

Gesa Lindemann

Approaches to the World

The Multiple Dimensions of the Social



Nomos

Gesa Lindemann

Approaches to the World

The Multiple Dimensions of the Social



Nomos

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-8487-7808-9 (Print)
978-3-7489-2212-4 (ePDF)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-8487-7808-9 (Print)
978-3-7489-2212-4 (ePDF)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lindemann, Gesa
Approaches to the World
The Multiple Dimensions of the Social
Gesa Lindemann
350 pp.
Includes bibliographic references and index.

ISBN 978-3-8487-7808-9 (Print)
978-3-7489-2212-4 (ePDF)

1st Edition 2021

© Gesa Lindemann

Published by
Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG
Waldseestraße 3-5 | 76530 Baden-Baden
www.nomos.de

Production of the printed version:
Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG
Waldseestraße 3-5 | 76530 Baden-Baden

ISBN (Print): 978-3-8487-7808-9
ISBN (ePDF): 978-3-7489-2212-4

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748922124>



Onlineversion
Nomos eLibrary



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution
– Non Commercial – No Derivations 4.0 International License.

Acknowledgements for the English edition

The translation of *Weltzugänge* offers me the opportunity to present the concepts I am advancing more explicitly in the context of the discourses on changing and complementary “turns” in theoretical approach, that have been so dominant in the English language scholarship. Helmuth Plessner’s philosophical anthropology forms the basis for my integration of the fundamental “turns” that followed one upon another in recent decades into a consistent theory.

The invaluable intellectual exchanges with Jonas Barth, Johanna Fröhlich and Anton Kirchofer are gratefully acknowledged. They helped me to unfold the consequences of my interpretation of Helmuth Plessner’s theory of the shared world for theorizing in the sociology. I also want to thank the Hanse Wissenschaftskolleg for facilitating lively debates, and name, among my many colleagues and interlocutors over the years, especially Uwe Schimank, Andrea Maurer, Werner Rammert, Florian Muhle, and Christian Fritz-Hoffmann, whose critical questions challenged me to articulate my theoretical approach with greater precision.

The wonderful translator Millay Hyatt provided a thorough translation and was very patient and accommodating when I found that parts of the initial text had to be changed because my thinking has moved on and I wanted this reflected in the English edition. Finally, I thank Aaron Woldamlak and Eva Müller for checking the citations and the bibliography to complete this volume. Many thanks also to Douglas Becker, Michael Krahn and Frank Raasch who created the index.

Gesa Lindemann

Acknowledgments

This book brings together ideas I have developed over the past several decades in a variety of contexts. One of the most significant of these was my in-depth engagement with questions of empirical research, and I would like to thank the German Research Foundation (DFG) for its support of these research projects.¹ After completing a first version of the manuscript in the late summer of 2012, I spent a year discussing it intensively with colleagues. I had the opportunity of presenting individual chapters in the colloquia of Hubert Knoblauch and Werner Rammert, in the latter case introduced by extensive commentary from Jörg Potthast. His comments as well as Michel Hutter's detailed criticism motivated me to render more precise the sections on material technology and symbol formation. My conversations with Rainer Greshoff and Uwe Schimank made it clear to me how important it was to close the book with a look at different types of ordering systems. Jens Greve provided insightful criticism of the section on the social dimension, as did Hans-Peter Krüger of the entire manuscript. The introduction benefited greatly from Christine Hauskeller's constructive suggestions.

This book would not have attained its current form without the colloquium participants of the Theory of the Social Sciences study group and the fellows of the "Self-Making" research training group in Oldenburg. Their criticism in particular challenged me and led me to make significant changes to the structure of the book. One of its key concepts, that of embodied touch, emerged from my in-depth discussions with Christian Fritz-Hoffmann. Anna Henkel encouraged me to more clearly work out the book's relationship to systems theory, particularly in regard to historical reflexivity. Nikolaus Buschmann and Jonas Barth's thorough and detailed criticism of the entire manuscript taught me a lot. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Günter Ulrich, who read the manuscript chapter for chapter (in some cases more than once) and relentlessly pointed out mistakes

1 These projects were: (1) The Anthropological Difference of Consciousness (2003–2007); (2) Development of Humanoid and Service Robots: An International Comparative Research Project — Europe and Japan; and (3) Decisions on Treatment of Preterm Newborn Infants — A Theory-Driven Ethnographic Study.

Acknowledgments

and inconsistencies. Martin Kubis was always a reliable source of support in researching the literature.

Table of Contents

Introduction	11
1. The Nature/Culture Distinction in the Explanation-Understanding Controversy	27
2. A Critique of Ordering Power	37
3. An Operational Theory of Reflexive Multidimensional Order Formation	77
4. Violence and Legitimacy	231
5. The Reflexive Formation of Order in Approaches to the World	275
Bibliography	315
Name index	341
Subject index	345

Introduction

Looking back at the debates within social theory in recent decades reveals several, in some cases non-intersecting strands. For one we have the conglomerate of discussions surrounding the necessity of theoretical realignments (“turns”); for another the problematizing of the borders of the social world or of the actor status of non-human entities; and, finally, there is the periodic flare-up of discussions about the ways in which violence shapes the social process. These debates pose new demands on a general social theory. Articulated as questions, they are:

What general theory of the social would allow us to

- understand the sphere of legitimate actors as being historically mutable, i.e., contingent, rather than taking for granted that it is limited to the sphere of living humans?
- understand the nature/culture distinction as a possible way of ordering our approach to the world rather than presupposing it as a given?
- analyze ordering systems not only as orders of the social but also as including materiality and the dimensions of space and time?
- conceive of violence as having the capacity to create order?
- lay the foundation for a theory of society?

The theory of world approaches worked out in this book is an attempt to take on these demands and to bring together the different aspects alluded to above in a social theory in such a way that will lay the foundations for the development of a theory of society. Taking this approach allows me to rationally construct my theory; that is, to historically situate the social theory I develop and the research it guides.

