically associated universalistic standards. This position as a whole entails not only a neglect of interpretative knowledge and of culture and the mediating role it plays, but also an inordinate emphasis on institutions and experts to the exclusion of an increasingly important extra-institutional dimension of everyday life and cultural politics. It even compounds the worst features of modernity in that the central concern with risk and insecurity facilitates or celebrates the perpetuation of a probabilistic calculative mode of conduct and the colonisation of the lifeworld by expert-systems (Lash 1994a: 140-41). It is this diagnosed cognitive one-sidedness of the theory of reflexive modernization, much of which one could heartily agree with, that Lash sees as necessitating a shift towards the opposite moment of the aesthetic.

Having already partially corrected Beck and Giddens from a more cultural perspective by showing that cognitive reflexivity requires the mediation of cognitive symbols circulating in the tracks of information and communication structures, Lash (1994a: 135) now insists on the irreducibly complementary role of what he calls 'mimetic symbols' in the form of images, sounds and narratives which are the preserve of the cultural industries yet nevertheless possess a significant critical potential. It is only by way of such a lateral move to the aesthetic that it is possible to penetrate beyond the late twentieth century 'mode of information' with its capitalist 'power/knowledge complex' into the 'post-industrial assemblage of power' and open it up to a critique of its mimetic constitution, i.e., its unique subjective attachment to and following of nature.

While paradigmatic examples of aesthetic reflexivity which clearly demonstrate its critical punch are to be found in the work of Nietzsche and Adorno, Lash (1994a: 136) favours the Frankfurt critical theorist for a decisive theoretical reason. It turns on the fact that without mediation there is no possibility of

reflexivity. Unlike Nietzsche, whose aesthetics allows mimesis only in the form of blunt immediacy, the Hegelian Adorno makes mediation central to his work. For him, as Peter Bürger (1980: 169) has shown, mediation is not a middle term that allows two extremes to maintain mutual relations with one another, but rather a complex process of dialectical transformation. Lash (1994a: 136) finds this theoretical idea so compelling that he centres his own position on it. Accordingly, he regards reflexivity as 'a complex dialectic of structure and agency'. Here we obviously reach a decisive moment in our analysis which must be borne in mind in the rest of the paper. The question posed by Lash's shift from the cognitive to the aesthetic for the overall assessment of his work is whether he actually succeeds in keeping the problem of mediation at the very core of his enterprise, as he undertook to do. Let us wait and see.

However important the aesthetic might be for breaking away from and looking at the other side of the cognitive, Lash realises that it is fraught with inherent limitations. Focusing on subjectivity, or more specifically the most basic mimetic or cathectic linkage between subjectivity and world, aesthetic reflexivity by the nature of the case devolves upon the 'radical individualism...of a heterogenous, contingent desire' (Lash 1994a: 144). In the course of the past decade or two, it has become graphically apparent that aesthetic individualism in this sense tends to be the handmaiden of consumer capitalism which has in turn proved to be rather destructive of community. Not only does it serve as 'the grounding principle of 'expressive individualism'' (Lash 1994a: 135), but its anti-foundationalist deconstructionism leads down the cul de sac of an endless, relativistic and ultimately destructive replication of pattern upon pattern (Lash 1994a: 145-46). It is this chronic repetition, this relentless sweeping away of foundations, which leads to 'ever more Faustian forms of the aesthetic 'I'' (145), and the consequent 'systematic impossibility of the 'we'' (144), that Lash sees as compelling him to go yet a step further - towards the hermeneutic moment. And that this is necessary is underscored by the fact that, although the aesthetic is the opposite of the cognitive, aesthetic individualism ultimately reinforces rather than mitigates the utilitarian individualism presupposed by Beck and Giddens's theory of reflexive modernization. Cognitive and aesthetic reflexivity 'remain arguably located in the same metaphysical universe' (144).

This transition from the aesthetic to the hermeneutic moment, it should be pointed out, represents the most central of the overt problems in Lash's work on reflexivity. There is, of course, the still more fundamental covert problem of the place of the cognitive.

5. From the Aesthetic to the Hermeneutic

Under the impact of the influential late twentieth century Neo-Aristotelian and Neo-Hegelian wave of a communitarian critique of Kantian and Neo-Kantian moral universalism and proceduralism, Lash uses Kant's third critique, Critique of Judgement, as the vehicle to accomplish the desired move. Besides having been the focus of much recent attention, this work eminently lends itself to such employment because of its complex ambivalence. Particularly important to Lash (1994a: 142-43) is Kant's peculiar treatment of his master concept 'judgement' as exhibited by the gerrymandering approach he adopted in this work. Whereas the specificity of the work of art and of the beauty of nature forced him to conceive of aesthetic judgement as the assessment of a particular within the framework of a previous particular case, he nevertheless sought to maintain his general notion of judgement as the subsumption of the particular under the universal. Also relevant, however, is the fact that, while it was once commonly claimed that Kant identified aesthetic judgement with pure subjective feeling, dissociated from sensation as well as from the socio-ethical problems of life, he has also come to be seen as having introduced the postulate of a sensus communis to account for the correspondence of people in their appreciation of aesthetic objects (Stadler 1968: 377, 383).

