

Action, Language, Art and Mystics as Reflection-Levels of an Alternative Semiotics and the Spiritual Perspective of a Value-Levels-Democracy

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Abstract:

In the wake of Kant's "Copernican revolution", first actions of the mind, then real actions have become the principle of modern philosophy and sociology. For the author, both kinds of actions are the issue of a philosophical semiotics. He shows up four big semiotic levels of growing inner (ontological) reflexivity: *real actions, language as meta-action, art as a meta-language, and mystic as a meta-art, meaning that mystical activity is pure receptivity for the divine sense-medium which gives itself in a specific human receptivity*. In this perspective, mystical spirituality is the most reflected human activity (in the sense of an implicit ontological reflection). This view implies some critic of unclear conceptions of "pragmatics", specifically in language theory. Whereas the proposed kind of reflection-theoretical semiotics follows an individual perspective, the collective perspective of reflection-systems leads to a future value-levels-democracy on philosophical fundamentals whose spiritual importance cannot be replaced by any individual spirituality.

1. Semiotics and Action Theory

Semiotics is the doctrine of signs. Human signs (in difference to natural signs) are philosophically (epistemologically) no "first data", but created by and embedded in actions. But we must distinguish actions of the mind (sense-activities) from real actions.

In the wake of Kant's "Copernicanian revolution", actions of the mind ("Handlungen des Verstandes", of which he speaks several times in his *Critique of Pure Reason*) have become the principle of modern philosophy, which is essentially reflection on what is implied in actions of the mind. Charles S. Peirce, one of the founders of semiotics as a new discipline, was inspired by that action-theory of the mind. Also for the author of this essay actions of the mind are the issue of a philosophical semiotics, in difference to special empirical and sometimes only fashionable kinds of semiotics.

But what about real actions in relation to those "mere" actions of the mind? They undoubtedly became the principle of contemporary sociology and social philosophy. It is not the place here to deal largely about the origin of both of these two disciplines (the former one more empirical, the latter one more theoretical) in that very "Copernicanian revolution" and in the development of philosophy (in so called German idealism, which essentially was a theory of human self-reflection) towards an action-theoretical and relational way of thinking. At any rate, it is a consequence of that action-theoretical and relation-theoretical departure of Kant's "transcendental" turn that with Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx philosophy became theory of human actions in general and social actions in particular, opening the door as well to empirical sociology as to the semiotics as that of Peirce.

In spite of that evident development you will rarely find a clear definition of real actions in difference to actions of the mind. But such a demarcation is needed if we

want clarify the relation between semiotics and social theory as well as a clear concept of pragmatics. With the great founders of American “pragmatism” like Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey and William James in the field of psychology, pragmatism always meant methodically more than the “philosophical doctrine that estimates any assertion solely by its practical bearing upon human interests” (*Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*. 1984. Oxford University Press; cf. F.C.S. Schiller 1929).

Even Max Weber, known for his precise definitions, in contrast to most contemporary sociologists, gives only a definition of social actions (“orientation on the behavior of others”, § 1 of his *Economy and Society*, Weber 1978), but no general definition of actions, in difference to “mere” activity of the mind.

Therefore in *Handlungen* (Heinrichs 2007), I defined real actions as those human activities which change something in reality. The main division of actions results then from the sense-elements¹ which constitute all general kinds of reality and of human action-situations:

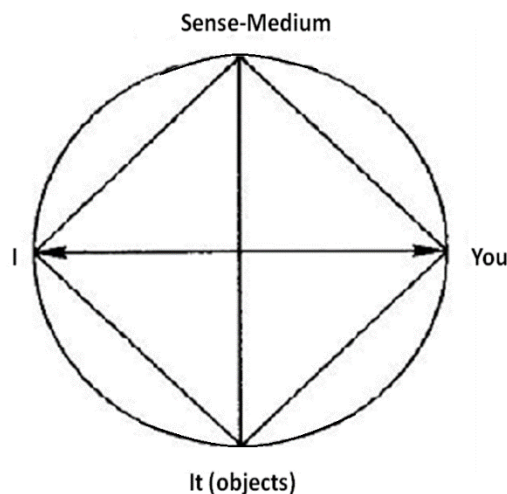


Figure 1: The sense-elements which are present in every mental activity and action-situation

According to these four general sense-elements, we can distinguish four main types of human action:

1. Objective-physical actions
2. Inner-subjective actions
3. Social actions (as Weber defined them)
4. Expression-actions

Here is not the place to enumerate or even to explain all subtypes of action which fall under these main types. The subdivision goes to $4^4 = 256$ subtypes! It may be sufficient just to understand the method of the reflection-logical division. This method is called *dialectical subsumption*: the repeated division of the subdivisions by the main types. The whole is, so to speak, subordinated and “holographically” present in every division. Contemporary mathematics speaks of “fractal” division. But it is an old method of “harmonic thinking,” which can be found in Indian and Western astrology,

in the Chinese I Ching and in many old scriptures, in Plato, and in Hegel. In an implicit manner, you find it also in Sri Aurobindo's main-works. What sometimes seems simple repetition, is mostly analogous, modified "repetition" on a new level. Today such an integral systemic method is unknown or rejected as nearly all systematics in Western philosophy, in the wake of so called "language analysis". After the apparent break down of German Idealism, the mainstream of Western philosophy does not dare to systematically improve Hegel's thinking and method by a new reflection logic², but prefers miniatures or witty arbitrariness.

This method is not a purely deductive one. The distinction of "induction" (1) and "deduction" (2) is not at all complete. It must be completed by "reconstruction" (3) which means *a methodical dialogue of conceptual elements and experience*. Reconstruction is the leading method in Integral Philosophy. This one must be completed by the method of *systemic design* (4), which means to find the *logical place* of each concept and division in an integral *architecture of thought*. Only by distinguishing and disposing of all these basic methods can you speak of integral thinking.

The result of the method of reconstruction and systemic design in the field of action theory can be called a *periodic system of actions*, in analogy to the known periodic system of chemical elements (Heinrichs 2007). Mankind has succeeded in systemizing the chemical elements and (approximately) the world of fauna and flora – but not an agreement on its own action-types. That makes communication about them rather difficult and often confusing!

But is such an action-theory part of semiotics, as it was suggested in the above headline "Semiotics and Action Theory"? For the following hypothesis it is essential to look on actions, even in the proper sense of real actions, as semiotic processes. Signs in general are, according to the traditional understanding, entities which stand for something other what they indicate or "signalize". In every action there is the dialectical duality of process (activity) and content, dialectical in the sense of their inseparability in spite of their opposition. These two dialectical elements of every intentional action can be understood as being signs for one another: the respective content stands for the activity in which it is content; the activity signals a content, an intention by which it is moved.

