

Reflexive Modernization

*Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the
Modern Social Order*

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What indeed might a critical theory look like in today's informationalized, yet more than ever capitalist, world order? If Marxism served pre-eminently as an *arme de critique* in a previous class-structured, nationally bounded manufacturing society, then what might instead replace Marxism in an era where axial principles of class, nation and industry have ostensibly yielded those of new identities, a global ordering and the production, circulation and consumption of communications? Commentators in a number of countries have for several years now posed just such a question and have proposed as today's critical successor to Marxism, on the one hand, the ethics of communicative rationality involved in the work of Jürgen Habermas, and, on the other, the analytics of discursive power instantiated in the writing of Michel Foucault.

I would like instead to argue in the pages that follow that crucial elements of such a turn-of-the-twenty-first-century critical theory can be found in the framework of 'reflexive modernity', which has been implicitly, when not explicitly, adumbrated in the first two sections of this book. But I should like to maintain that such a theory of reflexive modernity can take on this sort of critical power only when it is grasped radically against its own grain. That is, the theory of reflexive modernity can function best as critique only when understood fundamentally in terms of its own unarticulated other; when it is read counter to its own stated purposes and instead in the context of its unspoken assumptions. There are three ways in which I shall develop the theory of reflexive modernity in terms of its

'doubles', in terms of its own radical alterity. These correspond to the three parts of this chapter. First, reflexive modernization is a theory of the ever-increasing powers of social actors, or 'agency', in regard to structure. I will argue instead for a new set of structural conditions of reflexivity. I will argue that, though indeed there is a certain retrocession of *social* structures permitting greater scope to agency, there are new structural conditions of such 'free' and knowledgeable agency. I will argue that the receding social structures in this context are being largely displaced instead by *information and communication structures*.

Second, the theory as formulated by Beck and Giddens presupposes that reflexivity is essentially 'cognitive' in nature. This in the Enlightenment tradition of Kant through Durkheim and Habermas presumes critique by the universal (knowledgeable agency) of the particular (existing social conditions). I should like instead to draw attention not to the cognitive but to the *aesthetic* dimension of reflexivity. This is situated in the tradition – of Baudelaire through Walter Benjamin to Adorno – in which critique instead is of high modernity's unhappy totality, of high modernity's universals *through* the particular. Here the particular is understood as the aesthetic, and involves not just 'high art' but popular culture and the aesthetics of everyday life.

Third, the theory of reflexive modernization is a very 'strong programme' of individualization. The state of affairs which it describes is ever more one rendered by Beck's 'I am I', in which the 'I' is increasingly free from communal ties and is able to construct his or her own biographical narratives (Giddens). But the still further unfolding process of modernization has not just yielded the end-of-history convergence Fukuyama foresaw (especially in Eastern Europe) towards the 'I' of market democracy. Instead we have witnessed at the same time – and perhaps more than ever – a revenge of the repressed 'We' of ethnic cleansing, of eastern German neo-Nazi skinheads and the nationalist fragmentation of the former USSR. The third part of this chapter transforms the concept of aesthetic reflexivity into a more hermeneutic direction in an attempt to throw some light on the shifting ontological foundations of this recurrent phenomenon of *community* in late modernity.

Why 'reflexive' modernity?

Before I turn to a hermeneutic reconstruction of reflexive modernity theory, let us examine some of its virtues as a critical theory.

Here I want to look first at how it is important respects a creative departure from the seemingly endless debates between modernists and postmodernists. I want further to show how, in contrast to the high abstraction of both modernist and postmodernist versions of critical theory, it has an immediate applicability to social analysis, that it constitutes a turn towards a *zeitdiagnostische Soziologie*. In this context I want also to gain some analytic purchase on the crucial features of the theory.

Modernist social theory has been criticized for presupposing a utopian 'metanarrative' of social change. To this, postmodern analysts such as Foucault have counterposed what seems to be a dystopic evolutionism. The idea of reflexive modernity seems to open up a third space, a fully different and more open-ended scenario. The idea might be best understood in a context suggested by Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which reason or modernization, initially emancipatory from the premodern static order of the *ancien régime* – in opening up possibilities for free expression, budding democracy and the free markets of liberal capitalism – then turned upon itself. Enlightenment or modernization in the era of *organized* capitalism instead becomes its own haunting double – as the public sphere opened up by market exchange turned into its other of hierarchically structured monopoly capitalist firm; as democratic individualism in political life turned into the clockwork impersonality of legal-rational bureaucracy; as the creative drive of the aesthetic modernist *avant-gardes* became the prison-estates of tower blocks and housing projects of the 1960s; as the anti-clerical emancipatory potential of classical physics turned into the nature-destroying science of the late twentieth century.

Reflexive modernization theory, however, holds open another possibility for this turn of modernization in which 'system' advances seemingly inexorably to destroy the 'life-world'. It points instead to the possibility of a positive new twist to the Enlightenment's dialectic. What happens, analysts like Beck and Giddens ask, when modernity begins to reflect on itself? What happens when modernization, understanding its own excesses and vicious spiral of destructive subjugation (of inner, outer and social nature) begins to take itself as object of reflection? This new self-reflexivity of modernity, on this view, would be a lot more than the belated victory of 'free will' over the forces of 'fate' or 'determinism'. It would instead be a development immanent to the modernization process itself. It would be a condition of, at a certain historical point, the development of functional prerequisites for further moderniz-

ation. In the late twentieth century, if modernization as economic growth is to be possible, the work-force must acquire substantial information-processing abilities and thus must be highly educated. The framework of problem-solving, questioning and the like involved in this education process is also a condition of acquisition of the sort of knowledge that can be turned as rational critique upon the 'system' itself. If modernization presupposes increased individualization, then these individuals – less controlled by tradition and convention – will be increasingly free also to be in heterodox opposition to the dystopic consequences of modernization.

And indeed this is the sort of distinction that reflexive modernization makes in regard to 'simple' modernization. If simple modernization gives us the vertically and horizontally integrated, functionally departmentalized meso-economic firm, then the new reflexivity on the rules and resources of the latter yields flexible disintegration into networked districts of small, relatively autonomous knowledge-intensive firms. If simple modernization's totalizing inversion of the social rights of the Enlightenment project is the impersonality of the bureaucratic welfare state, then its reflexive counterpart understands that welfare services are a client-centred coproduction and advocates a decentralized citizen-empowering alternative set of welfare arrangements. If the politics of simple modernity serve up, on the one hand, the abstract 'blueprint Marxism' of the Eastern European past, and, on the other, the Western combination of capitalist state bureaucracy and abstract procedural parliamentarism, then reflexive modernity proffers a politics of radical, plural democracy, rooted in localism and the post-material interests of the new social movements. In brief, if simple modernization means subjugation, then reflexive modernization involves the empowerment of subjects. If simple modernization gives us Foucault's scenario of atomization, normalization and individuation, then the reflexive counterpart opens up a genuine individualization, opens up positive possibilities of autonomous subjectivity in regard to our natural, social and psychic environments. Though, as Giddens warns, even reflexive modernity is a 'juggernaut', as the consequences of reflexivity can unanticipatedly result in new insecurities, in new forms of subjugation.

At issue here is no longer the straightforward and dichotomous juxtaposition of tradition and modernity, dear to the hearts of the giants – Weber, Durkheim, Simmel and Tönnies – of classical sociological theory. At issue instead is a three-stage conception of social change – from tradition to (simple) modernity to reflexive mod-

ernity. On this view simply modern societies are not fully modern. In this context reflexive modernity comes *after* simple modernity. Put another way, traditional society here corresponds to *Gemeinschaft*; simple modernity to *Gesellschaft*; and its successor to a *Gesellschaft* that has become fully reflexive. The motor of social change in this process is individualization. In this context *Gesellschaft* or simple modernity is modern in the sense that individualization has largely broken down the old traditional structures – extended family, church, village community – of the *Gemeinschaft*. Yet it is not fully modern because the individualization process has only gone part way and a new set of *gesellschaftlich* structures – trade unions, welfare state, government bureaucracy, formalized Taylorist shopfloor rules, class itself as a structure – has taken the place of traditional structures. Full modernization takes place only when further individualization also sets agency free from even these (simply) modern social structures.

It is necessary to call attention to the very different nature here of traditional and simply modern social structures. Though both presuppose a not fully developed individualization, the sort of structures they presuppose is vastly different. That is, whereas traditional societies presuppose *communal* structures (and I want to understand 'structure' in Giddens's sense of 'rules and resources'), simply modern societies presuppose *collective* structures. These collective structures assume that communal ties are already broken down, and the 'We' has become a set of abstract, atomized individuals. Thus social class, as Tönnies emphasized, was not *gemeinschaftlich* but *gesellschaftlich*. It was a collectivity which already presupposed facelessness, already presupposed the impersonality of social relations. If communities presume shared *meanings*, then collectivities presume merely shared *interests*. Marx himself understood class (for itself) emphatically not as a matter of shared meanings. Indeed the formation of classes in capitalism entailed that workers were set free from the earlier peasant *Gemeinschaften* as individuated bearers of labour power, who would only come together as a collectivity when the common conditions of workers were understood as shared interests. The understanding of the working class as *Gemeinschaft* is in many respects a peculiarly British phenomenon, due to the uneven modernization of British society, and to the fact that Britain – in terms of social class – has made the transition directly from tradition to reflexive modernity, skipping over, so to speak, the stage of simple modernity. In comparison, *la classe sociale* in France, as Touraine observes, has

been understood not in terms of community but in respect to class struggle as *la raison*.¹ In Germany canonically the working class was also not conceived as community but as exemplified in Social Democratic politics, a *gesellschaftlich* collectivity which was at the same time the basis of and excluded from civil society. Cultural critics such as Nietzsche were thus able to wish a plague on the houses of both utilitarian capital and equally utilitarian organized labour.

It is not just the class structures of simple modernity that are abstract and impersonal: equally abstract and impersonal are, for example, phenomena of nation and nationalism, which Benedict Anderson has argued are rooted in an atomized polity and abstract homogenous space and narrative time.² Indeed the whole notion of 'society' in modernity is abstract, characterized not by the concrete and particular relationships of the *Gemeinschaft* but by abstract relationships such as impersonality, achievement and universalism – which Talcott Parsons saw as constituting the institutional norms of his *Social System*. Durkheim and his fellow 'positivists' were attacked by the classical humanist tradition in France for essentially the same sort of abstract vision of the social. Indeed Georg Simmel's 'sociological expressionism' was at points an explicit attempt to counterpose the 'life-force' of the inner self against the general and impersonal abstract norms of the social.³

The point in this context is that this initial, 'simple' stage of modernity is not just *halfway* modern, but *halfway modern*, and that even its collectivity is grounded in atomization and individuation. It is that further individualization in the second, reflexive phase of modernity has set free individuals also from these collective and abstract structures such as class, nation, the nuclear family and unconditional belief in the validity of science. Thus reflexive modernity is attained only with the crisis of the nuclear family and the concomitant self-organization of life narratives; with the decline of influence on agents of class structures – in voting behaviour, consumption patterns, trade union membership; with the displacement of rule-bound production through flexibility at work; with the new ecological distrust and critique of institutionalized science.

This said, what indeed, it might be wondered, is 'reflexivity'? To this question two answers must be given. First there is *structural* reflexivity in which agency, set free from the constraints of social structure, then reflects on the 'rules' and 'resources' of such structure; reflects on agency's social conditions of existence. Second there is *self-reflexivity* in which agency reflects on itself. In self-reflexivity

previous heteronomous monitoring of agents is displaced by self-monitoring. Beck's *Risk Society* and Giddens's *Consequences of Modernity* mainly address structural reflexivity. Beck here foregrounded reflexivity on the institutions of science in the framework of ecological critique, while Giddens's focus is more general reflexivity regarding the rules and resources of society. Beck and Beck's *Das ganz normale Chaos der Liebe* and Giddens's *Modernity and Self-Identity* and *The Transformation of Intimacy* are largely about self-reflexivity, in the shift to autonomous monitoring of life narratives and of love relationships.⁴

Each sort of reflexivity in turn can take place either, on the one hand, via the mediation of 'expert-systems'; or, on the other, against the grain of such expert-systems. Here is where the remarkable convergence of Anthony Giddens's and Ulrich Beck's theories ends. For Giddens reflexivity in modernity is via a 'double hermeneutic', in which (while the first medium of interpretation is the social agent) the second medium of interpretation is expert-systems. Thus for him, as at the turn of the nineteenth century for Durkheim, sociology itself is a key expert-system in structural reflexivity. That is, in late modernity a growing proportion of the population has access in more or less diluted form to sociological concepts as a hermeneutic medium of reflection – and potentially as an impetus for social change – on the rules and resources of social structure. For Giddens self-reflexivity, or the self-organization of life narratives, takes place in contradistinction, via such expert-systems as psychology and psychoanalysis. For Giddens reflexivity in modernity involves a shift in trust relations, so that trust is no longer a matter of face-to-face involvement but is instead a matter of trust in expert-systems. For Beck, in strong contrast, reflexivity in modernity entails a growing freedom from and critique of expert-systems. Structural reflexivity thus involves a freedom from the expert-systems of dominant science. Self-reflexivity involves a freedom from and critique of various psychotherapies. Reflexivity is based not in trust but in distrust in expert-systems.⁵

The problem of 'insecurity' figures importantly in both authors' conceptual frameworks. This is striking because, as I've argued elsewhere, Giddens's concern – like that of classical sociologists like Durkheim – is with the problem of order, while Beck's – like the tradition running from Marx through Habermas – is with change.⁶ For both, reflexivity aims to achieve the minimization of insecurity. In Beck's *Risk Society* which thematizes social change, reflexivity – made possible by individualization – is to bring about social change

through the minimization of environmental hazards. This is just one of the forms of meaningful social change that reflexive agency can achieve in the risk society. Thematized in Giddens's case is 'ontological insecurity'. Although Beck has achieved fame for the concept of the risk society, insecurity is far more basic to Giddens's *problematique*. For Giddens the problem of order is formulated on the basis of such ontological insecurity. The problem is precisely how we can cope with not so much environmental but psychic and social hazards, and maintain reasonable levels of order and stability in our personalities and in society. His answer is through the mediation of expert-systems.⁷

Giddens draws importantly on ethnomethodology for his idea of hermeneutically mediated reflexivity. Only whereas ethnomethodology asks the question how we routinely achieve meaning, Giddens in effect asks how do we *consciously* achieve *ontological security*? Whereas ethnomethodology would seem to want to dispute expert-systems (and in particular Durkheimian and other versions of positivist sociology) and instead look behind them at 'habits' and routine activities, Giddens wants to argue that such insecurity is only, or at least best, coped with via the use of expert-systems. The notion of 'ontological insecurity' is drawn from the work of R. D. Laing on existential psychology.⁸ The term's tenor is Heideggerian and would seem to call for a 'hermeneutics of retrieval', whereby one would through hermeneutic interpretation gain access to the ontological foundations of our social and psychic worlds. This would seem to be the apparent way to gain a basis in some sort of ontological security. This would entail hermeneutic interpretation, the laying open (*Auslegung*) and hermeneutic dismantling of the subject-object thinking of expert-systems in order to be able to show their foundations in forms of being, in ways of life.⁹ Giddens like Laing eschews this sort of hermeneutic interpretation and instead finds his double hermeneutic and solution for ontological insecurity in expert-systems themselves.