The suggestion contained in this ambivalence not only to question the continued use of the concept of judgement in the aesthetic context but also to search for an aesthetic ethics or aesthetically based ethics of non-identity, gained a life of its own with the recent upsurge of the Neo-Hegelian concern with Sittlichkeit or the ethical life and of the concurrent celebration of aesthetic-ethical communities. Lash (1994a: 142-44) regards this aesthetic, particularist, communitarian approach of such authors as Levinas, Derrida, Rorty, Bauman, Lyotard, Maffesoli and Eagleton as most significant and indeed valuable, yet not without a certain proviso. As long as the fascination with the aesthetic keeps the focus riveted to the non-identical or difference to the exclusion of community in the sense of shared meanings, a substantial deficit will continue to call out to be filled.

This, for Lash, is the entry point of hermeneutics. It is at this juncture that he wants to bring to completion the shift from aesthetic subjectivity, which has already been put in touch with aesthetically based ethical or community life. What he (Lash 1994a: 111, 144) proposes to do, is to make a transition from aesthetic reflexivity to hermeneutic interpretation, indeed, to 'transform' aesthetics into hermeneutics. To salvage the shared meanings of community, to gain access to the 'we', the aesthetic concern with desire, ambivalence and deconstruction must be de-emphasised in favour of the truth-oriented and charitable interpretation of hermeneutics. Accordingly, Lash (1994a: 146) initially speaks of a 'hermeneutics of retrieval' in the sense of an interpretation that believes in its object and takes it on trust with a view to

coming to an understanding of its meaning. He (1994a: 147, 152-53) finds more or less plausible examples of work along these lines less in cultural studies in that it is based on a utilitarian rational choice model than in Dick Hebdige's work on cultural processes and practices in subcultures and in Charles Taylor's socially committed analysis of the sources of the self. But the models for which he ultimately opts come from Germany and France. The kind of interpretation Lash (1994a: 148) has in mind under the title of 'hermeneutics of retrieval' is based on Heidegger's hermeneutics of practice,[8] as it may be called, and approximates what Paul Ricoeur (1972: 28) called 'the recollection of meaning'. Later, having faced up to the analytical bluntness and political conservatism of such an approach, however, Lash (1994a: 165) exchanges it for what he proposes to call 'radical hermeneutics'. Rather than trying to emulate the Apel-Habermas model of critical hermeneutics, which according to him is just another form of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', Ricoeur's (1972: 32) second type, he claims to be following Pierre Bourdieu who, in his view (Lash 1994a: 166), operates with 'a hermeneutics of retrieval at whose core is not consensus but power'.

The impact of both Heidegger and Bourdieu, the two of whom are by no means arbitrarily related to one another by Lash since the latter (Bourdieu 1991) indeed has a thorough knowledge of the former, is clearly visible in the position our author develops. It is the hermeneutic-phenomenological 'fundamental ontology' of Being and Time that unmistakably announces itself in Lash's search for the 'ontological foundations of communal being-in-the-world' (Lash1994a: 146). Unlike Heidegger (1967: Division Two) who is interested in deep-seated 'existentialia', however, Lash expects to find these foundations in cultural phenomena such as the shared meanings, Sitten or customs, habits and background practices whereby communal meaning is routinely achieved (144, 147, 149). This already brings him closer to Bourdieu who, although speaking like Heidegger (1972) of pursuing 'the unthought', is himself a considerable anthropological and sociological distance away from the philosophical concerns of both the early and the later Heidegger. Following Bourdieu whom he interprets as offering a 'sociology of ontological foundations - in categories of habit - of conscious action', Lash (1994a: 154-55) proposes to focus on the 'unthought categories', the 'classificatory categories' or 'classificatory schemata' which are hidden from view in our most immediate and familiar habits, practices and techniques of the body. That a hermeneutic approach is and remains the appropriate one for such an ontological sociology follows, in Lash's (1994a: 155-56) view, from the fact that the classificatory schemata at the centre of attention are immediately given pre-dispositions or orientations which, unlike rules or structures, require interpretation.

If Lash's transformation of aesthetics into hermeneutics has earlier already raised a question about the precise relation between the two that will have to be pursued below, another question for further investigation is posed here. Why does he so emphatically insist on a hermeneutic appropriation of Bourdieu? And why is he consequently willing not only to deny the relevance of rules or structures in favour of meanings but also to forget that he has expressly made room at the core of his thinking for the problem of mediation?

PART 2: HERMENEUTIC CULTURALISM CRITICISED

In the above it became apparent that there are various problems of different kinds present in Lash's articulation of his hermeneutic culturalist position. Over and above these, however, there is still another and indeed deeper one. In the following, I propose to focus first on the immanent problems (1) and then to proceed to the transcendent or metaproblem (2) I am trying to tease out by means of the reference to the cognitive approach.

1. Immanent Problems

Lash's transformation of the aesthetic into the hermeneutic, as previously pointed out, is the most central of the overt problems in the work under consideration The theoretical steps that he takes in this context are designed to salvage reflexivity from the confines imposed on it by the aesthetic moment so as to make it available for retrieving the shared meanings of community in the form of cultural classificatory schemata. Two issues immediately announce themselves. The one concerns the relation between the aesthetic and the hermeneutic, and the other the relation between the hermeneutic and the normative.

(i) The first question is whether the transition from the aesthetic to the hermeneutic, which is the single most important theoretical step in Lash's essay, is a meaningful and justifiable one. There is doubtless a need to move from the aesthetic to the hermeneutic if that means that individualism is thereby located in context and thus communally rendered less destructive. On the other hand, this does not change anything in principle as the very problem that the move is supposed to have addressed is merely displaced to another level. The place of potentially destructive aesthetic individualism is now simply taken by no less potentially destructive aesthetic-ethical community. Far from being different, the aesthetic and the hermeneutic belong to one and the same universe.[9] Both are similarly concerned with establishing a cathectic or mimetic relation with the world, attaching meaning to the world, creatively working out the ramifications of this originary act, articulating a

thematically systematic culture, accordingly forming a unique identity, and engaging in self-realisation and the good life.

