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Individuation through Socialization: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity

I

Durkheim was the first to observe the connection between societal differentiation, or what he calls the "division of labor," and progressive individuation: "no one today contests the obligatory character of the rule which orders us to be more and more of a person."[1] This formulation harbors an ambiguity that reappears in the expression chosen by Parsons, "institutionalized individualism."[2] On the one hand, the person is supposed to achieve greater freedom of choice and autonomy in proportion to his individuation; on the other hand, this extension of the degree of freedom is described deterministically: even liberation from the stereotyping dictates of institutionalized behavioral expectations is described as a new normative expectation—as an institution. This flipside is conceptualized by Arnold Gehlen ironically: an individual—that's an institution in one instance.[3] This emphatic formulation is supposed to indicate that the very process through which the individual is emancipated from the power of the universal is itself directed toward the subsumption of the individual under the universal. With this Gehlen wanted to denounce the idea of individuation as mere illusion; like Foucault, he wanted to convict modernity of an illusory self-understanding.[4] What is in fact at issue, however, is a dilemma arising from a lack of appropriate basic concepts.

Sociological interpreters lack the concepts that would enable them to capture descriptively a specific experience of modernity, one that is present to them intuitively. The individual is supposed to be distinguished as what is essential, yet it can only be defined as the accidental, namely, as that which deviates from the exemplary embodiment of a generic universal: "To be a person is to be an autonomous source of action. Man acquires this quality only insofar as there is something in him which . . . individualizes him, as he is something more than a simple incarnation of the generic type of his race and his group."[5] Durkheim understands social individualization as a growth in the spontaneous forces that enable the individual to be himself; but he can only describe these forces in terms of the particularities through which the individual *deviates* from the more general determinations of his social milieu. In the course of time, these deviations from the normative givens of a relatively homogeneous group give rise to the normative plurality of a group that is differentiated within itself. However, these new norms do not shed the character of being pregiven general determinations simply in virtue of their pluralization; the individual is now subordinated to them in just the same way as he was previously subordinated to the behavior patterns of a less differentiated form of life. What was once accidental has now merely become the essence; individualism itself has become a further institution. This description, however, conceals the specific thing that Durkheim himself actually intended with the expression "individualization"—the increase in singularity, personality, or the capacity for being oneself. Whether we have need of a greater or a lesser number of social roles for characterizing a socialized subject, every combination of roles, no matter how complex, has to be expressed in the form of a conjunction of general determinations. These predicates *remain* general determinations, even when they admit relatively many different combinations, and even when every individual combination applies to only a few members of a collectivity.

Differences in the extent of individuation are elucidated by Hegel in the following manner:

> The star is exhausted by its simple law and brings this law into appearance; a few specific traits characterize the configuration of the world of rocks; but already in the nature of plants there arises an infinite copiousness of the most diversified forms, transitions, hybrids, and anomolies; animal organisms display a still greater range of difference and of interaction with the surroundings to which they are related; and if, finally, we rise to the spiritual and its appearance, we find a still infinitely wider many-sidedness of inner and outer existence.[6]

Staying entirely within the spirit of scholasticism, Hegel conceives of degrees of "being" as also being gradations of individuality. Of course, unlike Thomas Aquinas, Hegel also finds the tendency toward the progressive individuation of beings in the process of world history; just like the forms of nature, the historical formations of spirit are characterized by greater individuality the more highly they are organized. The passage just cited stems from the point in the *Aesthetics* at which Greek art is introduced; this new type of art is supposed to be distinguished from the symbolic art forms of the Old Empires through "concentrated individuality," or the complete interpenetration of the universal and the particular. For Hegel the idea of individuality obtains its most perfect palpable embodiment when the gods of Greek mythology are formed into sculptural works of art. He makes use of the concept of the "individual totality" in order to explain why the mere diversity of predicative determinations does not exhaust the essence of individuality. But the sociologist, who finds himself faced with similar problems on his own terrain, lacks an equivalent concept; he lacks the reference point that could prevent him from confusing processes of individualization with processes of differentiation.

The only promising attempt to grasp the entire significance of social individualization in concepts is, I believe, initiated in the social psychology of George Herbert Mead. Mead makes the connection between differentiation within the structure of roles, on the one hand, and the formation of conscience and gain in autonomy by individuals who are socialized in increasingly differentiated conditions, on the other hand. Just as, for Hegel, individuation depends upon the progressive subjectiv-

ization of spirit, for Mead it depends upon the internalization of the agencies that monitor behavior, which migrate, as it were, from without to within. In the process of socialization, the growing subject takes what the reference person expects of him and first makes it his own, so that thereafter he can universalize and integrate the diverse and even contradictory expectations by means of abstraction; and to the extent that this occurs, there arises an internal center for the self-steering of individually accountable conduct. Such an agency of conscience implies

> a degree of individuation, which in turn requires a detachment from roles, a distance from the expectations others exact when we play these roles. Such detachment and individuation come about when there are conflicting expectations exacted, along the sequence of our careers and currently among our circles of significant others. Individuation of the self results from the variety and scope of voluntary actions [imputed to us] which we undertake. It involves the reality of individual decisions and being held responsible for personal choices.[7]

In this formulation by Gerth and Mills, various aspects of social individualization are combined that are in need of a more precise analysis. What appears historically as societal *differentiation* is mirrored ontogenetically in the course of an ever more differentiated perception of, and confrontation with, diversified and tension-filled normative expectations. The internalizing processing of these conflicts leads to an *autonomization* of the self: to a certain extent the individual itself must first posit itself as a spontaneously acting (*selbsttätig*) subject. To this extent, individuality is not conceived primarily as singularity, nor as an ascriptive feature, but as one's own achievement—and *individuation* is conceived as the self-realization of the individual (*des Einzelnen*).[8] Admittedly, by themselves these features merely recapitulate the reinterpretation of the concept of individuality that had already been made possible when the basic concepts of metaphysics turned toward the philosophy of the subject. I see the more far-reaching contribution of Mead in his having taken up themes that can be found in Humboldt and Kierkegaard: individuation is pictured not as the self-realization of an independently acting subject carried out in isolation and freedom but as a linguistically mediated process

of socialization and the simultaneous constitution of a life-history that is conscious of itself. The identity of socialized individuals forms itself simultaneously in the medium of coming to an understanding with others in language and in the medium of coming to a life-historical and intrasubjective understanding with oneself. Individuality forms itself in relations of intersubjective acknowledgement and of intersubjectively mediated self-understanding.

Here as elsewhere, the decisive innovation relative to the philosophy of the subject was made possible through a turn to the pragmatics of language, a turn that concedes primacy to world-disclosing language—as the medium for the possibility of reaching understanding, for social cooperation, and for self-controlled learning processes—over world-generating subjectivity. For the first time, this frees up the basic concepts needed to capture an intuition that has long been enunciated in religious speech. From the structure of language comes the explanation of why the human spirit is condemned to an odyssey—why it first finds its way to itself only on a detour via a complete externalization in other things and in other humans. Only at the greatest distance from itself does it become conscious of itself in its irreplaceable singularity as an individuated being (*Wesen*).

Before I go into Mead's conception, I would like to take a look at the history of the concept in order to recall how the "individual essence" (*Wesen*)—the very expression betrays the paradox—eludes the basic concepts of metaphysics, even in the form that these take on in the philosophy of consciousness.

II

In the specialized language of philosophy, "individual" is the translation of the Greek *atomon;* in logic it designates an object about which something can be stated, and in ontology it designates a single thing or a determinate being.[9] The expression "individuality" primarily means the singularity or particularity of a numerical individual, and not what is atomic or indivisible. In this sense we call every object "individual" that can be picked out and recognized again among the set of possible objects as

being this particular one, i.e., every object that can be identified. Since William of Occam, terms such as proper names, demonstratives, designations, etc., with whose aid we identify individual objects, have been called singular terms. In the empiricist tradition space and time are regarded as principles of individuation: every object can be identified through space-time coordinates. The singularity of an object is determined according to the spatio-temporal identity of the relevant body. For instance a human being can in this way be *numerically* identified through the spatio-temporal segment that his body occupies. In contrast, we speak of *qualitative* identification when we denote the same human being through a determinate gene combination, through a social role constellation, or through a biographical pattern.

Although the *singularity* of an object can be explicated in terms of a numerically ascertainable identity, I would like henceforth to speak of the *individuality* of a being only when this being can be distinguished from all (or at least most) other things through qualitative determinations. Now in the metaphysical tradition the properties that can be asserted or denied of an object have always been understood in both a logical and an ontological sense. Predicative determinations reflect ideal essences, forms, or substances, which individuate themselves into single things through their conjunction with material substrates. Individual chairs are thus more or less exemplary embodiments of the same idea or form, which determines the end for which chairs generally are supposed to be good. No matter how the relationship of universals to individuals is conceived, this idealistic conceptual approach predetermines a peculiar primacy of the universal over the individual. From the beginning there clings to the individual something of that dubious obstinacy (*Eigensinn*) that separates the concrete individual from what is universal. In German usage, especially in the older etymological strata, "individual" still retains something of the pejorative connotations relating to what is lower and peripheral in an existence that is dull and isolated and closed in on itself.

This devaluation of what is individual gives expression not only to a socially conditioned ideology but to a philosophical embarrassment as well. If matter is regarded as the only principle of individuation, and if matter qua nonbeing is determinate solely because it can be determined by formal substances, then the individuality of the single thing must remain *underdetermined.* The qualitative determinations that distinguish each individual from other things are derived from essences or forms that are themselves by nature universal and cannot mark out the individual as unique.[10] As early as late antiquity, this dilemma led to attempts to bestow at least the appearance of substantiality upon the individual by means of the determination of its being atomic, thus of being indivisible, whole, independent, etc.;[11] but above all it led, with the doctrine of accidental qualities, to the introduction of the category of the particular into the realm of the formal substances themselves: the *substantia universalis* and the *substantia particularis* were augmented by the *accidens universale* and the *accidens particulare.* The individual was now not only thought to be *numerically* identifiable through its connection with matter but also *qualitatively* identifiable through various distinctions in form. This path led in the end to Duns Scotus, who elevated to a formal determination that which makes an individual into one such as this, Socrates into Socrates. He completes the chain of genera and species with a final, purely individuating determination—*haecceitas.* In this paradox of an essential determination that extends to every being qua individual, the universal triumphs, against all intentions, over the individual, which in its uniqueness and irreplaceability eludes the basic metaphysical concepts of form and matter.

