

**Communication
and the
Evolution
of Society**

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Habermas**

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Introduction by
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are embedded in relations to reality in such a way that in an acceptable speech action segments of external nature, society, and internal nature always come into appearance together. Language itself also appears in speech, for speech is a medium in which the linguistic means that are employed instrumentally are also reflected. In speech, speech sets itself off from the regions of external nature, society, and internal nature, as a reality *sui generis*, as soon as the sign-substrate, meaning, and denotation of a linguistic utterance can be distinguished.

The following table represents the correlations that obtain for

- a. The domains of reality to which every speech action takes up relation.
- b. The attitudes of the speaker prevailing in particular modes of communication.
- c. The validity claims under which the relations to reality are established.
- d. The general functions that grammatical sentences assume in their relations to reality.

Domains of Reality	Modes of Communication: Basic Attitudes	Validity Claims	General Functions of Speech
"The" World of External Nature	Cognitive: Objectivating Attitude	Truth	Representation of Facts
"Our" World of Society	Interactive: Conformative Attitude	Rightness	Establishment of Legitimate Interpersonal Relations
"My" World of Internal Nature	Expressive: Expressive Attitude	Truthfulness	Disclosure of Speaker's Subjectivity
Language	_____	Comprehensibility	_____

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Moral Development
and Ego Identity

In July of 1974, on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, the *Institut für Sozialforschung* in Frankfurt arranged a series of lectures to which Herbert Marcuse, Leo Löwenthal, Oskar Negt, Alfred Schmidt, and Jürgen Habermas contributed. This is the text on which Habermas' lecture was based.

Since the tradition of the Frankfurt Institute has been immediately embodied in the lectures by Marcuse and Löwenthal and has been made present in two essential aspects by contributions from representatives of the postwar generation, I feel myself absolved from duties that the occasion of this anniversary would otherwise have imposed. In other words, I shall not be delivering a ceremonial address. Moreover, the state in which critical social theory finds itself today—if one compares it with its now classical expressions—gives no occasion to celebrate. Finally, there is a systematic reason for being somewhat sparing with tributes to the past: the members of the original institute have always felt themselves one with psychoanalysis in the intention of breaking the power of the past over the present; to be sure, they have tried to realize this intention, as psychoanalysis does, through future-oriented memory.

I

I would like today to deal with fragments of a thematic that interests my co-workers and me in connection with an empirical investigation into the potential for conflict and apathy among young people.¹ We suspect that there is a connection between patterns of socialization, typical developments of adolescence, corresponding solutions to the adolescent crisis, and the forms of identity constructed by the young—a connection that can explain deep-seated, politically relevant attitudes. This problem leads one to reflect on moral development and ego identity, a theme that takes us naturally beyond this to a fundamental question of critical social theory, viz. to the question of the normative implications of its fundamental concepts. The concept of ego identity obviously has more than a descriptive meaning. It describes a symbolic organization of the ego that lays claim, on the one hand, to being a universal ideal, since it is found in the structures of formative processes in general and makes possible optimal solutions to culturally invariant, recurring problems of action. On the other hand, an autonomous ego organization is by no means a regular occurrence, the result, say, of naturelike processes of maturation; in fact it is usually not attained.

If one considers the normative implications of concepts such as ego strength, dismantling the ego-distant parts of the superego, and reducing the domain in which unconscious defense mechanisms function, it becomes clear that psychoanalysis also singles out certain personality structures as ideal. When psychoanalysis is interpreted as a form of language analysis, its normative meaning is exhibited in the fact that the structural model of ego, id, and superego presupposes unconstrained, pathologically undistorted communication.² In psychoanalytic literature these normative implications are, of course, usually rendered explicit in connection with the therapeutic goals of analytic treatment. In the social-psychological works of the *Institut für Sozialforschung* one can show that the basic concepts of psychoanalytic theory could enter integrally into description, hypothesis formation, and measuring instruments precisely because of their normative content. The early studies by Fromm of the sado-masochistic character

and by Horkheimer of authority and the family, Adorno's investigation of the mechanisms for the formation of prejudice in authoritarian personalities, and Marcuse's theoretical work on instinct structure and society all follow the same conceptual strategy: basic psychological and sociological concepts can be interwoven because the perspectives projected in them of an autonomous ego and an emancipated society reciprocally require one another. This link of critical social theory to a concept of the ego that preserves the heritage of idealist philosophy in the no-longer idealist concepts of psychoanalysis is retained even when Adorno and Marcuse proclaim the obsolescence of psychoanalysis: "Society is beyond the stage at which psychoanalytic theory could illuminate its ingress into the psychic structure of the individual and could thereby reveal the mechanisms of social control *in* individuals. The cornerstone of psychoanalysis is the idea that social controls arise from the struggle between instinctual and social needs, from a struggle within the individual."³ It is precisely this intrapsychic confrontation that is supposed to have become obsolete in the totally socialized society, which, so to speak, undercuts the family and directly imprints collective ego ideals on the child. Adorno had earlier argued in a similar vein: "Psychology is not a reservation for the particular protected from the general. The more social antagonisms increase, the more the thoroughly liberal and individualistic conception of psychology itself evidently loses its meaning. The pre-bourgeois world does not yet know psychology; the totally socialized world knows it no longer. To the latter corresponds analytic revisionism; this is adequate to the shift of power between society and the individual. Societal power hardly needs the mediating agencies of ego and individuality any longer. This then manifests itself as a growth of so-called ego psychology; while in truth individual psychological dynamics are replaced by the partly conscious, partly regressive adaptation of the individual to society."⁴ But even this melancholy farewell to psychoanalysis appeals to the idea of an uncoerced ego that is identical with itself; how else could the form of total socialization be recognized, if not in the fact that it neither produces nor tolerates upright individuals.