While this is of the utmost importance since all humans require a goal of self-realisation, as a strong trend in late twentieth century intellectual life has reminded us, the problem that Lash sought to address by adopting a hermeneutic culturalist communitarian position, namely to tame culturally creative action by drawing an ethical-cultural boundary around it, remains unresolved. The reason for this is that the binding force he expects to emanate from an aesthetic-ethical community is not sufficient. The move from the aesthetic to the hermeneutic as against the cognitive, which entails a general trajectory from the utilitarian to the normative, does not cover the whole distance. It goes as far as the normative quality implied by the cultural binding force of community, but it fails to go all the way to the normative. This is apparent from the fact that Lash consistently refers to community without considering the complication entailed by communities in the plural and the problems raised by their interrelations and interdependencies. Another related indication is the fate of reflexivity after his hermeneutic turn. Being focused on the classificatory schemata housing shared cultural meanings, it remains confined within the cultural bounds of the aesthetic-ethical community.

(ii) At this stage, we have already started to deal with the second issue of the relation between the hermeneutic and the normative. A consequence of Lash's particular focus on community is that he (1994a: 156) offers an outline of reflexive sociology which not only operates with a drastically mutilated and diminished concept of reflexivity but is also shorn of any critical dimension. This contrasts very sharply indeed with the claims that he makes in respect of both reflexivity and critique (1994a: 110, 140), and at the same time it falls well below the level attained by his model, Pierre Bourdieu, in both these areas. Lash's hermeneutic appropriation of Bourdieu looses sight of the latter's reflexive sociological concern with the outcome of struggles over the application of classificatory schemata and by the same token precludes the possibility of developing anything nearly approximating the concomitant form of social critique. At this stage, I reserve for later any comments on the cognitive dimension of Bourdieu's work, which Lash appreciates even less.[10]

At the root of Lash's inability to resolve the remaining problem of a potentially destructive aesthetic-ethical community (one that for instance on the basis of an aesthetically and ethically self-righteous construction dominates and excludes others), however, lies a still more profound deficit. It is undoubtedly necessary today to be particularly careful with how precisely one formulates it, but there is an unavoidable need to find some equivalent or another for the Kantian requirement of a universalistic, normative reference point that transcends any and every particular

community and is applicable to the relations among a plurality of communities. Examples that have played and in revised form will continue to play a significant role in social science with a critical dimension are Apel's (1980, 1991) 'ideal communication community' or his more recent 'planetary co-responsibility', Habermas's (1979, 1987) 'ideal speech situation' or his later 'normative content of modernity',[11] Wellmer's (1986: 126) 'elimination of inequality and unequal treatment', and Honneth's (1992: 9, 274-287) 'recognition-theoretic concept of the good life'. It is precisely a normative reference of this kind, whether positive as in the case of Apel, Habermas and Honneth or negative as in the case of Wellmer, that Lash lacks, as do the contemporary communitarians as well as the two major authors - Heidegger and Bourdieu - to whom he so profusely appeals. His strategy of moving from the cognitive to the aesthetic and from there again to the hermeneutic thus leaves him normatively in the lurch. The permanent tension between the universal and the particular is collapsed in favour of the latter.[12] The significant gap at the very centre of his sociology becomes graphically apparent when one considers it against the background of the threefold configuration of the cognitive, the normative and the aesthetic from which he proceeded in the fist place. A comparison of his position with it reveals a strangely lopsided alignment: the cognitive to the left, the aesthetic to the right, and the hermeneutic grouped with the latter, while the centre, which ought to be occupied by the normative, remains empty.

It is of course my contention that the failure on Lash's part can be traced to more fundamental theoretical problems. One of these is the problem of mediation. Previously, we have seen that Lash, following the example of Adorno, gave the theoretical idea of mediation a central place in his own thinking. He regarded this concept as being of decisive importance for a theoretical sociology of reflexivity in view of the fact that reflexivity was possible only in the event of there being mediation. No mediation, no reflexivity. The surprising thing is now that, while the problem of mediation is maintained at the core of his enterprise for a considerable period, it disappears at the most crucial juncture in his essay, that is, at the point where he takes his own most characteristic theoretical step. In his argument against Beck and Giddens's utilitarianism, it comes to the fore as the major corrective, and in the discussion on the aesthetic it is directly addressed and given a central theoretical status. But when Lash moves from the aesthetic to the hermeneutic, particularly when he appropriates Bourdieu's doctrine of classificatory schemata, mediation is reduced to zero. Here, to be sure, we once again touch on Lash's misunderstanding of the cognitive approach, but before explicating the issue in those terms let me describe the problematic situation in which he finds himself.