Although he does not surrender the metaphysical problematic, Leibniz bestows a positive sense upon the ineffability of the individual. He finds a ready support for this in the concept of a subjectivity that represents the world as a whole to itself; at the same time, he can make use of an idea derived from the infinitesimal calculus, namely, that of an infinite analytic convergence toward an ideal limit value. Every individual is a mirror of the world as a whole; it can in principle be defined by the conjunction of all the predicates that apply to it. Such a characterization constitutes the complete concept of the individual, but because it would have to contain infinitely many propositions, it is never actually available to us; rather, as Kant

will say, it only represents an Idea of Reason. Of course, unlike Kant, Leibniz still insists on the ontological significance of this Idea of Reason. He conceives of the infinitesimally characterized total individual as an individual substance in which the gap between *infima species* and underlying matter is closed: the material substrate disappears into the encompassing network of formal determinations, which penetrate and organize, consume and at the same time sublimate everything. Hence individuals are no longer set within a spatio-temporally extended universe and no longer stand in external contact with each other. Each instead forms a totality for itself, which encloses everything within itself by representing as a whole the world from its perspective. Monads exist as individual representations of the entire universe. Individuating force is no longer possessed by matter but by the transcendental circumstance that every representing subjectivity is centered in itself and in each case represents the world as a whole in a way peculiar to it. Thus it is not true, as it was for Plotinus, that everything is in One; instead, everything is mirrored in a different manner in every individual:

> Indeed, each Monad must be different from every other. For in nature there are never two beings which are perfectly alike and in which it is not possible to find an internal difference, or at least a difference founded upon an intrinsic quality.[12]

Here Leibniz introduces an ontological model for a concept of individual substance, a concept which, as a discursively unredeemable program of exhaustive characterizations, resists complete explication. Hegel's dialectical logic can be understood as the promise to redeem this program nonetheless. Hegel finds support for this already prepared: the statically reflecting monads have undergone both a transcendental-philosophical and an aesthetic-expressive reinterpretation as creative individual totalities that are caught up in self-formation. It is now no longer the organism that serves as a model but the genial setting-to-work of the organic work of art. In the work of art, the totally organized matter has entirely become form; that is, it is so thoroughly formulated that it merges as a work of art with its organic form. The individual totality

derives from transcendental subjectivity the power of spontaneously generating a world, and from aesthetic productivity it derives the motion of a formative process from which something new is always emerging. Hegel is aware that he is indebted for this concept to Schiller, who had taken the productive artist as his model for conceiving of the individuated being.[13] Just as the artist playfully reconciles form and matter in his work, so too does every figure (*Gestalt*) that has matured to individuality: the human being "is to turn everything that is mere form into world, and realize all his potentialities"; at the same time, he "is to eradicate in himself everything that is merely world, and produce harmony in all its mutations; . . . he is to turn outward everything internal, and give form to everything external."[14]

As before, what is individuated is here apprehended using the basic concepts of metaphysics; the play impulse, which seamlessly mediates form and matter, admittedly stands in for an ontological model that has yet to be conceived. In order to conceptualize the individual totality, which has so far only been circumscribed, and thereby to make the individual accessible to rigorous knowledge, Hegel has to explicate the connection among the different monads. He cannot be satisfied with the "intercession" of the Leibnizian God, who places the coexisting monads into a timelessly harmonious order. For Hegel, the individual totalities that are themselves already caught up in formative processes must also be joined together at a higher level through a formative process that reaches right through them to form a super-totality. But this absolute spirit, which appears in the singular, can acquire the individuality that it claims for itself only at the expense of the individual figures of spirit encased in it—just as the world spirit contests the individuality of world-historical individuals, whom it merely utilizes as means to its ends. Hegel's philosophy of history and his philosophy of right merely illustrate in a drastic way something that is generally valid: as long as the problematic of metaphysical unitary thinking remains in force, and as long as idealist modes of thought remain in use, the universal will triumph over the individual, which is banished to ineffability. Along the course of metaphysical thinking, the endangered

individual reveals itself at best *ironically* as the nonidentical—as the marginal that is pressed to the side and drops out of the running at every attempt to identify an individual as itself and distinguish it from *all* other individuals.[15]

III

In the meantime, the philosophy of consciousness had taken on a new configuration with Kant, one which opened up a different route to that in the concept of individuality which had eluded thought. With the relationship of the knowing subject to itself, Descartes had disclosed the realm of conscious phenomena and equated this self-consciousness in turn with the *ego cogito*. Thenceforth, the concept of individuality, insofar as it has meant more than singularity, has been associated with the ego as the spontaneous source of cognition and action. Since Kant, the transcendentally revaluated ego has been conceived simultaneously as a *world-generating* and *autonomously acting subject*. For the concept of individuality, however, this combination initially provides only the notion of a spontaneously acting subjectivity. In Kantian philosophy the individuated ego falls through the cracks, as it were, between the transcendental ego, which stands over and against the world as a whole, and the empirical ego, which finds itself already in the world as one among many.[16] What distinguishes the individual from all other individuals, i.e., uniqueness and irreplaceability in the emphatic sense, can at best apply to the intelligible ego; but as the addressee of the moral law, this latter is oriented precisely toward maxims that have universal validity. Furthermore, the ego qua a subject capable of moral action is a thing-in-itself and thus eludes cognition, even if it could be thought of as completely individuated.

Fichte is the first to hone the Kantian concepts for the problem of individuality by reducing the transcendental accomplishments of the knowing ego and the practical ego, world-constitution and self-determination, to the common denominator of spontaneous activity, and by radicalizing them to the primordial act of *self-positing*. Fichte answers the question, Who

am I really?, with a program: I am the one into whom I make myself.

> Who am I, in truth? That is to say, what individual am I? And what is the ground, why I am *this* individual and none other? I reply: From the moment that I have arrived at consciousness I am that individual which I make myself to be with freedom, and I am it because I make myself it.[17]

With this phrasing Fichte interprets the ontological process of individuation, which is now concentrated into the genesis of the ego, as an act that is *practically executed* (*vollzogen*) and at the same time *reflexively recapitulable* (*nachvollziehbar*); he understands it as a process of self-constitution that has gone before yet is comprehensible after the fact—a process that the individual, insofar as it comes upon itself as a spontaneously acting ego, must be able to attribute to itself. Kierkegaard will take up these ideas with his concept of self-choice (*Selbstwahl*). Fichte himself carries his thoughts a step in the direction of a theory of intersubjectivity. But it is Humboldt who first transfers the latter to the premises of the philosophy of language.

Fichte wants to demonstrate that the ego can posit itself only as something individual; he wants to explain why the consciousness of individuality belongs *a priori* to my self-understanding as ego.[18] In the first act of self-consciousness, I come upon myself as an object, which is nonetheless supposed to be an ego—a free, spontaneously active subject: "As sure, therefore, as I am to find myself as natural product, I must also find myself as freely active (*freitätig*). . . . [M]y self-determination exists without my assistance."[19] This paradoxical experience can be elucidated by the fact that I first confront the concept of my freedom through an expectation or demand that is directed to me by another subject:

> This requirement, or appeal, addressed to me to be spontaneously active, I cannot comprehend without ascribing it to an actual being outside of me, which intended to communicate to me such a conception; and which is therefore capable of a conception of the conception. But such a being is a rational being, a being positing itself as Ego. . . .[20]

Because the Other confronts me with a demand that can only be satisfied by virtue of a free will, I experience myself as a being capable of spontaneous activity: "Namely, my Egohood and self-sufficiency generally is conditioned through the freedom of the other individual. . . ."[21] This intersubjective relationship between intelligent beings, who oppose and respect each other as free beings, requires exactly the kind of limitation and self-restriction that makes the one ego as well as the other into an individual; for through the reciprocal relation there arises "a sphere of freedom, which these many separate beings divide amongst themselves."[22] I must oppose (*entgegensetzen*) myself as an individual to another individual and oppose this individual in turn to me. It is thereby shown that "a rational being can not self-consciously posit (*setzen*) itself as such, without positing itself as an *individual,* or as one of many rational beings, which many it assumes outside of it by assuming itself."[23]

In all of his constructions, in the *Wissenschaftslehre* as in the *Sittenlehre,* Fichte takes his starting point from the circle inherent in every philosophy of consciousness: in consciously assuring itself of itself, the knowing subject unavoidably makes itself into an object, and it thereby falls short of itself as the antecedent source of all accomplishments of consciousness, a source that precedes all objectification and is absolutely subjective. In its spontaneous activity the ego is supposed to make itself into an object. Even the resolution that Fichte proposes for the deduction of the concept of law remains caught up in this initial circle. Namely, the individuation of egos, which makes possible an intersubjective relationship among several individuals, and therewith the encounter with an alien freedom as well—this individuation of egos proves in the continuation of the construction to be purely illusory. That is, using the concepts of the philosophy of the subject, Fichte can only define individuality as the restriction of oneself (*Selbsteinschränkung*), as renunciation of the possibility of realizing one's own freedom—not as the productive cultivation of one's own essential powers. Subjects can only be objects for one another, so that even in the reciprocally limiting influence they have on each other, their individuality does not reach beyond the objectivistic

determinations of the strategic freedom of choice whose paradigm is the arbitrary will of privately autonomous legal subjects. As soon as the restrictions on subjective freedom are deduced as legal in character, even the individuality of the legal subjects forfeits all significance. Like the world-generating transcendental ego, Fichte's original ego comes on the scene in the singular, as one over and against everything; thus, "freely active" subjectivity, of which I want to reassure myself without illusion in the consciousness of myself, unveils itself in every individual consciousness as something universal after all—as Egohood in general. Since it is

> accidental to Egohood in general, that *I,* the individual A, am precisely this A, and since the impulse of self-sufficiency is to be an impulse of Egohood in general, *as such,* this impulse certainly does not crave the self-sufficiency of the particular individual A, but of reason in general. . . .[I]f *this* self-sufficiency can only be represented *in* the individuals A, B, C, etc., and *through* them; then it is necessarily altogether indifferent to me whether A, or B, or C represents it; . . . it is always reason in general which is represented, and hence my impulse is always satisfied.[24]

Fichte is unable to exhaust the explanatory potential of his proposed solution because he is forced to resolve the intersubjective relationship, through which the ego is able to individuate itself to several individuals in the first place, into a subject-object relationship. The problem of intersubjectivity cannot be solved within the limits of the philosophy of the subject; instead it arises ever more intractably from Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation through Sartre's construction of Being-for-another. But Fichte himself already addresses this problem, namely the dynamic of reciprocal objectification that falls short of what is specific both to an intersubjectively shared understanding of language and to a communicative relationship between first person and second person.[25] With his central argument Fichte does, it is true, lay claim to language as a medium through which one is able to *demand* independent activity of the other and to confront him with one's expectation. But like all philosophers of consciousness, he peers right through language as though it were a glassy medium without properties.

Fichte opened up a new route to the concept of individuality. To be sure, before his intuitions could be made fruitful, they had to be detached from the architectonic of his *Wissenschaftslehre*. The connection between individuality and intersubjectivity would be investigated by Wilhelm von Humboldt with reference to the noncoercive synthesis that is carried out in the process of coming to an understanding in language. And the idea that each individual must first make itself into that which it is would be honed by Kierkegaard into the act of taking responsibility for one's own life history. Finally, the fusion of world-constitution and self-determination that Fichte aimed at with his concept of spontaneous activity proves to be fruitful for the concept of an ego-identity that is *claimed* by me for me. Admittedly, before the emphatic sense of individuality can be completely transferred to the performative use of the personal pronoun in the first person, Fichte's peculiar linkage of reflection with the performance of an action in the act of self-positing, in which as it were an eye is inserted, must be disencumbered of theoretical pretensions. G. H. Mead will carry through these thoughts by downgrading the agency of the ego in the philosophy of consciousness into a "me," into a self that first emerges in contexts of interaction before the eyes of an alter ego—and, in doing so, Mead will shift all fundamental philosophical concepts from the basis of consciousness to that of language.

IV

For Humboldt, language is the whole comprising the system of grammatical rules and speech. Itself subjectless, language makes possible the linguistic practice among subjects who belong to a linguistic community, while at the same time it renews and maintains itself as a linguistic system through this practice. Humboldt's interest is devoted above all to one phenomenon: in the process of linguistic communication, a synthetic force is at work that generates unity within plurality in a *different* manner than by way of subsuming what is manifold under a general rule. The construction of a number series had served Kant as a model for the generation of unity. This constructivistic con-

cept of synthesis is replaced by Humboldt with the concept of unforced agreement (*Einigung*) in conversation. In place of one unifying perspective, which the generative subject brings first to the material of sensation with its forms of intuition and categories and then to the stream of its own lived experiences with the "I think" of transcendental apperception, there now appears the unrelinquished difference between the perspectives from which the participants in communication reach understanding with each other about the same thing. These speaker and hearer perspectives no longer converge at the focal point of a subjectivity centered in itself; they instead intersect at the focal point of language—and as this focal point Humboldt designates the "reciprocal conversation in which ideas and feelings are sincerely exchanged." In this conversation the "irrevocable dualism" of speech and reply, question and answer, utterance and response, reactivates itself each time anew. The smallest analytic unit is therefore the relationship between ego's speech-act and alter's taking a position. Humboldt expends great effort in analyzing the use of the personal pronouns; he surmises that the specific conditions for the unforced synthesis of linguistically reached understanding, which simultaneously socializes and individuates the participants, are to be found in the I-you and you-me relation, which is distinguished from the I-s/he and I-it relations.

