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**The Cultural Causes of Environmental
Problems:
a Wittgensteinian Approach to Social
Action**

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Abstract

This thesis develops a multidisciplinary grounded account of the cultural causes of environmental problems discussed as a question in philosophical and sociological theory of social action. The approach is articulated by an original reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

Part 1 of the thesis critically discusses a prominent view of the cultural causes found in environmentalism and environmental history with significant popular appeal. In this view, labelled the ideological approach, the human nature relationship is characterised essentially by our culture's alleged disrespectful, manipulative and materialistic attitude to nature that is said to have been internalised by the modern human being and to fundamentally drive our ecologically consequential activities. An alternative organisatory approach is suggested based on the view that due to division of labour of culturally and geographically dispersed masses, as well as the everyday character of activities in terms of which we collectively cause environmental problems in global industrial market society, no general ideological source of social action can plausibly be posited. An organisatory approach to the human environmental burden as a function of the collective performance by masses of a shared organisation of activity on a recursive, everyday basis is a more realistic account of the intensity of human environmental impact.

Part 2 argues that the ideological approach in environmentalism and beyond can be seen to imply a form of collectivism also found in many classics of Wittgensteinian philosophy and social theory, an important common denominator being their ontological focus on the mental source of social action in shared conceptual schemes, normative orientations and the like. By contrast, in the Wittgenstein reading developed in this thesis, his perspective was non-ontological, viewing social activity as developing processes not defined by their mental source in shared conceptions but by their organisation. Social life is viewed as being based on agreement in form of life, that is, in organisation of human activity.

The thesis is a rare and original attempt to make philosophy relevant in the discussion of a pressing contemporary problem that also advances Wittgenstein-scholarship to a novel area.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

(V. P. J. Arponen)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

... the mutual penetration of history and philosophy. It was a grandiose and somehow tragic enterprise ... to solve the conflict between the relative and the absolute ... to work uncompromisingly in two spheres at the same time, to consider the temporal and the eternal simultaneously, and to apportion to each its actual importance.
— Gerhard Masur on Wilhelm Dilthey¹

Human induced environmental change appears to be taking place on the planet on a scale and speed never seen before. For one, the planet seems to face global warming and climate change as, in 2007, eleven of the previous twelve years had been the warmest on record². A major cause of global warming are certain human activities, in particular the burning of fossil fuels that alter the composition of the earth's atmosphere ultimately leading to temperature changes in it. The effect of this kind of human activity since the 1750s is said to “greatly exceed” the effect of natural changes in natural processes³. In addition, and not wholly unrelated to climate change, the earth's biocapacity to sustain life is currently being overshoot by thirty percent⁴. This means that the earth's natural resources are used up faster than they are able to regenerate. In the last 35 years the global biodiversity has declined by nearly thirty percent⁵ meaning that due to

¹Masur 1952: 96.

²IPCC 2007: 103. The next update to this important report by the United Nation's *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* is due in 2014.

³IPCC 2007: 100.

⁴WWF 2008: 2.

⁵WWF 2008: 2.

human activities species and ecosystems are forever destroyed at a previously unseen pace. Some other problems accompanying these developments are the accumulation of waste in the air, water and soil, as well as deforestation and, now increasingly, water shortages⁶. Many other more local environmental problems from acid rain to loss of soil fertility are further examples of human induced rapid and disruptive changes in the environment.

In the face of the environmental predicament, natural sciences but also human sciences have turned their attention to various aspects of environmental problems. In addition to natural scientific knowledge of the causes of environmental problems, roughly the last sixty years have seen the emergence of human scientific interest in what in this thesis are referred to as *the cultural causes of environmental problems*. By this kind of causes are meant, roughly speaking, the social forms of the organisation of human life as well as certain specifically intellectual or ideological factors such as human conceptions of nature and our place in it as driving human action in the environment. This thesis provides an account of the cultural causes where ‘cultural’ is understood, not ideologically, but in the former sense as focusing on the forms of organisation of human action.

As will be illustrated in Chapter 2 by a review of two main orientations in contemporary environmental sociology, most would agree that the cultural causes of environmental problems must be intimately and essentially related to the burden placed upon the environment by *global industrial market society*. Natural scientific knowledge of environmental problems indeed strongly implicates human activity associated with global industrial market society, such as the industrial-scale production of food and goods with associated resource depletion and waste generation, in human induced environmental change. In a crucial way, then, the cultural causes of environmental problems have to do with our collective ‘performance’, to use sociological jargon, of global industrial market society.

The central claim discussed in this thesis is that there is a significant tendency in human sciences —as well as in popular culture more broadly, it appears— to conceive the cultural causes of environmental problems *ideologically*. That is to say, as human beings are conceived of as *symbolic, cultural beings* —roughly, beings in possession of culturally mediated symbolic representations of the world around them according to which they direct their actions in it—, it has seemed in human sciences that the attempt to explain human and social action towards

⁶WWF 2008: 22.

the environment will centrally have to involve reference to how human beings conceptualise nature.

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, environmental history and environmentalism are significantly characterised by the so-called *ideological approach* to the cultural causes of environmental problems. As testified by a number of classics of environmental history, the typical argument there is that the scientific revolution gave rise to a new human conception of the environment as a disenchanted, law-governed entity susceptible to human manipulation by knowledge of the system of nature. The scientific rationalistic picture of nature, furthermore, naturally joined forces with another ideology, that of a broadly utilitarian drive towards ever higher levels of human material well-being as the guiding value of our times, or so environmental historians often argue. Human exploitation of the natural environment signals lack of respect and is often undertaken with misplaced technocratic confidence in science and technology to control risk, the argument goes. Similar views are echoed in environmentalism and beyond evident in the rise of anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation activism in the past decade. The statement of an environmentalist summarises the import of the ideological approach well: “[t]he environmental crisis is a spiritual crisis which can only be solved through a deep enquiry into who we are and what it means to be alive”⁷. Important here is that in the ideological approach the human relationship to nature appears as conceptual in character basing upon conceptions, motivations, values and the like—in short, ideology—that allegedly drive social action in nature and lie hence also at the root of our environmental problems.

Although my discussion of the cultural causes of environmental problems takes place in the context of modern society, I believe that the essential points have relevance also historically in understanding the human relationship to nature. I shall illustrate this in Chapter 3 by critically discussing the uses of ideology made in a number of classics of environmental history. I shall, among others, discuss at length Carolyn Merchant’s account of John Evelyn’s *Sylva* and contrast her account with mine based on original historical research.

In Chapter 4 I shall then provide the present positive account of the cultural causes of environmental problems. I shall argue that, firstly, the performance does not have a general shared ideological source, for it is characterised by extensive global *division of labour of geographically and culturally dispersed peoples* from,

⁷Spowers 2002: 9.

say, a designer in Sweden and the manual labourer in Bangladesh to the consumer in Japan⁸. Secondly, the performance consists of an immense variety of essentially *very mundane*, daily recursive and broadly speaking productive and consumptive activities and as such cannot be said to have a shared, general ideological source. I contrast the view of this thesis with the ideological approach arguing that the latter implements a questionable picture of our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems. It is a picture that *over-intellectualises* and intellectually *homogenises* our collective performance of the social and its problems by seeking to account for our everyday activities in terms of an underlying shared ideology.

Moreover, the picture offered by the ideological approach is, in my view, not conducive to comprehending in a deep way our problematic present situation with regard to environmental problems. It is not the uprooting of an ideology, but the finding of an alternative more ecologically tenable form of the socio-economic *organisation* of everyday life that is the most pressing challenge posed by human induced environmental change, or so this thesis argues. When for instance in environmental history one of the central focuses has been on the historical developments in human ideas about nature, I argue that the emphasis should really be in the socio-economic organisation of human life in particular ways, in particular that everyday human life is organised in a particular form on an enduring, repetitive and mundane basis. It is in this way that the human environmental disruption is instituted *on an enduring and larger scale basis*, namely, by some socio-economic form becoming the norm of organisation of human life steering *the masses* to its continual performance and reproduction. The human disruption of the environment is so disastrously effective precisely because of the large population scale and repetitive nature of the everyday human engagement with nature, an observation essential to any account of the cultural causes of environmental problems.

The points I make about our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems are not novel as such, but their full ramifications have rarely been noticed. I believe that the way this thesis identifies the ideological approach, and critically discusses it as underlying a dominant view of the human relationship to nature and beyond is challenging, stimulating and novel. Furthermore, a critique of the ideological approach bears upon, not only a

⁸Rivoli 2009.

view of our nature relationship found in environmental history and environmentalism more broadly, but also some of our favourite conceptions of the character of ourselves, our culture and age.

Thus, as I conducted the research for this thesis, it began to seem to me that there are certain tendencies at work across human sciences that appear to steer thought towards an ideological approach to human and social action, and hence also towards an ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems. To illustrate this, in a distinctly more theoretical discussion commencing in Part 2, I shall identify the theoretical bearings of the ideological approach in social theory and philosophy of social action embodied in the so-called *paradigm from sharing*. This is often coupled with what I call the view of *the essentiality of the mind to human action*. That I in this way expand the discussion to social theory illustrates a key characteristic of the present thesis: it aims to provide a broad ranging, interdisciplinary analysis of the cultural causes of environmental problems exploring its dimensions sociologically, historically and philosophically. Consequently, the thesis has a related double-character signalled in the structural division in Parts 1 and 2: it is at once a take on the cultural causes of environmental problems (Part 1) and an effort to sketch a matching theoretical approach to social or collective action, or performativity (Part 2).

I begin Part 2 with arguing in some detail that a lot of theoretical literature out there seems to align much more readily with the ideological approach than the present view, so much so that I began to think that in many ways the ideological approach really articulates a central human scientific *paradigm* about human action, the paradigm from sharing. At its clearest this is visible in the paradigmatic social theoretical claim that one way or another social action can only spring from *shared mentalities*, that is shared and internalised values and norms (Parsons), ethos or spirit (Weber), mutual knowledge (Giddens), normatively sanctioned shared conceptualisations (Bloor and the Strong Programme), shared forms of intentionality (Searle), or other such broadly speaking *ideological* factors. In Part 2, after a general description of what I call the paradigm from sharing and a brief overview of the present *organisatory* alternative based on Wittgenstein's later philosophy in Chapter 5, in Chapter 6 I provide considerations to erode the intuitive appeal of the paradigm from sharing and the ideological approach more generally.

In Chapter 7 I then introduce and employ certain ideas from the later phi-

losophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein to articulate the present theoretical position, although some rereading of Wittgenstein will be necessary as in my view many social theoretical and philosophical readings of him too readily lend to the ideological approach. On a number of occasions in Part 2 I shall return to the contrast between the present and past uses of Wittgenstein in social theory, the present reading of him, and in particular the way it is applied in social theory, being in my view one of the most novel aspects of this thesis. In Chapter 7 I also relate in detail the Wittgensteinian organisatory approach I have just developed to the argument of Part 1 about the cultural causes of environmental problems. In the remaining chapters I focus on further elucidating the nature of the Wittgensteinian organisatory approach in relation to selected philosophical and social theoretical literature. First in Chapter 8, I discuss the issue of the social nature of normativity and meaning as the main aspects in terms of which the later Wittgenstein would actually appear to be offering an ideological and not, as I claim, an organisatory approach. Then, in Chapter 9, I shall relate the present organisatory approach to a number of interesting social theoretical perspectives, the most central author here perhaps being Karl Marx to whom a notable body of Wittgensteinian literature has already sought a connection. I believe the organisatory reading of Wittgenstein can offer a fresh perspective to the similarities in the views of the two thinkers.

In general, the present Wittgensteinian *organisatory* approach, as I name it, is based on the idea that our collective performance of social systems and processes does not draw from a shared ideology —this over-intellectualises and intellectually homogenises our collective performance— but is essentially characterised by us viewing social reality from different perspectives, with differing interests and knowledge of the social. These differences are a function of *division of labour* that characterises our collective performance of the social. More, we perform the social by repetitive and mundane, complementary activities in a shared *organisation* characterised by division of labour. In the performance, our epistemic attitudes to the social processes within which we operate, and which we collectively perform, concern the mundane tasks at hand, and hence our relationship to most aspects of the *total* social process is *non-epistemic*. I argue that in Wittgenstein these ideas find their expression in the phrases ‘agreement in form of life’ and ‘blind rule-following’ which Wittgenstein characterised *non-ontologically*, that is, not by whatever mental ontological *source* human and social action may have, but by de-

scribing the systems of organisation of human life (form of life, language-game) as *developmental* processes. The Wittgensteinian methodology I develop can thus be seen to mirror the organisatory view articulated in Part 1 of our collective performance of global industrial market society as the root of the cultural causes of environmental problems.

In closing, I would like to stress again that against what is perhaps the prevailing tendency in academia for research to have an ever more narrow and specialised focus, the present thesis approaches the issue at hand with an intentionally broad interdisciplinary sweep. The thesis is an attempt to relate philosophical and sociological theory of social or collective action, or performativity, with the topical issue of our collective causing of environmental problems. As such the project represents a rare and highly important intellectual effort of relating what can be narrow scholarly issues to a pressing contemporary problem. I believe that posing the question from the cultural causes of environmental problems as a challenge to a theory of performativity is a novel and stimulating way to create discussion in philosophy and social theory about environmental problems. Casting the cultural causes of environmental problems as an issue to a theory of performativity represents an exiting but rarely if at all taken opportunity for philosophy and social theory to contribute to the discourse about a central contemporary problem.

Part 1

Chapter 2

Ecological Modernisation of the Treadmill of Production

All of us in the environment movement, in other words —whether we propose accommodation, radical downsizing or collapse— are lost. None of us yet has a convincing account of how humanity can get out of this mess. None of our chosen solutions break the atomising, planet-wrecking project. I hope that by laying out the problem I can encourage us to address it more logically, to abandon magical thinking and to recognise the contradictions we confront. But even that could be a tall order.

— George Monbiot, 2011¹

By way of a review of two broad types of orientation found in environmental sociology to global industrial market society and its environmental problems, this chapter frames the terms of the problem from the cultural causes of environmental problems. Environmental problems are shown to be essentially a by-product of the industrial-scale production of the human material well-being in global industrial market society.

The Social Nature of Environmental Problems

Most would agree that there is a close connection between environmental problems and global industrial market society. First, natural scientific knowledge

¹Monbiot 2011c.

of the physical causes of environmental problems implicates the functioning of industrial market society as the underlying system within which environmental problems arise. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identified the burning of fossil fuels as the central factor behind human induced climate change. Fuels of course are burned to provide energy for industry, transportation and domestic uses, all key general processes in global industrial market society.² Again, drawing from a wealth of natural scientific research, The WWF (The World Wildlife Fund, also known as the World Wide Fund for Nature) relates human environmental disruption to the size of the human population and “the resource and waste intensity” at which it produces the goods and services that it consumes³. These goods and services are produced, distributed, consumed and disposed of —albeit characterised by great inequalities⁴— within the system of global industrial market society.

Second, environmental problems are not only caused but also conceptualised and addressed in the frame of global industrial market society. Revealing here is the aforementioned report by the WWF on the ecological condition of the planet that also contains recommendations how to address environmental problems. We shall discuss this report in a moment. In a nutshell, commentators embedded in global industrial market society, such as the WWF, quite understandably tend to conceive environmental issues as problems because they constitute a threat to the smooth running of the global economic system and thereby to the social organisation of human life. Although the argument of this thesis does not depend on the truth of this claim, despite the view of an environmentalist that an “Environmental Revolution has become essential for our own survival”⁵, it is questionable that environmental issues would *at present* constitute a direct threat to the existence of (human) life on earth. The fear is rather the domino effect of environmental changes putting pressure on how the human being produces the material basis of her existence and this in turn putting pressure on the political and other institutions. Disruption of the organisation of human life can lead to disturbances and conflict in societies and between societies. An environmental problem can ultimately be, and essentially is, a social problem, as anthropocentric as this characterisation may be. This is not to say that the environmental concern would not

²IPCC 2007. An update to the report is due in 2014.

³WWF 2008: 22-3.

⁴Held & Kaya 2007.

⁵Spowers 2002: 7.

also involve genuine concern for the preservation of the environment as such, as politicians and other environmental commentators often carefully remember to add. However, arguably the most political and other resources are moved by the concern to pre-empt the potential social disruption that environmental problems may cause to human life.

These points come out nicely in the WWF's periodically updated *Living Planet Report* containing a natural scientific analysis of the nature of environmental problems as well as political and other practical proposals how they could be combated.⁶ The WWF report is an interesting representative of the wider current of environmental concern in the Western world because of both the roots of the organisation in charity-based environmentalism and its recognised expert role as an adviser to governments and business.

One of the main messages of the report is that the world's natural resources are being used up at a faster pace than they renew: by 2006 the so-called human *Ecological Footprint* exceeded the earth's biocapacity by 25 percent⁷. The report also draws attention to the "rapid and continuing loss of biodiversity", the world having allegedly faced the extinction of about a third of its vertebrate species since the 1970s⁸. The report points out the need to cut carbon emissions (accounting for 48 percent of the Ecological Footprint), and in general, to cut over-consumption and waste generation, pointing out that otherwise we will face continual loss of biodiversity, habitat destruction and degeneration that will eventually amount to a severe threat to human well-being.

Now, many of the solutions identified in the report involve making changes in the social organisation of human life. Change is sought, for instance, by means of urban and family planning as well as by development of new business models and financial markets conducive to more environmentally conscious decision making⁹. The significant players are identified to be politicians, engineers and scientists, businesses and industry. Engineers and scientists are to develop environmentally friendly technologies and know-how, together with politicians who are to create favourable political conditions making the former kinds of innovations possible.

⁶In this section I will mainly make reference to the 2006 edition of the report (WWF 2006). At the time of writing this, two later reports have become available, the 2008 and 2010 versions that however contain essentially the same basic points. Some ecological condition indicators have been revised, usually to a more worrying direction.

⁷WWF 2006: 3.

⁸WWF 2006: 4-5.

⁹WWF 2006: 22-3.

Yet, while the WWF implicates politics, business and science and technology as the key players in countering human environmental disruption, it also, although rather implicitly, draws attention to us and our consumer decisions as performers of global industrial market society, for this kind of society affords great numbers of us the comfortable material existence that we lead.

In the background, receiving various degrees of emphasis and articulation in the report, looms the concern for a number of aspects of human well-being —as well as the concern for biodiversity and preservation of the natural environment. The report is thus not wholly anthropocentric in its point of view, yet it is clear that human well-being takes priority which is reflected in the space given to the issue over the preservation of biodiversity.

Thus, the report draws attention to the issue of sustaining the global human population on a sufficient level of material well-being. The objective here is identified by the report as that of needing “to find ways for the average person to live well on less than half the current global average footprint”¹⁰. One aspect of the human well-being is thus the concern for a basic material well-being, improvement of which is a particular issue for the world’s poor and recognised by the report. For another aspect, consider this passage from the WWF report:

Cities, nations, and regions might consider how economic competitiveness will be impacted if economic activity is hampered by infrastructure that cannot operate without large resource demands.¹¹

[Protective measures] must be considered in concert with the economic costs and potential social disruptions associated with [the measures taken].¹²

The passage speaks of economic costs and decline in economic competitiveness potentially resulting from environmental protection. While the connection is not made explicit, it is clear that social disruption can result from decline in human socio-economic well-being, meaning roughly speaking, for instance, problems with access to sources of livelihood, such as availability of employment. Transformation towards a less ecologically disruptive society is likely to come with associated socio-economic costs between which a balance needs to be struck in order to preserve societal stability, the report argues.

¹⁰WWF 2006: 28.

¹¹WWF 2006: 28.

¹²WWF 2006: 5.

The foregoing illustrates well that it is within the structures and processes of global industrial market society that environmental problems appear, in terms of which they are conceptualised as problems, and by the means of which they can be addressed. We may say that the WWF report is written under particular socio-political conditions prevailing in global industrial market society. This is reflected in the fact that such a report is naturally addressed to those who are the key players in making the requisite changes in the social organisation of human life, that is, science and technology, politicians and business leaders. On the other hand, the changes made in the socio-economic organisation have to be such that the stability of the system prevails and therefore that social stability is preserved, or so the report argues.

Ecological Modernisation of the Treadmill of Production

The WWF report is a straight-talking analysis of the environmental burden of global industrial market society and how environmental problems can be addressed *within that frame*. In environmental sociology, two broad orientations can be distinguished, one rather closely paralleling the approach of the WWF, and another essentially more critical in approach. These are the so-called *Ecological Modernisation Theory* as found in the work of the Dutch sociologist Arthur Mol and the so-called *Treadmill of Production Theory* as developed by the pioneering American environmental sociologist Allan Schnaiberg. It will be useful to briefly review these views here as they on their part expose the role of global industrial market society as the context of discourse about environmental problems.

The Ecological Modernisation Theory is characterised by Mol as follows:

The basic premise of ecological modernization theory is the centripetal movement of ecological interests, ideas and considerations in social practices and institutional developments. This results in ecology-inspired and environment-induced processes of transformation and reform going on in the core practices and central institutions of modern society.¹³

Thus, basically, Mol's is the optimist view that environmental concerns can make, and are as a matter of fact making, a difference in how global industrial market society organises itself. Mol observes a "growing autonomy of an

¹³Mol 2002: 93.

ecological perspective and rationality” and that “[i]n the economic domain, ecological rationality has started to challenge the dominant economic rationality”¹⁴. Most importantly, Mol argues, these changes are institutional and have a semi-permanent character: “[a]lthough the process of ecology-induced transformation should not be interpreted as linear and irreversible ... these changes have some permanency and would be difficult to reverse”¹⁵, Mol writes.

The approach championed by Mol can be contrasted with the Treadmill of Production approach developed by Allan Schnaiberg. Schnaiberg’s influential and pioneering work in environmental sociology from the 1980s builds around the notion of conflict between human society as an economic complex and the environment as a biological complex. Basically, in an effort to sustain itself, the human being withdraws more resources and adds more pollution to the environment than it is capable of sustaining¹⁶. In industrial market society these withdrawals and additions are conducted in the frame of national and global economy. As Schnaiberg sees it there is an economy versus ecology conflict. Impact of this ranges in severity depending on the volume of the additions and withdrawals, degree of their permanence, their centrality to the functioning of an ecosystem and the range of ecosystems impacted¹⁷.

Historically, human environmental impact tends to increase with the increase of productive capacity despite the alleged ‘eco-friendliness’ of ‘the latest technology’, or so Schnaiberg claims:

[w]hile some have argued that modern production technology has become more materially efficient per unit production ..., even these gains have been offset by increased volumes of production and increased by-products of such new technologies.¹⁸

Schnaiberg repeatedly draws attention to examples where environmentally protective action has perhaps addressed the problem at hand but also created environmental or other problems elsewhere. Schnaiberg’s view is thus rather pessimistic as compared to Mol’s.

Schnaiberg’s pessimistic line of argument has been pursued more recently, more aggressively and in an unusually frank manner by the environmental sociol-

¹⁴Mol 2002: 94.

¹⁵Mol 2002: 94.

¹⁶Schnaiberg 1980: 23.

¹⁷Schnaiberg 1980: 27.

¹⁸Schnaiberg 1980: 28. More recently, John Bellamy Foster (2002: 22) has advanced similar views.

ogists Ingolfur Blühdorn and Ian Welsh. Here in a powerful passage worth quoting in full they articulate what they see as the the core problematic in environmental problems:

As the reassuring belief in the compatibility and interdependence of democratic consumer capitalism and ecological sustainability has become hegemonic, different and perhaps counter-intuitive lines of enquiry are not particularly popular. They appear disturbing, even counter-productive. As faith in technological innovation, market instruments and managerial perfection is asserted as the most appropriate means for achieving sustainability, empirical experience reveals the limitations of such approaches. ... environmental sociology that opportunistically refrains from pursuing potentially inconvenient lines of enquiry and instead confines itself to serving and enabling the prevailing techno-economic hegemony fails in terms of both academic and eco-political integrity. For these reasons, a new sociological effort to grasp and address what we are calling the post-ecologist era and its politics of unsustainability is in fact imperative.¹⁹

They argue further that while “[a]n abundance of eco-political measures are being considered and implemented ... the key principles governing western practices of production, circulation, exchange and consumption remain immutable”. These “key principles of consumer capitalism” include the idea of “infinite economic growth and wealth accumulation, which ecologists have always branded as fundamentally unsustainable” but that still “remain fully in place”²⁰. Blühdorn and Welsh note that this is not because of a lack of time to make changes as analogous points were made already as early as in the 1980s, in the so-called Bruntland Report by the then brand new World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations chaired by the Norwegian politician Gro Harlem Brundtland²¹.

Blühdorn and Welsh argue that the critical issue is “the question of what is to be sustained and how”. They continue saying that if what is to be sustained “is first and foremost the established economic system, or cherished western practices of individualised, consumption-oriented identity formation, then this is a far cry from the demand to sustain planetary ecological integrity and the intrinsic value of nature”.²²

¹⁹Blühdorn & Welsh 2007: 186.

²⁰Blühdorn & Welsh 2007.

²¹Blühdorn & Welsh 2007: Footnote 1.

²²Blühdorn & Welsh 2007: 189.

Blühdorn and Welsh implicate some environmental sociologists themselves in making it seem like a fundamental socio-economic change is not required. In particular, they implicate the above considered Ecological Modernisation approach saying that “[t]he paradigm of ecological modernisation ... offered reassurance, disempowered radical ecologist movements and helped to pacify eco-political conflicts whilst bolstering the argument that radical system change is not actually required as environmental goals can be realised through the modification of existing structures”.²³ In a process known in the literature as the death of environmentalism²⁴, strands of sociology, but of environmentalism too, have allegedly gone with the prevailing economic realities and have thereby lost a crucial element of their identity, namely, that of aiming for long-term solutions to environmental problems, which Blühdorn and Welsh argue is simply not possible within global industrial market society.

We see then that the two approaches set out from rather different starting points in their analyses of the relationship of society to environment. In the words of Mol and Spaargaren, “the ecological modernization perspective analyzes how environmental interests and considerations are starting to make a difference with respect to the organization of our modern society” whereas the Treadmill of Production theories “focus on continuity in the way capitalist economies ... persist in setting the scene for failures in environmental reforms”²⁵. These characterisations imply a key difference in the premises of the investigation. The Ecological Modernisation theory appears, as it were, as a view from inside global industrial market society looking at how society could transform its practices such that it can continue to exist *as* global industrial market society. In a passage revealing the trade-off’s between different priorities Mol and Spaargaren write that “[i]n principle, ecological modernization theorists may very well come to the conclusion that green capitalism is possible from an environmental point of view but that the social consequences would be so dramatic that it is very unlikely and undesirable to move into this trajectory”²⁶.

The Treadmill of Production approach, by contrast, is less sympathetic to global industrial market society viewing it, as it were, from the outside. They argue for the importance of transforming global industrial market society in the

²³Blühdorn & Welsh 2007: 194

²⁴Shellenberger & Nordhaus 2004.

²⁵Mol & Spaargaren 2002: 36.

²⁶Mol & Spaargaren 2002: 41.

name of ecological concerns, if necessary beyond recognition. The Ecological Modernisation theorists, by contrast, envision a process of “transformation of core social institutions of modernity —be it not beyond recognition”²⁷, as Mol and Sonnenfeld put it. Tellingly, Mol and Spaargaren argue that the Treadmill of Production theories tend to produce meagre and utopian proposals as to how society should be ecologically transformed. This could be because in the Treadmill of Production approach the required transformation often appears as so comprehensive that it is hard to give exact guidelines how it could be achieved.

It is not of present interest to take sides in the disputes of these two camps. Rather, the above review illustrates the centrality of global industrial market society to discourse about environmental problems. Two dichotomies emerge in terms of which environmental discourse tends to orientate itself in the context of global industrial market society. First, there is the view from the institutions of politics, business, science and technology as the instruments by the means of which ecological change can be sought in society *versus* the view of these institutions, and the larger frame of socio-economic organisation of human life they imply, as central impediments to an effective ecological transformation of human life. There is, second, the emphasis on the dependence of human well-being on the orderly functioning of the system of global industrial market society *versus* the view from the need to overthrow the system and socio-economically re-organise human life.

Society, Environment and Ideology

In the epigraph to this chapter began, the British environmentalist George Monbiot writes about the challenge of addressing the “contradictions we confront”. These contradictions boil down to the problem that, social inequalities notwithstanding, in the current situation human well-being is intimately bound with the relative stability and continuity of an environmentally costly socio-economic form of organisation of human life, that is, global industrial market society. I believe most parties to the debate recognise this dilemma in one way or other, but there is still space to differ over whether a description of societal dynamics can tell the whole story.

The environmental sociological positions reviewed above do not centrally revolve around the issue of ideology, that is human perceptions and ideas about

²⁷Mol & Sonnenfeld 2000: 5.

nature that environmental history and environmentalism more broadly highlight as at the root of environmentally consequential forms of human conduct. In the passages quoted above Böhndorn and Welsh did speak of “faith in technological innovation, market instruments and managerial perfection” and “consumption-oriented identity formation”, all ideological themes we shall encounter again in Chapter 3 in the review of the ideological approach in environmental history and environmentalism. However, most central to the environmental sociologies discussed above seems to me to be that they view global industrial market society structurally or functionally as the context within which environmental problems occur and by the means of which they are addressed.

It may thus perhaps seem like in sociology it is more generally held that the question from the effect of human ideas about nature on ecologically consequential activities would not be the right one to ask. The view is reinforced by the observation made by the modern classic of environmental sociology Ulrich Beck from what he terms the “causal autonomy” of global industrial market economy. This denotes “the momentum of a social development founded on markets, technology, private ownership, capital investment, class contradictions, bureaucracy, and so forth” that “consists of human action, but becomes independent of the latter”, Beck argues. The realisation of causal autonomy is the “culmination of the idea with which sociology emerged from incipient nineteenth-century industrialism”, he continues. Everyone in sociology, says Beck, from Weber to Marx, Habermas, Adorno and Foucault “agree, on very different grounds and with contrary evaluations, that the developed industrial system must be seen as an inexorable social force, which has become independent”.²⁸ It would thus seem that sociologists had always thought that the causally autonomous system of global industrial market economy has no need for an explanation drawing from human ideas and ideologies.

However, as will be argued in Part 2, Chapter 5 in particular, in a range of important social theoretical works human sociality and social action are said to spring ultimately from shared *ideology*, a shared value or norm basis, world-view, ethos, mutual knowledge, conceptualisations, presuppositions or the like. These social theoretical views go together well with the environmental historical and environmentalist perception of the root of our environmental problems residing in a shared mentality characterised by profit orientation and an ethos of reliance

²⁸Beck 1995: 74.

on science and technology as engines of more human material well-being. In other words, although as far as I am aware the theoretical bearings of the ideological approach have not been systematically articulated, the environmental historical and environmentalist argument from the role of certain culturally acquired ideologies at the root of our ecologically consequential conduct can be seen to draw essentially, although implicitly, from some form of collectivist/constructivist social theory.

The social theoretical side of the present challenge to the ideological approach will be discussed in Part 2. In the remaining chapters of the present Part 1, I will provide a detailed critical discussion of the ideological approach in environmental history and environmentalism in the following Chapter 3 and thereafter, in Chapter 4, set out a different, a *materialistic or organisatory view*, of the cultural causes of environmental problems. The two orientations of environmental sociological discourse sketched in the present chapter can be used to articulate its core problematics. In my view, the virtue of the view of the Ecological Modernisation camp is the recognition of the deep dependence of human well-being—inherent inequalities notwithstanding—on the functioning of global industrial market society, something which I shall flesh out in more detail in Chapter 4. On the other hand, the Treadmill of Production camp's scepticism seems profound: the system may be beyond the possibility of an ecological repair, or at least the process of repair will see dramatic changes and possibly conflict take place in the organisation of human life. This puts us in the throes of a grave dilemma noted by Monbiot in the epigraph to this chapter: either we face what seems like an eventual environmental collapse or we attempt to repair the system which however seems essentially unrepairable without massive disruption to the organisation of human life and thereby to human well-being. At present, there does not seem to be a solution to this dilemma, nor real concerted global will to acknowledge and address it.