The current state of the discussion

In terms of the first discussion strand, the past decades have been characterized by ever more frequent “turns.” These include the now already well-established linguistic turn, which was followed by the practice turn, the material turn, the spatial turn, the body turn, and the pictorial turn.² The second discussion strand developed independently of the debates sur-

2 See the overview in Bachmann-Medick (2006).

rounding the various turns, and concerns the actor status of non-human entities. Should social phenomena be understood exclusively as the action, interaction, or communication of human beings, or should we not also include other entities as social actors, such as technical artifacts, animals, spirits, gods, plants, or deceased ancestors? Finally, in an entirely different discussion, the question of the role of violence in shaping social processes has been keenly debated in recent years. Here it is taken for granted that human actors are the only entities with the status of persons. Violence is understood to refer to relationships between human beings and the discussion centers on ways in which violence can destroy social relationships.

These first two discussion strands share a basic starting point: dissatisfaction with the idea that order formation is limited to the formation of social order. The latter is understood as the ordering of relationships between human beings, which are characterized by, e.g., cooperation, division of labor, conflict, power and/or authority [*Herrschaft*], as well as by their respective legitimations. The “turns” respond to the dissatisfaction with the limitation of order formation to the social dimension by augmenting the latter by a specific aspect: order = order in the social dimension, which is shaped in a particular way by X. This “X” emphasizes the specific character of the current “turn.” Thus the linguistic turn demands that not only social or societal structures but also linguistic/symbolic structures be included in the analysis of social processes, as these structures significantly determine social relationships and, more generally, the ways in which we see the world. While the linguistic turn has shaped sociology since the first half of the twentieth century, beginning in the 1980s, subsequent turns have followed rapidly on each other’s heels.³ The practice turn (Reckwitz 2003; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, and Savigny 2000) focuses on the relevance of observable social practices, while the body turn (Gugutzer 2006; Jäger 2004; Shilling 1993) emphasizes the fact that practices are carried out by human bodies and that the body, or the experience of the

3 For an overview of the linguistic turn, see Habermas ([1999] 2003). The research that, in a broader sense, is associated with the linguistic turn is quite varied. It ranges from Johann Gottlieb Herder’s theory of language ([1772] 2002), Wilhelm von Humboldt’s analyses of the inner form of a language ([1836] 1999) and their influence on and further development by authors such as Helmuth Plessner ([1923] 1981a:163ff), to Ernst Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* ([1923–1929] 1955–1957) and Gadamer’s hermeneutics ([1960] 1989), as well as work by Wittgenstein (1953) and its influence on the social sciences, and, finally, Foucault’s discourse analysis ([1966] 1970; [1971] 1972).

body, is socially or discursively determined.⁴ The spatial (Döring, Thielmann 2008) and the pictorial turns (Mitchell 1994) were proclaimed almost simultaneously. The groundwork for the material turn was laid to a significant degree by theorists of science and technology, who argued that the process of scientific research could not be understood without considering the role of artifacts in the construction of scientific experiments (Woolgar and Latour 1979).

The more recent “turns” express the insight that social processes cannot be adequately understood if they are conceived as meaningful in a purely incorporeal sense, as is implied by Max Weber’s concept of social action and as is explicit in Niklas Luhmann’s concept of the social as consisting of meaningful communication. Understanding human beings as embodied actors, and material artifacts and non-human beings as similarly involved in the formation of order, emphasizes the fact that order formation is not only a purely meaningful, but also a bodily, material, and sensorially perceivable process. This is also to understand order formation as spatially and temporally bound (Bourdieu [1972] 1977; Giddens 1984). We should retain the insights of the more recent “turns” without losing sight of what the linguistic turn has already established, that is, the significant role of linguistic/symbolic structures in the shaping of different kinds of order. Seen as a whole, these debates point to the fact that order formation must be understood as a multidimensional process. So far, however, there is no social theory that systematically brings together the different aspects of the various “turns.”

The material turn in science and technology studies constitutes the point of intersection with the second discussion strand. This strand raises the question of whether only human actors are involved in the formation of order and asks about the role of non-human actors. The key move in this discussion is to regard the borders of the social world as historically variable, that is, as contingent. Thus the status of social actor is not restricted to living human beings but can, in principle, also be held by non-human beings.⁵ Theorists of science and technology foreground the possible inclusion of technical artifacts in this category (Latour 2005), while ethnological research focuses on the ways in which the borders of the social

4 The practice turn also gathers a range of at times highly heterogeneous social theory concepts under a single heading. These include ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), Bourdieu’s analyses of habitus (Bourdieu [1972] 1977), and Giddens’s structuration theory (1984).

5 I use the terms “social actor” and “social person” interchangeably.

world are drawn differently depending on the type of society. While in modernity only living human beings can be social persons in a universally recognized way, other societies draw the borders of the social in different ways, equally recognizing spirits, ancestors, plants, and animals as social persons. Thomas Luckmann (1970) and Philippe Descola ([2005] 2013) have called for a social theory that can encompass this variability. Such a social theory, they argue, must subvert the modern nature/culture distinction with its notion of nature on the one side, subject to uniform laws, and, on the other, a variety of cultures seen as having equal value. Viveiros de Castro (1998) posits that the difference between “mononaturalism” and “multiculturalism” forms the matrix of modernity, where the human occupies the pivotal position. For Helmuth Plessner ([1931] 1981b), this position means that the “human” must be understood as a collective noun; i.e., there is humankind, which is composed of a myriad of single individuals who, as humans, are each other’s equals or equivalents. The different cultures created by humans should also be regarded as, in principle, of equal value.⁶

Luckmann and Plessner both work out the normative force of questioning the nature/culture distinction. Luckmann argues explicitly that limiting the sphere of social persons also establishes the boundaries of morality (Luckmann 1970:73): anyone who is a social person has a different moral status than those beings that are outside of this sphere. This means that if the sphere of beings with full moral status is not limited to human beings, relationships to beings that in modernity are considered as belonging to nature or even as in-existent will be experienced as morally relevant. In such a context, it is, for instance, of considerable importance to treat the heavenly bodies politely and to greet the sun in the morning lest it become angry and refuse to return. In a similar sense, it can be essential for one’s survival to know what the ancestral spirits demand and how to meet these demands—otherwise they may come to haunt the living. In the framework of the modern order, such morally structured relationships to heavenly bodies or ancestral spirits appear as erroneously moralized relationships to natural phenomena or as reified psychological processes. In other words, it is only at the cost of a destruction of their meaning that such relationships can be integrated into an order characterized by the nature/culture distinction. Analyzing orders in which such relationships occur requires new ana-

6 Remarkably, this position formulated by Plessner in 1931 anticipates the postcolonial criticism of Western figures of thought.

lytical categories that will open up a comparative perspective and enable us to grasp the existence of different orders as just as possible as our own.