Mead will be the first to make use of the performative attitude of the first person toward the second person—and above all of the symmetrical you-me relationship—as the key for his critique of the mirror-model of the self-objectifying subject and its relationship to itself. Already, however, Humboldt takes his start here in order to illuminate the basic experience of every interpreter—the experience, that is, that language only appears in the plural of particular languages, which present themselves as individual totalities and yet are porous to one another. On the one hand, languages impress their own stamp on worldviews and forms of life and thus make translations from one language into others more difficult; nonetheless, they are directed like converging rays toward the common goal of reaching universal understanding:

Individuality fragments, but in such a wondrous way that it awakens, precisely through separation, the feeling of unity, and even appears as a means of establishing the latter, at least in the idea. . . . For, struggling deep inside for that unity and universality, the human being seeks to overcome the dividing barriers of his individuality, yet must . . . heighten his individuality precisely through this struggling. He thus makes ever increasing advances in a striving that is in itself impossible. Now language comes to his aid in a truly wondrous way here—language, which binds together even as it distinguishes (*vereinzelt*), and which contains within the hull of the most individual of expressions the possibility of universal understanding.[26]

Yet, Humboldt himself never came up with a plausible explanation for the fact that language is a mechanism that distinguishes and unifies *at the same time.*

Fichte had derived the individual ego from the fact that a distinct subject must oppose itself to the other in an intersubjective relationship. The necessity of an encounter between ego and alter ego was supposed to result from the fact that an ego, which, paradoxically, has *itself* posited itself, is able to become conscious of itself only in the mode of active subjectivity. Soren Kierkegaard now makes this singular figure of thought—self-positing—so much his own that he interprets self-relation (*Selbstbeziehung*) as a relating-to-oneself (*Zusichselbstverhalten*), wherein I relate myself at the same time to an antecedent Other on whom this relation depends.[27] To be sure, Kierkegaard no longer identifies this Other with the absolute ego qua the subject of the original act of self-positing. But that means the problem is posed all the more acutely: how, under the contingent circumstances of a life history that he cannot himself choose, is a subject nonetheless supposed to be able to encounter himself as a spontaneously acting subject, conscious of being the one into which he has made himself? The act of self-positing must now be shifted to an individual who is entangled in history; the historicized, situated self must return to itself from out of the facticity of a life that has developed naturally.

That is only possible if the individual *critically* appropriates his own life history: in a paradoxical act, I must choose myself as the one who I am and want to be. *Life history* becomes the principle of individuation, but only if it is transposed by such an act of self-choice into an existential form for which the self

is responsible. This extraordinary decision to posit oneself, which as it were retroactively places the historicized self under one's own direction, results in the claim of the individual to be identical with himself in ethical life: "Now he discovers that the self he chooses has a boundless multiplicity within itself inasmuch as it has a history, a history in which he acknowledges identity with himself."[28] The authentic individual has himself to thank for his individuation; as this determinate product of determinate historical surroundings, he has made himself responsible for himself: "in choosing himself as product he can just as well be said to produce himself."[29] For Kierkegaard, spontaneous activity is tied up with the "avowal" ("*Bekenntnis*") of individuality because it must prove itself in the recalcitrant material of one's own life history:

> To a certain degree, the person who lives ethically cancels the distinction between the accidental and the essential, for he takes responsibility for all of himself as equally essential; but it comes back again, for after he has done that, he makes a distinction, but in such a manner that he takes an essential responsibility for excluding what he excludes as accidental.[30]

In the performative attitude of the subject who chooses himself, the metaphysical opposition between what applies to the individual essentially and what applies to him accidentally loses all significance.

Fichte had placed two topics on the agenda: first, individuality and linguistic intersubjectivity, second, individuality and life-historical identity. Humboldt and Kierkegaard took these topics up from a perspective that had been transformed by the historical mode of thinking. The one topic is linked to the other through the thought that the call, the demand, or the expectation of an Other is needed in order to awaken the consciousness of spontaneous activity in me. Kierkegaard's Either-Or poses itself ineluctably in the conversation of the lone soul with God. The ethical stage of life is only the gateway to the religious stage, where the dialogue with oneself proves to be a mask behind which has been concealed the prayer, the dialogue with God. The Christian consciousness of sin and the Protestant hunger for grace therefore form the real spur for

the return to a life that takes on form and coherence only in relation to the justification, due at the Last Judgment, of an irreplaceable and unique existence. From Augustine to Kierkegaard, the structure of a prayer was imposed on the inner monologues of the missionary author setting down his confessions. But already in the middle of the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau secularized the confession of sin set before the judging God into a self-confession, which the private man circulated before the reading audience of the bourgeois public. The prayer was deflated to a public conversation.[31]

In January 1762 Rousseau writes M. de Malesherbes four letters in which he presents and projects himself as the one who he is and who, with the will to authenticity, he wants to be. With growing intensity and desperation, he continues this existential presentation of self in his *Confessions,* later in the *Dialogues,* and lastly in the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker.* But those initial letters already name the communicative presuppositions for the public process of mercilessly reaching self-understanding and of assuring oneself of one's own identity. Rousseau turns to Malesherbes with his revelations in order to justify himself before him: "You will pass judgment when I have said everything."[32] Of course, the addressee is only the representative of an omnipresent public. The form of the letter does indeed indicate the private character of the contents; but the claim to radical sincerity with which Rousseau writes these letters requires unrestricted publicity. The real addressee extends beyond the contemporary audience; it is the universal public of a justly judging posterity: "Whether it is to my advantage or my disadvantage, I am not afraid of being seen as I am."[33]

The religious background is indeed present, but it lingers only as a metaphor for an innerworldly scene, robbed of all transcendence, in which no one knows the author better than he knows himself. He alone possesses privileged access to his inwardness. The experience of conversion, datable according to time and place, is no more missing than is the thematic of the consciousness of sin and the hope for redemption. But the profane equivalents twist the meaning of religious justification into the desire to be recognized before the forum of all fellow

human beings as the one who one is and who one wants to be: "I know my great faults and vividly feel all of my vices. With all of that, I will die without despairing in God Supreme, quite persuaded that of all the men whom I have known in my life, none has been better than I."[34] In truth Rousseau knows that he is dependent on the judgment of the public. He wants to win its recognition, without which radical self-choice would lack confirmation. Once the vertical axis of the prayer has tipped into the horizontal axis of interhuman communication, the individual can no longer redeem the emphatic claim to individuality solely through the reconstructive appropriation of his life history; now the positions taken by others decide whether this reconstruction succeeds.

From this secularized perspective, the *performatively employed* concept of individuality has been completely detached from its descriptive use. A totally different meaning is invested in the claim to individuality that is put forth by a first person in dialogue with a second person. Justificatory confessions, through which the performatively raised claim to one's own identity can be authenticated, are not to be confused with the description, always selective, of an individual. The literary genre of the letter, the confession, the diary, the autobiography, the *Bildungsroman,* and the didactically recited self-reflection, which authors such as Rousseau and Kierkegaard favor, testifies to the transformed illocutionary mode: it is not a matter of *reports* and descriptions from the perspective of an observer, not even of *self-observations;* rather, it is a matter of interested *presentations of self,* with which a complex claim presented to second persons is justified—a claim to recognition of the irreplaceable identity of an ego manifesting itself in a conscious way of life. This claim is brought to bear in the performative attitude, and the attempt to make it plausible by means of a totalizing draft of one's life will always remain fragmentary; but this attempt must not be confused with the never completed descriptive endeavor of characterizing a subject through the totality of all statements that could apply to it. Rousseau's confessions can be most properly understood as an encompassing ethical self-understanding with justificatory intent, put before the public in order for the public to take a position on

it. These confessions belong to a different genre than the description that a historian could give of Rousseau's life. They are not measured against the truth of historical statements, but against the authenticity of the presentation of self. They are exposed, as Rousseau knows, to accusations of *mauvaise foi* and of self-deception, not simply to that of being untrue.

V

Leibniz had preserved a descriptive sense for the meaning content of individuality that extends beyond singularity—with the reservation, of course, that it is not possible to completely explicate the individual concept of any being. Fichte had brought Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy together in the highest point of the originary act; hence, in Fichte the moments of cognition and of the performance of an action fuse together in the spontaneous activity of the subject that itself posits itself. Further discussion has shown that the semantic content of "individuality" can be salvaged only if we reserve this expression for performative usage and, in all descriptive contexts, employ it only with the sense of singularity. Our examination of the conceptual history therefore ends with the recommendation that we explain the meaning of the expression "individuality" with reference to the self-understanding of a subject who is capable of speech and action, one who in the face of other dialogue participants presents and, if necessary, justifies himself as an irreplaceable and distinctive person. However diffuse it may remain, this self-understanding grounds the identity of the ego. In it, self-consciousness is articulated not as the self-relation of a knowing subject but as the *ethical self-reassurance* (*Selbstvergewisserung*) of an accountable person. Standing within an intersubjectively shared lifeworld horizon, the individual projects himself as someone who *vouches* for the more or less clearly established continuity of a more or less consciously appropriated life history; in light of the individuality he has attained, he would like to be identified, even in the future, as the one into whom he has made himself. In short, the meaning of "individuality" should be explicated in terms of the ethical self-understanding of a first person in

relation to a second person. A concept of individuality that points beyond mere singularity can only be possessed by one who knows, before himself and others, who he is and who he wants to be.

To be sure, it is not entirely unproblematic to concede the status of *knowledge* to this self-understanding, when this "knowledge" is not analyzable into a finite number of propositions but, as a claim demanding acknowledgment, can only be illustrated in the form of provisional confessions or presentations of self that can be extended *ad hoc*. What is at issue is a performative knowledge that is *sui generis*. Even the performative knowledge that a speaker expresses with the help of a performative clause in carrying out an illocutionary act, for example, only accompanies the explicit knowledge expressed in the propositional component as something that comes along with it; it can, however, be made fully into the object of a *further* constative speech act and thereby transformed into propositional knowledge. The totalizing self-understanding of an individual eludes such an effortless explication. Every attempt at the reassurance and justification of one's own identity must remain fragmentary. In Rousseau's case there were at first letters, then confessions, then commentaries on the confessions which took the form of dialogues, of diary entries, of books. It would be false to look on these exemplary attempts as substitutes for a *descriptive* explication of the ineffable individual that can never be completed. For the identity-bestowing self-understanding of a person has no *descriptive* sense whatsoever; its sense is that of a guarantee; and the meaning of this guarantee has been *completely* grasped by the addressee as soon as he knows that the other is vouching for his ability to be himself. The latter *shows* itself in turn through the continuity of a more or less consciously assumed life-history.

This also explains why such a self-understanding, articulated in the totality of a life project, stands in need of confirmation by others, whether they be concrete or possible participants in interaction. The circumstance that Rousseau and Kierkegaard remained so very dependent on the positions taken toward them by their audiences points beyond the specific reasons that lay in their persons. Phenomenologically it is easy to show that

unendangered identity structures must be anchored in relations of intersubjective recognition if they are to be somewhat secure. The explanation for this clinical fact is that the structure for which someone assumes the guarantee with his claim to individuality is by no means absolutely that person's own (*das Eigenste einer Person*)—as is suggested by the decisionistic conceptual framework extending from Fichte to Kierkegaard (and Tugendhat).[35] No one can dispose over his identity as property. The guarantee under discussion must not be conceived according to the model of a promise through which an autonomous speaker binds his will; no one is able *in this way* to obligate himself to remain identical with himself or to be himself. A simple circumstance explains why this does not lie solely within his power. The self of an ethical self-understanding is not the absolutely inward possession of the individual. The impression that it is arises from the possessive individualism of a philosophy of consciousness that begins with the abstract self-relation of the knowing subject, instead of conceiving the latter as result. The self of an ethical self-understanding is dependent upon recognition by addressees because it generates itself as a response to the demands of an other in the first place. Because others attribute accountability to me, I gradually make myself into the one who I have become in living together with others. The ego, which seems to me to be given in my self-consciousness as what is purely my own, cannot be maintained by me solely through my own power, as it were for me alone—it does not "belong" to me. Rather, this ego always retains an intersubjective core because the process of individuation from which it emerges runs through the network of linguistically mediated interactions.