The point at issue for the moment however is that whereas Beck sees expert-systems similarly as obstacles to the achievement of security, Giddens sees them as instruments which help us just to achieve such security. And however one might want to dispute the normative implications of Giddens's theory, its purchase on late modernity's empirical reality is considerable. Though Giddens's largely positively valued expert-systems seem to be very much the same thing as Foucault's (wholly negatively valued) 'discourses', they are in fact a much broader concept.

Whereas Foucauldian discourses are frameworks regulating the systematic occurrence of serious speech acts, expert-systems are much wider in scope. They refer at the same time to the practices of say professionals and other experts; they have a strong institutional aspect; they can also refer to the expertise objectified in machines such as aeroplanes and computers, or in other objective systems such as monetary mechanisms.¹⁰

And this broad purchase, yet immediate empirical applicability, is precisely the virtue of both Beck's and Giddens's theories of reflexive modernity. What they represent is the development of what is known in Germany as a *zeitdiagnostische Soziologie*. After two decades of dominance of the German social-theoretical landscape by the interminable struggle between Habermas's communicative action and Niklas Luhmann's autopoietic systems theory, the impact of Beck's *Risikogesellschaft* was quintessentially that of social theory finally coming back down to earth. This was true in terms of the accessibility of both the ideas and the presentation – *Risk Society* and *Das ganz normale Chaos der Liebe* are two of the best selling social science books in continental European history – and are read widely by the educated lay public. It was also true in that Beck addressed how social change in its broad outlines was also change of everyday lives. The publication of *Consequences of Modernity*, followed by *Modernity and Self-Identity* and *The Transformation of Intimacy*, represented also a *zeitdiagnostisch* turn in Anthony Giddens's intellectual history. Previously one read Giddens to learn about Giddens and his social theory – his notions of time-space distanciation, of structuration theory. Now a whole new audience was introduced to Giddens's far more accessible new work. Now people who wanted to read about trust, risk, relationships, the crisis of modernity, the role of expert-systems have begun to consult his work. There has been a new interest in Giddens among the Labour Party; and the wider British 'left', who previously saw his work as very ivory-tower stuff, now consult it alongside *eminentes grises* such as Stuart Hall as among the most penetrating analyses of social change. With the decline of academic Marxism at the end of the 1970s, sociology too lost its place at centre stage of what was current in the world of theory. After more than a decade in which literary critics, art and architecture writers and philosophers have dominated the 'theory scene' – and one thought one heard the death knell of sociology in favour of the much more fashionable 'cultural studies' – it is gratifying that sociology can address the same major problems of the contemporary era with such political purchase and analytic power.

Enough by way of introduction and kind things said. Let us get to the 'beef' of the matter at hand. Let us return to the theory of reflexive modernity. Let us at the same time turn to the creative destruction of this theory of agency, the cognitive and individualism and its concomitant reconstruction as a theory also of structure, the aesthetic and community.

Agency or structure?

The reflexive modernization thesis has for its core assumption the *Freisetzung* or progressive freeing of agency from structure. This is perhaps most powerfully instantiated in social change in economic life, and in particular in the development of a new framework of what might be called 'reflexive accumulation', for economic growth. This takes place via the freeing of agency from structure. Or rather structure effectively forces agency to be free in the sense that structural, capital accumulation is possible only on the condition that agency can free itself from rule-bound 'fordist' structures. This process has been commonly understood in terms of 'flexible specialization' in which increasingly specialized consumption entails more flexible ways of producing. Specialized consumption in this context encourages firms to produce smaller batches of a given product, on the one hand, and to widen the array of products on offer, on the other. For this to be possible firms and workers in firms must *innovate* that much more quickly. And such ever more rapid innovation is a question of a lot more than just 'flexibility'. Quicker innovation entails that a lot more work must proportionally go into the designing of new products. It entails that a far greater proportion of the production process than heretofore must be accounted for by a knowledge-intensive 'design process' and a smaller proportion by the material 'labour process'. Knowledge-intensive necessarily involves *reflexivity*. It entails self-reflexivity in that heteronomous monitoring of workers by rules is displaced by self-monitoring. It involves (and entails) 'structural reflexivity' in that the rules and resources (the latter including the means of production) of the shopfloor, no longer controlling workers, become the object of reflection for agency. That is, agents can reformulate and use such rules and resources in a variety of combinations in order chronically to innovate.

So far so good. The *Freisetzung* thesis of reflexive modernity theory (where agency is set free from structure) has thus consider-

able explanatory potential regarding the flexibilization of production. But let us pause for a moment. Let us step back and ask the question which Beck and Giddens do not, with sufficient urgency pose: Why, we might ask, do we find reflexivity in some places and not in others? Why in some economic sectors and not in others? There is to be sure a massive increase in the number of reflexive producers in the (operating systems and applications) software sector, in computer and semiconductor production, in the business services, in machine building in, for example, Germany. But what about the postfordist creation of the millions of 'junk jobs' of downgraded manufacturing jobs in, for example, the apparel sector of the last decade and a half; what of the creation of the massive 'MacDonalds proletariat' in the services; the systematic creation of large armies of unemployed, especially among young males? What about all of these new labour market positions which have been 'downgraded' to a position below that of the classical (fordist) working class? Are there in fact alongside the aforementioned 'reflexivity winners' whole battalions of 'reflexivity losers' in today's increasingly class-polarized, though decreasingly class-conscious, information societies? Further, outside of the sphere of immediate production, just how 'reflexive' is it possible for a single mother in an urban ghetto to be? Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens write with insight on the self-construction of life narratives. But just how much freedom from the 'necessity' of 'structure' and structural poverty does this ghetto mother have to self-construct her own 'life narratives'?¹¹

To account for such systematic inequalities in our globalized informational capitalism, as well as the systematic inequalities between core and peripheral nations, we must, I believe, address the *structural conditions of reflexivity*. But what can these structural conditions be if reflexivity, as delineated above, has developed only through the retreat, the retrocession of social structures? If reflexivity by definition involves the *Freisetzung* of agency from structure, then how indeed can inequality in late modernity have a structural explanation? The answer to this would seem to be that reflexivity and inequality of 'reflexivity chances' must then have for condition of existence an interarticulated set of *non-social* structures. If so then what in fact are these non-social structures? What indeed underpins reflexivity is then neither the social (economic, political and ideological) structures of Marxism, nor the (normatively regulated and institutional) social structures of Parsonsian functionalism, but instead an articulated web of global and local networks of *information*

and communication structures. One might best understand this new context in contrast to industrial capitalism, in which 'life chances' and class inequality depend on an agent's place in and access to the mode of production. In reflexive modernity, life chances – the outcome of who are to be the reflexivity winners and who the reflexivity losers – depend instead on place in the 'mode of information'.¹² Life chances in reflexive modernity are a question of access not to productive capital or production structures but instead of access to and place in the new information and communication structures.

Reflexive production: upgrading the working class

The idea of 'information structures' has been introduced in the work of the Japanese industrial sociologist Kazuo Koike in the context of a comparison of Japanese and American firms. Koike analysed internal labour markets in large firms in the two countries, and found that the incentive patterns for promotion in Japan were tightly linked to the acquisition of knowledge or information, while in the USA promotion was mainly independent of knowledge acquisition. The concept was subsequently further developed by the institutional economist Masahiko Aoki also to encompass information flows. Here in the Japanese firm information flows are optimized through the trust relations which exist between the firm and its workers, subcontractors, and between firms and financiers. This stands in contrast to the blocking of information flows in low-trust, market-governed firms in the USA and UK.¹³ Information structures thus consist of, first, networked channels in which information flows and, second, spaces in which the acquisition of information-processing capacities takes place.

Reflexive production, in this context, is possible only in the presence of optimal levels of information flow and knowledge (or information-processing) acquisition. And certain modes of institutional governance of information structures are favourable to reflexive production, while others are not. Japanese 'corporatist' governance of information structures is, for example, more conducive to reflexive production than market governance in the USA and UK. Crucial here is the extent to which information structures overlap with production systems in a given sector or a given country. Crucial is the question of who in a production system is included in, and who is excluded from, the information structures. Thus Aoki has drawn on Ronald Dore's juxtaposition of Japanese 'relational contracting'

with Anglo-American market-governed 'arms-length contracting'. In Japanese subcontracting, the frequent permanent and temporary exchange of personnel between subcontractor and parent firm, the joint programmes of product development and the shared identity between workers in subcontractor and parent firm optimize information flow. In the USA and UK not only is information flow impeded by the absence of these material and symbolic exchanges, by the absence of these trust relationships, but the subcontractors are excluded from the information structure of the parent firms' production system altogether.¹⁴ In Japanese as in German production systems, financial contracting typically takes place to a greater extent via banks than in the Anglo-American world. Institutional economists have complained for some time about the inability of banks in the USA and UK to act rationally and put an end to their bad habits of short-term loans at quite high interest rates. But perhaps free market rational-choice assumptions are not the solution but rather the problem. It is instead perhaps the proclivity of the Anglo-Saxon institutions for neo-classical, cost-benefit thinking of the calculating rational actor that has predisposed them to the failure of such short-termism. This rational choice, neo-classicism, stands polar opposite to the relational contracting of the Japanese and German banks, the fact that their relationship with industry is more one of 'status' than 'contract', the fact that corporatistic (as distinct from neo-classical) trust relations enable also a flow of symbols between financial and industrial contractors. It is the shared meanings, the shared 'world' of the two, which explains the tendency of banks in Japan and Germany to lend long and at lower interest rates. And in return they are included in the information structures of the industrial firm. Financial contracting through equities is, to be sure, increasingly common in Japan and Germany. But in Japan again shareholding is much longer-term and dividends are much lower than on the Anglo-American model. Although the outcome is reaped in capital gains, the motive for Japanese shareholders to engage in such 'risk-sharing' with industrial firms is again the trust context of their relationship.¹⁵ The result is inclusion in the information structures of the firm's production system. The short-termist Anglo-Saxon financial contractors often do not even show an interest in being included in these information structures.

Finally, employment contracting in Japan in comparison with the Anglo-Saxon world is also relational rather than arms-length, the straightforward cash nexus being complemented by symbolic exchange of shared identity. This need not be at all 'primitive'; indeed

many of us as university teachers or, say, graduate students have relationships with our departments that are strongly networked in terms of symbolic exchange and shared identity. In this context Japanese workers will say they work 'in the firm' while their British or American colleagues work 'for the firm'. What this involves is a certain measure of risk-sharing among Japanese workers – who, for example, will work at quite low levels of pay for the first years of their careers. But it also involves inclusion of the Japanese worker in the firm's information structure. There is a certain informational *quid pro quo* involved in this. The worker contributes to informational flow through giving voice to tacit knowledge in, for example, quality circles. In return he or she has access to much more information in regard to how the production process is run. Here information flow is inextricably intertwined with knowledge acquisition. Moreover, Japanese workers as consumers effectively participate in risk-sharing with industry. Their propensity to maintain high levels of savings at low interest rates are effectively loans to industry.¹⁶

In Germany too, corporatist governance of production systems makes possible inclusive information structures and highly reflexive production. This traditionalist institutional governance allows for very modern production, while seemingly modern market governance in the Anglo-Saxon world effectively inhibits the modernization of production systems. In Germany there are, so to speak, three pillars of such corporatist governance: the technical college system, the collective bargaining structure and the apprenticeship.

The technical colleges (*technische Fachhochschulen*) are the basis for the successful highly networked industrial districts in for example Baden-Württemberg and Nordrhein-Westphalia. The technical colleges are colleges of higher education, not elite technical or engineering universities. Their closest counterparts might be the English polytechnics as they were first set up, or state or city engineering schools in the USA. The knowledge taught in the technical colleges is, however, much more concrete, trade-based and hands-on than the comparatively abstract, theoretical learning in their Anglo-American counterparts. The typical departmental structure for such a college will not be, say, a physics and a physical chemistry department but instead departments of shipbuilding, machine-tool engineering, ceramics and the like. Technical colleges are the linchpin for information structures in German industrial districts. They work through the establishment by college teachers of consultancy offices and technology-transfer services for the firms, and through the circulation of personnel through colleges and firms.¹⁷

The technical colleges are not particularly effective in districts dominated by larger firms, which finance in-house much of their own R&D and training. They are also not effective where firms are small and not very innovative. There is sufficient incentive for college lecturers to send their students and spend some of their own working years only in firms which are innovators. Through the circulation of personnel over the course of their careers through the technical colleges and firms there takes place considerable information flow and acquisition of information-processing capacities. It is not at all untypical for an already apprenticed young man, after several years working in a firm, to go on to a technical college for two years to acquire credentials to become a technician, after which he will either go back to work for the same firm or join another medium-sized firm in the same industrial district. After several more years' work, this man might return to the technical college for further courses and the acquisition of credentials as an engineer. After this, this man may work as an engineer for another firm in the district. Perhaps at the age of forty he will take on a lecturing job in one of the nearby colleges, where he will send his students on projects for up to one year working in the district's firms. Simultaneously he might be spending two days a week running a technology transfer office, providing consultancy services to local firms.¹⁸

In the circulation of personnel between firms and colleges, there is not just information flow and knowledge acquisition but the further facilitation of each by the comparative egalitarianism of the German industrial occupational structure. There is significantly more work-life mobility from skilled worker to technician to engineer than in other countries. Moreover, the status differences between engineer, technician and skilled worker are much less pronounced than elsewhere. This is conducive to an occupational universe concentrated around the 'middle mass'. Here engineers are seen not so much as higher-ups in hierarchy but as professionals, fellow professionals with just a different specialized *Beruf* (trade, craft or profession), who can work side by side with skilled workers.¹⁹ Both the mobility and the status equality facilitates the free exchange of ideas and hence information flow as well as knowledge acquisition.

The second pillar is the corporatist representational structures of the works councils and co-determination, and the sectoral neo-corporatist collective bargaining structures. These have been described at length elsewhere.²⁰ The point is that each of these

further trust relations. These are not the more particularized, personalized trust relations of the Japanese firm. They are more abstract and institutionalized trust relations, and lead to the forgoing of opportunism, between trade unions and management. All of this facilitates information flow, especially via the works councils, but also positive training policies, which itself is the third pillar of the *deutsche Modell*.

