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## **What follows from the Nature of Human Communication for a Future Democracy as a „Communication-Society“ ?**

At the Crossing of Social-Philosophical and Spiritual Meditation

### **Information and Communication**

It is widely recognized today that our democracies need to develop more in the direction of „communicative societies“. The question immediately raised by philosophers at this point is: what is meant here by „communication“? Given the growing significance of data-processing and information technologies, why not speak rather of an „information society or an „informed society“ (Steinbuch 1969)? Are „informed“ and „communicative“ equivalent terms when applied to society?

Before giving a more scientific definition of these terms, it first can be said that they have a different resonance: „Information“ has a cold and prosaic sound whereas „communication“ all around sounds more human, less scientific and technical. From the standpoint of social philosophy, it seems essential to me both to differentiate between these two concepts and at the same time to connect them.

The following fictional phone conversation is found in a popular textbook on the Bible. „*She*: I love you! *He*: I take note of that!“ (Lohfink 1977:37) The comic effect here derives from the fact that a declaration of love is far more than just information in the ordinary sense. What is involved here is far more than just information in the ordinary sense. What is involved here is what is called a performative interpersonal speech act, moreover one with a high emotional content. Nevertheless, merely to say that more than „just information“ is involved is a gross oversimplification. The specialist in information theory at once interjects here, quite rightly, that to speak in that way presupposes a far too narrow and crude everyday-idea of information, as if „information in the scientific sense simply denoted factual content with no dimension of emotion or value. Information also includes the expression of emotional involvement as well as the response to it, such as the expression of delight, surprise, revulsion, embarrassment, and the whole scale of emotions.

There are two contrasting concepts of “information”: a narrow *everyday* concept and a broader *scientific* one. Whereas in ordinary parlance “information” denotes (in the first instance) merely factual, value-free items of information, the concept which has come to be generally accepted in scientific parlance embraces every new content which is relevant for decision-making or behavior and is measurable in “bits”. In its classical form, information theory only took into account the information *content*, the lower limit of the set of signals required unambiguous codification, but

up to now has not taken fully into account the *value of an item of information* for the recipient. There is only one weapon not only against excessive rationalism but also against irrationalism of the “sound” human intellect: a philosophical analysis of meaning – and by philosophy in the modern sense I mean nothing less than a universal or integral reflection on meaning, beginning with the very basic nature of human consciousness reflecting on itself (Heinrichs 2018, chap.1).

The *thesis* here may be stated as follows: *Information in the narrow sense* denotes interpersonally *not reflected contents*, whereas *information in the broader sense* also embraces *interpersonally reflected contents* or what may be called in a qualified sense, “*communication*”. In other words: In its proper sense, communication is a qualified form of information (in somewhat the same way that poetic language is a qualified form of language), with subjective and inter-subjective reflection as the qualifier.

The explanation and proof of the above thesis, and of the concept of communication as well, are found in the notion of *inter-subjective reflection*. On this basis alone it will be possible to identify the social consequences of the distinction between information and communication in the specific meaning of each of these two terms. The specific concept of communication will be easier to establish if we approach it from the angle of *process* rather than that of *content*. We therefore consider the process whereby information contents are transferred, which is a *social action*.

### **Reflection Levels of Social Action**

According to the well-known definition of *Max Weber (1978, c. 1)*, social action is one which is oriented towards the behavior of others. This practical orientation on the behavior of others is what is meant here by “inter-subjective reflection”. The point of view of reflection theory is very important to give more profile to the first overall-definition of Weber. Inter-subjective or simply social reflection *is not a subsequent and epistemological one* (as reflection is mostly and superficially understood), but *a constitutive and ontological one*, which is widely overseen in the current discourse.

We can and must distinguish between the following levels in this inter-subjective or social reflection:

(1) Physical influence on others, or the *reflectionless* (transfer of)

*information*: the others (recipients) are treated as material or thinking objects. No account is taken of their freedom in this transfer, or it is deliberately ignored. The others are *simply acted on like objects* without anything being expected from them. Nota bene: The term "reflectionless" refers to the lack of *inter-subjective* reflection. This doesn't mean that subjectively the action cannot be an act of full self-conscience and in this reference a lived or ontological reflection (*reflexio implicita*). On the contrary, we speak here of this exclusively, not of a subsequent reflection in the superficial sense. (Already Thomas Aquinas spoke of the underlying ontological reflection of the subject itself as *reflexio implicita*!<sup>1</sup>)

(2) Action in which all the interest and gain is aimed to be on one side. The transmitter directs information towards the recipients with the deliberate aim of making them serve his/her own interests. The actor entertains *behavioral expectations* to his co-actors. E. g. in traffic: I expect that the other behaves in a certain way. The other can expect the same from me. But this form of reciprocity doesn't change the basic *unilaterality* of expectations, which we can call „strategic“.<sup>2</sup> We must not take the *reciprocity of unilaterality* for the real reciprocity of communication!

(3) "Social" action in the positive sense of communicative action, in which an attempt is made to take as much account of the other party's freedom and wishes as of our own. *Communication in the true sense, means that reflection of the wishes of the other is taking place reciprocally on both sides in the mode of acceptance.* What we expect from the other party is not a behavior which is unilaterally determined by ourselves, nor merely the behavior of the other party that can be predicted to done by the other alone. What is expected from the other party is his/her expectations and wishes themselves which reflect my expectations and wishes, a reflection in the practical way of action.

Only a genuine reciprocity of this kind, i.e. not just of behavior, not

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, book IV, chapter 11.