At any rate, the dilemma provides the background against which the present account of the cultural causes of environmental problems is put forward. First, I reject the ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems on the grounds that the system is essentially too complex, globally so, as well as performed recursively on mundane day to day basis by the mass of geographically and culturally dispersed peoples, to be reduced to any common ideological drivers. Thus, second, only an organisatory view can account for the disastrous efficiency

and persistence with which global industrial market society consumes the planet's resources transforming, polluting as well as destroying ecosystems and species. If the environmental problematicity of global industrial market society would derive from some common ideological drivers, we would at least have a distinct target for reforms. Unfortunately, these are not the drivers. The gravest challenge is to tell how, in a post-reform world, do we organise human life on this planet to provide for some kind of human material well-being for all without incurring significant environmental burden as well as how do we begin to move towards such a change.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed two major environmental sociological orientations to environmental problems and global industrial market society: the Ecological Modernisation and Treadmill of Production theories. The two orientations both allocate a central role to global industrial market society in human induced environmental change. Albeit coming from different directions, they both picture the effective causes and the solution to lie in society as a particular kind of a structure, system or organisation of human activity. In the following two chapters I shall argue that this invites an *organisatory* rather than *ideological* approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems. Before developing the organisatory approach in detail in Chapter 4, I shall first critically discuss the alternative, the ideological approach.

Chapter 3

A Deeper Spiritual Malaise

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply!
Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and
the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the
ground.”

— “the Dominion Mandate”, Genesis 1:28

Gesellschaft, an aggregate by convention and law of nature, is
to be understood as a multitude of natural and artificial
individuals, the wills, and spheres of whom are in many
relations with and to one another, and remain nevertheless
independent of one another and devoid of mutual
relationships. This gives us the general description of
“bourgeois society” or “exchange Gesellschaft”.

— Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*

In this chapter I take up a detailed critical discussion of the so-called ideological approach as found in many work of environmental history and environmentalism more broadly to the cultural causes of environmental problems. I shall highlight a number of forms that the ideological approach has taken in classic environmental history and critically explicate the picture of social action implied in the ideological approach.

Central Ideological Themes

The beginnings of environmental history have been traced at the turn of the 20th century and developments in disciplines such as archaeology, ecology and geography that stimulated thought about the environment, forces acting in it and their effect on human habitations¹. In the United States, the first historical works resembling what later came to be referred to as environmental history appeared in the early 20th century². In Europe, works with environmental historical character had also been produced already before the First World War, in particular in France by the so-called *Annales historians*, whose work was influential in emerging American environmental history³.

The emergence of environmental history as a discipline is intimately tied with the emergence of the broader environmentalist movement and environmentalist ideology in the second half of the 20th century. In the United States, “[t]he environmentalist movement of the 1960s and after”, writes the environmental historian Alfred W. Crosby, “was the engine that drove environmental history”⁴. According to Caroline Ford, in Europe too the emergence of environmental history took place “in the context of the rise of ecological issues in the 1970s and 1980s” associated “with the “green” political activism of those years”⁵. In the 1970s, environmental history took an important step towards institutionalisation with the founding of its first Society in the United States⁶.

Since its beginnings, the ideological approach has been a central part of environmental history and environmentalism. By the 1960s, among others in the works of Clarence Glacken⁷ and Lynn Townsend White Jr.⁸, environmental history had established a firm and paradigmatic interest in natural philosophical, religious and other *ideas* about nature and how these give rise to and legitimise certain forms of human conduct in the natural environment. Glacken’s book, for instance, is an impressive historical overview of natural philosophical ideas about nature. Townsend White identifies the Christian theological conception of nature as the root of the modern ecological crisis.

¹Crosby 1995: 1182-3.

²Crosby 1995: 1182.

³Crosby 1995: 1184.

⁴Crosby 1995: 1186.

⁵Ford 2007: 113.

⁶Ford 2007: 112.

⁷Glacken 1967.

⁸Townsend White Jr. 1967.

One commentator on the history of environmental history and environmentalism wrote that the writings of Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson⁹ and other pioneering American environmentalists expressed an essentially moral point viewing “things as diverse as vanishing wilderness and the alienation of modern society as symptoms of a deeper, spiritual malaise —our failure to live in right relationship with the world around us”¹⁰. It was and is a key strength of environmentalism that it puts forward a utopia about human harmony with nature serving thereby perhaps some fundamental human spiritual needs and offering a prized ideal to strive for.

In a later classic of environmental history from the 1980s, Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature*¹¹, one of the central themes is the emergence of the so-called *mechanical world-view* as characterising the human conception of nature with implications in human conduct in nature. A very similar view is expressed in the classic environmental historian Donald Worster’s discussion of the *imperial view of nature*¹². Central to these works is the idea that in order to understand human impact on the natural environment we must study the ideas that shape and drive human engagement with nature where these ideas are understood among others to be natural philosophical, religious, moral, aesthetic or other human conceptions about how the world is or should be.

In many ways this ideological approach continues to form a central aspect of the environmental historical methodology. Thus, Worster says that “[e]nvironmental historians have done some of their best work on this level of cultural analysis, studying the perceptions and values people have held about the nonhuman world”¹³. Also, another heavy-weight of environmental history J. Donald Hughes’ relatively recent book introducing environmental history identifies “the history of human thought about the environment and the ways in which patterns of human attitudes have motivated actions that affect the environment”¹⁴ as one of the three main themes of the discipline. Also indicative of the prominent role of the ideological approach in environmental history is the fact that despite the central role Worster attributes to ideologies some have seen “potentially excessive materialism” in Worster’s methodological views¹⁵.

⁹See Leopold 1949 and Carson 1962.

¹⁰Dunlap 2006: 325.

¹¹Merchant 1980.

¹²Worster 1994.

¹³Worster 1988: 302.

¹⁴Hughes 2006: 3 ff.

¹⁵Cronon 1990: 1124. Cronon’s discussion refers to Worster 1988.

I should note that there are in environmental history of course also works that do not attribute any overriding role to ideology. David Blackbourn, for instance, provides an excellent set of case studies of a number of early modern and modern German environmental engineering projects discussing the role of key individuals but also of wider societal developments in the background to these projects. Particularly admirable is that Blackbourn also highlights the perspective of the ordinary people who worked in these projects, colonised the engineered areas afterwards or acted in other mundane roles.¹⁶ The ideological approach does thus not constitute an all-dominating but still a very influential aspect of environmental history.

While some of the above mentioned classics of environmental history stem from decades ago, more contemporary examples can be found in modern environmentalist thought. Thus, recently, writing on the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil catastrophe and British Petroleum, the oil and gas company whose rig was involved in the disaster, Naomi Klein makes explicit reference to Merchant's *The Death of Nature* and follows her line of argument saying that the

crisis is about many things — corruption, deregulation, the addiction to fossil fuels. But underneath it all, it's about this: our culture's excruciatingly dangerous claim to have such complete understanding and command over nature that we can radically manipulate and re-engineer it with minimal risk to the natural systems that sustain us.¹⁷

Klein argues further that indigenous peoples have myths “about gods and spirits living in the natural world” and that “the practice serves a practical purpose”: these myths are “another way of expressing humility in the face of forces we do not fully comprehend”. Most importantly, such ideologies can allegedly have a significant effect on human conduct: “[w]hen something is sacred, it demands that we proceed with caution. Even awe.” By contrast for us in modern industrial market societies the ideology has changed, Klein argues: we do not respect the earth. The suggestion seems to be that environmental disasters are the result. The key ideological themes that Klein here highlights are thus the ideas of modern technocratic lack of respect of nature and misplaced confidence in science and technology to control risk.

That Klein explicitly draws from Merchant indicates the prominent role still played by her classic work in environmental history and environmentalism more

¹⁶Blackbourn 2007. Others include Sieferle 2001 and Brakensiek 1994, 1991.

¹⁷Klein 2010.

broadly. Also, as we shall see below not only are Donald Worster's views on the role of ideology in the human relationship to nature crucially similar to Merchant's, but Worster's take on methodology in environmental history from the late 1980s¹⁸ remains a leading discussion of the theme¹⁹.

There are, alongside Klein, other contemporary examples of the ideological approach in environmentalism. The American environmentalist Bill McKibben argued recently that Adam Smith's economics introduced the idea of "dogged pursuit of maximum economic production" on the core ideas of "individuals pursuing their own interests" and of "increasing efficiency ... [as] the key to increasing wealth". In McKibben's view, "Smith's ideas still dominate our politics, our outlook, even our personalities"²⁰. Similarly, the British environmental author and journalist Jeremy Seabrook argued that "[t]he morality of economic growth and expansion has invaded the psyche, the inner sites where people struggle with how to be a good person; and now reigns as the ultimate revelation of what it means to be human"²¹. The general ideological themes arising here are the materialistic and utilitarian value orientation allegedly typical to modernity and the claim that such values would be broadly internalised by the modern human being.

In David Orr we find a peculiar mixture of many of the previously mentioned themes. He spoke of 'biophobia' and gave the film maker Woody Allen as an example case: "Allen is known to take extraordinary precautions to limit bodily and mental contact with rural flora and fauna", Orr says²². Biophobia is "the culturally acquired urge to affiliate with technology, human artifacts, and solely with human interests regarding the natural world", Orr suggests, adding that biophobics also include those "who regard nature 'objectively' as nothing more than 'resource' to be used any way the favored among the present generation see fit"²³. Although not really by choice, more primitive societies of the past were biophilic respecting and living in harmony with nature, Orr argues. Their "ecologic innocence", Orr explains, was not really chosen but rather dictated by the circumstances, for they lacked the means to radically alter the natural world.

¹⁸Worster 1988.

¹⁹Methodological questions have not engaged environmental historians a great deal. In addition to Worster 1988, other works on methodology in environmental history that I know of include Hughes 2008, O'Connor 1997, Cronon 1990 and Merchant 1987.

²⁰McKibben 2007.

²¹Seabrook 2009.

²²Orr 2007: 131.

²³Orr 2007: 131.

The moderns, on the other hand, “must choose between biophobia and biophilia because science and technology have given us the power to destroy so completely as well as the knowledge to understand the consequences of doing so”²⁴. The fundamental issue is, Orr says, about “how we regard the natural world and our role in it”²⁵. Our manner of thinking “so thoroughly ingrained in us that we can scarcely conceive of any other manner of thinking”²⁶ is characterised by lack of respect towards nature. Reflecting the paradigmatic environmental historical story, according to Orr this transformation in thinking was brought about by the view, expressed among others by Descartes and Bacon, that the human being is capable of controlling nature by the exercise of reason and utilising it for human benefit. This way of thinking naturally joined forces with “the ideology of perpetual economic growth, now the central mission of governments everywhere”, Orr concludes²⁷.

Thus, historically and contemporarily, environmental history and environmentalism more broadly are characteristically ideological in approach. Let us now look at some of the above covered central themes in more detail.

World-views in Environmental History

The describing of a *world-view* as characterising the human relationship to nature is a major theme in environmental history as we have it for example in the works of Carolyn Merchant and Donald Worster. In *The Death of Nature*, Merchant spends a great deal of time providing an interesting and what seems like a comprehensive overview of various human ideologies about nature from magical to the emerging natural scientific views²⁸. One ideology discussed by Merchant is the so-called *organic world-view*, an ancient now almost extinct view of a symbiotic, non-manipulative existence of the human being on the earth. This world-view is essentially connected with the ancient imagery of ‘nature as a nurturing mother’²⁹, Merchant writes. For a contrasting world-view, Merchant reviews Francis Bacon’s aggressive rhetoric of ‘penetrating’ into the ‘womb of nature’ and extracting ‘her

²⁴Orr 2007: 133.

²⁵Orr 2007: 133.

²⁶Orr 2007: 133.

²⁷Orr 2007: 133.

²⁸Given this emphasis of the work on human ideas about nature, it is all the more puzzling why, in a paper some seven years later, Merchant articulated a very different methodology where ideas merely ‘legitimate’ actual human activities in nature (Merchant 1987). However, we shall not pursue this tension further here.

²⁹Merchant 1987: xx.

secrets'³⁰. Merchant goes on to argue that with Bacon and the beginnings of modern natural sciences emerged the so-called *mechanical world-view* bound for manipulating and taking advantage of nature for human utilitarian ends.

A very similar set of world-views is identified in Donald Worster's *Nature's Economy*³¹. This work too reviews the ideas of a number of central thinkers about the human relationship to nature in the West. Worster distinguishes between two world-views, one branded *arcadian* and the other *imperial*. The arcadian world-view emphasises human interdependence with the natural environment promoting equality of the species and preservation of nature's own dynamics. This is effectively Merchant's organic world-view.

The imperial view, in turn, is basically that which Merchant calls the mechanical world-view. The imperial view is characterised by the human desire for "the domination of the earth —often promoted in the name of a purely secular welfare" which is, Worster argues, "one of modern man's most important ends"³² —another sweeping ideological attribution that one often finds in environmental history but that is not argued for.

Following Townsend White, for Worster the roots of this kind of imperialism are in the Christian view of nature. "[O]f all the major religions of the world", Worster says of Christianity, "it has been the most insistently anti-natural"³³. There is, for instance, the Christian image of the human being as the Good Shepherd, "the defender of the flock *against* the hostile forces of nature"³⁴, Worster writes. Also, Worster adds, Christianity "severed man from nature emotionally" by the overthrow of pagan animism which, characteristic of the arcadian view, emphasised the human communion with "the inner, vital spirit of the natural world"³⁵. In addition, Christianity cast the world as having been divinely created out of chaos "by a rational mind and made to obey a strict set of laws"³⁶ contributing to the birth of the modern scientific world-view, Worster argues. And as in Merchant, the imperial view is to be found, among others, in Francis Bacon's ideas: "Bacon promised to the world a manmade paradise, to be rendered

³⁰Merchant 1987: 164 ff.

³¹Worster 1994.

³²Worster 1994: 29.

³³Worster 1994: 27.

³⁴Worster 1994: 26.

³⁵Worster 1994: 28-9.

³⁶Worster 1994: 29.

astonishingly fertile by science and human management”³⁷, Worster argues.

In the above overview we encounter a number of articulations of the nature of the said world-views. In *The Death of Nature* Merchant draws from mythologies and figures of speech (‘nurturing mother’) on the one hand, and natural philosophical texts such as those of Francis Bacon on the other, in mapping the changes in the human conception of nature. Elsewhere she justifies her approach saying that “[s]cientific, philosophical, and literary texts are sources of the ideas and images used by controlling elites, whereas rituals, festivals, songs, and myths provide clues to the consciousness of ordinary people”³⁸.

Worster in turn talks about the idea of interconnections in ecosystems as underlying the arcadian world-view, which would seem to be an essentially modern natural scientific conception articulated well after the thinkers in the connection of whom Worster uses these terms such as the early naturalist and priest Gilbert White (1720–1793)³⁹. Worster also talks about the role of Christianity as spreading anti-natural sentiments although the precise channel of influence from such ideas to people’s everyday conduct is not discussed by Worster.

Apart from passing mentions, I have not encountered rigorous discussions by environmental historians of the mechanisms in which ideologies influence actual human activities although this is in many ways a crucial step in the environmental historical argument⁴⁰. It seems fair to say that environmental history and environmentalism are marked by something like what James W. Sire called “worldview thinking” focused on the detection of “a set of basic concepts ... a fundamental orientation of the heart ... commitment to and understanding of the “really real” ... grasped as story, not just as abstract propositions”, as Sire characterises it⁴¹. In my view, the two also face a similar general problem. My general argument in this thesis builds upon the intuition that positing a close connection between world-views and *everyday* human activity is problematic, although I do not deny that world-view analyses can be made of philosophical and other such literatures. It is one thing to detect a world-view in a philosophical work but quite another to attribute a world-view to a mass of people as a significant determinant of their everyday activities. My view is that explaining human and

³⁷Worster 1994: 30.

³⁸Merchant 1987: 272.

³⁹Worster 1994: Chapter 1.

⁴⁰Barnabas Dickson (2000) makes the same observation. Dickson also attempts to reconstruct the philosophical position of some environmentalists based on the implicit clues they give.

⁴¹Sire 2004: 13.

social action by an ideology, world-view or some such set of ideas, conceptions or the like over-intellectualises and ideologically homogenises everyday human and social action.

In this thesis I support this view in a number of ways. In the sections below I shall provide examples of how environmental historians have overblown and thus failed to account for the link between a world-view and everyday conduct. In Chapter 4 I shall highlight the powerful role in human and social action of certain systemic or organisatory mechanisms of the social organisation of human life. Shortly, in a brief discussion of Max Weber's spirit of capitalism as a world-view, and more comprehensively in Part 2, I shall engage with a number of sociological and philosophical works critically discussing their uses of something like a world-view in explanation of human action, both individual and social.

The Ruling Values of Our Time

Above we identified two major ideological ingredients in the environmental historical analysis at the root of the modern human relationship to nature. These were the so-called mechanical and broadly utilitarian world-views. In this section I want to focus on the latter world-view characterised by Worster as the ethos for ever more material well-being. I shall ask the question, how much are the hardening, rationalisation and materialisation of values for example towards the environment part of 'the modern psyche'?

In a passage that we have already quoted Worster argues that for us "[t]he characteristics of the modern economic system are familiar to the point of becoming 'second nature' " and that "[w]e are well aware that ours is an intricate corporate society"⁴². I believe that here Worster radically over-intellectualises the mass of human beings as to our 'collective grasp' of the structures and processes shaping our societal existence. The same goes for Worster's claim that "efficiency and productivity as human goals" are "undoubtedly the ruling values of our time"⁴³. It is doubtful that these describe our values in any penetrative sense. Equally doubtful is it that "[w]ith few exceptions, anything that does not meet their test [of efficiency and productivity as human goals] or that challenges their supremacy has little chance of being taken seriously by the public or its lead-

⁴²Worster 1994: 293.

⁴³Worster 1994: 293.

ers”⁴⁴. It is important not to let Worster’s claims pass, for if they are accepted at their face value we are well on our way to a distorting ideological account of human action.

Environmental historians, to be sure, are not in that bad company with their ideological approach, in particular the claim from the utilitarian values as the ruling values of our times. I shall offer a lengthier quasi intellectual history of the ideological approach at the start of Part 2, but I note here the striking similarity of the utilitarian world-view with what Max Weber wrote in his classic study on the Spirit of Capitalism. In Weber’s words, a central feature of this spirit is that

Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs.⁴⁵

This impulse draws essentially, Weber writes, from “the idea of a calling and the devotion to labour in the calling ... one of the most characteristic elements of our capitalistic culture”⁴⁶. When we couple this idea of blind devotion to *mammon* with Weber’s claim that historically it was first necessary to overcome “inner resistance”, the power of tradition to stifle “the ability and disposition of men to adopt certain types of practical rational conduct”⁴⁷, we have two important ingredients of the environmentalist argument, modern materialism in its contrast with a softer mentality of the times long gone by.

Consider also a problem with Weber’s view. He observed that the core of Western capitalism resides in the development of “a very different form of capitalism which has appeared nowhere else: the rational capitalistic organization of (formally) free labour”⁴⁸. What Weber, however, went on to do next did not focus on the structural features of the capitalistic organisation of labour that for example Marx was very much interested in, namely the phenomena of wage labour and division of labour together with the effects of these organisatory features on the quality of human life. Instead, Weber put forward a questionable ideological argument based on the idea that capitalistic organisation of labour led to efficiency only coupled with the spirit of capitalism on part of the workers.

⁴⁴Worster 1994: 293.

⁴⁵Weber 1930: 53.

⁴⁶Weber 1930: 78.

⁴⁷Weber 1930: 26-7.

⁴⁸Weber 1930: 21.

Thus, in Weber's example, the tool of capitalistic organisation of labour that allowed the employer "to secure the greatest possible amount of work from his men is the device of piece rates"⁴⁹. Yet, claimed Weber, this was often thwarted by the "traditionalism" of the worker who often did "not 'by nature' wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to earn as much as is necessary for that purpose", Weber claimed⁵⁰. Another example Weber gives builds upon the claim that this "type of backward traditional form of labour is today very often exemplified by women workers, especially unmarried ones", who are "almost entirely unable and unwilling to give up methods of work inherited or once learned in favour of more efficient ones", he wrote⁵¹.

Now, the second of these arguments we would now declare immediately as prejudiced and sexist, but how about the first? Does it tap onto a key historical shift in mentality? I am not in the position to judge this—and who is? Who can claim, and on what evidence, that in the birth of the capitalistic order significant masses of people all went and adopted a different mentality? The structural features of the capitalistic organisation of labour are easy to observe but the same does not go for the alleged mentalities with which people operated in these systems. This is a major implausibility in Weber's ideological argument that we shall see below also bothers the arguments of two classic environmental historians (see the sections *Worster on Varmints* and *Cronon on Boosters* below), namely the sweeping claims made about shared mentalities on questionable grounds.

Before we consider the question of the ruling values of our times from another perspective, I want to point out that no utilitarian motive or creed towards more and more material well-being needs to be posited to explain the growth orientation, growth dependence, of modern society. Given the present form of the socio-economic organisation of human life in global industrial market economy, growth is simply a precondition of societal stability. As discussed above, Weber identified the spirit of capitalism, the alleged Protestant ethos for blind accumulation of wealth, as the key differentiator in the developmental paths of the Orient and the Occident, but it would seem to be a mistake to assume that such an ethos is still *today* needed to power the system. One reason for why the economy needs continuous growth even without an ideology of growth is that given the growth of population also the economy needs to grow to sustain the

⁴⁹Weber 1930: 59.

⁵⁰Weber 1930: 59-60.

⁵¹Weber 1930: 62.

standard of living of the expanding population for otherwise the added population would be unemployed. There is also the associated pressure upon politicians to keep the populace happy where continuous economic growth certainly helps as it often means more jobs, more tax revenue and thus the possibility of providing better services. Also, in a situation where no new investments were made in the national economy, there would be no new housing developments, no new roads built, no new cars built. There would still be the maintenance of existing goods and infrastructure to take care of, but this would still mean dramatic scaling back in the economic activity as we have it with associated unemployment and unhappiness. Thus even without the ideology of blind creed for more material well-being there is enough incentive for economic growth.⁵²

I note in passing that even if the spirit of capitalism was a significant driver of action, it is another question are such actions in the end *successful* in producing wealth, that is whether such an ideology has a practical effect. In fact, there is some evidence to the contrary. On the basis of a statistical analysis of the performance over eight years of a group of investment advisers in a firm, the psychologist and 2002 economics Nobel prize winner Daniel Kahneman concluded that there was no consistency to their performance. Whatever successes the advisers had had seemed in the light of relevant statistics to be down to pure luck. In the complex world of investment, even educated recommendations appear to produce no consistent results.⁵³

Let us now, however, return to the issue the ruling values of our times and whether a hardening of values has occurred. I cannot here seek to ground these claims empirically, but my experience is that by and large people still lead ‘morally healthy’ lives with friends and family, make commitments, have respect, recognise ends other than purely material ends, and so on. I simply do not see these relations having been watered down by utilitarian considerations or that they display ‘efficiency and productivity as human goals’. I cannot here attempt a systematic investigation of moral attitudes, and I am sceptical that opinion polls can shed essential light here. I shall instead draw attention to an argument made by a number of philosophers that turn the matters around in an interesting way: in modernity it is not people’s morality but the philosophers’ concept of morality that has suffered an inflation they argue. Some similar blindness to actual human

⁵²For a discussion of the mechanics of growth dependence, see Bellamy Foster & Magdoff 2011: 55 ff.

⁵³Kahneman 2011.

life seems to me to underlie Worster's views on the ruling values of our time.

In his *After Virtue*, the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre traces an historical developmental line in moral philosophy over the course of its history. MacIntyre observes that philosophers such as Immanuel Kant held a view that MacIntyre refers to as *rational ethics* according to which "reason instructs us both as to what our true end is and as to how to reach it"⁵⁴. However, already in David Hume a new mechanistic conception of reason is to be found, a conception according to which "reason is calculative; it can assess truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more"⁵⁵, MacIntyre writes. That is, in contrast to Kant, reason as conceived in Hume is able to assess the means but not the ends worth pursuing. To save the day, Hume posited the existence of *the sentiment of humanity* giving moral judgements an air of universality and of being directed towards something like universal human good. However, Hume's humanity is significantly weaker than the rationalist conception in which reason was taken to *dictate* the means *and* the ends. In Hume we have the beginnings of a historical shift in moral thought, MacIntyre argues. Later theories, such as one called emotivism espoused by the American philosopher Charles Stevenson (1908–1979), fashionable for a while in the first half of the 20th century, proposed that all moral judgements are mere expressions of emotive preferences. Quite fittingly, emotivism has sometimes been referred to as the boo-hurrah theory of morality.

Commenting on emotivism, the American philosopher Cora Diamond writes: "it is as if Stevenson were writing philosophy after having forgotten all he knew of what moral thought and moral discussion were like, as if he had lost the very notion of morality". Diamond continues saying of Stevenson that "it is not that he has lost it so much as that he cannot or will not acknowledge or recognize what he knows"⁵⁶. In other words, Diamond is saying that moral philosophers have in their professional lives become estranged from what they probably very well know in their private lives. The reason is certain philosophical preconceptions, arguably deriving from Hume's distinctions between values and facts and is and ought, that have seen philosophers forget what they in everyday life know about morality espousing instead an impoverished professional concept of morality.

Now, could it be that claims such as those by Donald Worster, or indeed

⁵⁴MacIntyre 1985: 53.

⁵⁵MacIntyre 1985: 54.

⁵⁶Diamond 1988: 255.

Max Weber, regarding efficiency and productivity as the ruling values of our time belong to the same category? Could it be that industrialisation, bureaucratisation and commercialisation of modern society have made us think that the mentality of the human being too has changed to reflect these societal structural changes?

This is what Worster but also certain classics of sociology seem to be telling us. The break-up of the old rural ways of life and the emergence of industrialism and urbanism with the associated socio-economic changes informed, and were indeed recorded in, the classic works such as Ferdinand Tönnies' *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* and Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society*⁵⁷. These early sociologists saw it that there were particular human attitudes and even parts of the human psychological machinery at work here: Durkheim spoke of *organic and mechanical solidarity* and Tönnies of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as well as particular forms of human will, *Wesenwille* and *Kürwille*.

For these authors European life was becoming more rational, spurred by various scientific and technological advances which was naturally reflected in their sociology. Strikingly, these developments in society were often conceived as having ideological roots: modern mentality is rational, scientific and capitalist as for instance in Max Weber's thesis from the spirit of capitalism. Durkheim and Tönnies worried about the divisive, alienating effect of intensifying division of labour upon social cohesion, shared values and perceptions. This worry was the context of Durkheim's ideas of organic and mechanical solidarity. As the society around them became more and more saturated with science, technology and bureaucracy, it was perhaps natural for sociologists to think that people's mentalities also gained a qualitatively new character.

The environmental historical argument from the mechanical, imperial world-view seems to be in agreement with the general tendency of the sociological tradition to conceive modernity ideologically. Commercialisation, bureaucratisation and industrialisation are of course undeniable structural changes that have taken place in many societies in the last couple of hundred years. I suggest, however, that the ways of thinking that these developments would seem to favour, namely certain rationalisation and associated hardening of values, do not necessarily have to be seen to reflect the attitudes of the mass of ordinary people.

In fact, it could be argued that in a significant sense people have responded to

⁵⁷Tönnies 1957; Durkheim 1984.

modern society, not by adopting a harder rationalist mentality, but by becoming in general confused in the changed circumstances. I cannot seek to ground this claim here at any length, but I shall briefly mention one example. Terms such as 'rootlessness' and 'alienation' or 'estrangement' are now commonly used notions describing the human experience of global industrial market society. Rootlessness describes the situation of individuals who for better job opportunities have relocated usually to urban centres with family, friends, acquaintances and a wider social network elsewhere. Alienation or estrangement describes the relocated individual's, but also of those left behind in the emptying country side, disintegration from social life due to the severing of social links and leaving behind of a significant part of one's social network.

I suggest that analogous to how the human being has had problems with adjusting to life in global industrial market society, so too by similar mechanisms she has drifted apart from nature. This drifting is not a result of hardening of values or anything like that, at least in the case of social estrangement the old values are indeed very much present. Rather, the setting in which people live their lives has changed and no longer allows the kind of social relationships and social life to which they were accustomed.

Similarly, in the process of human estrangement from nature we have drifted away from nature among others by relocating and now living life in an urban setting away from significant 'natural spots'. In such settings there is little opportunity and indeed social use for activities involving 'the great outdoors' or even superficial knowledge of plants and animals. In the predominantly human created environments in which we tend to spend our time we have no need for knowledge of nature but rather, we develop knowledge and skills pertaining to, for example, electric gadgetry. In a similar way people have become estranged to certain forms of physical exercise, not by developing a mentality against physical exercise, but by way of a change in our lives' activities from, say, chopping fire wood to sitting at the computer. For the mass the shift away from nature has not been triggered or sanctioned by a changed mentality or values but by the gradual shift in the activities of human everyday life.

We do not thus need to argue that global industrial market society's mores are our second nature, or that our values have hardened, to explain the changed relationship of the human being to nature. The shift has been much more subtle having to do with the gradual reorganisation of human life away from the natural

environment. Arguably, we could say that the process started with the human practice of agriculture, but certainly the emergence of global industrial market society with the implied large scale alteration of the environment, urbanisation and the changed character of typical human everyday activities greatly accelerated and widened the scope of the process.

Often it is of course the mentality, not of ordinary people, but that of crucial elites that has got the most serious stick in environmentalist argumentation. Here the ideological approach can be said to enjoy some significant popular appeal with corporate economically motivated ruthlessness, corruption, lobbying and the like often being in the focus of media and other attention⁵⁸. I do not wish to claim that in many cases elites and individuals could not be charged for moral and other types of failure here. Such ‘individualisation of responsibility’ as it is known in the literature, however, can also lead to demonisation of individuals as well as analytic failures such as when we, in the words of an environmental sociologist, “designate particular discrete actions as bad and/or irresponsible without addressing the pervasive and systemically embedded nature of the causes”⁵⁹. Arguably, as the American environmentalist John Bellamy Foster put it, “it is not people (as individuals and in aggregate) that are enemies of the environment but the historically specific economic and social order in which we live”⁶⁰. This is to say, as I shall argue in more detail in Chapter 4, the intensity of the human environmental burden is not the doing of elites and individuals, but of vast masses of people performing a ‘historically specific economic and social order’ on a recurring and everyday basis. There is, finally, also an air of the discredited History of Great Men approach to the idea of the individualisation of responsibility, an issue that I shall discuss more below in the context of Donald Worster’s use of crucial elites in an environmental historical case study of his.

Functional World-views

We have in this chapter reviewed a set of environmental-historical notions in terms of which the modern human relationship to nature is often articulated. Another image continuing to engage the environmentalist and environmental historical imagination is the idea of an organic, symbiotic existence of the human being

⁵⁸See e.g. Greenpeace 2011; Reay 2006.

⁵⁹Butler 2010: 188. For more on this debate, see e.g. Maniates 2002 and Kent 2009.

⁶⁰Bellamy Foster 2002: 49.

with nature. We saw Naomi Klein make the argument that modern society has effectively lost the kind of touch with nature that some more primitive societies still allegedly had. The view, as we saw, draws from the idea of the arcadian or organic world-view discussed by Merchant and Worster.

An ideal case of such organic adaptation seems to be discussed in the classic anthropological case study by Roy Rappaport titled *Pigs for the Ancestors*⁶¹, also highlighted as such by Worster⁶². In this study, Rappaport focused on a relatively small tribal community of 200 members in New Guinea and argued that their beliefs, rituals and practices formed a system of life particularly well adapted to the environment in which they lived.