Wolfgang Streeck has argued that it is irrational for any one capitalist to invest heavily in training workers, though it is eminently rational for capitalists as a class to invest in such training.²¹ This is because any single capitalist who invested in training would in all likelihood lose his or her trained workers through external labour markets to another capitalist. The first employer would not then recoup the costs invested in training, while the second would be a 'free rider' at the expense of the first. Streeck's insight here is not entirely accurate. It is rational for any one capitalist to invest in training when – as is often the case in Japan – he or she knows that trained workers are likely to stay their whole careers in his or her firm. But the principle of what Streeck argues holds: the Japanese case is not one of neo-classical, market governance of training but of institutional governance through 'enterprise corporatism'. And that market-regulated training is the worst possible solution for the information structures of reflexive production.

There seem to be two solutions to Streeck's proposed regulation of training by capitalists as a class. On the one hand, there is the state-regulated education of workers until the age of about eighteen common in France and Japan. On the other, there is the corporatistically regulated apprenticeships in Germany and Austria, and these form our third 'pillar'. They are regulated on a local level – through chambers of commerce, trade unions, employees' associations and state representatives from the departments of education. Where capitalists organize such training collectively through the state, education tends to be school-based; learning is theoretical, of abstract numerical and verbal competencies. Where they organize training collectively through the 'local corporatism' of the German-speaking world, education is based in the workplace; learning is more practical and hands-on.²² In the Anglo-Saxon world we have unfortunately neither the one nor the other. Apprenticeship structures in both the UK and the USA are mainly a thing of the past. As for state-organized secondary schools, young people either leave early (UK) or learn very little at all while there (USA).

In contrast to Aristotle's *zoon politikon* and Enlightenment Rational Man, the German apprenticeship seems to take on Marxian *homo faber* assumptions. That is, to be without a skill is somehow to be beyond the pale in terms of what it is that makes human beings human. If there are 720,000 school-leavers in a given year and only 715,000 apprenticeship places, it is a national scandal. The twenty-two-year-old salesman of video recorders, Sega consoles, walkmen and CD players in an electronics goods shop on the high street or shopping mall will have done an apprenticeship and know the detailed electronics of what he is selling you. The young woman of the same age in a bakery will have similar detailed knowledge of all the kinds of bread she is baking and selling to customers. The apprenticeship is still based on a *Meistermodell*, reminiscent of medieval guilds, in which workers progress from apprenticeships to journeyman to master. Skilled mechanics in large machine tool firms who are work team leaders at the age of thirty-five will often be at the same time master craftsmen. Loyalty and community here (which in Japan is connected with the enterprise) in Germany is in the context of the *Beruf*, of the trade or professional community. This is instantiated in lower wage levels of German apprentices who in the UK and elsewhere commonly earn some 75 per cent of adult wages.²³ The *quid pro quo* for such monetary sacrifice is the acquisition of knowledge for the apprentices. In Japan as well, (in strong contrast with the UK, Italy and France) wages of school-leavers entering firms are on the order of 50 per cent of those of adult workers.

At issue here is a process not of reflexive modernization but of 'reflexive *traditionalization*'. This is traditionalization in Robert Bellah's sense of an ethics of commitment and obligation, not to the self (which we do see in Anglo-American production systems) but to a *community*, this community being the firm in the Japanese case and the *Beruf* in the German.²⁴ This is reflected in the forging of adult wages by very young workers. This reflexive traditionalization is not a matter of individualization but one of reflexive *communities* with practices motivated by and oriented to a set of 'substantive goods'. Such substantive goods are, in Alistair MacIntyre's sense, 'internal goods' – that is, not goods external to practices, such as monetary reward, power or prestige, but goods internal to practices – workmanship or the good of the firm. These substantive goods also, in Charles Taylor's sense, set themselves off in contradistinction to 'procedural goods'.²⁵ In contrast to the procedural shopfloor ethics of demarcation disputes and a primary

focus on the 'discursive will-formation' of shopfloor democracy, a substantive shopfloor ethics will be rooted in the *Sittlichkeit* (the ethical life of particular, shared and customary practices) of the trade or company community and will devote primary focus to craftsmanship and making a high quality product.

This traditionalization and community is *reflexive* in that it mediates abstract power relations, either where trade unions and democracy are well instituted, as in Germany, or where such power structures are hierarchical and paternalistic, as in Japan. Although it is often said (and true in some respects) that globalization is forcing Germany and Japan to move in the direction of Anglo-American market regulation, these traditional structures are reflexive in another way. And that is that it is the small, old-fashioned firms in Japan and Germany which actually do come the closest to market regulation of work relations, while the largest, most modern, most high-tech firms in both countries come closest to the traditionalist and communitarian models. This traditionalization is reflexive finally in the sense that large numbers of firms, in the Anglo-Saxon world and elsewhere, previously with individuated forms of economic regulation, now choose to attempt to institute precisely such non-market structures.

Reflexivity winners and reflexivity losers: (new) new middle class and underclass

Premodern, and communal-traditional forms of regulation, as we have just seen, can be conducive to information flow and acquisition which are the structural conditions of reflexive production. The training and access to information flows which this presupposes involves an upgrading of the new 'reflexive' working class in regard to the classical, fordist proletariat. These sorts of information structures are a condition of existence of the contemporary working class *tout court*, in that where they are absent products are not internationally competitive, and working-class jobs disappear. Hence the proportion of manufacturing workers in the total labour force today is on the order of 50–75 per cent higher in Germany than in the Anglo-American world.

If communal regulation is optimal for the scope and power of information and communication structures in production systems, then individualized (and market) regulation is optimal for them in *consumption* systems. Flows of not just information and communi-

cations but also money articulate primarily with not production but consumption systems in the market-driven Anglo-American social economies. Here financial contractors of firms tend to contract more in the interests of their own consumption needs than the interests of the firm, with resulting short-termism in stock ownership. Hence the phenomenon of leveraged buyouts. Hence the vastly higher proportion in the Anglo-American world of loans to direct consumption (bank credit cards, hire purchase, overdrafts, shop credit-card usage) and of mortgages to homebuyers than in Japan, Germany and elsewhere. Consumption is also massively more *individualized* in the market-driven Anglo-Saxon countries. All sorts of areas in which consumer decisions are made by 'structure' in Germany and Japan are left to individual decision in the USA and UK. And this more reflexive consumption is carried out with the help of expert-systems. A middle-class (or even working-class) individual in the UK or USA is apt to buy and sell four houses in her lifetime, undergoing thereby four sets of financial transactions with surveyors, architects, lawyers, estate agents and building societies. Her German or Japanese counterpart will mostly rent her whole life long or, if she buys a house, do so only once, hence undergoing none of these economic transactions with expert-systems. The Anglo-American individual is that much more likely to be divorced, or divorced more than once, entailing more lawyers, more house purchases, etc.; to have a personal tax accountant, to use a personal finance officer, to hire at points in her life physical training specialists and physio- and psychotherapists. In market-driven economies this frequently economic-transacting individual is that much more likely to be a 'she' than in corporatist countries. Her mode of consumption will open up ever more activities and occupational places in the advanced consumer services. This is matched by the filling of these occupational places with vast (and recently vastly greater) numbers of female personnel, as is indicated in the 1990 United States Census. A given Anglo-American will typically be involved in inordinately more economic transactions with these consumption-experts in her life than will her German or Japanese counterpart. Hence these occupational places, and the middle class in general, are so very much larger in the USA and UK than in Germany and Japan. The proportion of the workforce active in the advanced services (which are expert-systems) is approximately twice as high in the Anglo-Saxon countries as in corporatist ones. A great deal more than half of those employed in these advanced service jobs in the Anglo-American world are active in the

consumer services, while the preponderance in the corporatist countries are in the producer services.²⁶

The reflexive working class in the wake of the demise of organized capitalism is paradigmatically linked to the information and communication (I&C) structures in three ways: as newly individuated consumers; as users of informatized means of production (in, for example, computer numerically controlled tools) and as producers of consumer and producer goods (for example, televisions, fax machines, fibre-optic cable) which function as means of production and consumption inside the I&C structures. The expanded middle class in reflexive modernity *work inside the* I&C structures. They do so very largely as the 'experts' *inside the expert-systems*, which themselves are 'nodes' of accumulated information and accumulated information-processing capacities stockpiled, as it were, at various locations inside the I&C structures. There is a crucial distinction between the new middle class in reflexive, as distinct from simple, modernity. Simple modernity's new middle classes grew in size as adjuncts to the accumulation of manufacturing capital. Their characteristic economic activity was as expert engineers, as marketing specialists in the sphere of circulation, in sales, finance and other services as part and parcel of – and in service of – the wider circuits of accumulation of manufacturing capital. In simple modernity there was considerable growth in these services, where the bulk of the new middle class, or 'service class', worked. This growth resulted from the increased 'roundaboutness' in the production of manufacturing goods.²⁷

In reflexive modernity the tables are turned. The working class and the production of manufacturing goods become instead a crucial moment in, though subordinated to, the roundabout production of *informational* goods. With the production of informational goods becoming the new axial principle of capital accumulation, the (new) new middle class is created. This new class embraces occupational places which have developed from the new principle of accumulation. But now the middle class is no longer a 'service class', that is, a class in the service of the reproduction needs of manufacturing capital. In its expanded form, it becomes more a 'served' than a service class, as its mainly information-processing labour is no longer subsumed under the needs of manufacturing accumulation. In reflexive modernity the accumulation of capital is at the same time (increasingly) the accumulation of information.²⁸ Thus the means of production as constant fixed capital (hardware) and constant circulating capital (software) are informatized. At the

same time variable capital as labour power and the commodities produced (both consumer and producer goods) take on an increasingly high and predominant proportion of informational content. The point is that the accumulation of information (and of capital) in the I&C structures becomes the driving force of reflexive modernity, just as the accumulation of manufacturing capital and its associated social structures had been in an earlier modernity. And reflexive modernity's upgraded (and reduced) working class as well as its expanded middle class find their basis in this informational displacement of the 'motor of history'.

If the transformed middle class works in the information and communication structures, and the reflexive working class for and with these structures, then there is a third paradigmatic class in reflexive modernity who are fundamentally *excluded* from access to the I&C structures. If the post-industrial middle class (mainly) and the upgraded working class (marginally) are the 'reflexivity-winners' of today's informationalized capitalist order, then this third class who are downgraded from the classical proletariat of simple modernity are the 'reflexivity losers', the bottom and largely excluded third of our turn-of-the-twenty-first-century 'two-thirds societies'. A large portion of this new lower class are very much in the position of what it makes sense to call an 'underclass'. William J. Wilson's underclass thesis has been a powerful and positive ethical-political intervention, calling the attention (of politicians, policy-makers and social scientists) for the first time in a long time to the plight of the urban ghettos as well as the increased class polarization of post-industrial societies. Wilson's thesis is in the first instance not about race but about social class. It is quite straightforwardly that in the shift from manufacturing to informational production a new class is created which is structurally downwardly mobile from the working class. In terms of relations to the I&C structures we will see that this underclass includes the 'ghetto poor' but also incorporates much of the information society's 'excluded third'.²⁹

The subsiding of social structures in reflexive modernity is especially felt by the underclass. In the ghetto there is a general emptying-out of social structures, of the institutions of socio-economic and cultural regulation. Thus, the large fordist factories in the USA and elsewhere have either shut down or moved to regions and suburban and ex-urban locations which are geographically out of reach of the black population. Along with labour markets, consumer commodity markets move out as shopping malls and centres

find locations that blacks have to travel distances to shop in and are rarely hired to work in. Other structural institutions of regulation also move out of what is becoming the 'impacted ghetto' – the large industrial trade unions, welfare state agencies victim to cuts in public spending, the church, the respectable black middle and working classes – and very effectively, the family.³⁰ The result is not individualization but anomie, and a deficit of regulation. The result is the gang-bonding of young males and racial violence. This of course applies not only to the urban minority ghettos but to the white ghettos of Britain's council estates in Liverpool, Glasgow and Newcastle where working-class fathers breed underclass sons. Where fathers who worked in the mines, on the docks, in the steel mills, in large chemical and machine-building plants have sons who leave school at sixteen without an apprenticeship and invariably find little in the way of steady employment until the age of twenty-five. Of sons who when employed at all are unable to find the industrial labouring jobs they were brought up to do, but wind up behind a counter at Dixons, as a cleaner at the local airport or a porter at the local college.

The same is, above all perhaps, true in Eastern Europe, in eastern Germany or Poland, where the factory jobs that fathers could depend on have disappeared for the sons. Where other instances of socio-economic regulation, like (state-run) trade unions or the police, have subsided or been fully delegitimated. Where the population of the most able young people has emptied out to seek work in western Germany. Here socio-economic 'governance' previously by the state, through state-regulated corporations and networks, was to be displaced by market regulation. But markets are institutions as well, with specific social, legal and moral preconditions. And to a disturbing degree the previously existing modes of institutional governance has not been replaced by market governance at all but instead by a deficit of governance, a deficit of socio-economic regulation. As in black America a generation of youth which has been brought up 'learning to labour', a generation of Eastern European working-class kids has grown up only to find this time that there are no working-class jobs.³¹ 'Learning to labour', as Paul Willis described it, is also and perhaps mainly the acquisition of a specific sort of *male* habitus. Without an outlet in working-class jobs, the alternative is gang-bonding, the (football) terraces and racial or racist violence. That is, the heteronomous monitoring of simple modernity has not been replaced by reflexive modernity's self-monitoring. Instead, in the absence of the displacement of social

structures by the I&C structures, the outcome is neither heteronomous nor self-monitoring but very little monitoring at all.

The subsiding of the social structures and the increased freedom for agency is experienced by all social classes in reflexive modernity. It is only in the case of the underclass that these social structures are not displaced by the information and communication structures. The labour process, for example, of this new lower class is substantially less informational and substantially more material in content than that of the middle class and working class. The means of production of for example a new lower-class 'MacDonalds proletarian', a garment sector worker, a house servant, a shopping mall employee are substantially less informational in content than, say, the CNC (computer numerically controlled) tools of the reflexive working class. So, typically, is the content of the product which is manufactured. All jobs, as Ganssmann notes, contain information-processing and material-processing components. One indicator of the proportion of each is the length of job-task cycle.³² This can range from the unusually long-cycle job tasks of, say, the corporation lawyer who works for six months on a given merger or acquisition, or the university professor who works for three years on a major research project, to the three to four hours necessary for a skilled mechanic to repair a machine. The more design-intensive work is, the more innovation-intensive, and the more long-cycle, job tasks are. But these cycles are significantly shorter in the new lower-class jobs, from the subcontracted cleaners of the state schools to the check-out workers at the supermarkets.