<sup>2</sup> I adopt here some expressions of Juergen Habermas (1987) who nevertheless does not at all clearly analyze the reflection levels of actions, which are nevertheless decisive for the important transit from action theory to theory of social systems. Habermas only repeats Max Weber's distinction of rational and value-oriented social actions. Consequently, the extremely important essential connection of social actions and social systems was lacking in the famous controversy between Jürgen Habermas and Nikolas Luhmann in the 70ties of last century. This connection is formed by the principle of mutual social reflection, which is a practical and ontological one, not only a matter of reciprocity of (epistemological) perspectives.

even just of behavioral expectations, but also of expectations of expectation (and therefore a practical reciprocity of reflection on both sides) deserves to be called "communication" in that proper sense which is also resonant even in ordinary parlance as in the philosophical use of the term. This is certainly true also of the theme as formulated here - even if information in the wider and neutral sense was more to the forefront here in order to take into account the explosive development of the information society.<sup>6</sup>

- (4) But communication as just defined does not yet represent the conclusive, ultimate reflective form of interpersonal (social) behavior, i.e. of information in the broad sense. This reflection actually achieves its completion rather in a further fourth stage of reflection on the reciprocal expectations of expectation, in a consensus on expectations of expectation (including a consensus on behavioral expectations and on behavior generally). In respect of this "consensus", which for the most part also remains an implicit accompaniment, I prefer to speak of *metacommunication*, as do certain Anglo-Saxon and German writers.<sup>7</sup> This term shall be used to define the *nature of the relationship* of communicants. In defining just this in a practical way of mutual action, they constitute a *system* of human interrelationships. "In one aspect, communication is content; in another aspect it is a relationship. The latter aspect governs the former and is therefore a metacommunication" (Watzlawick et al. 1967).

But the concept of metacommunication achieves a considerably greater precision than speaking of relationship governing content or "communication on communication" even in this form-content approach (not to speak by simple "contents on contents", as is often said) by our consideration of the stages of ontological and practical inter-subjective reflection. As I tried to show in my books since 1976 (summoned up in Heinrichs 2018), this fourth stage of reflection is structurally conclusive and thereby *formative of a system*: by defining reciprocal relationships in shared standards of behavior and thought. When speaking of "structurally conclusive", I mean: not temporally and historically. Because social systems develop continually, but their basic structure remains. And that basic structure is that of actions woven together by nothing else than the principle of

intersubjective and ontological reflection!<sup>3</sup>

## Communication and Love

To put this genesis of a social system from the very interactions of partners which is of so great theoretical importance more concretely and existentially, let us meditate on the genesis of a couple of lovers, let's call them He und She. They both have fallen in love at a certain moment. But they don't know of each other's attitudes, and they are separated immediately after that happened. Remember, it was in a time without mobile phones!

1. *Simple unilateral relation*: He thinks constantly of Her, not knowing whether She does the same. That is the crucial question of reciprocity of any lover!
2. *Unilateral reflected relation*: A common friend tells Her that He is constantly thinking of and longing for Her. Hence, She knows more now than Him (second step by reflection of His attitude).  
This unilateral situation can become quasi-reciprocal or symmetrical when the same friend or another one tells Him of Her loving attitude – but nevertheless not of her knowledge of His attitude, a *reciprocal unilaterality*, which is not yet real communication (being *analogous in that reference to strategic action above*: If the couple would remain on that level, they could only play strategically with each other, even with the desire of love).
3. *Real reciprocity or communication*: The level of real communication is only reached if there is not only individually “shared” knowledge, but reciprocally shared knowledge und double reciprocal reflection by mutual knowledge and reflection of the other one, perhaps still by the “mediumship” of that third person.
4. *Meta-communication*: Mutual love is not only knowledge, but a lived consensus about that foregoing reciprocity or mutuality. This is a fourth step, that of meta-communication, which takes into account the unchangeable and unavailable conditions of mutuality. Yes, there are unchangeable and unavailable conditions of intersubjectivity and mutuality as there are for the individual acting and thinking. Metacommunication means dealing with those unavailable preconditions in making deals about what is available, i.e. in

developing forth the social norms and habit. Social metacommunication is a steady development of what is socially agreed upon – and what is unavailable by mutual agreement, e. g. the basic fact that an agreement is an agreement, that means that it establishes a norm of common behavior.

**The Medium of Sense:  
Issue of all meditation and deepest mediator**

These four levels of reflection and of human action, which were briefly shown as the intentional structure as well of communication (including meta-communication) as of love, correspond to what I call the general elements (sense-elements) of any human intentionality and action which easily can be grasped by phenomenological attention to them and which in this context I can only introduce briefly in spite of their most general importance:<sup>4</sup>

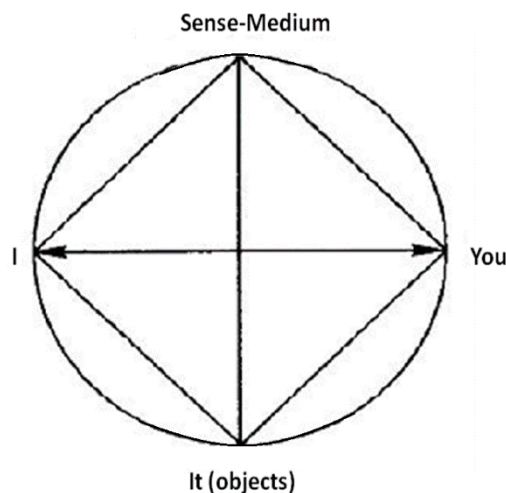


Figure 1: The 4 sense-elements of human sense-activity and of the general action situation

The most essential condition of mutuality between persons is the common Medium of Sense itself which is as infinite as the “horizon”<sup>5</sup> of each person is infinite. About this fact of individual and shared infinity in implicit meta-communication we cannot meditate enough. This Medium of Sense, *Logos* in Western philosophy since Heraclitus and Plato, *Atman* in Indian tradition is:

<sup>4</sup> The most general meditation on these sense-elements for all dialectical relations is given in Heinrichs 2020.