2. The hypothesis of four great semiotic levels

The big hypothesis which binds the following paragraphs together can now be illustrated. If all semiotic-processes in the human sphere are activities or actions in the broad sense of actions of the mind, real actions in the defined sense are the first level of those. On the same level are to be placed the passive counterparts of actions, the basic self-experiences (Erleben).³ Both the active as the passive form of sense-activities have the *implicit self-reflection* which is constitutive for human self-consciousness. This very fundamental point cannot be discussed here largely (see for that Heinrichs 2018, chap. 1).

But there are higher reflected levels of mental activities. The following scheme must be read from below, according to the great *reflection-levels of semiotic processes*:

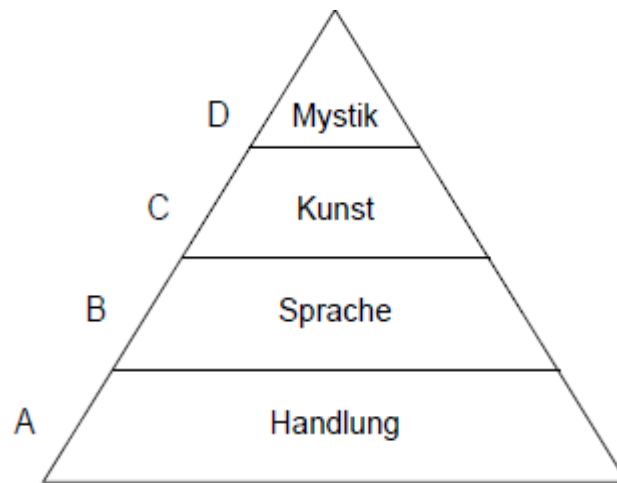


Figure 2: the hierarchy of semiotic levels or dimensions

- A. *Actions* resp. basic self-experience
- B. *Language* as meta-action (essentially an action of mind)
- C. *Arts* as meta-languages
- D. *Mystic* as meta-art, where action is lifted in pure receptivity

The proof of this very comprehensive and integral view, is given step by step in the following outline of the corresponding chapters of the book *Integral Philosophy* (Heinrichs 2018) which in its turn is a summary of a series of books on Action and Social System, Language and Art, and Spirituality. Here we have the privilege of overview without proving each step in detail.

What is possible and the most important at first, is to show the *transition from the sphere of actions into the sphere of language*. This transition is made by sign-actions, more specifically by meta-signs. Sign-action belongs to the fourth big sphere of actions the main reflection-logical division of which is

1. Objective-physical actions
2. Inner-subjective actions
3. Social actions
4. Expression actions, comprising
 - 4.1 expression objects (monuments)
 - 4.2 moving subject expression (gestures)
 - 4.3 community expression
 - 4.4 Sign-actions

An expression-action of the type 4.2. (gestures) is, e.g., waving for farewell. It becomes a sign-action (4.4), if the vague meaning of this waving gets a clearly defined meaning; e.g., if the waving in traffic means a very specific intention of action. (The waving by hand can be replaced by lights, by indicators. These are technical substitutes of human actions). A sign-action is a class of expression actions with well-defined meanings. These sign-actions can be regulated by meta-signs, e.g., if a policeman indicates that certain rules are changed. This policeman can eventually be made of cardboard. It is a meta-sign saying that signs have changed.

Now, *language* is a system of signs which regulates itself, in the very process of speaking, by its own meta-signs, the grammatical rules. This is *a semiotic definition of language as self-regulating meta-action!* This definition enables one, by the way, to distinguish clearly the astonishing animal “languages” from human language. Only a self-conscious being can develop self-regulating action-rules. (The animals have consciousness, but not self-consciousness with a full implicit self-reflection and the resulting possibility of self-regulation.)

3. A New deal of linguistics and philosophy: reflection logical universal deep structures

In current language theory, such a semiotic definition does not exist. So the relation between actions and language is rather obscure in the contemporary “discourse”, as even the meaning of “discourse” is obscure: Is it *ratio discursiva* = argumentation or discourse in the general sense of the English language? There are theorists of “discourse-theory” of society and of discourse-ethics (like J. Habermas) which play more or less consciously with this ambiguity. But here we have to deal with another important ambiguity, that of “pragmatics”.

It is right that all actual language-use is action, because it is an interpersonal action. But this does not mean that language as a whole is only one special kind of action, as it appears in most books on “pragmatics”. Language is meta-action. That means that *there are dimensions of language which are not real actions* – even if all dimensions are the result of human activity (actions of the mind) and should be analyzed as such. But psychic activity and real actions are not the same, as our above definition of action states clear. Real action must change anything, and language changes only in the interpersonal dimension of speech acts. What is meant by the *dimensions of language, which are not action*, but mere mind-activity, may become clearer by the following figure:

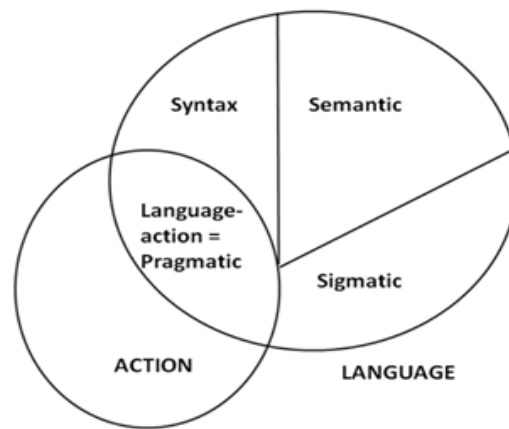


Figure 3: The overlap between action and language

From the perspective of action, *speaking is a special action type: social action by sign-acting. From the perspective of language, real action is only one of its constant dimensions.* Only this is what can correctly called pragmatic dimension of language, i.e., language as interpersonal action. In spite of the boom of linguistic pragmatics, I do not know any publication, where this relation between real action and language is sufficiently clarified. Mostly language is seen as just one type of (social) action. So the relation between language and action and the nature of language remains unclear – as does most speaking of “pragmatics”. Does it deal with actions of the mind, what is the general standard of post-Kantian thinking and what is necessary for an understanding of all dimensions of language – or does it refer to real actions, which is only one aspect of language, the pragmatic one in the sense of interpersonal action?

This definition of “pragmatic dimension” as interpersonal action (speech act in this sense) is very important because it differs essentially from that of Charles Morris, who has the merit of having first introduced the so-called *semiotic dimensions*, as there are, in his eyes, the syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic dimensions (Morris 1937). His concept of the pragmatic dimension needs correction, with him and his many followers which are blind on this eye (see the enormous and influential compendium of Posner 2003). Being a behavioristic psychologist, Morris did not distinguish *psychic activities* from *proper actions*. *Only in the interpersonal dimension is language real action!* Only this deserves the name “pragmatic dimension”, because in the wider sense of mind activity all the above linguistic dimensions are pragmatic and must be understood as actions of the mind!