Exclusion from information and communication structures takes place for the new lower class not just on the job. Their residences are also affected. The maps of communications geographers graphically expose the locations of fax machines, large satellite receivers and senders, fibre-optic cable, international computer networks and the like. In these, one is struck by the heightened informational and communicational density in the downtown districts of central cities, with their concentrations of head offices, of finance and of business services; the intermediate levels of density in the suburbs, the locations of factories and many advanced consumer services; and the sparseness of the ghetto and underclass areas. What one sees is a patchwork of such 'live zones' or 'tame zones' in the urban central business districts and the 'dead zones' or 'wild zones' of the ghettos.³³ And as civil society, as the public sphere itself, becomes increasingly superimposed on the I&C structures, exclusion from

them becomes exclusion from *citizenship*, effectively both political and cultural exclusion from civil society. That is, if in simple modernity citizenship's obligations were mainly to the nation-state, in reflexive modernity they are instead to the self, to responsible self-monitoring. Citizenship's rights in simple modernity, featuring equality before the law, political rights and the social rights of the welfare state, have been transformed into reflexive modernity's rights of access to the information and communication structures. Reflexive modernity's new lower class, which is increasingly in many respects effectively an underclass, is deprived of both obligations and rights, of what now is no longer social but predominantly cultural citizenship.

There are three modes of formation, of the 'making' of this new lower class, which is indeed a 'class not in but of civil society'. First, there is downward mobility from the working class as instantiated in the black American ghetto and the British council estates. Second, there are the vast number of migrants setting up businesses and working in the informal sector of the economy, in the apparel industry, and for example the Asians running the small shops of the West's big cities. Third, there is the systemic exclusion of women from the I&C structures. In countries like Germany this exclusion of women (and minorities) is exacerbated by the corporatist institutions of the apprenticeship, the welfare state and the education system, in which women perform welfare services, not in firms operating through the market, not by working in jobs in the welfare state, but (as excluded from labour markets) in the home. Hence the very low labour-force participation rate of women in Germany and Austria.³⁴ Even in the absence of enhanced corporatist exclusion, women in neo-liberal labour markets are shunted away from the information-intensive end of the labour force and disproportionately into new lower-class positions. Moreover, outside of work-life, the line separating the 'live zones' from the 'dead zones', which sets off middle-class neighbourhoods from the ghettos also runs right through the centre of the private sphere of the household. Here men typically have access to equipment highest in the informational content, such as the camcorder, the remote-control switch of the television and operation of the time-shift on the video recorder, while women - with less access to the 'brown goods' - tend to concentrate their usage in the 'white goods' of refrigerator, cooker and vacuum cleaner, washer and dryer in which there is a higher ratio of mechanical components to electronic components. This

holds even for the young boys, and not girls, who have privileged access to the Sega and Nintendo consoles, the home computers and electric guitars.

Although the new lower class or underclass is quite clearly a class category, defined by access to not the mode of production but the mode of information, the personnel filling these class positions are typically determined by more particularistic, 'ascribed' characteristics – by race, country of origin and gender, and, in some countries like Britain where class has always had a caste-like dimension, by large numbers of young white (ex-)working-class males. Here too the new lower class comes to resemble the underclass not only as delineated with social-scientific precision in Wilson's work but also its metaphorical rendering in the *Unterwelt* of Wagnerian opera and Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*. Like Lang's (lumpen-)proletarians the underclass is recognizable by ascribed, often physical features. Lang's underclass was also decipherable as not a service but a servant class. And the increased activity of the new lower class in literally servant jobs in the homes and (as waitresses, taxi-drivers, etc.) in the public leisure lives of the higher echelons of the central business district's middle class, as well as the continuing servant activity of large numbers of women in the homes of their husbands and children, seems to qualify them for this. Finally Lang's *Unterwelt* was metaphorical for the then German working class, who suffered caste-like exclusion from civil society, although civil society itself was built on the back of their labour. Much the same could be said for the new lower class today.

Most significant might be the particular ways that the ghettos, that women are *not* excluded from the I&C structures. This is first through comparatively open access to the education system. Thus women, it is well known, are entering the professional schools and universities on an unprecedented scale. And blacks in the USA for example have increased enormously their relative and absolute education level, only to find that the requisite jobs have disappeared. The other is that through television, including satellite and cable, radio, video recorders and the like, the new lower class may not be on the information-*manipulating* end, but they most surely are on the communications, and especially symbol and image-communication, *receiving* end of the I&C structures. This disparity – between acquisition of symbol-processing capacities and access to symbol flow in the I&C structures, between access to the sending of symbols and their reception – has been and will increasingly be a potent mix for the heterodox political and cultural critique by

blacks, by women, by other ethnic minorities – from the 'wild zones' themselves.

Reflexivity: cognitive or aesthetic?

But not only does knowledge flow through these information and communication structures, not only do conceptual symbols function as structural conditions of reflexivity in modernity, but so does an entire other economy of signs in space. This other semiotic economy is one of not conceptual but mimetic symbols. It is an economy that opens up possibilities for not cognitive but aesthetic reflexivity in late modernity. The conceptual symbols, the flows of information through the information and communication structures cut, to be sure, two ways. They represent, on the one hand, a new forum for capitalist domination. Here no longer is power primarily lodged in capital as the material means of production. In place of this is found the power/knowledge complex – now largely linked to supra-national firms – of the mode of information.³⁵ On the other hand, as outlined at length above, these flows and accumulations of conceptual symbols constitute conditions of reflexivity. The same is true of the 'mimetic' symbols, of the images, sounds and narratives making up the other side of our sign economics. On the one hand as the commoditized, intellectual property of the culture industries they belong to the characteristically post-industrial *assemblage* of power.³⁶ On the other they open up virtual and real spaces for the popularization of aesthetic critique of that same power/knowledge complex.

This second, not cognitive but aesthetic, moment of reflexivity is fundamentally mimetic in nature, and as such is very much in the tradition not of Enlightenment high modernity but of modernism in the arts. It has, partly in the context of ethnicity and the issue of 'neo-tribalism', become transferred into a basis for a new, at the same time situated and contingent, ethics. This aesthetic dimension of reflexivity finally is the grounding principle of expressive individualism' in everyday life of contemporary consumer capitalism.³⁷

The conceptual and the mimetic

Reflexivity, by *definition*, would seem to be cognitive in nature. 'Aesthetic reflexivity' would, on the face of it, seem to be a contra-

diction in terms. So the question which must be asked is how can aesthetics, how can an aesthetic 'moment' or aesthetic 'source' of the self, be 'reflexive'? Let us try initially to approach this question by focusing on the *object* on which art, or our aesthetic sensibilities, might be reflexive. Here there can be reflexivity, on the one hand, on the natural social and psychic worlds of everyday life; and on the other there can be reflexivity on 'system', on the modes of commodification, bureaucratization and other operations by which the 'system' colonizes any and all of these life-worlds. Aesthetic reflexivity on everyday life takes place via a mode of not conceptual but *mimetic* mediation. Thus such thinkers as Nietzsche and Adorno stand the Platonist hierarchy of the conceptual and the mimetic on its head. Nietzsche in his early essay 'Über Lüge und Wahrheit' contends that mimesis provides greater access to the truth than conceptual thought. He proclaims that theoretical concepts are little better than desiccated versions of mimetic metaphors, and that in their abstract and sterile fixedness they lack the suppleness necessary for truth. He maintains that the concept in particular cannot have access to processes of 'becoming' – his example is the unfolding blooming of a flower – in natural and cultural processes.³⁸

Adorno also has recourse to the notions of the mimetic in his idea of aesthetic critique. In the Enlightenment tradition of critical theory – from Kant to Habermas – critique is of the particular by the universal (be this universal a categorical imperative, the proletariat or communicative rationality). Against this, for Adorno, as for Nietzsche, critique instead is of the universal by the particular; or critique of 'the subject' from the point of view of 'the object'. The notion of aesthetic reflexivity which I am advocating here is closer to Adorno's rather than Nietzsche's on several counts. First, I should like to take seriously the process of *mediation* which Adorno, and not Nietzsche, proffers.³⁹ For Adorno if Platonic and Cartesian conceptual reflection involves a great deal of abstract mediation, then aesthetic reflection involves not ultimate but 'proximal' mediation. In Nietzsche's aesthetic there is a blunt immediacy of the mimetic, which is neither of a different quality than nor in a different 'world' to everyday life. It seems to me that, in the absence of mediation, it is problematic to speak of reflexivity at all.

Second, reflexivity as developed in this book – in a complex dialectic of structure and agency – is implicitly Hegelian, and Adorno, though thoroughly heterodox, is surely an Hegelian. Hegel himself, we will recall, had a strongly inflected notion of aesthetic

reflexivity. In his *Aesthetic Writings* and in *The Encyclopaedia*, he conceives art as in the realm of absolute reason, as the most 'finite' sphere in this realm, less mediated than religion and philosophy.⁴⁰ Adorno's Hegel is of course that of only a 'negative dialectic', of a persistent critique not *through* the universal, or through totality, but of the universal and of totality. Here comparison with Herbert Marcuse is instructive. Marcuse also privileged the aesthetic-sensual dimension – but could only imagine the triumph of cognitive reason's unhappy totality, where Eros was nullified in a totalizing repressive desublimation and any hope of aesthetic resistance sublated in what became 'one-dimensional man'. Adorno, though still profoundly the pessimist, in contradistinction to Marcusean one-dimensionality, saw space for determinate negation precisely in the aesthetic dimension. Yet, unlike neo-Nietzschean deconstructors of the subject by the 'object', Adorno, though understanding the aesthetic to be in the position of the particular, still preserves 'moments' of the subject in the object.⁴¹

This understanding of Adorno, pervasive in the German-speaking world from the outset of the 1980s, shows how vastly wide of the mark has been his reception by the mainstream of Anglo-American cultural studies and sociological theory.⁴² In this Adorno has been identified with 'production aesthetics', with high modernism and with the transcendental subject of an abstract aesthetic rationality. But as we have just seen, Adorno's aesthetic utopia was one of a radical particular set against the universal, of the non-identical (aesthetic) object – which in its intrinsic difference and heterogeneity – can never be subsumed by the abstract subject of identity-thinking. Thus when Adorno understands art as the working through the possibilities of the aesthetic material, he is speaking of a very hands-on, 'tectonic' notion of material. When he praises Schoenberg's twelve-tone music it is not as 'conceptual music' arranged in structural sequence, but of the very texture, the very grain of the tonality. His unhappiness with pastiche in painting is not due to an abstract purism of, for example, structural *combinatoires* of facet-planes in cubism. It is because of an explicitly material notion of the qualities and possibilities of the paint. This is particularly thematized in one of his last talks – to the Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm, in some respects the West German postwar heirs – including Alexander Kluge – of the design tradition of the Bauhaus.⁴³ Historians of architecture have noted a tradition in modernism which is material and 'tectonic', with forebears in bridge-building and engineering and whose foremost exponent is Mies van der Rohe. This they have

contrasted with a more conceptualist tradition with roots in abstract art, and prototypically instantiated in Corbusier. In the framework of this juxtaposition Adorno's mimetic materialism is clearly on the side of Mies and the engineers.

This mimetic materialism has been foregrounded recently in a book on Adorno by Fredric Jameson. Jameson, also importantly influenced by Hegel, extends this Adornonian 'aesthetic materialism' to suggest a negative dialectics of *popular* culture. This provides for him an effective 'postmodernism of resistance' in contradistinction to the postmodernism of domination enunciated in Jameson's earlier work.⁴⁴ Jameson is in this sense suggesting that the cultural logic of late capitalism, though seemingly one-dimensional, though ostensibly identitarian, creates – in an immanent dialectical movement – its own non-identical critique. This too is aesthetic reflexivity, but at issue are not reflexive subjects but the already reflexive *objects* produced by the culture industries and circulating in the global information and communication structures. These objects are already at least trebly reflexive – as symbol-intensive intellectual property, as commoditized and as advertised. They are at the same time mimetic in a more radical vein than that propounded by either Nietzsche or Adorno. That is, philosophers will often counterpose the mimetic (as aesthetic) to the conceptual (as theory). But, in the space of the aesthetic, we can make a distinction more typical of linguists between 'semiosis' and 'mimesis'. In semiosis, meaning is produced rather on a Saussurean model through the differences, valences and identities between elements in a *langue*. Mimesis, in contrast, signifies 'iconically', through resemblance.⁴⁵

It is crucial in this context that the objects of the culture industries are differently reflexive than cultural objects were in the earlier era of liberal capitalism. That is, they are reflexive, they are mimetic in a far less mediated way. If nineteenth-century realist narrative as cultural object is reflexive through highly mediated semiosis, then ideal-typically organized capitalist cinema – in its diachronic, tonal visuality – is a cultural object which is reflexive through less mediated iconic representation.⁴⁶ For modes of signification to be less highly mediated (by the subject) is, at the same time, for them to be more highly *motivated* by the phenomenon which is represented. The most proximally mediated, and most highly motivated form of signification, is of course 'signal'. And the culture industries, especially television, signify increasingly like signal – in sports programmes, in the news, in 'live' crime and divorce shows, in

talk shows, in immediate audience revelation programmes like 'Donahue' and 'Oprah Winfrey'. In fact the greater part of the information which flows in the information and communication structures signifies as signal.

What are the implications of this for aesthetic reflexivity? For aesthetic critique? Let us here perhaps have another look through Adorno's eyes. We must understand Adorno in spite of his mainstream cultural studies reception. This misreading has dismissed Adorno because of his rejection of popular culture's vulgarity. This misses the point, it is interminably repeated, that popular culture can in fact serve not domination, but 'resistance'. Adorno's scepticism, however, towards the culture industries was not because their products were too much like low culture, but indeed because they were too much like *high* culture. That is, he rejected them not because they exemplified the proximal mediation of 'mimesis' but because they exemplified the *ultimate* mediation of 'the concept'. To come under the sign of the commodity is to partake of the abstraction – as Marx too was well aware in his notion of exchange-value – of the concept, of identitarian reification. Thus in effect Adornonian mimesis advocates 'low culture' against high culture. Critique could come via popular culture but only when it was deconstructed (quite literally in Derrida's sense) from under the sign of the commodity.

In a similar vein, Walter Benjamin's notion of 'allegory' promulgated a version of mimesis – as 'die Sprache der Dingen', as, literally, the sounds of the city – but this is far less mediated than even Adornonian mimesis.⁴⁷ In contrast to Adorno's Hegelian assumptions, Benjamin did not even speak the language of mediation. His allegorical mimesis shares properties with signal in being, like surrealist representation, very highly motivated. But neither Adorno nor Benjamin, of course, saw even the most proximal modes of mimesis as mere copying. Both saw an unbridgeable gap between 'speech' and 'phenomenon'. The very proximal mimesis of the culture industries was captured by Adorno under the notion of 'hieroglyphic writing'.⁴⁸ Like hieroglyphics, popular culture seems to signify: not abstractly through semiosis but most immediately, through resemblance. Yet for us in the modern West, hieroglyphics also take on indecipherable levels of abstraction. So may the culture industries, which can take the immediacy of popular cultural experience and metamorphose it into the unhappy utilitarian abstraction of the commodity.