Consider, however, a commentary given on this approach. The modern classic anthropologist Conrad Kottak seizes on the point that, where Rappaport's subjects may have occupied a small geographical area and lived within one ecosystem, many people today move from one area to another, do not participate in one ecosystem only or do not employ only one set of "cultural adaptive means"⁶³ in dealing with their environments. Kottak observes that the idea of a so-called "cognized model" —that is, a given culture's "interpretations of the world, the set of rules and expectations, orienting principles, concepts, meanings, and values that are significant to an individual culture bearer and that account for why he or she does things"— requires modification. Kottak continues saying that "[c]ontemporary people still have cognized models, but anthropologists must increasingly wonder where such models originate, how they are transmitted, and the extent to which they are unique and shared"⁶⁴. According to Kottak, this rethinking of 'cognized models' corresponds with a general shift in methodology in anthropology "from research focusing on a single community or "culture", perceived as more or less isolated and unique, to recognizing pervasive linkages and concomitant flows of people, technology, images, and information, and to acknowledging the impact of differential power and status in the postmodern world on local entities"⁶⁵.

Now, environmental historians may claim that they study past cultures that are not splintered and where, therefore, 'cognized models' with effective explana-

⁶¹Rappaport 1968.

⁶²Worster 1988: 304 ff.

⁶³Kottak 1999: 24.

⁶⁴Kottak 1999: 25.

⁶⁵Kottak 1999: 25.

tory value can still be identified. To some extent this may be true, yet it is clear that we have to go relatively far back in time⁶⁶ or make regional differentiations if we want to write the environmental history of local, largely self-contained communities untouched by global industrial market economy. At the time of the alleged emergence of Merchant's so-called mechanical world-view and Worster's imperial view of nature the 'globalising process' had at any rate already begun.

Kottak's observations constitute one reason for thinking that modernity requires a different conceptualisation of the human relationship to nature than can be afforded by the contrasting notions of organic-arcadian and imperial-mechanical-utilitarian world-views, or indeed the notion of world-view in the first place. In modern society the human relationship to nature is essentially more complex, and I argue indirect, than can be articulated ideologically.

A Note on Marx(ism) in Environmental History

Before moving on to illustrating by examples from certain classics of environmental history the effects of the ideological approach on the actual writing of environmental history, I want to discuss briefly the role of Marx(ism) in environmental history, not least because we shall later, in Chapter 9, make our own use of him. The issue in this section is the self-conception of environmental history and environmentalism as having their roots in certain Marxian ideas. The question we shall address is how could environmental history be said to be ideological in approach if it has its roots in Marxian historical materialism?

Let us begin to answer this question by noting that the ideological approach, that I have cast as dominating environmental history and environmentalism more broadly, and the present challenge to it, could be conceptualised as representing two differing readings of Marx. The two poles are, on the one hand, Marx's critique of the profit motive of capitalism and associated exploitation of the worker seized upon in environmentalism and, on the other hand, Marx's materialist conception of history summed up in the famous line from the 1859 preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: "[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness". These two strands in Marx can be seen to pull in two

⁶⁶According to the historian of capitalism Immanuel Wallerstein, the origins of the capitalist system are "in late-fifteenth-century Europe" (Wallerstein 1983: 19).

distinctly opposite directions⁶⁷.

Marx's critique of the capitalist system and the profit motive prevalent in it forms one of the central tenets of critical environmental thought. It seems like an easy and sound step to argue from the profit motive in capitalism to the more or less total disregard of the system of nature and its preservation. Seen in this way, Marx would appear to support the ideological approach in that the capitalist profit motive appears as driving human action, among others towards the environment. Among classic environmental historians, at least Carolyn Merchant and William Cronon⁶⁸ explicitly give Marx as one of their influences. It is not surprising that Marx should have been of influence in the discipline given the activist roots of environmental history.

To be sure, environmental historians have also criticised Marx. Some of Marx's ideas have been seen as inimical to the appreciation of the role of nature in human history. Thus, William Cronon has argued that

Marx's emphasis on the class relations whereby one human group extracts surplus from another is less than satisfactory in environmental terms, since it marginalizes the very processes [i.e. the environment] that environmental historians wish to place at the centre of their work.⁶⁹

Marx is arguably rather utilitarian towards the environment. Marx argued that industrial production is realisable other than in the frame of a capitalist system. This forms the key to the humanistic utopian objective of his theorising: that an industrial society with all the material well-being that it is capable of offering could be had *without* any of the morally questionable effects of the capitalist form of ownership. In other words, Marx's ideal society, although it would not be capitalist, would be an industrial society. Yet, as highlighted in the work of John Bellamy Foster, Marx also noted and criticised the detrimental environmental effect of intensive, large-scale industrial as well as agricultural production⁷⁰.

At any rate, environmental historians have taken from Marx a certain distaste of the broadly utilitarian ethos of capitalism linking it, as we saw, with the human perception of nature as a system suitable for human manipulation and exploita-

⁶⁷Theda Skocpol (1979: 15) makes this same observation about the dual export of Marx's influence.

⁶⁸Merchant 1987; Cronon 1991.

⁶⁹Cronon 1990: 1125.

⁷⁰Bellamy Foster 1999 and Bellamy Foster 2000.

tion. This is probably the primary sense in which environmental history, and environmentalism more broadly, can be said to have taken in Marxian influence.

Environmental historians also often conceptualise themselves as materialists, although, I would argue this has been in a sense quite remote from Marx. They have been materialists in the sense of emphasising nature, its regenerative and other processes, as the material stage of human existence often having a significant impact on the historical development of human societies. According to Worster⁷¹, this is one genuinely new perspective or emphasis introduced to the study of the past by environmental history. Few would maintain that this is Marx's kind of materialism. Marx's materialism refers to the material organisation of how the human being produces the material basis of her existence, that is by certain means of production according to the stage of economic development that the society is in.

However, environmental historians have been materialists also close to the sense of Marx's historical materialism emphasising the "changes, tensions, and contradictions that develop between a society's mode of production and its ecology" leading to "major transformations in human relations with non-human nature", as Carolyn Merchant put it⁷². This is a Marxian dialectical point to the extent that it speaks of contradictions in the mode of production, albeit ecological contradictions, leading to societal transformations. Marx did not conceptualise the contradiction in ecological terms between 'a society's mode of production and its ecology', as Merchant sees it. For Marx, the contradiction had to do with a number of things. One was the commodification of labour, that is, that in industrial market society the worker is alienated from the fruits of her labour due to labour being reduced to mere abstract means of exchange via pay to other commodities (see the first sense of 'market' on p. 78 below). Another contradiction was that eventually the capitalist form of socio-economic organisation, due to a conflict in the capitalist's interest to hoard more profits and productive interest of stimulating economic activity through circulation of money, begins to fetter further development in productivity leading to an era of social revolution.

The point of the foregoing is that it is not obvious that the Marxian influences in environmental history are essentially Marxian points. At any rate, as pointed out at the start of this section, there is another side to Marx that does not appear

⁷¹Worster 1988.

⁷²Merchant 1987: 265.

to have evoked particular attention among environmental historians and that is inimical to their ideological paradigm: Marx did not think of ideologies, but certain *material* factors, as driving human action. Consider here again the words of the famous passage from the 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness”. By ‘social existence’ Marx meant human existence in the frame of a particular social organisation of production. In Marx’s sense of materialism, the word always refers to the processes by way of which the human being collectively produces the material basis of her existence. In Part 2, Chapter 9, I shall pursue this theme in Marx and illustrate its close relation to the present Wittgensteinian alternative to the so-called ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems. I shall thus conclude this section merely by pointing out that the environmental historical and environmentalist use of Marx as a critic of the capitalist ethos is not the only way to read him.

Worster on Varmints

Let us now finally consider a number of particular examples of the ideological approach in action in environmental history. A case in point is a chapter in the American environmental historian Donald Worster’s *Nature’s Economy* discussing the early 20th century case of government control of certain vermin populations in Western United States. Worster’s argument makes significant but in my view simplistic and over-intellectualised use of the ideological aspects of the human relationship to nature. Note thus that the purpose here is not to discredit the factual details of Worster’s scholarship which is, as far as I can see, solid. Furthermore, Worster’s writings tell of a genuine passion for the environment that must be respected. Rather, I shall attempt to highlight the overblown nature of the ideological claims made by Worster on what is in my view a rather slim factual basis.

The larger issue upon which Worster focuses in that part of the book is the transition in early 20th century American ecology from the “[p]rogressive ideology of utilitarianism” to “a preservation policy based on ecology”, as he puts it⁷³. For the present purposes, what exactly was going on in this alleged transition in values from an explicitly anthropocentric view emphasising human utility

⁷³Worster 1994: 256.

over preservation of untouched nature to something genuinely concerned with preserving the wilderness is of little direct interest. I will instead provide a close reading of Worster's story of the governmental vermin control programme discussing critically the ideological nature of the account.

Worster's story takes us back to the early 20th century United States and discusses the issue of vermin control in areas where the agricultural and other activities of the white settlers were encountering problems in the form of vermin. Of present interest in Worster's story are his frequent attributions of ideological motives to the actors he discusses. Immediately upon its founding, the American Bureau of the Biological Survey (BBS), founded in 1905, "began to concentrate its energies even more on aspects of science with obvious economic value"⁷⁴, for instance, on supervised killings of wolves and coyotes in the National Forest and Parks, Worster writes. Through varmint control, it was thought, it would be easier for agriculture to operate in these areas. There were "pressures on government from well-heeled livestock associations, especially those of western sheepmen, many of whom reacted to wolves and coyotes with an almost metaphysical hatred"⁷⁵. These associations played an important role in pressing for funds to flow into the government vermin control programs. Worster continues saying that these sheepmen and their associations "wanted —needed, from their point of view— to see the West made over into an artificial ecological order, forever free from predators: an idyllic pasture for thousands of bleating flocks"⁷⁶.

Now, while Worster does not provide passages from pamphlets or speeches to support the claim that there was 'an almost metaphysical hatred' among these men towards wolves and coyotes, or that they wanted an 'artificial ecological order', it is of course not wholly implausible that such men, whose livelihoods and whose companies' stock performance seemed to depend on vermin control, felt passionately about the issue. I presume, however, that while we do not know what individual sheepmen felt and thought about in terms of ideology, it is safe to assume that these men and their associations had a certain *pragmatic interest* in pressing for vermin control. The meaning of pragmatic interests in the sheepmen's lives is easily understood, but what could such terms as 'metaphysical hatred' and 'artificial ecological order' have meant to the average sheepman? Should we think of these terms as rhetorical devices or as attributions of belief to sheepmen? At

⁷⁴Worster 1994: 263.

⁷⁵Worster 1994: 264.

⁷⁶Worster 1994: 264.

any rate, the use of these terms nicely maintains the thrust and aura of Worster's ideological argument without an immediately obvious or documented basis in the lives and thinking of the actors that he talks about.

A moment later in the text, Worster observes that “[i]n the history of progressive agriculture, wild creatures had never counted for much” for “they failed to conform to the farmer's productive purposes and so were seen as useless when not seen as a threat”⁷⁷. It should be noted first that the term ‘progressive’ is until that point used by Worster to denote the explicitly utilitarian motive behind policy recommendations, and not as a farmer's ideology as it seems to be cast here, so there is an implicit switch of context there from motivations of policy makers to the motivations of the farmers. Be that as it may, the phrases ‘progressive agriculture’ and ‘farmer's productive purposes’ may for some connote a broadly utilitarian ethos on the farmers part. The passage, however, can also be read as providing a plausible description of the sheepmen's pragmatic thinking about vermin: it did not necessarily contain an almost metaphysical hatred or some vision of managed environment, but merely a simple pragmatic view about improving, or even just securing, their livelihoods in the face of the perceived threat from vermin. Yet, typical of a number of ideological arguments in environmental history, the implicit ideological aura of the argument is maintained through the use of powerful expressions such as ‘almost metaphysical hatred’ whose meaning, however, is often not grounded in the pragmatics of the lives of those who figure in key roles in the story.

This leads us to another issue of interest which is the extent to which Worster discusses the societal context in which an ideology may have gained practical currency. As is evident in the above quoted passages, the bulk of the text does contain some mentions of the wider economic context in which the government pursued its vermin control programmes. The context, however, is not pursued systematically and the mentions remain brief and superficial —again quite fittingly for an ideological approach. This is significant because it allows Worster to cast certain arguably ideologically motivated crucial elites as the prime moving force of human environmental impact disregarding the point of view that these elites could not have functioned without the existence of a wider institutional backdrop conducive to their actions.

Consider, for instance, Worster's claim that the extermination programmes

⁷⁷Worster 1994: 268.

were less “the result of the livestock groups’ economic needs and political leverage” than “the attitude toward the land and wildlife espoused by Progressive conservation leaders”⁷⁸. One of them discussed by Worster was Gifford Pinchot (1865–1946), the Chief Forester of Theodore Roosevelt’s administration (in office from 1901 until 1909). Here Worster does draw material from Pinchot’s autobiography that seems to justify Worster’s conclusion that there was “no doubt about his [Pinchot’s] utilitarian bias toward nature”⁷⁹. Pinchot argued for “a program of long-range, careful management that would put resource development on a thoroughly rational and efficient base” with the goal of “the greatest economic benefit for all citizens”⁸⁰.

However, we should now ask, how come was Pinchot able to have his opinions heard? What was the context in which his views were able to gain wider currency? Again, there is not much towards answering this question to be found in Worster apart from the brief clue that “[g]ame management on the public lands began in earnest during the [Theodore] Roosevelt administration”⁸¹ which suggest that the wider political situation in the United States and Roosevelt’s ambitions might explain why men such as Pinchot rose to prominence.

Although Worster would most likely vigorously object to this characterisation, there is I think more than a passing similarity to the fallen-out-of-favour so-called History of Great Men approach in the way Worster highlights the roles of crucial elites and individuals for instance in the case of Pinchot and the vermin programme. The classic British historian Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) expressed the History of Great Men approach saying:

Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain.⁸²

To put Carlyle’s point in other words, we find in him, as well as I think in Worster, the idea of crucial elites and individuals as somehow dominating the course of historical developments. Thus, there is in Carlyle a clear similarity with the spirit in which Worster writes about Pinchot’s role to a significant extent

⁷⁸Worster 1994: 265.

⁷⁹Worster 1994: 266.

⁸⁰Worster 1994: 266.

⁸¹Worster 1994: 270.

⁸²Carlyle 1841: 1-2.

ignoring the societal context in which Pinchot rose to the role he had and in which he was able to have the impact he had.

Carlyle's *History of Great Men* approach was famously attacked by the early British sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Spencer wrote:

the origin of the great man is natural; and immediately this is recognized he must be classed with all other phenomena in the society that gave him birth, as a product of its antecedents. Along with the whole generation of which he forms a minute part —along with its institutions, language, knowledge, manners, and its multitudinous arts and appliances, he is a resultant of an enormous aggregate of forces that have been co-operating for ages.⁸³

Spencer is of course famous for having had a biological evolutionary conception of the methodology of social sciences casting “the study of Sociology as the study of Evolution in its most complex form”⁸⁴, as Spencer put it. It should be clear that the present thesis does not advocate this. Yet, if we understand the ‘antecedents’ of crucial elites and individuals, not biologically, but socially as the social context in which they operate we begin to have a more balanced view of the role of the crucial elites and individuals such as Pinchot. By contrast, a contrary approach we find for instance in the American sociologist Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* on the ‘cultural causes’ of a number of great revolutions⁸⁵. In a later paper, she summed up the argument of the book saying that “no single acting group, whether a class or an ideological vanguard, deliberately shapes the complex and multiply determined conflicts that bring about revolutionary crises and outcomes ... as if some grand intentionality governs revolutionary processes”⁸⁶.

It is not my task to provide the background missing in Worster's story —I shall attempt something similar below in the case of John Evelyn's *Sylva* where I contrast my version with Carolyn Merchant's ideological story. For the present objective of discussing the nature of the ideological approach in environmental history it suffices to note that the general background against which apparently ideologically motivated men, such as Pinchot, rose to prominence is missing. Furthermore, were it not missing it would, I think, have added an essentially materialist, socio-economic aspect to the story playing down the ideological side.

⁸³Spencer 1896: 30.

⁸⁴Spencer 1896: 350.

⁸⁵Skocpol 1979.

⁸⁶Skocpol 1985: 86-7.

In sum, the point I wish to make here against the role of arguably ideologically motivated elites and individuals in driving human environmental impact is that their views would have come to nothing without the existence of a backdrop of social organisation of human life that was receptive to their ideas or otherwise allowed their ideas to be heard and have an impact. Let me emphasise that I do not wish to deny that crucial elites and individuals might have ideological convictions that genuinely affect their course of action. Moreover, the approach to social action I develop in Part 2 also admits that individuals are thinking beings and can be *ideologically* motivated. I do hold, however, that the ideologically minded individuals should always be seen in the social context in which they operate, and I think Worster's story of Pinchot and governmental vermin control is a case in point where the societal backdrop is not analysed, giving rise to a skewed, almost exclusively ideological, reading of the case.

Cronon on Boosters

The next example of an ideological approach in environmental history stems from William Cronon's classic *Nature's Metropolis*⁸⁷. It discusses the history of the founding and rise of Chicago from the 1830s onwards as the chief transportation link of the natural resources of the Great West, the vast frontier spreading westward of the city. Cronon's story too contains a significant but implicit ideological component.

Cronon introduces the book with an interesting discussion of the angle from which he approaches the issue: "if we wish to understand the ecological consequences of our own lives", Cronon argues, "we must reconstruct the linkages between the commodities of our economy and the resources of our ecosystem"⁸⁸. The angle, as it is described here, is rather 'materialistic' and in the rest of the book Cronon indeed provides an intriguing description of the various aspect of the socio-economic organisation of the conquest of the Great Western resources. This part of the work is in my mind excellent and exemplary of perceptive environmental history.

In the first chapter, however, the book sets off with the familiar ideological approach to the human conceptions driving the city's founding as it was connected to something called the American 'vision of the empire'. Cronon discusses at

⁸⁷Cronon 1991.

⁸⁸Cronon 1991: xvii.

length the various 19th century theories pertaining to urban growth, colonisation of the Western prairies as well as the arguments and the vision of certain ‘boosters’, businessmen promoting Chicago and other sometimes still non-existent, but speculatively charted, locations of potential future great metropolises. One key element, according to Cronon, was the idea of Chicago, or some other great future city, as leading the rise of the United States to a great empire. There were visions of American cities comparable to the great cities of Antiquity⁸⁹. The vision of the empire was essentially connected with economic greatness promised by the resources of the Great West, Cronon argues.

Now, as individuals the boosters may indeed have entertained such visions but it is questionable to what extent, and with what practical significance, was the vision shared by the masses making Chicago and the conquest of the Great West happen. Strikingly, Cronon indeed makes the claim that the vision of the empire was “the vision that inspired those who flooded into Chicago during the 1830s hoping to make it the focus of a far more extensive metropolitan economy”⁹⁰. A moment later he reiterates the claim saying that “[f]or many, if not most, Americans, “the discovery, cultivation, and capitalization” of land meant bringing it into the marketplace and attaching it to the metropolis”⁹¹. In a striking contrast to the quality of the rest of Cronon’s story, the above ideological claims are not discussed further and not backed up by any documented or other evidence.

One has to wonder, could this kind of an ethos on its own, or even as a significant component, explain the American annexation of the Great West? Is it really plausible to attribute such an ethos to all those ordinary men, women and children who ‘flooded in to Chicago in the 1830s’? Did ‘many, if not most, Americans’ really think this? These are bold claims. I suspect that it was really some multitude of other much more pragmatic motivations and mundane everyday considerations that drove the colonisation of the Great West, in particular the activities of the mass of ordinary people who farmed, operated the rail-roads and the grain silos of the Great West and Chicago. Certainly a lot more argumentation is needed to make Cronon’s claims plausible, and this Cronon simply does not provide. Still, the way Cronon frames his story in the first chapter leaves the feeling that the vision of the empire, and certain related human conceptions of how the world is or should be, somehow drove the colonisation of the Great

⁸⁹Cronon 1991: 42.

⁹⁰Cronon 1991: 53.

⁹¹Cronon 1991: 54.

West.

Merchant on John Evelyn's *Sylva*

I close this chapter with a final, substantially lengthier critical discussion of the use of ideology in environmental history. Carolyn Merchant's account of John Evelyn's *Sylva*, a classic of English forestry from the 17th century, casts the work as a prime example of the mechanical world-view coupled with a broadly utilitarian ethos in action. In the following three sections I shall provide my own contrasting historical account of the circumstances of production and reception of Evelyn's *Sylva*.

John Evelyn's *Sylva* was first published in 1664. The book went through four editions in Evelyn's life-time, each one expanded in various ways. The fourth edition runs to almost 600 pages and is a comprehensive collection of forestry techniques pertaining to various types of trees, also including exotic trees. Although the authorship of *Sylva* is credited to John Evelyn alone, it was at least to some extent a collaborative work of a number of other fellows of the early Royal Society of London. The literary style of the work is attributable to Evelyn.⁹² It was a popular work already in its time⁹³ and displayed Evelyn's fame and skill as a gardening enthusiast.

In Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* the work is discussed as an historical example of the mechanical world-view and the utilitarian ethos in action. In environmental history the case of *Sylva* has not received detailed attention apart from Merchant's discussion of it where it is appropriated as a case in point of the mechanical world-view and the utilitarian ethos, crucial themes in the environmental historical and environmentalist conception of the human relationship to nature. There is thus distinct argumentative value in looking at the case of *Sylva* again.

Let us begin with a brief overview of Merchant's argument. She casts *Sylva* as standing at a threshold of change in human relationship to nature as a representative of a newly emerging aggressively manipulative attitude to nature. Evelyn's "interest in conservation of timber", Merchant writes, "represented a new

⁹²Hunter 1981: 93. On the collaborative origins of what was to become *Sylva*, see Hartley 2010, Lynch 2001, Darley 2006: 181, Sharp 1975: 63-4, Denny 1940: 483 ff. and Stubbs 1989: 331.

⁹³Hunter 1981: 93.

managerial approach to nature”⁹⁴. This “[m]anagerial conservation”, Merchant continues, “was an adaptation of the rationalizing tendencies inherent in mechanism applied to the natural environment”⁹⁵. The managerial approach allegedly embodied in *Sylva* is related by Merchant to “a rudimentary form of a utilitarian ethic” first championed in Evelyn’s time by a host of natural philosophers and appearing quite a bit later in “the progressive conservation movement in the United States in the early 1900s” as well as “the new reductionist ecology of the 1950s”⁹⁶. The ideology of managerial ethos towards nature, allegedly in operation across centuries, is associated by Merchant with the attempts to “maximize energy production, economic yields, and environmental quality through ecosystem modeling [sic], manipulation, and prediction of outcomes”⁹⁷. In Evelyn it allegedly found its expression in the view that “[i]f exploitation [of forests] were allowed to continue unabated, nature would decay, and human progress would be curtailed”⁹⁸.

Now, there are a number of aspects to Evelyn and *Sylva* that may lead us to associate the two with the managerial-mechanical and utilitarian ideology about nature. In the following sections I shall discuss three issues. There is, first, the persistent statement about *Sylva*, that is often repeated but the exact meaning of which is rarely carefully discussed, namely that the book was a reply to a request for help by the English navy regarding replenishing the nation’s stock of naval timber. It may thus at first seem plausible to associate Evelyn and *Sylva* with the military strategic and economic forestry interests of the English state and therefore with the so-called utilitarian ethos. Yet, as we shall see, *Sylva*’s link with the navy’s request has been greatly exaggerated and it is of a complex pragmatic rather than of an ideological nature.

Second, that *Sylva* was a comprehensive collection of tree planting and maintenance techniques may foster the impression that it put forward a mechanical, managerial attitude towards nature. Moreover, the book became a best-seller and it is nowadays considered a classic of forestry and so it would seem that

⁹⁴Merchant 1980: 238.

⁹⁵Merchant 1980: 238.

⁹⁶Merchant 1980: 238. Although I shall not pursue this argument here, history of ideas conceived as tracing the development of an idea across significant stretches of time, as we see it for example here in Merchant, has been challenged as insensitive to the significance of the uniqueness of historical context among others by Quentin Skinner (1969) and Michel Foucault (1977).

⁹⁷Merchant 1980: 238.

⁹⁸Merchant 1980: 238.

it was influential in spreading the ideology of human domination of the natural environment. Yet, we do not find any signs of influence of Evelyn upon plantings in English state forests and, moreover, the economic and military strategic issue pertaining to timber had been in the agenda well before and without the influence of Evelyn⁹⁹. Finally, third, Evelyn's own interests in gardening could be described as being to a significant extent spiritual and aesthetic in nature, not managerial or economically orientated, and Evelyn's advisory work for country gentlemen with regard to planting trees in their estates would seem to have been practically exclusively of an aesthetic nature.

Sylva and the Navy

We shall begin with an examination of the question of the navy's paper to the Royal Society in relation to Evelyn's *Sylva*. It is said that the navy put a request to the Society to examine what could be done about the impending naval timber shortage in the nation. This crucial statement is often made in the literature with varying choice of words and implied meaning. For example, sometimes it is said that the navy "commissioned" *Sylva*, or that *Sylva* was a "response to an appeal from the Navy for the Society to encourage the preservation and planting of oaks" and other times merely that the navy "inspired" the research that went into *Sylva*¹⁰⁰. We shall see that the precise relationship between the request by the navy and Evelyn's response, as well as the nature of the request itself, is complicated, and has never been properly explicated; in fact, relatively little appears to be known of the relevant circumstances¹⁰¹.

First, however, let us briefly discuss the situation in 17th century England regarding the navy and its timber needs. In setting out the issue one has to be careful to make at least some rough distinctions between different kinds of wood and other materials needed in the 17th century to build a naval ship as well as the sources of these materials. Thus, for example oak, native to the British Isles, was used to build the body of the ship due to it being rot resistant, whereas the

⁹⁹It should be noted that I obviously cannot attempt to consider here in detail the influence of *Sylva* over the centuries that it has been available. For one, the book appears to have enjoyed revived interest upon its republication in 1812 (see Nisbet's introduction to *Sylva*, Evelyn 1908: Vol. I, lxviii). I shall focus on the period leading up to and shortly after *Sylva*'s publication.

¹⁰⁰Chambers 1988: 29, Hartley 2010: 1, Hunter 1981: 104.

¹⁰¹The most detailed account is offered in Lynch 2001: 37 ff.. See also de la Bédoyère 1995: 173-180 and de Beer 1960: 234. Hartley 2010 reprints one crucial document to the story, the navy's paper to the Society.

durable but flexible Baltic conifers were considered to be the best quality mast wood¹⁰². In addition, there was the need for instance for tar obtained sometimes from as far north as Finland¹⁰³. However, a lot of the discussion of planting trees in England to secure the availability of naval timber concerns oak.

The historical context of the naval timber issue was the following. In the 17th century, there were a series of conflicts between the English and the Dutch referred to as the Dutch Wars. One crucial element of these conflicts was to challenge the Dutch dominance in international trade in which by that time Europeans were active on most continents of the world: the Americas, Asia as well as in Europe¹⁰⁴. These conflicts were to a significant extent naval, involving the building and maintenance of fleets of wooden vessels. In particular, suitably long yet flexible timber for masts was difficult to acquire and Norway, but also many other parts of Northern Europe and the Baltic, were for the British the source of mast wood¹⁰⁵. In terms of such strategically crucial goods England was thus at least partly dependent on foreign powers. The situation was made worse by the fact that the Dutch were in control of the trade to the Baltic and Scandinavian countries. Even if the English were sometimes in charge of the trade, the route to the Baltic through the narrow straits between Norway, Sweden and continental Europe could easily be blocked. At least to some extent England was thus at the mercy of foreign powers both in terms of the source of some crucial raw materials as well as their distribution. In addition to military means, this dependence was combated legally by the English: the introduction of the Navigation Ordinance of 1651, and a number of Navigation Acts in the 1660s attempted to arrange matters of transport in terms more favourable to the English.¹⁰⁶

Thus, writes the historian John Nisbet, as “[a] great advance in the price of timber took place soon after the Restoration the commissioners of the navy at that time, alarmed by the prospect of a want of timber for the dockyards, represented the situation to the Royal Society, and requested them to suggest a remedy. This was given to them in the shape of John Evelyn’s *Silva*”¹⁰⁷. Similar passages

¹⁰²Williams 2003: 193 and 196.

¹⁰³Williams 2003: 200.

¹⁰⁴For a relatively recent review of historical work regarding the causes of the wars, see Israel 1997.

¹⁰⁵Kent 1955.

¹⁰⁶Williams 2003: 169 ff.

¹⁰⁷Nisbet 1906: 452. In the first three editions the name is spelled *Sylva* and in the fourth edition as *Silva*. Recent literature prefers the original spelling, *Sylva*.

stressing the intimate connection between *Sylva* and the navy are common in the literature. Such accounts, however, face one crucial set of questions: why did Evelyn and the Society respond to a *practical* enquiry about how to secure timber access from the navy by compiling a *manual* on forestry techniques? Would not a paper proposing some particular, concrete policies together with the relevant forestry techniques to realise them have been more appropriate? This remarkable discrepancy between what was a rather pragmatic request by the navy and the manual-like character of *Sylva*, that nevertheless allegedly was Evelyn and the Society's response to the navy's request, has as far as I can discover passed unnoticed in the secondary literature.

The connection between the navy's request and *Sylva* can be studied in the minutes of the Society's meetings over the period in which *Sylva* came to be¹⁰⁸. The story begins on 17 September 1662 when "[a] paper about the improvements and planting of timber" was read at the Society's meeting. It was brought in by Sir Robert Moray¹⁰⁹ and the paper was "from the commissioners of his majesty's navy"¹¹⁰. The paper still exists, the text of which has recently been published, and Beryl Hartley has been able to establish that it was handwritten by one of the commissioners of the navy, Peter Pett¹¹¹. In fact, in the very same meeting in which Moray read the paper from the commissioners of the navy, "commissioner Pett" among a number of others "were put to the scrutiny, and elected" as fellows of the Society¹¹².

Now, the paper itself, although often referred to as a request for help from the navy to the Society, is rather a set of propositions, not a set of questions, nor a request for anything from the Society. The five propositions it contains are addressed to "his most sacred Majesty" that he would institute certain reforms to secure the protection and future availability of naval timber. Why is the paper then so often referred to as an appeal for advice from the Society and *Sylva* as

¹⁰⁸These minutes are reprinted in Birch 1968. Birch's book is a chronicle, a day to day record of the work undertaken by the Society, presenting the results of an enormous task of copying that he as the Society's secretary (1752-65) was nicely placed to execute (see xi-xiii of the introduction to Birch 1968 by A. Rubert Hall).

¹⁰⁹Moray was a founding member of the Society and said to have been "the chief intermediary between the Society and the King and other highly placed persons" (Martin 1960: 246). Although serving the state in high positions, Moray does not appear to have had any particular role in the affairs of the navy, so perhaps he was in this case a mere messenger between the navy and the Society.

¹¹⁰Birch 1968: 111.

¹¹¹Hartley 2010: Footnote 3, Appendix I.

¹¹²Birch 1968: 111.

the reply? This is stated for instance in the very cover of *Sylva* itself. Due to the lack of documented evidence, one possibility is that perhaps Pett and the commissioners had the paper read to the Society in order to have their comments to it as well as to obtain further similar propositions to be presented to the king later. This is supported by the fact that, as we shall soon see, similar propositions were then indeed provided by a number of the Society's fellows, for sure by John Winthorp and probably by John Evelyn. Importantly, however, as will become apparent soon, these propositions are not to be thought of as *Sylva* the book.

The next step in the story is that four fellows of the Society had the navy's paper 'referred to their consideration'. These were "Mr. Evelyn, Dr. Goddard, Dr. Merret and Mr. Winthorp"¹¹³. Then, on 1 October 1662 it was recorded that "Mr. Evelyn was desired to peruse the papers regarding the propagating of timber, brought in by Dr. Goddard, Dr. Merret, and Mr. Winthorp, and to add what he had of his own, digesting the sum of all into one paper against the next meeting"¹¹⁴. Evelyn presumably had not been able to produce the summary paper by the next meeting on 8 October as it is not mentioned in the records, but then on 15 October 1662 "Mr. Evelyn read his paper, in which he had put together the several suggestions offered by others in distinct papers, by way of answer to the queries of the commissioners of the navy"¹¹⁵. The Society must have liked what they heard for "he [Evelyn] was desired to print the paper read by him"¹¹⁶.