Having taken Adorno's Hegelian concept on board, Lash (1994a: 136) came to conceive of mediation generally as a complex dialectical process in which structure and agency are interwoven and pass over into one another. Later in one of the most problematic paragraph of his whole essay, however, we see him trying to jettison what he had taken on board: 'To have access to the 'we', to community, we must...hermeneutically interpret and thus evade the categories of agency and structure...' (Lash 1994a: 144). This rather peculiar attempt to step outside of socio-cultural reality as a mediated one is subsequently, in another of those problematic paragraphs, pursued still further by means of an interpretation of Bourdieu's analysis of lifestyles in terms of what the Frenchman calls 'schemes of the habitus' (Bourdieu 1986: 466). Led on by Bourdieu's conception of the habitus as a basic disposition, or embodied knowledge without concepts, particularly by his playful description of schemata as 'unmediated (or immediate) mediators', Lash (1994a: 155) takes the classificatory schemata seemingly literally to be unmediated. This is rather surprising, for he expressly decided in favour of Adorno as against Nietzsche. That this interpretation of Lash as drastically reducing mediation to zero is correct is confirmed by his strong insistence that both structure and agency are irrelevant in this context: ''Rules' or structures don't even figure in structuring the habitus; in their place are 'habits' and 'pre-dispositions'..... Habitus is just as far away from 'agency'...[since it]...assumes a certain 'thrownness' into a web of already existing practices and meanings' (Lash 1994a: 156).

It seems, then, as though for Lash the habitus somehow obliterates the larger socio-cultural reality as a complex dialectical process of mediation. It might be argued that this mediationlessness, as it were, is not an insurmountable impediment to an endeavour aimed at grasping the core of a community through focusing on its primary schemata of perception, experience, appreciation and evaluation, and that a certain inevitable loss of context is a fairly small price to pay for focal clarity. But I am convinced that the implications for Lash are much more serious than this. Despite the obvious difference between the two authors, Lash's reduction of mediation is related to Bourdieu's assumption that the habitus is not open to learning and hence is resistant to development and change (Miller 1989: 213-15). And when it is borne in mind that this particular conception of the habitus is predicated on Bourdieu's postulate of 'the virtual inevitability of relations of cultural domination and oppression' (Cohen 1996: 138), then it becomes apparent that this, in turn, is comparable to Nietzsche's refusal of mediation, his blunt immediacy, his emphasis on the will to power. This is the great irony that Lash's jettisoning of mediation has for his proposal. Whereas he seeks to overcome the limitations of utilitarianism by recovering the shared meanings and practices of community, he ends up soliciting the

assistance of Bourdieu the utilitarian (Honneth 1990: 156-181; Miller 1989: 199, 215-18). Had he called upon Bourdieu the cognitivist instead, matters would have been quite different.[14]

2. The Metaproblematic

At this stage, it is possible to concentrate squarely on the most interesting aspect of Lash's contribution to reflexive modernity, namely his struggle against his double, cognitivism, effectively suppressing it yet calling forth its regular return and sometimes vengeful reassertion. Both the main essay (Lash 1994a) and its sequel (1994b) bearing on reflexive modernity team with evidence of this unequal contest. Let us begin with a brief overview.

A recurring example of a relatively minor instance in which Lash has recourse to the cognitive, without apparently being aware of it, is his appeal to ethnomethodology (1994a: 156; 1994b: 204). Ethnomethodology, as is well known, is one of the variants of cognitive sociology, albeit an unhistorical or ungenetic and micro variant. What Lash calls upon is its conception of the already available presuppositions supporting routine activities of meaning creation. Central here, therefore, is a reference to the ethnomethodological concern with cognitive order. Another rather more obvious and important example, already mentioned and to be considered in greater detail, is Lash's (1994a: 153-56) use of Bourdieu. Cognitive concepts such as ‘schemata’ and ‘habitus’ are appropriated for the purposes of a hermeneutic position, yet this very appropriation exposes and even explodes the limits of hermeneutics. Still another very interesting instance is Lash's (1994a: 161) characterisation of sociology as fulfilling all the conditions of his concept of community. Although drawing on Bourdieu, Lash's circumscription of sociology gives unmistakable evidence of the concept of the scientific community first introduced by Thomas Kuhn (1970). In the meantime, of course, we have learned to discriminate between the original ideological idea of the scientific community which was designed to secure the autonomy of science in the face of demands for public accountability (Hollinger 1990) and the cognitive concept which proved to be one of Kuhn's great contributions (e.g. De Mey 1982; also Apel 1980). The only charitable interpretation of Lash here would be that he does not mean to confine his characterisation to the former.

Besides such minor examples, however, one of the centre pieces of Lash's theory of reflexive modernity could on foot of the available evidence justifiably be regarded, if not as cryptogrammatic cognitivism, then at least as entailing cognitive assumptions. It turns on what he calls the ‘ontological foundations’ or ‘shared meanings of community’ (1994a: 144, also 143, 146, 147, 148, 149, 166, 210) which

are the object of hermeneutic reflexivity. This type of reflexivity focuses on the meanings that are already there in the sense of being inscribed in the practices of the community in question and are therefore best regarded as unthought schemata which operate below the level of conscious conduct. As shared meanings they are indeed communally effective, but rather than being socially institutionalised or institutionally organised they have this effect, according to Lash (1994a: 166), due to 'the force of shared meanings and habits'. Similarly, he argues that hermeneutic reflexivity is not concerned with structures. Indeed, 'shared meanings and Sitten are not structures at all' (1994a: p. 166). What precisely the nature of the force he has in mind amounts to is left unclear, but it is difficult to see what else it could be than a force emanating from an orientation toward mutual care and understanding which is articulated with reference to cultural models or structures. Be that as it may, the very fact that the meanings are effective, even unconsciously, in a cultural way implies that they come into play not simply socially but in particular cognitively. This is the field in which the concept of cognitive institutionalisation (Eder 1996: 206) as distinct from social or normative institutionalisation finds application. Along the same lines, one could agree with Lash that the force emanating from shared meanings does not involve structures in the sense of social structures, yet it cannot possibly be the case that no structures whatsoever are necessary to mediate this effect. They take the form of what may be called cognitive structures, a relevant variant of which is what is known as a cultural model (e.g. Touraine 1988: 8-9, 54-5, 159) or a cultural form.