Due to his too wide and unspecific concept of pragmatics, Morris and his followers do not know a *sigmatic dimension*⁴, the primary relation between signs and objects, and confuses this relation with the *semantic dimension*, which means the disposition of the sign-user (subject) on already established language-signs. But these differences become only visible from the reflection-logical point of view which is leading here.

We can define the semiotic dimension of language in analogy to the main types of actions:

Main types of action

Semiotic dimensions of language

objective-physical	→	sigmatic: object-related introduction of words
inner-subjective	→	semantic: subjective disposing of known words
inter-subjective	→	pragmatic: speaking as interpersonal acting
expression	→	syntax: connection of the word-signs

The main function of the *sigmatic dimension* is the introduction of word-meanings, like a child learns them by showing, also in an illustrated book. Here is the first place of the so called “language games” of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The main function of the *semantic dimension* is word-memory and the use of words for predications. Instead of an illustrated book for children, a normal dictionary is sufficient which explains unknown words with known words.

The function of the *pragmatic dimension* is acting by speaking (also by writing). Here we can also speak of “language games,” but in a very different understanding from the introduction-games, what Wittgenstein confused (compare *Philosophical Investigations* § 7 to § 23). It is like confusing car-production with car-driving! Can we call both activities “use of cars”? This confusion of two totally different meanings of “language games” is comparable to that of Morris` confusion of behavioristic psychology of the sigmatic dimension with interpersonal speech acts. Due to this confusion, the relation of semiotics (the line Peirce and Morris) to speech act theory (the line Wittgenstein, J. Austin, J. Searle) was longtime not seen.

The function of the *syntactical dimension* is the connection between the primary signs, which connection was correctly defined by Morris as syntactical, and thus the self-regulation of language by meta-signs (the latter one not being in the scope of Morris).

To each of these four dimensions the author has written proper books (5 tomes under the title *Sprache*, because the fourth dimension, the syntax, results in a meta-syntax of stylistic figures which a dealt with in a proper tome). There is everywhere an impressive reflection-logical order, for example in the semantics of word-classes and predication types, also in the types of verbal actions (pragmatic). There is also a *hidden universal syntax* in the languages of the world. Sri Aurobindo spoke of a common original language of mankind (Aurobindo 1971, 550 s). To the author`s mind however, this common language is not so much founded in sounds and word-roots, it is rather founded in the *common reflection-logical structures*, which are the same anywhere. Those are nevertheless deeply hidden under the innumerable varieties of the single mother-languages. A really fruitful comparison of languages will be possible only by going back to the common structures and discovering how they are varied. Actual linguistics sees only the varieties and hasn`t any idea of the deep structures, with the prominent exception of Noam Chomsky, for whom the common deep structures (due to which a child can learn “the” language so quickly) are however of a genetic nature. To my mind, they are not more of genetic nature than mathematical laws are a matter of genes. Those common deep structures are rather founded in the common reflection logic of human mind.

In the eyes of the author, language and languages constitute a whole which is gripped so quickly by children because *all languages are nothing else but the interpersonal expression-system of human self-consciousness itself*: All general linguistic structures cannot be deduced, but reconstructed from this sole source! These common structures can only be found by an integral reflection logic, not by starting with the varieties of any given language.

What nowadays is called “language analysis” refers only to the storage of single mother languages. This is an endless as well as mostly fruitless “business” (providing academic prestige and money). Instead of linguistic business as usual, we need *integral reflection departing from the fundamental sense-structures*, as very shortly outlined here.

4. Art: the meta-language beyond the languages

As already mentioned above, the integral, reflection-logical language-theory is completed by a *stylistic of tropes*, which is nothing else than a meta-syntax: qualitatively and quantitatively beyond the boundaries of normal phrase syntax. In difference to idioms, linguistic tropes are figurative ways of using the words, which follow unconsciously, yet paradoxically, a logical order. Here again we meet four reflexive levels:

1. *Figures of repetition*: from simple iterations of sounds or meanings to syntactical parallelism and chiasmus, which is a crossing of words: “*The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon*” (K. Marx, *Introduction into the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*).

2. *Figures of analogy*: metaphors etc. “*weapon of criticism*” is also a metaphor (a short comparison), whereas “*criticism of the weapon*” constitutes a metonymy, namely the expansion of the concept “criticism.” Metaphors, metonymies, symbols, and allegories are the main types of the analogy-figures.

3. *Figures of play with truth*: i.e. understatement/exaggeration, euphemism/emphasis, irony/joke, undercover statements, that uses a different grammatical form, e.g., a question for a strong statement.

4. *Word plays in the formal sense*: “For example, Joyce's phrase “they were young and easily freudened” clearly implies the more conventional “they were young and easily frightened;” however, the former also makes an apt pun on the names of two famous [psychoanalysts](#), Jung and Freud” (see Wikipedia, *Wordplay*).

Also in this field of style figures the logic of reflection, proving its fertility in sorting not only the traditional figures, but even of detecting and naming of many unknown ones. These figures are far from being only a matter of traditional rhetoric. They are essential for modern literature as well as for publicity. Even if their analysis belongs to an integral language theory, they constitute also the *transition from ordinary language to literal language and to art in general*.

It is the sense-generating power of style-figures and other style-features, that makes the inner fertility of *form* for the *content*, thus determining its artistic value. It is this

sense-generating quality of form that transcends the sphere of “simple” or even rhetorical language, transforming it into art. This transition is as big as that from action to the meta-action of language, because it is a *meta-language* which is found in all the arts.

Pantomime is an illuminating example: Why does the pantomimic let away the words? Because he will show another level of expression beyond the words. All art has this pantomimic character, as all art presupposes language, and for transcending it, “we need art, not to go broke on the truth” - of mere language (F. Nietzsche).

The arts form a new semiotic level of sense-transportation, higher than language. Juri Lotman spoke rightly of a secondary language (Lotman 1990) without analyzing the reflexive relation between language and arts. The meta-language of art is not a meta-language in the linguistic sense of speaking about an object-language. This one is only a form of subsequent reflection. But art constitutes an inner, *higher form of lived reflection*. No wonder the arts can be sorted in reflection through a logical manner. The following distinctions of the main kinds of art are well-known, but not in their reflection-theoretical order, not to speak of the resulting subdivisions, according to the method of dialectical subsumption. These subdivisions can also not be indicated in this context, as well as the combinatorial or mixed forms, e.g. the opera as combination of music, language-art (sometimes) and moving art.

1. *Visual arts*, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, and garden art. Their common denominator is object-shaping or creation of sign-objects. Their medium of expression is stationary objects.