<sup>5</sup> The word „horizon“ is not a specific expression of hermeneutics, it occurs already with Kant (1787, B 787), but there only as a subjective horizon. The „condition of possibility“, to speak in his terms, in which way one subject can communicate with another one, is neither asked nor answered by this great pioneer of subject-reflection.

- not only the depth of any self-conscious being which comes to explicit consciousness as well in spiritual meditation as (in a different way) in methodical thinking on the “condition of possibility” of our questions, assertions, passions, longings, and moral obligations,
- but also the “Between” of the dialogue of individuals which the dialogical thinker Martin Buber aimed at, primarily in the personal sphere,
- up to the Medium at the highest level of mankind in general, the “Geist” (Spirit) of Hegel, as well in the sense of “Weltgeist” (world spirit), i.e. the common Medium of any communalities like States and their history, as in the sense of “Absolute Spirit”<sup>6</sup>
- by no means to confuse with the individual “Mind”, which is the rational aspect of the individual Soul, a confusion which has become very current. There is no duality of Mind and Matter (Body), but the triad of Body (pre-personal Matter), personal Soul and transpersonal Medium of Sense (Logos). The latter one is the big, the infinite Mediator par excellence.

## From 4 activity-elements to 3 components of human nature

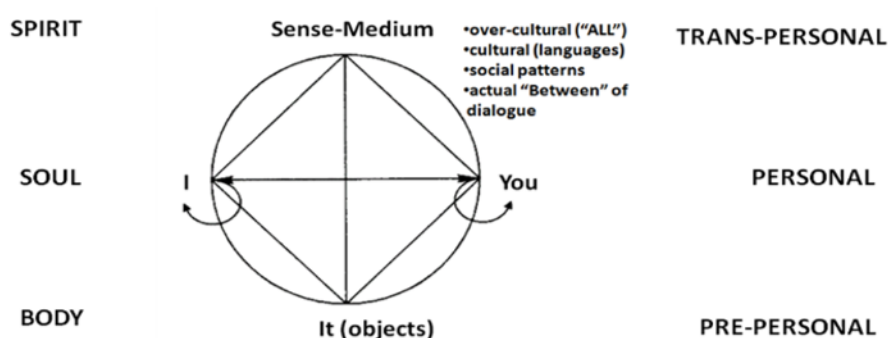


Figure 2: the three components of human entity in relation to the basic, over-individual Sense-Medium

The profound play on the words *mediation* and *meditation* which Ananta Giri introduced in this book get its most serious and general

<sup>6</sup> In a Western and Hegelian view Atman can be understood as the infinity of the respective individuals, whereas Brahman is the Divine Spirit over the finite (human, self-conscious) individualities – to which Divine can be attributed an own self- reflection. But this is not the place here to go deeper into this essential theological question.

application here: There is nothing what is so worth of our meditation, what is even the aim of any meditation in the spiritual sense, and what at the same time is the most basic mediator of all: the general Medium of Sense (Sinn-Medium). As “condition of possibility” or infinite “horizon” (Kant 1787: B 787) of all specific human acts and intentions (questions, assertions, passions). It is even the medium “between” Divinity and Humanity: We may call it Atman with the Indian term for Logos which is Divine and human at the same time (whereas Brahman can well be understood as the self-reflection of Atman in Itself). In the frame of this article, I will soon turn from this very theological aspect to the human and especially to the social level. But let me first make some general remarks on meditation which include nothing less than a short theory of consciousness.

### **Philosophical and spiritual meditation in a theory of consciousness**

It cannot be my purpose here to deal on the manifold forms of meditation in the spiritual sense. Even if I personally and originally come from a certain Western school of meditation, the one of Saint Ignatius cultivated in the Jesuit order, I am aware that there is probably no country in the world where forms of spiritual meditations play such a big role and where so many different forms of spiritual meditation are cultivated than in India. Therefore, I feel neither a special competence nor a need to deal about any of those forms already dealt with by distinguished Indian writers.

But what I have to contribute is the general distinction of spiritual and philosophical kind of meditation from a philosophical viewpoint of theory of consciousness which can be characterized as a contemporary theory of reflection in the wake of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel. The so-called Copernican Turn in modern philosophy, inaugurated by Kant, is nothing else than a reflexive turn: away from the objects to their *relation to the subject*, and the beginning of a reflection theory of conscience, because it is the *self-relation* of the knowing and acting subject which is fundamental for all its object-relations. This self-relation or reflection is an ontological one which is prior to any expressive or objectifying subsequent reflection. Even before the Copernican Turn, this ontological or implicit reflection has been recognized by Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), but not yet at the same time in its epistemological and systemic significance (which



reflective development began slowly with René Descartes, 1596-1650).

The importance of reflection-theory for a distinction of spiritual and philosophical meditation is just the insight in the *parallel distinction* of ontological (implicit) and explicit reflection. If we distinguish scientific philosophy from exercised common religion and personal spirituality (as it is done in the following figure 3), philosophical meditation is *an explicit and conceptional and objectifying reflection*. Philosophy is the “art of concepts”<sup>7</sup>, and only by this very art the difference between the ontological, implicitly lived reflection which is constitutive for human self-consciousness, and the subsequent, objectifying reflection becomes clear. But even for many philosophers the notion of an implicit and ontological reflection has not become clear.