Lash is unwilling to conceive of shared meanings as structures since he seems to confine structure to the macro-level of late twentieth century information and communication structures (1994a: 120, 167, 213) and to equate shared meanings and classificatory schemata with semantics (1994a: 150, 162; 1994b: 209, 210). There are a few things, therefore, that he tends to overlook. One is that semantic worlds are by no means unstructured below the structural level he identifies, and another that meaning content at any level occurs only within the framework of structures. It should be added here that, although regarded as cultural structures, his information and communication structures represent only a partial and indeed not fully cultural conception of macro-level structures. The cognitive order and hence the cultural models of modernity go well beyond them. That he assumes more than he gives to understand, however, is suggested by his central emphasis on the increasing importance in our own time of the cultural sphere which has itself become more differentiated and autonomous and his concomitant critique of Beck and Giddens for neglecting 'the newer importance of cultural structures' (1994a: 167; 1994b: 207-11, 213, 215). At issue here are not particular meanings or interpretations but rather cultural structures, models or forms - that is, the common 'background assumptions'

(Lash 1994a: 166) or 'common classificatory systems' (Bourdieu 1986: 478) to which individuals and groups, despite their commonality, give different particular meanings and interpretations.

A comparison of Lash's appropriation of Bourdieu with the position taken by the French author himself sheds more light on the spectacle of the former's overt dismissal of the cognitive dimension and his covert employment of it. Lash's principal debt to Bourdieu is the concept of schemata. Although we are not offered a proper analysis, it is clear that for him schemata have to do with shared meaning and routine background practices. In respect of shared meanings, on the one hand, they are necessary for any social relationship to exist (1994b: 204) and, on the other, they play a guiding role in relation to practices which from the start involve the investment of affect (1994a: 157). As we know, he is also characteristically emphatic that schemata should not be conceived as rules or structures (1994a: 155-56, 157, 166), to which he adds that they should simultaneously be dissociated from agency or constructive activity (155-56). Schemata must rather be treated as the immediate or directly operating pre-dispositions or orientations of human beings who are situated in a seamless web of pre-given practices and meanings.

The first thing of which Lash should be reminded is that the concept of scheme, or the plural schemata, is a cognitive concept with a long history stretching from Kant through Schutz and Piaget to cognitive sociology and anthropology which has been combined in the course of time with a genetic point of view. It is with an acute sense of this history and of what is entailed by the concept that Bourdieu (1986: 466) focuses on 'the schemes of the habitus'. He indeed regards these schemes or schemata as unmediated mediators in the sense of a disposition or system of dispositions operating below the level of consciousness, but this does not mean that they are shorn of their cognitive character. On the contrary, Bourdieu points out at the very outset of Distinction (1986: xiv), on which Lash liberally draws, that his concern with the habitus is a central component of his project which he circumscribes as 'the project of objectifying the mental [or rather cognitive - PS] structures associated with the particularity of social structure'. What he indicates here is that his is a broad approach which ascribes special significance to the cognitive dimension. Making clear in what sense the cognitive dimension enters, he later submits that '[t]o speak of habitus is to include in the object the knowledge which the agents, who are part of the object, have of the object, and the contribution that this knowledge makes to the reality of the object' (467). That this is not simply a conventional sociology of knowledge but one that is fused with the sociology of culture in a way that brings out the significance of the cognitive is suggested by the fact that he insists on 'conferring on this knowledge a genuinely constitutive power'

(467). All knowledge of the social world, and thus the social world itself, involves centrally the structuring activity of the agents, while these acts of construction, which are themselves acts of cognition and misrecognition (172), are but the differential implementation of 'cognitive structures', 'symbolic forms' (468) or 'cultural codes' (3) in the form of classificatory schemata or schemes of perception, experience, thought, appreciation and expression (xv-xvi, 2, 175, 467, 468, 471, 477, 478, 479, 480, 482). As against intellectualists, idealists and structuralists, including ethnomethodology and anthropological structuralism, however, Bourdieu rejects the idea of a static system of universal forms and categories oriented towards pure knowledge in favour of stressing a system or cognitive order whose classificatory schemata are constituted in the course of collective history, are acquired in the course of individual history within a particular context, and function in the form of practical knowledge (467, 468).

From this comparison it is clear that Lash not only overestimates the hermeneutic approach but by the same token also underestimates the cognitive one. What is a matter of structure and construction is turned into one of meaning and pre-givenness. He is able to sustain his hermeneutic appropriation of Bourdieu only because of two basic misinterpretations. First, Lash (1994a: 155-56) misreads Bourdieu's critique of structuralism to the effect that what appears as universal rules of structure are actually strategically employed by different groups to mean that there are no rules at all. Secondly, he (1994a: 156) allows Bourdieu's own deplorable tendency to portray the habitus as static to mislead him into overlooking the constructivist dimension which Bourdieu (1986: 170, 467) himself takes care to emphasize. Later, however, Lash would again reintroduce this dimension.