G. H. Mead was the first to have thought through this intersubjective model of the socially produced ego. He leaves behind the reflection-model of self-consciousness, according to which the knowing subject relates to itself as an object in order to lay hold of and thereby become conscious of itself. Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* already *began* with the aporias of the philosophy of reflection—but Mead is the first to lead the way out of them via an analysis of interaction, which had, however, at least been initiated in Fichte's *Sittenlehre*.

VI

Mead takes up the program of the philosophy of consciousness once again, albeit under the naturalistic presuppositions of John Dewey's functionalist psychology. His interest in the explanation of subjectivity and self-consciousness is at first epistemological, seen namely from the angle of a psychologist who is giving an account of the constitution of his object domain. That is the problematic of the early essay "The Definition of the Psychical" (1903). The question of the subjective world's accessibility for the psychologist is joined straightaway by the genetic question of the conditions under which self-conscious life emerges. An exploratory answer is to be found in the essay on "Social Consciousness and the Consciousness of Meaning" (1910). In rapid succession further articles appear in which Mead works out the solution to the twofold problem of the self-reflexive access to consciousness and of the genesis of self-consciousness.[36] The last essay in this series, "The Social Self" (1913), begins with the circle of reflection from which Fichte had taken his start: the "I," which is the aspect in which the knowing subject comes upon itself in its self-reflection, has always already been objectified into a "me" that is merely observed. The self that is made into an object must indeed presuppose the spontaneous I or the self of self-reflection, but the latter is not given in conscious experience:

> For the moment it is presented it has passed into the objective case, presuming . . . an "I" that observes—but an "I" that can disclose himself only by ceasing to be the subject for whom the object "me" exists.[37]

The idea that lets Mead break out of this circle of self-objectifying reflection requires the transition to the paradigm of symbolically mediated interaction.[38] As long as subjectivity is thought of as the inward space of one's own representations, a space that is disclosed when the object-representing subject bends back, as if in a mirror, upon its activity of representing, everything subjective will be accessible only in the form of objects of self-observation or introspection—and the subject itself only as a "me" objectified under this gaze. The "me" casts

off the reifying gaze, however, as soon as the subject appears not in the role of an *observer* but in that of a *speaker* and, from the *social perspective* of a *hearer* encountering him in dialogue, learns to see and to understand himself as the alter ego of another ego: "The self which consciously stands over against other selves thus becomes an object, an other to himself, through the very fact that he hears himself talk, and replies."[39]

It is intuitively plausible that the manner in which I objectify myself as a first person in a self-relation that is mediated through my relation to a second person is not the same as the way in which I objectify myself in introspection. While introspection requires the objectifying attitude of an observer who confronts himself in the third person, the performative attitude of the speaker and hearer requires the differentiation between "you," as the alter ego on my level *with whom* I seek to reach an understanding, and the "something" *about which* I want to reach an understanding with "you." As Mead explains it, the actor comes upon himself as a social object in communicative action when he orients himself to the current I-you relationship and thereby encounters himself as the alter ego of his alter ego; Mead explicates the self of self-consciousness as this *social* object. In the first person of his performative attitude, the actor encounters himself as a second person. In this way there arises an entirely different "me." Even this "me" is not, however, identical with the spontaneously acting "I," which now, as before, withdraws from every direct experience; but the "me" that is accessible in the performative attitude *does* present itself as the exact memory of a spontaneous state of the "I," which can, moreover, be authentically read from the reaction of the second person. The self that is given for me through the mediation of the gaze of the other upon me is the "memory image" of my ego, such as it has just acted in the sight of an alter ego and face to face with it.

Admittedly, this construction exposes itself to the objection that it only applies to the reflected self-relation of a subject speaking with itself, but does not apply to *originary* self-consciousness, which must already be *presupposed* for the utterance of simple experiential sentences. According to Wittgenstein, utterances such as:

(1) I have a toothache.
(2) I am ashamed.
(3) I am afraid of you.

still retain, in spite of their propositional structure, something of the symptomatic character possessed by those body-bound expressive gestures for which they are occasionally the substitute. Even gestures, when they are employed with communicative intent *as* linguistic expressions, betray an intentional relation of the subject to itself, even though we cannot already attribute the reflected self-relation of "an inner conversation" to such a subject.[40] The "me" that is supposed to have emerged from the adoption of the perspective of an alter ego could explain self-consciousness as an originary phenomenon only if it were inserted deeper, beneath the level of a linguistic competence that has already been acquired and used for inner monologues.[41] In fact, Mead does presume that we have already to presuppose self-consciousness even for the employment of symbols with identical meaning. Let us briefly look back at his starting point.

In his earliest works, Mead had followed up on ideas from Dewey in order to expose the "I" as the source of spontaneous accomplishments behind the introspectively reified "me" of positivistic psychology. Mead at first sought access to the subjective world through a pragmatistic concept that had been previously introduced by Peirce, namely the problematization of a conventional situation interpretation. A "problem" disturbs the execution of a plan of action that is being undertaken, removes the basis for the acceptance of a hitherto tried-and-true expectation, and gives rise to a conflict of impulses. In this phase of disintegration, what had been regarded by us as objective collapses in on itself: "the result . . . is . . . to dislodge our objects from their objective position and relegate them to a subjective world. . . ."[42] Within a world-horizon that remains intact, the segment of the world that has become problematic is robbed of its familiarity and validity; it remains behind as the material of the *merely subjective* representations and constitutes the matter from which "the psychical" is made. Thus, the actor becomes conscious of his subjectivity at the moment when

his habitualized performance of an action is disturbed, since he must form better hypotheses through abduction out of the rubble of the invalidated representations, that is, he must reconstruct a collapsed interpretation of the situation. In this way, functionalist psychology locates its object, the psychical itself, precisely from within the perspective of an actor who in the performative attitude becomes aware of his performance—which has been interrupted by being problematized:

> For this functional psychology an explicit definition of its subject matter . . . is as follows: that phase of experience within which we are immediately conscious of conflicting impulses which rob the object of its character as object-stimulus, leaving us insofar in an attitude of subjectivity; but during which a new object-stimulus appears due to the reconstructive activity which is identified with the subject "I". . . .[43]

This "definition of the psychical" is supposed to provide information about the phenomenon in need of elucidation, namely, about the subjective world of a subject who forms hypotheses and engages in abductive activity. Mead soon realizes that this attempt at an explanation fails, for he cannot in this way make plausible how the subject catches sight of himself in the actual performance of his problem-solving accomplishment. In the moment when he notices, for example, that the ball is too heavy, the ditch too wide, or the weather too uncertain for risking the throw, the jump, or the stroll, the actor does no doubt see himself entangled in a problem, which may bring to consciousness the invalidation of those *action premises* that have foundered on reality; but how the *problem-solving process* itself, which leads to new action premises, could become *conscious*, remains unilluminated. Thus, Mead can explain the phenomenon and emergence of conscious life only after he has given up Dewey's model of an isolated actor's instrumental dealings with things and events and has made the transition to the model of several actors' interactive dealings with each other.

Mead expands the familiar ethological approach, which privileges the individual organism in its species-specific environment, with a social dimension. He concentrates on the relationship between several organisms (of the same species)

because problem-solving behavior in such interactions stands under conditions of double contingency. Unlike physical circumstances such as gathering clouds, the behavioral reactions of a social object can also be influenced by my own behavior. This constellation implies, on the one hand, a perpetuation of the danger that my habitualized behavioral expectations might be problematized by the unpredictable reactions of the opposing side; on the other hand, it promises a selective advantage to the side that could calculate the effects of its own behavioral reactions and react to the other, in an elementary sense, *self-consciously:* "A man's reaction toward weather conditions has no influence upon the weather itself. . . . Successful social conduct [however] brings one into a field within which a consciousness of one's own attitudes helps toward the control of the conduct of others."[44] This functionalistic argument directs attention to the situation of interaction as a place where particular advantages of adaptation are to be expected for the emergence of self-consciousness. Yet, as before, the real problem remains the following: How can a self-relation that is rewarded in this way arise under conditions of interaction *in the first place, before* there has developed a linguistic medium with speaker-hearer perspectives that would allow ego to adopt the role of an alter ego toward himself? The competence to speak with oneself already presupposes for its part an elementary form of self-relation. That is the reason why Mead believes he must redirect his analysis to the prelinguistic level of gestural communication.

Nonetheless, an internal reconstruction of the conditions that make original self-consciousness possible can be based upon a prior understanding of linguistic communication. One organism can understand another organism's behavioral reaction that is triggered by the first's gesture *as if it were* an interpretation of this gesture. This idea of recognizing-oneself-in-the-other serves Mead as the key to his explanation, according to which the elementary form of self-relation is made possible by the interpretive accomplishment of another participant in the interaction. In order to understand Mead's thoughts correctly (perhaps somewhat better than he did himself), one must pay heed to the premise that gesture-mediated interaction is

still steered by instinct. Thus, in the functional circle of behavior steered by instinct, what are expressed are objective meanings that are assigned from the perspective of the observing ethologist, such as flight, defense, caring for others, propagation, etc.[45] The interpretation that any of one's own behavior receives through the reaction of the other organism is then to be understood in this objective sense. At first, then, this is not an interpretation in the strict sense for either organism. Mead must recur to a further circumstance, already identified by Herder, in order to explain when the objective process of interpreting one's own behavior through the behavioral reaction of another can be understood *as* interpretation by the actor who meets with this reaction—under the condition, namely, that the gesture interpreted by the other is a vocal gesture.

With the vocal gesture, which both organisms perceive simultaneously, the actor affects himself at the same time and in the same way as he affects his opposite number. This coincidence is supposed to make it possible for the one organism to have an effect upon itself in the same way as it does upon the other and thereby to learn to perceive itself exactly as it is perceived from the view of the other, as a social object. It learns to understand its own behavior from the perspective of the other and, specifically, in the light of the other's interpreting behavioral reaction. The antecedent objective meaning of this interpretation of my behavior—e.g., as an emission to which a member of our species reacts with aggression, defensiveness, or submission—now becomes accessible to me as the subject of this emission. My vocal gesture obtains a meaning *for me* taken from the perspective of the other who reacts to it. The character of the vocal gesture is thereby transformed. In the effect it has on oneself, one's vocal gesture stands in for the behavioral reaction of one's opposite number; it takes its provisionally objective meaning from the interpreting force of this behavioral reaction; in that this meaning becomes accessible 'for me,' however, the vocal gesture transforms itself from a segment of behavior into a sign substrate—the stimulus turns into a bearer of meaning.

These considerations explain why the issue covertly shifts for Mead, that is, how the emergence of an originary self-relation is connected with the transition to an evolutionarily new stage of communication. The actor takes the perspective toward himself of another participant in interaction and becomes visible to himself as a social object only when he adopts as his own the objective meaning of his vocal gesture, which stimulates both sides equally. With this self-relation, the actor doubles himself in the instance of a "me," which follows the performative "I" as a shadow—a shadow, because "I," as the author of a spontaneous gesture, am given to "me" only in memory: "If you ask, then, where directly in your own experience the 'I' comes in, the answer is that it comes in as a historical figure. It is what you were a second ago that is the 'I' of the 'me.'"[46] The self of self-consciousness is not the spontaneously acting "I"; the latter is given only in the refraction of the symbolically captured meaning that it took on for its interaction partner "a second ago" in the role of the alter ego: "The observer who accompanies all our self-conscious conduct is then not the actual 'I' who is responsible for the conduct in *propria persona*—he is rather the response which one makes to his own conduct."[47] The expression "observer" in this context is however misleading. For the self of the originary self-relation is a "me" constituted from the performative attitude of a second person and not one objectified from the observer perspective of a third person. For this reason, original self-consciousness is not a phenomenon inherent in the subject but one that is communicatively generated.