I do not wish to go into the thesis of the end of the individual here.⁵ In my view, Adorno and Marcuse have allowed themselves to be seduced, by an overly sensitive perception and an overly simplified interpretation of certain tendencies, into developing a left counterpart to the once-popular theory of totalitarian domination. I mention those utterances only to draw attention to the fact that critical social theory still holds fast to the concept of the autonomous ego, even when it makes the gloomy prognosis that this ego is losing its basis. Nonetheless, Adorno always refused to provide a direct explication of the normative content of basic critical concepts. To specify the make-up of the ego structures that are mutilated in the total society would have been regarded by him as false positivity. Adorno had good reasons to reject the demand for a positive conception of social emancipation and ego autonomy. He developed these reasons theoretically in his critique of First Philosophy: the attempts of ontological or anthropological thought to secure for themselves a normative foundation, as something first and unmediated, are doomed to failure. Additional reasons stem from the practical consideration that positive theories harbor a potential for legitimation that can be used, in opposition to their stated intentions, for purposes of exploitation and repression (as the example of classical doctrines of natural law shows). Finally, the normative content of basic critical concepts can be reconstructed nonontologically, that is, without recourse to a first unmediated something (or if you will, dialectically) only in the form of a developmental logic. But Adorno, despite his Hegelianism, distrusted the concept of a developmental logic because he held the openness and the initiative power of the historical process (of the species as well as of the individual) to be incompatible with the closed nature of an evolutionary pattern.

These are good reasons that can serve as a warning; but they can grant no dispensation from the duty of justifying concepts used with a critical intent. And Adorno did not always avoid doing so in philosophical contexts. In *Negative Dialectic* he says about the Kantian concept of the intelligible character: "According to the Kantian model subjects are free to the extent that they

are conscious of themselves, are identical with themselves; and in such identity they are also unfree to the extent that they stand under and perpetuate its compulsion. As non-identical, as diffuse nature, they are unfree; and yet as such they are free, because in the impulses that overpower them they also become free of the compulsive character of identity."⁶ I read this passage as an aporetic development of the determinations of an ego identity that makes freedom possible without demanding for it the price of unhappiness, violation of one's inner nature. I want to try to interpret this dialectical concept of ego identity with the cruder tools of sociological action theory and without fear of a false positivity; and I want to do so in such a way that the (no-longer-concealed) normative content can be incorporated in empirical theories and the proposed reconstruction of this content can be opened up to indirect testing.

II

The problems of development grouped around the concept of ego identity have been treated in three different theoretical traditions: in analytic ego psychology (H. S. Sullivan, Erikson), in cognitive developmental psychology (Piaget, Kohlberg), and in the symbolic interactionist theory of action (Mead, Blumer, Goffman, et al.).⁷ If we step back for a moment and look for points of convergence among them, we find basic conceptions that can perhaps be summarized (in a simplified way) as follows.

1. The ability of the adult subject to speak and act is the result of the integration of maturational and learning processes, the interplay of which we cannot yet adequately understand. We can distinguish cognitive development from linguistic development and from psychosexual or motivational development. This motivational development seems to be intimately connected with the acquisition of interactive competence, that is, of the ability to take part in interactions (actions and discourses).⁸

2. The formative process of subjects capable of speaking and acting runs through an irreversible series of discrete and increasingly complex stages of development; no stage can be skipped over, and each higher stage implies the preceding stage in the sense of a rationally recon-

structible pattern of development. This concept of a developmental logic has been worked out especially by Piaget, but there are also certain correspondences in the other two theoretical traditions.⁹

3. The formative process is not only discontinuous but as a rule is crisis-ridden. The resolution of stage-specific developmental problems is preceded by a phase of destructure and, in part, by regression. The experience of the productive resolution of a crisis, that is, of overcoming the dangers of pathological paths of development, is a condition for mastering later crises.¹⁰ The concept of a maturational crisis has been worked out especially in psychoanalysis, but in connection with the adolescent phase it also has a meaning for the other two theoretical traditions.¹¹

4. The developmental direction of the formative process is characterized by increasing autonomy. By that I mean the independence that the ego acquires through successful problemsolving, and through growing capabilities for problemsolving, in dealing with—

a) The reality of external nature and of a society that can be controlled from strategic points of view;

b) The nonobjectified symbolic structure of a partly internalized culture and society; and

c) The internal nature of culturally interpreted needs, of drives that are not amenable to communication, and of the body.¹²