As regards structure, it should be pointed out as against Lash, schemata are not simply immediately operating dispositions devoid of structuration, but in the first instance take the form of macro-level cognitive structures, cultural models or forms which exert a structuring effect and directing force through their implementation by the individual or group, even when they are strategically employed. And far from being purely cognitive in the sense of conceptual, intellectual or representational, such schemata are also normatively and aesthetically or conatively structuring and directive by virtue of the fact that through interaction they are experienced as obligations and needs.[15] As regards constructivism, Lash exhibits a marked ambivalence. Whereas the habitus is initially presented as being devoid of a constructive dimension (Lash 1994a: 156), Lash's (1994b: 208-10) renewed reflections on the late twentieth century cultural society complicate matters considerably. He is no longer able to dwell only on the hermeneutic retrieval of the semantic implications of cultural models in the context of the new reflexive

communities represented by lifestyle affinity groups. Over and above the implied constructive relation of reflexive communities to cultural models, he is compelled to acknowledge the significance that the differentiation and relative autonomy of culture and the consequent value pluralism and multiculturalism have for the cultural and social construction of reality. In both the case of schemata and that of constructivism, then, Lash seeks to uphold a position that is explicitly directed against the cognitive approach, yet in both we witness the spectacle of the excluded other returning and reasserting itself with a vengeance.

CONCLUSION

In order to take up the unresolved issues in the previous paragraphs and to tie the loose ends together, I finally propose to return once again briefly to the problem of mediation in Lash.

Somewhere, Lash (1994a: 135) observed quite perplexed that reflexivity, and by extension we might add mediation, seems by definition to be cognitive in nature, but then went off on a tangent. Subsequently, he adopted mediation as a central concept of his theoretical sociology of reflexivity, conceiving of it as a complex and multilevel process of the dialectical interrelation of the various dimensions of reality through conceptual and mimetic symbols, but then peculiarly enough proceeded to exclude the foundational pre-dispositions and orientations of community from the process. Had Lash taken the time to unravel his original perplexity, thus freeing himself from a narrow concept of the cognitive and adopting a cognitive rather than purely hermeneutic concept of culture, he would have been in a propitious position to think through also the problem of mediation. For mediation indeed is something cognitive. It involves cognitive structures of different orders, from the micro- to the macro-level (see e.g. Eder 1996: 166-71). The elements are available in Lash's work, to be sure, but they are left to languish in an unsystematised state.

A careful reading shows that Lash analytically distinguishes information and communication structures, shared communal meanings in the sense of common universes of meaning which are dialogically produced, and primary and small group semantics. Although he explicitly speaks only of the first as cultural structures, in terms of the theory of culture all three categories can be regarded as cognitive structures, with each occupying a distinct level. The macro-level is occupied by information and communication structures as well as by cultural models or cultural forms not mentioned by Lash. Shared communal meanings, secondly, can be taken to refer to communal and collective identities on the meso-level. And, finally, the semantics of intimate relations and reflexive affinity groups indicate the cognitive elements which are borrowed from cultural models and employed in the creative

process of the construction of communal or collective identities. These cognitive elements are not of a purely conceptual or representational kind, but also include both normative and aesthetic or conative elements. While the former could be norms or rules of conduct experienced as obligations, the latter could be mimetic or cathectic meanings attached to reality in the form of feelings or emotions and motivational syndromes. Were the problem of mediation to be adequately grasped, then all three these levels of cognitive structures and their interrelations would have to be taken into account in the course of studying the cultural and social construction of reality.

Lash, however, does not do so. This is the case not only in terms of the structure of culture, but also at the level of the theory of signs. Erroneously contrasting mimesis in the sense of iconic signification with semiotics which is itself confused with Saussurian semiology[16] and thus structuralistically misunderstood as a binary code (Lash 1994a: 138), he throws away his best chance to prepare at a more fundamental level to grasp mediation comprehensively. Unlike semiology which views the sign as a dyadic structure, semiotics of Peircean (Apel 1974; Apel 1981; Habermas 1991; Rochberg-Halton 1982) origin proceeds from the assumption of the sign as a threefold process in which a mediated relationship is maintained among the sign or linguistic system, the object or reality referred to, and the interpretation community. By contrast with structuralist semiology, semiotics keeps this complex dialectical process in focus and thus does not exclude the iconic but expressly seeks to account for the way in which the immediate qualities of experience act as mediating signs - Peirce's icon or iconic sign.

That Lash does not grasp the matter at this basic level is reflected in his difficulties with the problem of mediation, but not only there. It also helps us understand better the other major problematic aspects of his work: his suspicion of structure which he understands in a static binary rather than in a threefold processual way, his ambivalence about constructivism which properly understood requires attention to process and how its is structured, and his one-sided emphasis on semantics, including a paradoxical swipe at pragmatics (1994a: 150) while celebrating practices himself, but above all his cognitive sortilege, his gamble and double-dealing with the cognitive. The latter, nevertheless, turned out to be a thought-provoking and instructive adventure.

ENDNOTES

1 The basic insight of this article goes back to remarks Scott Lash made about phenomenology in the course of a conversation some years ago in Florence, where over a longer period I also incurred a substantial debt to Klaus Eder. I wish to thank both of them, especially the latter. Finally, I am most grateful to Prof. Karl-Otto Apel for sending me his latest forthcoming work.

2 This is the basis for a contribution to the development of the more general perspective that Alexander (Alexander and Seidman 1991: 26) calls for, one which is able to take together the different dimensions of culture articulated by different theories. My point of view is that of a sociologically relevant cognitive theory of culture which is underpinned by a theory of semiosis according to which the sign is a threefold process of mediation, not a structuralist semiological theory that treats the sign as a binary structure.

3 This neglect makes for unclarity regarding the distinction between theories of praxis (or agency) and action, e.g. Lash (1994a: 156). On this distinction, see Cohen (1996).

4 Lash himself draws on Dreyfus (1991). Curiously enough, although based on Heidegger, Lash's work also seems to contain oblique references to Quinean theoretical hermeneutics. See for instance his use of the word ‘translation’ (1994a: 156).