Strangely enough, the debate surrounding the role of violence in the shaping of social processes has, in the sociological context, largely failed to intersect with the two discussions summarized above. Strange because it is obvious that violence is intimately connected to the limitation of the sphere of social persons. In order to understand this connection, we must remind ourselves of the link between violence and morality: violence is exercised by entities that have a moral status, that is, by legitimate social actors. And violence is used against such entities that have a moral status, that are thus also considered to be legitimate, universally recognized social actors. A social theory that is conceived without consideration of the normative dimension, of morality, also loses sight of the phenomenon of violence. This holds, for instance, for Latour, who analyzes social contexts by using a flat, effects-oriented concept of action. From this perspective, the connection between a gun, a shooter, and a dead human body appears as a sequence of effects (cf. Latour 1994). The shooter pulls the trigger, which initiates mechanical force on the previously inactive bullet, which is projected from the barrel. If the target is hit, the bullet penetrates skin and cranial bone and lodges in the brain. This in turn has an effect on the control mechanism of the living body that was shot, leading to the irreversible cessation of brain function, so that a doctor arriving on the scene can only declare the person dead. Such a description either makes no room for violence in that there are only effects of actants on each other, or it applies the notion of violence to very many things. Is it not violence against the bullet to be projected out of the narrow barrel? Is it violent for the bullet to penetrate the skull? Force is used against an actant in the network in both cases. Since actor-network theory does not distinguish between actants using force and their effects on the one side and morally relevant actors on the other, it cannot grasp the specificity of the phenomenon of violence and thus also fails to see the role of violence in the limitation of the sphere of social persons.

However, the discussion surrounding violence itself ignores the problem of the connection between the phenomenon of violence and the limitation of the sphere of social persons by taking the borders of the social to be a given. Thus the use of violence in social relationships is understood as violence in human relationships (Endreß and Rampp 2013; Neckel and Schwab-Trapp 1999) and is seen as a problem to be treated or solved (Heitmeyer and Soeffner 2004). It is for this reason that research on violence is to a large degree research on the causes of violence or a criticism of the le-

gitimation of violence (Butler [2004] 2006, 2005; Habermas [2005] 2008). In this work, violence is ascribed to social factors or its legitimation questioned, but it is not understood as itself able to generate order. Trutz von Trotha called for replacing research on the causes of violence with a “sociology of violence” (Trotha 1997), which would treat violence as social action to be analyzed in microsociological studies. Many such studies now exist (Collins 2008; Cooney 1998; Fiske and Rai 2015). Jan Philip Reemtsma’s theorization of violence (2012) includes a criticism of general social theories. He asks why general social theories, e.g., Luhmann’s ([1984] 1995) theory of social systems or Habermas’s ([1981] 1984–1987) theory of communicative action do not, or cannot, address physical violence—and concludes that when it comes to violence, sociology falls silent (Reemtsma 2012:261). In this light, the established social theories appear as fair-weather theories unable to make sense of the extreme violence that has characterized the social reality of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁷ Reemtsma’s criticism includes the implicit call to go beyond a sociology of violence and to try to understand violence in general in its order-generating function.

A general theory of the social that takes violence into account brings social theory’s traditional bracketing of violence more sharply into view by shifting its attention to ways in which violence contributes to drawing the borders of the social. In the context of social theory, we can only speak of violence if those who exercise it and those at whom it is directed belong to the sphere of social persons.⁸ Only then can the genuinely order-generating nature of violence and the connection between violence, law, power, and authority come into focus.

An expanded social theory

These discussions suggest the need for a new social theory. A theory that, first, takes into consideration the multiple dimensions of order formation;

7 This criticism equally applies to newer theories such as network analysis (White 2008) or so-called French pragmatism (Boltanski and Thevenot [1991] 2006).

8 In the order of modernity, which limits the sphere of social persons to living humans, violence can also be exercised against things and animals. This presupposes, however, that the things stand in a particular relation to humans and that animals share certain characteristics with humans, such as sensitivity to pain. The details of the ordering of violence in modernity can only be untangled within the framework of a theory of modern society (see Lindemann 2018).

that, second, factors in the contingency of the borders of the social; that, third, explains the role of violence—i.e., physical assault, homicide, war, and torture, as well as subtle forms of violence—in the formation of order; and that, finally, lays the foundation for a theory of society.

My starting point in this endeavor, following Plessner's ([1928] 2019) theory of positionality, is the excentrically constituted, shared-world [*Mitwelt*] relationship between the lived body [*Leib*] and its environment. This approach has two important advantages over traditional phenomenological conceptions of the lived body-environment relationship—and that includes the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl ([1913] 1982; [1936/54] 1970) as well as the phenomenologies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2012) and Jean Paul Sartre ([1943] 1956), all far better known than Plessner's in the international discussion.

1. Plessner not only formulates a theory, but also makes transparent the process of its construction. This allows us to trace back the ways in which empirical phenomena relate to the theory, as well as how they can trouble it. Neither Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, nor Sartre provide the possibility of this kind of methodological control of the formation of their theories.⁹
2. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre follow in the tradition of Husserl's phenomenology in that they start from the lived body of the acting and perceiving subject, who is then analyzed by way of subjective self-reflection.¹⁰ Making the embodied subject into the starting point of analysis in this way, however, makes it into a general and thus transhistorical condition of experience, and it is only in a second step that social relations and historical formation can be inscribed into it.

Plessner's concept of the lived body differs in two ways from this view predominant in phenomenology. First, Plessner does not approach the lived body in terms of a reflection of subjective experience. Rather than taking as his object the lived body of an ego that experiences it, Plessner seeks to understand from the outside the fact that there is an ego that experiences his or her lived body. Second, Plessner's theory of excentric positionality regards the structure of bodily experience from the perspective of the shared world, that is to say, its relationship to others. Thus the starting point of his analysis of experience is not the lived body, but the lived body as mediated by the shared world. For Plessner, the relatedness of lived bod-

9 For a methodological criticism of Husserl, see Plessner ([1938] 1985).

10 This also holds for Husserl's late work, where he sets out to "mundanize" the transcendental subject (cf. Husserl [1936] 1976).

ies to each other forms the starting point of the analysis rather than the individual lived body and its relationship to its environment.