5. The identity of the ego signifies the competence of a speaking and acting subject to satisfy certain consistency requirements. A provisional formulation by Erikson runs as follows: "The feeling of ego identity is the accumulated confidence that corresponding to the unity and continuity which one has in the eyes of others, there is an ability to sustain an inner unity and continuity."¹³ Naturally ego identity is dependent on certain cognitive presuppositions; but it is not a determination of the epistemic ego. It consists rather in a competence that is formed in social interactions. Identity is produced through *socialization*, that is, through the fact that the growing child first of all integrates itself into a specific social system by appropriating symbolic generalities; it is later secured and developed through *individuation*, that is, precisely through a growing independence in relation to social systems.

6. The transposition of external structures into internal structures is an important learning mechanism. Piaget speaks of interiorization when schemata of action, that is, rules for the manipulative mastery of objects, are internally transposed and transformed into schemata of apprehension and of thought. Psychoanalysis and interactionism assert

a similar transposition of interaction patterns into intrapsychic patterns of relation (internalization).¹⁴ With this mechanism is connected the further principle of achieving independence—whether from external objects, reference persons, or one's own impulses—by actively repeating what one has at first passively experienced or undergone.

In spite of these (admittedly somewhat stylized) convergent fundamental conceptions, none of these three theoretical approaches has as yet led to an explanatorily powerful theory of development, a theory that would permit a precise and empirically meaningful determination of the concept of ego identity (which is, nevertheless, being used more and more frequently). Taking analytic ego psychology as her point of departure, Jane Loevinger has, however, attempted to work out a theory that is meant to grasp ego development independently of cognitive development on the one side, and of psychosexual development on the other.¹⁵ According to this conception, ego development and psychosexual development are together supposed to determine motivational development (see, Schema 1). I do not want to discuss this proposal in detail, but I shall point out three difficulties.

1. The claim to have grasped, in an analytically sharp way, something like ego development by employing the dimensions of behavioral control or superego formations, interactive style, and stage-specific developmental problems, does not strike me as plausible. For the developmental problems listed in the third column obviously do not lie in a single dimension, but touch on cognitive, motivational, and communicative tasks. Moreover, the superego formations circumscribed in the first column can scarcely be analyzed independently of psychosexual development.

2. The claim that the given stages of development follow an inner logic cannot be made good even intuitively. Nor does each row characterize a structural whole; nor can a hierarchy of increasingly complex stages of development building one on another be extracted from the columns.

3. Finally, the relation of the claimed logic of ego development to the empirical conditions under which it is realized in concrete life histories is not considered at all. Are there alternative paths of development that lead to the same goal? When do deviations occur from the rationally reconstructible developmental pattern? How great are the tolerance limits of the personality system and of social structures

Schema 1. *Stages of Ego Development*
(according to Jane Loevinger)

Stage	Impulse control and character development	Interpersonal style	Conscious preoccupation
Presocial Symbiotic		Autistic Symbiotic	Self vs. nonself
Impulse ridden	Impulse ridden, fear of retaliation	Exploitive; dependent	Bodily feelings, especially sexual and aggressive
Opportunistic	Expedient, fear of being caught	Exploitive, manipulative, zero-sum-game	Advantage, control
Conformist	Conformity to external rules, shame	Reciprocal, superficial	Things, appearance, reputation
Conscientious	Internalized rules, guilt	Intensive, responsible	Differentiated inner feelings, achievements, traits
Autonomous	Coping with inner conflict, toleration of differences	Intensive concern for autonomy	Ditto, role conceptualization, development, self-fulfillment
Integrated	Reconciling inner conflicts, renunciation of unattainable	Ditto, cherishing of individuality	Ditto, identity

Source: Jane Loevinger, "The Meaning and Measurement of Ego Development," *American Psychologist*, 21 (1966): 198.

Schema 1a. *Stages of Moral Consciousness*
(according to Lawrence Kohlberg)

Obedience and punishment orientation	Egocentric deference to superior power or prestige, or a trouble-avoiding set. Objective responsibility.	I Preconventional level
Instrumental hedonism	Right action is that instrumentally satisfying the self's needs and occasionally those of others. Naive egalitarianism and orientation to exchange and reciprocity.	
Good-boy orientation	Orientation to approval and to pleasing and helping others. Conformity to stereotypical images of majority or natural role behavior, and judgment by intentions.	II Conventional level
Law-and-order orientation	Orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.	
Contractual-legalistic orientation	Right action is defined in terms of individual rights and of standards which have been initially examined and agreed upon by the whole society. Concern with establishing and maintaining individual rights, equality, and liberty. Distinctions are made between values having universal, prescriptive applicability and values specific to a given society.	III Postconventional level
Universal-ethical-principle orientation	Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract; they are not concrete moral rules. These are universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.	