Aesthetic, ethnic, ethnique

This theory of reflexive modernity or any theory of reflexivity is reflexive in so far as it concerns the mediation of everyday experience – whether this mediation is conceptual or mimetic. A theory of reflexivity only becomes a *critical* theory when it turns its reflection away from the experience of everyday life and instead on to 'system'. Aesthetic reflexivity – either of cultural forms or of experiencing individuals – is not conceptual but mimetic. It is reflexive in so far as it operates mimetically on everyday experience; it becomes *critical* only when its point of mimetic reference becomes 'system', of commodities, bureaucracy, or reification of life forms. The same is true for cognitive reflexivity, in which mediation is conceptual. Of theorists of cognitive reflexivity, Habermas's for example is primarily a *critical* theory, in that the transcendental, intersubjective and discursive truths of communicative rationality are explicitly aimed at critique of system in order to win space for the life-world. In this sense, cognitive reflexivity in both Beck and Giddens is *not* primarily critical, not primarily aimed at the logic of commodity and bureaucracy, but instead – like such earlier theories of simple modernization as Durkheim's – aimed at the transformation of tradition.

In one very important way the theory of reflexive modernity, with its rather one-sided emphasis on the cognitive, or 'conceptual', dimension seems to compound the unhappy identity integral to the process of simple modernization. I am speaking of the notion of 'risk' which both Beck and Giddens set up against a core problem, even a core ontology, of insecurity. Now risks can be understood as dangers, but, in so far as today's society presumes increased individualization, risks are mainly things that individuals take. If I want to innovate at work, I must take not just responsibility but risks. New products are always also a matter of risk-taking. The shrewd gambler must be a risk-taker. If I am to be a good poker player, I must take responsibility – that is, know how much I can afford to lose – but also risks. As a poker player when I take risks, I must act 'probabilistically'. I will know that a great deal of the outcome of a hand is inexplicable, and a matter of contingency (*fortuna*),⁴⁹ but a great deal of the rest is cognizable through probabilistic calculation based on the cards already showing, the memory of any discards, the cards turned over by other players and the betting patterns of the other players.

In this sense social life today probably does have more to do with risk than with insecurity, more to do with how the 'transcendental subject' of high modernity has been brought down a few pegs and can only at best be a probabilistic calculating subject. Thus 'expert science', though often imbricated in a formal discourse of certainty, must act probabilistically *vis-à-vis* the natural environment. Even when the experts are the object of critique, through the reflexivity of the lay public, what is disputed is partly the expert's discourse of certainty.⁵⁰ This however does not mean that the answers of a critical *public* – themselves often dependent on the advice of other experts – are any less probabilistic. The risk society is thus not so much about the distribution of 'bads' or dangers as about a mode of conduct centred on risk. This is seen not just in relationship to environment, or work, or poker playing. It is instantiated in the self-construction of life narratives described by Beck and Giddens, in which a probabilistic calculative mode of regulation imparts narrativity to the life-course. Through such risk-taking probabilistic calculation, we often find ourselves in situations of 'shame', that is, being exposed in our contradictory, fragmented autobiographies. In the same fashion we calculate, 'hedonistically', our leisure time.⁵¹ We carry out our sex lives in such probabilistic calculation, in risk-taking encounters with the ontological insecurity of AIDS. Even quantitative sociology has become part of the risk society, as the metaphysics of Karl Pearson's probabilistic correlation coefficient replaced the security of explanation of a previous positivism. In the newer, perhaps more modest positivism, contingency (insecurity) is rendered as 'unexplained variance'.⁵²

Is the risk society a last attempt on the part of the modernist subject now only probabilistically to control the out-of-hand and increasingly rampant insecurity and 'excess' of a triumphant postmodernity? Do the expert-systems of reflexive modernization colonize ever more regions of the life-world? It is possible perhaps to maintain a precarious agnosticism on this question and at the same time agree with Zygmunt Bauman that answer might be to avoid altogether the metaphysics of risk and instead to live with contingency, even to affirm ambivalence.⁵³ What Bauman is suggesting is, it seems to me, a radically different sort of poker. Here the player is less the probabilistic risk-taker, but instead the sometimes foolhardy addict of the all-night games, the player who pushes kings-over-threes to the hilt, the punter who bets more than he or she can afford to lose. This poker player, like Georg Simmel's 'adventurer', is not out for risk-taking but in search instead of a zone of

contingency in a social space increasingly cross-hatched by ever more, and ever more pervasive, expert-systems.⁵⁴

Bauman, unlike Beck and Ciddens, could not see 'another modernity' as a new and reflexive era succeeding an old and 'simple' one. Instead his other modernity, one closer to aesthetic modernism, would run *parallel* to its Cartesian and utilitarian counterpart. Bauman's culture of alterity is on the one hand the mimetic critique of high, Enlightenment modernity. It is at the same time the dark side of the Enlightenment. As 'id', it stands counterposed to 'ego'; as insecurity it encounters the calculating subject; as *fortuna* it underpins the *cogito*. Bauman, however, gives to this other modernity an ethnic twist. In the place of the aesthetic, in the place of insecurity as disruptive mimesis, in the place of *fortuna* or ambivalence, for him, stands the Jew. Thus the Jew, like Simmel's 'stranger', is the visitor who 'comes today and stays tomorrow'. Aesthetic modernism, Susan Sontag somewhere wrote of Proust – who belonged to both – would be unthinkable in the absence of those two 'confraternities', of homosexuals and Jews. On this view, the homosexual and the Jew are neither same nor clearly other; they instead are disruptive of classifications; they embody ambivalence.

Bauman's project is ultimately an ethical one. It is a project that he may articulate best, but shares with thinkers such as Lyotard, Rorty, Derrida, Levinas and Adorno. The idea is to construct an aestheticized ethics and understand it in terms of ethnicity. In this the Holocaust is understood as the final triumph of 'the concept', the victory of identitarian and Cartesian modernity. The implication is that no totalizing critical movement such as Marxism, no transcendental ethics like the Kantian imperative, is possible after the Holocaust. All that is possible is determinate negation or aesthetic critique, where even ethics can only be an *ethique esthétique*, or an ethics of non-identity.⁵⁵ Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* characterizes this sort of thinking, in contrast to 'symbol', as *allegory*. He observes that if 'symbol' is somehow Protestant in its allowing for totality, 'allegory' is perhaps Jewish in its imperative (thus Derridean *écriture* always defers the meaning of the signifier) that the name of God must not be spoken.⁵⁶

For these philosophers of allegory, the pivotal text of course is Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. For Kant, 'judgement in general is the faculty of thinking the particular as subsumed under the universal'.⁵⁷ In his *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, this general rule posed no problem. But in consideration of the work of art and (not mechanical, but) organic nature there seemed to be

some complications. In life forms and art, it seemed to Kant, Aristotelian teleology rather than mechanical causality was at work. In the development of a work of art or an organism, the universal is no longer a principle (whether as in Socratic nominalism or Platonic realism) external to the object under consideration, but the universal is operative, as it were, 'autopoetically', internal to the organism (work of art) itself.⁵⁸ In aesthetic judgement the universal is no longer located in a transcendental (real or ideal) subject. Instead Kant likened such judgement to English Common Law, in which a previous particular case becomes the framework within which a subsequent particular is assessed. If this is so, then, one wonders, why speak of judgement at all? Perhaps what is called for, as Bauman suggests, is an end to the ethics of judgement.⁵⁹ On this view an *ethique esthétique* is the triumph of the aesthetic over judgement itself. It is the revenge of the object on the subject, the retribution of difference on identity.

The 'I' or the 'We'

A number of these philosophers of allegory liken this inversion of subject and object, of universal and particular involved in aesthetic reflexivity, to another set of phenomena in the context of more directly social practices. In this, the abstract morality of Kant's categorical imperative is challenged by the ethical life of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*. Often this is contextualized in contemporary politics with abstract Eastern European 'blueprint Marxism' standing in for Kantian morality, and the complex particularity of a given specific culture as exemplifying *Sittlichkeit*. This is the move that for example Lyotard makes in *Le Différend*, Maffesoli in *Ethique esthétique* and implicitly Terry Eagleton in *Ideology of the Aesthetic*. One possible consequence of this, the danger of such particularism, is an emergent 'neo-tribalism' and ethnocentrism of ethical-aesthetic communities. This is a danger which Bauman staves off through prescribing – drawing on Levinas – an ethics of interpretation for the other, and to which for example Rorty counterposes not a universalism of 'emancipation' but a 'cosmopolitan' pragmatics of translation between speech communities.⁶⁰

One is initially gratified, but then soon uneasy in the face of such arguments. How, one might ask, can Bauman or Rorty speak so quickly of translation to the other before a convincingly substantial sense of shared meanings among 'the same' is established? Are

perhaps these 'neo-tribes', much like Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities', not tribes or communities at all but merely associations of atomized individuals? Why, further, does Bauman, like Adorno, have to construe the Third Reich purely in terms of 'technology', of bureaucratic modernity, and ignore the proximal communal meanings of the premodern yet still existent *ethnie*?⁶¹ Why do almost all of these 'allegorists', these 'deconstructors', insist on understanding Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* as 'difference', as complexity or the non-identical, instead of as community and shared cultural practices?

What I am pointing to is a substantial deficit in any sort of convincing notion of 'community', of the 'we' in these analyses. And to understand today's barbaric if fragmented new nationalisms, as well as the collective representations of the new social movements, not to mention other kinds of contemporary ethics of practice, some fundamental thinking about the 'we' is surely needed. What I am further arguing is that a neglect of shared meanings, a systematic impossibility of the 'we', is systematically integral to allegorical thinking. I am claiming that analysts in the tradition of allegory from Nietzsche to Benjamin and Adorno, to Derrida, Rorty and Bauman, presume a radical individualism – surely not a utilitarian but an aesthetic individualism: not an individualism of a controlling ego but the individualism of a heterogenous, contingent desire – which itself is hardly conducive to community.

What I am contending is that any understanding of the 'we' under the star of aesthetic reflexivity, under the star of such a mimetic critique of the concept, is impossible. To have access to community, it may be necessary to break with such abstract aesthetic subjectivity. It may be necessary to reject the 'method' suggested by deconstruction in favour of the 'truth' advocated by hermeneutics. Cognitive reflexivity posed the calculating subject versus contingency, and the conceptual versus the mimetic. Aesthetic reflexivity's renewal of this hierarchy, with the embrace of contingency and mimesis, remain arguably located in the same metaphysical universe. To have any access to the 'we', to community, we must not deconstruct but hermeneutically interpret and thus evade the categories of agency and structure, subject and object, control versus contingency and the conceptual versus the mimetic. This sort of interpretation will give access to ontological foundations, in *Sitten*, in habits, in background practices of cognitive and aesthetic individualism. It will at the same time give us some understanding of the shared meanings of community.

Aesthetic reflexivity – as allegory, or deconstruction – is unceasingly anti-foundationalist. Thus Baudrillard's sign-value deconstructs the 'essentialism' of Marxian exchange-value. Thus the Lacanian symbolic reveals the foundationalism in orthodox Freudian ego psychology; Deleuze deconstructs Lacan's prison-house of language and Oedipus for his own libidinal economics of desire; Derrida, De Lauretis and Iragaray in turn can find a phallogocentric metaphysics of presence in Deleuze, which they counter with an alternative female economy of desire,⁶² while feminists of the 1990s take the foundations away from even De Lauretis's 'essentialist' naturalism. In each case there is the initial anti-foundationalist challenge of aesthetic subjectivity to rationalist individualism, and then further attacks by even more 'anything goes' versions of aesthetic subjectivity on the incumbent form of the latter. In each case it is forms of control which are deconstructed from the standpoint of contingency or ambivalence. The previous modes of ambivalence are shown really to have been modes of control, and they in turn are deconstructed, and so on.

Where and when, if ever, will this incessant process of deconstruction end? Does it lead to one after another often increasingly *kitsch* theory replacing the last one, on the model of rapidly changing styles in our 'throw-away societies'? What all of these ideas do is to deconstruct the universal from the point of view of the particular. And though, as Tönnies observed, the individualized *Gesellschaft* is to universalism what the *Gemeinschaft* is to particularism, none of today's ubiquitous and incessant deconstruction leads to any grasp of the 'we', but just to ever less foundational, ever more Faustian forms of the aesthetic 'I'. Thus Lyotard's title of an early book, *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*, is emblematic of our own 'casting ourselves adrift', through the chronic deconstruction of whatever foundations, whichever essentialisms still remain. The point, however, is that Marx and Freud, along with Christ, 'the eternally deconstructed', were themselves original and paradigmatic deconstructors. They were along with Nietzsche the founding figures among the 'masters of suspicion'.⁶³ The practitioner of what Ricoeur calls a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is in principle suspicious of some sort of good universal from the standpoint of a deceitful, hidden, *sournois* particular. Thus the unseemly, sweaty labour process of the satanic mills and Lang's *Metropolis* is the truth of the noblest Christian and Enlightenment ideals. And the debased particularly of the id is the truth of the noblest sublimations of the ego.

In its persistent challenge to ever new universals, in its chronic aesthetic reflexivity, present-day deconstruction does not undermine, or 'cast adrift from' Marx and Freud, but only repeats, in ever more rapid cycles, what the masters (of suspicion) inaugurated. In counterposition to this, one wonders if it may be not that Marx and Freud had not gone far enough, but that they already had gone too far. It may well be that the notion of the Enlightenment ego – from classical physics and economics – that was their prime target had already gone too far. What is needed perhaps for any sort of group of community, of the 'we', of national and other collective identity is not any sort of hermeneutics of suspicion at all. What may well instead be needed is perhaps a 'hermeneutics of retrieval'. Such a hermeneutics of retrieval, unlike the masters (and today's journey-men) of suspicion, will not unendingly sweep away foundations but will attempt to lay open the ontological foundations of communal being-in-the-world. A hermeneutics of retrieval will not suspiciously put the lie to first substantive and then procedural goods, but will seek to point to a grounded set of substantive goods as the basis of any sort of communal ethics. A hermeneutics of retrieval will not, in Fausstian suspicion, chronically be on the lookout for 'transcendental signifieds', it will not chronically defer and deny meaning. It will, instead of marvelling in the free play of the signifier, modestly 'look beneath' that signifier to gain access to the shared meanings which are conditions of existence, indeed *are* the very existence, of the 'we'.