VII

Until now the topic has been the epistemic self-relation, the relation of the problem-solving, i.e., knowing subject to itself. The turn to an intersubjectivistic way of looking at things leads in the matter of "subjectivity" to a surprising result: the consciousness that is centered, as it seems, in the ego is not something immediate or purely inward. Rather, self-consciousness forms itself on the path from without to within, through the symbolically mediated relationship to a partner in interaction.

To this extent it possesses an intersubjective core; its eccentric position attests to the tenacious dependence of subjectivity upon language as the medium through which one recognizes oneself in the other in a nonobjectifying manner. As in Fichte, self-consciousness first arises out of the encounter with another ego confronting (*entgegengesetzten*) me. To this extent, the "posited" (*gesetzte*) ego is comparable to the "me." But in the naturalistic view of pragmatism, this "me" appears as the form of mind that is higher or reflected and not as the product of an antecedent ego ("itself positing itself") which withdraws from consciousness. Admittedly, Mead neglects the distinction between an originary self-relation, which first makes the transition from communication that is mediated through vocal gestures to communication that is genuinely linguistic, and the reflected self-relation that is only established in the conversation with oneself, and that thus already presupposes linguistic communication. Only the latter discloses the domain of representations attributable to me, a domain from which the philosophy of the subject has, since Descartes, proceeded as something apparently ultimate. This lack of clarity may be connected with weaknesses in Mead's philosophy of language, which I have discussed elsewhere.[48]

Equally unclear remains the important distinction between the *epistemic* self-relation (*Selbstbeziehung*) of the knowing subject and the *practical* relation-to-self (*Selbstverhältnis*) of the acting subject.[49] Presumably, Mead blurs this difference in his lectures because from the start he comprehends "knowing" as problem-solving practice and conceives of the cognitive self-relation as a function of action.[50] Nonetheless, the meaning of the central conceptual pair "I" and "me" is surreptitiously altered as soon as the motivational dimension of the practical relation-to-self comes into play. To be sure, Mead explains the practical relation-to-self just as he does the epistemic self-relation, on the basis of a reorganization of the stage of prelinguistic, instinct-steered interaction. Just as the epistemic self-relation emerges from a transition to another mode of communication, the practical relation-to-self emerges from the transition to another mechanism of behavioral control. But along with these transitions, two aspects of behavioral coordination are differentiated

that had still coincided in the model of an instinctual reaction triggered by species-specific stimuli. Symbolically mediated interaction allows one to *monitor and control one's own behavior* through self-referential cognition; this cannot, however, replace the *coordinative accomplishments* that had previously been secured through a common instinctual repertoire and the corresponding behavior patterns that made the actions of the one actor 'fit' those of the other. This void is now filled by normatively generalized behavioral expectations, which take the place of instinctual regulation; however, these norms need to be anchored within the acting subject through more or less internalized social controls.

This correspondence between social institutions and behavioral controls within the personality system is also explained by Mead with the aid of the familiar mechanism of taking the perspective of an other who, in an interactive relationship, takes up a performative attitude toward ego. Now, however, taking the other's perspective is extended into *role-taking:* Ego takes over alter's *normative,* not his *cognitive* expectations. To be sure, the process retains the same structure. Through the fact that I perceive myself as the social object of an other, a new reflexive agency is formed through which ego makes the behavioral expectations of others into his own. To the normative character of these expectations, however, there corresponds a transmuted structure of this second "me" as well as a different function of the self-relation. The "me" of the *practical* relation-to-self is no longer the seat of an originary or reflected self-*consciousness* but an agency of self-*control.* Self-reflection here takes on the specific tasks of mobilizing motives for action and of internally controlling one's own modes of behavior.

The stages of development leading to a conventional moral consciousness, which is dependent upon the forms of life and institutions existing at a given time, need not occupy us here.[51] Mead conceives of this "me" as the "generalized other," i.e., as the behavioral expectations of one's social surroundings that have, as it were, migrated into the person. The "I" in turn relates to this agency as a spontaneity that eludes consciousness. But unlike the epistemic "I," the practical "I" forms an unconscious that makes itself noticed in *two* ways: as the onrush of

impulses that are subjected to control and as the source of innovations that break up and renew conventionally rigidified controls. The epistemic self-relation had been made possible by a "me" that fixed in memory the spontaneously acting "I," such as it presented itself in the performative attitude of a second person. The practical relation-to-self is made possible by a "me" that places limits, from the intersubjective perspective of a social "we," on the impulsiveness and the creativity of a resistant and productive "I." From this perspective, the "I" appears on the one hand as the pressure of presocial, natural drives, and on the other hand as the impulse of creative fantasy—or as the impetus for the innovative transformation of a way of seeing. This distinction should account for the experience we have of the *difference* between the way in which institutionalized forms of social intercourse are placed in question by the revolt of split-off motives and repressed interests, and the way in which they are placed in question by the intrusion of a revolutionarily renewed language that allows us to see the world with new eyes.

In both cases, the "me" of the practical relation-to-self proves to be a conservative force. This agency is closely united with what already exists. It mirrors the forms of life and the institutions that are practiced and recognized in a particular society. It functions in the consciousness of the socialized individual as society's agent and drives everything that spontaneously deviates out of the individual's consciousness. At first glance it is counterintuitive that Mead attributes the unconscious powers of spontaneous deviation to an "I"—instead of to an id (or it), as Freud does—and that he conceives of the self of the practical relation-to-self, or the identity of the person, the consciousness of concrete duties, as the anonymous result of socializing interactions. This irritation does not disappear completely, even when one realizes that it is by no means a matter of arbitrary usage, but involves the point of the entire approach.

The self of the epistemic self-relation does not coincide with the "I" as the author of spontaneous performances, but it does cling to the latter as closely as possible because it is held fast (in memory) from the perspective of a coacting, not an objectifying, alter ego. The *terminus ad quem* here is the *recording* of

the subject in the performance of its spontaneous accomplishments. In the practical relation-to-self, on the other hand, the acting subject does not want to *recognize* (*erkennen*) itself; rather, it wants to *reassure* (*vergewissern*) itself about itself as the initiator of an action that is attributable solely to it—in short, to become sure of itself as a free will. It is thus plausible to approach this reassurance from the perspective of the generalized other or the community will that we find already embodied, so to speak, in the intersubjectively recognized and autonomous norms and forms of life of our society. Only to the extent that we grow into these social surroundings do we constitute ourselves as accountably acting individuals; by internalizing social controls, we develop for *ourselves,* in our own right, the capacity either to follow or also to violate the expectations that are held to be legitimate.

This interpretation has not yet explained, however, why Mead maintains the difference between the "me" and the "I" at all, instead of letting one be absorbed by the other. The socially constituted free will seems in the act of reassurance to be *completely* captured by the self of the practical relation-to-self. The unconscious elements of the personality that both withdraw from and force themselves upon this self can hardly lay claim to the title of an "I" as the subject of accountable action: "It is only by taking the roles of others that we have been able to come back to ourselves."[52] This insight, which is already valid for the epistemic self-relation, takes on a particular nuance for the practical relation-to-self. For the self of the practical relation-to-self is not a memory shadow trailing an antecedent spontaneity; it is a will that, solely as a result of socialization, constitutes itself as an "I will," as an "I can posit a new beginning, for the results of which I am responsible." Mead also says: "this generalized other in his experience . . . provides him with a self."[53]

But the clarification that Mead provides for the way this self or this ego-identity functions already hints at why it is not equated with the "I":

> We approve of ourselves and condemn ourselves. We pat ourselves upon the back and in blind fury attack ourselves. We assume the

generalized attitude of the group, in the censor that stands at the door of our imagery and inner conversations, and in the affirmation of the laws and axioms of the universe of discourse.[54]

The "me" is the bearer of a moral consciousness that adheres to the conventions and practices of a specific group. It represents the power of a *particular* collective will over an individual will that has not yet come into its own. The latter is *not completely* able to recognize itself in its own identity, generated through socialization, as long as this identity requires us to "attack ourselves in blind fury." The "me" characterizes an identity formation that makes responsible action possible only at the price of blind subjugation to external social controls, which remain external in spite of the internalizing effect of role-taking. The conventional ego-identity is at best a steward for the true one. And in virtue of this difference, the difference between the "I" and the "me" may not be retracted, even for the practical relation-to-self.

At this crucial juncture Mead recurs both to processes of societal differentiation and to experiences of emancipation from narrowly circumscribed, tradition-bound and standardized forms of life; these experiences typically accompany the transition to and integration of expanded reference groups and forms of intercourse, or those which are both more comprehensive and functionally differentiated. In this context Mead speaks of the process of "civilizing" society which signifies a step forward in the individuation of the individual:

> In primitive society, to a far greater extent than in civilized society, individuality is constituted by the more or less perfect achievement of a given social type. . . . [I]n civilized society individuality is constituted rather by the individual's departure from, or modified realization of, any given social type . . . and tends to be something much more distinctive and singular. . . .[55]

This is in accord with Durkheim's descriptions and those of the other sociological classics. Mead's originality reveals itself in the fact that he is in the position to provide, from the reconstructive perspective of his independently developed theory of communication, a more precise meaning for these basic sociological concepts.

VIII

From the point of view of the individuals affected by it, the process of social individualization has two different aspects. To a growing degree, both *autonomy* and a *conscious conduct of life* are culturally imputed to and institutionally demanded from them. Moreover, the cultural paradigms and social expectations of *self-determination* and *self-realization* become differentiated from each other, depending upon the degree to which the accents are placed on the subject's own achievements. In the "me," to the extent that we have examined it thus far, there are layed down the concrete forms of life and institutions of a particular collective; however, to the degree that this conventional identity formation disintegrates under the pressure of societal differentiation, or the diversification of conflicting role expectations, the moral and the ethical dimensions (in the language of psychoanalysis: the agency of conscience and the ego-ideal) become separated from each other. "Turning away from rigid conventions," which is socially enforced, burdens the individual, on the one hand, with moral decisions of his own and, on the other hand, with an individual life project arising from the process of ethical self-understanding.

However, the self from which these independent achievements are expected is socially constituted through and through; it is not able, by detaching itself from particular life contexts, to step outside of society altogether and settle down in a space of abstract isolation and freedom. Rather, the abstraction that is expected of it lies *in the same direction* in which the civilization process is already pointed. The individual projects himself in the direction of a "larger society":

> one appeals to others on the assumption that there is a group of organized others that answer to one's own appeal—even if the appeal be made to posterity. In that case there is the attitude of the "I" as over against the "me."[56]

We are already familiar with the appeal to posterity from Rousseau, who regards the process in which he reaches self-understanding as being subjected to similar conditions of communication, conditions for a universal discourse that is coun-

terfactually directed into the future. In modern societies it is ever more common for moral decisions to overtax a merely conventional moral consciousness; these decisions must now also be made under the conditions of a universal discourse. The transition to a postconventional morality becomes unavoidable. Mead interprets it thus:

> In logical terms there is established a universe of discourse which transcends the specific order [and] within which the members of the community may, in a specific conflict, place themselves outside of the community order as it exists, and agree upon changed habits of action and a restatement of values.[57]

The formation of moral judgments (like reaching ethical self-understanding) is referred to a forum of reason that simultaneously *socializes* and *temporalizes* practical reason. Rousseau's universalized public and Kant's intelligible world are rendered socially concrete and temporally dynamic by Mead; in this way, the anticipation of an idealized form of communication is supposed to preserve a moment of unconditionality for the discursive procedure of will formation.