Source: Elliot Turiel, "Conflict and Transition in Adolescent Moral Development," *Child Development* 45 (1974): 14-29.

for such deviations? How do the stage of development and basic institutions of a society interfere with an ontogenetic developmental pattern?

I would like to deal with these difficulties in turn. First I shall isolate a central and well-examined aspect of ego development, namely moral consciousness. Even here I shall consider only the cognitive side, the ability to make moral judgments. (In Schema 1a I have coordinated the stages of moral consciousness proposed by Kohlberg with Schema 1, the stages of ego development proposed by Jane Loevinger, in order to emphasize that moral development represents a part of the development of personality that is decisive for ego identity.) I shall then show that Kohlberg's stages of moral consciousness satisfy the formal conditions for a developmental logic by reformulating these stages within a general action-theoretic framework. Last I shall remove the restriction to the cognitive side of communicative action and show that ego identity requires not only cognitive mastery of general levels of communication but also the ability to give one's own needs their due in these communication structures; as long as the ego is cut off from its internal nature and disavows the dependency on needs that still await suitable interpretations, freedom, no matter how much it is guided by principles, remains in truth unfree in relation to existing systems of norms.

III

Kohlberg defines six stages in a rationally reconstructible development of moral consciousness. To begin with, moral consciousness expresses itself in judgments about morally relevant conflicts of action. I call those action conflicts "morally relevant" that are capable of consensual resolution. The moral resolution of conflicts of action excludes the manifest employment of force as well as "cheap" compromises; it can be understood as a continuation of communicative action—that is, action oriented to reaching understanding—with discursive means. Thus the only resolutions permitted are those which:

Harm the interests of at least one of the parties involved or affected;
Nevertheless, permit a transitive ordering of the interests involved

from a point of view accepted as capable of consensus—the point of view, let us say, of a good and just life;

Entail sanctions in case of failure (punishment, shame, or guilt).

(Compare Kohlberg's definitions of the stages of moral consciousness in Schema 1b. As Schema 2 shows, different sanctions and domains of validity correspond to these stages.)

Schema 1b. Definition of Moral Stages

I. Preconventional level

At this level the child is responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad, right or wrong, but interprets these labels in terms of either the physical or the hedonistic consequences of action (punishment, reward, exchange of favors), or in terms of the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels. The level is divided into the following two stages:

Stage 1: *The punishment and obedience orientation.* The physical consequences of action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority (the latter being stage 4).

Stage 2: *The instrumental relativist orientation.* Right action consists of that which instrumentally satisfies one's own needs and occasionally the needs of others. Human relations are viewed in terms like those of the market place. Elements of fairness, of reciprocity, and of equal sharing are present, but they are always interpreted in a physical pragmatic way. Reciprocity is a matter of »you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours«, not of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

II. Conventional level

At this level, maintaining the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation is perceived as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. The attitude is not only one of *conformity* to personal expectations and social order, but of loyalty to it, of actively *maintaining*, supporting, and justifying the order, and of identifying with the persons or group involved in it. At this level, there are the following two stages:

Stage 3: *The interpersonal concordance or "good boy-nice girl" orientation.* Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others and is

approved by them. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is majority or "natural" behavior. Behavior is frequently judged by intention—"he means well" becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being "nice."

Stage 4: *The "law and order" orientation.* There is orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.

III. Postconventional, autonomous, or principled level

At this level, there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles which have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles, and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups. This level again has two stages.

Stage 5: *The social-contract legalistic orientation,* generally with utilitarian overtones. Right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights, and standards which have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. There is a clear awareness of the relativism of personal values and opinions and a corresponding emphasis upon procedural rules for reaching consensus. Aside from what is constitutionally and democratically agreed upon, the right is a matter of personal "values" and "opinion." The result is an emphasis upon the "legal point of view," but with an emphasis upon the possibility of changing law in terms of rational considerations of social utility (rather than freezing it in terms of stage 4 "law and order"). Outside the legal realm, free agreement and contract is the binding element of obligation. This is the "official" morality of the American government and constitution.

Stage 6: *The universal ethical principle orientation.* Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen *ethical principles* appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative); they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of *justice*, of the *reciprocity* and *equality* of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as *individual persons*.

Source: Lawrence Kohlberg, "From Is to Ought," in T. Mishel, ed., *Cognitive Development and Epistemology* (New York, 1971), pp. 151-236.