Plessner's approach is unique among those that give center stage to the lived body-environment relationship, in that his theory of excentric, shared-world positionality shifts the focus to the historicity, and thus the contingency and variability, of the relationship between the lived body and its environment.¹¹

If a social theory is to begin with the lived body-environment relationship, the theory of excentric positionality seems to be a good choice—but why *should* it start there? This choice cannot, in fact, be justified in a strict sense, for there is no universally recognized principle from which it could be rationally deduced that the formulation of a social theory must begin with the relationship between the lived body and its environment. All I can do is argue for my choice in reference to current discussions.

There are five arguments for basing a systematic social theory on the shared-world relationship between the lived body and its environment:

1. The theory of the shared world explicates the social dimension of order formation without defining what beings should be recognized as members of the shared world of persons. The borders of a historically specific shared world of persons have to be continually redrawn. I refer to this as the contingency of the shared world; it points to the necessity of historically situated processes of border drawing.
2. The relationship between the lived body and its environment is spatiotemporal; i.e., embodied relationships to the environment are practically executed in the here and now. This means that practices occurring “now” always also contain relevant references to the future and to the past. It also means that the lived body is to be understood as a center of action existing “here,” from where it establishes different spatial relationships by directing itself toward surrounding space with its senses and actions.
3. Embodied actors are sensorially and practically integrated into their environment. They use tools and cooperate with each other, i.e., they refer to each other in complex action sequences, to which individual ac-

11 This also renders moot objections made by, for instance, representatives of the linguistic turn, whose criticisms of founding a theory in the lived body lead, more or less, to dissolving the body and materiality into discourse (cf., e.g., Butler 1990, 1993). The problems resulting from this have been debated in a very intense and theoretically sophisticated way particularly in feminist discussions around the body (for an overview, see Institut für Sozialforschung 1994; Wobbe and Lindemann 1994).

tors contribute input in the form of partial acts. This means that embodied actors are involved in material, practical implementations whose reach often exceeds their own comprehension.

4. The excentric, shared-world relationship between the lived body and its environment is characterized by a specific kind of reflexivity, which is significant for order formation in two ways. For one, the reflexive structure of excentric positionality makes possible the formation of semantically identical linguistic and non-linguistic (i.e., also visual) symbols; for another, it allows for symbolic generalizations, i.e., context-independent semantic structures that guide the reciprocal lived body-environment relationships.
5. Starting from the lived body makes it possible to theorize violence in all its myriad facets—from the direct use of violence to its mediated threat. Lived bodies are centers of action that are not only able to exert violence, but also to suffer it and, since they are capable of experiencing pain and fear, to be impressed by the threat of it. Thinking about symbolization in terms of the lived body-environment relationship makes it possible to incorporate the symbolic, order-generating function of violence.

These five points indicate the ways in which the theory of the excentrically constituted, shared-world relationship between the lived body and its environment satisfies the specific requirements given by the current state of the discussion.

The structure of this book

Starting from the problem of the formation of social order, Chapters 1 and 2 work out the requirements of a theory of multidimensional order formation, which is then explicated in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 concludes the book by suggesting an approach to a theory of society.

Chapter 1 presents the nature/culture distinction as a structural characteristic of a specific, that is, modern, approach to the world. A social theory that seeks to take into account non-modern orders must be able to grasp the modern approach to the world as one approach among others. This leads to the necessity of understanding order formation as a broader category than the formation of human culture. Traditionally, the social sciences have been oriented toward the “Hobbesian problem of order” (Parsons [1937] 1968a). This problem is clearly situated in the social dimension and exists wherever the behavior of actors is not determined by instinct:

the actors ego and alter do not know how their counterpart will act and what expectations this counterpart has of them. Parsons and Luhmann also refer to this reciprocal uncertainty as the problem of double contingency (Luhmann [1984] 1995, chap. 3; Parsons 1968b). The solution to this problem is the basis for the emergence of social order, which allows for ego and alter to be able to learn how their counterpart will act as a function of the expectations directed at them. This knowledge enables them to act with confidence that their expectations will be met. We can expand this problem of double contingency—the classic problem of the social sciences—by recognizing that it cannot be known in advance what entities come into question as possible social actors. I call this the problem of the contingency of the shared world, a problem with methodological significance. If social actors are those who form an order intelligible to sociological study, the question of the borders of the social is, in methodological terms, the question of the reach of the sphere containing those whose expressions, actions, and expectations can be considered intelligible. It is for this reason that I consider the question of the borders of the social to be part of the debate surrounding explaining [*erklären*] vs. understanding [*verstehen*].

Chapter 2 looks at those theoretical approaches that aim to hold the modern nature/culture distinction at arm's length and to turn it into a subject of analysis. Beginning with the ways in which the nature/culture distinction has been understood in the explanation/understanding controversy allows me to identify the implicitly normative problems of this debate. The modern nature/culture distinction is intimately tied to the restriction of the sphere of possible actors to living human beings. The establishment of this border contains a distinction, presupposed as beyond doubt, between morally significant human relationships and the realm of nature. Thus questioning the nature/culture distinction also leads to considerable normative problems. In this chapter, I engage with actor-network theory as well as with the work of Luckmann, Descola, and Plessner in order to work out the requirements of a theory of order formation that understands the borders of the social as historically variable.

Chapter 3 develops the theory of excentric positionality into a theory of multidimensional order formation. I begin by looking at how order formation in the *social dimension* can be thought if the borders of the social world are understood to be historically variable (section 3.1). The connection between “embodied touch” and “communication” is a key issue here. Embodied actors have the experience of being touched by others. Touch here is not understood as a meeting of surfaces, but rather as the experi-

ence of an embodied actor directing herself at another—in the sense that one can also be touched by someone’s gaze. Embodied actors find themselves in relationships of touch and they represent to each other and in front of each other what forms of touch are, or can be experienced as, the touch of another person. In this context I develop a triadic concept of communication grounded in a theory of the lived body that allows me to treat the establishment of borders between social persons and other entities as an empirical problem. The question here is whether and how ego interprets a questionable entity as an alter ego. If ego does not proceed arbitrarily but is rather guided by rules, it is because ego carries out and experiences his interpretation as one that is observed by tertius. Insofar as ego experiences the realization of his interpretation as being observed, he can identify, from the perspective of tertius, a pattern in this interpretation which can be distinguished from its current application and be grasped as a rule that can guide future interpretations. Introducing a triadic concept of communication enables me to work out the historically variable rules according to which distinctions are made in the field between social persons and other entities.