Importantly for the present argument, the summary paper presented by Evelyn on 15 October 1662, and desired to be printed by the Society, was considered inadequate as a reply to the navy. This is testified by the fact that, in the same meeting, "Dr. Goddard, Dr. Merret, Mr. Evelyn and Dr. Wilkins, were appointed a committee, to make an extract out of Mr. Evelyn's papers, and the others, &c. in order to return a brief and methodical answer to the queries of the commissioners of the navy"¹¹⁷. What was wrong with the summary paper as a reply to the navy the record does not explicitly say, but we may speculate that it did not

¹¹³Birch 1968: 111. Jonathan Goddard was the professor of physics at the Gresham College, Christopher Merret a physician and John Winthorp the governor of the colony of Connecticut (as detailed on the list of the Society's fellows in Birch 1968: xxxiii ff.).

¹¹⁴Birch 1968: 114.

¹¹⁵Birch 1968: 117.

¹¹⁶Birch 1968: 117.

¹¹⁷Birch 1968: 117. As we see, the make-up of the committee has now changed. The new addition John Wilkins was at the time the secretary of the society (as detailed on the list of the Society's fellows in Birch 1968: xxxiii ff.).

directly address the concerns of the navy but was perhaps too long or even just a collection of tree planting techniques in the style of *Sylva*.

While it was a whole committee that was set upon the task of providing the ‘brief and methodical’ version of the paper it seems to have been Evelyn who worked on it as at the next meeting on 22 October 1662 only Evelyn’s name is mentioned in a request for results¹¹⁸. On 5 November it is recorded that Evelyn had “conferred with commissioner [Peter] Pett concerning the account, which he was to bring in”, which Evelyn however had apparently not yet brought in, “of the best methods of planting and propagating timber-trees”¹¹⁹. Interestingly, the record says that Evelyn was hastened to make changes to the part “which concerns the way of preparing acorns for planting”¹²⁰, the significance of which we shall consider below.

Evelyn’s diary entry for 5 November adds a detail about the meeting: “[t]he Council of the Royal Society met to amend the Statutes, and dined together; afterward meeting at Gresham College, where was a discourse suggested by me, concerning planting his Majesty’s Forest of Dean with oak, now so much exhausted of the choicest ship timber in the world”¹²¹. This passage gives the most direct link we have suggesting that Evelyn played a role in initiating or encouraging state plantings. I shall consider the passage in more detail below in the section on Evelyn’s role in the Forest of Dean.

After the mention on 22 October there are no more references in Birch’s record to the issue and we are left in the dark as to what happened with the Society’s reply to the navy. Of the many papers mentioned above —the navy’s paper brought in by Moray, the contributions of the four fellows set to work upon the navy’s paper, Evelyn’s summary of them, and the final brief and methodical reply to the navy, if there was one— only the text of two papers appear to survive¹²²:

¹¹⁸Birch 1968: 118.

¹¹⁹Birch 1968: 120.

¹²⁰Birch 1968: 120.

¹²¹Evelyn 1901: Vol. I 365.

¹²²Darley appears to have further information as to the content of some of these papers but her sources are not recorded and Darley’s claims conflict with Birch’s records. Darley writes that “[o]ther fellows provided material for *Sylva*, notably Christopher Merret’s observations on France and Germany, ... and Dr Jonathan Goddard on the physiology of trees” (Darley 2006: 181). Now, Birch’s record does mention that on 24 September 1662 Goddard “brought in ... his thoughts concerning the planting of timber in England” this being “upon the proposition offered to the consideration of the society by the commissioners of his majesty’s navy” (Birch 1968: 112). This, then, presumably was Goddard’s contribution but it is not on ‘the physiology of trees’ as Darley says. Likewise, in the meeting on 1 October Merret is recorded to have read “his paper concerning the planting and preserving of timber; together with his collection

the navy's paper¹²³, the content of which has already been summarised, and Mr. Winthrop's contribution¹²⁴.

How much the character of Winthrop's contribution corresponds with the character of the other missing papers we cannot say. Winthrop's contribution, in contrast to the bulk of *Sylva* containing technicalities of tree planting, certainly is of the pragmatic kind that would have been of interest to the navy whether they would in the end have considered its proposals practicable or not. Most interestingly it is written in the same form as Pett's or the commissioners' paper, namely, as a proposition 'to his majesty' to institute certain reforms to secure the supply of naval timber. Thus, Winthrop's contribution wonders "whether it may not be fit to propose to his majesty, or his honourable commissioners of the navy, the conveniency of building ships in some of the northern parts of America"¹²⁵. This is followed by nine arguments why this would be of advantage concerning for instance the easy and cheap availability there of all the resources needed to build ships, and the ready ships could then sail to England loaded with spare materials, Winthrop adds.

The few clues we have to the nature of Evelyn's contribution are the above quoted passage in his diary and the minutes of the Society's meeting, both from 5 November 1662. The minutes imply that Evelyn's proposal to the navy contained technical details about preparing acorns for planting which makes sense in the light of his above quoted diary remark where he says that he proposed the Forest of Dean to be planted with oak. As speculated above, judging by its content, the first six pages or so of the concluding chapter of *Sylva* (first edition) could well have been contained in Evelyn's contribution. This section indeed contains a mention of the Forest of Dean, sowing acorns and a number of other practical considerations that may have been of interest to the navy but little in terms of technical detail pertaining to planting trees. We shall return to the content of this section below as we discuss Evelyn's influence regarding plantations in the Forest of Dean.

In this connection the historian Gillian Darley writes that in *Sylva* "Evelyn suggested that an orderly programme of timber management and conservation

of those statutes, that have been formerly made by the parliament of England concerning the same" (Birch 1968: 114). This then probably is Merret's response to the navy's paper but again it does not concern France and Germany as Darley has it.

¹²³Reprinted in Hartley 2010.

¹²⁴Printed in Birch 1968: 112-3.

¹²⁵Birch 1968: 112.

would put the economy to rights and ensure that the national defences, those ‘wooden walls’ that consumed such prodigious quantities of timber, were secure against imminent threat”¹²⁶. Yet, this kind of suggestion hardly describes the *bulk* of the content of *Sylva* which is essentially a kind of instruction manual, not an ‘orderly programme’. Darley’s remarks, though unreferenced, may refer to what are the most programmatic and pragmatic passages of *Sylva* found in the beginning of the concluding chapter¹²⁷. We shall return to consider the content of this interesting section shortly. For now, the point needs to be stressed that, while it contains pragmatic materials of the sort that would probably have interested the navy, the relevant part of the closing section of *Sylva* is very short (some six pages of the total 120 pages of the first edition), cannot really be described as an orderly programme, and in terms of the nature of its content differs greatly from the bulk of *Sylva*.

Moreover, in a letter by Evelyn to William Wotton dated 12 September 1703¹²⁸ he writes that materials “for the improvement of planting and gardening..., my *Sylva* and what else I published on that subject” were collected as part of the Society’s History of Trades programme¹²⁹. The History of Trades was a project inspired by Francis Bacon’s vision of the systematic collection of practical techniques to be used for human benefit that was begun in the 1650s by the members of what was to become the Royal Society, among them Evelyn. Indeed, the importance of the promotion of tree planting among the Society’s activities has recently been argued for by Hartley¹³⁰. It seems thus that the collection of materials later to appear in *Sylva* was begun already in the 1650s, that is, well before the navy’s paper to the Society.

In sum, then, despite the declaration in the very cover of *Sylva*, it is clear that the book was not the Society’s reply to the navy. A detailed study into why *Sylva* was nevertheless branded as such is beyond the present scope. I speculate that it was a marketing tactic by the Society to associate itself with the state. The early Society is known to have struggled with funds and craved for an official recogni-

¹²⁶Darley 2006: 182.

¹²⁷See *The Paraenesis and Conclusion* 112 ff. of the first edition, 157 ff. of the fourth edition. In the fourth edition the chapter is titled *The paraenesis and conclusion, containing some encouragements and proposals for the planting and improvement of his Majesty forests, and other amcemties for shade, and ornament* and in it it is some forty pages longer than in the first edition.

¹²⁸The letter is reprinted in Evelyn 1854: 390 ff.

¹²⁹Evelyn 1854: 392.

¹³⁰Hartley 2010. See also Levy Peck 2005: 312 ff. and Houghton Jr. 1941.

tion of its operations¹³¹, so it is understandable that the Society would seize the opportunity to associate one of its publications with the work of the navy and the needs of the state. In Merchant's story, by contrast, Evelyn and *Sylva* appear as the ideological champions of a newly emerging, aggressively manipulative attitude to nature intimately connected with the technocratic machinery of the English state. There is reason, however, to see the association of the Society with the navy as a much more pragmatic and a much less substantial affair. Moreover, as will come more apparent in the following sections, the orientation towards managing forests as sources of raw materials and wealth —orientations that Merchant casts as emerging with Evelyn and *Sylva*— were already very much in the agenda as pragmatic economic and military-strategic questions that by no means needed Evelyn as their protagonist.

Sylva and the Forest of Dean

What of Evelyn's proposal to plant oak in the Forest of Dean as he recorded in his diary (on 5 November 1662, quoted above)? Could Evelyn have played a role in drawing the navy's attention to that possibility? In the absence of further evidence this is unlikely. As we shall see, the dire situation with regards to timber at the Forest of Dean was well-known having been subject to much discussion in the parliament throughout the 17th century.

In the main, the English navy obtained its timber from three royal forests: the Forest of Dean, the New Forest and the Alice Holt forest (in addition to which, "though unreliable, private parks and estates could make up deficiencies from time to time")¹³². Let us begin with a brief overview of the circumstances in the Forest of Dean in the period leading up to the 1660s.

In overall terms, during the reigns of James I (1567-1625) and Charles I (1625-1649) of England, it has been said that "the Forest of Dean was managed for short-term monetary benefit with little care for preserving the future value of its woodlands"¹³³. By Evelyn's time, it had already for some time served as a source of the navy's timber: "[t]he first evidence found of the use of Dean's oak for the royal navy was in 1617"¹³⁴. First plantings in the forest were initiated by John

¹³¹Hunter 1981: 36 ff.

¹³²Williams 2003: 193-6.

¹³³Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹³⁴Baggs & Jurica 1996.

Wade, the chief administrator in the Forest of Dean from 1653 until 1660¹³⁵. In a display of disregard for the forest in the quest for monetary benefits, in the early 17th century, “James I declared much of what was presumed to be established freehold in the Forest’s parishes to be illegal assarts” making the newly illegalised inhabitants pay for their lands¹³⁶. Later on, a different approach was applied, as “[b]y 1638 Charles I’s government had decided that the best means of capitalizing on the Forest was to disafforest and sell the bulk of the royal demesne”¹³⁷. Both of these actions resulted in riots and destruction in the enclosures by the unhappy commoners who had lost access to common lands. It was not until the 1630s that “the government became more purposeful in its attempts to preserve timber for the navy’s use” which, however, due to free access to the forest was in practice not very efficient¹³⁸.

Further destruction in the forest followed in the disorderly years of the Civil War as “[f]or most of the Civil War the administration of the Forest was disrupted as royalists under Sir John Winter [the older spelling is Wintour] contested control [of the area] with the parliamentary garrison of Gloucester”¹³⁹. Already since the 1620s, Winter had been in charge of his family estates in the forest, managing in particular an ironworks¹⁴⁰. In the 1630s he was fined for offences relating to felling materials for fuel in his ironworks¹⁴¹ only in 1640 to be sold a significant portion of the forest by Charles I who “through Wintour ... could at once obtain a highly attractive revenue and leave local difficulties to someone on the spot”¹⁴². This led at once to vast enclosure and felling operations by Winter that were bitterly opposed by the locals¹⁴³ probably for the simple reason that the enclosures now denied them access to what had been common lands upon which their livelihoods depended. This is a pattern that was to be repeated again and again in the future and Winter too was to figure in a central, and in a rather destructive, role in what went on in the forest in the next decades. However, during the Commonwealth of England, the royalist Winter “fought for the King’s cause and his own, but when

¹³⁵Hart 1966: 150.

¹³⁶Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹³⁷Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹³⁸Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹³⁹Baggs & Jurica 1996, Nicholls 1858: 29-30.

¹⁴⁰Hart 1966: 101-2.

¹⁴¹Hart 1966: 113.

¹⁴²Hart 1966: 125.

¹⁴³Hart 1966: 125-127.

his resistance ended in about 1644 he lost most of his property”¹⁴⁴.

The Restoration in 1660 had brought in a new attempt to put the forest under effective control and thus “[a]t the Restoration the government ordered a commission of inquiry, which, reporting in 1662, advised it to resume as much as possible of the alienated lands and follow a determined policy of inclosing the Forest as a nursery for ship timber”¹⁴⁵. The inquiry into the Forest of Dean had thus reached a conclusion some months *before* the navy’s paper was read at the Society’s meeting: the Society heard the paper on 17 September 1662 (as quoted above) but on 12 April 1662 a commission led by Marquis of Worcester had already reported on the state of the Forest of Dean¹⁴⁶. Therefore, the navy’s paper to the Society probably did not relate to the commission’s report as their report was issued earlier than the paper by the navy to the Society. In any case, the commission’s study of the conditions in the Forest of Dean had been conducted independently in February 1662¹⁴⁷.

However, malpractice in the Forest of Dean continued as one Sir John Winter reclaimed his right to the forest. Winter “had a new grant of all the timber trees surviving on almost the whole demesne and the use of the ironworks” there¹⁴⁸. As mentioned above, in the 1640s Winter, an ardent royalist, had resisted the Commonwealth among others by arms attacking the Parliamentary forces in and around the Forest of Dean. No wonder then that “[t]he return of Charles at once restored Sir John Winter to liberty, and to the benefits of the Patent which the late King had granted him”, upon which he began to act immediately “by repairing his enclosures, in spite of determined opposition from the neighbouring inhabitants”¹⁴⁹ from whom the access to land they depended upon was once again being denied.

Part of the new agreement of 1662 was that Winter provide the navy with timber¹⁵⁰. However, already in 13 April 1663 another committee, that had been

¹⁴⁴Hart 1966: 131.

¹⁴⁵Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹⁴⁶Hart 1966: 157.

¹⁴⁷Hart 1966: 155.

¹⁴⁸Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹⁴⁹Nicholls 1858: 38.

¹⁵⁰Samuel Pepys had been involved in setting up this agreement between Winter and the king, as Pepys records in his diary on 20 June 1662: “Drew up the agreement between the King and Sir John Winter ... about the Forrest of Deane; and having done it, he come himself, (I did not know him to be the Queene’s Secretary before, but observed him to be a man of fine parts); and we read it, and both liked it well. That done, I turned to the Forrest of Deane, in Speede’s Mapps, and there he showed me how it lies; and the Sea-bayly, with the great charge of carrying

formed to investigate complaints coming from the Forest of Dean, reported “that Wintour ‘had 500 cutters of wood employed in Dean, and all the timber would be destroyed if care should not be speedily taken to prevent it’ ” upon which the House of Commons ordered the felling to stop. This, however, appears to have had no effect upon Winter’s operations in the forest.¹⁵¹ In December 1667, a survey found that about seven to eight tons of timber supposed to be delivered by Winter for the navy were unaccounted for while “of 30133 trees sold to him there remained only about 200”¹⁵². Where all these trees went “remains a mystery”¹⁵³. Finally, in 1668, after a number of Parliamentary hearings and “after more opposition and irregularities in his delivery of the navy’s timber, he [Winter] surrendered all his rights and was discharged of the obligation to supply the timber”¹⁵⁴. He was simply discharged of his obligation despite “his debt to the King for 8921 tons of shiptimber”¹⁵⁵ still outstanding.

The year 1668, when Winter’s activities in the Forest of Dean were put to a final end, saw the parliament pass *The Dean Forest Reafforestation Act*. This act was at last one that was “ostensibly acceptable to most interests”, much however “would depend on the energy and integrity of the officials” to put the Act to an effective realisation¹⁵⁶.

Not only does the year of the passing of the Act (1668) make it possible that the Society’s response to the navy should have borne fruit, albeit six years after the navy’s paper was read in the Society’s meeting, but also, in 1671, none other than “Samuel Pepys and colleagues from the Navy Office visited the Forest”¹⁵⁷ suggesting that the navy, and perhaps by implication the Society and Evelyn, had had its hands on the project.

However, such a link is tenuous to establish in a rigorous way and in any case, as we have seen, the official concern with the Forest of Dean well predated Evelyn’s

it to Lydny, and many other things worth my knowing; and I do perceive that I am very short in my business by not knowing many times the geographical part of my business.” Later on, on 14 August 1662, perhaps in a display of Winter’s gratitude to Pepys and the commissioners, Pepys records: “Commissioner Pett and I being invited, went by Sir John Winter’s coach sent for us, to the Miter, in Fanchurch-street, to a venison-pasty; where I found him a very worthy man; and good discourse. Most of which was concerning the Forest of Deane ...”.

¹⁵¹Hart 1966: 160.

¹⁵²Hart 1966: 164.

¹⁵³Hart 1966: 165.

¹⁵⁴Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹⁵⁵Hart 1966: 168.

¹⁵⁶Hart 1966: 169.

¹⁵⁷Baggs & Jurica 1996.

recommendation to plant oak there. True, Pepys was a fellow of the Society, but not yet in 1662 having become one in 1665¹⁵⁸. Pepys was incidentally also a good friend of Evelyn's although apparently the two became so only sometime towards the end of the 1660's, a difference in social rank having until then kept a distance between Pepys, the son of a tailor as well as twelve years junior to Evelyn, the gardening enthusiast from a wealthy and learned background¹⁵⁹. It is therefore unlikely that Pepys was at that time Evelyn's or the Society's channel of influence upon the navy.

Also, the role of Pepys and other commissioners of the navy in the Forest of Dean appears to have been merely to inspect whether there were suitable timber materials for the use of the navy, and not for example to issue orders to plant trees. For this purpose, "Pepys, with Lord Brounker and J. Tippetts, surveyed the Forest for three days in July 1671"¹⁶⁰. The actual management and the introduction of plantings at the Forest of Dean appears to have been in the hands of a group of officials there: John May, the supervisor of the forest, Daniel Furzer, a master shipwright, who since 1656 had been the supervisor of various naval timber projects in the forest¹⁶¹, the surveyor-general of woods Thomas Agar, the constable-warden Marquis of Worcester together with his deputy Sir Baynham Throckmorton, as well as Sir Charles Harbord and his son William¹⁶².

Nevertheless, it is interesting to speculate about Evelyn's effect in the connection of the 1668 Act and the changes it brought in the Forest of Dean. For this purpose, let us return to the remarks made by Evelyn in the concluding chapter of *Sylva* (Chapter VIII) we mentioned briefly above and compare the recommendations there to what took place in the Forest of Dean as a result of the 1668 Act.

As noted above, the concluding chapter of *Sylva* could well have been of interest to the commissioners of the navy because of the pragmatic nature of the first six pages or so of the chapter. These pages may even have been Evelyn's reaction to the navy's paper that later found their way into *Sylva*. There, again in the form of a proposal to 'his majesty' as in Winthrop's and the commissioners' papers, Evelyn writes "that there is not a cheaper, easier or more prompt

¹⁵⁸See the list of fellows in Birch 1968: xxxiii.

¹⁵⁹de la Bédoyère 2005: 11.

¹⁶⁰Hart 1966: 172.

¹⁶¹Hart 1966: e.g. 144, 145, 158 and in particular 170.

¹⁶²Hart 1966: 169.

expedient to advance ship-timber, than to solicit, that in all his Majesty's forests, woods and parks, the spreading oak, &c. (which we have formerly described) be cherish'd, by plowing and sowing barley, rye, &c. ..."163. The best way to achieve this is to enclose common forest, as Evelyn says is "advis'd by such as are every way judicious, and of long experience in those parts"164. However, Evelyn notes that "it is to be considered, that the people, viz. foresters, and borderers, are not generally so civil and reasonable, as might be wished"165 but tend to object to enclosures. It is therefore desirable that "in such places, his Majesty must assert his power, with a firm and high resolution to reduce these men to their due obedience, and to a necessity of submitting to their own and the publick utility ..."166. These were not particularly original suggestions as the troubles in the forest as well as its role as a source of navy timber were well known. We have also seen that the enclosure of common land had been one key source, not the solution, of the troubles in the forest.

Evelyn appears to have recognised the need to provide these 'uncivil and unreasonable men' something in return for the enclosed common lands, otherwise there would be no stopping the violations of the enclosures. Thus, Evelyn suggests getting "the bordures [borders, the edges of the forest] well tenanted, by long terms, and easie rents, and this will invite and encourage takers; whilst the middle, most secure, and interior parts would be a Royal portion"167. The reasoning evidently is that the enclosed part would remain untouched if the surrounding forest offered attractive enough land upon which to subsist. Yet, for the landless folk subsisting on the forest the idea of having now to pay for access to land that had formerly been common would have seemed outrageous and, in any case, presumably not everyone could become a tenant. What changes took place in the tenancies around the forest I have not been able to find out, but the 1668 Act ordered the implementation of a model of the following kind: "11,000 a. of the demesne should be inclosed, to be progressively laid open and replaced by other inclosures as the new growth of timber reached sufficient size to be safe from browsing animals"168. We see then that Evelyn's proposed model does not immediately coincide with the model actually instituted at the Forest of Dean.

¹⁶³Evelyn 1908: Vol. II, 158.

¹⁶⁴Evelyn 1908: Vol. II 158.

¹⁶⁵Evelyn 1908: Vol. II, 158.

¹⁶⁶Evelyn 1908: Vol. II, 158.

¹⁶⁷Evelyn 1908: Vol. II 159.

¹⁶⁸Baggs & Jurica 1996.

Evelyn also suggested an administrative model reliant on private enterprise to manage the enclosed areas: “[l]et his Majesty therefore admit of any willing adventurers in this vast circle for such enclosures in the precinct”, the anticipated effect being “that multitudes [of parties with interest in the forest] being thus engaged, the consideration might procure and facilitate a full discovery of latter encroachments, and fortifie the recovery by favourable rents, improvements and reversions by copy-hold ...”¹⁶⁹. If Evelyn’s advice was ever heard, it was not in this respect taken up, for as a matter of fact the management of the forest was executed by “the administration [which] relied mainly on salaried and easily replaceable officers”¹⁷⁰. In any case, in dividing up the forest the rights of the landowning families of the area had to be taken into consideration and in practice many landowners of the area were appointed to posts in the forest administration, and sometimes the positions remained in the family line for generations¹⁷¹.

In some other respects Evelyn’s recommendations seem to match with what was instituted at the Forest of Dean. Thus, the overall strategy of the reformed administration was “mainly to encourage natural regeneration of oak and beech and preserve what healthy trees survived, though some acorns were sown”¹⁷², sowing of which Evelyn also had thought a good idea (as quoted above)¹⁷³. In *Sylva* Evelyn also wrote that “to advance the Royal forests to this height of perfection, I should again urge the removal of some of our most mischievously plac’d iron-mills” and acquire the materials from abroad, in particular, from New-England¹⁷⁴. And indeed the administration’s “determination to pursue a policy of preservation was shown by the dismantling of the ironworks in 1674 ...”¹⁷⁵. Yet, again Evelyn’s points are not particularly original but familiar from decades of troubles in the forest.

In sum, then, it is possible to find both convergence as well as divergence

¹⁶⁹Evelyn 1908: Vol. II, 158.

¹⁷⁰Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹⁷¹Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹⁷²Baggs & Jurica 1996.

¹⁷³Quoting first Evelyn’s diary from 5 November 1662 where he mentions having suggested the planting of the Forest of Dean with acorns, Hart continues saying that “Evelyn may or may not have known that Furzer had collected 100 bushels of acorns in Dean by 20 October ... and hoped to collect another 60 bushels” of which Furzer noted that “they begin to sprout and grow very much already” (Hart 1966: 158). Hart’s account, the most detailed account of the history of the Forest of Dean, does not contribute Evelyn or the Royal Society any explicit role in what went on in the Forest of Dean.

¹⁷⁴Evelyn 1908: Vol. II, 163.

¹⁷⁵Baggs & Jurica 1996.

between what Evelyn proposed in *Sylva* and what was instituted in the Forest of Dean in the 1660s and 1670s. What was the matter of fact connection between the two, we do not know for sure. If there was a connection, it was most likely unofficial consisting of private conversations between Evelyn and other strategically placed gentlemen serving the English state. On the other hand, the problems in the forest and what could be done about them were well known even without Evelyn's encouragements to preserve and plant. Thus the main thrust of the present argument is supported: Evelyn and *Sylva* cannot be considered a novel ideological driving force towards rationalised maximum exploitation of the forest as Merchant appears to suggest.

Sylva and Landowners

Let us now turn to more civilian forestry matters and inspect Evelyn's influence there. *Sylva* sold well and was popular among the higher ranks of the English country side, but because of its style it was more difficult for the lower ranks. Thus, while "a market undoubtedly existed among yeomen farmers and practitioners of mechanical arts for handbooks describing techniques and disseminating theoretical skills like arithmetic", Evelyn's style in *Sylva* often appeared as too "aloof" for such an audience¹⁷⁶. The success of *Sylva* seems to have partly depended on "its refinement that ensured its success among the dilettante gentry, who were flattered by its pretensions"¹⁷⁷. The more common folk were put off by *Sylva*'s "literary embellishments and difficult vocabulary"¹⁷⁸, even when a later edition contained a glossary of difficult terms.¹⁷⁹ It has been suggested that it may have been, at least after the success of *Sylva*, a deliberate tactic on part of the Royal Society to promote its work through the upper class: "[t]he Society might even have been well advised to concentrate on relatively elitist subjects" and use "a network of prominent landowners to spread innovation"¹⁸⁰.

Thus, in the beginning of *Sylva* we find a preface titled *To the Reader* where Evelyn encourages private planting of timber trees saying

[i]t is what all Persons who are Owners of Land may contribute to, and with infinite delight, as well as profit, who are touch'd with that laud-

¹⁷⁶Hunter 1981: 109.

¹⁷⁷Hunter 1981: 101.

¹⁷⁸Hunter 1981: 100.

¹⁷⁹On the refined style of *Sylva*, see also de la Bédoyère 1995: 178 ff.

¹⁸⁰Hunter 1981: 101.

able Ambition of imitating their Illustrious Ancestors, and of worthily serving their Generation.¹⁸¹

Later Evelyn himself proclaimed that the book had had just that effect: it had encouraged the planting of “many millions of useful timber-trees throughout this nation” concluded “(without immodesty) from the many letters of acknowledgement received from gentlemen of the first quality, and others altogether strangers to me”¹⁸². One of these may have been Joseph Glanville, at the time the rector of the Abbey Church in Bath in southwestern England and member of the Royal Society along with Evelyn. In his own words, Glanville had distributed the book in his locality and in 1671 wrote to Evelyn saying that the local gentlemen who had received a copy “have to my knowledge been incited by it [*Sylva*] to plant some Thousands’ of trees”¹⁸³.

The historian John Nisbet tells us that Evelyn’s work had influenced both private persons and the English state to plant trees: “[a]part from the planting done in the royal woods and forests, details of Evelyn’s diary shew that he was frequently called upon to give advice with regard to laying out private plantations”¹⁸⁴. Evelyn himself proclaimed that *Sylva* had greatly inspired planting in England, and some have claimed that it had in particular inspired planting of naval timber: “[i]t is not too much to say that Evelyn’s book on forestry contributed to the ‘wooden walls’ of Nelson’s navy”¹⁸⁵.

However, as we saw, there is little *direct* evidence suggesting Evelyn’s influence upon what went on in the Forest of Dean. Also, Evelyn’s diary, while it does mention that Evelyn advised persons on gardening matters, it does not, as far as I can discover, contain passages about the alleged advice he gave to private persons regarding setting up *tree plantations*. The advice seems rather to have concerned the arrangement of gardens from an *aesthetic* point of view. Thus, consider this passage in the entry for 16 October 1671:

Here my Lord [Arlington]¹⁸⁶ was pleased to advise with me about

¹⁸¹Evelyn 1908: Vol. I, Ixxviii.

¹⁸²This passage stems from Evelyn’s a 1690 letter to Lady Sunderland (reprinted in Evelyn 1854: 317 ff.). A similar passage is to be found in the book’s dedication to the king in which Evelyn writes: “I need not Acquaint Your Majesty, how many Millions of Timber-Trees (beside infinite others) have been Propagated and Planted throughout Your Dominions, at the Instigation, and by the sole Direction of this Work” (Evelyn 1908: Vol. I lxxv).

¹⁸³Quoted in Hunter 1981: 93.

¹⁸⁴Nisbet’s Introduction to *Sylva*, Evelyn 1908: Vol. I, lxxviii.

¹⁸⁵Bowle 1981: 115.

¹⁸⁶Henry Bennet, 1st Earl of Arlington, secretary of state under Charles II.

ordering his plantations of firs, elms, limes, etc., up his park, and in all other places and avenues. I persuaded him to bring his park so near as to comprehend his house within it; which he resolved upon, it being now near a mile to it.¹⁸⁷

Another passage from 25 September 1672 also suggests Evelyn having given landscaping advice to Lord John Berkeley¹⁸⁸:

the fore-court is noble, so are the stables; and, above all, the gardens, which are incomparable by reason of the inequality of the ground, and a pretty piscina. The holly hedges on the terrace I advised the planting of.¹⁸⁹

Indeed, it is likely, given the fashion of the times for landowners to display their social standing by the construction of parkland for hunting and other recreational as well as aesthetic purposes, that the advice given by Evelyn was indeed mostly of that quality.

In the 17th century, English country gentlemen had a related social reason to improve their estates by tree planting. “Ever since medieval times”, the historian Michael Williams writes, “the forests had been the hunting grounds of royalty, and large areas of the country were preserved for the recreational use of the few”¹⁹⁰. Later on, the possession of such land where recreational activities could be conducted was a status symbol: “the owners displayed their wealth and power by refashioning the landscape, mainly through planting trees”¹⁹¹. In addition, Williams continues, “[i]n the urban sphere the cult of walking and promenading as a social exercise gathered momentum after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660” and the place to do that was “along formally laid out tree-lined walks and avenues”¹⁹². Indeed, Williams adds jokingly, “[w]hereas the Romans had taken off their clothes [and bathed] in order to meet socially, the English donned their best clothes and planted a great number of trees to do the same”¹⁹³. In the country side, a kind of a competition between landowners ensued, Williams argues, as “[l]andowners vied with each other in the complexity and extent of their

¹⁸⁷Evelyn 1901: Vol. II, 73.

¹⁸⁸John Berkeley, first Baron Berkeley of Stratton, member of the Privy Council and a civil servant.

¹⁸⁹Evelyn 1901: Vol. II, 84.

¹⁹⁰Williams 2003: 206.

¹⁹¹Williams 2003: 206.

¹⁹²Williams 2003: 206.

¹⁹³Williams 2003: 207.

plantings”¹⁹⁴. In these circumstances, Evelyn’s gardening know-how and vision, and his prominence as a gardener, would have seemed attractive to a gentleman wanting to redesign his estate.

That gardening was for Evelyn an important aesthetic and spiritual exercise is clear. Evelyn’s works on gardening tend to invest the subject with a spiritual, poetic quality and he develops an almost metaphysical account of the philosophy of gardening¹⁹⁵. Evelyn is said to have introduced to the English language the word ‘avenue’ to mean a drive with trees planted in straight lines on the sides, although such drives had existed well before Evelyn¹⁹⁶. Furthermore, Evelyn is said to have championed “one of the major shifts in the eighteenth-century landscape”, that from “the contained traditional Dutch garden to large open estates whose chief effects were dependent upon trees”¹⁹⁷. His test ground for ideas was his estate Sayes Court (in today’s London) in which “he had transformed the garden of the old-fashioned manor house, realizing French and Italian ideas” and that contained such specialties as “a fountain, an aviary ... [a] transparent beehive” and other fine examples of gardening vision and skill¹⁹⁸. This evidence suggests that Evelyn’s approach to matters of gardening and silviculture was always at least partly, if not significantly, aesthetic.