Schema 2. Elucidation of the Stages of Moral Consciousness (Kohlberg)

Cognitive presuppositions	Stages of moral consciousness	Idea of the good and just life	Sanctions	Domain of validity
IIa. Concrete-operational thought	1. Punishment-obedience orientation	Maximization of pleasure through obedience	Punishment (deprivation of physical rewards)	Natural and social environment (undifferentiated)
	2. Instrumental hedonism	Maximization of pleasure through exchange of equivalents		
IIb. Concrete-operational thought	3. Good-boy orientation	Concrete morality of gratifying interactions	Shame (withdrawal of love and social recognition)	Group of primary reference persons Members of the political community
	4. Law-and-order orientation	Concrete morality of a customary system of norms		
III. Formal-operational thought	5. Social-contractual legalism	Civil liberty and public welfare	Guilt (reaction of conscience)	Legal associates in general Private persons in general
	6. Ethical-principled orientation	Moral freedom		

This empirically supported classification of expressions of moral judgment is supposed to satisfy the theoretical claim to represent developmental stages of moral consciousness. If we now take upon ourselves the burden of proof for this claim—a claim that Kohlberg himself has not made good—we commit ourselves to show that the descriptive sequence of moral types represents a developmental-logical nexus (in Flavell's sense). I should like to arrive at this goal through connecting moral consciousness with general qualifications for role behavior. The following three steps serve this end: first I introduce structures of possible communicative action and, indeed, in the sequence in which the child grows into this sector of the symbolic universe. I then coordinate with these basic structures the cognitive abilities (or competences) that the child must acquire in order to be able to move at the respective level of his social environment; that is, taking part first in incomplete interactions, then in complete interactions, and finally in communications that require passing from communicative action to discourse. Second, I want to look at this sequence of general qualifications for role behavior (at least provisionally) from developmental-logical points of view in order, finally, to derive the stages of moral consciousness from these stages of interactive competence.

I begin with the basic concepts of communicative action that must be presupposed for the perception of moral conflicts. These include: concrete behavioral expectations and corresponding intentional actions; then generalized behavioral expectations that are reciprocally connected with one another, that is, social roles and norms that regulate actions; principles that can serve to justify or to generate norms; the situational elements that are connected with actions (e.g., action consequences) or with norms (e.g., as conditions of application or as side effects); also actors who communicate with one another about something; and finally orientations, insofar as they are effective as motives for action. I am adopting the action-theoretic framework introduced by Mead and developed by Parsons, without thereby accepting conventional role theory.¹⁰ (In Schema 3 I have ordered these components from the perspective of the socialization of the growing child.)

Schema 3.

General Structures of Communicative Action

Cognitive presuppositions	Levels of interaction			Action motivations			Perception of		
	Incomplete interaction	Concrete actions and consequences of action	Generalized pleasure/pain	Natural identity	Norms	Motives	Actors		
I Preoperational thought	Complete interaction	Roles, systems of norms	Culturally interpreted needs	Role identity	Understand and follow reflexive behavioral expectations (norms)	Distinguish between "ought" and "want" (duty/inclination)	Distinguish between actions and norms, individual subjects and role bearers		
II Concrete-operational thought	Communicative action and discourse	Principles	Competing interpretations of needs	Ego identity	Understand and apply reflexive norms (principles)	Distinguish between heteronomy and autonomy	Distinguish between particular and general norms, individuality and ego in general		
III Formal-operational thought									

Qualifications of Role Behavior

For the preschool child, who is cognitively still at the stage of preoperational thought, the sector of his symbolic universe relevant to action consists only of individual, concrete, behavioral expectations and actions, as well as consequences of action that can be understood as gratifications or sanctions. As soon as the child has learned to play social roles, that is, to participate in interactions as a competent member, his symbolic universe no longer consists only of actions that express concrete intentions, (e.g., wishes or wish fulfillments); rather, he can now understand actions as the fulfillment of temporally generalized behavioral expectations (or as violations of them). When, finally, the youth has learned to question the validity of social roles and norms of action, the sector of the symbolic universe expands once again; there now appear principles in accordance with which opposing norms can be judged. Dealing with hypothetical validity claims in this way requires the temporary suspension of constraints of action or, as we can also say, the entrance into discourses in which practical questions can be argumentatively clarified.

In the succession of these three levels, actors and their needs also grow stage-by-stage into the symbolic universe. At level I the orientations that guide action are integrated only to the extent that they can be generalized in the dimension of pleasure/pain. Only at level II is the satisfaction of need mediated through the symbolic devotion of primary reference persons, or through social recognition in expanded groups, in such a way that it is released from the egocentric tie to one's own balance of gratification. In this way, motives for action acquire the form of culturally interpreted needs; their satisfaction depends on following socially recognized expectations. At level III the quasi-natural process of need interpretation, which until then depended on an uncontrolled cultural tradition and changes in the institutional system, can itself be elevated to the object of discursive will-formation. In this way, beyond already culturally interpreted needs, the critique and justification of need interpretations acquire the power to orient action.