The Peircean concept of a consensus achieved in an unlimited communication community, or an "ultimate opinion," returns in Mead. In practical discourse we erect

> an ideal world, not of substantive things but of proper method. Its claim is that all the conditions of conduct and all the values which are involved in the conflict must be taken into account in abstraction from the fixed forms of habits and goods which have clashed with each other.[58]

Social individualization means, for the individuals, that the self-determination and the self-realization that are expected of them presuppose a nonconventional sort of ego-identity. Even this identity formation can, however, only be *conceived* as socially constituted; it must therefore be stabilized in relationships of reciprocal recognition that are at least *anticipated.*

This is confirmed by those extreme cases in which the self of the practical relation-to-self, in grappling with its moral or ethical problems, is thrown back entirely upon itself: "A person may reach a point of going against the whole world about him. . . ."[59] But as a person he will not be able to sustain himself

as a solitary being *in vacuo,* even in this extreme isolation, "except as he constitutes himself [as] a member of this wider commonwealth of rational beings."[60] This wider commonwealth is not, however, an ideal in the Kantian sense, severed from the empirical world: "It is a *social* order, for its function is a common action on the basis of commonly recognized conditions of conduct and common ends."[61] Kant's Kingdom of Ends must be *supposed* here and now as a context of interaction and as a communication community in which everyone is capable of taking up the perspective of everyone else and is willing to do so. Whoever is thrown back entirely upon himself and wants to speak to himself with the voice of reason

> has to comprehend the voices of the past and of the future. That is the only way in which the self can get a voice which is more than the voice of the [presently existing] community. As a rule we assume that this general voice of the community is identical with the larger community of the past and the future. . . .[62]

Mead carries the approach of moral theory further than that of ethics. The latter would have to give the concept of self-realization a communication-theoretical formulation, similar to that given the concept of self-determination by moral theory. Progressive individuation is measured just as much against the *differentiation of unique identities* as it is against the *growth of personal autonomy.* In this respect, too, Mead insists upon the interlacing of individuation and socialization:

> The fact that all selves are constituted by . . . the social process, and are individual reflections of it . . . is not in the least incompatible with, or destructive of, the fact that every individual self has its own peculiar individuality . . . because each individual self within that process, while it reflects in its organized structure the behavior pattern of that process as a whole, does so from its own particular and unique standpoint within that process . . . (just as every monad in the Leibnizian universe mirrors that universe from a different point of view . . .).[63]

Here Mead repeats his earlier conclusion,

> that each individual . . . slices the events of the community life that are common to all from a different angle from that of any other individual. In Whitehead's phrase, each individual stratifies the com-

mon life in a different manner, and the life of the community is the sum of all these stratifications. . . .[64]

Both of these passages do a good job of presenting the intuition that Mead wants to express; but the ontologizing connections with Leibniz and Whitehead distort its adequate explication, toward which Mead's own thoughts are pointing.

Not only as an *autonomous* being but also as an *individuated* being, the self of the practical relation-to-self cannot reassure itself about itself through direct reflection but only via the perspective of others. In this case I have to rely not on others' *agreement* with my judgments and actions but on their *recognition* of my claim to uniqueness and irreplaceability. Since an ego-identity that no longer merely adheres to the "social type," that is, one that is postconventional, articulates itself in an unconditional claim to uniqueness and irreplaceability, a moment of idealization comes into play this time as well. But this moment of idealization no longer concerns only the circle of addressees, which virtually encompasses *everyone,* or the unlimited communication community; rather, it concerns the claim to individuality itself, which relates to the guarantee that I consciously give, in light of a considered individual life project, for the continuity of my life history. The idealizing supposition of a universalistic form of life, in which everyone can take up the perspective of everyone else and can count on reciprocal recognition by everybody, makes it possible for individuated beings to exist within a community—individualism as the flip-side of universalism. Taking up a relationship to a projected form of society is what first makes it possible for me to take my own life history seriously as a principle of individuation—to regard it *as if it were* the product of decisions for which I am responsible. The self-critical appropriation and reflexive continuation of my life history would have to remain a nonbinding or even an indeterminate idea as long as I could not encounter myself before the eyes of all, i.e., before the forum of an unlimited communication community. Here "myself" means: my existence as a whole—in the full concretion and breadth of the life contexts and formative processes that shape identity.

Here, too, the ego finds its way to itself only along a detour by way of others, by way of the counterfactually supposed universal discourse. Once again, the self of the practical relation-to-self can only assure itself of itself if it is able to return to itself from the perspective of others as their alter ego. But this time it does not return to itself as the alter ego of some other alter ego from among its own concrete group (as the "me"). It now comes upon itself as the alter ego of *all* others in every community—specifically, as a free will in moral self-reflection and as a fully individuated being in existential self-reflection. Thus, the relationship between the "I" and the "me" *remains* the key even for an analysis of the socially imputed postconventional ego-identity. But at this stage the relationship between the two is reversed.

Previously, the "me" was supposed to capture a spontaneously acting "I," which eludes direct seizure, in a nonobjectifying manner in mediated acts of self-knowledge or self-reassurance. Now, however, the anticipatory establishment of interactive relations to a circle of addressees is imputed to the "I" itself; for it is from their perspective that the "I" is able to return to itself and assure itself of itself as an autonomous will and an individuated being. The "me," which in a way follows the "I," is now no longer made possible through an *antecedent* interactive relationship. The "I" itself *projects* the context of interaction that first makes the reconstruction of a shattered conventional identity possible on a higher level. This reconstruction is made necessary by processes of societal differentiation. That is, the latter have set in motion a generalization of values and, especially in the system of rights, a universalization of norms, and these processes demand a specific kind of independent accomplishment from the the socialized individuals.[65] The onus of these decisions requires a nonconventional ego-identity. Although the latter can only be thought of as socially constituted, still a social formation corresponding to it in any way does not yet exist. This paradox is resolved in the temporal dimension.

Among the characteristic experiences of modernity are an acceleration of the historical process and a constant expansion of the future horizon, with the result that present situations

are ever more plainly interpreted in the light of pasts made present and, above all, future presents. One function of this transformed and reflexive consciousness of time is the imputation that present action will be placed under premises that anticipate future presents. This applies to systemic processes (such as long-term political commitments, debt-financing, etc.) as well as to simple interactions. The consciousness of crisis that is becoming more and more prevalent in modern societies is the underside of this now-endemic utopian current. Yet, this current also encompasses the mode of anticipation that is imputed to the free will in moral self-reflection and to the fully individuated being in existential self-reflection, a mode of anticipation that is now socially expected. A postconventional ego-identity can only stabilize itself in the anticipation of symmetrical relations of unforced reciprocal recognition. That may explain tendencies toward a certain existential burdening and moralizing of public issues or, more generally, the increasing normative congestion within the political culture of developed societies, which is so lamented in the neoconservative critique of the present.[66] Yet, it is also the source from which the radically democratic perspectives of Mead and Dewey derive their own internal consistency.[67]

IX

The projection of the unlimited communication community is backed up by the structure of language itself. Just as the "I" of the "I think" occupies a key role for the philosophy of the subject, so the first person singular also occupies a key role in the successor to this philosophy, communication theory. Admittedly, up till now linguistic analysis has busied itself above all with two grammatical roles of the personal pronoun "I" that only indirectly touch on our problem. One debate concerns "I" as a self-referential expression, with which the speaker numerically identifies himself before a hearer as a particular entity from among the set of all possible objects.[68] Another debate concerns the grammatical role of the first person in experiential sentences, in which this expression signals the privileged access of the speaker to his own subjective world. The issue

there is the epistemic self-relation in expressive speech acts.[69] In contrast, the self of the practical relation-to-self first comes under scrutiny when we investigate the grammatical role that the first person takes on as the subject expression in performative sentences. The "I" then stands for the actor of a speech act, who in a performative attitude enters into an interpersonal relationship (which is more specifically determined by the mode of communication) with a second person. In this respect, the personal pronoun in the first person neither fulfills the function of self-reference, which must however be presupposed as fulfilled, nor is it a matter of the mode-specific meaning of the 'self' in the presentation of self, to whom an audience attributes experiences that are unveiled before its eyes—since this concerns only one out of several classes of speech acts. The meaning of the "I" that is employed performatively is a function of *any* illocutionary act. Here the expression relates to the speaker at the moment at which he performs an illocutionary act and encounters a second person as his alter ego. In this attitude toward a second person, the speaker can relate to himself as a speaker *in actu* only by taking up the perspective of the other and becoming visible to himself as the alter ego of his opposite number, as the second person of a second person. The performative meaning of the "I" is thus Mead's "me," which must be capable of accompanying all my speech acts.

Mead always insisted that the relation to a second person is unavoidable—and to this extent fundamental—for every self-relation, including one that is epistemic. However, with the development of different modes of communication (which, like the illocutionary-propositional double structure of speech, Mead did not investigate),[70] the epistemic self-relation is restricted to the class of expressive speech acts, while a practical relation-to-self in a narrower sense differentiates itself from the latter. The meaning of the subject expression of performative sentences also specifies itself thereby, and indeed in the sense of the "me" that Mead conceived social-psychologically as the 'identity' of a person capable of speaking and acting.[71]

The self of the practical relation-to-self reassures itself about itself through the recognition that its claims receive from an

alter ego. But these identity claims aiming at intersubjective recognition must not be confused with the validity claims that the actor raises with his speech acts. For the "no" with which the addressee rejects a speech-act offer concerns the validity of a particular utterance, not the identity of the speaker. The speaker certainly could not count on the acceptance of his speech acts if he did not already *presuppose* that the addressee took him seriously as someone who could orient his action with validity claims. The one must have recognized the other as an accountable actor whenever he expects him to take a position with "yes" or "no" to his speech-act offers. In communicative action everyone thus recognizes in the other his own autonomy.

However, the performative use of the personal pronoun in the first person comprehends not only the self-interpretation of the speaker as a free will but also his self-understanding as an individual who distinguishes himself from all others. The performative meaning of the "I" also interprets the role of the speaker in relation to his own irreplaceable position in the weave of social relations.[72]

Normative contexts establish the set of all interpersonal relationships that are held to be legitimate in a given intersubjectively shared lifeworld. Whenever the speaker enters into an interpersonal relationship with a hearer, he also relates himself as an actor to a network of normative expectations. Nevertheless, as long as interactions are linguistically structured, filling social roles can never imply their mere reproduction. The interwoven perspectives of the first and the second person are indeed exchangeable, but the one participant can adopt the perspective of the other only *in the first person;* that is, never as a mere representative, but always *in propria persona.* Thus, the communicative actor is encouraged by the bare structure of linguistic intersubjectivity to remain *himself,* even in behavior conforming to norms. In action guided by norms, the initiative to realize oneself cannot in principle be taken away from any one—and no one can give up this initiative. For this reason, Mead never tires of emphasizing the moment of unpredictability and spontaneity in the *manner* in which the actor interactively plays his roles. The individuation effected by the linguistically mediated process of socialization is explained by

the linguistic medium itself. It belongs to the logic of the use of the personal pronouns, and especially to the perspective of a speaker who orients himself to a second person, that this speaker cannot *in actu* rid himself of his irreplaceability, cannot take refuge in the anonymity of a third person, but must lay claim to recognition as an individuated being.

These brief formal-pragmatic considerations confirm the result that Mead arrived at by another route and that is also in harmony with our recapitulation of the conceptual history. Among the universal and unavoidable presuppositions of action oriented to reaching understanding is the presupposition that the speaker qua actor lays claim to recognition both as an autonomous will and as an individuated being. And indeed the self, which is able to assure itself of itself through the recognition of this identity by others, shows up in language as the meaning of the performatively employed personal pronoun in the first person. To be sure, the extent to which this meaning, with its two aspects of self-determination and self-realization, either emerges articulated, remains implicit, or is even neutralized in any concrete case, depends upon the action situation and the further context. The universal pragmatic presuppositions of communicative action constitute semantic resources from which historical societies create and articulate, each in its own way, representations of mind and soul, concepts of the person and of action, consciousness of morality, and so on.