On the other hand, spiritual meditation in all its manifold forms is not a conceptional and explicit, but a pre-conceptional and implicit one. Therefore, nearly all spiritual teachers insist on evading the conceptional reflection, called thinking. They recommend to let pass the thoughts that come during meditation. The reason is not because reflection is bad and an obstacle to spirituality (as some rather bad philosophers and spiritual teachers hold), but that there is that fundamental and mostly overseen difference of lived or ontological kind of reflection, and subsequent, objectifying and mere epistemological kind of reflection.

But philosophical and spiritual ways of reflection *are not at all hostile to each other*, if they are not confused, and if the essentially reflexive nature of consciousness as ontological reflection is not misunderstood as merely objectifying and subsequent. On the contrary, *philosophical reflection can also become real meditation in the proper, spiritual sense*, namely concerning the essential relation of human consciousness to the Infinite or to the (likewise inner and outer) Atman, which I call Sense-Medium. But in meditation, this “concept” can and must become more than an objectified concept. It must become the matter of an evidence, of even an inner intuition or view.

You can characterize all kinds of spiritual meditation just by this one

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<sup>7</sup> This formula of mine alludes to Kant’s characterization of philosophy as “reasonable cognition by concepts” (Kant 1787, B 741 ss).

purpose: to get a clearer or stronger intuition of the Atman which is Divine and human at the same time (whereas Brahman, as already said above, can well be understood – in the view of a general theory of consciousness as reflection and with much caution in this theological field - as the self-reflection of Atman in Itself).

There has been a big struggle among the so-called German idealists whether man is capable of a proper intellectual view (intellektuelle Anschauung) or not (Tilliette 1995). This is a rather difficult epistemological question which I cannot deal with adequately in this frame. To my mind, there are semiotic levels of that intuition or view, the highest of which is called mystical. (For a semiotic understanding of mysticism see Heinrichs 2018, c. 7.) At any rate, we must not understand the inner view on any of these levels of lived, ontological reflection as an objectifying one, i.e. not as the viewing of a separated object, but rather as the medial “condition of possibility” to have objects at all for a self-conscious being. The Medium mediates not only the cognition of objects, but also the cognition of Itself and of the connection with the self-reflected Divine.

It may be added that human communication with the Divine can be no objectifying addressing to It or Him, but a meta-communicative communication. Therefore it is too simple to understand prayer as a “dialogue” in the common sense with the Deity. *Prayer is essentially an essay of “pure” meta-communication by the insufficient means of communication.* In my observation, simple praying people normally are not conscious enough of the fact that their “dialogue” with God is not just a conversation between one self-conscious being with another one, but that the Divine “partner” is nothing less than the *medial and meta-communicative “condition of possibility” of any communication at all.*

Therefore human *mediators* which are the Masters of Wisdom like Krishna (and many great Indian Saints) or Jesus Christ in the West are so important. The way and justification how these Masters, to use the theosophical term, are “divinized” (seen as representations of the Deity) cannot be discussed in this frame.

Other and more direct ways (than by mediation of highly evolved Masters) to approach the Divine in a meta-communicative way are individual and common rituals, e. g. individual *mantras* and common

*ceremonies*, but also the repetition of pre-formed prayers, often given by masters of spirituality. These *are metacommunicative activities of expression* which have their big place in a reflection-theory of human actions (Heinrichs 2018: 126ss). To deepen further this point of the importance of metacommunication for the spiritual life would mean to enter deeper into theory of spirituality with philosophical (conceptional!) means than is perhaps ever done before, just because the said reflection theory is needed for that purpose. Spiritual minds normally content themselves to describe their sincere difficulties and aporias at these crucial points of prayer and spiritual practice without too much additional conceptional effort. Their efforts are rather manifested in psychological and autobiographical descriptions as we know them from the Saints (Masters) and spiritual teachers in East and West.

At any rate, with the concept of the Sense Medium of all communication and meta-communication we stand at the very crossing point of spiritual and philosophical meditation. These two forms of meditation are very different. To confuse them means not to understand the difference between ontological and merely epistemological reflection. But they have an overlap when the deeper understanding of the meta-communicative Sense-Medium remains not only conceptional but gets existential. In this case, philosophical meditation gets a spiritual one at the same time. Then alone there is no confusion and terrible levelling but unification of normally different types of reflection.

### **Communication among the reflection levels of social systems**

Communication is the lived or ontological reflection between the self-conscious individuals, so much more than information provided by anonymous mass media. Traditional societies were communities, in which interpersonal communication was the original standard – even if this standard was compromised and too often broken by force and cruelty, and by the power of rulers. Now my question is: What is the role and chance of genuine communication in modern societies, especially in those which call themselves *democratic societies*? It seems evident, that democratic societies pretend to be “communicative” ones, i.e. not only guided by the principle of individual freedom and of equality, but also of “brotherhood”, which can be understood as an equivalent of communicative relation. Hence, the term “communicative society” or “communication society” means

nothing else than a developed democracy.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, my question for the rest of this paper is this one: What are the structural preconditions for the development of democracies towards more communicative societies? I speak of “structural” preconditions in difference to the historical ones. It is not sufficient to tell stories about our national or pre-national histories. To deal with structural preconditions means also to put a stop to merely preachy and moralistic considerations. We will see that the structural approach opens not only social but even personal and existential insights.