The stages through which the child grows into the general structures of communicative action have been described to a

point at which there emerge corresponding indications for the perception and self-perception of actors, that is, of the subjects sustaining the interaction. When the child leaves its symbiotic phase and becomes sensitive to moral points of view—at first from the perspective of punishment and obedience—it has already learned to distinguish itself and its body from the environment, even though it does not yet strictly distinguish between physical and social objects in this environment. The child has thereby gained a "natural" identity, as it were, which it owes to the capacity of its body—as an organism that maintains boundaries—to conquer time. Plants and animals are already systems in an environment that possess not only an identity for us (the identifying observers), as do bodies-in-motion, but also an identity for themselves.¹⁷ At the first level actors are thus not yet drawn into the symbolic world; there are natural agents to whom comprehensible intentions are ascribed, but not yet subjects whom one could *hold responsible* for actions with a view to generalized behavioral expectations. Only at the second level is identity detached from the bodily appearance of the actors. To the extent that the child assimilates the symbolic generalities of a few fundamental roles in his family environment, and later the norms of action of expanded groups, his natural identity is reformed through a symbolically supported role identity. Corporeal features such as sex, physical endowments, age, and so on, are absorbed into symbolic definitions. At this level actors appear as role-dependent reference persons and, later also, as anonymous role bearers. Only at the third level are the role bearers transformed into persons who can assert their identities independent of concrete roles and particular systems of norms. We are supposing here that the youth has acquired the important distinction between norms, on the one hand, and principles according to which we can generate norms, on the other—and thus the ability to judge according to principles. He takes into account that traditionally settled forms of life can prove to be mere conventions, to be irrational. Thus he has to retract his ego behind the line of all particular roles and norms and stabilize it only through the abstract ability to present himself credibly in any situation as someone who can satisfy the requirements of consistency even

in the face of incompatible role expectations and in the passage through a sequence of contradictory periods of life. Role identity is replaced by ego identity; actors meet as individuals across, so to speak, the objective contexts of their lives.

Up to this point we have directed our attention to the components of the symbolic universe that acquire reality in stages for the growing child. If now, in a psychological attitude, we turn our attention to the abilities that the acting subjects must acquire in order to be able to move about in these structures, we come upon the general qualifications for role behavior that together form interactive competence. To the increasing mastery of the general structures of communicative action and the correlative growth of the acting subject's context-independence, there correspond graduated interactive competences that can be arranged in three dimensions (as shown on the right side of Schema 3). Our burden of proof will have been sufficiently discharged if the determinations introduced in each of these dimensions, regarded from a formal point of view, form a hierarchy such that the assertion of a developmental-logical nexus among the three levels of interaction can be justified.

The first dimension grasps the perception of the cognitive components of role qualifications: the actor must be able to understand and to follow the individual behavioral expectations of another (level I); he must be able to understand and to follow (or to deviate from) reflexive behavioral expectations—roles and norms (level II); finally he must be able to understand and apply reflexive norms (level III). The three levels are distinguished by degrees of reflexivity: the simple behavioral expectation of the first level becomes reflexive at the next level—expectations can be reciprocally expected; and the reflexive behavioral expectation of the second level again becomes reflexive at the third level—norms can be normed.

The second dimension relates to the perception of the motivational components of general role qualifications. At first the causality of nature is not distinguished from the causality of freedom—imperatives are understood in nature as well as in society as the expression of concrete wishes (level I); later the actor must be able to distinguish obligatory from merely desired

actions (duty and inclination)—that is, the validity of a norm from the mere facticity of an expression of will (level II); and finally he must be able to distinguish between heteronomy and autonomy, that is, to see the difference between merely traditional (or imposed) norms and those which are justified in principle. The three levels are distinguished by degrees of abstraction and differentiation: the orientations that guide action become more and more abstract—from concrete needs through duties to the autonomous will—and at the same time more and more differentiated in regard to the validity claim of rightness (or "justice") that is connected with norms of action.

The third dimension grasps the perception of a component of general role qualifications which, if I am correct, presupposes the other two and has both cognitive and motivational sides. At first the actions and actors perceived are context-dependent, that is, concrete—there exists only the particular (level I). At the next level symbolic structures must be differentiated into general and particular—namely, individual actions vis-à-vis norms, and individual actors vis-à-vis role bearers. At the third level it must be possible to examine particular norms from the point of view of generalizability, so that the distinction between particular and general norms becomes possible. On the other side, actors can no longer be understood as a combination of role attributes; rather they count as individuated subjects who, through employing principles, can each organize an unmistakable biography. In other words, at this stage individuality and the "ego in general" [*Ich überhaupt*] must be differentiated. Here the levels are distinguished by degrees of generalization.

A glance at the columns I have just elucidated shows that role qualifications can be placed in a certain hierarchy from the formal viewpoints of (a) reflexivity, (b) abstraction and differentiation, and (c) generalization. This provides initial grounds for the conjecture that a deeper analysis could identify a developmental-logical pattern in Piaget's sense. In the present context, I shall have to let the matter rest with this conjecture. If it is correct, the same would have to hold for the stages of moral consciousness, insofar as these can be derived from the levels of role competence. This derivation as well can only be sketched here.