5 The cognitive approach put forward here has its basic reference point in the semiotically informed communication and discourse theory of the two leading figures of the Neo-Frankfurt school of critical theory, Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, and is related to ideas developed by the younger generation, including in particular Klaus Eder and Max Miller.

6 A sample of relatively recent, sociologically relevant contributions to the cognitive approach would include: Nowotny (1973), Cicourel (1973), Habermas (1979, 1984/87), Moscovici (1981, 1982), Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel (1981), Bloor (1982), Bourdieu (1986), Miller (1986, 1992), Evers and Nowotny (1987), Eder (1988, 1993, 1996), Eyerman and Jamison (1991), Holland and Quinn (1991), Shweder and LeVine (1993), Knorr-Cetina (1988, 1994), Van Dijk (1997). See also Fuller (1984).

7 Crucial contributions to a sociologically relevant cognitive theory of culture were made by Habermas (1979, 1984/87), Touraine (1981, 1988), Moscovici (1981, 1982), Bourdieu (1986), Miller (1986, 1992), Eder (1988, 1993, 1996), Knorr-Cetina (1994).

8 This is the first of the two forms of hermeneutics Heidegger elaborated on in Being and Time (1967). In the first division he introduces hermeneutics in the sense of the disclosure of the meaning of existence as itself hermeneutic by nature, while division

two is devoted to ontological interpretation in the sense of the unmasking of the hidden truth of existence. See Joseph Rouse (1987) for an example of the contemporary use of these different forms of hermeneutics. Although Lash claims to be concerned with the ontological foundations of community, his hermeneutics comes closest to the first rather than the second type of Heideggerian hermeneutics.

9 That there is confusion in Lash's mind regarding the relation of the aesthetic and the hermeneutic is suggested by the fact that, whereas he in one place argues in favour of a difference between them (1994a), in another he simply equates the two when he talks of 'hermeneutic or aesthetic reflection' (1994b: 204).

10 In stark contrast with Lash is the use that Eder (1993: 81-100; 1996) makes of Bourdieu.

11 For an immanent - i.e., a critical theoretic - critique of Apel and Habermas, see Wellmer (1986). For their latest statements, see Habermas (1996b) and Apel (forthcoming).

12 In their recent report, the Gulbenkian Commission insists on the need in the social sciences to accept 'the unending tension between...the universal and the particular' (1996, 77). This is of course precisely the sense of the title of Habermas's book Between Facts and Norms (1996a).

13 Not to mention Habermas's latest as yet untranslated work of 1996.

14 Bourdieu's own problem is that he himself neglects to pursue his cognitive theory of culture far enough. Had he done so, he would have been compelled to qualify his own pronounced utilitarianism in terms of universalistic references or cultural forms. For a critique from a critical theoretical point of view, see Honneth (1990) and Miller (1989). LiPuma (1993) also puts forward a penetrating critique of Bourdieu's concept of culture.

15 For a cognitive account of culture paralleling Bourdieu's notion of habitus, see Holland and Quinn (1991: 11-12).

16 It is an understanding of this relationship that makes possible the resolution of the conflict between constructivism and realism in contemporary philosophy of social science. See e.g. Delanty (1997: 133) who speaks of '...constructivist realism in which reality, the sign system and the interpreter together interact'.

REFERENCES

Alexander, Jeffrey C. (1996) 'Critical Reflections on Reflexive Modernization', Theory, Culture & Society 13 (4): 133-38.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. and Seidman, Steven, eds. (1991), Culture and Society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Apel, Karl-Otto (1974) 'Einführende Bemerkungen zur Idee einer transzendentalen Sprach-Pragmatik', in Carl H. Heinrich (ed) Semantics and Communication. Amsterdam/London: North-Holland, pp. 81-108.
Apel, Karl-Otto (1980) Towards a Transformation of Philosophy. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Apel, Karl-Otto (1981) Charles S. Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
Apel, Karl-Otto (1991) 'A Planetary Macroethics for Humankind', in E. Deutsch (ed) Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 261-78.
Apel, Karl-Otto (forthcoming) 'Auflösung der Diskursethik? Zur Architektonik der Diskursdifferenzierung in Habermas' 'Faktizität und Geltung''. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Beck, Ulrich (1996) 'World Risk Society as Cosmopolitan Society?', Theory, Culture & Society 13 (4): 1-32.
Beck, Ulrich et al. (1994) Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Bloor, David (1982) 'Durkheim and Mauss Revisited: Classification and the Sociology of Knowledge', Studies in History and Philosophy of Science 13 (4): 267-97.
Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) Distinction. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Bürger, Peter (1980) 'Das Vermittlungsproblem in der Kunstsoziologie Adornos', in Burkhardt Lindner und W. Martin Lüdke (eds) Materialien zur ästhetische Theorie. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, pp. 169-186.
Cicourel, Aaron V. (1973) Cognitive Sociology. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Cohen, Ira (1996) 'Theories of Action and Praxis', in Bryan S. Turner (ed) The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 111-42.
Delanty, Gerard (1997) Social Science: Beyond Constructivism and Realism. Buckingham: Open University Press.
De Mey, Marc (1982) The Cognitive Paradigm. Dordrecht: Reidel.
Dreyfus, Hubert (1979) What Computers Can't Do. New York: Harper & Row.
Dreyfus, Hubert (1980) 'Holism and Hermeneutics', Review of Metaphysics 34: 3-23.
Dreyfus, Hubert (1981) 'Knowledge and Human Values', Teachers College Record 82: 507-20.
Dreyfus, Hubert (1991) Being-in-the-World. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press.
Eder, Klaus (1988) Die Vergesellschaftung der Natur. Frankfurt: Suhramp.
Eder, Klaus (1993) The New Politics of Class. London: Sage.
Eder, Klaus (1996) The Social Construction of Nature. London: Sage.