The above shown levels of inter-subjectivity which constitute social systems on the level of personal metacommunication are also the source of the levels of the social system. It is a matter of the line of sight to switch from the individual to the collective view to society “from above” (cf. figure 3):

- The *object-oriented* or instrumental actions result in the sub-system of *economics* (with *money* as characteristic medium of interaction). This doesn't mean that all actions in the economic sphere are strictly object-oriented. There can be much “humanity” and friendliness in business. But the distinctive direction of business action goes to material goods.
- The *subject-oriented* or strategic actions or the source of the system of political power (with *law*, juridical norms, as the medium to canalize power and to avoid violence, at least open violence, as this depends on the question of justice.)
- The *altero-oriented* or communicative (dialogical) actions find their systemic place in the cultural level of society (with *language* as the basic medium). Language is by no means the quintessence of communication as rationalistic and linguistic-turn-thinkers – including Habermas – assert. We can communicate also by gestures and physical expressions (not at least sexuality) and manifold behavior, especially by helping somebody. But the specific evolutionary media of communication are indeed the languages: manifold variations of a hidden universal “language” in form of common reflection-structures (Heinrichs 2008/9).
- The meta-communicative actions of normative regulation are the basis of the basic-value-system of a society (with *basic principles*, *basic values* and their expressive *rites* as specific medium). The norms of our social behavior are ever-changing products of more or less implicit, more or

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<sup>8</sup> The title “Communication Society/kommunikative Gesellschaft“ first occurred to me by invitation as a speaker to a conference in Bonn 1977, organized by the Eastern Asian Institute (Ostasien-Institut) in collaboration with the Society for Mathematic and Data Processing. The Japanese speakers and participants used the expression “Johoka Shakai”, which seems traditional in Japan, even if the new use of it was rather technical in face of the emerging computer revolution. Cf. the contributions of Ostasien-Institut 1977 and Heinrichs 1978.

less explicit meta-communication. Behind both of these likewise important forms of metacommunication, there are more or less hidden principles of belief or thinking. Not all social norms are consciously known as results of metacommunication. And there is one medium which is the “condition of possibility” of any metacommunication: the above mentioned Medium of Sense in its infinity which is specific for human mind – and which connects human Mind to the Logos, Geist or Spirit. Whether this Logos is reflected in Itself as a self-conscious Deity, this is the basic theological question. We will see in the following that in modern societies, i. e. those with pluralistic word views and religions, this theological question cannot and must not be answered “officially”.

Already in another reader, edited by Ananta Kumar Giri (Giri 2021), I could present the following summarizing figure of the social system as State:

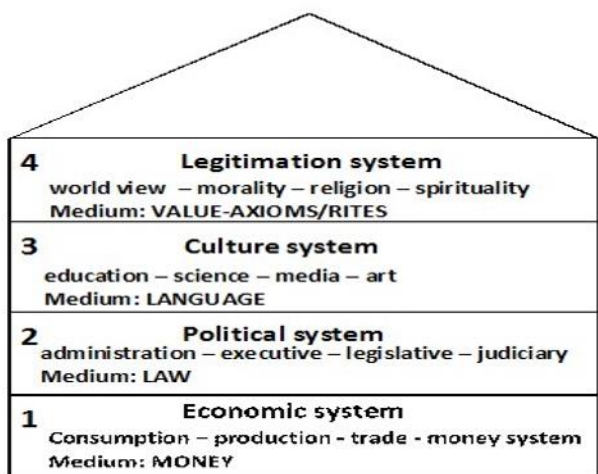


Figure 3: The subsystems of a social system as levels of ontological social reflection

It is not possible nor necessary to evaluate the many implications of this reflection-system-theory in the present article on communication. We can focus on the specific *communicative level of society* which is called *culture*. But the delineation of the communicative to the metacommunicative level belongs essentially to our task. I am beginning with this.

In a paradoxical sense, just the traditional societies were “*meta-communicative*” societies because they were united in a common religious world view. Their meta-communication was clear and predominant. The expression “meta-

communicative society” may get a new modern meaning in the sense of everlasting explicit searching for and establishing always anew the last basic principle and values of a society. But we are not there at all to enjoy pluralism because of its proper value fundament, not as an unavoidable evil (P. Phan 2017). We are – at the best - on the way to a *communicative society*, with a pluralism of more or less scientific world views (what can I know?), with a pluralism of more or less explicit ethics (what shall I do?), with a pluralism of community-religions, (what can I hope?) and with a pluralism of personal spiritualities (how can I experience and realize the sense of my life?).<sup>9</sup>

At any rate, for a communicative society the distinction of the *meta-communicative level* of basic values from the level of cultural life is extremely important: the basic value level concerns the values which are valid or are considered to be valid unconditionally: truth, moral goodness, hope for last sense of life, realization of such a spiritual sense – and all that follows from these fundamentals in society. Men fought in innumerable war for these truths and values, even if those last values were often only pretexts for minor values of power and material possession. But whether men were fighting for truths and last values or mainly for minor values, both kinds of fighting should be stopped meanwhile, in a future communicative society. The question is: How can we seriously include the basic values in such a society, which will be a democratic one? Democracy does not mean at all value-relativism, but there must be developed fair procedures of dealing with different value- and truth-options. And these democratic procedures of word-view pluralism are a basic value in themselves!

Let me come to the specific level of *communication*. Here the further distinction in the graphic follows also the main principle of division which I call “dialectical subsumption”, that means the main division according to the sense-elements in figure 1 (object, subject, other subject or intersubjectivity and sense-medium) are repeated in each subdivision. Therefore the cultural system is divided, resp. divides itself into education (as objective in the sense of obvious or traditional contents), sciences (as subjective endeavor for knowledge), publication media (as established societal communication) and the arts (as the forms of a lived, ontological meta-languages: languages beyond the ordinary fixed languages).