2. *Moving arts*, such as dance or mime, scenic representations without language, hang gliding, animal games (where not only a sportive or acrobatic intention is leading). The common medium of expression in these arts is not only human movement but any movement at all, the sign or analogy for liveliness, for spirit-led life.

3. *Literature (language art)*: For this, it is most evident that it internally requires the common language. There is no doubt that every poet uses an ordinary, everyday language as his "material" and is shaping this material in a special way. Just as this shaping is therefore the meta-language syntax, or link art. (Remember: syntax is a semiotic view of the dimension of connection between signs). Language art logically presupposes the moving arts, as in reflexive division each level presupposes the previous one. As was previously mentioned, the vocal language must be understood as acoustic gestures of the tongue, accompanied by multiple motion gestures. On the other hand, the language arts become music, first by the singing of words.

4. *Music* is sound design, no longer bound to standardized semantic meanings, which is singing of words still. Not yet in the so-called program music, but finally in absolute music, do language and semantics separate. Music becomes the syntactically designed silence in relation to words, an evocative silence totally beyond the words. Music is shaped silence beyond the words in crafted relationship to the richness of sound elements in time and space. Music is the most syntactical art. All elements, such as the relationships of the pitch, the harmony, and rhythm, are nothing more than laws of relations: syntax. Seen or heard as absolute music, it has

no semantics of its own. Its semantics exist mainly through connection with the language in the vocals, except in the case of onomatopoetic program music.

Concluding this paragraph on art, we should realize that the understanding of art as meta-language does not recur in the concept of beauty which is traditionally firmly associated with art, even with Sri Aurobindo in his *Letters on Art*, and in *The Future Poetry*. To this reference Aurobindo belongs, with all his enormous knowledge of contemporary and ancient literature, still to a generation for which the arts are automatically Fine Arts, that means, defined by beauty. Also the art-theories of Kant, Hegel and all 19th century thinkers could not leave this frame, by a lack of this semiotic conception of the arts. Modern art has practically shown that the area of beauty is transgressed by the arts - even if the theoretical foundation of this step was not yet clear.

For a reflective theoretical concept of art, it is *not beauty alone* which defines it but the *power of expression*. The concept of expression is wider than beauty alone, and it corresponds better to the understanding of art as a meta-language. Evidently, this must not always be beautiful, but expressive— powerful in the expression of all reality which touches the humans, and that is just All, including the fascinating as well as the terrifying Infinite.

5. Mystics and Spiritual philosophy: making the infinity-relation explicit

In the beginning the hypothesis of four great semiotic levels has been proposed: action - language as meta-action - art as meta-language - mystics as meta-art. A structural concept of mystics is unusual, even unknown hitherto. It results by analogy, more specifically by the fact that the level of art is analogous to the level of communication in the interpersonal relations (which I will propose here afterwards in the context of democracy-development), and that we must ask for a conclusion of that leveling. This conclusion is only *given if the unilaterality of action is totally overcome*. It is already lifted on the language level, by the reciprocal receptivity for the whole language system. On the art level, the artist must be still more receptive to what there is to express, aware of its technical means - and when what we call “inspiration” arises, to what touches mystic receptivity.

The borders between art and spiritual experience were always very open. In pre-modern times, all art was mostly sacral art which was not only imposed by religious institutions but came from the neighborhood of art and mystics.

Only the modern differentiations (of religion and all basic universal values from culture as conditional and regional values, both from politics and all that form economics⁵) led to our modern concept of autonomous art. If this one is spiritual nevertheless by the free expression of the artists, it is all the more credulous.

The central mystic phenomenon is the experience that the infinite medium of Sense becomes active itself, whereas the part of the human subject is pure receptivity. This insight provides a *structural understanding of mystics*, which is independent of any specific religious and denominational contents! Paradoxically, this receptivity is the most “ambitious” achievement of the human individual. It is exactly the same paradox which we find in Aurobindo’s concept of “Supramental”! This part must be trained anyhow, though it goes beyond the proper human faculties. Often the mystic

does not know how he/she merits this grace, maybe more in the course of his reincarnations (if we adopt this hypothesis here) than in his actual life. Anyway, this phenomenon is visible in all history of religions, the real origin and core of which is always mystical, as well as in the life of many of us. Christians name this the experience of “grace,” in spite of the fact that grace is said not to be a matter of *experience* in official theology. But here we speak about experience.

Types of mystic result from the different empirical elements, which serve as expression-media of the self-revelation of the infinite Sense. Evidently, these empirical elements correspond to the known sense-elements:

1. *Objectivity or nature*: Many people have the mystical experience of the Divine in nature, more or less clearly, more or less continuously. There are also poets in most languages, which are nature-mystics and have the additional artistic gift to bring their experiences into language, although there is *a tension between the experience of the shapeless Divine and the shaping in words of literature*. The same applies to other arts.

2. *Subjectivity*: the inner of the subject is itself the medium of mystical experience. This form of mystic self-contemplation is fundamental for most of the Eastern religions. In the West it was just the impulse of the philosophy of self-reflection, which made the romantic poet Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), student of J.G. Fichte, exclaim: “*We dream of traveling through space: is the universe not in us? We do not know the depth of our mind. The mysterious path goes inward.*” Most forms of meditation and yoga will be helpful to go this way inward. It is the inner self-reflection in the *activity-experience of the subject* which is the starting point of Integral Philosophy, and what is sought in meditation, possibly on higher levels. At any rate, the mystical experience is “nothing but” an increase of that elementary experience of self-awareness, the high level of lived reflection.

3. *Community-experience* is another field of mystical experience. The so-called revelation-religions of the West (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) are not to understand (in their dynamism and dangers of power degeneration) without the intense community-experience at their origin, as in their historical development. What is said about self-awareness before, applies here also, but with the mirroring of the Medium of a community.

4. *The sign-mystic or medial mystic* uses as sign-figures: runes, image writing, letter writing, secret emblems, cards, rites and many symbols, which shall evoke messages of the invisible Divine or its helpers. The ancient reading of fate or of the will of the gods from the bird's flight or entrails belong here. Today, the traditional Tarot cards or even Scat cards can become, for some gifted clairvoyants, the medium of their messages, which are only real, if there is mystical experience. Those media are never simple techniques for the use of everybody! The starry sky is one of the oldest natural sign systems, requiring interpretation. The sign mystic can easily degrade to *sign magic*, i.e. an effort, using characters not only to understand the reality, but to arbitrarily change, to manipulate.

When it comes to the question of *how to understand the Divine* - is it a “personal God” or the pantheistic Universe? - our way of thinking provides an answer, in all

humility and firmness. Can this universe of self-reflexive structures, which emerge in the human self-consciousness, can it be without proper self-reflection or self-reference? Would the evolution of nature to human self-consciousness be possible without an underlying self-reference, and that means self-consciousness? The sober philosopher, undisturbed by so many religious and anti-religious prejudices, says firmly: no, that would be impossible!