Evers, Adalbert and Nowotny, Helga. (1987) Über den Umgang mit Unsicherheit. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Eyerman, Ron and Jamison, Andrew (1991) Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach. Cambridge: Polity.
Fuller, Steve (1984) 'The Cognitive Turn in Sociology', Erkenntnis 74: 439-50.
Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1975) Truth and Method. London: Sheed & Ward.
Gulbenkian Commission (1996) Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Habermas, Jürgen (1979) Communication and the Evolution of Society. London: Heinemann.
Habermas, Jürgen (1984/87) The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1-2. London/Cambridge: Heinemann/Polity.
Habermas, Jürgen. (1987) The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Cambridge: Polity.
Habermas, Jürgen (1991) 'Charles S. Peirce über Kommunikation', in Habermas, Texte und Kontexte. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, pp. 9-33.
Habermas, Jürgen (1996a) Between Facts and Norms. Cambridge: Polity.
Habermas, Jürgen (1996b) Die Aneignung des Anderen. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Heidegger, Martin (1967) Being and Time. Oxford: Blackwell.
Heidegger, Martin (1972) What is Called Thinking? New York: Harper & Row.
Holland, Dorothy and Quinn, Naomi, eds. (1991) Cultural Models in Language and Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P.
Hollinger, David A. (1990), 'Free Enterprise and Free Inquiry: The Emergence of Laissez-Faire Communitarianism in the Ideology of Science in the United States', New Literary History 21: 897-919.
Honneth, Axel (1990) Die zerrissene Welt des Sozialen. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Honneth, Axel (1992) Kampf um Anerkennung. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Joas, Hans (1992) Pragmatismus und Gesellschaftstheorie. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Kant, Immanuel ([1790] 1972) Critique of Judgement. New York: Hafner.
Knorr-Cetina, K. (1988) 'The Micro-Social Order', in N. G. Fielding (ed) Actions and Structure: Research Methods and Social Theory. London: Sage, pp. 21-53.
Knorr-Cetina, Karin (1994) 'Primitive Classification and Postmodernity', Theory, Culture & Society 11 (3): 1-22.
Knorr-Cetina, Karin and Cicourel, Aaron, eds. (1981) Advances in Social Theory and Methodology. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Kuhn, Thomas (1970) The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lash, Scott (1994a) 'Reflexivity and Its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community', in Ulrich Beck et al. Reflexive Modernization. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 110-73.
Lash, Scott (1994b) 'Expert-Systems or Situated Interpretation? Culture and Institutions in Disorganized Capitalism', in Ulrich Beck et al. Reflexive Modernization. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 198-215.
LiPuma, Edward (1993) 'Culture and the Concept of Culture in a Theory of Practice', in Craig Calhoun et al. (eds) Bourdieu: Critical Perspectives. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 14-34.
Miller, Max (1986) Kollektive Lernprozesse. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Miller, Max (1989) 'Systematisch verzerrte Legitimationsdiskurse', in Klaus Eder (ed) Klassenlage, Lebensstil und kulturelle Praxis. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, pp. 191-219.
Miller, Max (1992) 'Discourse and Morality', Archives Européennes de Sociologie 33 (1): 3-38.
Moscovici, Serge (1981) 'On Social Representations', in Joseph P. Forgas (ed) Social Cognition. London: Academic Press, pp. 181-209.
Moscovici, Serge (1982) 'The Coming Era of Social Representations', in Jean-Paul Codol and Jacques-Philippe Leyens (eds) Cognitive Analysis of Social Behaviour. The Hague: Nijhoff, pp. 115-50.
Nowotny, Helga (1973) 'On the Feasibility of a Cognitive Approach to the Study of Science', Zeitschrift für Soziologie 2 (3): 282-96.
Piaget, Jean (1970) Genetic Epistemology. New York: Columbia University Press.
Ricoeur, Paul (1972) Freud and Philosophy. New Haven/London: Yale U. P.
Rochberg-Halton, Eugene (1982) 'Situation, Structure, and the Context of Meaning', The Sociological Quarterly 23: 455-76.
Rouse, Joseph (1987) Knowledge and Power. Ithaca/London: Cornell U. P.
Shweder, Richard A. and LeVine, Robert A., eds. (1993) Culture Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Stadler, Ingrid (1968) 'Perception and Perfection in Kant's Aesthetics', in Robert Paul Wolff (ed) Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays. London: Macmillan, 339-84.
Touraine, Alain (1981) The Voice and the Eye. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Touraine, Alain (1988) Return of the Actor. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Van Dijk, Teun A. (1997) Discourse Studies, Vol.1-2, London: Sage.
Wellmer, Albrecht (1986) Ethik und Dialog. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
Wellmer, Albrecht (1991) The Persistence of Modernity. Boston, MA.: MIT Press.

Published in *European Journal of Social Theory* 2(1), 1999, pp. 45-69.

NOTE ON AUTHOR

Piet Strydom is a statutory lecturer in sociology at University College Cork. He has published on social theory in anthologies and such journals as Philosophy and Social Criticism, Telos, Political Studies, Praxis International, and Theory, Culture and Society. Full mailing address: Department of Sociology, University College, Cork, Ireland; Email: p.strydom@ucc.ie.