In section 3.2 I consider ways to think about the *spatiotemporality* of embodied relationships to the environment and its implications for the shaping of social processes. Understanding the nature/culture distinction as a possible order of how to approach the world—among other possible orders—automatically raises the question of the role of space and time in such a social theory, since space and time can no longer be understood as universal forms of intuition or be identified with measurable space and measurable time. It is for this reason that Mead’s pragmatic theory, followed by practice theory (Bourdieu, Giddens), called for taking current lived body-environment relationships in the here and now as the starting point for the analysis of social processes.

Section 3.3 treats the *material dimension*. By shifting my focus to the relationship between the lived body and its environment, I take up a key insight of practice theory and, in particular, the aims of the material turn. The starting assumption here is that the formation and stabilization of complex spatial and temporally expansive social relationships is only made possible by the fact that social life is substantially determined by the practical use of tools, or, more generally, artifacts. This section addresses the ways in which the internal dynamics of material technology determine the relationships of lived bodies to their environment, as well as the ways in which the practical handling of artifacts and their symbolization endows social relationships with structure and stability.

Section 3.4 focuses on the *symbolic dimension*. Excentric, shared-world relationships between lived bodies and their environment exhibit a specific form of reflexivity. The experience of one's own lived body and one's practical relationships to the environment or to other embodied centers of action are, on the one hand, experienced immediately as embodied implementations; on the other, they are also reflected upon in terms of a shared world, that is, from the perspective of others. Plessner refers to this state of affairs as mediated (embodied) immediacy. The reflexive shaping of the lived body-environment relationship allows for the formation of semantically identical symbols of both a linguistic and a non-linguistic (i.e., also visual) nature. I work this out by way of an engagement with Mead's symbol theory and, more generally, with the use theory of the meaning of linguistic symbols (Wittgenstein). Symbol theory enables me to render more precise here the triadic concept of communication developed in the first section of the chapter. In this way, I integrate key insights of the linguistic and pictorial turns into a social theory grounded in the theory of the lived body: the experience of one's own lived body as well as of one's environment and other embodied centers of action or other social persons is understood as symbolically mediated, with the visual symbolism of the representation of social relationships a highly significant factor.

The inclusion of symbolic mediation leads me to the concept of symbolic generalization (Parsons, Luhmann), which I expand on the basis of the theory of the lived body. Luhmann used the concept of symbolic generalization in order to develop his theory of symbolically generalized media of communication and of the codes of societal subsystems (Luhmann [1974] 2005a). If we think of theory architecturally, symbolic generalization functions as a hinge between general social theory and a theory of society. Basing such a concept of symbolic generalization on a theory of the lived body brings together the level of the lived body, of sensory materiality on the one side, and the level of general semantic structures in society on the other. I work out this theoretical perspective by developing symbolic generalizations starting from a concept of institutions. Following Mead, I understand institutions as institutionalized complex acts, in the framework of which participants symbolically represent as whom (i.e., an identity) they contribute what partial acts to particular complex acts. Institutional complex acts are brought into relation with each other by way of reflexive institutions, e.g., symbolic media of communication.

Parsons and Luhmann both generally thought of symbolic media (e.g., power, money, influence/persuasion, truth) from the perspective of the problem of double contingency. Given that ego can use such media to mo-

tivate alter ego to accept an offer of communication, Parsons also calls them success media. I consider symbolic success media in terms of a more specific problem: how do actors begin a new complex act after another has been completed? Building a house is an example of an institutional complex act. Once the building is completed, how do those involved transition to other complex acts? Should we go hunting together now or brew beer, or is it time to make preparations for the flower festival instead? Or: our shared project has been completed, should we go out to eat now, begin a new project right away, or does each participant go off and do something entirely different with other people? Order can be understood in this way as a nexus of institutions that can be shaped in ever more complex ways by means of reflexive institutionalizations such as symbolic success media.

Grounding symbol-generating processes in a theory of the lived body also allows us to understand the order-generating power of *violence*. Chapter 4 explores this in detail. In order to introduce violence on the level of social theory, we first have to define the word.¹² Engaging with those aspects of the work of Luhmann (1985; [1974] 2005b), Reemtsma (2012), Randall Collins (2008), Walter Benjamin ([1920–1921] 2006), and Jacques Derrida (1992) that are relevant to social theory, as well as with the studies in material history by Viktor Achte (1951), René Girard ([1972] 1977), and Michel Foucault ([1975] 1977), has led me to understand violence as follows: violence is injurious or fatal force that entails a claim to legitimacy and is directed by ego at another embodied actor, alter ego. Alter ego is targeted by violence as someone who has violated normative expectations; the violence expresses ego's will to hold on, at all costs, to the expectations disappointed by alter ego. The approval of third parties makes violence into legitimate violence. Legitimate violence represents the legitimacy of normative expectations as well as the requirement of an act of violence to represent the validity of disappointed expectations. I understand violence, then, as a symbolically generalizable, embodied act, which, if it succeeds in this symbolic generalization, communicates the validity of normative expectations. Legitimate, i.e., symbolically generalized, violence also contains an obligation to repeat it if the normative expectations in question are disappointed again. This shows that legitimate violence has a tendency to become procedurally structured. Violence that can be rationalized in this

12 The entry under “Gewalt” (violence) in the Grimm brothers’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch* takes up about 180 columns; the *Oxford English Dictionary* requires 273 lines to define the term. My definition necessarily reduces this semantic diversity, similar to the fate of the word “power” in sociological theory.

way in reference to third parties seems to be indispensable for the maintenance of a social order. This insight allows us to understand the relationship between violence, power, authority, and law in terms of increasingly more complex procedural structures. It also makes possible the development of nonviolent procedures for representing the validity of normative expectations. Blood feuds, sacrifice, torture, terrorism, and/or public executions are taken into account by this theory of violence as much as are the mere threat of violence and its other more subtle forms. Violence and its own particular means of rationalization make up the focus of Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 lays the foundations for the development of a *theory of society*. The objective here is to distinguish between different types of ordered approaches to the world. We can provisionally identify three such approaches: the order of dividualizing sociation, that of individualizing sociation, as well as that of contingent multi-sociation. The latter type is the ordering system of modernity, for which the distinction between nature and culture is constitutive. Due to the great empirical variety within each type of approach to the world, they can only be described in terms of ideal types. Such an ideal type is characterized by compatible structures in the social dimension, in the dimensions of time and space, as well as in the material and symbolic dimensions, and a compatible procedural structuring of violence. These compatible structures form what could be called the “historical apriori” of a type of ordering system.¹³ The historical apriori of an ordering system must contain assertions concerning

- what rules distinguish social persons from other entities,
- what spatiotemporal structures are generally binding,
- what forms of material technology are possible,
- what symbolic structures are formed, and
- how violence is procedurally structured.