At the same time he will be humble, because that insight will remain a mere postulate, as long as there is no proper experience. And this experience can only be the mystical one. It is *more or less* available to everybody, not only to the “professional” mystic. Everybody is a mystic (to modify a famous dictum of the German artist Joseph Beuys: “Everyone is an artist”). There is only the question in which grade and clarity. As to the mystic, everyone has that relation to the Infinite which we called the medium of Sense. Only the clarity and explicitness of that consciousness is very different.

It is one task of philosophy to help the implicit consciousness become clearer in going the way of theoretical explicitness. But there are other ways to make the implicit infinity-relation explicit than theoretical reflection, among them yoga and all that we call spirituality. *Spirituality comprises all ways to make the implicit infinity-relation of the human being more explicit.* Explicit mystic is more than one of the many ways, it is the accomplishment of that (non-theoretical) explicitness.

The formula of philosophical reflection-theory “Self-consciousness of the Universe” can be an important help on the spiritual way. It shows the way between a traditional Theism of a “personal” God and a pantheism which is lacking just the possibility to address the Divine. The discourse of a “personal” God remains, as long a rather childish anthropomorphism as, firstly, “person” in general is not understood as the structure of self-reference (self-consciousness) and as, secondly, this notion is not primarily related to the universe, namely as its very self-reflection.

In a less conceptual manner, that is the philosophical understanding, e.g., of the Gospel of St. John: The Logos was with God and all that is made is made of Him (Jo 1, 1-3). There is no “creation out of nothing,” only one out of the Logos - that is a remarkable difference which was unfortunately not understood by traditional Christianity. Evidently, that “self-consciousness of the universe” is the same as what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother address as “the Divine” and as Supermind. In this latter name, the relation to the universe as well as the distinction from it (and from a pure pantheism) is expressed. Therefore it comes nearest to the formula “Self-consciousness of the universe.” However, it is not easy to keep away any reification (objectification) for a “supreme being” above all others. The Self-consciousness of the universe is not above all others, but the Innermost of a holographic universe, the most noble holographic mirror-points of which are the self-conscious, but finite human beings.

Whether the Divine is manly or female (the Divine Mother, or Shakti), is a question of religious psychology and the reception of the Indian myths. Only if they are consciously taken *as that* (as is the case with Aurobindo and “the Mother”), they are more than anthropomorphisms which today rather hinder on the spiritual way. Devotees of The Mother may be reminded by her own words:

“You must not confuse a religious teaching with a spiritual one. Religious teaching belongs to the past and halts progress. Spiritual teaching is the teaching of the future – it illumines the consciousness and prepares it for the future realisation. Spiritual teaching is above religions and strives towards a global Truth. It teaches us to enter into direct relations with the Divine.”⁶

What about *belief*? Must we believe, at least if we are not professional philosophers, but spiritual ones? The author distinguishes four kinds of belief in a reflexive order:

1. Belief as acceptance of doctrines on the *authority* of someone or an institution (the traditional belief, e.g. in Catholicism).
2. Belief as total *trust* in the presupposed Deity (e.g. the Lutheran form).
3. Belief as being *open for a message*, which I can verify only in the long run.
(“The belief comes from hearing,” Paul, *Romans* 10, 17)
4. Belief as “courage to be” (Paul Tillich) and the courage to stand by one’s own peak experiences: *the Sense-belief*.

Evidently, only the last two of these “beliefs” can be recommended by a philosopher and for a philosophical mind. For these forms, the traditional contradiction between belief and one’s own insight is totally overcome. More in the Western than in the Eastern and Indian world, it has always been but an instrument of institutional power plays.

In the Eastern hemisphere, there was not so much a contradiction felt, but the need of critical thinking, the epistemologically scientific approach without traditional prejudices was less cultivated. We need that severe kind of approach today, in a world which is so much shaped by the sciences. It should be demonstrated in the above outlined philosophical semiotics that a spiritual mind has nothing to fear from such a scientific approach. To deny its severity and to declare any traditional doctrine a “science” without a modern epistemological fundamental means to create that appearing contradiction between belief and scientific thinking which worked for some centuries so destructively in the West.

6. The Model of a Value-Levels-Democracy

It would be possible now to evaluate that semiotic approach for a general ontology, an orientation in the fields of “being”, and also for an ethical value reflection, as it is done in “Integral Philosophy” (Heinrichs 2018). But under the general title of this book, with the keywords Pragmatism, Spirituality, and Society, it seems adequate to add a short outline on the value-levels of society and an essentially further developed democracy, in the sense of a communicative and ontologically self-reflected society. This rather new view on democracy is based on the analogous reflection-levels as the semiotic levels dealt with in the above. The interpersonal reflection and its levels constitute even *the original context of discovery for the four reflection-levels*.

It happens rarely, if at all, that the organization of our societies is dealt with as a general philosophical issue, or as one of fundamental and spiritual importance. (I do not speak of the traditional religious identification of religion and society which today has become fundamentalist!) “Political philosophy” seems a mere application, not a

basic dimension of philosophy. This is due to the fact that most traditional philosophies are monologist in their departure. But if the inter-personal relation, the dialogue with other persons, is constitutive for a subject, there results a dialogical thinking which is expressed in the famous sentences of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), pupil of Hegel:

*"True dialectic is not the monologue of thinker with himself, but the dialogue between I and You."- "The first object of man is man himself. The sense of nature (...) is a comparably future product. The other person is the bond between me and the world. I am and feel myself depending on the world, because I first feel myself dependent on other humans."*⁷

In the interpersonal or social relation to the other persons, the reflection, which is so constitutive for self-consciousness, reaches a totally different dimension: The *interpersonal reflection becomes practical or pragmatic just by itself* - that means really changing the interpersonal relations and changing the persons themselves. This practical or pragmatic character of social reflection has rarely been recognized and never been systematically analyzed. The social reflection is much more than a theoretical "exchange of perspectives". There are four levels of interpersonal reflection, which constitute, in my eyes, even the basis of proving (the epistemological basis) of the fourfold semiotic dimensions dealt with above ⁸:

1. *Instrumental* action with reference to the other (and handling of the other), e.g. treatment by a doctor or pre-personal business, where the other is only seen in the context of things or of money. - In the look: I see the other person just as an object, for example as an obstacle in traffic.
2. *Strategic* action takes into account the actions of the other for one's own interests. - I see the other person as an entity which is looking himself/herself. I take her/him into account knowing that he may or certainly will take into account me and my behavior likewise. In traffic a very important new level compared with a simple obstacle on level 1.
3. *Communicative* action responds to the expectations and desires of the Other, not just with strategic intention, the track of self-interest (2), but for the Other's own sake; called also "altruistic" (derived from "*alter, the other*"). This communicative approach does not mean a particular altruistic attitude, but that *a reciprocity is recognized* and somehow realized. The reciprocity of looking is the most basic pattern of communication. It is a reciprocal and double reflection which works here: I reflect the Other in his ability to reflect me and vice versa. (This goes far beyond the objectification by the "regard" of the Other what J.P.Sartre speaks about as the basic character of social relation! That objectification belongs to level 1.)