In addition to aesthetic and social reasons, private landowners could have been moved to planting by a significant but rather long-term promise of profit. According to the historian Sarah Couch, plantings undertaken in Evelyn’s time “were not solely expressions of the current taste in gardening but were inextricably connected with the social and economic preoccupations of the time”¹⁹⁹. Couch adds that “[l]arge scale planting was being encouraged to restore the depleted stocks of timber following the Civil War” which she also sees as the “the primary motive behind the publication of *Sylva*” although the “ornamental value” of avenues was a factor too²⁰⁰. At any rate, “[i]t is clear”, she says, “that the value of the eventual timber was a consideration if only as an insurance for the future”²⁰¹, a statement understandable in the light of the lengthy period of fifty

¹⁹⁴Williams 2003: 207.

¹⁹⁵Sherman 2002.

¹⁹⁶Couch 1992: 173-4.

¹⁹⁷Chambers 1988: 29.

¹⁹⁸Bowle 1981: 113.

¹⁹⁹Couch 1992: 176.

²⁰⁰Couch 1992: . 176.

²⁰¹Couch 1992: 176.

to over 200 years required for a tree such as an oak to reach the suitable size.

The impression that there was profit to be made in the timber business is further strengthened when we note the central role of timber in the 17th century life. As pointed out by the historian Lindsey Sharp, “[u]ntil the late eighteenth century, timber was one of the most basic requirements of human existence” and “[t]hus the importance of any widespread threat to timber supplies, whether local or national, becomes self-evident in the light of this seventeenth-century dependence on wood as the all-purpose material”²⁰². There was thus a natural market for timber even before and without Evelyn’s encouragement to plant more and it would be surprising that it should have taken Evelyn’s encouragement to plant trees given that timber was already very much on the agenda anyway.

According to Sharp, the early 17th century witnessed a surge in technical guide materials for farmers and landed gentlemen²⁰³, and it would have been interesting to read Sharp’s speculations as to why this was the case. One may speculate that the interest in agricultural improvements may have received impetus from the gradual growth of population after the ravages of plague in the 14th century and the pressure as well as commercial opportunities this constituted. Thus, according to the historian William H. Te Brake, the 17th century witnessed a second wave timber shortage in many localities of England. The first had been brought to an end by the plague in the 14th century, and it took until the 17th century that the human population had again reached levels that began to put serious pressure on timber resources. According to Te Brake, the times of timber crises saw the price of timber rise dramatically (several hundred percent) and had people return to the burning of sea-coal for fuel, shipped from up North in Newcastle, despite its smell and other disadvantages²⁰⁴ (about which one John Evelyn also wrote in 1661 a pamphlet titled *Fumifugium, or, The inconveniencie of the aer and smoak of London dissipated together with some remedies humbly proposed by J.E. esq. to His Sacred Majestie, and to the Parliament now assembled*). In the literature, early accounts do speak of a more or less unqualified timber crisis²⁰⁵, but a recent statement of the extent of the timber crisis is more cautious and tends to conclude that the crises were most likely local and of indirect national significance only when occurring in centres of national life such as London. In an age pre-dating

²⁰²Sharp 1975: . 51.

²⁰³Sharp 1975: . 52.

²⁰⁴Te Brake 1975: 356 ff. The price rise is confirmed in Williams 2003: 169 ff.

²⁰⁵See e.g. Nisbet’s introduction to *Sylva* (Evelyn 1908: Vol. I).

the railway and other efficient modes of transport, the transportation of timber from its source was always the critical issue, for the journey through a difficult landscape could sometimes increase the price of timber manyfold. Perhaps there was thus not a shortage of timber as such, but it seemed at times painfully costly or otherwise difficult to obtain suitable materials.²⁰⁶ In addition, the sense of a crisis could have been evoked by the military strategic issue of access to naval timber discussed above.

In these circumstances timber may well have seemed a commercially attractive option to the country gentleman even without him having read Evelyn's book. To a later edition of *Sylva* Evelyn indeed added a section discussing the commercial advantage of timber allowing Evelyn to "demonstrate through clear calculations that it was as advantageous financially, as it was aesthetically, for the contemporary landowner to plant trees"²⁰⁷. This section borrowed the figures from a recent agricultural guide book by John Smith titled *England's Improvement Reviv'd* (published in 1673). It is also clear from Smith and Evelyn's discussion that the time-scale upon which returns could be expected was rather lengthy: as Evelyn writes, the first felling could take place about eight or nine years after planting but the greatest profit would be derived after as long as seventy to over two hundred years of growth²⁰⁸ effectively making planting trees an investment for the well-being of future generations.

Michael Williams also confirms the economic motivation to plant timber. He argues that "while its [*Sylva*'s] publication certainly raised awareness of the desirability of tree planting, there is reason to believe that the trend had begun earlier". At any rate, according to Williams, "[t]he reasons for planting were primarily economic", for "it paid well to grow large trees, if one could wait the fifty or more years it took them to mature"²⁰⁹.

In addition to aesthetic, social and economic reasons, the historian G. D. Holmes argues that "Evelyn's enterprise was influential in inspiring landowners to plant trees for patriotic reasons"²¹⁰. The nature of these patriotic reasons is not elaborated further by Holmes but two likely significations can be distinguished in the literature: planting to provide timber for the maintenance of the navy and

²⁰⁶Williams 2003: 169 ff.

²⁰⁷Sharp 1975: 66.

²⁰⁸Evelyn 1908: Vol. II, 195 ff.

²⁰⁹Williams 2003: 206.

²¹⁰Holmes 1975: 72.

planting to symbolically indicate loyalty to the restored monarchy in distinction to forest destruction of the Commonwealth times. Nisbet, however, counters the claim from neglect saying that the Forest of Dean “would probably have been totally destroyed then but for the vigour and vigilance of Cromwell’s administration as regards both the prevention of waste and abuses in this forest, and the general preservation of timber throughout England”²¹¹. The Commonwealth era seems to have been taxing on forests as, according to the historian Miles Hadfield, in England in general a destructive dynamic was at work in which the Commonwealth “sold great areas of the forests on the Royalist’s lands that they had sequestrated to raise funds” and the Royalists on the other hand “sold timber to pay their fines”²¹². At any rate, if there was a patriotic motive from loyalty to the restored monarch, it is ironic, as we saw above, that the destruction at the Forest of Dean would appear to be significantly due to the self-interested actions of the last monarchs before the Interregnum as well as what appears to have been self-interested actions by John Winter sanctioned by the restored monarch. In any case, whether or not a patriotic motive inspired landowners to plant trees and whether or not Evelyn’s recommendations played a role, the English naval timber “came mainly from the royal forests”²¹³ and the role of private estates was subsidiary: “though unreliable” timber from private estates “could make up deficiencies from time to time”²¹⁴.

Finally, there were age old reasons for landowners to be interested in tree planting having to do with practicalities of running an estate. Thus, private landowners were concerned with “not only to produce income from the sale of timber, but also to enhance the landscape, provide cover for foxes and game, [and] shelter for exposed houses and fields”²¹⁵. These were, of course, ancient preoccupations. Also, the historian George Peterken argues that while “[m]any people believe that tree planting and therefore afforestation started with the publication of *Silva* by John Evelyn ... some planting and sowing are known from earlier periods” providing a brief overview of evidence of planting down until the Roman times²¹⁶.

²¹¹Nisbet 1906: 450.

²¹²Hadfield 1966: 40.

²¹³Williams 2003: 193.

²¹⁴Williams 2003: 196.

²¹⁵Peterken 1993: 85.

²¹⁶Peterken 1993: 85.

Evelyn, *Sylva* and Ideology

To return to Merchant's account of Evelyn's *Sylva*, the points raised above cast doubts on the claim that the work should be closely associated with the emergence of a mechanical-utilitarian ideology. As argued above, Evelyn's own interests and approach to gardening were significantly aesthetic and so was the advisory work he conducted for his chief audience, country gentlemen. Also, as we saw, making a close connection between *Sylva* and the request of the navy is not true to the facts. *Sylva* was, already in terms of its style, a work of an aesthetically minded gardening enthusiast and not in any primary sense a tract towards championing the orderly management of nature for human benefit. In any case, the issue of the English naval timber situation, that the work has been (too intimately) associated with, were not publicised by Evelyn but had rather been in the agenda already well before Evelyn. Whatever ideologies Evelyn may have championed, there was sufficient pragmatic interest around for there to be concern for example with the naval timber issue. Evelyn did not play a crucial role in introducing these utilitarian concerns for the well-being of the English people, they were already there. It was demonstrated, to the extent that the available information allows, that Evelyn, despite the proposal towards planting trees in the Forest of Dean, did not have any central role in bringing about such activities in the said forest.

Let it be clear that I do not wish to deny that Evelyn could not be cast as an ideologically minded individual for instance in terms of his loyalty to the King and the work Evelyn did for the English state. After the Restoration Evelyn frequented the court and met numerous gentlemen in various governmental positions—including working for the navy as one of the commissioners for the sick, wounded and prisoners of war, although only since October 1664, after *Sylva*'s publication²¹⁷— so that private conversations and exchange of ideas were perfectly possible.

However, in my mind, much more crucial in terms of understanding the relationship to nature of Evelyn's times is to construct ourselves a picture of *the organisation of human activities* in the frame of which they engaged in ecologically consequential actions regardless of what the numerous differently situated individuals we have encountered above may have thought and understood about the larger picture. One aspect of crucial interest here is the interest of the En-

²¹⁷Darley 2006: 193.

glish state in a steady supply of naval timber. In terms of its economics, England was a society increasingly engaged in foreign trade and imperialistic activities in the colonies which gave a plenty of pragmatic, economic and military strategic, reasons to pursue particular courses of action. A lot of what went on for example in the Forest of Dean had to do with the military-strategic importance of timber.

Note, however, that also a single man, Sir John Winter, as well as an anonymous mass of forest dwellers played their role in the story contributing in their various ways to the developments. Thus, in addition to the role of the organisation of human life, the story told above can be seen to highlight the diverse *perspectives* that different actors hold to their social settings, which implies different interests concerns, motivations and knowledge of the social reality in which they operated. In the story we encountered, among others, John Evelyn and the fellow's of the Society keen to promote and secure the financial preconditions of their pursuit of science. We encountered the navy officials with their particular work related interests. We encountered the characters of John Winter and the commoners with their own perspectives making also a difference to the proceedings in the Forest of Dean. In short, a whole host of motivations from ideological to pragmatic come to play in understanding the individuals' actions in given historical circumstances, and I certainly do not claim to have done more than scratched the surface of this diversity. It is just not plausible to try to reduce these to some shared ideology or to identify some ideology as the most central motivation. Given perspectival diversity, it is the shared organisation of action including its internal tensions, rather than shared ideology, that accounts for the concerted larger scale human engagement with nature. In the following chapters I shall reiterate and clarify this key claim of the present thesis in a variety of contexts.

Conclusion

In this chapter we identified and critically discussed a set of central ideological themes as well as looked at a number of particular examples in which the so-called ideological approach appears in a number of classics of environmental history. Due to the elusive nature of ideologies allegedly powering human and social action, the arguments provided above have also had to be suggestive in character. I have focused on pointing out implausibilities in ideological arguments as well as given alternative ways of glossing various phenomena for which ideological explanations

have been offered.

While the foregoing argumentation may have a certain negative or destructive overall character, also certain hints of a positive view of the cultural causes of environmental problems have emerged. The central themes here are what I refer to as the *over-intellectualisation* and intellectual *homogenisation* of human and social action easily occurring when we try to understand them as powered by a world-view or other such ideology. Thus, I claimed that it is one thing to attribute a high-flying ideology to a philosopher but quite another to attribute it to a mass of ordinary people engaged in quite mundane, everyday activities. Example cases of over-intellectualisation I discussed above included Donald Worster's metaphysically minded sheepmen, the masses colonising the Great West in William Cronon's story and materialism as the ruling value of our times. The case of John Evelyn's *Sylva*, on the other hand, was shown to involve a whole array of differently placed actors with quite particular or local and differing knowledges, motivations and interests —differences that Merchant's ideological story effectively overlooks in search of an underlying ideology driving the proceedings. The positive account contained in this draws from the idea that in the face of individual differences in perspective to social reality it is therefore more plausible to focus on the *organisation* rather than the ideological source of human and social action. I shall develop this idea in the following chapter with a particular focus on our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems seeing it as a performance of a shared organisation of human life. Thereafter, in Part 2 of this thesis, I provide an extensive social theoretical or philosophical discussion of the same core idea.

Chapter 4

The Cosmos of Commodification

When the division of labour has been once thoroughly established, it is but a very small part of a man's wants which the produce of his own labour can supply. He supplies the far greater part of them by exchanging that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he has occasion for. Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society.

— Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*

Green narratives have collapsed precisely because they were unable to withstand the steely quantification demanded by an attempt to get to grips with problems like climate change.

— George Monbiot, 2011¹

Chapter 2 identified global industrial market society and the dependence of human well-being on its functioning as the key context of environmental sociological discourse about environmental problems. In Chapter 3 the so-called ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems was shown to be unable to account for the organisatory quality of our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems. This chapter sets out

¹Monbiot 2011d.

the present positive account of the cultural causes of environmental problems. We shall take a closer look at certain key characteristics of the system of global industrial market society and consider their implications to the question from our collective performance of the system. Instead of *ideological sharing*, this chapter views the role of a certain *division*, namely division of labour, as the central characteristic of our societal existence and hence of our collective performance of the social. The points I shall make about global industrial market society are not novel as such, but the way this chapter relates them to the question of our collective performance of social systems and processes—in short, of performativity—and raises them as problems for the ideological approach is challenging, stimulating and I believe novel.

Global Industrial Market Society

The notion of global industrial market society denotes a complex form of the socio-economic organisation of human life. The three terms contained in the phrase—global, industrial and market—describe different aspects of the system. To begin with, the notion of *market* society can be seen to refer to two aspects of human socio-economic organisation. Firstly, it relates to the phenomenon of wage labour in that when work is compensated (usually) monetarily labour becomes a kind of a commodity exchanged via pay for other goods and services. This phenomenon of the *commodification of labour* was of central importance to Marx. In a market society there exists thus a kind of a market in which workers sell their labour power. Historians of capitalism such as Immanuel Wallerstein, of whose ideas more below, speak in this connection of the gradual historical “commodification of everything” as ever more areas of human productive activity become commodified, that is, that producers are wage labourers as well as that commodities thus produced are sold and bought in the market. This first sense of market society is important for the present purposes, for it allows us to grasp the dependence of actors on the functional stability of market society: workers’ well-being depends on continual employment and reception of a wage with which we purchase the material basis of our existence, a complex process to which a stable, functioning economy is virtually a precondition. In the second related sense market society is one where goods and services are sold in what is now an increasingly global market. The complex global links of production and consumption via the market, and their role in fostering human material well-

being characterised by significant inequalities, can be unknown to the actors in the system.

The notion of market society is closely related to the notion of industrial society. For one, industrial production, characterised by its comparative intensity and efficiency through the use of machinery and other technology, really only makes economic sense when there is a market consisting of wage labourers capable and interested in ejecting their wages ‘back into the economy’ by purchasing and consuming the industrially produced goods. It should be noted that capitalism is not synonymous with industrial market society although historically the two may perhaps be closely linked. The word ‘capitalism’ denotes a form of ownership of the capital employed in the production process, namely, that to a varying extent the means of production are in private ownership. In conceptual terms there is no contradiction in the idea that an industrial society would be a socialist or communist society —this is in fact a crucial feature of the Marxian utopia that a society can be industrial without being capitalist.

Let us emphasise that the industrial market society is a global phenomenon. For this purpose it may be better to speak of the industrial market *economy* as the word ‘society’ connotes a distinct unit like a nation state or country while the global industrial market economy is something that essentially transgresses national boundaries. In this thesis, the term ‘industrial market society’ is to be understood in the wider sense. The above described dynamic of industrial production and consumption is today an essentially global phenomenon where geographically remote and ideologically diverse areas are in interaction via economic links. Global economic interconnections are highlighted, for instance, by the fact that while in the period from 1990 to 2009 the United Kingdom reduced its total greenhouse gas emissions by some third², yet allegedly more than the reduced amount of emissions simply ‘moved abroad’ with more and more UK consumed goods being produced elsewhere³. Some commentators indeed speak of the world-economy or world economic system, most notably Immanuel Wallerstein, whose work we shall review shortly.

²Department of Energy and Climate Change 2011: Table 2.

³Davis & Caldeira 2010. The point is made in Monbiot 2011a.

Population, Production, Consumption and Division of Labour

A striking fact about global industrial market society surely is the population scale at which it is performed. The last two hundred years have seen a dramatic acceleration of the growth in human population. Between 1750 and 1900 the human population more than doubled, from 791 million to 1.7 billion, but this is still dwarfed by the most recent developments: in the 20th century the world population went up from the 1.7 billion to over 6 billion.⁴

The growth has been most dramatic in the last 100 years, but arguably the groundwork for making such numbers possible was made in the preceding centuries —just as the costs of these developments will be paid in the future. Population growth due to natural factors (e.g. ‘good years’) is obviously too limited in scope to account for the dramatic population increase, hence the causes of growth have been looked for in human induced factors. For the present argument, what is important is not to find *the* cause but to obtain a view of the wider social mechanisms that give rise to and maintain the population.

It is sometimes said that until about 1800 the world was held within the so-called *Malthusian limits*⁵. The term ‘Malthusian limit’, or sometimes ‘Malthusian check’, derives from the classic population theory of Thomas Malthus in his *An Essay on the Principles of Population*⁶. According to Malthus, the ultimate factor regulating population growth or decline is the availability of the means of subsistence. The basic logic that keeps the human population in check is that, if growing uncontrollably, the demands of the human population eventually outstrip the capacity of the environment to support human life. The population is then automatically checked by the ensuing outbreaks of famine, disease and war, but also other more intellectual, cultural or societal factors such as voluntary birth control, Malthus argued.

Indicating that we may be reaching the Malthusian limit, the aforementioned *Ecological Footprint* of the WWF, an index measuring the human impact on the environment, tells us that sometime in the 1980s the human consumption of natural resources began to exceed the earth’s biocapacity, that is, its capacity to provide resources taking into account regeneration from human impact⁷. Unless

⁴United Nations Population Division 1999.

⁵Clark 2007.

⁶Malthus 1826.

⁷See WWF 2006 and 2008.

corrective action is taken, the world would eventually seem to have to feel the impact of various kinds of Malthusian checks reducing human population due to lack of sustenance, or so the WWF's index gives us a reason to assume.

At any rate, historically, after 1800 the Malthusian limits were seemingly broken, or rather expanded: the human population just kept growing and growing, the Malthusian check apparently not taking effect. From the Malthusian point of view this must be because while the human population increased for some reason it did not outstrip the capacity of the environment to support life. Hence the population did not become subject to population decreasing effects. It seems that now the earth just is capable of supporting more human beings than before.

An increase in the human efficiency to exploit the environment is one key phrase in understanding these developments. On a basic level, we are more efficient at producing food. This is due to improved know-how and technology pertaining to various aspects of agricultural processes as well as to the fact that more and more of the earth's surface is in productive use. On the other hand, there is a favourable balance in the death and birth rates: annually more people are born than pass away. This is probably due to things like better health through better hygiene and medicine which leads among other things to longer life expectancy. Also important are reductions in mortality, in particular in developing countries of the African and Asian continents: the 1999 United Nations report on world population argued that “[t]he rapid growth of the world population started in 1950, with reductions in mortality in the less developed regions”⁸.

It should always be kept in mind that these changes display massive global inequalities in what comes to the improvement of material conditions so much so that in 1800 *on average* the material living standards on the planet have been estimated not to have been better than they were in the darkest stone age⁹. Growth in population and improvements in material well-being for some disguise inequalities, poverty and a reduction of standards of living for others.

A lot of economic historical literature tends to focus on working out the *deciding factors* bringing about the spectacular economic rise of the West as powered by science, technology and ideology¹⁰. However, without wishing to discredit

⁸United Nations Population Division 1999: 4.

⁹Clark 2007: 1.

¹⁰See e.g. Walt Rostow's classic work on the preconditions of the European early-modern economic 'take-off' (Rostow 1975), and more recent work by Jack Goldstone (2004 and 2008). One of the trend-setters here certainly must have been Max Weber's argument from the Protestant ethic and the spirit of Capitalism as explaining the divergent developmental paths taken by the

this literature, for the present purposes it is important not to lose sight of the social institutional background against which for instance medical advances and the human population growth obtain. While for example improvements in health through modern scientific medical knowledge are extremely important in explaining human population growth, it is equally important to see that discoveries come to nothing unless there exists a complex system of social institutions within which technological and medical advances are made, turned into products, distributed, purchased and consumed. Also, the historical increase in the efficiency in food production does undoubtedly owe a great deal to certain technological discoveries. However a given piece of technology can begin to make a difference in societies only as soon as the practical questions of the commercialisation of technology, production and distribution, are addressed. This claim is supported historically for example by the case of artificial fertilisers that began to make practical difference some half a century after their invention as the industry and markets had developed sufficiently to address the question from commercialisation of fertiliser production and distribution.

Drawing attention to the complex systems of extraction, production, distribution, sale and consumption underlying human life in global industrial market society is effectively to draw attention to one of its absolutely key characteristics, namely, *division of labour*. The concept is obviously well-known and not hugely controversial. A central logic behind division of labour is, as Adam Smith put it in the epigraph to this chapter, that a very small part of our wants are satisfied by the products of our own labour. Rather, in the system of division of labour, the labour I expend, say, in academic research brings me a wage with which I shall be able to purchase products and services towards satisfying my wants. Division of labour thus goes hand in hand with the notion of wage labour and money economy which characterise modern society, in Smith's words, as a commercial society, or as a market society as I have referred to it above. The basic and core processes of global industrial market society —extraction, production, distribution, sale and consumption— are all immense complex, social processes shot through with global division of labour and, importantly, made possible by a complex infrastructure of a vast array of social institutions.

The system is vast and intricate, an “immense cosmos” in Max Weber's

Orient and the Occident (Weber 1930).

words¹¹, but some handle on this complexity can be gathered from the 2009 report of *The World Economic Forum* (WEF) titled the *Global Competitiveness Report*¹² analysing the nature and factors contributing to national economic competitiveness. Whatever blind spots and bias towards free-trade¹³ such a report may have, it is nevertheless in many respects a telling guide to the global economic system.

The report identifies “12 pillars of economic competitiveness” representing a range of factors identified in a number of attempts by economists to analyse the nature of economic systems.

This attempt has ranged from Adam Smith’s focus on specialization and the division of labour to neoclassical economists’ emphasis on investment in physical capital and infrastructure and, more recently, to interest in other mechanisms such as education and training, technological progress (whether created within the country or adopted from abroad), macroeconomic stability, good governance, the rule of law, transparent and well-functioning institutions, firm sophistication, demand conditions, market size, and many others.¹⁴

In a nutshell, the output of whatever products and services an economy produces is a function of a number of systemic or organisatory properties of the economic system, properties such as existing systems of education and training of workforce, the legal system that allows the making of contracts, monetary transactions, distribution of goods together with its infrastructures, and many many other such things. “The central point” about these factors, the report continues, “is that they are not mutually exclusive” but work together in a functioning economy.¹⁵ Thinking about the vast number of very ordinary activities and roles that are covered even in such a summary description, one begins to get a handle on the truly mind-boggling vastness of the system of division of labour in which we collectively perform global industrial market society. In other words, when we note that the various pillars of a functioning economy are performed by

¹¹Weber 1930: 54.

¹²WEF 2009.

¹³The report states, for one, that “competitiveness is hindered by distortionary or burdensome taxes and by restrictive and discriminatory rules on foreign direct investment (FDI) — limiting foreign ownership — as well as on international trade” (WEF 2009: 5). This claim we know to be contestable, to say the least. For one, Immanuel Wallerstein argues that economic flourishing of one party in the world-system often results from semi-monopolistic conditions favouring the flourishing party. The dynamics of this are explained e.g. in Wallerstein 1983.

¹⁴WEF 2009: Preface.

¹⁵WEF 2009: Preface.

countless recursive, day to day activities by ordinary people, we observe that a functioning economy is based on an extensive division of labour within a shared organisation.

Today, unprecedented numbers of people collectively perform this vast system and a particularly problematic aspect of all this is that, due to division of labour, the well-being of unprecedented numbers of people, all inequalities notwithstanding, depends upon the functioning of global industrial market society. In a moment I shall discuss an important consequence of this, namely the structural nature of the environmental burden of global industrial market society. Here I want to highlight the point that the *intensity* of the human impact upon the environment is essentially a function of the performance of global industrial market society on a large population scale which I think must be conceived as an organisatory, not an ideological, phenomenon. In other words, a key task for any view on the cultural causes of environmental problems is to account for the intensity at which we consume the natural environment which I argue can only be done by an organisatory approach.

Structural Environmental Burden

The other side of the complexity of division of labour is the immense difficulty of dismantling the system for instance in order to combat environmental problems. A number of contemporary attempts to work out a working model for a scaled back economic system exist¹⁶. Consider the vision provided in one such a report, the New Economic Foundation's (NEF) *The Great Transition*. The NEF recognises that one of the greatest challenges of transforming global industrial market society to an ecologically more sustainable direction is to scale back economic activity in such a way that it does not leave large numbers of people standing on nothing in terms of source of livelihood. In other words, it is clear that the unprecedented volume of production and consumption taking place in the frame of global industrial market society needs to be scaled back but without causing a collapse in the economic system in the context of which people provide for themselves. The challenge is enormous as the NEF observes that "headline indicators such as GDP will have to fall by as much as a third" in order for humanity

¹⁶See e.g. Daly 1996, Jackson 2009 and NEF 2010a. The economist Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (1906–1994) is commonly recognised as a pioneer of ecologically orientated economic theory.

to halt the ecological destruction of the planet. As one of the means, the NEF proposes a large scale return to local production¹⁷ necessitating a mass learning of agricultural, craft and other techniques¹⁸. Local production and a degree of self-sufficiency would scale back global economic interaction, production and consumption but keep people employed and nourished, or so the NEF suggests. Needless to say, steps towards this direction will be very hard to take considering that action needs to be taken by globally concerted agreement.

The pressing need to scale back economic activity coupled with the immense difficulty of doing so constitutes the hard structural core of environmental problems. Even if the scaling back could be achieved—which is tough given the current level of human population, which is a population of an industrial world-economy, not a local organic economy—we still face what the British environmentalist George Monbiot noted is “a remarkable but seldom-noticed problem: that most of those who advocate an off-grid, land-based economy have made no provision for manufactures”. Monbiot was not “talking about the pointless rubbish in the FT’s How to Spend It supplement”, but about providing “the energy required to make bricks, glass, metal tools and utensils, textiles ... ceramics and soap: commodities which almost everyone sees as the barest possible requirements”¹⁹.

Numbers provided by Gutowski *et al* bring the point about structural unsustainability into a stark relief. In their study of the environmental impacts of a range of life styles in the United States they were able to

identify a floor, below which environmental impacts for people living in the United States do not drop. For example, none of the life styles studied here ever resulted in an energy requirement below 120 GJ [giga-joule] (in 1997). This includes the life style of a five year old child, a homeless person and a Buddhist monk.²⁰

Crucially, they point out that the figure of 120 GJ “is almost double the

¹⁷“The Great Localisation” (NEF 2010a: 56 ff).

¹⁸“The Great Reskilling” (NEF 2010a: 67 ff).

¹⁹Monbiot 2011c. A similar point was made by another British environmentalist Paul Kingsnorth: “The greens are in a corner. If you believe that climate change will wreck the Earth and that the only way to prevent that from happening is to ‘reduce emissions’ in a fantastically short time period, then you are in a very perilous place. It’s not that this argument is necessarily wrong — it probably isn’t, though the lack of certainty is always worth highlighting. But it is so obviously impossible to do what it is claimed Must Be Done to stop it that futility or despair can end up being the only places to turn.” (Kingsnorth 2011).

²⁰Gutowski *et al*. 2008: 2. I thank Monica Aufrecht for bringing this study to my attention.

global average energy use in that year (64 GJ)”²¹. Thus, even a consumptively and thus environmentally fairly low intensity life style, as we imagine that of a monk to be, is of an alarmingly environmentally consequential nature *when lived in the frame of a developed society*. Why? Because life in a developed society is supported by a complex infrastructure of social institutions that already in themselves collectively make up an environmentally burdensome whole. The calculations of Gutowski *et al* took into account a range of environmental impact areas from housing to transportation as well as subsidies particular to some life style, such as those from “educational services, Medicare, Medicaid” and “insurance companies”. Many of these provide very basic services and constitute very basic features of our environments —such as basic transportation and sanitation infrastructures, health care and education— that we demand a right to and consider part of good life. They also mean that a society providing them automatically puts an inevitable, and significant, burden upon the environment simply by providing certain basic services to its members. The burden results essentially from the fact that infrastructure and services do not exist in a vacuum but rely upon the aforementioned pillars of economic productivity which involve a large number of actors, artefacts and so on in the recursive, daily performance of the system.

The general form of argument advanced above can I think justifiably be referred to as Marxian in so far as a central general aspect of Marx’s critical philosophy was to trace the structural effects of the organisation of human life on the character and quality of human life. Thus, for instance the Marxian writer Conrad Lodziak advanced an argument of the same structural form drawing from the effects of division of labour on the character of human life. Lodziak wrote that in a society of advanced division of labour “most people do not have direct access to all the means necessary for their own survival”, and concluded that “[s]urvival needs, for the vast majority, can be addressed *only* by the purchase of the relevant goods”²². In this sense quite a specific form of consumption by monetary purchases of globally industrially manufactured goods is *effectively compulsory* and imposed by the form of organisation of production.

In another argument of the same form, Lodziak claimed that “[b]eing employed structures our range of action by structuring our ‘free time’ ”²³. As “to be

²¹Gutowski *et al.* 2008: 2.

²²Lodziak 2002: 89.

²³Lodziak 2002: 100.

employed is a priority for the vast majority for the simple reason that it provides survival money”, this means that free time —and activities such as child-rearing and family time— must take place in the “fragmented time” between, after or on holiday from employment with whatever energy resources and fitness are left after employment²⁴. Lodziak thus concluded that “the [temporal and monetary] scope for expensive forms of unnecessary consumption is far more limited than the images of ‘affluent society’ suggest”²⁵. The general Marxian thrust of Lodziak’s arguments resides in the insistence that to understand modern consumption we need to understand “the material power of the capitalist system to organise effectively the means through which we are to satisfy our basic needs, however these might be interpreted”²⁶.

The immense scale of the structural problem illustrated above is very disconcerting. In my view an ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems cannot even begin to consider this precisely because of its focus on ideologies as opposed to the systemic, structural or organisatory root of these problems.

The Cultural Causes of Environmental Problems

Let us now turn to making explicit the significance of the foregoing to our understanding of our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems. To make this argument, I shall first turn to an important aspect of the historical emergence of the system of global industrial market economy. A good guide here is the work of the economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein on world-systems.

A world-system, according to Wallerstein, is first of all “an economic, not a political entity” being “larger than any juridically-defined political unit”. In a world-system the “basic linkage between the parts of the system is economic”²⁷. In a world-system, in other words, there is not one ruler, parliament or other one instance, who politically rule over the whole of the system, rather political empires are mere units in the whole system. Wallerstein adds that “it was a mark of political wisdom to realize this”, namely, that within the world-economy one may “thrive, produce, and expand without the emergence of a unified political

²⁴Lodziak 2002: 98, 101.

²⁵Lodziak 2002: 109.

²⁶Lodziak 2002: 93.

²⁷Wallerstein 1974: 15.

structure”²⁸. One may thrive —given certain favourable ‘semi-monopolistic’ conditions, as Wallerstein often emphasises— by being favourably placed to utilise the global system of production, exchange and consumption.