An order is stable if the structures in the individual dimensions support each other or, at minimum, are compatible and do not destabilize each other.

The book concludes with an explication of the reflexive relationship between social theory and a theory of society. A social theory necessarily claims to be able to take into account all phenomena of the ordering system in question. At the same time, however, the formulation of a social theory is a communicative event within the framework of modern science and thus reproduces that framework’s structures of communication. In ref-

13 The term “historical apriori” was, to my knowledge, first coined by Misch ([1930] 1967) and was later used in a similar way by Foucault ([1966] 1970).

erence to modernity, then, not only a theory of society, but also a general social theory is to be understood as part of the object it is meant to analyze (cf. Luhmann 2012, chap. 1). When developing such a theory, we must ask whether and to what extent this has an effect on the theory's claim to universality—in other words, its claim to be able to analyze non-modern ordering systems as well as it does the modern ordering system. Such a claim would be naïve and, ultimately, irrational if it were not for its part subjected to a reflection on its own conditions of communication.

1. The Nature/Culture Distinction in the Explanation-Understanding Controversy

The social sciences are a child of modernity. The underlying concepts which still guide sociological research today emerged in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thinkers such as Marx ([1867] 1990), Durkheim ([1893] 2013), Simmel ([1908] 2009a; [1908] 2009b), Weber ([1904] 2012b), and Mead (1925) theorized the concepts of society, action/social action, interaction, and other basic concepts of sociology. While a more precise historical study of social science concepts dates their emergence approximately one hundred years earlier, i.e., to around 1800 (Heilbronn, Magnusson and Wittrock 1998; Luhmann [1980] 2004; [1981] 1993; [1989] 1993; [1995] 2004), this has little bearing on my initial observation. The only point of contention is whether we should, following Foucault ([1966] 2002), assume an abrupt break between epistemes, or rather a conceptual transformation during a “saddle period” (Kosellek; Vierhaus) between 1750 and 1850, with the roots of the semantic changes culminating in this period traceable as far back as the seventeenth century (Magnusson 1998). In any case, the underlying assumptions of the social sciences—their conceptual apparatus—are an integral component of an order of knowledge that solidified in the nineteenth century and that distinguishes between two different categories of science: the social sciences and the humanities on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other, along with their areas of study, culture and nature.

1.1 Introduction to the discursive context

In the second half of the nineteenth century, humanities [*Geisteswissenschaften* or *Kulturwissenschaften*] and social science scholars began to ask questions about the foundation of their specific epistemological approach to the world. The resulting discussion has come to be known as the explanation-understanding [*erklären-verstehen*] controversy. Apel ([1979] 1984) identifies three phases of this debate. The first was dominated by an engagement with Kant’s transcendental philosophy. The question was whether and in what sense the critico-epistemological justification of physical natural science, which Kant, as was generally accepted, had achieved in

his *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant [1787] 2007), should hold for all sciences. More precisely: should the epistemological justification of science hold not only for the natural sciences but also for research in the historical humanities emerging in the nineteenth century, and by extension also for sociology? Dilthey argued that the subject matter of the (social sciences and) the humanities required a different approach in principle, as these fields were concerned not merely with objects, but with subjects able to express themselves. The humanities in this view were faced with an expressive context created by human subjects. There is a marked difference here, Dilthey argued, to the understanding the natural sciences have of their objects. In the humanities, the objects being studied are themselves subjects, able to independently establish an expressively shaped “nexus of life” (Dilthey) among themselves. Rather than scientists bringing a meaningful nexus to the objects in the form of an expectation of lawfulness, this nexus exists there of its own accord, created by the subjects themselves. Simmel put forward this same argument and used it to justify the autonomy of the a priori assumptions underlying sociological research (Simmel [1908] 2009a:41f). Max Weber ([1904] 2012a; [1904] 2012b), by way of Rickert ([1898] 1962), also belongs to this tradition.

The second phase of the explanation-understanding discussion centered on Hempel and Oppenheim’s deductive-nomological model (1948; Hempel [1959] 1968). Here too the question was whether the model should apply universally or whether it should exclude—or only apply in a very restricted way to—the social sciences. In the third phase, the claim to universality of the deductive-nomological model was disputed from the perspective of analytical philosophy. Following Wittgenstein ([1953] 2001), explaining and understanding were understood in this view as different language games. Important thinkers in this phase were Winch ([1958] 2008), Wright ([1971] 2009), and Apel ([1979] 1984) himself (see also Apel, Manninen and Tuomela 1978).

All three phases of the explanation-understanding controversy were centered on whether, or how, the “understanding” method can be used to justify an independent epistemological approach to the world that follows a fundamentally different rationality than explanation, which is guided by universal laws. For the purposes of my argument, the difference between these approaches can be summarized as follows: to *explain* is to construct a meaningful connection, such as a causal relationship. The observer studies external phenomena and determines whether the observed elements behave the way she postulated they would. She controls the situation by designing experiments, creating technical/material experimental setups that

touch off an event or a sequence of events. The researcher can then verify whether the events touched off by the experiment correspond to her starting assumption. Given that the implementation of the experiment constitutes a practical encroachment into the field being studied and thus has an effect on the way events there unfold, this verification process may include a reflexive turn toward the observer herself. Her role and that of the experimental design must be taken into consideration when assessing the limits of the validity of experimental statements.¹⁴