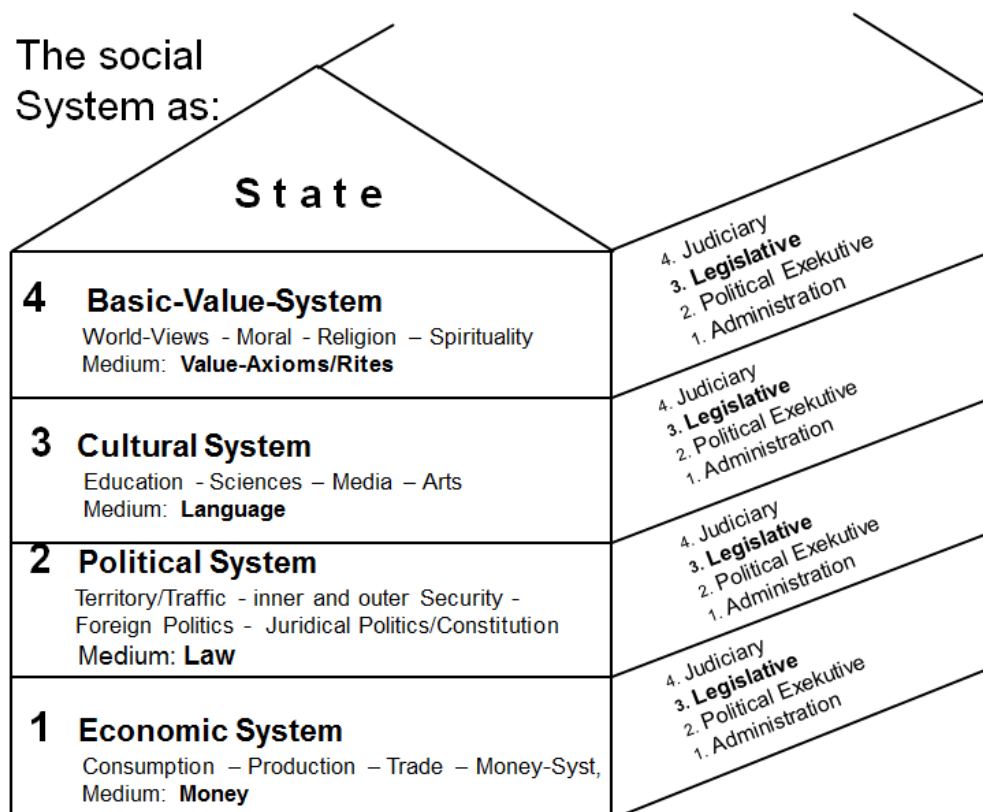
The subjective attitudes and acts become elements of that reciprocal recognition, which is qualified communication. Successful communication goes beyond any subjective attitudes! It is possible that a partner wants to stay in communication, and the other does not, or that the current communication ceases. Then only the individual's more or less "altruistic" or strategic attitudes remain.

4. *Meta-Communication* means to take position to the communicative reciprocity, another reflexive step. This can be first realized in subjective acts of the

individuals taking part in communication. But a *new social reality* becomes meta-communication by the reciprocity of that position taking. *This means to create appointments or common norms of social behavior.* Meta-communicative actions or attitudes and their resulting norms respond to the requirements and standards of social coexistence. Standards of behavior are mutually recognized, partly put again into question, and are more or less regulated anew: the everlasting process of social shaping of norms.

The *social action* was "classically" defined by Max Weber as an "orientation on the actions of others."⁹ If we think this orientation as practical reflection with the above leveling, the decisive *structural constant* is revealed: the *four levels of social action*. The reflection levels shown above are the predominant components of social action.

On the meta-communicative level, the interpersonal relation becomes a *social system*, dynamic and self-regulating with an *ontological status*.¹⁰ Systemic thinking means then that the relations are no longer seen from the view-point of the individual actors, but from "above," from the community as such. And now, we look at the same levels of personal interaction as *system-levels* of a big community, as that of a state, and find differentiations which we all know well – but normally without systemic understanding:



The four great levels of any society are called subsystems. They are nothing else than the reflection-levels we know already from the direct interpersonal relation.

The second division (subdivision) is given for understanding the method of fractal division, and for illustrating the richness of the subsystems.

On the political level 2 we could also insert (as is done in Heinrichs 2018 and 2019) the formal distinctions of the so-called political powers, traditionally legislative, executive, and judiciary power. Within the executive power we must distinguish, for logical as well as for practical reasons, the kind of executive, which has only to apply the existing laws, which is the *administration* (e.g. *police, financial offices etc.*), from *the executive*, which has the task and power to act and to decide for the community, which is the *government*. So we have not three but four powers or functions of the state in this logical succession: administrative (objective application), governmental (subjective power), legislative (intersubjective, communicative consulting), and judiciary (meta-communicative control).

We see that this division of powers must be applied on each system level. Therefore it is already put at the right side of the house, in the graphic. (It is not a multiplication of the four powers but only the respective applications of the four on each system level.)

This is the first theory of social systems which is directly *derived from the nature of the individual and the interpersonal relations!* There can be no satisfying social system theory which doesn't take fully into account the constitutive principle of social reflection. ¹¹

Now let us briefly draw the conclusions for an integral theory of democracy.

1. In our existing democracies *the whole system is governed from below*, from the economic sphere and from a "capitalist" money system, which is quite dubious. Even if this money-system was in order, the governing of the system from below ("money rules the world") cannot be accepted. Everybody knows that, but nobody knows how to change it – except many fanatics of another money-system. Even if they are right in their economic field, they are very wrong from an integral point of view. The whole of a society cannot be changed from the economic field alone! To try that means to repeat the historical mistakes of Marxists as well as of liberals and neo-liberals.
2. In our existing democracies around the world, the *political parties* are decisive. These parties bundle all problems (basic values of culture, foreign issues, inner politics, and the economy) and are chosen by their electors for all this – that means for nothing.

Apart from many other weaknesses of the parliamentary system these seem to be the most general and crucial ones. Now, the remedy of these weaknesses is not at all the abolishment (or a further weakening) of parliament (e.g. by direct democracy of plebiscites, which is either only an ornamental addition or totally inept for a big

state), but on the very contrary, the further development and *inner* synthesis of direct and parliamentary democracy.

Let us briefly come to serious solutions which follow logically and rather simply from the above system analysis.