About all these levels of cultural life should be dealt with longer. But what is important for my line of thought are only the big distinctions as well on the cultural level itself as to the neighboring systems of meta-communication and of politics. As to the frontier to meta-communication it is evident that there cannot

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<sup>9</sup> The first three questions are posed like this by Immanuel Kant (1787: 833 ss) He summarizes them in his fourth question „what is human being?“. There is a clear convergence with my formulation above. But spiritual men will oppose to Kant’s view that religion is only a matter of hope for a future Beyond. They want to experience and realize the Sense of their lives „here and now“, mostly not excluding a Beyond.

be a free culture if the distinction from the unconditional basic values is not made: If in a pre-pluralistic society all culture is only a prolongation of religion and a monolithic religion, we cannot speak of a free culture in the realms of education, science, publicity, and arts.

As to the other frontier to politics, we remember examples of culture in the service of a State-Weltanschauung (world view), may it be of a secular or of a religious type.

About the *economic system* I confine to only two short remarks: First that the division in figure 3 follows again the principle of dialectical subsumption which in this case coincides with the historical development: Consumption concerns the appropriation of objects, mainly as food, originally given by nature. Production is the new level of economics since the agricultural, namely the neolithic revolution, trade is interpersonal exchange, and the money system is the medial regulation of the whole economic system, the importance of which has become more and more evident.

My second remark follows directly from the overwhelming importance and power of the money system, the realization of which as self-augmenting money poses a serious democratic problem: Is a capitalist economy compatible with democracy? It is evident, that our existing democracies are to a high degree still plutocracies. Without going deeper into a definition of capitalism and without trying to answer that question directly, I am rather going to deal about democracy from the viewpoint of a communicative society. We can hope that an answer to the last question is included in a piece of theory of democracy from that decisive angle of communication.

**The institutionalization of communication in parliamentarism  
(a short doctrine of division of powers)**

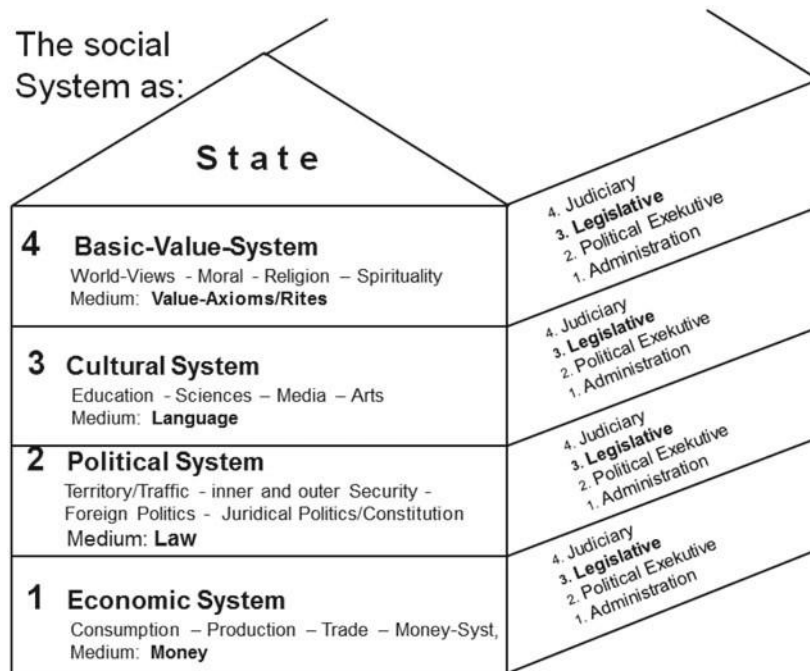


Figure 4: The house (Oikos) of society, with the 4 institutional powers at the right

If you look at figure 4, you see at the right the so called “division of powers”, which are functions of the State-activity. But instead of the traditional three powers, we must, from the viewpoint of reflection-system-theory, distinguish four powers, because the executive power is logically divided in administration (as the whole executive power is called in the USA) and government. It is evident that an administration which applies only the existing laws is essentially different from a government which by far acts beyond the existing laws: by important decisions which have nothing to do with mere application of laws, to which e.g. the police or the financial administration and the whole bureaucracy is strictly bound to. A political leader must take decisions which shall be compatible with the constitution, but which go far beyond application of laws and constitution. Therefore, I regard the label “administration” for the American government as a traditional misunderstanding – as long as the *bureaucratical administration* is not principally distinguished from the *political government*, under whatever label. Even if the administration in the proper sense becomes more directly dependent on the parliaments - as is desirable everywhere – the difference between executive of decision (government) and executive of mere administration remains essential. The distinction of the two forms of executive seems nowhere made clearly enough. But the actual weakness and serious danger of American democracy, including the weakness in making constitutional improvements, still lies much more in its party system what will become evident in the following.



The logic of the division of powers follows that of the initially introduced sense-elements and the corresponding reflection levels. The (only) logical point of view of their division is their respective relation to the laws, which are the core of a constitutional State:

1. *Administration* is application of already “*objectively*” existing laws to the actions of citizen. (Sometimes these laws are not yet explicit and written, in the beginning.)
2. *Government* consists of ruling by *subjective* decisions.
3. **Legislation is the *communicative power of deliberation and common decision on laws.***
4. Jurisdiction is partially simply part of administration (application of laws), but as an own power the effective supervision of the conformity of that application and of all juridical procedures: the meta-communicative power.

What is most important for our issue communication and “communication society” is evidently the third power: the parliamentarism. It is the core and the heart of democracy. Otherwise even a constitutional State could be nothing but the authoritarian application of laws with mostly authoritarian origin. (What the constitutional monarchies of Europe were before the World Wars, and what China seems to be nowadays.)