This can be used to pose the first challenge to an ideological account of the human performance of global industrial market economy: the component parts of this interacting, interdependent system have *the most diverse histories, cultural traditions and political systems*. This observation puts great strain on any attempt to find a common ideological denominator characterising the modern human relationship to nature. I have already alluded to this point above in Chapter 3 where we saw the anthropologist Conrad Kottak argue that culturally shared “cognized models” may not be the right tool for conceptualising the human relationship to her surroundings in a globalised, ideologically fragmented yet interconnected and interacting world. The point was also alluded to earlier in this chapter where we noted the essentially global character of industrial market society and division of labour within it.

Turn now to a second challenge to the ideological approach that can also be articulated by way of a historical point arising from Immanuel Wallerstein’s work. Although global trade has existed since time immemorial, Wallerstein argues, it had been conducted mainly in terms of “luxuries, not in bulk goods”²⁹. It was only “within the framework of modern world-economy that long-distance trade could convert itself in part into bulk trade which would, in turn, feed the process of expanded production”³⁰.

Now, this development from trade in luxuries to trade in bulk is in many ways significant, for one because by coming to trade in bulk, the world-economy began to include within its growing sphere *the mass of ordinary people* who could not afford luxury goods but could afford the cheaper bulk goods. Expanded production, furthermore, drew in people in large numbers not only as consumers but as producers, that is, as workers and thus their livelihoods —their well-being with warts and all— became coupled with the newly expanded upon area of economic activity. There are plenty of other examples of similar historical expansions of the productive-consumptive loops. Eric Hobsbawm wrote that “the products most likely to be mass produced were those which could be used by very large numbers of small producers such as farmers and needle-women (the

²⁸Wallerstein 1974: 16 and footnote 3.

²⁹Wallerstein 1974: 20.

³⁰Wallerstein 1974: 20-1.

sewing-machine), in offices (the typewriter), consumer goods such as watches, but above all the small arms and ammunition of war”³¹. A more recent example still of a luxury item becoming a bulk good is the emergence of cheap holidaying and the associated mass tourism that in a number of countries now contribute an important share of the national economic activity³².

Our second objection to the ideological approach is thus that, as the mass of ordinary people were drawn to play a role in the world-economic system, whatever shared ideological basis there may have been for human action was immediately diluted. For what kind of a grasp did, say, the average 18th century European cottager-turned-*proto-industrial-worker* have of the system she had just become a part of? To begin with, these people were mostly illiterate to read and grasp whatever economic texts may have been around. And what did it mean to them to speak of some high-flying utopias of material welfare for all? Marxists, for one, have been keen to argue that the (proto-)industrial workers did not really have an option but to toil as they could and they would in any case certainly not have chosen the lot they had, if they had had an option. Thus, if there was an ideology behind the emergence and everyday functioning of global industrial market society it was not one of a majority of the ‘performers’ of the system³³.

Also, the coupling of a newly established area of economic activity with the livelihoods and well-being of people yields a surprising point of view on our collective performance of global industrial market society. Consider again mass holidaying. Mass holidaying would seem to be the very embodiment of materialistic vanity, a prime example of a so-called ‘post-necessity value’, something without which we would well survive. Yet, dismantle this form of economic activity for instance for environmental reasons and you have a gaping hole in national economies and a host of associated problems such as unemployment. The important point regarding our collective performance of mass holidaying thus is: there is a significant sense in which we do not perform mass tourism *only* because of vanity, that is because of an ideology, but to a significant extent because of its role in the everyday socio-economic organisation of human life. In other words, to emphasise the consumer side of holidaying as a vain exercise in post-necessity values ignores the other side of our collective performance of holidaying, namely the side of the producer(s) of the holiday.

³¹Hobsbawm 1975: 60-1.

³²Inglis 2000.

³³See the epigraph to Chapter 7.

This takes us to the third point against the ideological approach. As our collective performance of global industrial market society consists of these *countless very mundane, everyday activities* and interactions with and around artefacts, commodities, infrastructure and services, it cannot be said to have an effective ideological source. In a phrase, mundane everydayness is not performed out of a world-view, perception, ideology or the like. We have seen that to account for the cultural causes of environmental problems one must account for the recursive performance of global industrial market society by the masses of globally interconnected peoples in essentially very mundane broadly speaking productive and consumptive activities. This the ideological approach cannot do, for activities in mundane everydayness simply do not have a general ideological driver.

I shall have a great deal more to say about this so-called *everydayness* aspect of our collective performance of social systems and processes in the social theoretical side of the present argument in Part 2. I believe that the idea can be found in the Wittgensteinian idea of our blind or non-epistemic relationship to social reality. The point with everydayness has also already been talked about above in Chapter 3 under a slightly different guise. There I suggested that the conceptual, motivational and intentional contents ‘in the heads’ of the various actors we encountered in the particular historical examples we considered — Worster’s sheepmen, Cronon’s colonisers and the various parties in the case of John Evelyn and *Sylva*— be best conceived as local, situated and contextual in character exhibiting individual differences. I accused the ideological approach of over-intellectualising and intellectually homogenising us in the attempt to find a shared, ideological driver of our diverse activities. It is better, I argued, to conceive the various actors as sharing, not a mentality, but a form of organisation of their activities.

One can also express the point about everydayness advanced here by saying that the human relationship to nature is *indirect* and mediated by the form of organisation of human activity. This is to say, the human relationship to nature is not ‘present’ in the actors’ mentalities as we operate in our everyday lives — instead, a whole array of different, local, situated and contextualised contents probably are. The human relationship to nature, if there is such a thing, is a property of the organisation of human activity, not a common ideological denominator allegedly shared by all or most actors. By contrast, the ideological approach would have to claim the opposite: it would seem to have to say that

our nature relationship is direct, ‘present’ in and a property of all of us, for it is characterised essentially by our shared mentality.

As the fourth objection to the ideological approach, I raise the issue of *arbitrariness* that the ideological approach casts as one central feature of the form that our societal existence and hence also our nature relationship happens to take. For the environmentalist view is very much characterised by its constructivist character in that the human relationship to nature is conceived as an ultimately arbitrary ideologically powered fancy to exploit nature for material gains. That is, in so far as environmentalism casts a certain collective mentality as the root of our ecological problems, it implies that if we only would *think* differently we would have taken, if not the sole, then at least a very decisive step towards a more ecological society. This view is, furthermore, echoed in social theory in that according to social theoretical collectivist constructivism the striking characteristic of social reality is its *self-referentiality*, that is, how it appears to be given rise to by a collective decision to adhere to a set of meanings, symbolism —not whatever purposes, point or function it can be seen to serve— and hence the arbitrariness, contingency. As one commentator pointed out, in a different context but also in criticism of constructivism, “[w]hen the consumption of food, for example, is treated solely as a symbolic activity, the main purpose of consuming food does not figure in its explanation”³⁴. I shall return to the social theoretical side of this issue in Part 2. At any rate, in the argument of the present thesis, the form of organisation of human life, and thereby our nature relationship, is by no means arbitrary. That is to say, as I have argued above, global industrial market society serves the important function of providing for our material well-being, all inequalities notwithstanding. And precisely there lies the challenge of addressing environmental problems, namely, in coming up with and transferring to an alternative, less environmentally costly, form of socio-economic organisation of human life that at the same time serves the function of providing for human material well-being on an adequate level.

Conclusion

The argument advanced in this chapter was that the essential character of the human induced environmental disruption resides in the form of organisation of human activity and it therefore being adopted and acted out on a larger popula-

³⁴Lodziak 2002: 15.

tion scale on a recursive, day to day basis. The key is to be able to account for the *intensity* of the human impact on the environment. This is most realistically seen as a function of the form of organisation of masses of people on a recursive, everyday basis.

In an effort to characterise the system of global industrial market society, the chapter provided an interdisciplinary look at certain key features of the system. Fairly basic observations about the global, industrial and market societal character of the socio-economic form of organisation of human life were made. The twelve pillars of competitiveness highlighted the complexity and embeddedness of a functioning economy in the very mundane and repetitive everyday activities of the masses. Historical work of Immanuel Wallerstein was reviewed in order to highlight the important aspect of the world-economic system that the population scale upon which it operates is due to its historical expansion to include the less well-off producing and consuming masses in its sphere. While the explosive growth in human population may in some immediate sense be due to medical and other innovations, it is crucial to remember that innovations themselves are possible only in a complex global system of education, training, distribution, selling and buying of new technologies and techniques—in a phrase, in a system characterised by global division of labour.

The central take-home message of the chapter is thus the immense interconnected variety underlying the organisation of human life in the form of global industrial market society. In this guise the chapter has raised the all important themes of everydayness of human activity as well as the individual differences in perspective to, interest in and knowledge of the social. We shall return to these themes again and again below and in Part 2 where they form the core of the present Wittgensteinian approach to social action.

Part 2

Chapter 5

Losing Everything Philosophically Astonishing

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: —How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*.

— John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Let us then make the experiment whether we may not be more successful in metaphysics, if we assume that the objects must conform to our cognition.

— Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

Try not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’ at all.

— Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

The remaining chapters of this study reflect upon the social theoretical and philosophical aspects of the foregoing argument. As such these chapters will be of a rather different character from the preceding discussion, but they are essential for providing a perceptive account of the cultural causes of environmental problems in the intended breath and depth.

As the argument of this thesis took shape and I thought about its theoretical implications, to my surprise it began to seem to me that there obtain certain paradigmatic tendencies in philosophy and social theory that steer thought towards an ideological approach to the question of the cultural causes of environmental problems. The following appears to be the main source of these tendencies. The human collective performance of social systems and processes, in short social or collective action, has in social theory and philosophy been widely conceived as relying upon *shared* conceptualisations, ideas and the like —that is, ideology. In the following chapters I shall discuss a range of authors exemplifying this, but a central common theme among them is the idea of shared normative orientations as underlying cohesive social life. This tendency is itself underlined by the idea of *the essentiality of the mind* —and associated mental phenomena such as knowledge, intention, motivation and thought— to explanations of human action. According to a very natural and paradigmatic picture¹, our concept of action is, in the words of a philosopher, “based on the idea of doing something at will under the guidance of beliefs”² and thus we feel that explanations of human action must elucidate its mental *source* in beliefs and knowledge.

In sociological thought this individualistic idea often appears in a *collectivised* form: social action flows from a *collectively held and shared mental source* of action —a world-view, mentality, conceptual scheme, normative orientation or, in short, an ideology— that drives social action as well as defines groups, communities, cultures and ages³. While important differences exist among various thinkers, this core idea of the importance of the *shared mental source of action* remains widely accepted and so I shall assign it a label, *the paradigm from sharing*. I shall argue these points in more detail by way of a brief intellectual historical overview of selected aspects of the history of social theory in the following section. In the second section, I shall preliminarily explore the alternative Wittgensteinian philosophy of social action that I develop in more detail in the later chapters of this thesis. I believe that the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein can be used to construct an alternative theoretical position capable of conceptualising the or-

¹Throughout this thesis I have used the word ‘picture’ in the sense in which Wittgenstein frequently used it. The sense is summarised neatly by Nigel Pleasants: “A philosophical picture, in Wittgenstein’s sense, is a theoretical representation which has lost its representational status and has been reified into a peculiarly compelling portrayal of the essence of some phenomenon” (Pleasants 1999: 3). See also Egan 2011.

²Tuomela 2003: 125.

³McSweeney 2002.

ganisatory character of the cultural causes of environmental problems although we will have to read him differently than is customary.

In this Part 2, our ultimate purpose in challenging the paradigm from sharing and the idea of the essentiality of the mind to explanations of human action is that they lend support to the ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems. The paradigm fits very well with the view that there is a *shared mentality* —the mechanical, imperialistic and utilitarian world-view— at the root of the modern human relationship to nature and thus also at the root of our collectively performed environmental problems. One could say, the environmentalist argument that our ecological predicament has ideological roots is a form of collectivism. However, it will be recalled that the argument of Part 1 was that social action in and towards the environment does not essentially draw from how people and communities *conceptualise* nature, but how the life of the masses is *organised* on a recursive, everyday basis. To put it plainly, it is not helpful to look for the essence of our nature relationship in our heads —that is, in our shared world-view, mentality, concepts, values or the like. Yet, as I shall argue with examples below, a lot of existing social theory and philosophy of the social sciences —in particular of the Wittgensteinian breed, that will be my chief focus in this thesis— effectively looks for the essence of human sociality in our heads in the form of a shared ideology if some kind. The task of this Part 2, then, is to look for a theoretical picture that supports the views expressed in Part 1, that is, we look for an *organisatory* rather than an *ideological* picture of social action.

The Paradigm from Sharing

We begin with a brief intellectual historical sketch of the so-called ideological approach and the closely linked paradigm from sharing. I say ‘sketch’ because in the space available the remarks provided below admittedly fall far short of a proper intellectual history of any rigorous quality.⁴

As briefly indicated above, by the paradigm from sharing I designate a particular picture paradigmatic to social theory regarding the human being as a knowing and acting being. This could be characterised as the conception of the human being as a *symbolic, cultural* being —that is, a being in possession of

⁴Stephen Turner also offers a brief intellectual history of a view very similar to what I refer to as the paradigm from sharing (Turner 1994: Chapter 1).

culturally mediated mental representations of the world around her according to which she directs her actions in it. Consequently, it has seemed obvious in human sciences that the attempt to explain human action, social action in particular, will centrally have to involve reference to how human beings conceptualise social reality, these conceptions being the shared source of cohesive social action but also defining and demarcating collectives ideologically as unified cultures, societies, peoples and as an age. I refer to this picture as collectivism.

I argue that there remains a distinct conceptual —if not intellectual historical— link between collectivism and its historical roots in certain forms of classic *individualism*, for the shift from individualism to collectivism has not been as radical as it could be. The core of individualism is the view of the human being as a knowing and acting being, a much criticised aspect of which is the putative privacy and autonomy of the individual mind. Collectivism, by contrast, claims to improve upon this and as it were multiplies the knowing and acting individuals aligning or interconnecting their mentalities: social action is collective doing something at will under the guidance of *shared* beliefs. Thus, as was observed by a social theorist, the shift is less radical than it may seem, for “[m]any alleged ontological nonindividualisms turn out to be ontological individualisms ... their “opposition” to individualism ... being a stand against too narrow a construal of the stratum of the individual”⁵. In the standard collectivist critique, the core of this narrow construal is the ignorance by individualism of the social construction of human cognition. Collectivism views human cognition as social throughout given rise to and maintained by the social processes of training and correction.

In the present view, the shift from individualism to collectivism is not complete. The complete shift would involve abandoning the idea of the essentiality of the mind to social action. In Wittgenstein’s words, we should focus on the *surroundings or circumstances*, and not the *source*, of social action; or we should not attempt to analyse the *mental ontology* (concepts, beliefs) but the *organisation* of social action. In later chapters I shall argue that this non-ontological and organisatory approach is implicit in the later Wittgenstein, while a lot of Wittgensteinian secondary literature continue to read him as an ontologist.

To make explicit the nature of the shift from individualism to collectivism, I shall attempt to illustrate the intellectual historical roots of collectivism in the paradigmatic shift towards interest in the human mind in early modern philos-

⁵Schatzki 2002a: 127.

ophy. As is now well-recognised due to critiques of individualism for example by Richard Rorty⁶, the conception of the human being as an observer of facts and entertainer of ideas can be seen to relate to the early modern philosophies of Descartes and Locke and via them it has its roots in the emerging natural scientific world-view. One key work here is John Locke's *Essay*⁷ in which he develops a version of what has come to be called the causal theory of meaning: Locke discusses the process of experience giving rise to various kinds of ideas in the human mind and how these ideas in turn are what language expresses. Similar views were expressed by Descartes, Hume and others.

Of course significant historical shifts have since occurred in how philosophers view human cognition, but also a certain continuity can be observed the core of which lies in the continuing acceptance of the view from the essentiality of the mind. Kant, for one, argued that perception is always laden with a priori categories of cognition, a position that is not directly or naively realist as for example Locke's is. Still, at the same time Kant preserved crucial bits of the heritage from Descartes and Locke—that is, the epistemological focus and the central role of the mind, knowledge and ideas—and so for example Richard Rorty spoke of “the Descartes-Locke-Kant tradition”⁸.

I shall suggest that we can see the philosophical groundwork from Locke and others also as the groundwork for collectivism, the ideological approach and the paradigm from sharing as they figure later in human sciences. At some point a crucial collectivist modification was made to the classic individualist story and here I believe the figures of Max Weber and Talcott Parsons rise to the fore, not perhaps so much because they were first to put forward such ideas—they were not—, but because of their immense influence in social theory, whether subsequent writers agreed with them or not.⁹

In what way did Max Weber then link the individualistic views in classic philosophy with later collectivist views in sociological and historical literature? Kant's influential idea of the categories of the human mind as imposing a form upon experience, the mind thus as it were construing (our experience of) reality, certainly did a great deal towards making collectivist constructivism conceivable

⁶Rorty 2009.

⁷Locke 1690.

⁸Rorty 2009: 8-9.

⁹See Turner 2010: Chapter 5, for similar observations about the history of collectivism with reference to the work of the influential American philosopher Wilfrid Sellars (1912–1989) and others.

in the first place. But Weber played a crucial role in adapting Kant's ideas to social theory¹⁰. Weber's methodological views were formed in the frame of a 19th century German debate (*Methodenstreit*) about the proper method for the emerging social sciences between hermeneutics and historicism on the one hand and positivism on the other. It has been argued that among the 19th century German intelligentsia existed a strong distaste of science and the scientific method deriving from earlier idealism in German philosophy and the classic romantic sentimentalist literature¹¹. As one commentator put it, to this climate Weber responded with a "complex, middle-of-the-road position"¹² insisting on, with positivism, the importance of a systematic, scientific approach to explanation of social phenomena but acknowledging, with hermeneutics, the historicity of human ideas, values, motivations and the like. Weber's approach can thus perhaps be seen as a kind of amalgamation of two traditions and this in turn as the dual root of modern social sciences.

Weber's influential methodology, laid down with force and clarity in the beginning of his monumental *Economy and Society*¹³, builds upon the ideas of interpretive understanding, or *verstehende Soziologie*, and of causal explanation of human conduct. Interpretive understanding is interpersonal understanding and it concerns comprehending the aspects in which "the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to ... behavior"¹⁴. Interpretive understanding, Weber says, cannot *as such* yield rigorous, systematic, human scientific knowledge. (His reasons for saying this will be considered in Chapter 6, p. 118, below.) Materials gained by *Verstehen* must be filtered by certain scientific methods, Weber argues. One of these is to view human action as if it was 'rationally purposeful action', an *ideal type* of action and a purely "methodological device" that does not assume "actual predominance of rational elements in human life", Weber says¹⁵. The model conceptualises human action in terms of *means and ends* and thus even actions taking place in an "emotional context" can be understood "intellectually" in so far as emotions can be related to and they can be seen to have "influence

¹⁰See Schluchter 1981: Chapter III, on Weber's relation to Kantianism and neo-Kantianism and Mommsen 1999 for a more general historical background.

¹¹Lepenies 1988.

¹²Eliaeson 2002: 18.

¹³Weber 1978.

¹⁴Weber 1978: 4.

¹⁵Weber 1978: 7.

on the course of action and the selections of means”, Weber writes¹⁶.

Note carefully the kind of balance that Weber here strikes between positivism and hermeneutics. In Weber’s view interpretative understanding, or *Verstehen*, can go some way towards capturing the individual’s experience of social reality. General statements about social life, on the other hand, are made on the basis of interpretative understanding *but only after* a process of abstraction to general types. The notion of ideal type could thus be seen as the core of the compromise that Weber strikes between hermeneutics and positivism: the ideal type is informed by *Verstehen* but for Weber this is in the last analysis a methodologically convenient generalisation. Nevertheless, the core of the collectivist turn prepared here by Weber, and made explicit in Parsons, resides in the idea that the ‘subjective meanings’ entertained in the human mind are the source of human action but that human minds can be, as it were, in tune or aligned producing cohesive social action.

Next in the story we must thus consider the role of the classic American sociologist and a keen follower of Weber, Talcott Parsons. He was a great synthesiser of classic European social theory most explicitly in his seminal *The Structure of Social Action*¹⁷. A good place to begin our review is Parsons’ classificatory scheme of ideas in terms of which the human being orientates her action in the world and in social reality.

According to Parsons, ideas, first of all, are “concepts and propositions” relating to “human interests, values and experience” and constitute systems where they inferentially relate to each other. One main class of ideas, according to Parsons, are existential ideas that refer to “external reality in some sense”, or rather “to some phase or phases of this reality, real or imagined”. As another main class alongside existential ideas are normative ideas that express, not the indicative, but the “imperative mood” describing states of affairs that can be seen as the ends of an actor.¹⁸ This categorisation of ideas can be considered to form a central aspect of Parsons’ so-called *action theory* in that it is intended to illustrate the ideological (cognitive) machinery behind human and social action. Thus, Parsons insisted on the “voluntaristic” nature of human action, that is, that it is “not determined by the facts of human nature and environment ... that man stands in significant relations to aspects of reality other than those revealed

¹⁶Weber 1978: 6.

¹⁷Parsons 1949.

¹⁸Parsons 1954c: 21.

by science”¹⁹.

For Parsons, society is held together by the collective commitment to shared nonexistential and normative ideas, such as are formulated in religious systems. Parsons spoke critically of “positivist thinking” characterised by “the strong tendency ... to minimize the [social] importance of religion, to treat it as a matter of ‘superstition’ ”²⁰ contrasting this with Emile “Durkheim’s view that religious ritual was of primary significance as a mechanism for expressing and reinforcing the sentiments most essential to the institutional integration of the society”²¹. This general picture is constitutive for Parsons’ *structural functionalism*: actions or “unit acts” take place within a “system of action” where unit acts are analysable by a means-end schema reflecting, crucially, the situatedness of action within the system, in particular with respect to the cohesion and functionality of the system²². As Parsons put it, “[w]hat is essential to the concept of action is that there should be a normative orientation, not that this should be of any particular type”²³. The exact content and direction of human ambition varies according to the social setting and one’s upbringing²⁴.

An aspect of this socially generated mentalities picture is Parsons’ view that in a cohesive society, there operates a system of *social stratification*, as Parsons termed it. This is “the differential ranking of the human individuals who compose a given social system and their treatment as superior and inferior relative to one another in certain socially important respects”²⁵. The term ‘social stratification’ denotes the various means by which society maintains its internal ranking, its internal cohesion and functionality²⁶. In a cohesive society there is a convergence in individual nonexistential, normative or moral ideas: “the scale of stratification is a pattern characterized by moral authority which is integrated in terms of common moral sentiments”²⁷. Every member of society goes through the process of socialisation meaning in Parsons “the learning of *any* orientations of functional significance to the operation of a system of complementary role-expectations”²⁸.

¹⁹Parsons 1935: 290.

²⁰Parsons 1954d: 198.

²¹Parsons 1954d: 206.

²²Parsons 1949: 78, Hall 1984.

²³Parsons 1949: 45.

²⁴Parsons 1954b: 57.

²⁵Parsons 1954a: 69.

²⁶Münch 1981.

²⁷Parsons 1954a: 71.

²⁸Parsons 1951: 208.

We have in Parsons a classic formulation of the general idea behind the collectivism and the paradigm from sharing, namely, that social action springs from a *shared mentality*. As we shall see in the following chapters, the idea takes different shapes in different authors, many of whom have been explicitly critical of Parsons. Yet, I argue the core has survived in the view that human action flows from our ideas about the world and that social action flows from shared ideas about social reality.

So much, then, for the intellectual history of collectivism in relation to individualism as it is conceived in this thesis. In a number of connections in Part 1, I argued that the ideological approach characterises in a variety of respects our intellectual orientation in explanations of human and social action. ‘The ideological Marx’ (see Chapter 3 above) is another prominent source of the ideological approach, and another is Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) who in *Beyond Good and Evil*²⁹ expressed the view that modernity is characterised by the replacement of religious ideology, in particular Christian ideology, with that of what we may call the ideology of Reason. In other words, for Nietzsche modernity is characterised by its belief in the power of Reason manifested in certain trends within humanities as well as science and technology. Of course, for Nietzsche this belief is false and no better than the belief it replaced, namely, belief in a religious truth. For him they are both expressions of the age old human desire to find Platonic truths over and above the human being herself. Yet, the paradigm survives: the human being is an ideological being, albeit inherently confused and fooled by false ideologies. Again, one might see something similar in the work of the Frankfurt School. Its perhaps two most prominent protagonists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argued that modernity is characterised by the operations of an instrumental notion of Reason suited to work out means-to-end calculations efficiently but that has to by nature remain silent about matters of moral, aesthetic and other evaluation³⁰.

This is the conceptual juncture in which critical approaches such as environmental history and environmentalism more broadly enter the picture. As discussed above (in Chapter 3), environmental history and environmentalism more broadly, have in many cases a Marxian critical root. The ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems indeed crucially reflects the

²⁹Nietzsche 1973.

³⁰Horkheimer & Adorno 1971. Lodziak (2002) provides a differing, structuralist, reading of these fathers of the Frankfurt School.

paradigm from sharing in arguing that the causes have cultural, ideological, roots. These views again go together with a significant number of sociological and historical literature on the idea of modernity as a rational age. Very central here is the idea of modernity as essentially a particular kind of *mentality*: modernity is rationalised, scientific, commercialised, capitalist and bureaucratic where these characterisations are not only said to pertain to the societal structures but to the *mentalities* of human beings performing these systems. The environmental historical and environmentalist view of the human being as acting out our environmental problems from ideological motives is a detail in a wider picture of modernity.

I am suggesting, then, that there are deep-seated intellectual forces at play across a number of ‘schools’ that in terms of their general orientation favour the ideological approach. The epigraphs at the start of this chapter seem to me to articulate the essential continuity across philosophical schools —as well as the contrasts in terms of which I see the later Wittgenstein as making a revolution in philosophy: both great traditions, the realist-empiricist (Locke) and the constructivist-rationalist (Kant, neo-Kantianism), build paradigmatically upon the essentiality of the mind and knowledge and beliefs contained in it, disagreeing only over their origin. The idea of a revolutionary quality to the later Wittgenstein’s thought is not new³¹ and although I cannot go into this at present, I believe that the idea of seeing the revolutionary quality in the rejection of an ideological in favour of what I term an *organisatory* approach represents a novel reading of Wittgenstein. The novelty resides in the present thesis offering a consistently non-ontological reading of Wittgenstein which is in contrast with a number of prominent readings for example by Peter Hacker and David Bloor. I shall develop my reading of Wittgenstein’s views, as well as the contrast in which it stands to other readings, in great detail in the following chapters, but the closing section of the present chapter offers a preliminary overview of his approach elucidating also some of philosophical contexts in which his work emerged.

One might object that the later Wittgenstein himself played a significant role in ‘the collectivist turn’ away from individualism and the associated vices such as the view of the privacy of the mental. Moreover, the later Wittgenstein is commonly described as an anti-humanist with significant relativistic and con-

³¹See e.g. Hacker 2001: 90-1 and Dilman 2002.

structivistic tendencies which also go together well with collectivism.³² It is true that Wittgenstein has been read in this way, but a different reading is possible as the present thesis is at pains to illustrate. In the present organisatory reading, Wittgenstein figures as more of a materialist in Marx's sense (discussed in Chapter 9 below) than as a constructivistic collectivist or an ideologist.

Wittgenstein, Meaning as Use and Social Reality

In this section I shall introduce certain aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy and indicate the kind of approach to social or collective action, and social life more generally, it can be seen to give rise to.

Philosophers, at least in the Anglo-American tradition, have traditionally taken naming as a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. Early language training is thought to involve children pointing at things upon which they are told the name of the object pointed at. Wittgenstein was critical of this focus in philosophy of language and said of naming that "[a] child uses such primitive forms of language when it learns to talk" but added that "[h]ere the teaching of language is not explanation, but training"³³. The child is being prepared, trained, for something more than the mere tagging of objects with their names: "naming is something like attaching a label to a thing. One can say that this is preparatory to the use of a word. But *what* is it a preparation for?"³⁴, Wittgenstein wrote. Typically of his style, the next passage in the text does not go on to answer the question in any explicit way. A picture of Wittgenstein's view, here as elsewhere, emerges gradually as one puts together the different strands that he pursues in different parts of his work.

What then, according to Wittgenstein, is naming in preparation for? One might say that even if naming is an early step in language acquisition, the significance of the child's calling for an object is not its mere naming, but may include such things as that upon calling its name the child is given the object. Going beyond this simple example, even apart from the *various* practical reasons regarding *why it is useful* to be able to refer to someone, that one names someone is already in itself a more symbolically significant act than merely that of giving someone a short-hand for referring to them. Thus, for example, as Wittgenstein

³²See e.g. Sire 2004: 48.

³³Wittgenstein 1958: §5.

³⁴Wittgenstein 1958: §26.

says, “children give names to their dolls and then talk about them and to them” and goes on to ask us to compare the *depth* that this possibly implies with sole ostensive concern: “how singular is the use of a person’s name to *call* him!”, Wittgenstein exclaimed³⁵.

There will be differences in our nose for significance here, but for one, naming may imply that children cast their toys as kinds of inanimate human beings, capable of feelings, intentions and so on, and thus they talk to them, comfort them and so on. As opposed to being a mere tag, naming attaches a certain *significance* to a thing, it connects the thing with human intentionality and thus with human life more generally. Naming one’s doll can be seen as attaching some human qualities, for example the ability to feel, to the doll.

These observations begin to expose the role, the *use*, of language in the context of human interaction. For Wittgenstein, it was essential to see language and thought in the context of such uses, that is, that we look at the use of names, for instance, as involving such complex considerations as described above. We look at language use as having *a point*. In my view, this is the import of Wittgenstein’s claim that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language”³⁶.

Naming of course relates closely to what names refer to, their referents. This takes us to another central concern in traditional philosophy of language that Wittgenstein was critical of, namely, the relationship of words, concepts and statements to things they talk about in the world, sometimes referred to as entities and facts. Thus, typically, in philosophy one attempts to ‘analyse’ the connection of such statements as ‘I’m in pain’ to the physical processes in the person’s body who makes the claim or to the person’s phenomenological experience of pain. A lot of Wittgenstein’s writings from the 1930s onwards, upon his famous return to philosophy, concentrate on spinning paradoxes out of this picture which is an important form of argumentation in the later Wittgenstein. I shall discuss some examples below in Chapter 8 (p. 195 ff.)

Wittgenstein’s positive take on the meaning of such statements as ‘I’m in

³⁵Wittgenstein 1958: §27.

³⁶Wittgenstein 1958: §43. Interestingly, Wittgenstein in fact put a *qualification* to this phrase that has become the slogan representing his whole approach. The quoted passage is preceded by: “For a *large* class of cases —though not for all— in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus:” (Wittgenstein 1958: §43). I believe, however, that the qualification has no essential significance to the argument advanced here. For a detailed discussions of what Wittgenstein may have meant by the qualification, see Baker & Hacker 2009: 152 ff. and Garver 1994: Chapter 12.

pain', by contrast, drew attention to the activities that *surround* the use of the word 'pain'. The exercise of our knowledge of potential real life circumstances in which the word is used reveals the meaning, that is the use, of the word 'pain'. Thus, we may announce to our family members that 'I've got a terrible toothache since the early hours of this morning' and prepare ourselves for going to see the dentist. According to Wittgenstein, our knowledge of the meaning of the word 'pain' relates to such uses of the word in actual situations.

In philosophy, again, since the meaning of pain is typically associated with some physical process in the body, or sometimes with something in the phenomenology of one's experience of pain, doubts arise as to whether the external symptoms of pain really signal pain: "I can only *believe* that someone else is in pain, but I *know* it if I am", Wittgenstein has his imaginary opponent make a typical philosophical statement about the philosophical epistemology of pain. In a telling response Wittgenstein asks us to "[j]ust try—in a real case—to doubt someone else's fear or pain"³⁷. His intention here is again to draw attention to the actual circumstances, real cases, in which people talk about pains and that in these cases the talk revolves in the first instance around the display of pain, and what significance this has in the situation and to the people involved, and not for example its neural nature.