Ad 1: Governing from “above”, i.e. from the basic values instead of from below is possible by the differentiation of the parliament according to the system levels. That means *four chambers of the parliaments with a hierarchical legislation-power*.

Ad 2: *The representatives must be elected for each chamber independently*. In this way, the elections become at the same time matter-decisions. The parties (federations of candidates with the same aims) become matter-specific parties instead of power-parties which claim to cover all issues.

The decisions of the upper parliaments are binding for the lower ones. The existing second chambers, the House of Lords, the Senate, or the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) could constitute the third level, safeguarding the cultural diversity of the partial states.

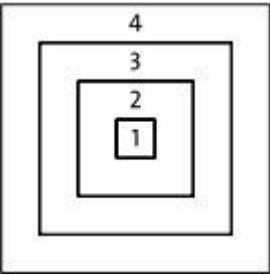


Figure 5: The hierarchic aspect of the partial parliaments, framework legislation

4 = basic value chamber, 3 = culture chamber, 2 = chamber of politics, 1 = chamber of economics

There must also be a circular feedback from the “lower” chambers to the upper ones. This can easily be provided by several parliamentary “readings” in which the representatives of each chamber can publicly give their statements to any legislative project.

Taking into account the vote of the other chambers - as well as that of extra-parliamentarian social groups - contains a *circular feedback*. If a clear majority of all three other chambers presents converging concerns against a bill, it would be factually as well as tactically unwise to ignore these concerns, even if by the hierarchical point of view this would be legal. So the votes of the chambers 1 and 2 undoubtedly have influence on the deputies in chambers 3 and 4 and vice versa. As the members of parliament must all four years (for example) face re-election, although not all at the same time, there is a feedback-circuit.

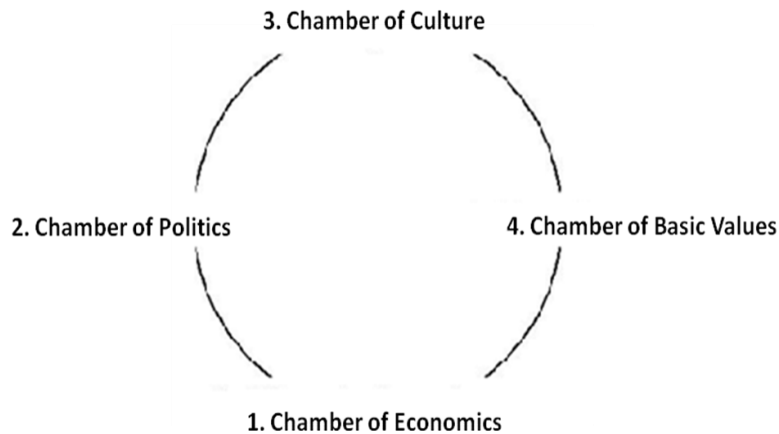


Figure 6: The circular aspect of the differentiated parliamentary system.

There are many practical questions concerning the rhythm of independent elections for each chamber, concerning the number of parliamentarians (which must not increase, on the contrary!), and concerning a possible corresponding division of the *government* and the *administration* in the proper sense, etc.

The practical main question is: How to win the minds and hearts of people, especially the members of the political and economic class? Besides an already rather numerous agreement among “normal” people, there must be forerunners among the elite, people of influence, which have not only the intellectual capacity to recognize the unique value of this model, but above all the *spiritual drive or motivation* to stand for it. Still more than for truth-finding alone, it needs spiritual qualities for the realization of truth and justice. For there are too many privileged circles which are against such a big change, even though it would be for the wealth of all.

It may be allowed to quote Alice A. Bailey responding to her Tibetan Master before World War II (1936): "Take for instance the emergence into manifestation of the egoic ray of the German nation. Its lower expression is that of architectural construction, and can be seen at this time making its presence felt in the new and modern style in building. *Its higher expression is not yet to be noted, but Germany some day will give out to the world a sound form of hierarchical government.*"¹²

It may also be allowed to remark that India has a special responsibility and perhaps also a special ability for the installment of a fourfold value-democracy, because the caste system seems to be a degenerated or perverted version of what the old seers intuitively intended without formulating it enough in rational terms: a value based society. India is the biggest democracy in the world, and the most adaptable (with many changes of Constitution). It could become the most developed one, upon its philosophical and spiritual fundamentals, perhaps together with Germany out of whose reflection theoretical tradition (with the so called German idealism) the above model stems from.

By the way: It would be false to speak of a Platonic “republic of philosophers.” The role of philosophy and sociology is only to detect the basic structures which enable the participation of everybody in the concrete decision-making. Before everybody can participate, a philosophical and at the same time spiritual elite must go ahead.

Democracy must be gripped as a spiritual task, as part of an integral spirituality in the sense of Sri Aurobindo. There can be no Integral Philosophy which doesn't include a whole philosophy and sociology of society and democracy, as it must include a psychology.

7. The Indispensable Spiritual Dimension of Integral Democratic Institutions

But unfortunately and paradoxically, Sri Aurobindo does not yet provide such a social philosophy (in spite of his spiritual and intuitive way of speaking of the “soul of nations”), which today must be a structural and systemic-ontological theory of the social system. There is the important difference of the *individual perspective or reference* where individual ethics and spirituality play their evident traditional roles, and the *collective or systemic perspective or reference where the ethic and spirituality are the matter of intelligent institutions what is not yet recognized*. That is this last paragraph about.

When Ananta Kumar Giri discusses the “discourse ethics” of Jürgen Habermas in his important article, “*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action: From Discourse Ethics to Spiritual Transformations*” (Giri 2012), he is totally right to criticize that discourse in the sense of rational argumentation is much too narrow. To my mind, he even goes not far enough in his critique. Discourse ethics is firstly not open for the emotional values – and most cultural values of the above level 3 are matter of emotional and intuitive, not only rational cognition. Therefore Habermas has little understanding for cultural and national values which are not universal as those of a universalistic ethic. Therefore my critique concerning a reciprocal “hospitality of cultures” (Heinrichs 2017) which the moralizing universalist Habermas doesn't recognize at all in its importance. But Giri's objection concerns mainly the basic values (level 4 in the above) and Habermas' rationalism in the field of morality, which rationalism results in his eyes from a lack of spirituality. Nevertheless we can distinguish moral and spiritual values. Here it is Sri Aurobindo, who is right to emphasize the superiority of spiritual over moral values (as it is implied also in figure 4):

Morality is a question of man's mind and vitality, it belongs to a lower plane of consciousness. A spiritual life therefore cannot be founded on a moral basis, it must be founded on a spiritual basis. This does not mean that a spiritual man must be immoral – as if there were no other law of conduct than the moral. The law of action of the spiritual consciousness is higher, not lower than the moral – it is founded on union with the Divine and living in the Divine Consciousness and its action is founded of the exuberance of the obedience to the Divine Will.¹³

Even if I strongly agree to Giri's critique of Habermas' “linguistification of the sacred” (Giri 2012: 83), which is part of the so called linguistic turn and its general inherent rationalism (as if language would comprise all human cognition!), I have a certain reserve against Giri's (and even Sri Aurobindo's) opposition of rationality and spirituality because even the spiritual processes or actions of the mind have their structural rationality, as was shown in the semiotic sketch above, particularly by the

concept of mystics. To my mind, there is no opposition of the rational and the spiritual, if we see the *general* borders of rationality which are likewise evident already in the field of sensual perception: nowhere ratio can provide the contents which are structured by her. Everywhere we must distinguish structures and general structural cognition from specific contents as values are.