The institutional communication named parliamentarism does not at all replace or force back the everyday communication of people. On the contrary, the more credible the institutional, parliamentary communication becomes, the more vivid will the everyday and non-institutional communication develop. But this is by far not the only reason why our democracies all over the world need urgently a much more credible parliamentarism – for not to die under the attacks of populism and authoritarianism or of their combination like Trumpism!

### **A new parliamentarism as structural precondition of a communicative democracy**

Only since the audacious research of the English physician William Harvey (1578-1657) we know that the human heart has four chambers. This is only a historical analogy, not a biological argument for my central thesis:

**The parliaments as the hearts of future democracies which can claim to be communicative societies must have four chambers in order to take into account the four subsystems of a social system.**

The most important lack of our democracies is undeniable the fact that the

parliaments are filled with party-politicians which are not really representatives of the people but of their respective parties which in their turn are power-parties, organizations to get power, not matter parties (organizations to achieve aims for the wealth of the population). This character of mere power parties results from the simple fact that they generally are all-round-parties, i.e. not specified matter-parties. What, for example, has the protections of the environment, the core issue of the Greens, to do with the thesis, often held by Green parties, that nations and their languages are constructs of yesterday which ought to be dissolved, an essentially cultural question because modern nations are basically cultural units. The voters are in a dilemma, if they agree to the Green key issue of ecology, but not to their opinions on nations and migration questions. Likewise, if the same ecological party takes positions on the issue of social justice, the voter may agree or not.

In brief, the voters are principally in a dilemmatic situation as long as the parties are not specified *matter parties* which stand for one realm of questions, be it economical, be it political in the proper sense, be it cultural, be it in a religious or basic value sense. Here is not the place to illustrate all the numerous dilemmas which the voter is confronted with when he is obliged to vote for all-round parties which bundle up all the different issues. The worst dilemma is that of a two-party-situation of traditional Anglo-Saxon type!

As to communication: neither the voter nor an elected representative has a chance of real matter-oriented communication. Such a chance would be only given if there is separation of the *essential bundles of issues* (not one point-issues only) - which are the value levels. Whenever there are controversial options on the respective levels (economy, politics, culture, basic values) parties must constitute themselves on these value levels – as matter parties which are able to find the best solutions in dispute – or just by counting finally the votes of the representatives. Fruitful matter-disputes are totally different from the well-known power-disputes with hidden interests because of the confusion of all levels.

In this context it doesn't matter whether we understand "communication" as rational discourse or as discourse in the broader sense. The famous J. Habermas plays – consciously or rather unconsciously – in many of his writings with these two very different meanings of "discourse", we may call them the rationalistic or academic and the emotional or populist one! At any rate, the power-oriented parties are not able to any "discourse" which could be named "communication" in the sense of human reciprocity of hearing and understanding!

That is why there must urgently be installed a hierarchy of the four chambers or partial parliaments, in which matter oriented parties can discuss and fight for the best solutions. I begin from the first level in characterizing the main tasks of

the respective partial parliaments in order to signalize some of the countless value-questions which are posed on each level but which cannot be answered adequately without a holistic system of priority:

4. *The basic value parliament*, does not define positions on the ultimate questions, but how to handle fairly, i. e. in a communicative way) the different, pluralistic positions of world view, ethics and belief. Only as far as some ethical decisions must become law, it will become directly legislative itself for individual acting. But, what is still more important: Its legislative power defines social rules for the subordinate spheres of culture (e.g. representation of violence or sex in films), of politics (e.g. production and trade of weapons, military violence and threatening with it), not at least ethical rules of an economy which serves to the common wealth instead of governing the whole of society.

3. The culture parliament has the main task to give education, science and cultural expression the big importance it must get in a communicative society. The protection of mother languages against an absorption in a bad, simple word language as well as the question of migration and reciprocal hospitality of cultures (that includes the priority of a hosting culture over the cultural guests) are tasks of the culture parliament (Heinrichs 2017). As to the media, what is called “communication” today and what in fact is – at the best - unilateral information, would be developed into forms of real communication with forms of greater reciprocity. This big issue would require a new article.

2. The tasks of the political parliament must not be defined more than in the above figure 4. But concerning “territory” shall be underlined that the possession of ground and other common goods like special earths, air and the environment and climate in general are political pre-conditions of public welfare as well as of economic activity. This is not seen enough as a genuinely political task in economically dominated nations.

1. That economy is not simply a matter of market, but the *servicing fundament* of the entire society, must not be emphasized again. Even a “free market” stands and must much more consciously than until now stand under ethical, cultural, and political preconditions. In a future communication-society the free market can serve as figurative model of free communication, provided that it is seen that this model is not all the reality of communication itself, but dependent on that specific human behavior we call communication.

## **Difference to Plato and to the old Indian caste-system**

Sometimes the concept of value-levels-democracy is seen near Plato`s *Politeia*. There is indeed in common with Plato the claim of a philosophical foundation of policy and politics. From that claim derives also a common aversion against “big thoughts” which don`t prove their truth in the real life as

well of the individuals as of communities, the states and the world-community of peoples and states. The importance of the institutional realization of the value-levels for the international level cannot be the issue in this frame.

But the difference to Plato`s way of thinking must become clear. A four-value-based democracy is not at all a design of an aristocratic philosopher-state, where a philosopher-king rules. It is “only” a modern philosophically based design of structures, in which the free and well-instructed “wisdom of the crowds” (Surowiecki 2001) can play: in form of dynamical, sector-specific elections and legislations. *The philosophical contribution is pre-thinking of communicative structures and institutions*, in which democratic wisdom of majorities can develop in a really free and fertile way. But this philosophical pre-thinking is absolutely indispensable. It cannot be replaced by mere empirical political science and statistical sociology! Moreover, in future basic-value-parliaments philosophical thought has a much bigger chance of shaping society than nowadays and ever in history. And that with the democratic feedback from the entire population.