I shall proceed on the assumption that "moral consciousness" signifies the ability to make use of interactive competence for *consciously* processing morally relevant conflicts of action. You will recall that the consensual resolution of an action conflict requires a viewpoint that is open to consensus, with the aid of which a transitive ordering of the conflicting interests can be established. But competent agents will—independently of accidental commonalities of social origin, tradition, basic attitude, and so on—be in agreement about such a fundamental point of view only if it arises from the very structures of possible interaction. The reciprocity between acting subjects is such a point of view. In communicative action a relationship of at least incomplete reciprocity is established with the interpersonal relation between the involved parties. Two persons stand in an incompletely reciprocal relation insofar as one may do or expect x only to the extent that the other may do or expect y (e.g., teacher/pupil, parent/child). Their relationship is completely reciprocal if both may do or expect the same thing in comparable situations ($x = y$) (e.g., the norms of civil law). In a now-famous essay Alvin Gouldner speaks of the norm of reciprocity that underlies all interactions.¹⁸ This expression is not entirely apt, since reciprocity is not a norm but is fixed in the general structures of possible interaction. Thus the point of view of reciprocity belongs *eo ipso* to the interactive knowledge of speaking and acting subjects.

If this is granted, the stages of moral consciousness can be derived by applying the requirement of reciprocity to the action structures that the growing child perceives at each of the different levels (Schema 4). At level I, only concrete actions and action consequences (understood as gratifications or sanctions) can be morally relevant. If incomplete reciprocity is required here, we obtain Kohlberg's stage 1 (punishment-obedience orientation); complete reciprocity yields stage 2 (instrumental hedonism). At level II the sector relevant to action is expanded; if we require incomplete reciprocity for concrete expectations bound to reference persons, we obtain Kohlberg's stage 3 (good-boy orientation); the same requirement for systems of norms yields stage 4 (law-and-order orientation). At level III principles

Schema 4:

Role Competence		Stages of Moral Consciousness				Age level	
Age level	Level of Communication	Reciprocity requirement	Stages of moral consciousness	Idea of the good life	Domain of validity	Philosophical reconstruction	
I	Actions and consequences of action	Incomplete reciprocity	1	Maximization of pleasure—avoidance of pain through obedience	Natural and social environment	Naïve hedonism	
			2	Maximization of pleasure—avoidance of pain through exchange of equivalents			
II	Roles	Incomplete reciprocity	3	Concrete morality of primary groups	Group of primary reference persons	Concrete thought in terms of a specific order	
	Systems of norms		4	Concrete morality of secondary groups			
III	Principles	Complete reciprocity	5	Civil liberties, public welfare	All legal associates	Rational natural law	
			6	Moral freedom			All as members of a fictive world society
			7	Moral and political freedom			

become the moral theme; for logical reasons complete reciprocity must be required. At this level the stages of moral consciousness are differentiated according to the degree to which action motives are symbolically structured. If the needs relevant to action are allowed to remain outside the symbolic universe, then the admissible universalistic norms of action have the character of rules for maximizing utility and general legal norms that give scope to the strategic pursuit of private interests, under the condition that the egoistic freedom of each is compatible with that of all. With this the egocentrism of the second stage is literally raised to a principle; this corresponds to Kohlberg's stage 5 (contractual-legalistic orientation). If needs are understood as culturally interpreted but ascribed to individuals as natural properties, the admissible universalistic norms of action have the character of general moral norms. Each individual is supposed to test monologically the generalizability of the norm in question. This corresponds to Kohlberg's stage 6 (conscience orientation). Only at the level of a universal ethics of speech [*Sprachethik*] can need interpretations themselves—that is, what each individual thinks he should understand and represent as his "true" interests—also become the object of practical discourse. Kohlberg does not differentiate this stage from stage 6, although there is a qualitative difference: the principle of justification of norms is no longer the monologically applicable principle of generalizability but the communally followed *procedure* of redeeming normative validity claims discursively. An unexpected result of our attempt to derive the stages of moral consciousness from the stages of interactive competence is the demonstration that Kohlberg's schema of stages is incomplete.

IV

A paradoxical relation is expressed in the identity of the ego: as a person in general the ego is like all other persons, but as an individual he is utterly different from all other individuals. Ego identity proves itself in the ability of the adult to construct new identities in conflict situations and to bring these into harmony

with older superseded identities so as to organize himself and his interactions—under the guidance of general principles and modes of procedure—into a unique life history. So far I have developed only the cognitive and not the motivational side of this concept of ego identity. I have chosen the perspective in which we can observe how the ego of the child acquires in stages the general structures of communicative action and, through these, interactive competence, stability, and autonomy of action. However this perspective screens out the psychodynamics of the formative process. It neglects the instinctual processes into which ego development is interwoven. In the dynamics of superego formation, we can see the instrumental role that libidinous energies, in the form of a narcissistic attachment to the self, play in the development of ego ideals; we can also see the function that aggressive energies, turned against the self, assume in the establishment of the authority of conscience.¹⁹ But above all, the two major maturational crises—the Oedipal phase and adolescence—in which sex roles are learned and the motive-forming powers of the cultural tradition are put to the test, show that the ego can enter into and penetrate beyond structures of interaction only if its needs can be admitted into and adequately interpreted within the symbolic universe. In this perspective ego development presents itself as an extraordinarily dangerous process. There is no need to refer to pathological developments to substantiate this fact; a less conspicuous sign, lying in the range of the normal, are the frequent discrepancies between moral judgment and moral action.