Apart from this distinction, I fully agree to Giri's noble and relevant critique of Habermas. Only, my point is another one and goes farther: Habermas has failed to find the synthesis with his counterpart Niklas Luhmann, disciple of Talcott Parsons in social system's theory. The synthesis shown above between action and system by the principle of interpersonal or social reflection is no academic luxury but indispensable for contemporary social thinking of "beyond sociology" (cf. Giri 2012), at least the contemporary one!

Therefore I lay much emphasis on the evolutionary need for a theoretically elaborated *social* ethics in the sense of a structural system theory and institutional fairness doctrine, which means something completely different than *individual* ethics – even than spiritually enlightened ethics of the individual.

The individual remains a necessary, but not at all the sufficient condition for a structural change and for the wise installation of spirituality in the public institutions. This is possible in a democratic way primarily by a basic value parliament (or chamber), but also of a cultural parliament (or chamber). These are *conditions sine qua non* for a liberal and democratic implementation of ethics and spirituality as well as corresponding cultural values in the public!

We must not and cannot wait for the enlightenment or at least for the spiritual progress of a majority of individuals! We cannot and must not wait for a majority of supermen and superwomen in that sense! It is sufficient and necessary to create *institutions* which provide value-realization on the cultural as well as on the basic value level of ethics and of spirituality.

Value-communication is not primary a discursive, rational argumentation, but more than that: a lived (ontological) community process with much emotion and intuition at all levels of the system, particularly the "high" levels 3 and 4. But this community process needs the help of institutions to become effective and fair. Whereas a prescriptive individual ethics is widely superfluous (mostly in the rationalistic form of Habermas' ambiguous "discourse"), because self-evident for rather cultivated people, *the creation of institutional conditions of a "communication society," is the most urgent socio-ethical and spiritual task of our time.* This sociological postulate of the reflection system theory is something very different from the intellectual plays of an individualistic ethics without real consequences.

Surely, we need also an innovative sense of responsibility of the individuals. Thinking and responsibility can and must make the connection between social-ethical insights and their realization. But without institutionalizing, all the good will of most individuals, no deep change is possible. Herein lies the tremendous, over-summative power of the United Individuals, by which the opposition "from below / from above" lies slapped, as a subterfuge and means of blocking.

The wrong opposition of structural changes from above and organization of society from below must stop finally. "Civil Society" must overcome its anti-institutional affects, and in particular the historically survived opposition of parliamentary and direct democracy. For elections which refer to one of the value-levels are matter-oriented, and that is the very essence of direct democracy. So a value-levels-democracy provides a new synthesis of both historical forms of democracy, and democracy becomes the epitome of a "communicative society", reproducing the value levels of human communication in an institutional way.

There are tons of existing good will of the great majority of people in all countries, often overlooked by many academic as well as non-academic moral apostles because they don't want to recognize to what high degree even the individual ethos has institutional and structural conditions. Simply said: people cannot be as good and act as well as they would like to, because the institutional conditions are destructive. All the more people are flooded with useless prescriptive ethics.

Reflection system theory means not at all new endless epistemological external "reflections" on the surface, but the useful, not at least spiritually useful installation of insights in the nature of the internally reflexive life of society – which is something totally different from a society of "discourse" in a rationalistic and at the same time ambiguously populist sense.

Endnotes:

¹ I took the term „sense-elements“ from Paul Tillich`s early writings (Tillich 1989), but in a more generalized sense, because Tillich distinguishes only two elements: mind-activity (Vollzug) and their contents (Gehalt).

² The term „reflection logics“ has a special place in Hegel`s *Science of Logic*, but in a more general sense of philosophical history it is first used by Gotthard Günther (1976). It means – in my further interpretation - the logic of entities which are constituted by inner or implicit reflection, in difference to a merely outer or subsequent reflection of the thinker. The implicit or lived reflection is an ontological one, not only an epistemological one.

³ The opposition of action (Handeln) und self-experience (Erleben) plays a fundamental role in Niklas Luhmann`s early and important article *Sinn als Grundbegriff der Soziologie (Sense as Basic Concept of Sociology)* in: Habermas/Luhmann 1971, pp. 25-100.

⁴ I use this term for a fourth semiotic dimension of language (logically the first one) in the wake of GDR-philosopher Georg Klaus who recognized the need of this dimension even without reflection-logic.

⁵ This differentiation constitutes, in my eyes, the essence of a future democracy with separate parliamentary and executive institutions for each of these value-levels. See the end of this article and Heinrichs 2019.

⁶ *On Education*, vol. 12 of the *Collected Works of the Mother*, Reprint Pondicherry 2003, p. 120.

⁷ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*. This main work of Feuerbach from 1842, has been, because of his religious criticism, less appreciated in its positive, spiritual substance.

⁸ I take here some expressions of Jürgen Habermas (1982), although the decisive principle of their connection, the interpersonal or practical reflection, it not seen by him.

⁹ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, § 1.

¹⁰ Ananta K. Giri is very right to postulate a sociology which disposes on a social ontology, e.g. in *Sociology and beyond: The Calling of an Ontological Epistemology of Participation*, in: Giri 2012.- The reflection system theory which I propose includes a social ontology, because social systems in this view are real systems, not only

theoretical ones! Their ontological “stuff” is lived interpersonal reflection: a tissue of reciprocal reflexive actions. “Lived reflection” can also be called “ontological reflection”.

¹¹ The author has been much inspired by the theory of social systems of Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), which could not preserve its former popularity and could not become more “pragmatic” in the sense of shaping political praxis, because the basic principle of his system-levels (the interpersonal reflection) was not found by him. Nor was it by the following system-thinker Niklas Luhmann the high reflexivity of whom is restrained to the external (not ontological) reflection.

¹² *Treatise on the Seven Rays I*, Geneva 1987, p. 389. – Online edition:

https://www.lucistrust.org/online_books/esoteric_psychology_volume_i/section_two_chapter_iii_the_rays_andman/6_the_nations_and_the_rays.

¹³ Sri Aurobindo 1999, p. 99 s.

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