From subjectivity to community

One particularly fruitful attempt at understanding community and collectivity today is found in the cultural studies literature. This literature has been invaluable in understanding social change, as Stuart Hall and others have provided necessary tools for analysis of the declining significance of social class, the increased significance of cultural, in comparison with social, factors, and the increased importance of leisure in comparison with the sphere of production. All of this has massive implications for changes in forms of community and collective identity. Cultural studies has increasingly been concerned with the media, and has argued that what is important here is not cultural production but instead cultural consumption. Analysts such as Fiske have contended that even the most mass-produced of Hollywood films, even the most apparently po-

litically and aesthetically retrograde soap operas, even the sort of popular muzak produced for example by Stock, Aitken and Waterman, can have politically progressive effects. These writers argue that even such cultural objects do not necessarily serve dominant ideologies, but can be used in cultural consumption by audiences for collective struggles against domination.⁶⁴ The point I want to make here is not so much about the relative merits of, say, Fiske's political judgement or even about the relative merits of producer-driven versus consumer-driven accounts of popular culture. The point instead concerns the possibility of cultural community, and the very terms 'producer', cultural 'text' or cultural 'object' and 'consumer' are telling in this context. That is, cultural communities, the cultural 'we', are collectivities of shared background practices, shared meanings, shared routine activities involved in the achievement of meaning. The cultural studies model would seem to rule this out. The cultural studies model instead resembles that of neo-classical economics, with 'producers' and 'consumers' abstracted from shared and embedded practices and instead operating as rational-choice-making individuals with 'preference schedules', with cultural 'products' to choose from on the marketplace. Unfortunately the sort of model that Fiske and his colleagues work with is pervasive not only among professors but in everyday life, and would seem to be a reason why cultural communities are indeed very thin on the ground today.

A more sophisticated approach within this framework is found in Dick Hebdige's writings on subcultures. Hebdige's understanding here moves away from producerist and consumerist perspectives to a stronger focus on cultural processes and embedded cultural practices. He speaks of 'authenticity' in the context of sub-cultural community precisely as instantiated in those subculture members whose way of life is the most distanced from consumerist mentalities. This focus on subculture is also a focus pre-eminently on *reflexive* community.⁶⁵ That is, if we are 'thrown' into the collective meanings and practices of the being-in-the-world of simple community, we reflexively 'throw ourselves' into the communal world of youth subculture, as we decide to become involved in them, or even with others come to have a hand in creating them. A problem with the idea of subcultures as conceived in cultural studies is the idea of 'resistance through rituals'. In this 'rituals' are conceived as the symbolic construction of subcultural identity. These are typically constructed through the 'bricolage' of a disconnected set of signifiers from previous styles.⁶⁶ For example Teddy

Boy subculture involves drawing on Edwardian, black American and a variety of other signifiers. The problem is that this whole focus on freely playing *combinateurs* of signifiers tends to ignore the whole basis of subcultures, or any community, which are shared meanings or shared signifieds.

The sort of cultural communities at issue here are evoked by Heidegger's discussions of 'world' in Division One of *Being and Time*. Here 'the world', conceived initially by Heidegger along the lines of a model of a metaphorical workshop (as a world, as a community), can exist only on the basis of the accessibility of meaning. When the workshop is functioning, Heidegger notes, focus is never on the sign or signifier; instead signs are seen immediately as meanings. It is only when there is breakdown that focus is on the sign.⁶⁷ When a community like a football team is functioning, the meaning of signs like a shout, a nod of the head, is transparent. Footballers read each other's signifiers already as meanings. It is only when there is breakdown that the goalkeeper must confer with his central defenders about gestures and sounds and take the signifier as problematized. In other words the movement to subject-object modes of thought takes place only with the breakdown of shared practices and shared meanings of the 'we', and to start from the subject-object assumptions of subcultures as a bricolage of signifiers and then try to understand 'the we', as does much of the cultural studies literature, is itself indeed problematic.

Perhaps the most influential and deeply considered attempt to grasp community beginning from considerations of the subject is in the work of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas's commitment to understanding community is profound. His theory is of 'communicative' action and his background in hermeneutics must be taken seriously. His commitment is not to Enlightenment abstraction or to contemporary expert-systems. He wants instead to preserve and widen the sphere of the 'life-world', conceived in a way consistent with Schutz's and Heidegger's idea of 'world'. The difference is that, instead of starting from the collective meanings of *Kultur* and proceeding to a defence of *Zivilisation*, Habermas takes his starting point from the individualism of *Zivilisation* and wants to arrive at the *Sittlichkeit*, the community, of *Kultur*. That is, Habermas wants to use the Enlightenment to protect the life-world from the excesses of the negative (and unintended) consequences of the Enlightenment. What Habermas specifically wants is a life-world of embedded social practices, that is, a *Sittlichkeit* (concrete ethical life) in Hegel's sense that is grounded in the intersubjectivity of communi-

cative action. Is this possible? Can such transcendental intersubjectivity be a basis for community? Surely in this context communicative intersubjectivity can be a basis for 'the social' or for 'society'.⁶⁸ The social, or society, as defined by classical sociologists such as Durkheim has been understood as consisting of abstract rules and norms regulating action in institutions. Durkheim himself was attacked by classical humanists in the first decade of the twentieth century in France for just this sort of scientific and 'clockwork' idea of society. Habermas's transcendental intersubjectivity – transcendental in that the subjects are disembedded from worlds of shared practices – is surely a good basis for the social in this sense. But so is Talcott Parsons's equally transcendental intersubjectivity of ego and alter, through which his sociology of action can yield the normatively governed institutional structures of functionalism. But community – *Gemeinschaft*, *Sittlichkeit* – is a far cry from these abstract rules. Instead it is based on *Sitten*, which are customs and by definition not rules; it is based in habits, not in judgements, but 'pre-judgements'. When Gadamer polemically pits truth against method in *Wahrheit und Methode*, he is not just referring to the advocacy of ideographic versus methodological rulebound approaches in the human sciences. He is also referring to the truths revealed in the community, by *Sittlichkeit* in everyday life.

For Habermas communicative rationality is a means by which intersubjectivity can roll back the claims of 'system' and expand the space of the life-world. This takes place through communicative interaction, in which speech-acts or utterances are potentially 'discursively redeemable validity claims'. Habermas recognizes that communicative rationality takes place on the basis of the sort of pre-understandings and background assumptions which are the domain of hermeneutics. But the great part of his attention is devoted not to these but to the examination of discursively redeemable validity claims. How can this cope with community? Now community in any substantial sense must be 'worlded'. It must be rooted in shared meanings and background practices. These practices have purpose, have their own specific 'telos'. These practices involve other human beings. They also involve things, which are not 'objects' but 'Zeuge', in Heidegger's sense – that is, tools, 'gear', including language and informational tools,⁶⁹ which we dwell among and invest significantly with affect. Everyday activities in the 'we' are involved in the routine achievement of meaning; they are involved in the production of substantive goods, which themselves are also meanings. Though activities are guided by such substantive goods

whose criteria are set internal to a given practice, this guiding is not by rules but by the example of such present and traditional practices.

Now consider the discursively redeemable validity claims of communicative rationality. In this the communications involved are understood as speech acts. Why should Habermas want to use speech-act theory? Surely speech-act-based sociolinguistics and conversation analysis have been criticized precisely because they look at utterances (a 'text', a 'corpus') in abstraction from everyday embedded social practices. Speech-act theory, observes Hubert Dreyfus, presumes the regulation of different sorts of utterances by 'rules', which goes against the anti-nomothetic, *sittlich* basis of community.⁷⁰ Further, Habermas looks at such speech acts between subjects as 'validity claims'.⁷¹ Hence the assumption right away is that meaning is not shared but seemingly chronically contested. Utterances are assumed to be in the first instance about attempts to establish or overturn positions of power. Speech acts become power plays. But in fact, in most communities of practice, communication does not in the first instance or usually involve power plays, but involves developing successfully a common collective practice. When a goalkeeper signals to his right fullback, at issue is the successful development often of an attacking pattern through the middle of the field and out to the wings, rather than in the first instance power relations between keeper and defender. When a colleague from another university – in the international sociological community – whom I esteem and who esteems me, rings me and asks me to get the article in the post to the journal she edits, at issue immediately is the production of a common product, rather than the power relations between her and me. Indeed if there were not sufficient shared meanings – and a bracketing out of speech acts as validity claims between us – it is unlikely that she and I would share enough common ground to be involved together in the project. Habermas's theory, it has been claimed, involves too weak a notion of power. I would like to argue rather the opposite – that it has too *strong* a notion of power; that it claims to see power in places where power just isn't, and in doing so cannot account for the shared meanings necessary for community. Why, one might ask, is communicative rationality a 'universal pragmatics'? Pragmatics in linguistics looks at power and what words do. Why does Habermas not instead proffer a *semantics*, focusing on the *meaning* of expressions?⁷²

Finally for Habermas these validity claims are 'discursively redeemable'. This means that where a validity claim is contested, the interlocutors must move into the realm of 'discourse' – in which arguments are systematically brought forward in support of the communications. The realms of discourse which Habermas is referring to are theoretical discourse, ethical or practical discourse, and aesthetic-expressive discourse. In this context comparison with Giddens is instructive. That is, the individualistic assumptions of Giddens's reflexive modernity, and its potential deficiencies in understanding community or the 'we', are in important ways also those found in communicative rationality. Both theorists, for example, assume an abstract or 'transcendental' subject-subject relation as starting point. For Habermas this is intersubjectivity; for Giddens it is the *intra*-subjectivity of the self-monitoring social agent. For Giddens modern reflexivity passes through the 'loop' of, or is mediated by, 'expert-systems'. For Habermas the equivalent of expert-systems are the 'discourses' which attest to the validity of the subject's utterances. Though not all expert-systems are such legitimating and speech-act redeeming discourses, all of Habermas's discourses would also be expert-systems.

Let us return to the notion of community implicit in Heidegger's 'workshop' model in *Being and Time*. Here being-in-the-world involves not 'subjects' but situated human beings absorbed in routine (or pre-reflexive) practices or activities with not objects but *Zeuge* (tools, 'gear', equipment) and involved in shared meanings and practices with not 'subjects' but other finite human beings. It is only with the breakdown of routine activity that human beings become subjects and the *Zeuge* become objects, as repair becomes necessary.⁷³ It is only with the breakdown of shared meanings that human beings become 'subjects' for one another. This is where the expert-systems, this is where the legitimating discourses, come in; that is, to repair the breakdown so that practices and shared meaningful activities can resume once again. But when the expert-systems and discourses *chronically* intervene, when they intervene 'preventively' and pervasively, then the practices, shared meanings and community become increasingly marginalized, made progressively less possible. The problem does not seem to be, as many have argued, that Habermas's discourse ethics is too abstract to have much purchase on reality. The problem may instead be that it has *too much* purchase on reality. It is more likely that social reality itself has become too abstract, too pervasively interpenetrated by expert-sys-

tems and legitimating discourses. It is more likely that neither the incessant discourse of the concept and cognitive reflexivity nor the interminable deconstruction of mimesis and aesthetic reflexivity might be the best mode of access to truth. What could be an alternative? Perhaps only in involved engagement, in having concern for things and people in a shared world. Perhaps not the incessant noise of the signifier of either discourse or deconstruction, but instead the already shared meanings of everyday social practices, make thinking and truth (and community) possible.

Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self* seems to have begun from far more promising assumptions in developing a truly reflexive hermeneutics and notion of community. We have already observed that the 'discourse ethics' of cognitive reflexivity disputes the notion of substantive goods and instead proffers a highly proceduralist notion of the good. Taylor doesn't deny the validity of this but instead parries by showing how such procedural ethics are themselves a substantive good and 'source' of the modern self. We have also noted that the deconstruction ethics of aesthetic reflexivity wants to do away with both substantive and proceduralist notions of the good. Again Taylor doesn't counter this, so much as show how such deconstructive anti-foundationalism is itself a foundation, indeed is itself a substantive good and source of the modern self. So far so good. But there is more. Taylor is a Hegel scholar and a communitarian. In his *Hegel* he insisted that we must understand community and ethics in terms not of Kant's abstract morality but of Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*, which he contextualized in the writings of the Romantic philosophers among Hegel's contemporaries. In this context it would seem that Taylor wants us to understand 'sources', not in terms of a reflexive subject; and that reflexivity lies not in the subject, nor the self, but instead in the *sources* of the self. It is that reflexivity must be present in the background practices, in the 'ever-already there' of the world into which the self is thrown.⁷⁴

Taylor seems then to offer us a notion of reflexive community in which the shared background assumptions are already reflexive. Here I think he is surely on the right track. But at the same time this line of approach raises a number of sticky, perhaps insurmountable, issues. First, Taylor seems to be telling us that we only *think* we are living in the presence of an impoverishing deficit of *Sittlichkeit*. He seems to be saying instead that we already have community, if only we knew where to look for it. This he does mostly by assertion. One may ask here if this isn't mostly a case of wishful thinking at best. At worst, if we already have community, then we are let off from

needing reflexively to create it. Further, what if we agree with Taylor that both the cognitive-utilitarian and aesthetic-expressive dimensions of modern reason are sources of the self? Are these grounds for rejoicing? Or are these 'sources' themselves so emptied-out, so abstract, that they instead are perhaps emblematic of 'system' having already finally colonized the life-world? Taylor, like many other thinkers, finds two traditions present in the aesthetic source of the self – on the one hand 'symbol' and on the other 'allegory'. Here the tradition of 'symbol' would embrace Goethe, Schiller, Schleiermacher and for example T. S. Eliot. 'Allegorists' would include Baudelaire and the *poètes maudits*, but also Benjamin, Derrida and Foucault. 'Symbol' arises from the Romantic tradition and is understood in terms of nature, totality, organicism, community and meaning. Allegory is in contrast cynical, urban, artificial, radically individualist and highlights the materiality rather than the transparency of the signifier. Taylor, then, for me inexplicably and surely unconvincingly, puts a number of arguments for the assimilation of allegory to symbol. In doing so he ends up proffering a cognitive and an aesthetic, but not a communitarian (hermeneutic), source of the self. I expect he does so because of certain (Christian) assumptions of a not Adornian but Hegelian 'positive dialectic', in which dialectical movement is governed and finally subsumed by the universalist moment of reason. None the less for Taylor, a self-conscious communitarian and hermeneutician, this is a very strange conclusion indeed. The result is a failure systematically to think through the potential sources of the 'we'.