Thus, most importantly for the present purposes, the cases in which people display pains are humanly potentially serious situations and this is what is humanly significant about them. Thus, when we display pain, doubt someone else's pain and so on, there are always longer strings attached to these activities, strings that lead to the most diverse considerations pertaining to human life such as pains as limiting human aspirations or faking pains as perhaps offering some sort of an advantage (perhaps through pity thus evoked) to the person faking or exaggerating her pains. These are of course not at all deep observations, but express rather ordinary knowledge of the social: for any given sentence "I can imagine circumstances [of use] that turn it into a move in one of our language-games, and by that it loses everything that is philosophically astonishing", Wittgenstein observed³⁸. At any rate, understanding language implies an understanding of a wider picture of human life and human aspirations in which a failure to understand, or partial understanding, is also a possibility³⁹. A significant use will be made later in this

³⁷Wittgenstein 1958: §303.

³⁸Wittgenstein 1975: §622.

³⁹Wittgenstein 1958: Note on page 53.

thesis of the idea that there are significant individual differences in perspectives and thereby in people's interests and knowledge of social life.

In Wittgenstein, as I shall argue in detail in the chapters below, emerges a view of social life as a *developmental process* with a particular course in which expressing doubts and pains and so on figure as moves. Essential in this perspective to human life is not as it were the *mental ontological* identity of doubts, pains, intentions and beliefs in the physical (perhaps neural) make-up of the person involved. What is essential is that the life process has some structure, direction, course or point in the sense in which someone's having pains leads to actions to relieve pain or disrupts the current activity and plans.

Wittgenstein used two special terms to refer to the social reality within which language, and human intellectual and intentional capacities more generally, are used. These terms are 'language-game' and 'form of life'. These terms do not appear to be used by Wittgenstein in any mutually exclusive or in a singular definite sense⁴⁰. They both, however, belong to the same picture of language use. As Wittgenstein put it, "the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life"⁴¹ and that "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life"⁴². Both terms thus describe something about the context in which human beings use language but it appears that 'form of life' has a larger scope than 'language-game', the latter term focusing on the specifically linguistic component of human interaction where the former comprises thought, talk and action. However, in what follows I will use the two terms practically interchangeably and in the same sense as 'social reality', 'the social' as well as 'organisation (of human life)' and 'social systems and processes'.

In my view, Wittgenstein's philosophy of *meaning as use* is not strictly speaking a philosophy of meaning *of expressions* at all, or it is so only indirectly. We could say instead that it is a philosophy of what *surrounds* the use of expressions. Here 'expressions' comprises at least written and spoken language, symbolisms (in mathematics, engineering, etc.), facial and other bodily expressions, tones of voice, and many other such ways of expressing or signalling something. The surroundings of the use of expressions refers to the complex of human interactions, artefacts, and so on, as they connect with purposes for which human beings en-

⁴⁰See Wittgenstein 1958: §7. for Wittgenstein's characterisation of his use of 'language-game'.

⁴¹Wittgenstein 1958: §23.

⁴²Wittgenstein 1958: §19.

gage in interaction. Later on, in Chapter 6 (p. 120), I shall contrast this point with the tendency in Wittgenstein literature to reduce the essence of social life to concepts, in particular to collective standards or criteria for the application of concepts.

An essential claim in my approach is that Wittgenstein's views against brain physiological and phenomenal understandings of pain (but also of such things as reading, knowing and intention, all examples that Wittgenstein considers and some of which we shall look at below) are also applicable against a distinct but in my view related view we have already discussed above, namely, that human interaction in social reality draws from our (shared) *ideas* about social life. Wittgenstein can be read as recommending a refocus away from our ideas about the world and onto what as it were surrounds these ideas. On account of this I refer to his approach as *non-ontological*. Here, I shall argue, emerges a picture of social life as a set of organised, often recurring, systems and processes which I shall in turn relate to the argument of Part 1 from the organisatory character of the cultural causes of environmental problems. I argue, thus, that there is a sufficient analogy here between Wittgenstein's critical views on pain (as well as reading, etc.) and the present social theoretical concerns, for underlying both the philosophical and the social theoretical views, is the aforementioned picture of the human being as a being with an advanced mental life, a part of which are pains but also knowledge, beliefs, intentions and the like. A central part of the sociological, collectivised picture of the human being is that she is a symbolic, cultural being in possession of culturally mediated conceptualisations. Consequently, as noted above, it has seemed obvious in human sciences that to explain human action will centrally have to involve reference to how human beings conceptualise social reality⁴³. Social action, in turn, must be explained by reference to shared ideas. The discussion in the coming chapters will focus on two aspects of the ideologies allegedly driving social action: their status as something mental as well as that they are shared.

I approach the drawing of this analogy by attempting first, in Chapter 6, to illustrate problems with the idea of shared mentalities, ideologies, beliefs and the like and thereby make plausible the view that there are significant individual differences in our perspectives, interests and knowledge of social reality. The

⁴³The term 'social reality' draws from the philosopher John Searle (1996). While I find the term a useful shorthand, I do not thereby endorse Searle's views on the construction of social reality. In fact, I offer some criticisms of his approach in Chapter 7.

relation, explored in Chapter 7, of this claim to Wittgenstein's concerns is the following. While Wittgenstein rejected the view of the mental source of human action as being essential to an account of social reality, he did not deny that human beings are thinking beings either. Instead, he argued that in human interaction the individual mental sources of human action are not at stake but that interaction takes place on another plane than the mental, namely, in social processes. This accommodates and in fact presupposes individual differences in knowledge of the social in that human interaction appears as a reciprocal and complementary process of *differently placed* actors with differing perspectives, knowledge, beliefs and interests. As will be illustrated below, there are passages in Wittgenstein that can be read, not merely as accommodating, but as gesturing towards the existence of individual differences in knowledge (see the discussions of 'the beetle in the box' and algebraic formula in Chapter 7, p. 194 ff. below).

At any rate, in the present view, Wittgenstein's interest was not the source of human and social action, whether shared or individually variable. He developed, instead, a view of human action not focused on its source but its surroundings, or what comes to the same, he looked at social life as a developmental process. For this reason certain of his ideas allow us to develop a social theoretical methodology alternative to those focused on the source of social action. This shall be developed in Chapter 7 drawing on Wittgenstein's phrase 'agreement in form of life'. I shall highlight the role of the *everyday organisation* of our performance of the social as the key to understanding social action, a move which allows us to relate the argument of Part 1 with that of Part 2. In the remaining chapters, in Chapter 8 I discuss the issue that would most readily place the later Wittgenstein in the camp of the ideological approach, namely the issue of the social character of normativity, and then in Chapter 9 elucidate the present approach by way of highlighting agreements and disagreements with existing social theoretical literature.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief intellectual historical sketch of the broader intellectual orientations with which the present approach is at odds. I argued that the heritage of the early modern philosophy, in particular its focus on the human being as a knowing subject, has been only moderately modified in later human scientific thought. For our purposes crucial is to note the collectivist move that as it were socialised the production and functioning of the human mind. Even after

this move, the idea of the essentiality of the mind to human and social action has, however, prevailed. This move indicates the preservation of the ideological approach in the collectivist paradigm from sharing.

I also offered a preliminary characterisation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy as a radical alternative to the ideological approach and the paradigm from sharing and the present use of him as being based on an argument from analogy from his approach in philosophy to social theory. Before taking up the task of detailed articulation of this alternative in Chapter 7, the next chapter considers a number of epistemological challenges to the paradigm from sharing that form the centre of the present challenge to the paradigm.

Chapter 6

Knowing the Way About

Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side
and know your way about; you approach the same place from
another side and no longer know your way about
— Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

The above metaphor illustrates Wittgenstein's view that our ordinary knowledge of meaning, just as our ordinary knowledge of the social, gets us by just fine, but when we begin to theorise about it the whole thing begins to seem incomprehensible. In Wittgenstein's metaphor, the 'another side' could be the philosophical analysis of language, but also the social theoretical analysis of social action, contrasting with the flow of ordinary life where we often do 'know our way about' with considerable ease. The attempt to articulate the hidden mechanisms of thought, language and meaning underlying human activities is "as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers"¹, as Wittgenstein put it. That is, our gaze upon the complex spider web struggles to be fine enough to trace all its details.

Wittgenstein advocated a kind of hands-off approach to the web: "We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place", he declared². He also said that "[t]he use of [a word] in the ordinary circumstances of our life is of course extremely familiar to us. But the part the word plays in our life, and therewith the language-game in which we employ it, would be difficult to describe even in rough outline."³ So are we to conclude that we both know

¹Wittgenstein 1958: §106.

²Wittgenstein 1958: §109.

³Wittgenstein 1958: §156.

and do not know our way about? The answer is yes, but with the clarification that while one may know one's local streets rather well but we can still get lost in the city.

The following discussion of a number of epistemological challenges to the paradigm from sharing is intended to make plausible the view that there obtains a considerable individual variety in the perspective to the social, in people's interest and sensitivity to features of social reality around them (interpersonally as well as on the level of social institutions), and that there are therefore considerable individual differences in knowledge of the social. In these circumstances, the attempt to provide a *general* theory of our knowledge of the social is like trying to repair a spider's web with fingers. In the course of the discussion I try to clarify where exactly I think there are individual differences in knowledge of the social—and where perhaps not—, that is, I try to clarify what we are denying when we deny shared ideologies as the basis of social life.

Epistemological Challenges

Recall first the example cases considered in Part 1 of actors' collective performance of environmentally consequential organisations of human life. These illustrated that people have most diverse perspectives, interests, sensitivity and knowledge of the social systems and processes that we collectively perform. I argued for instance that it is by no means obvious that the actors who collectively perform global industrial market society—that is, *us*— have by and large a very clear idea of the functioning of global industrial market society. Nor is it clear that significant numbers of us share something like a mechanical and utilitarian attitude to nature. Such differences between individuals, I argued, make implausible any general ideological analyses of the human relationship to nature.

In the present Part 2, I shall pursue this same general line of argument in a more abstract, theoretical or philosophical manner. Let us begin by noting that essential to an ideological approach is that it seeks explanations by appeal to the intentional capacities of the human mind as the *mental source* of human and social action. In Chapter 3, for instance, we found a number of environmentalists claiming that the modern human being has effectively internalised technocratic materialism as the ruling value of her life. Parsons' classification of ideas (discussed in Chapter 5 above) in terms of which people are said to conceptualise (empirical and extra empirical) reality gives us some general idea of the various

modes that human intentionality could be said to take. Throughout this thesis, I have intentionally used the word ‘ideology’ and its cognates in a broad sense to capture these various modes. The phrase ‘mental source’ is a loose but nonetheless an *ontological* term designating the material basis of human cognition, probably most intuitively described today as neural in character. Social theory of course rarely says much in terms of how ideologies work ontologically or neurally, but it is important to note that they retain the *functionally efficient* part of such a picture, namely that an ideology is held by an individual or group and that it, as it were, dispenses thought and action. One might think that it is unfair to draw, say, some environmental historical account using terms like a world-view to explain human and social action towards the environment to a discussion about the ontology of such claims. Yet, to expose the power of an ideological explanation, it is crucial that we do not let the picture of the mental source of human and social action to hold us captive and predispose us to a certain kind of an account. I shall return to this point below under the rubric “the conjuring trick” (Chapter 7, p. 139).

I shall now attempt to unravel the plausibility of the ideological approach by considering a number of ontological worries for theories of the mental source of human and social action. One indispensable and highly stimulating contribution here surely is the American philosopher Stephen Turner’s critical work on notions such as shared ideology, mutual knowledge and their kin. Turner’s primary target is the notion of practice conceived as drawing from shared skills and knowledge, although he argues that a whole host of notions draw from a similar source of plausibility. Turner mentions notions such as “tradition, tacit knowledge, *Weltanschauung*, paradigm, ideology, framework and presuppositions”⁴ and many others in the course of his discussion. I find Turner’s work fascinating and very important but, as I shall indicate shortly, he too fails to shed the ideological approach in all its aspects, in particular the view of the essentiality of the mind in explanations of social action.

One example of an ontological problem is Turner’s challenge to the idea of *transmission* of culturally mediated concepts to the novice: “if practices or presuppositions are hidden things, or tacit, how do these things move through channels that are themselves public or open?”⁵, Turner asks. That is, if the source of

⁴Turner 1994: 2.

⁵Turner 1994: 45.

human action is a shared tacitly and unconsciously held presupposition, state or the like, then how is that hidden thing transferred through an array of its public manifestations and implanted into the next person as an identical (?) tacitly and unconsciously held presupposition?⁶

A related worry of Turner's is that the " 'same' overt behaviour in two people may have a quite different causal ancestry in each person"⁷. Thus, it is highly conceivable that two people learned chess in different ways, by different examples say, or one from a rule book while the other by watching, and so on. Arguably, their performances in a game of chess can be equally competent, but the source of it presumably different due to the differing learning histories. Indeed, if a person's knowledge is a function of her learning history, then surely we do not share knowledge, so different are our learning histories.

Talk of the ontology of human and social action as having its source in ideology, world-view, mentality, conception, presupposition or the like faces one general problem to which Turner time and again returns:

The concept of practice, whether it is conceived cognitively, as a kind of presupposition, or causally, as a kind of mental trace which disposes thought or action in a certain way, is epistemologically elusive.⁸

For Turner the epistemological elusiveness is first and foremost due to the *underdetermination* of claims from sharing by the facts that can be adduced in their support:

They may establish that phenomena of order may be produced by people acting as if they are acting in accordance with certain shared procedures or rules, but this is not the same as showing that these (or any) shared procedures are the causes of the 'order'.⁹

Turner's charge would thus seem to be the classic one from inductive inference: no amount of confirming instances can logically justify the inference to an underlying regularity, law, cause, source or the like. If these arguments amounted to mere inductive scepticism I would not consider them particularly interesting, for scepticism threatens to mark the end of all positive theorising¹⁰. To me the argument highlights the fact that social theoretical appeals to the shared mental

⁶See Pleasants 1999: Chapter 4 for an illuminating critical discussion of taciticity.

⁷Turner 1994: 19.

⁸Turner 1994: 43.

⁹Turner 1994: 43.

¹⁰James Bohman (1997) reads Turner as a sceptic.

source of human and social action are often made without much concern for how such a picture works ontologically —that is, whether it is in fact plausible to postulate an ontologically unequivocal, uniform and shared mental source of social action—, yet it is precisely their alleged power to dispense uniform thought and action that is explanatorily crucial about collectively shared ideas.

Note that while Turner identifies something like the paradigm from sharing and presents compelling arguments against it, his positive proposal takes a rather different direction to the present approach. In Turner’s view, first of all, the later Wittgenstein and/or his followers are the prime proponents of what I have called the paradigm from sharing. Secondly, in his positive account of human action, Turner argues that our actions are driven by “private habits, with a variegated causal structure, that arise in response to public things”¹¹. In other words, Turner’s proposal is to reject the idea of *shared* mentalities as driving social action in favour of the idea that there can be diversity in human mentalities, but that given the social context of their occurrence actions can nevertheless converge towards coherent social life. Turner’s alternative is thus also very much neural-ontological in its focus¹². Turner has since developed his views elsewhere arguing for instance that “[t]he discovery of mirror neurons suggested a non-collective mode of transmission of practices” by providing “an alternative [theory] to habituation or connectionist learning as a mechanism of acquisition”¹³.

Now, I do not object to this idea as such, but note that there would be ingredients in Turner’s arguments for a more radical alternative. In the present view, as shall be argued in more detail in Chapter 7, given individual differences in knowledge of the social, the focus should move away from the mental *source*, whether shared or not, of human and social action to the *organisation* of social action. Thus, the present argument differs considerably from Turner’s in that it proposes a wholly non-ontological or organisatory approach.

At any rate, Turner’s arguments cast doubt on the plausibility of the ontological machinery seemingly needed to run the view from shared ideology as the source of social action. I shall return to the issue in Chapter 7 where we critically discuss the philosopher John Searle’s explicitly ontological account. I shall now consider certain less theoretical, and therefore hopefully intuitively more

¹¹Turner 1994: 105.

¹²As Andrew Pickering put it: “He [Turner] is not against the invisible [mental ontology] *per se*, only the idea of a shared invisible” (Pickering 1997: 327).

¹³Turner 2007: 110, 118.

approachable, reasons for rejecting the ideological approach.

Max Weber—the provider of the argument from the role of the spirit of capitalism in the historically divergent courses taken by the Orient and the Occident—provided a whole barrage of considerations as to why interpersonal, and even intra-personal, understanding is a problematic object of study. As noted above in Chapter 5, Weber’s intention was to illustrate that knowledge of the social gained by *Verstehen* needs to be checked by certain more rigorous means to yield robust scientific knowledge. In this context Weber advances the following arguments.

First, “the conscious motives” may well, even to the actor himself, conceal various “motives” and “repressions” which constitute the real driving force of his action”¹⁴, Weber says. Where this is the case, “even subjectively honest self-analysis has only a relative value”¹⁵, he continues. Nevertheless, these are the materials that the sociologist has to work with in trying to reconstruct the individuals’ “motivational situation”, even where any given motivation “has not actually been concretely part of the conscious intention of the actor”¹⁶. Second, similar to Turner’s argument, Weber observes that “processes of action ... may fit into exceedingly various complexes of motives”¹⁷. In other words, while two observable actions may seem similar they may nonetheless spring from very different motives. And finally, third, Weber says that “the actors in any given situation are often subject to opposing and conflicting impulses” and as “the relative strength of conflicting motives” is very hard to establish, and thus “very often we cannot be certain of our interpretation”¹⁸, he concludes. Worries such as these about understanding individuals by attempting to reconstruct their mentalities explain why Weber thought, as we saw above in Chapter 5, that interpretive understanding of subjective meaning must be complemented by scientific techniques.

It may be in order to note in passing that to argue that the reconstruction of actors’ motivations and the like is problematic is *not* to argue for the *absolute privacy* of motivations or other mental contents of individuals (as famously rejected by Wittgenstein). Nor is it to argue that motivations cannot be known. The argument is rather that self-analysis, as well as the analysis of others’ mo-

¹⁴Weber 1978: 9.

¹⁵Weber 1978: 9.

¹⁶Weber 1978: 10.

¹⁷Weber 1978: 10.

¹⁸Weber 1978: 10.

tivations and the like, are in many cases complex, multi-layered, on-going and therefore very difficult processes. Think for instance of what depths of personal psychology we may get to chart upon really getting to know another person as opposed to when we make more superficial, passing acquaintances. In my view, in its summary attributions of motivations and the like the ideological approach clashes with such intuitions about the complexity of the human being—or, alternatively, the ideological approach operates with a very different, simpler, picture of the human being as an intentional being.

Weber's worries might also be taken to reflect what any textbook on survey research will tell you about the difficulty of *operationalising and validating* concepts¹⁹. The difficulty is that of ascertaining that respondents all have alike understandings of a given term used in a survey question or in terms of which the respondent is probed in an interview, and conversely that a concept used to describe the respondents views is faithful to their perspective.²⁰

In a similar vein, the editors of a collection of sociological work on social norms identified one principal disagreement dividing the contributing authors: there are those who view “norms as clear constraints on action” and “those for whom norms are more plastic social constructions”, adding that it tended to be the game theorists who hold the former view²¹.

Again, the sociologist Richard Sennett's distinctions between belief, value and ideology illustrate similar difficulties with drawing conclusions about people's motivations, knowledge and beliefs. Belief, Sennett defines, is “consciously involved in the behavior of the person who holds it”²². Ideology, by contrast, does not touch behaviour in any direct manner and Sennett argues that “[m]uch of the opinion which people hold about social life never touches on or strongly influences their behavior”²³. Ideology, according to Sennett, is close to values in that both do not intimately relate to behaviour but rather are parts of “language by which people rationalize their social world”. Other such parts of language include for instance “prized ideas”²⁴. What Sennett seems to be arguing is that the idea of beliefs as the source of human action may seem relatively unproblematic be-

¹⁹See e.g. Sapsford 2007: Chapter 5.

²⁰See also the classic myth-busting study by Philip E. Converse (2006/1964) about the notable differences in political knowledge and views of elites and masses.

²¹Hechter & Opp 2001: 394.

²²Sennett 2002: 33.

²³Sennett 2002: 33.

²⁴Sennett 2002: 34.

cause it can be represented as something local and concrete: “there is an apple in my basket”. But then, to introduce values and ideologies —“apples are good for me” or “I’m a supporter of organic farming”— into the mix arguably already brings in significant ambiguities as to the role of them as the shared mental source of action.

In sum then, philosophically speaking shared ideas, values, norms and the like are ontologically suspect. Moreover, there are commonsensical reasons for being suspicious about claims from the effect of shared values, ideas and ideologies on human and social action. The ideological approach, and the accompanying paradigm from sharing together with the view from the essentiality of the mind as the location of the mental source of human action, might thus constitute a natural picture, but it is by no means an unproblematic one.

Mastery and Criteria

Let us take a brief excursion to two notions frequently made use of in Wittgensteinian literature that can in an interesting way be related to the above discussion, namely those of mastery and criteria. I shall argue that many Wittgensteinian authors often work with a rather quick and shallow concept of mastery understood as knowledge of the collective criteria or standards according to which it is correct to apply a given expression in a given instance. In this section I try to make plausible the view that not only are there individual differences in level of mastery and knowledge of criteria, but also that it makes better sense to locate the essence of human sociality, not in shared mastery of criteria, but in shared social organisation of human life viewed as a set of recurring and developing processes.

Consider Wittgenstein commentator Marie McGinn’s words:

Learning the language-game involves, both becoming master of these different performances, and coming to recognize and understand these distinctions in the actions of others. In the latter case, this involves our detecting and responding appropriately to subtle and complex patterns of behaviour, which we have a nose for but which we cannot always make explicit.²⁵

One is here perhaps thinking of something like our nose for what Wittgenstein called pain-behaviour as a kind of a signal: “A child has hurt himself and he cries;

²⁵McGinn 1997: 173.

and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour”, Wittgenstein wrote²⁶. There will indeed be a considerable body of broadly shared criteria on the basis of which human beings can recognise the condition of the other. Yet, I think it should be intuitively clear that there are also considerable differences in people’s emotional intelligence or sensitivities. There will be again differences in how people go on to *react*, say, to others’ pains, whether with pity or by thinking that the other is a helpless whiner or something else. These differences are significant, for they affect the course of human interactions. Pain-behaviour is thus not an uncontroversial counterexample to the present challenge to shared mentalities.

A deeper issue here is that of taking *criteria* (say, for being in pain) to constitute the essence of human sociality which I think would be misleading. In this view, to know what pain is is to know the criteria in terms of which one signals pains, but this misses the *significance* of pains to human life. That is, it having been recognised that someone is in pain leaves open the wider questions such as what is to be done now and why.

A similar point was made by the philosopher Lars Hertzberg against the Wittgenstein commentator Peter Hacker. Hertzberg argued that “in representing the learning of concepts as the learning of a technique” and “in citing imitation, repetition and recognition as central to what it means to become a speaker, Hacker conveys the impression that language is a surface phenomenon, a mere set of conventions”²⁷, for “to relate to someone as a speaker is not a matter of noting that she lives up to some standard or conforms to some pattern”²⁸. It seems that Hertzberg’s intention in propositions such as “learning to speak means learning to express oneself by means of words”²⁹ or “finding ourselves interacting ... in ways involving words”³⁰ is to gesture at the view that the essence of human sociality goes beyond the criteria in terms of which we, say, express pain. Focusing on concepts and criteria, Hertzberg says, “misrepresent the place of language in our lives” by viewing the “life we live with language in too abstract terms. (It is true that we find a similar tendency in Wittgenstein’s own work.)”, he adds³¹.

Note in passing how understanding of criteria is often equated with under-

²⁶Wittgenstein 1958: §244.

²⁷Hertzberg 2010: 124.

²⁸Hertzberg 2010: 123.

²⁹Hertzberg 2010: 122.

³⁰Hertzberg 2010: 123.

³¹Hertzberg 2010: 122.

standing rules in what from my point of view is a misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's use of the word 'rule'. In (Wittgensteinian) literature one often finds analyses of the ontology, or social ontology, of rule-following—say, in John Searle or in David Bloor's collectivism discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, respectively. In the present reading, however, Wittgenstein's approach to criteria and rules and, language, thought and meaning in general, was not ontological at all as I shall illustrate in more detail in Chapter 7.

That said, the notion of rule is certainly central to Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In the *Investigations*, the word appears first in a familiar, everyday sense, that is in the context of a discussion of the rules of a game³². Later the term is also used in the sense in which we may say of someone that she is following a rule even though no explicit teaching by using rules nor explicit formulating and recording of rules has taken place³³. However, given Wittgenstein's overall philosophical aims of which more in Chapter 7, I argue that the most central sense in which the notion is used is *critical*: a rule is *that something* that many have seen to determine meaning, intention, usage and so forth, namely something mental (a state or disposition³⁴) or even metaphysical (a Platonic idea)³⁵. It is used in particular in the critical remark against the view "that if anyone utters a sentence and *means* or *understands* it he is operating a calculus according to definite rules"³⁶. One could thus argue that although rules and rule-following are central to Wittgenstein's later philosophy, he is not interested in rules as such (as a formulation, as mental content, etc.), but rather in the form of life in which rule-following conduct, that is regular and intelligible behaviour, takes place³⁷. Missing the critical sense in which Wittgenstein spoke of rules is part of the 'mastery as knowledge of criteria' picture.

Going back to Hertzberg, I read him as taking issue with a too *static* characterisation of human sociality implied by the focus on concepts and their criteria of application. The social processes of correction and training are considered to form

³²Wittgenstein 1958: §3.

³³Wittgenstein 1958: §53-4.

³⁴One may be inclined, perhaps justifiably, to distinguish more carefully between mental states, mental processes and dispositions and then map beliefs, knowledge, intention, moods, conceptual scheme, world-view, ideology and the like under appropriate headings. For the present purposes, however, all of these are understood as ontological features of our mentality and hence are both part of the ideological picture of human action being powered by features of human mentality. No finer distinctions need to be made for the present purposes.

³⁵Wittgenstein 1958: §74.

³⁶Wittgenstein 1958: §81.

³⁷See in particular Wittgenstein 1958: §82.

the social subject, her conceptual capacities and mastery, as if steering subjects towards a state of homogeneous sociality, that is, sharing of ideology. By contrast one could say that these social processes are effectively the very process of sociality itself characterised by ‘negotiation’, exchanges and interactions between heterogeneous actors. Anthony Giddens appears to be making a similar point when he writes that “ ‘Socialisation’ should be understood as an element of the continuity of social reproduction —of the inherent temporality of social process— rather than as just referring to the temporality of the personality formation of the child”³⁸. I shall discuss Giddens’ view in more detail shortly.

I want to, however, also raise the question about the extent that human sociality is characterised by a shared mentality, ideology, mastery of the same criteria and so on. As indicated above, even after shared criteria having been applied and a given utterance, event or the like labelled as an instance of something, the question has not been touched as to what is the significance of these happenings and how shall we react to them. In such a perspective to social reality, of interest is the social as a *developmental and organised* process.

Think here of Wittgenstein’s famous builder and his assistant at work in a construction site one giving and the other taking orders such as “slab!” and “pillar!”³⁹. Is it not at least as essential in this scenario that there obtains *division of labour* between the two builders as that each one knows what a ‘slab’ is, that is, masters the same criteria? One could even extend the point and argue that the builder and the assistant do not in fact know the same thing about slabs, for what the builder knows about slabs is, say, how they can be joined together, whereas the assistant has to have no idea about that but knows instead that upon “slab!” he has to fetch one. Here, then, not the builders’ shared knowledge (which they might not have), but that they operate in a shared organisation of activity, emerges as the essential character of their activity.

The general picture of social life emerging here is focused on it as a *form* of *organisation* of human action, not one focusing on whatever knowledge social actors may have of the social systems and processes which they collectively perform, where there will be considerable individual differences. This theoretical picture corresponds with the gist of the more empirical argument of Part 1, namely that our collective performance of environmental problems does not flow

³⁸Giddens 1979: 128.

³⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §2.

from a shared world-view about nature, but rather from social action being mediated by its form of organisation. Part of this broader line of argument are the critical discussions pursued in this Part 2 against the notions such as the shared source of social action, criteria and mastery as well as the emphasis on individual differences in perspective to and knowledge of the social. In the next section I continue this project with a critical discussions of existing social theory, namely, Anthony Giddens' complex and intriguing views on social life.

Giddens on Social and System Integration

Let us begin with Giddens expressing what we could read as an epistemological worry about shared ideologies as the basis of social action. He argues that “[w]e have to recognise that what an actor knows as a competent—but historically and spatially located—member of society, ‘shades off’ in contexts that stretch beyond those of his or her day-to-day activity”⁴⁰. The implication that interests us in this is that if actors are in such a way situated in their knowledge of social reality, it would seem to follow that the social cannot be conceptualised in terms of an ideology shared by the actors. In this section I shall argue, however, that in Giddens' system this implication is not followed through and that instead, upon a closer analysis, a fairly classic view of the social as based on what he calls mutual knowledge can be seen to underlie also Giddens' approach.

Consider here Giddens' distinction between *social integration* and *system integration*⁴¹. In Giddens, the pair draws attention to a difference in kind of integration that spatial distance between actors generates. Thus, social integration refers to integration with those face-to-face or otherwise in contact, whereas system integration refers to ties with spatially distant actors who nevertheless can be said to link with me in terms of the system within which we both operate⁴². In other words, social integration is integration or lack of it between social *actors* whereas system integration denotes that between *parts* of social systems, structures and institutions⁴³.

Interestingly however, as we shall see, Giddens does not appear to match this difference in kinds of spatial locations of integration with a corresponding

⁴⁰Giddens 1979: 73.

⁴¹This pair of notions has a prominent history and uses in social theory. See Lockwood 1964, Mouzelis 1974 and Archer 1996.

⁴²Giddens 1979: 76-7.

⁴³Mouzelis 1974: 396.

difference in knowledge that one has of or that powers social integration on the one hand and system integration on the other, although arguably such a duality would be called for. Giddens does distinguish between kinds of knowledge—that is between *practical / discursive knowledge* discussed in more detail below—but this distinction does not map against the two senses of integration. I shall return to this important point soon.

We should try to see the distinction between the two kinds of integration in the context of Giddens' wider system of thought about social reality. It is an impressive system that draws from various disciplines from semiotics to philosophy. In his classic theoretical works, the *New Rules* and the *Central Problems*⁴⁴ the critique of others is perceptive but Giddens' own ideas, often expressed in borrowed terminology⁴⁵, and at times in almost impenetrable prose, are sometimes harder to get to.

The central idea of Giddens' system is that of the *duality of structure*, the view that social life can and should be seen at once as a structured system imposing limits on human conduct as well as continuously reproduced by free agents. This is expressed by Giddens in the phrase that there is a *duality*, rather than dualism, of structure⁴⁶. The continual process of unfolding of this duality in the flow of human activity is called the process of *structuration*⁴⁷.

Giddens develops this key theme of duality of structure by way of a number of related dualities. These include the pairs *analysis of strategic conduct / institutional analysis* and the aforementioned *social integration / system integration*. The former pair denotes a distinction that is “methodological rather than substantive” in nature, Giddens says⁴⁸, and it concerns the manner in which the social analyst views action, whether from the actors' or the institutions' point of view. In other words, the difference is in whether the materials drawn upon in action are viewed as properties of the actors (say, their knowledge and capacity to reason) or as features of practices and institutions. Giddens' terminology here is ‘bracketing’ and ‘placing an *epoché* on’ one point of view or another.

It is evidently important for Giddens that we should not over-intellectualise

⁴⁴Giddens 1976, 1979.

⁴⁵The prominent American sociologist Lewis A. Coser wrote that “[I]n listening to so many voices, the reader fails to hear clearly Giddens's own” (*The American Journal of Sociology*, **86**(6), 1981).

⁴⁶Giddens 1979: 5.

⁴⁷Giddens 1979: 69 ff.