Likewise, the religious and spiritual wisdom and their actualisation have much bigger chances – but without traditional suppression and dogmatism. I remember that communication has its roots in meta-communication, *that the meditation on the universal medium, which I called Sense-Medium is absolutely fundamental for a communication society.*<sup>10</sup>

I even suppose that the old Indian, Vedic seers were masters of both ways of meditation and reflection, the ontological and the conceptual. Otherwise they couldn`t have grasped, in their way, the essential four-folded structure of the social system.

There is a striking parallel of the four levels of actions and values to the traditional Indian caste system as well as in the later *varnasrama* system of the Hare Krishna tradition (Harikesa Swami Visnupada 1981). *Varna* literally means “class, status, color. The latter one emphasises that the varnas are not bound to birth-castes, and they take distance from the caste system. But as far as I understand, this is the only essential difference to that traditional system which has been so characteristic of the India. There are four *varnas*:

- Brahmanas: the intellectual elite and priests, educated in the Holy Scriptures, the Vedas;
- Kshatriyas: the warriors, princes, senior officials;
- Vaishyas: the traders, merchants, landowners, farmers;
- Shudras: craftsmen, leasehold farmers, day laborers.

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<sup>10</sup> I proposed the resulting *reflection-system-theory* in many references, such as in philosophical semiotics of action, language, arts, and mystics, cf. Heinrichs 2018.

Below are the formerly so-called “untouchables”, because they were not regarded as real members of the community, called Parias or Harijans or nowadays, Dalits. It is not my aim nor my competence to go deeper into the caste - resp. the varna system. My first question is whether there is a “communicative” level of the system. However, the Kshatriyas (warriors etc.), obviously are not understood as a communicative varna, but as exercising strategic power of the “princes and warriors,” that is, of the politicians of today. It could be that this was different in the original system, that the old visionary intuition was different from the later tradition, and that originally the communicative-cultural element was meant for that level, with a difference of “worldly” and “holy” knowledge and education.

But the main difference to a real value order and especially then to a value-based democracy relies on *structural, systemic differences*, which have little to do with a *unilateral allocation of individuals to one system level*. Even if the various professions can be allocated on one of the social subsystems, this must not be the case for the personal totality of the individuals and their participation in the social and political life. This is the major difference: Whereas the various professions can more or less be mapped to the system levels - economy, politics, social communication, and basic values – the affiliation of individuals as such to a system level as such is *not acceptable* for a modern society. *System levels are no castes nor varnas at all!* The “perversion” of system levels into castes/varnas by the assignment of individuals exclusively to one level is not only a lack of systemic thinking (what the old seers perhaps had by intuition) but also a question of taking individuality not seriously. Maybe that the individual assignment was not given in the beginning of the caste system, so that this one was more a result of a big misunderstanding or a confusion and a historical degeneration. I cannot decide about this historical question. Perhaps the Vedic scriptures affirm my hypothesis of an originally deeper sense of the varnas, with no personal affiliation and formation of castes, which misunderstanding would give more explication for the “sacred” longevity of the castes.

Anyway, this gap of tradition and future democracy would be overcome if the real value order of the social subsystems would be realized by chambers of the Indian National Congress. India seems to be called for this historical step, just because of the lasting problem-pressure of castes and their here supposed origin, even if the Western countries should temporarily be unable or unwilling to follow such fundamental insights into democracy as value realization. In this way, India could clear up a historical misunderstanding of her old wisdom, a wisdom which is found again or reconstructed by the Western type of reflection theory as it is outlined here. The slogan would be: *Institutionalization of systemic value levels in an exemplary democracy - instead of castes or dogmatic varnas!*

The Republic of India is by far the most populous democracy in the world. She could and should become also the best one, realizing her own spiritual values in a

non-fundamentalistic way, perhaps even before the old democracies awake from their apparent self-sufficiency!

The current serious struggles between Hindus and the Muslim minority must and can be resolved by open discourse in a basic value chamber of a tiered parliament, and a resulting fair legislation. The differentiation of parliamentarism means a stop to religious fundamentalism of all sides without ignoring the genuine religious issues in social life. A monolithic parliament of all-over parties can impossibly manage problems like this big one.

### **Abstract**

Communication, in philosophical analysis and in terms of a logic of reflection, can be understood as such a kind of information which is qualified by the participants' taking practically into account the expectations of the interaction partners. There is an inner mutuality of interpersonal reflection, characterized by a double reciprocity-structure. This is what communication in the proper and demanding use of the word distinguishes from mere information and also from a strategical (self-interested) use of information. There is a succession of ontological reflection-levels: mere information (1), strategic information (2), communication (3) and meta-communication (4). The latter one is not to be understood as information about information (words about words), but as a new implicit ontological reflection level by which the interpersonal exchange becomes systemic: a communication system. The condition of possibility and great mediator of true communication is the meta-communicative universal (Divine) Medium of Sense. Philosophical and spiritual ways of meditation must go together here, without being confused.

A "communicative society" in a proper sense doesn't still exist in modern times, though it means nothing else than real democracy, an internationally urgent project. This will be characterized by the institutional distinction of the mentioned reflection levels in a value-levels-democracy with four "heart chambers" of the parliaments, which are institutionalized communication. One of these chambers will be dedicated to the ultimate or spiritual values which govern a secular democracy not less than a traditional society.

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