Habitus, habiter, habits

Why do even these most muscular attempts to derive the 'we' from the 'I', to derive community from the individual, by even the most gifted of thinkers, ultimately fail? Why do such analyses end up with the same atomized, abstract phenomena that they began with? Why indeed? One may begin to look for an answer to such failure in perhaps the sort of questions that such analysts are in the first place posing. Perhaps instead the only possible way is to begin with self that is already situated in a matrix of background practices. And such is surely Pierre Bourdieu's starting point in his notion of 'habitus'. Bourdieu has been often likened to Anthony Giddens as a theorist of 'structuration'.⁷⁵ At first glance this seems indeed to be true. Bourdieu's 'habitus' as effectively a social actor is involved in

the production or construction of social structures. There is further in Bourdieu a 'duality of structure' in which structures are not only the outcome but the reflexive medium of action. Bourdieu had in his early work severely criticized the overly structural approach of Lévi-Strauss from, it seemed, the standpoint of agency. Later, his *Distinction* could serve as implicit critique of overly actionalist conceptions such as in rational-choice theory. Bourdieu's actors in *Distinction* are after all collective as much as individual. They act through the mediation of already structured class-related taste categories as they engage in 'classificatory struggles' for cultural hegemony.⁷⁶

Bourdieu himself has protested against this likening to Giddens, maintaining that his idea of 'habitus' has been radically misunderstood. But is this protest of Bourdieu's to be taken at face value? One way to approach this, possibly, is to begin with Bourdieu's idea of reflexivity. In his recent *Invention to Reflexive Sociology* Bourdieu speaks of reflexivity in terms of the systematic uncovering of the unthought categories which themselves are preconditions of our more self-conscious (in this case, sociological) practices.⁷⁷ What can be meant by this? Let us note to begin with that – unlike in Beck and in Giddens – reflection is not on social structure, that is, it is not on institutional (or other structural) rules. Reflexivity is instead on 'unthought categories', which are not as readily accessible to us as are social structures. Yet these unthought categories are also not, Bourdieu assures us, in principle inaccessible to the conscious mind as the Freudian unconscious.⁷⁸

What is Bourdieu getting at? He wants to understand the relationship between the conscious self and the unthought categories neither as (in Beck and Giddens) a subject-object monitoring relation, nor (as in Freud) an object-subject causal relation, in which cause is, so to speak, kept secret from effect. What he is getting at, or at least what he is suggesting for present purposes, is a *hermeneutic* relationship, in which the unthought categories are not causes but are to be hermeneutically interpreted. In which the unthought categories are also ontological foundations of practical consciousness. But let us not stop there, but instead proceed on to hermeneutic interpretation of the unthought categories. Bourdieu in effect does this interpretation for us. But first what are these categories which are also not social structures? They are, in the first instance, classificatory categories, on the lines very much of Durkheim and Mauss's *Primitive Classifications*.⁷⁹ Durkheim and Mauss observe that the framework for their classifications is the

Aristotelian (and Kantian) categories of logic. But Bourdieu's classificatory categories are not as immediately accessible as the latter, instead they are 'taste' categories, understood on the model of Kant's aesthetic judgement.⁸⁰ Now Bourdieu's *Distinction* seems *prima facie* to be a study in the social stratification of consumption. It is, however, much more than this. It is a sociology not just of taste in the strict sense but more generally of the whole range of our most immediate habits and practices. It is a sociology of our unthought, though bodily inscribed, categories. It is in short a sociology of the ontological foundations – in categories of habit – of conscious action.

But Bourdieu wants to interpret the unthought even further. He talks of habitus, most proximally, not in terms of classificatory categories, but of classificatory 'schemata'. This is significant because 'schemata' are more supple than categories, much less fixed. Schemata are in fact more immediate than the least mediated categories. They are difficult to distinguish in nature from the particular cases and practices they putatively subsume. Schemata are, in fact, that contradiction in terms, of 'unmediated (or immediate) mediators'.⁸¹ But the habitus and classificatory schemata can be interpreted yet further and even more immediately as 'predispositions', as 'orientations'. These are even more immediate than classificatory schemata. 'Predispositions' and 'orientations' are the learned, yet unthought, techniques of the body – such as swimming, ways of walking, playing tennis – which for Marcel Mauss too would be foundational for conscious conduct.

This takes us back to Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, which lends itself, it becomes clear now, to a second and radically different reading. Aesthetic reflexivity or 'mimetic reason', à la Adorno or Nietzsche, could understand the critique of judgement in terms of the critique by the particular of the universal. But instead of this reversal of this famous metaphysical hierarchy of the concept versus the aesthetic, Bourdieu suggests a step outside of metaphysics altogether and a reading of the third critique simply as judgement via the subsumption of a particular by a particular: the subsumption by 'predispositions', by 'orientations', by 'habits', of routine practices and background activities. The point here is that predispositions and habits are themselves background practices, are themselves routine activities. We are at this point a great distance away from the world of 'structure' and 'agency'. Bourdieu's 'logic of practice' has little to do with structure. In his early critique of Lévi-Strauss, he understood the 'rules' of structure as things the

anthropologists imagined they had discovered which regulated the processes of *la pensée sauvage*. On the contrary, claimed Bourdieu, the 'indigènes' were fully aware of the structures and used the rules instead as 'alibis', as legitimations. 'Rules' or structures don't even figure in structuring the habitus; in their place are 'habits' and 'predispositions' which by definition are counterposed to rules much in the same sense as Max Weber's notion of traditional action is to rational action.⁸² Habitus is just as far away from 'agency'. The theory of agency speaks the language of the 'unit act', 'habitus' the language of ongoing activities. Action theory posits, at least implicitly, a disembedded, cost-minimizing and benefit-maximizing, preference-scheduled actor. Habitus exists only as situated in its 'world'. Action theory is often 'constructivist', in which agency is the motive force behind structure as for example in 'actor-networks'. Habitus, in contrast, assumes a certain 'throwness' into a web of already existing practices and meanings.

Bourdieu's reflexive sociology has been especially influential for the 'reflexive anthropology' of Clifford, Rabinow, Marcus and others.⁸³ And now we can see how. Reflexivity in the sense of Bourdieu and the anthropologists operates in a fully different terrain than cognitive (Beck, Giddens) and aesthetic (Adorno, Nietzsche) reflexivity. In both cognitive and aesthetic reflexivity, a subject is presumed, outside of a world, for whom the world is (conceptually or mimetically) mediated. Reflexive anthropology entails breaking with the objectivism, the realism of Lévi-Strauss and of functionalism, and instead on a partial fusion of horizons with the world of one's 'respondents'. It means learning through habitus, of similar roots to 'habiter',⁸⁴ in which truth is neither conceptual nor mimetic, but becomes evident through shared practices. Reflexive anthropology (and sociology) means that we see our own concepts not as categories but as interpretive schemata, as predispositions and orientations, as our own habits. Reflexive human science depends on the emergence of a translation between our schemata and those of our respondents. It entails that we understand reflexively that our 'concepts' are only another set of (by Western accident) privileged schemata. Reflexive human science would need to understand itself as just another 'ethnology'. Thus the notion of reflexivity here is polar opposite to that of Beck and Giddens. For Beck and Giddens it tends to involve the bracketing of the life-world to arrive at individualized, subject-object forms of social knowledge. For reflexive anthropology it involves bracketing subject-object knowledge and situating knowers in their life-world.

Conclusions: reflexive community and the self

We have already outlined basic elements of a notion of community. Community must in a very fundamental sense be in a 'world', or 'worlded'. Even reflexivity in the context of community must be 'in-the-world'. Neither everyday nor human-scientific knowledge is a matter of a relationship between a knowing subject and the world as it is in epistemology.⁸⁵ Communal knowledge and the hermeneutic knowledge and the latter is only possible when the knower is in the same world as and 'dwells among' the things and other human beings whose truth she seeks. Community does not involve chronic problematization of the signifier, but is instead rooted in shared meanings and routine background practices. The shared practices here have ends or a 'telos' that guide them and are set internal to the practice. They involve other human beings, the things and tools (*Zeuge*) worked with and the things that are made. These practices are guided not by rules but by schemata, by *Sitten*, which can range from the 'mysteries' of the medieval crafts to the customs and practice of the sociological imagination. These practices involve an immediate investment of affect in the tools – including the signs – worked with and the other human beings with whom the practices are shared. Everyday activities in the 'we' are about the routine achievement of meaning: about the production of substantive goods, and guided by an understanding of more generally what is regarded as substantively good by that community. The substantively good is not encountered by communal beings as an 'imperative', divorced from the mundane and the everyday. It is instead already present in the world of meanings and practices into which human beings are thrown when they become part of the 'we'. The meanings and practices incorporating the substantive good are learnt, but then become unconscious as if inscribed on the body.

Communities are not about shared interests. Political parties and social classes – which have interests in common – are not communities. Political parties are typically aggregations of the interests of a plurality of interest groups, most of whom are not themselves typically communities but atomized collections of individuals. Political parties do have some communal bases. For example, the Sikh community might tend to support the British Labour Party. But the relationship even here between party and ethnic collectivity is hardly 'communal'. Social classes, also a basis of political parties, are not communities but rather interest groups. The middle class by

Table 1 Aspects of the three sorts of reflexivity I have outlined in this chapter. Cognitive reflexivity is more or less consistent with how I understand the positions of Beck and Giddens. Aesthetic reflexivity is addressed on pp. 135–146, and hermeneutic reflexivity on pp. 143–168

	Type of reflexivity		
	cognitive	aesthetic	hermeneutic
	'the I' (ego)	'the I' (desire)	'the We'
	{ utilitarian individualism	{ expressive individualism	community
mode of talk	Enlightenment modernity	aesthetic modernism	tradition
paradigmatic figures	Descartes/ Bentham	Baudelaire/ Nietzsche	silence Goethe/ Heidegger
story-telling	narrative	allegory	symbol
access to truth	conceptual	minnesis	through-situated practices
mode of social regulation	norms	anything goes	habits <i>Sitten</i>
temporality	narrative	the event	tradition
	<i>Zivilisation</i>	difference	<i>Kultur</i>
	identity		ontological foundations
	the social		culture
	transcendental ethics	<i>ethique</i> <i>aesthetique</i>	ethics of care
	risk	insecurity	care
	the subject	the object	background practices
privileged semiotic element	the referent	the signifier	the signified (meaning)
	action (unit act)		conduct (activities)
spatial mode	geometrical grid	the boulevard	place
ethical mode	norms		values

Table 1 Continued

	Type of reflexivity		
	cognitive	aesthetic	hermeneutic
	interests		needs
	proceduralism		substantive goods
	universalist ethics	ethics of non-identity	particularistic ethics
		ethics of the other	ethics of the same
mode of understanding	realism	deconstruction	hermeneutics
	propositional truth	power/ knowledge	disclosive truth
	epistemology		ontology
mode of dialectics	totality	determinate negation	<i>Stitlichkeit</i> (ethos)

many accounts may be so atomized as often not even to perceive shared interests. Middle classes have instead typically been able to pursue their interests on a familial basis. The working class has had typically to pursue collective (not communal) action. In some sectors – for example mining – very strong communal sentiments have underlain a typically very great propensity for collective strike action and solidarity. But this is not typically solidarity for the class as a whole.

Communities are not about shared *properties*. Groups of individuals can share sets of properties or characteristics, but yet be completely atomized in regard to one another. On a recent bus tour I took of the San Francisco Bay Area, our (black) bus driver and tour guide narratively pointed us tourists to the neighbourhoods and shops of the 'Chinese community' and the watering holes of the 'homosexual community'. He then spoke to us about how all of this was understood in the 'heterosexual community'. San Francisco's heterosexuals, though they share the property of primarily or exclusively engaging in heterosexual relations, do not in our sense form a community. They might participate in a Bay

Area 'imagined community', or even imagine themselves, against a perceived homosexual menace, to constitute a community, but there are nowhere near enough shared meanings and practices to be a community. San Francisco's homosexual and Chinese denizens are a lot closer to these criteria of community. These are also in certain respects, we shall see, reflexive communities.

'Lifestyle enclaves', like niche markets, share properties but they are not communities. Lifestyle enclaves and niche markets are possible only when consumption is disembedded from the guidance of communal mores. As consumption is individualized from communal guidance it can: 1) remain individualized; 2) be regrouped (through the sign economies of the information and communication structures, through for example marketing and advertising) as niche markets and lifestyle communities; 3) become 'positional consumption' of never-ending oneupmanship of keeping ahead of the Joneses; 4) take the creative turn of the 'romantic imaginery', as disembedding from communal regulation makes possible the modern phenomenon of daydreams⁸⁶; 5) disembedded from *Sitten*, be understood in characteristically modern fashion in regard to 'needs'; 6) set free, can find itself bonded with 'spectacle' and 'sign-value'; or 7) enter the instrumental rationality of 'calculating hedonism'.

Each of these forms of modern consumption (can consumption be conceived of in the absence of modernity?) is possible only in the absence of communal regulation. But a lifestyle enclave such as Berlin's Winterfeldplatz does begin to be a community as the same individuals meet in the same cafés on Sunday mornings, after being out all night on Saturday, and drink *Sekt* on the square. As these same people shop in the Flohmarkt and buy their pasta, fish and cheese from Winterfeldplatz market stalls on Wednesdays and Saturdays. When a certain style of dress, similar time-space trajectories, similar neologisms start systematically to repeat themselves. When it turns out that some Winterfeldplatz regulars have stalls in the market, others have opened up or work in small businesses in the area, a certain number have connection with the Berlin S&M scene, many with Schöneberg's very integrated gay scene, as others are active in the area's avant-garde rock scene. Thus Berking and Neckel can justifiably in their qualitative sociology of this Berlin district speak of Winterfeldplatz in terms of forms of post-traditional '*Vergemeinschaftungen*'.⁸⁷ *Vergemeinschaftungen* would need to be translated as 'communalization', but it means a lot more. And it would apply to certain 'taste communities' but not others. People who read the same newspaper or watch the same soap opera share

only an imagined community. To be in a taste community, which takes on the facticity of community, entails shared meanings, practices and obligations. It entails the transgression of distinction between consumer and producer. Take, for example the James Addiction fans that follow the group's gigs around the UK and meet up again at performances on the European continent; who 'dress the dress', read and write letters to and sometimes edit the fan mags. This is a community – as is the core of the travelling support of Leeds, Manchester United or Arsenal.

'Reflexive community' can be instructively understood in regard to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the 'field'. Here for Bourdieu in traditional society there are no fields, but there is community. In modernity however there is the differentiation of a number of 'delimited' (religious, political, legal, scientific, artistic, academic, sociological) fields from what then becomes the general, 'social field'. The social field, though it is divided into class fractions, is atomized, and the only sorts of community to be found there are imagined communities. 'Real' modern communities, which are also reflexive communities, are to be found in the delimited fields. In for example the sociological field, are found all our characteristics of community – the shared meanings and practices, the affective involvement with the 'tools' and product, the internalist generation of standards, telos, and ends, the felt obligations, the guidance by *Sitten*, the characteristic habitus of the field. Social actors in a field are as much producers of a cultural product as consumers. The same is true of the Manchester United supporters or the James Addiction core fans. That is, the cultural good produced in a given specialist field that we receive in the social field is produced as much by the supporters as by the players. The same would be true of the core membership of the ecological community, not of the pressure groups which are interest associations but of the social movement. The latter crucially define what sort of way ecology as a cultural product is received in the social field. These communities are reflexive in that: first, one is not born or 'thrown', but 'throws oneself' into them; second, they may be widely stretched over 'abstract' space, and also perhaps over time;⁸⁸ third, they consciously pose themselves the problem of their own creation, and constant re-invention far more than do traditional communities; fourth, their 'tools' and products tend to be not material ones but abstract and cultural.