The actor's claim to recognition as an accountable subject receives *different* interpretations depending on whether the framework is provided by a conventional morality, by a religious ethic of conviction, by a principled morality that has become autonomous, or by a completely secularized procedural ethics. Like the concept of the autonomous will, that of an individual being can also be radicalized. We have seen that in our tradition it is only since the eighteenth century that the idea of a completely individuated being has shed the connotations associated with an interpretation of history in terms of religious salvation. But even at a level of social development in which most people generally dispose over a radicalized understanding of autonomy and of conscious life conduct, and in which they allow themselves to be guided by these intuitions

in communicative action, this self-understanding still varies according to the action situation and the action system. Wherever relations are more or less formalized, be it in markets, in the firm, or in dealings with administrative authorities, legal norms relieve one of responsibilities of a moral kind; at the same time, anonymous and stereotyped behavior patterns leave little room for individual characterizations. Exceptions, such as the conflict engendered by compulsory orders in cases of legally sanctioned human rights violations, confirm this rule. However, the reciprocally raised claims to recognition for one's own identity are not completely neutralized, even in rigorously formalized relationships, as long as recourse to legal norms is possible; the two moments are preserved (*aufgehoben*) in the concept of the legal person as the bearer of subjective rights.

In communicative action, the suppositions of self-determination and self-realization retain a rigorously intersubjective sense: whoever judges and acts morally must be capable of anticipating the agreement of an unlimited communication community, and whoever realizes himself in a responsibly accepted life history must be capable of anticipating recognition from this unlimited community. Accordingly, an identity that always remains mine, namely, my self-understanding as an autonomously acting and individuated being, can stabilize itself only if I find recognition as a person, and as this person. Under conditions of strategic action, the self of self-determination and of self-realization slips out of intersubjective relations. The strategic actor no longer draws from an intersubjectively shared lifeworld; having himself become worldless, as it were, he stands over and against the objective world and makes decisions solely according to standards of subjective preference. He does not rely therein upon recognition by others. Autonomy is then transformed into freedom of choice (*Willkürfreiheit*), and the individuation of the socialized subject is transformed into the isolation of a liberated subject who possesses himself.

Mead examined social individualization solely from the point of view of progressive individuation: modern societies burden the individual with decisions that require a postconventional ego-identity and thus also necessitate a radicalization of the

actor's practical self-understanding, which is always already implicitly presupposed in the use of language that is oriented toward reaching understanding. But reality looks different. By no means do processes of social individualization occur in a linear fashion. The complex processes appear with confusing, contradictory aspects. However, in order to distinguish *these* aspects appropriately, we must reinterpret the basic concepts of conventional sociology in light of the theory of communication that Mead developed, from the outset, in a different methodological attitude.[73]

X

In sociology it is customary to describe processes of societal modernization from two different angles: as the functional differentiation of the social system and as the detraditionalization of the lifeworld. The complementary differentiation of an economic system that is steered by labor, capital, and commodity markets and of a bureaucratic system of public administration that has a monopoly on force and is thus steered by power, serves as the great historical example of a line of development along which modern societies are gradually absorbed by their functionally specified subsystems. The dissolution of traditional lifeworlds, on the other hand, is reflected in the decomposition of religious worldviews, of stratified orders of domination, and of those institutions which, by combining various functions, continue to characterize the society as a whole.

From the point of view of the socialized individuals, both the loss of conventional supports and the emancipation from quasi-natural dependencies are linked up with this. This dual significance is echoed, for example, in Marx when he ironically speaks of "free" wage labor. The status of productive wage labor is characteristically bound up with the *ambiguous* experience of being released (*Freisetzung*) from life conditions that are socially integrating but also marked by dependencies, that orient and protect yet restrict and oppress at the same time.[74] This multilayered complex of experiences forms the background for what the sociological classics have called social

individualization. They have emphasized the gains that correspond to the integrative losses, without having the concepts at hand that might have allowed them to free this intuition from the suspicion that it is an arbitrary evaluation of social facts. Now Mead, with his intersubjectivistically formulated concept of 'identity,' offers a means for drawing a finely tuned distinction between contrary aspects of social individualization.

It is possible to speak in a descriptive sense of the progressive individuation of socialized subjects, but only if this is not interpreted simply as being an expansion of the range of options for putative purposive-rational decisions. This kind of interpretation traces the individualization that is effected by societal modernization back to an exchange in which ligatures are traded against expanded opportunities for making choices.[75] Detraditionalization, which is experienced as ambiguous by those who are affected by it, can be described in this way only if the dissolution of traditional lifeworlds is treated exclusively as a function of societal differentiation. This picture suggests that the lifeworld should be viewed systems-theoretically as the substrate and form of a traditional society that is to be absorbed into functionally differentiated subsystems without, so to speak, any residue. The functional systems relegate the socialized individuals to their 'environments' and then lay claim only to functionally specific performances from them. From the point of view of subsystems that are steered by their own codes and are reflexively encapsulated within themselves, social individualization appears as the functional inclusion of personality systems that are at the same time left out, i.e., released and isolated.

What Parsons called 'inclusion' is explicated by Luhmann in the following way:

> The phenomenon designated as inclusion . . . first arises with the dissolution of the society of Old Europe, which was stratified by estates. This society had assigned each person (more precisely, each family) to one and only one stratum. With the transition to a type of differentiation oriented primarily by functions, this order had to be given up. Its place is taken by access regulations. The human being lives as an individual outside of functional systems, but every individual must obtain access to every functional system. . . . Every functional system takes in the entire population, but only with the segments of its members' life conduct that are functionally relevant in a given case.[76]

Ullrich Beck has portrayed the same processes from the point of view of the affected individuals. These individuals are *excluded* by the reified subsystems, yet they are at the same time *integrated* into them in a functionally specific manner as laborers and consumers, as social-insurance contributors and as the insured, as voters, as school-age children, etc.

For the individuals, the detraditionalization of their lifeworld at first presents itself as a fatalistically experienced differentiation of diversified life situations and conflicting behavioral expectations, which burden them with new coordinative and integrative performances. In past generations birth, family, marital partner, career, and political position formed a constellation that was specific to one's social stratum and largely determined the pattern of one's biography; but now life situations and life plans that had been normatively bundled are becoming ever more splintered. The need for individually processed decisions grows with the expanded range of options. The individual's milieu no longer relieves him even of those decisions that have the greatest consequences for his biography: which school one attends, which career one chooses, which relationships one enters into, whether and when one marries, has children, joins a party, whether one changes one's spouse or one's career, adopts a new city or country, etc.:

> In the individualized society, the individual has to . . . learn to conceive of himself as a center of actions, as a planning bureau in relation to his life, his capabilities, his partnerships, etc. 'Society' has to be handled individually as a variable under conditions of the biography that is to be produced. . . . The societal determinants that intrude into one's own life have to be conceived in this way as 'environmental variables,' which . . . can be gotten around or suspended by means of 'imaginative measures.'[77]

The systems-theoretic mirror-image of inclusion is therefore the released and isolated individual, who finds himself in diversified roles confronting multiplying opportunities; of course, he must make the requisite decisions under system

conditions that are not under his control. As a member of organizations, as a participant in systems, the individual who is seized by inclusion is simply subjected to *another kind* of dependence. One who is integrated must orient himself toward steering media such as money and administrative power. These media exercise a behavioral control that, on the one hand, *individualizes* because it is tailored to choices of the individual that are steered by preferences; but on the other hand it also *standardizes* because it only allows options in prestructured dimensions (having or not having, commanding or obeying). Moreover, the very first decision entangles the individual in a network of further dependencies. But if the individual is turned more and more into a "reproduction unit of the social," his release and isolation must not be equated "with successful emancipation":

> The individuals who are released become dependent on the market, and dependent *thereby* on education, on consumption, on social-policy regulations and entitlements, on transportation planning, on consumer goods, on possibilities and fads in medical, psychological and pedagogical consultation and care.[78]

Progressive inclusion in increasing numbers of functional systems does not imply any increase in autonomy, but at most a transformation in the mode of social control:

> The place of traditional bonds and social forms (social class, nuclear family) is taken by secondary instances that mold the biography of the individual and, running contrary to the individual control which asserts itself as a form of consciousness, turn him into the plaything of fads, relations, conjunctures and markets.[79]

According to this reading, social individualization is bound up with the conversion of the social integration that had been carried out through values, norms, and understandings over to steering media such as money or power, which refer to the preferences of isolated actors who reach decisions rationally. Whoever conceives of the dissolution of traditional lifeworlds in this way, i.e., *only* as the flipside of the functionally specific inclusion of excluded individuals in subsystems that have become independent, must arrive at the conclusion that social individualization isolates or *singularizes* but does not *individuate*

in the emphatic sense. Beck definitely has a feel for the latter sense of individuation, which is not captured by the basic concepts of conventional sociology. Resigned, he observes: "With 'individualization' many associate individuation, which equals becoming a person, which equals uniqueness, which equals emancipation. That might be right. But so might the contrary."[80] Beck sees that detachment from ascribed social forms and the loss of traditional certainties, that is, release and disenchantment, can provide the impetus not only for the singularization of individuals who have been socialized elsewhere, but *also* for "a new kind of social integration."[81]

This new kind of social integration would have to be conceived as the individual's *own achievement.* As Mead has shown, however, a conventional identity formation does not suffice for this. Just as inadequate is an ego conceived as the center of a prudent, egocentric selection among systemically prestructured options. For this simultaneously released and isolated individual disposes over no criteria other than his own preferences for processing the growing number of decisions required from him, and these preferences are regulated by the quasi-natural imperative of self-maintenance. An ego-instance shorn of all normative dimensions and reduced to cognitive achievements of adaptation does indeed form a functional complement to the subsystems that are steered by media; but it cannot replace the individuals' own socially integrative accomplishments, which a rationalized lifeworld expects of them. Only a postconventional ego-identity could satisfy these demands. And such an ego-identity can only develop in the course of progressive individuation.

Beck himself illustrates the empirical content of this consideration in terms of the dynamic through which the labor market, via the mobilization of female labor power, influences the sphere of socialization in the nuclear family. He interprets the statistically verified trends (which vary in intensity according to social stratum) toward a reduction in marriages and births and toward an increase in divorces, one-person households, single parents, changes in partners, etc., as symptoms of the problems that result from the growing employment of women

and of the resolution of these problems in conformance with the demands of the labor market:

> With the decisive question of career mobility there are associated other decisive questions: timing, number and care of children; the abiding problem of everyday chores that are never to be equally divided; the 'onesidedness' of contraceptive methods; the nightmare question of terminating pregnancies; differences in type and frequency of sexuality; not to mention the sensitivity of an optics that senses sexism even in an advertisement for margarine.

Moreover, these themes of conflict have different weights in the unsynchronized life cycles of men and women. Beck offers a dramatic view:

> What here descends upon the family as the lifting of taboos and as new technical possibilities . . . takes the [personal] situations that were once unified in it and divides them up piece by piece: wife against husband, mother against child, child against father. The traditional unit breaks apart in the decisions that are demanded from it.[82]

Of course, this proposition leaves open whether the familial lifeworld is crumbling under the growing pressure of decisions or whether it will transform itself *as* a lifeworld. If one regards the detraditionalization process only from the perspective of the labor market and the occupational system, only as the flipside of 'inclusion,' then it is to be expected that the drifting apart of individualized life situations will inevitably result in the singularization of the released family members and in the transformation of socially integrated relationships into contractual connections. The legal institutionalization of marriage and of the family in terms of civil law is then transformed into a juridification of familial relationships that becomes transparent and is held perpetually present. The end point of this tendency would be the dissolution of the family altogether:

> The existential form of the single person is not a deviant case along the path to modernity. It is the prototype for the triumphant labor-market society. The negation of social bonds that asserts itself in the logic of the market even begins in its final stage of progress to dissolve the presuppositions for the enduring togetherness of two people.[83]

One senses that such a systems-theoretic description misstates things in a peculiar way—and yet does not misstate things

entirely. It is only in the pathological peripheral zones, however, that the states of affairs that it describes are not completely distorted. The irritation that it arouses is not of a moral nature; it has empirical grounds. The decision structure required by media-steered subsystems misses the mark when it encroaches on the private and public core domains of the lifeworld. The independent performances that are here demanded from the subjects consist of something *different* than rational choices steered by one's own preferences; what these subjects must perform is the kind of moral and existential self-reflection that is not possible without the one taking up the perspective of the other. Only thus can there emerge a new kind of social integration among individuals who are individualized and not merely manipulated. The participants must themselves generate their socially integrated forms of life by recognizing each other as autonomous subjects capable of action and, beyond this, as individuated beings who vouch for the continuity of the life histories for which they have taken responsibility.