Other assumptions guide research in the case of *understanding*. Here researchers encounter actors who appear as other I's giving expression to their inner being, understanding each other, and forming an ordered expressive context. In the earlier conceptions of understanding, the emphasis was placed on the researcher/historian understanding other individuals. Even theorists as early as Dilthey ([1900] 1996) and Misch ([1931] 1967), however, as well as later interpretive sociologists, place the emphasis elsewhere: on actors in the field understanding each other and on their interactions generating rules that regulate how they do so. Rather than focusing on understanding individuals in their individuality, the analysis seeks to understand the rules that govern the nexus of these individuals' actions, their interaction, or their communication. To understand in this view, then, is to meaningfully reconstruct the rules governing the way in which actors understand each other in the field.¹⁵

Concentrating on the distinction between explaining and understanding also entails focusing on the distinction between nature and culture as two discrete subject areas requiring two different epistemological approaches. The explanation-understanding controversy is thus also implicitly a debate about the relationship between two subject areas and about whether the distinction between nature and culture is universally valid, including the question of what objects are appropriate for the understanding approach. In other words: whom, or what objects, is it appropriate to un-

14 This understanding of explanation is based on Wright's analysis of experimental action ([1971] 2009).

15 See Apel ([1979] 1984:11f) on this point, and, in the sociological context, Simmel ([1908] 2009a:41f), as well as Schütz's distinction between first and second-order constructions. Luhmann's concept of interpretation and his understanding of communication are also based on an abstract, formal concept of understanding. An example from recent qualitative social research is Amann and Hirschauer (1997:19ff), who call for ethnographic research to be grounded as much as possible in the systematicity of the field.

derstand? For what entities or objects is an explanatory approach more appropriate?

These aspects implicit in the explanation-understanding controversy have come into focus more sharply since the 1980s. One key reason is that work being done in empirical science and technology studies has made clear that nature and culture should not be understood as two ontologically distinct domains (Latour [1991] 1993). In terms of methodology, the most pressing question was how far understanding could reach: does the sphere of those communicating something contain only living humans or do other entities belong here as well? Do all beings we can seek to understand belong to the domain of culture, or do we need new conceptualizations of understanding that subvert the nature/culture distinction? Extending Apel's list, we can refer to this as the fourth phase of the explanation-understanding controversy.

The first three phases are characterized by a focus on more narrow methodological questions of how to approach the world, while in the fourth, the question of the emergence of social order arises. Here, asking how far understanding can reach is treated as the question of an entity's status as actor. The question, then, is: when analyzing the formation of social order, what entities have to be taken into account as understanding co-actors?

The close connection between methodological approach and the question of order is obvious. Is a particular entity one whose actions we must seek to understand or should we be explaining its movements mechanically? Is this a distinction that can easily and clearly be made in every situation? Are there uncertain cases and if so, how are they treated in social life? Should actions even be attributed to individual actors, or should we not rather think in terms of individual actors and technical artifacts making differently structured contributions to comprehensive actions? Questions such as these have been debated by theorists of science and technology since the 1980s (Latour [1991] 1993; Linde 1982; Rammert 2016). In dialogue with ethnology (Viveiros de Castro 1998), the question of actor status came to be formulated in a more general way: what entities should be considered personal actors in processes bringing forth societal-cultural ordering systems? Should only living humans be considered personal agents of these processes or should other entities be included as well?

The explanation-understanding controversy took a new turn with the introduction of the question of order, bringing to center stage an aspect that had thus far been merely implicit in the discussion. The question of how far understanding can reach had already been present in the first phase of

the controversy: it was treated by Wundt ([1897] 1969:283–95), by Scheler in his analysis of interpersonal understanding ([1923] 2008), as well as by Plessner in his concept of the shared world (Plessner [1928] 2019). It was, however, forgotten in the second and third phases. The debates surrounding the deductive-nomological model, the new dualism, and the notion that explaining and understanding are two different language games left aside the questions of order and of what entities can be understood.

1.2 *The expanded problem of order*

The problem of order implicit in the explanation-understanding controversy, i.e., the question of how far understanding can reach and hence the question of the borders of the social world, has not been seen as a problem of general significance in the social sciences or the humanities. In mainstream social science there is a marked resistance to even asking the question.

Referring to the “problem of order” is in fact ambiguous given that the “Hobbesian problem of order” has been entrenched in the social sciences at least since Parsons ([1937] 1968a; [1937] 1968b) and can indeed be considered *the* problem with which the social sciences are concerned. It becomes imperative, then, to clarify the difference between the problem of order long implicit in the explanation-understanding controversy and the Hobbesian problem of the possibility of social order. I do so in the following in view of anthropological assumptions, which allows me to work out the significance of problematizing the sphere of actors in societal processes.

The Hobbesian problem of the establishment of social order arises when human beings are released from given bonds without being confronted by an overarching power. The assumption that there is no overarching power that can be taken as a given must also hold from an analytical perspective. This, however, raises the question of how human beings can independently create a valid ordering system that allows them to calculate the actions with which they relate to each other (Wagner 1998). Identifying the problem in this way is a hallmark of the upheavals that ushered in modernity in Europe, and is framed differently depending on whether it is understood in terms of decision, action, interaction, or communication theory. Each of these models operates with different anthropological assumptions.

The last three centuries have shown a trend toward thinning out the positive content of anthropological assumptions. The social contract theo-

ries of such thinkers as Hobbes ([1651] 2012), Locke ([1689] 2012), and Rousseau ([1762] 2002), as well as the early works of classical economics (Smith [1776] 2008) contain relatively strong anthropological assumptions. This tradition of positive anthropological assumptions continues today primarily in rational choice theories, which abstractly posit human drives in order to conduct methodologically controlled research on human behavior (Menger [1883] 2009) or which make anthropological assumptions based on evolutionary theory (Esser 1993, 2006).¹⁶ Other approaches refrain from making positive anthropological assumptions, instead conceiving of the human as a kind of *tabula rasa*. Concrete empirical analyses are conducted in order to work out how the drive structure is formed by societal processes. Studies by, e.g., Marx ([1844] 2007; [1857–58] 1993), Durkheim ([1912] 2008), and Weber ([1904–1905] 2010; [1904–1920] 2009; [1915] 1968) go in this direction. Ultimately, this view of the human leads to an almost complete eschewal of positive anthropological assumptions, which come to be replaced by anthropological universals or the “human condition.” In philosophical anthropology, this condition is described as “world-openness” [*Weltoffenheit*] (Gehlen [1940] 1988; Plessner [1928] 2019).