The correlation between levels of interactive competence and stages of moral consciousness (Schema 4) means that someone who possesses interactive competence at a particular stage will develop a moral consciousness at the same stage, insofar as his motivational structure does not hinder him from maintaining, even under stress, the structures of everyday action in the consensual regulation of action conflicts. In many cases, however, the general qualifications for role behavior that are sufficient for dealing with normal situations cannot be stabilized under the stress of open conflicts. The party in question will then fall back in his moral actions, or even in both his moral actions and moral

judgments, below the threshold of his interactive competence. There thus occurs a shifting between the stage of his normal role behavior and the stage at which he works through moral conflicts. Because it places the acting subject under an imperative for *consciously* working out conflicts, moral consciousness is an indicator of the degree of stability of general interactive competence.

The connection between conscious conflict resolution and morality becomes clear in extreme situations that do not admit an unequivocal moral solution, situations that make a rule violation (an offense) unavoidable. An action that nevertheless stands under conditions of morality in such situations is called "tragic." The concept of the tragic includes the intentional assumption of punishment or guilt, that is, the fulfillment of the moral postulate of consciousness even in the face of a morally insoluble dilemma. This throws some light on the meaning of moral action in general; we qualify as morally good those persons who maintain the interactive competence they have mastered for (largely conflict-free) normal situations even under stress, that is, in morally relevant conflicts of action, instead of unconsciously defending against conflict.

As ego psychology shows, the ego devises mechanisms for situations in which it would like to avoid conscious conflict resolution. These ingenious strategies for avoiding conflict contribute to a reaction to danger that is similar to flight; dangers are screened out of consciousness as the ego hides itself, as it were, from them. External reality and instinctual impulses are not the only sources of danger; the sanctions of the superego also represent a threat. We have anxiety if we act in moral conflicts otherwise than we believe by clear judgment that we have to act. In defending against these anxieties (which signal the recurrence of infantile anxieties) we conceal at the same time the discrepancy between our ability to judge and our willingness to act. The theory of defense mechanisms has, however, not been significantly improved since the first provisional attempt at systematization by Anna Freud.²⁰ Interestingly, several more recent investigations suggest that a developmental-logical ordering

of the anxieties rekindled by transgression of moral commands (fear of punishment, shame, or qualms of conscience) makes possible a better classification of defense mechanisms.²¹ Specific identity formations promote such anxieties because they make possible moral insights that are, so to speak, more advanced than the action motives that can be mobilized within their limits.

The dual status of ego identity reflects, of course, not only the cognitive-motivational duality of ego development but an interdependence of society and nature that extends into the formation of identity. The model of an unconstrained ego identity is richer and more ambitious than a model of autonomy developed exclusively from perspectives of morality. This can be seen in our completed hierarchy of the stages of moral consciousness. The meaning of the transition from the sixth to the seventh stage—in philosophical terms from a formalistic ethics of duty to a universal ethics of speech—can be found in the fact that need interpretations are no longer assumed as given, but are drawn into the discursive formation of will. Internal nature is thereby moved into a utopian perspective; that is, at this stage internal nature may no longer be merely examined within an interpretive framework fixed by the cultural tradition in a naturelike way, tested in the light of a monologically applied principle of generalization, and then split up into legitimate and illegitimate components, duties, and inclinations. Inner nature is rendered communicatively fluid and transparent to the extent that needs can, through aesthetic forms of expression, be kept articulable [*sprachfähig*] or be released from their paleosymbolic pre-linguisticity. But that means that internal nature is not subjected, in the cultural preformation met with at any given time, to the demands of ego autonomy; rather, through a dependent ego it obtains free access to the interpretive possibilities of the cultural tradition. In the medium of value-forming and norm-forming communications into which aesthetic experiences enter, traditional cultural contents are no longer simply the stencils according to which needs are shaped; on the contrary, in this medium needs can seek and find adequate interpretations. Naturally this flow of communication requires sensitivity, breaking

down barriers, dependency—in short, a cognitive style marked as field-dependent, which the ego, on the way to autonomy, first overcame and replaced with a field-independent style of perception and thought. Autonomy that robs the ego of a communicative access to its own inner nature also signals unfreedom. Ego identity means a freedom that limits itself in the intention of reconciling—if not of identifying—worthiness with happiness.

3

Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures

This essay appeared as the introduction to *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus*. Remarks referring to or based on the occasion have been omitted.

I

[In recent years I have made] various attempts to develop a theoretical program that I understand as a reconstruction of historical materialism. The word *restoration* signifies the return to an initial situation that had meanwhile been corrupted; but my interest in Marx and Engels is not dogmatic, nor is it historical-philological. *Renaissance* signifies the renewal of a tradition that has been buried for some time; but Marxism is in no need of this. In the present connection, *reconstruction* signifies taking a theory apart and putting it back together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself. This is the normal way (in my opinion normal for Marxists too) of dealing with a theory that needs revision in many respects but whose potential for stimulation has still not been exhausted.

Not by chance [during the same period] I have been working on a theory of communicative action. Although the theory of communication is intended to solve problems that are rather of