There is of course another kind of reflexive community that cannot be assimilated into the Bourdieuan fields. This sort of community is defined by the fact that it cannot be assimilated, full stop.

What I am referring to is 'diasporic' communities, which are not reflexive in the sense that one does not choose to join them, but one is thrown into them. By 'diasporic', I am not referring to the American 'melting pot' of say Irish or Jewish 'communities'. That is, once 'melled', an ethnicity is no longer a community but just an ethnic interest group, raising money and espousing policy favourable to Israel or Sinn Féin. Diasporic communities are not melted but instead maintain what Salman Rushdie calls a collective 'being-in-the-world' which is grounded as, say, Muslim Indian. Yet they are reflexive in two senses. First in the sense that, as diasporic, theirs is a sort of 'mobile' being-in-the-world, which lends to it a certain mediation in regard to the 'original' ethnic in country of origin. Second, such community is reflexive because, like Simmel's 'stranger' and like Mannheim's *freischwebende Intellektuel*, the diasporic self is straight away aware of heterodoxy and aware of the possibility of a de-worlded position *au dessus*, as it were, *de la mêlée*. But unlike the stranger and Mannheim's intellectual, the diasporic self decides *not* to move into the position of subject as opposed to object, but to remain in his or her ethnic's being-in-the-world. The diasporic self of the ethnic minority community (and this would be the case for the 'diaspora-by-night' of the gay community) is thus a bit like the reflexive anthropologist, whose classificatory habits clash and mesh and to a certain extent inter-translate with those of the foreign (heterosexual) other.

Community, I have underscored throughout, is first and foremost a matter of shared meanings. The question then is: is reflexive community possible in our time-space distanced societies, in which meaning is by definition emptied out? Perhaps the place to look for hints of an answer as to how meaning in modernity is possible, is to the aesthetic realm. The aesthetic dimension has found voice, through for example Simmel, who juxtaposed outer spheres of an increasingly meaningless social ('das Soziale'), and 'inner spheres' of a life-enhancing meaning-creating subject. And sociologists today have observed that this aesthetic-expressive meaning-creating subject, with origins in aesthetic modernism, has now become ubiquitous in all the social strata and in everyday life, in the expressive individualism of what Gerhard Schulze insightfully chronicles as the *Erlebnisgesellschaft*. Niklas Luhmann, in his *Love as Passion*, has taken this meaning-creating modern subject and transformed it into the transcendental expressive intersubjectivity of the love relationship, characterized by intensified semantic interchange, whose very density constitutes itself as an

'autopoietic system' set off *vis-à-vis* the environment.⁸⁸ And indeed Luhmann's understanding has far greater truth content than the post-structuralist semiotic metaphysics of desire. That is, love and sexual relationships have very little to do with the 'free play of the signifier', and a lot more to do with the intensity of semantic interchange, that is of the interchange of meanings, of 'signifieds'. It is only when the relationship breaks down that we move into the subject-object mode, that we ask ourselves what has gone wrong – that we take the signifier as problematized, and wonder what she meant by that last faxed letter. It is only when things *really* have broken down that we bring in the 'expert-system', either as a set of legitimating arguments for our side of the dispute, or, worse, as professionals in the flesh. The very sad fact that we in modernity tend already, chronically, and preventively to use expert-systems tends in anticipation to create a semantic deficit in intimate relationships.

But even the emotional relationship of high-density semantics is hardly a community. Besides, this sort of relationship is overloaded with semantic affect and is inherently unstable. It is 'cocooned' from the wider community, and, worse, it can be just one more iteration of the solipsism of the contemporary expressive 'I', for whom both substantive and procedural goods have disappeared, and all that is left is the narcissistic self-grounding, not in the Cartesian 'I think therefore I am', but in Beck's 'I am I'. Bellah and his colleagues usefully juxtapose this intersubjective solipsism to classical friendship described by Aristotle, in which friendship rested in obligations not just between friends but to a wider community of practice, of shared activities with particular standards and ends.⁸⁹ And perhaps this is a clue to the question of meaning in contemporary reflexive communities. That is, we should not so much ask the question of the creation of meaning but look for the meaning that is already there. A number of German thinkers have contrasted two notions of 'experience', *Erlebnis*, which is subjective, and *Erfahrung*, which is more public and also connotes, for example, being 'experienced' in say a trade. The point is that perhaps we already live in what is not just an *Erlebnis*- but also an *Erfahrungsgesellschaft*. The point is that perhaps in various subcultures, in various practices that we reflexively commit ourselves to, the meaning is already there, already inscribed in the practices.

Where, however, does all this leave the 'self'? Is the self possible in the context of a genuine communitarianism? Some political philosophers like MacIntyre seem to lose the self, it seems, in a Thomist

absorption in the communal practices. Others, like Charles Taylor, perhaps partly because his Hegelian conceptions operate through not a negative but a 'positive' dialectic, seem overly to assimilate the community to the self. It is not, on the other hand, at all satisfactory only to allude vaguely to a 'dialectic' of self and community or to speak of a theory of community that 'leaves space' for the self. What is needed is a notion of involvement in communal practices out of which the self grows. And perhaps a clue here is found in Seyla Benhabib's call not for an ethics based in transcendental subjectivity or intersubjectivity but instead for a situated ethics grounded in 'care'. What she is looking for is not a situationist ethics like earlier existentialist moralists such as Rollo May, nor a standpoint ethics, on the lines of some feminists' standpointist epistemologies, but a situated ethics, and ethics firmly situated in a *Sittlichkeit*, in a world.⁹¹

The notion of *care* is crucial in the present context. We know that in the very late Foucault's 'subjectivist turn', one of the two volumes he wrote on sexuality was entitled 'the care for the self'. Much more explicitly and systematically Heidegger, of course, establishes the closest of bonds between the phenomenon of care and the self. In fact for Heidegger the self is unthinkable outside of care. Division One of *Being and Time* thematizes the world, much in the sense of the above view of shared meanings and practices. Division Two, however, thematizes care and the self. But already in Division One Heidegger has implicitly introduced care. That is, first the relationship in-the-world between human beings (*Dasein*) and things is understood in terms of 'concern'. Now the German for care is *Sorge*; for the tools and things in Heidegger's 'workshop', 'concern' is *besorgen*, and the 'solicitude' for other human beings of being-in-the-world is *fürsorgen*.⁹²

So at least implicitly care (*Sorge*) for the self in Heidegger arises out of the same logic as *besorgen* (concern) for things and *Fürsorge* (solicitude) for other human beings. Now *besorgen*-type care for the tools, the signs, the product and the referential whole of the workshop, that is, care for 'entities', is connected with the fact that entities reveal themselves for situated human beings. They reveal themselves in their unfolding, in their becoming. And 'care' entails that *Dasein* must have respect for that becoming; that it must matter to *Dasein*. The same can be said for the development of other human beings in *Fürsorge*. *Sorge*, the third type of Heideggerian care, is the one closest to Foucault's care for the self. Here care no longer relates to beings absorbed in, and as absorption in, the meanings and

practices of the world, but to the radical thrownness of *Dasein* into the uncanniness, into the isolation of *Dasein*'s 'being-towards-death'. A radically individuated, Kierkegaardian temporality emerges in the structure of care for the self. But for Heidegger *Sorge* and the authentic self bound up with this uncanny and radical individuation must first be involved with and care for things and other human beings in everyday communal practices.⁹³

To develop this line of thought further is beyond the scope of the theoretical sociology of reflexivity which is the theme of this book. What I wanted to point to was just one possibility of developing a notion of the self consistent with involvement in the 'we'. Let me append finally a coda with a very few self-reflections on my own method in this book. The thrust of my argument has been in support of hermeneutic reflexivity and community, against the individualization theses of both aesthetic and especially cognitive reflexivity. This can be accounted for, first with a justification and then with an explanation. By way of justification let me say that in fact I think that there are three very important sources of the contemporary self, which are analytically separable as cognitive, aesthetic and hermeneutic-communitarian 'moments'. And that these exist in us in an often contradictory and irreconcilable way. I don't imagine that this can be remedied a great deal, and am not certain that it should be. The majority of us will most probably have to live with these contradictions. My concentration on the hermeneutic or communitarian dimension has been largely because – in our present age of cognitive-utilitarian and aesthetic-expressive individualism – it is the one I feel is most in need of some sort of operation of retrieval.

The good news about the sort of hermeneutics of retrieval I am advocating is that it does give substantial purchase on the phenomenon of community. The bad news is that it has typically done so – in Heidegger, in philosophical communitarians like MacIntyre and Taylor, in sociological communitarians like Bellah and Daniel Bell, in the sociological hermeneutics of the ethnomethodologists – through assuming away power, through the unjustified and by implication politically conservative presumption of consensus. What seems to be needed is a radical hermeneutics. Yet I do not believe that contemporary critical hermeneutics or critical sociolinguistics has been of sufficient help in this context. The tendency of both is to think in terms of subject-object notions of truth, and to interpret discourse and practice in terms of underlying ideological structures. The tendency is to speak of practices which are not at the

same time *Sitten* or routine background activities but which instead are, in some substantial sense, rule-bound. In this sense critical hermeneutics is a hermeneutics not of retrieval but of suspicion.

Maybe the place to turn again is to Bourdieu, who, as we showed at length above, gives us a hermeneutics of retrieval at whose core is not consensus but power. That is, Bourdieu's 'fields' are peopled not by the structures, agents, discourses, ideologies, subjects and objects of the hermeneutics of suspicion but instead by habits, unconscious and bodily practices and categories of the unthought. Yet power is there in the Bourdieuan framework of classes and class fractions which are struggling for hegemony. But what is struggled over is vastly different than in the hermeneutics of suspicion. What is struggled over is not ideas as discursively redeemable validity claims. It is instead the background assumptions (taste categories, the most immediate classificatory categories) which are the ground for such rational speech acts. What is struggled over is not ideology, which itself is rule-bound and normatively structured and discursively articulated: it is instead the habits, the *Sitten*, which are the ontological foundations of ideology. Ideology is comprised of *judgements*, though of false judgements, to which critical hermeneutics counterposes the valid or true judgements. The perhaps not critical but *radical* hermeneutics of retrieval will instead look at the grounding of ideology itself in a set of *pre-judgements*, in a set of *Sitten* which also offer access to truth. Who is doing the struggling in Bourdieu's view is not class (or class-fraction) conceived as a collective actor, with its attached assumptions of consciousness and the abstract unit act. It is class as a collective habitus, as a set of routine activities, as a *form of life*. It is not class as an organized actor with conscious goals. Instead of a logic of consciousness it is a 'logic of practice', and it takes place not through institutional organization but through the force of shared meanings and habits. At issue is finally not a question of the 'structures' being present in the practices, and that is because these shared meanings and *Sitten* are not structures at all.

The classes-in-struggle in reflexive modernity are, as I suggested above, determined by their place in not the mode of production but the 'mode of information'. And this sort of structural location also partly explains the nature of this book. That is, Bourdieu's 'social field' is becoming increasingly the same thing as this informational and communicational field. And the sociologist, previously marginalized and 'above' the social like Mannheim's free-floating intellectual, is now smack dab in the middle of the new

Kulturgesellschaft.⁹⁴ As the middle class grows, as the proportion of the population grows who work inside the information and communication-structures, so at the same time does the scope of the expert-systems grow. That is, Bourdieu's specialist fields or Giddens's expert-systems now no longer either dominate or liberate the masses. Instead they *are* the masses. In the UK and USA probably some 25 per cent of the work-force is active in expert-systems. The sociologist, previously the objective student of the masses, finds himself or herself in just another expert-system alongside, and in the same world as, the masses now peopling the other expert-systems.

This location, no longer at the margins but at the heart of an increasingly cultural society, at the heart of the *Kulturgesellschaft*, means not just that the sociologist is in largely the same world as his or her respondents. It also means there is a growing displacement of the object of the human sciences from the social to the cultural. This is registered in the recent explosion of cultural studies (in the broadest sense of the term), in student numbers, Ph.D.s, books, journals and magazines. Just as the nineteenth-century separation of the social from the polity heralded the turn-of-the-twentieth-century birth of sociology in the advanced countries, so does the later twentieth-century growing superimposition of the information and communication (I&C) structures, which are *cultural* structures, on the social herald the turn-of-the-twenty-first-century birth and pervasion of cultural studies. This is reflected for example in the transformation of structuralism, which from Marx via Durkheim through Parsons essentially was a question of *social* structuralism; whilst from the 1960s in, for example, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Lacan and Foucault, it became a linguistic or *cultural* structuralism. Giddens's and Beck's theories of reflexive modernization also point to and reflect this same sort of decline of social structures. Only they don't sufficiently take into account the newer importance of cultural structures.

There are two ways that we can understand the 'implosion' of the social field into, on the one hand, the I&C structures and, on the other, into the mass expert-systems of the mass specialist fields. Either we can presume that now everybody is even further individualized, further atomized, as at one time the isolated (expert) sociological observer was. Or we can see chances open up for new forms of the 'we' – grounded in the expert-systems, founded on the I&C structures – which are vastly different from traditional communities. In turn these new cultural communities offer possibilities of even more intensified reflexivity. That is, these new com-

munities are hardly 'irrationalist'. They entail a reflexivity that is much more enhanced than that merely on social structures. They entail a reflexivity and understanding of the unthought categories, of the far less accessible *Sitten*, of the shared meanings that are the basis of community. They involve in short a hermeneutic reflexivity. And this hermeneutic reflection is not solely a matter of 'choice'. It is partly something to which we are fated by the increased hegemony of the cultural structures.

But new community involves not just heightened reflexivity but at the same time its opposite in the substantial intensification of contingency. The very 'groundless ground' of reflexive community has been captured by two important cultural theorists in very different contexts through the poet William Carlos Williams's phrase 'pure products of America gone crazy'. The first of these was the reflexive anthropologist James Clifford. The second was popular culture commentator Greil Marcus in his *Dead Elvis*.⁹⁵ Now Elvis Presley was a 'pure product of America' (the ground) to be sure. And he was a pure product 'gone crazy' (the groundless). *Dead Elvis*, or *Elvis dead*, represents even more poignantly this contradiction, of a groundless ground, of a being-in-the-world which is simultaneously radically contingent. Of being-in-the-world as *fortuna*. But how different from this is the sociologist, the cultural analyst, now grounded in the world, now grounded in reflexive communities inside the expert-systems, inside the information and communication structures, which themselves are cast adrift? Are we too not the groundless ground, the groundless community? Too often we, inside the expert-systems, 'we' constituting informed public opinion, will look askew at the 'neo-tribalism' of say, the anomic eastern German new Nazis of the terraces. Perhaps we would do better to redirect our gaze on a much less marginal phenomenon. Perhaps we would do better to redirect our gaze somewhat closer to home. Perhaps we could come to gain the courage to pose the radically important and radically difficult questions: that is to ask ourselves if it is perhaps not also we who are the neo-tribes.

NOTES

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