While social contract theories presuppose humans in a “state of nature” with particular behavioral options, the theory of world-openness starts from the indeterminacy of human behavior, from the idea that it is the nature of the human to be indeterminate. It is because of this indeterminacy that human beings have to artificially create their own drive structure with the help of societal contrivances such as institutions (Gehlen [1956] 2016) or the generalized other (Mead [1934] 2009) in order to artificially establish a natural relationship to their environment (Plessner [1928] 2019). According to this view, human beings do not live in an environment natural to them but in an artificially created reality.¹⁷

It is evident that this position permits neither a positive determination of human nature nor of human relationships to their environment. The “human condition” rather dictates that the human has to create herself. In philosophical anthropology, the notion of the human condition is elaborated in direct dialogue with research in comparative cultural sociology,

16 It is debatable whether Coleman ([1990] 2000) is closer to the methodologically justified anthropological assumptions of Menger or to Esser’s positing of evolved anthropological characteristics.

17 On the close connections between pragmatism (Dewey, Mead) and philosophical anthropology (Scheler, Gehlen, Plessner), see Krüger (2001).

ethnology, and history (Gehlen [1940] 1988; [1956] 2016).¹⁸ The human appears here as a historical being in a twofold sense: the historical changes in humans' relationships to their environment also comprise variability in the way they interpret themselves.¹⁹

Although anthropological assumptions inform the theoretical foundations of the social sciences, there has been next to no explicit discussion of anthropological questions in sociological discourse.²⁰ However, current research in the social sciences either implicitly or explicitly starts from the assumption that human nature is not fixed, but is rather generated by historical, societal practices. An example of an explicit alignment with philosophical anthropology is Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge ([1966] 1991). The authors treat Gehlen's categories of "world-openness" and "instinct reduction" as founding assumptions regarding human nature, based upon which they develop specific sociological categories. In his early works, Luhmann too makes affirmative use of philosophical anthropology's concept of world-openness (Luhmann [1967] 2005:166f) and explicitly bases his argument of the necessity of complexity reduction on anthropological claims (Luhmann [1967] 2005:147). The structure of this argument remains the same even after his autopoietic turn (Luhmann [1984] 2005).

There is a conceptual analogy to this in Mead as well ([1934] 2009). As Habermas has shown ([1981] 2007b:chap. 5, 1), the development of symbolically mediated communication leads to an invalidation of natural drives, which become societally and symbolically defined. This corresponds in substance to the notion of world-openness. Rational choice theories have also brought forth an analogy to world-openness: the interpretative version of the theory (Esser 1993; see also Greshoff 2006) assumes that the relevant preferences guiding behavior are culturally determined. And yet utility maximization remains an essential anthropological assumption

18 I cite philosophical anthropology here as an example. Other writers, such as Sartre ([1960] 2004) or Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2012), take a different approach to empirical research, on the basis of which they too, however, formulate anthropological statements.

19 For Kamper (1973:22ff), it follows from this that anthropology must reflect on its own attempts to develop a concept of the human and accordingly work out the impossibility of such a concept.

20 This, as noted above, does not mean that anthropological assumptions do not play a part in this discourse. Thus Honneth and Joas ([1980] 1988) have shown the ways in which anthropological assumptions shape theories of society.

even for Esser. In the end, the knowledge acquired by understanding has to be integrated here into the algorithm of utility maximization.

To summarize:

Thus far, the main problem of reference for the social sciences has been the incalculability in the relationships between human actors. This incalculability is a result of human world-openness, which in turn is the reason humans' relationships to their environment have to be given an artificial, symbolically mediated form. It is on this basis that social science can analyze the possibilities of societal order formation. Here it is assumed that there is a consensus on what entities are faced with the problem of world-openness: the social is a human affair, and there is thus no need to expressly ask what actors are included in order formation.

The formation of social ordering systems under conditions of world-openness constitutes the traditional problem of reference for the social sciences. Radical shifts in perspective on this problem have meant that stabilizing anthropological assumptions as held by early social contract theories and some of the current theories of rational choice have been increasingly replaced by the notion of the human condition and the world-openness it implies. One fundamental definition regarding the social dimension of order formation has been preserved, however: only living human beings can be considered personal actors.

The question of the boundaries of the sphere of personal actors takes up this radical shift and goes a step further, fastening its attention on the processes that determine where the boundaries between social persons and other entities are drawn. This amounts to an expanded notion of world-openness, in that it can no longer be certain who belongs to the category of personal agent of a structured approach to the world. In the following I will therefore distinguish between basic and expanded world-openness.

World-openness and order formation are intimately linked, as order formation is conceived in relation to the contingencies arising from world-openness. In analogy to the distinction between basic and expanded world-openness, I differentiate between the basic and the expanded problem of reference in relation to order formation. The basic problem of reference in relation to order formation corresponds to what Parsons identified as the Hobbesian problem of the emergence of social order. Asking about the personal agents of societal ordering systems fundamentally expands the problem of reference in the social sciences, forcing us to generalize the problem of order. The modern notion that only human beings ought to be universally recognized as legitimate persons is constitutively tied to an approach to the world that is structured by the nature/culture distinction

(Descola [2005] 2013). This approach depersonalizes non-human nature as well as splits the human himself into a natural and a personal component. The natural sciences treat the non-personal part as an object of study, while the personal part is seen as the creative source of a highly diverse range of cultures. Positing as contingent the sphere of personal actors in an ordering system automatically makes the nature/culture distinction contingent as well. It is a distinction that denotes the structure of a historically situated approach to the world that cannot be universalized. A general social theory, therefore, must allow for an analysis of the nature/culture distinction as such. Rather than presupposing it, this distinction should be rendered intelligible as one possible way of ordering the world among others.

It follows that sociological approaches concerned with the agents of societal ordering systems must be able to suggest ways of reflexively holding the nature/culture distinction at arm's length. Determining the boundaries of the sphere of social persons is not only constitutively connected to the ordering of the social world, but also to the substantive and spatiotemporal ordering of phenomena which these social persons may encounter. A social theory that allows for a comprehensive analysis of order formation cannot limit itself to the order of the social, of the social dimension, but must conceive of order formation in a pluridimensional way. As I will show in the following chapters, an analysis of order formation must also include the symbolic as well as the substantive, spatial, and temporal dimensions.