Beck pursues the plausible hypothesis that

> the lifeworld norms, value orientations, and lifestyles that characterize people in developing industrial capitalism are, in terms of their genealogy, not so much the products of the formation of industrial classes, but are often the relics of precapitalistic and preindustrial traditions.[84]

From this point of view one can understand why the task of reconstructing premodern forms of social integration (which must be performed by the affected individuals themselves) is only coming upon us with full force today. Social individualization, which has long since been gotten underway by systems differentiation, is an objectively ambiguous phenomenon; a description is therefore needed that does not reduce it to only one of its aspects. Only to the extent that the lifeworld is *rationalized* can this process imply something other than the singularizing release of self-reflexively steered personality systems—namely, the *individuation* of socialized subjects. Mead exposed the intersubjective core of the ego. Using it, he can explain why a postconventional ego-identity does not develop

without at least the anticipation of transformed structures of communication; but once this becomes a part of social reality, it cannot leave the traditional forms of social integration untouched.

Notes

1. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society,* trans. George Simpson (Glencoe: Free Press, 1933), 405.

2. Talcott Parsons, "Religion in Postindustrial America," in *Action Theory and the Human Condition* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 321.

3. Arnold Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology,* trans. Patricia Lipscomb (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 166.

4. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 238ff.

5. E. Durkheim, *Division of Labor,* 403.

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 2 vols., trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1: 490. (German: *Theorie-Werkausgabe,* 20 vols. [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp] 14: 92f.)

7. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *Character and Social Structure* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1953), 100. [Translator's note: The interpolation is by Habermas, who also writes "autonomous actions" (*autonomen Handlungen*) in place of Gerth and Mills' "voluntary actions."]

8. A. Piper, "Individuum," in *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe,* 3 vols., ed. H. Krings, H. M. Baumgartner and C. Wild (Munich: Kösel-Verlag) 2: 728–737.

9. "Individuum," in *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie,* ed. J. Mittelstraß (Mannheim, Vienna & Zurich: Bibliographisches Institut) 2: 229ff.

10. The expression "*einzigartig*" ["unique" or "singular"—from '*einzig,*' which means 'sole' or 'only,' and '*Art,*' which means 'kind' or 'species.'—Trans.] itself attests to the tradition that differentiates genera in terms of species (*Arten*).

11. "Individuum, Individualität," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel & Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co., 1976), 300ff.

12. G. W. von Leibniz, *The Monadology,* trans. Robert Latta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898), §9, p. 222.

13. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics* 1: 61. (German: *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 13: 89.)

14. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* trans. Reginald Snell (New York: Ungar, 1965), eleventh letter, pp. 63–64.

15. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 351.

16. Dieter Henrich, *Fluchtlinien* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 20.

17. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Ethics,* trans. A. E. Kroeger (London: Kegan Paul, Tranch, Trübner & Co., 1907), 233–234. (German: *System der Sittenlehre,* in *Fichtes Werke,* ed. Fritz Medicus [Leipzig: Meiner] 2: 616.)

18. For what follows cf. ibid. 6ff. (German: 2: 395ff.)

19. Ibid., 231, translation altered. (German: 2: 614.)

20. Ibid., 232, translation altered. (German: 2: 614–615.)

21. Ibid., 232f. (German: 2: 615)

22. J. G. Fichte, *Science of Rights,* trans. A. E. Kroeger (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1869), 18. (German: *Grundlage des Naturrechts,* in *Fichtes Werke* 2: 12.)

23. Ibid., 17. (German: 2: 12.)

24. J. G. Fichte, *Science of Ethics,* 243–244, translation altered. (German: 2: 625–626.)

25. Michael Theunissen, *The Other,* trans. Christopher Macann (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 187ff.

26. Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über die Verschiedenheiten des menschlichen Sprachbaus (1827–1829)," in *Werke,* ed. Andreas Flintner and Klaus Giel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 3: 160–161.

27. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death,* trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13–21.

28. Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or,* 2 vols., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 2: 216.

29. Ibid. 2: 251.

30. Ibid. 2: 250–251.

31. For the following cf. Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics,* trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 142ff.

32. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Lettres à Malesherbes," in *Oeuvres Complètes,* Pleiade Edition (Geneva: Gallimard, 1959) 1: 1133. (German: "Vier Briefe," in *Schriften,* ed. J. Ritter, 1: 480.)

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid. (German: 1: 481.)

35. Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination,* trans. Paul Stern (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986).

36. George Herbert Mead, "Social Consciousness and the Consciousness of Meaning," in *Selected Writings,* ed. Andrew Reck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 123ff.; "What Social Objects Must Psychology Presuppose?," *Selected Writings,* 105ff.;

"The Mechanism of Social Consciousness," *Selected Writings,* 134ff.; "The Social Self," *Selected Writings,* 142ff.

37. G. H. Mead, "The Social Self," 142.

38. Cf. Hans Joas, *G. H. Mead, A Contemporary Re-examination of His Thought,* trans. Raymond Meyer (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986).

39. G. H. Mead, "The Social Self," 146.

40. Ibid.

41. Otherwise, one would not be able to take the reservation into account which Dieter Henrich presents in "Was ist Metaphysik—was Moderne?," in *Konzepte* (Frankfurt, 1987), 34ff.

42. G. H. Mead, "The Definition of the Psychical," in *Selected Writings,* 40. [The original, unabridged version of this article appears in *Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago,* first series, vol. III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903), 77ff.]

43. Ibid., 55.

44. G. H. Mead, "Social Consciousness and the Consciousness of Meaning," 131.

45. Mead refers to McDougall here: "Social Psychology as Counterpart to Physiological Psychology," in *Selected Writings,* 97–98.

46. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 174.

47. G. H. Mead, "The Social Self," 145.

48. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action,* 2 vols., trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987), 2: 15–21.

49. [Translator's note: Although the German terms "*Selbstbeziehung*" and "*Selbstverhältnis*" would usually be synonymous, in this essay Habermas uses them to distinguish between the two different ways in which the subject can take up a relation to itself—the first cognitive, the second practical. To mark this distinction in English, in this essay I have translated "*Selbstbeziehung*" with "self-relation" and "*Selbstverhältnis*" with "relation-to-self." Unfortunately, this translation does not preserve certain connotations of the German terms that are relevant to the distinction being drawn by Habermas. The reflexive verb "*sich beziehen,*" for example, also means "to refer," giving "*Selbstbeziehung*" the cognitive overtones of "self-reference." The reflexive verb "*sich verhalten,*" on the other hand, often means to "behave" or "conduct oneself," and this practical connotation still resonates in "*Selbstverhältnis.*"]

50. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society,* 173ff.

51. J. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* 2: 31–39.

52. G. H. Mead, "The Genesis of the Self and Social Control," in *Selected Writings,* 284.

53. Ibid., 285. [Translator's note: The German has "ego-identity" (*Ich-Identität*) in place of Mead's "self."]

54. Ibid., 288. [Translator's note: The German has "of our communication community" (*unserer Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*) in place of Mead's "of the universe of discourse."]

55. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society,* 221.

56. Ibid., 199.

57. G. H. Mead, "Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics," in *Selected Writings,* 404. [Translator's note: The German has "unbounded communication community" (*unbegrenzte Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*) in place of Mead's "universe of discourse."]

58. Ibid., 404–405.

59. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society,* 168.

60. G. H. Mead, "Philanthropy from the Point of View of Ethics," 405.

61. Ibid., 404. [Emphasis by Habermas.]

62. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society,* 168. [Interpolation by Habermas.]

63. Ibid., 201.

64. G. H. Mead, "The Genesis of the Self and Social Control," 276.

65. G. H. Mead, "Natural Rights and the Theory of the Political Institution," in *Selected Writings,* 150ff.

66. H. Brunkhorst, *Der Intellektuelle im Land der Mandarine* (Frankfurt, 1987).

67. G. H. Mead, *Gesammelte Aufsätze,* ed. Hans Joas (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980), vol. 2, part III. [Contains the following articles: "The Working Hypothesis in Social Reform," in *Selected Writings,* 3ff.; "Review of G. LeBon: 'The Psychology of Socialism'," *American Journal of Sociology,* 5 (1899): 404ff.; "Review of Jane Addams: 'The Newer Ideal of Peace'," *American Journal of Sociology,* 13 (1907): 121ff.; "The Social Settlement: Its Basis and Function," *The University Record* (Chicago), 12 (1908): 108ff.; "Review of B. M. Anderson: 'Social Value, A Study in Economic Theory'," *Psychological Bulletin,* 8 (1911): 432ff.; "Natural Rights and the Theory of the Political Institution," op. cit.; "The Psychological Bases of Internationalism," *Survey,* 33 (1913–14): 443–444; "Review of Thorstein Veblen: 'The Nature of Peace and the Terms of its Perpetuation'," *Journal of Political Economy,* 26 (1918): 752ff.; "Review of William A. White: 'Thoughts of a Psychiatrist on the War and After'" (unpublished in English); and "National-Mindedness and International-Mindedness," in *Selected Writings,* 355ff.]

68. P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959).

69. Ernst Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination.*

70. Jürgen Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society,* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 1–68.

71. [Translator's note: "Identity" (*Identität*) is the term used to render Mead's "self" throughout the German translation of *Mind, Self, and Society* (*Geist, Identität und Gesellschaft*).]

72. J. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* 2: 59–60.

73. The reconstructive analysis of language use can no more be undertaken from the perspective of the observer than can a transcendental-philosophical investigation of cognitive achievements. Just as the transcendental philosopher carries out his investigation in the attitude of a first person who relates himself to himself, so Mead carries out his linguistic pragmatics in the attitude of a participant in interaction who relates himself to himself from the perspective of a second person.

74. [Translator's note: *Freisetzen* means to emancipate, liberate, or set free—but also to "release" or to "lay off" a person from employment. "Release" best captures this ambiguity, which is central to Habermas's argument; I thus use this term to translate "*freisetzen*" and its derivatives in the remainder of this text.]

75. Claus Offe, "Die Utopie der Null-Option," in *Die Moderne*, ed. J. Berger, *Soziale Welt*, Sonderheft 4 (1986).

76. Niklas Luhmann, *Politische Theorie im Wohlfahrtsstaat* (Munich, 1981), 25–26.

77. Ullrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt, 1986), 216.

78. Ibid., 219.

79. Ibid., 211.

80. Ibid., 207.

81. Ibid., 206.

82. Ibid., 192.

83. Ibid., 200.

84. Ibid., 136.

8

Philosophy and Science as Literature?

I

Jurists like Savigny, historians like Burckhardt, psychologists like Freud, philosophers like Adorno, were also important writers. Every year a German literary academy gives a prize for scientific prose. Kant and Hegel could not have given suitable expression to their thoughts if they had not given a completely new form to the inherited language of their discipline. In philosophy and the human sciences, even more than in physics, the propositional content of statements cannot be separated from the rhetorical form of its presentation. And even in physics, theory (as Mary Hesse has shown) is not free of metaphors, which are necessary if new models, new ways of seeing things and new problematics are to be made plausible (with intuitive recourse to the preunderstanding established in ordinary language). No innovative break with tried-and-true cognitive forms and scientific habits is possible without linguistic innovation: this connection is hardly controversial.

Freud was *also* a great writer. When we say that, however, we do not mean that his scientific genius expresses itself in the creative power of his flawless prose. It was not his eminent literary ability that enabled him to discover a new continent but rather unbiased clinical vision, speculative power, sensitivity and fearlessness in dealing skeptically with himself, persistence, curiosity—that is to say, the virtues of the productive scientist. Nobody regards it as inappropriate to treat Freud's texts as

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