⁴⁸Giddens 1979: 80.

our collective performance of the duality of structure. Thus, Giddens makes the aforementioned distinction between *practical* and *discursive* consciousness, the former being “knowledge embodied in what actors ‘know how to do’”, while the latter concerns “what actors are able to ‘talk about’ and in what manner or guise they are able to talk about it”⁴⁹, as Giddens characterises the distinction. This would seem to allow for rather loose attributions of knowledge such as potentially inarticulable practical know-how and *some manner* of discursive knowledge. Importantly for the present purposes, Giddens’ distinction does not allocate different types of knowledge to the different modes of integration, as noted above.

There is also the idea of *unintended consequences of action* that further de-intellectualises Giddens’ picture. These are “of central importance to social theory”⁵⁰, Giddens argues, and they draw from the observation that my actions may contribute to the collective performance of the practice even if the contribution is in no way present in my intentions, Giddens’ example being how my speaking of English contributes to the continuity of the language⁵¹. This allows for the view that an actor may contribute to a larger system of social action without having the appropriate intention or indeed knowledge of the system. This fits with the earlier quoted observation from Giddens that “[w]e have to recognise that what an actor knows as a competent —but historically and spatially located— member of society, ‘shades off’ in contexts that stretch beyond those of his or her day-to-day activity”⁵².

Giddens also argues that the performance of the duality of structure is a continuous, spatially and temporally located *flow* of conduct which is however not to be thought of as “a series of discrete acts combined together”⁵³. Rather, acts are “constituted” in “a reflexive moment of attention” that “breaks into the flow of action” and conceptualises the flow as broken up into acts. In an earlier work, Giddens wrote that he distinguishes action or agency used “generically to refer to the lived-through process of everyday conduct” from acts which are ‘elements or segments’ in the former⁵⁴ adding that the “categorization” of action or agency “into discrete sectors or ‘pieces’ depends upon a reflexive process of

⁴⁹Giddens 1979: 73.

⁵⁰Giddens 1979: 59.

⁵¹Giddens 1979: 77.

⁵²Giddens 1979: 73.

⁵³Giddens 1979: 55.

⁵⁴Giddens 1976: 75.

attention”⁵⁵. In my view the plausibility of these claims resides in the observation that in general reflexivity is not part of the flow of human action, but rather as it were a special moment in which attention turns away from one’s engagement in flow of conduct to analysis of the conduct. For instance, social theory itself is the activity of systematic and reflexive analysis of the flow of conduct. Giddens appears to agree as he says of actors’ accounts of intentions and reasons that they “only form discrete accounts in the context of queries, whether initiated by others, or as elements of a process of self-examination by the actor”⁵⁶.

There is for Giddens, however, also *reflexive monitoring* of conduct and characterised by him, not as reflexive stepping-back from the flow of conduct, but as taking place very much in the flow as “monitoring the setting of interaction, and not just the behaviour of the particular actors taken separately”, as he puts it. Relevant here is also what Giddens calls the *rationalisation of action*, that is “the capabilities of human agents to ‘explain’ why they act as they do”. This takes place “in the course of practical queries, in the context of daily social life” somehow incorporating —or being ‘caught up in’ or ‘expressive of’— practical consciousness as well as unconscious motivations and norms.⁵⁷

Giddens’ idea of duality is obviously intended as a kind of grand synthesis of points of view into social reality and perhaps this is fine as the study of the flow of human life can well be seen as characterised by constant switching between the different sides of Giddens’ duality as well as the frame with which the analyst looks at the flow. One feels, however, that at some point one must as it were pick a side⁵⁸.

Giddens’ view of the relationship of norms, meaning and power is also shot through with the idea of duality. Giddens argues that norms both constitute and sanction meanings. That is, social practices both constitute meaningful or intelligible actions and sanction conduct. He adds that “[a]lthough it is important to separate them out conceptually, these two senses of right and wrong —intelligible and normative— always intersect in the actual constitution of social practices”⁵⁹.

⁵⁵Giddens 1976: 74.

⁵⁶Giddens 1976: 57.

⁵⁷Giddens 1976: 57.

⁵⁸One reviewer argued that Giddens “offers no new system but rather a diagnostic criticism” of consensus (Howard L. Parsons, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 41(1/2), 1980). In Anthony King’s view, Giddens’ system does not manage to overcome but essentially preserves the tension between system (determinism) and agency (freedom) (King 2005: 228 ff.).

⁵⁹Giddens 1976: 82.

Power too has a dual character “as involved institutionally in processes of interaction, and as used to accomplish outcomes in strategic conduct”⁶⁰.

Consider now Giddens’ take on the question of our knowledge of the social. Here Giddens states that there are “standardised elements of stocks of knowledge” that are “applied by actors in the production of interaction” and these “form the core of the mutual knowledge whereby an accountable universe of meaning is sustained through and in processes of interaction”⁶¹. In what sounds like quite a classical sense of knowledge (“the Descartes-Locke-Kant tradition”⁶²), Giddens says that mutual knowledge is stored in the mentality of actors “as memory traces ... of ‘how things are to be done’ ”⁶³. Later he also writes that mutual knowledge is “founded in ordinary language categories”⁶⁴.

How extensively mutual or shared should we think of this knowledge? As we saw above, Giddens himself gives a reason for viewing it as fairly local: as social actors we are historically and spatially located in our particular activities and our knowledge shades off in areas beyond that. Another way to approach the issue is to ask what is the role of mutual knowledge in Giddens’ system? The answer is not easy to give, but one way to approach the issue is again by returning to the idea of the *duality* of structure.

Thus, mutual knowledge can be seen from the agency side of the duality as knowledge stored in ‘memory traces’ and made use of, for example, in strategic conduct by individuals⁶⁵. Mutual knowledge can also be considered, says Giddens, “[o]n the methodological level” as “a non-corrigible resource which the social analyst necessarily depends upon, as the medium of generating ‘valid’ descriptions of social life”⁶⁶. Later he states more strongly that “[m]utual knowledge is a necessary medium of access in the mediation of frames of meaning”⁶⁷. As we saw above, Giddens also evidently wants to preserve a more substantial role for ‘mutual knowledge’ than a mere methodological role, but there nevertheless remains a strong sense in which the existence of mutual knowledge is for Giddens first and foremost a necessary methodological presupposition. One is tempted to

⁶⁰Giddens 1976: 88. Italics removed.

⁶¹Giddens 1979: 83.

⁶²Rorty 2009: 8-9.

⁶³Giddens 1979: 64.

⁶⁴Giddens 1979: 247.

⁶⁵Giddens 1979: 80.

⁶⁶Giddens 1979: 5.

⁶⁷Giddens 1979: 251.

conclude that, while Giddens offers a range of considerations that question the notion of mutual knowledge, he also cannot help but appeal to it, not as a mere methodological construct, but also as a substantial reality of some sort.

The first thing we note about this is that the appeal to mutual knowledge as a phenomenon of the agency side of the duality is where, despite a vocal rejection of Parsons' structural-functionalism, Giddens too can be seen to preserve the core of the ideological approach and the paradigm from sharing: social life is reproduced by actors in possession of mutual knowledge of the social.⁶⁸

At the same time, there is also this somewhat odd double-sided dual nature to Giddens' mutual knowledge: it is both a set of mental traces and a methodological posit, whereas one feels that if mutual knowledge does exist then one would not have to introduce it as a methodological posit. As suggested above, to clarify things it would perhaps be of help to divide mutual knowledge in two kinds according to Giddens' distinction between face-to-face social integration and system integration with spatially and temporally remote others mediated by social systems, structures and institutions. Certainly, it would seem, our understanding of people is of a different kind from our understanding of social systems and processes, although there may also be overlap. We should thus acknowledge that there are limitations of scope to mutual knowledge on the agency side and be thereby able to account for differences in people's perspective and thus knowledge and beliefs about the social.

In Giddens' mutual knowledge, two essentially distinct frames of reference get unnecessarily mixed up; call them local and global. From the agency side, mutual knowledge would seem to be this localised, contextualised, situated knowledge particular to some fairly local practices. From the structure side, however, there is some generality to the notion of mutual knowledge and indeed it is not taken to represent anyone's knowledge as such but is rather a methodological posit. Thus, mutual knowledge turns out to have two senses and accordingly two sources of plausibility: mutual knowledge as local to a practice, and mutual knowledge as the investigator's global category. This means, however, that the two are not two sides of the same Giddensian duality but distinct issues with differences in scope and source of plausibility.

In the larger context of the argument of this thesis, the foregoing critical discussion of Giddens illustrates the implausibility of attributing shared ideologies

⁶⁸Pleasant (1999: Chapter 4) comes to the same conclusion about Giddens' system.

over some global scope. Such attributions, as we have seen in earlier chapters, we find in the ideological arguments of many environmentalists and environmental historians as well as philosophers and social theorists in the context of their theories of social action.

Individual Differences

The foregoing discussion is a part of the present argument of highlighting individual differences in perspective and thereby knowledge of the social as well as of the attack against the idea of there being a shared source of social action, such as the one we find Giddens here claiming to be discovering in mutual knowledge. The present challenge to the paradigm from sharing is also a central point of disagreement between the present view of Wittgenstein and a number of representatives of Wittgensteinian social theory and beyond. In the following chapters I shall discuss the theme from different angles providing in particular details on the form in which these ideas can be seen to appear in Wittgenstein.

I want to briefly indicate where I take individual differences in knowledge of the social to reside. The reader may have the suspicion that the argument from individual differences in knowledge of the social runs at its smoothest on a macro scale and that most of the mileage made by the present approach is due to the macro scale example we have been using, namely, our collective performance of environmental problems mediated by our performance of the world economic system. Such a world-system is easy to see as being best analysed by some non-ideological approach due to the sheer number of culturally and geographically dispersed individuals the system encompasses. My reaction here is that, on the one hand, running the argument on such a macro scale largely suffices for the main objective of the present study, namely that of showing that the root of the cultural causes of environmental problems resides fundamentally in our everyday activities mediated by the form of their organisation.

I also believe that social institutions, such as money, are organisatory rather than ideological constructs. Arguably, this so-called social kind is in some sense given rise to and maintained performatively by collective agreement as it were. But it is absolutely essential to note that we do not all share knowledge and beliefs about the various forms of money, we do not all use the same forms of it and thus that the core of our collective performance of money is not ideological but organisatory. In such a perspective, the various forms of money are important

instruments of human life as we know it. The case of money brings out the contrast between the organisatory and the ideological approaches particularly well and I shall return to this point below (in Chapter 8) once more ground has been set for it to be possible to fully highlight the contrast involved.

On the other hand, I do think that the same argument can be put forward on a micro scale as well. As argued above, all forms of interpersonal knowledge, and indeed even intra-personal knowledge, pose potential difficulties. The point is not a sceptical one of it being impossible to know what people really think, know or believe. This relates to Wittgenstein's view of the idea of *logically* private — that is, not even in principle understandable— language, thoughts, feelings and the like as cancelling out as irrelevant comparable to the irrelevance of a turning cog wheel not connected to any other wheel⁶⁹. The point is rather that such shared knowledge is not automatically culturally acquired in some wide-ranging completeness. True, there will be in society and culture shared knowledge about, say, various gestures and symbols as signals, although even there differences in sensitivity, interest and knowledge are bound to exist. Perhaps there is also an inter-culturally shared frame of reference, something that Wittgenstein called “common behaviour of mankind”, which can serve as “the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language”⁷⁰. All these, however, should not make us disregard the obvious individual differences in knowledge of the social.

In the case of Wittgenstein's favourite example, chess, there may be homogeneity in terms of what the players know of the rules of the game, that is, *how* the game is played, but it is by no means sure that individual players share knowledge of *why* to do something particular in the game. The why here can denote differences in understandings of the tactical dimension of the game —why *this* move makes sense *here*— as well as that players may engage in the game for different motives and reasons. To understand and contribute to social life is to have a grasp of how's and why's. Here there, however, are considerable individual differences.

A dimension of these differences is that while a given social system may be seen to have certain properties, as for instance in the way the relative stability of the world economy depends on continuous economic growth (see Chapter 3,

⁶⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §271.

⁷⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §206.

p. 33, above), this does not yet necessarily imply anything about the mentalities of those who perform the system. Thus, if the world economic system is characterised by the drive to ever more growth this being a feature of *how* the system functions, this does not necessarily describe *why* individuals perform the system. One may well argue that individuals may come to internalise the mores of the system thereby effectively adopting the ideology of the system, as for example an individual worker may presumably come to adopt the ideology of the maximum efficiency and rationalisation as the goal of her activities at work. She may internalise that goal even to the extent that she feels a sense of fulfilment due to a good performance at work, thus as it were identifying her own satisfaction with that of the organisation she works for.

Is this, however, a *typical* reaction or *necessary for participation* in the social institution in question? Furthermore, that an individual may internalise the mores of the organisation could be described as a point about her *personal identity building*, and not, say, about her relationship to whatever the social institution relates to, say, nature. In identity building of this kind one does not have a relationship to nature, but rather to the organisation by way of it affording one a medium of identity building. In this case the human relationship to nature could perhaps be said to be indirect and mediated by the societal frame in which individuals act, but this should not obscure the fact that in our example the main relatees are the individual and the social organisation.

I hope enough has now been said to cast doubts on the ideological approach and the paradigm from sharing as uncovering the essence of human sociality. Articulating an alternative Wittgensteinian organisatory picture in more detail is the task of the following.

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed a number of problems with the ideological approach and the accompanying paradigm from sharing and the idea of the essentiality of the mind to explanations of human action. I reviewed Stephen Turner's work who to my knowledge is virtually the only one to have identified and criticised something like that which I have termed the paradigm from sharing, although we saw that Turner's positive contribution cannot take us towards a sufficiently radical alternative precisely because it too retains the traditional focus on the mental source of social action. I also reviewed arguments from Max Weber and others

with the intention of reminding us of difficulties with attributions of knowledge, motivation and the like.

The intention in this chapter has been to cast doubt on the very natural ideological picture of human action and its source paving thereby the way for an organisatory approach. The point has not been to suggest a whole-sale rejection of any reference to motivations or knowledge and beliefs in explanations of human action, but to argue that we need to take better account of individual differences in our knowledge of the social and that we need to examine the effect of this on our explanations of social action. In the next chapter we shall take up the task of developing in detail the present Wittgensteinian organisatory approach to human sociality.

Chapter 7

Agreement in Form of Life

In view of all this, it is not surprising that the working-class has gradually become a race wholly apart from the English bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie has more in common with every other nation of the earth than with the workers in whose midst it lives. The workers speak other dialects, have other thoughts and ideals, other customs and moral principles, a different religion and other politics than those of the bourgeoisie. Thus they are two radically dissimilar nations, as unlike as difference of race could make them, of whom we on the Continent have known but one, the bourgeoisie. Yet it is precisely the other, the people, the proletariat, which is by far the more important for the future of England.

— Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*

Having in the previous chapter reviewed a set of philosophical problems with the ideological approach, I shall now turn to articulating the philosophical bearings of the organisatory alternative in Wittgenstein's later philosophy.

I shall approach the discussion by contrasting the Wittgensteinian view with that of the philosopher John Searle on the construction of social reality. Searle's is an explicitly ontological approach focusing on the shared mental source of social action and as such it exemplifies well the ideological approach to social life. It casts social life as drawing from shared ideology and I will show that it encounters certain problems as a result of this. Searle is aware of them, although I shall argue that his attempts to address them is ultimately unsuccessful.

Searle on the Construction of Social Reality

Searle is an established, well respected, and one could say a classic name in modern Anglo-American philosophy and his approach to the question from the nature of social reality bears the characteristic marks of his trade: the question is approached with a heavy focus on issues in the philosophy of mind. Not surprisingly then, Searle's account proceeds by way of discussing a set of forms of human intentionality that in his view underlie social institutions.¹ I shall first introduce Searle's position and then compare it with my reading of Wittgenstein.

To begin with, Searle frames his project as fundamentally ontological — “about how social facts exist” —, the key task of which is the description of the ontology of social reality in a way that does not make use of peculiar ontological entities: “we need to figure out how social reality fits into our overall ontology”, Searle writes. A crucial link shall turn out to be certain forms of human intentionality which in Searle's view have their basis in human consciousness which in turn is ontologically just a feature of certain complex organisms.²

One of the central forms of human intentionality is what Searle calls ‘status function’, this is the human capacity to attribute statuses to people and things. ‘S is a father’ expresses such an attribution of status. What makes the status function special is that the status attributed to someone does not denote an *intrinsic* property of the person or thing in question; it is not something in “its physical structure”, as Searle puts it³. Rather, the status function expresses the “assignment or acceptance”⁴ that the person or thing is allowed to perform a certain function or that a material object has a certain function, for instance, that money functions as a vehicle of exchange and repository of value.

Searle also speaks of the assignment of a function, a form of status function, which denotes the human capacity to conceive of things as tools. A wooden stick is not intrinsically much at all, but used by us, say, as a walking cane it gains a distinct function. Due to the human intentional capacity to endow things with functions, material objects (sticks of wood, disks of metal as well as human beings) are also social objects (walking canes, coins, fathers and mothers) with

¹I draw from Searle 1996 and 2005. The most recent version of Searle's views can be found in Searle 2010.

²Searle 1996: 5-7. This ontological concern is a common tenet often foundational to contemporary philosophical analyses of social action. See e.g. List & Pettit 2011; Tuomela 2007, 2002.

³Searle 2005: 7.

⁴Searle 2005: 8.

associated roles given by our assignment of statuses and functions.

On Searle's analysis, then, social institutions are characterised by the collective acceptance and adherence to particular statuses and functions and that these thereby gain the status of rules. Searle uses the term 'constitutive rules' to refer to rules in accordance with which we collectively perform certain actions that in themselves constitute the institution. Thus, Searle says that institutions

typically require structures in the form of constitutive rules *X counts as Y in C* and that institutional facts only exist in virtue of collective acceptance of something having a certain status, where that status carries functions that cannot be performed without the collective acceptance of the status. This I am claiming is the glue that holds society together.⁵

Thus, despite the emphasis on individual cognitive abilities as the ultimate ontological foundation of human sociality, Searle's approach contains fundamental social elements too, for one, the appeal to the collective acceptance of statuses as holding society together.

There is also another sense in which Searle's approach is social. He argues that among the forms of human intentionality there is one referred to as 'we intentionality' or collective intentionality⁶. This means that individual human beings are capable of thinking that a collective, say a football team, is collectively engaged in something examples of which could be formulated as '*we* are attacking', '*we* are trying to score a goal' and so forth. Searle holds that collectively intentionality does not reduce to a collection of individual intentions expressed in 'I intend to score and everyone individually in our team intends to score' or some such array of individual intentions. Rather, Searle argues, collective intentionality is an independent, irreducible form of intentionality just as 'I intend to ...' is. Searle is not particularly clear on this, but for him all "social facts" appear to be of the we-type⁷, although he does allow that the we-type also somehow contains intentions of the I-type as for instance while playing a game of American football I may intend to block (I-type) although this happens as a part of our team intention to engage in passing play (we-type), to give an example that Searle uses⁸. Some have indeed found Searle's account of collective intentionality ambiguous⁹.

⁵Searle 2005: 9-10.

⁶Searle 1996: 23 ff.

⁷Searle 1996: 26.

⁸Searle 1996: 23.

⁹Zaibert 2003.

Finally, Searle also introduces the notion of Background “of capacities, abilities, tendencies, and dispositions”¹⁰ to denote acquired or innate, biological, non-representational, pre-intentional, automated, instinct or reflex-like skills carrying forward, but also enabling in the first place, human activities within social institutions. The Background also includes knowledge about the world in terms of what is physically possible or typical in it—including knowledge that swallowing a key and opening a door with it by moving one’s guts in particular ways is hard if not impossible, as Searle amusingly puts it, reflecting his relaxed style of writing¹¹. These skills are not expressions of the human intentional capacity but in a particular way make the exercise of intentional capacities possible¹². Elsewhere, Searle characterises the Background as “a set of presuppositions for the application of intentionality, including a set of abilities”¹³.

The function of the Background in Searle’s theory is thus that it completes the picture of the human performance of social institutions by filling in the apparent gaps for example in knowledge about typical physical possibilities in the world left open by status functions and human intentionality in general. Perhaps we can say that the notion of Background is a response to the feeling that, as human action is very complex, the only way to explain it is to assume that “we have to take a great deal for granted” when we act in such complex ways, as Searle writes.¹⁴

Searle argues that “much of Wittgenstein’s later work is about what I call the Background”¹⁵ but we have reasons to doubt this. Unlike Searle’s project, Wittgenstein’s later philosophy cannot be described as containing attempts to analyse the in part hidden or unconscious “semantic contents” and “intentional contents generally”, as Searle describes his objects of interest¹⁶. For Wittgenstein a formal semantic theory would probably essentially seem like an attempt by “the logician to shew people at last what a proper sentence looked like”, as Wittgenstein put it¹⁷. A deeper point of disagreement is that, in contrast to Searle, Wittgenstein’s approach to meaning, language, thought and action was

¹⁰Searle 1996: 5.

¹¹Searle 1996: 131.

¹²Searle 1996: 129.

¹³Searle 2010: xxiii.

¹⁴Searle 2010: xxiv.

¹⁵Searle 1996: 132. Of Wittgensteinians, at least Gebauer (2009: 177) agrees with Searle here.

¹⁶Searle 1996: 131.

¹⁷Wittgenstein 1958: §81.

not *ontological* at all in the sense introduced in Chapters 5 and 6, namely, one that would focus on finding the basis of human sociality in human mental ontology of (shared) intentions, beliefs, motivations and world-views, ideologies, mentalities or the like. In what follows I shall defend and discuss various facets of this claim.

The Conjuring Trick

For the present purposes the crucial aspect of Searle's account is its heavy focus on the role of human mentality in the constitution of social reality. To use a notion of Wittgenstein's, Searle's analysis very much focuses on finding the *source* of human and social action, and as we have seen, in Searle's analysis the source appears as a shared mental object of some kind. In the present view this places Searle in the camp of the proponents of the paradigm from sharing, and the ideological approach more generally (as described in Chapter 5 above). In this and the following section I shall discuss two charges against Searle's account: one challenging the internal coherence of Searle's account of the existence and functioning of shared knowledge of the social, and another more fundamental one claiming that accounts of the source appear to miss the plane upon which social interaction takes place. I begin with the latter issue.

Consider the well-known case from the *Investigations* of the pupil being taught to complete a series of numbers. In the example, the pupil is meant to write down a series of natural numbers and Wittgenstein discusses the teaching and learning process to illustrate the nature of understanding. The teacher may guide the pupil in various ways to reproducing the appropriate numbers "but the *possibility of getting him to understand* will depend on his going on to write it down independently", Wittgenstein adds¹⁸. That is to say, the criterion that the pupil has really understood what he is supposed to do is that he eventually reproduces the series independently by himself. The pupil may have something describable as the 'inner sensation' of a flash of having understood¹⁹ and we may indeed assume all sorts of mental goings-on taking place in the pupil's mind, but on Wittgenstein's view on the *plane of human interaction* the check of his ability is his concrete performance supervised by the teacher. This is to say, when we observe the learning situation such are typical moves taking place in

¹⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §143.

¹⁹In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein spends some time discussing the significance of flashes of understanding (see e.g. Wittgenstein 1958: §138. ff.).

such situations.

Wittgenstein's emphasis on displaying competence would seem to stand in some contrast to the intuitive and deep-rooted picture —acknowledged but not adopted by Wittgenstein— that to theorise about human actions we must go to its alleged *source*, namely the mental structures in the mind or brain. A picture like this typical of an ideological approach, can be seen to inform Searle's views too. In the context of the completing series of numbers example, Wittgenstein has his interlocutor summarise the essentials of this picture saying that

to have got the system (or, again, to understand it) can't consist in continuing the series up to *this* or *that* number: *that* is only applying one's understanding. The understanding itself is a state which is the *source* of the correct use.²⁰

To this Wittgenstein retorts with the above quoted “application is still a criterion of understanding”. The point, as I read it, is to view the teaching situation as a *process of exchange* between the teacher and the pupil and noting that it is the development of that process that is important to the persons involved. In such a point of view, a central aspect of the proceedings will be the teacher judging the effects of the teaching by the pupil's applications of what has been learned. In such a point of view, understanding and knowledge figure as “modes”²¹ or “moves”²² in the process of interaction, to use words that Wittgenstein employed in similar discussions in other contexts.

To understand the power of Wittgenstein's point we must first rid ourselves of the intuition that what is fundamentally at stake in human interaction, say in interpersonal understanding, is knowledge or assumptions about other peoples' mental states. For example, imagine someone informs me about some matter. Here I may indeed doubt that person's honesty. I am not, however, trying to judge or guess the state of *mind* of the other, whatever that could in fact mean. Rather, as Wittgenstein put it, “the main thing he guesses at is a context”²³, or that I am interested in “the circumstances —that is, on what happened before and after”²⁴ the suspect statement made by the other person. In other words, the significance of a statement is not its ontological character but such things as have

²⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §146.

²¹Wittgenstein 1958: Part II : i (p. 174)

²²See e.g. Wittgenstein 1958: §22. and §49.

²³Wittgenstein 1958: §652.

²⁴Wittgenstein 1958: §35.

to do with the *developmental* process of interaction, say, the statement turning out to be a lie and the effect of lying upon my relationship to the liar. At the same time, there is no *one* answer as to what the significance of a lie is, for there will be differences in how individuals react to having been lied to. Something similar goes for the teaching scenario: the teacher is not trying to guess when the decisive mental occurrence has taken place in the pupil's head, but the teacher is focused on the teaching process and the signals the pupil gives.

In the following powerful passage of the *Investigations* a similar point is made with the example of expecting and hoping that contrasts hoping conceived as a mental going-on and hoping as seen in certain surroundings:

§583. "But you talk as if I weren't really expecting, hoping, *now* —as I thought I was. As if what were happening *now* had no deep significance." —What does it mean to say 'What is happening now has significance' or 'has deep significance'? What is a *deep* feeling? Could someone have a feeling of ardent love or hope for the space of one second —*no matter what* preceded or followed this second?— What is happening now has significance —in these surroundings. The surroundings give it its importance. And the word 'hope' refers to a phenomenon of human life.

Note that Wittgenstein is not here giving an answer as to the significance of hoping. He recognises that it can amount to a lot of things because people have differing sensitivities —a nose for— to these things. What is essential, however, is that hoping is a phenomenon of great human significance and that hopes, fears, expectations and ambitions have to do with how the course of human existence develops for someone. Due to this developmental aspect, Wittgenstein denies that love can be felt for a second only.

It is the adoption of a *developmental* perspective, as it could be called, to human interaction that in my view is one of the later Wittgenstein's most valuable and exiting contributions. It is also this aspect that in the present view paves way for an organisatory, rather than an ideological, approach to social action and thereby to our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems. In essence, to view social life as a set of (recurring) developmental processes allows us to focus upon them as organised activities engaged in by differently placed actors and hence also that they do not flow from a shared mentality. Part 1 showed that we need a social theory of this kind to understand the cultural causes of environmental problems. I shall flesh out

these claims more fully later in this chapter as we have explored some more of Wittgenstein's ideas.

I note in passing that despite the emphasis on display of competence Wittgenstein is not to be thought of as a behaviourist. It is hard to state concisely why Wittgenstein was not a behaviourist, among others because behaviourism comes in a number of flavours and goes together with a quite specific intellectual historical baggage of associations —I have in mind, for instance, the behaviourists' claim that behaviourism represents the first "scientific analysis of behavior"²⁵. Among different flavours of behaviourism, for example the logical behaviourist "claims that propositions about the mental are semantically equivalent to propositions about behavioural dispositions"²⁶. Wittgenstein has been characterised as an "analytical behaviourist" who claims that "[w]hen we attribute a belief, for example, to someone, we are not saying that he or she is in a particular internal state or condition. Instead, we are characterizing the person in terms of what he or she might do in particular situations or environmental interactions"²⁷. What one can concisely say is that Wittgenstein did not argue that all talk of mental states should be replaced by talk of behaviour or that statements containing references to putatively mental phenomena really only refer to behaviour. In a phrase, Wittgenstein did not affirm or deny mental ontology. In my reading, he thought that human activities should be described as systems of interaction, and one should therefore describe the system, not the mentalities of the participants, whatever they may be in particular cases. Wittgenstein advocates thus, not an affirmation or denial of human mental goings-on, but a particular perspective to social life.²⁸

Central is to note the *non-ontological* character of Wittgenstein's approach. In a passage, rare in its frankness for Wittgenstein's style, he states his position in quite straightforward terms:

Try not to think of understanding as a 'mental process' at all. —For *that* is the expression which confuses you. But ask yourself: in what sort of case, in what kind of circumstances, do we say, 'Now I know how to go on'."²⁹

In the perspective that Wittgenstein recommends, understanding is thus not a

²⁵Skinner 1971: 20.

²⁶Glock 1996: entry for 'behaviour and behaviourism'.

²⁷Graham 2008.

²⁸See Pleasants 1999: 76 ff. for a similar view of Wittgenstein and behaviourism.

²⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §154.

mental process, but it is looked at as a wider phenomenon consisting of the circumstances (social processes, surroundings, language-game, form of life) in which we talk about having or having not understood, try to get the other to understand and so on. It is the fact that such social processes take place, and not that some mental processes take place, that in Wittgenstein's view is humanly significant about 'understanding'.

Wittgensteinian methodology for describing the nature of human sociality would then move the focus away from the underlying individual intellectual or intentional capacities, representations and whatnot —without, however, denying mental goings-on either!—, whereas Searle for instance does just that, namely, focuses on the various forms of human intentionality as the source of human action. The following passage in the *Investigations* is as if in direct dialogue with Searle:

How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviourism arise? —The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them —we think. But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a definite concept of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick [Taschenspielerkunststück] has been made, and it was the very one that we thought quite innocent.)³⁰

Searle, by contrast, writes:

It is important to see that when we talk about the Background we are talking about a certain category of neurophysiological causation. Because we do not know how these structures function at a neurophysiological level, we are forced to describe them at a much higher level. There is nothing disreputable about that. When I say, for example, that I am able to speak English, I am talking about a causal capacity of my brain.³¹

Searle makes here what Wittgenstein above called the 'conjuring trick of defining what it is to know a process better' when he says that, although we do not know what the brain processes of speaking English are, still to talk about speaking English is to talk about someone's exercise of a 'causal capacity of the brain'. To this intuition Wittgenstein would probably comment:

³⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §308.

³¹Searle 1996: 129.

When philosophers use a word —“knowledge”, “being”, “object”, “I”, “proposition”, “name”— and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?³²

In my reading, Wittgenstein’s objection here can be put thus: Searle’s characterisation of ‘speaking English’ completely misses the social aspect, the use-aspect, of why it is sometimes important for someone to convey to the other person that she is able to speak English, which is arguably the more important aspect than the neurophysical when we are trying to understand what goes on in the social reality. Certainly, in any real situation where the phrase ‘I’m able to speak English’ is used, it is rarely used to remind the other of, or somehow else to make reference to, such a capacity of the brain. This certainly is not the only use and for sure not a fundamental use that underlies other uses. For if this were so, then the person ignorant of the neurophysiology of the brain or of the idea of the mind or brain the seat of human intellectual capacities would misunderstand remarks such as ‘I’m able to speak English’.

A similar statement to Searle’s was made by the prominent Wittgenstein commentator Saul Kripke who wrote that “[c]oming to understand, or learning, seem to me to be a ‘mental process’ if anything is” and so for example “ ‘It’s all in your mind’ means that no genuine physical pain is present”, he argues³³. Again, while it probably seems that Kripke is here articulating a platitude that no one could possibly deny, yet, to treat understanding or imagining a pain as essentially a mental processes completely misses the social processes of human interaction within which we come to understand, point out that the pains are not real and so on. That is, it is exactly their role in the developmental course of human interaction that is humanly significant about these things! A parallel mistake is to treat, say, the crossing of the finishing line by the winning biker in the *Tour de France* as *essentially* a complex physical occurrence in certain space-time co-ordinates. This is certainly not what is humanly interesting about the crossing and the same goes with understanding and pain.

I believe there is a close link here between the present critique of the social theoretical and philosophical emphasis on the *mental source* of human and social action and the critique of Fernando Vidal and others of the so-called ‘cerebral

³²Wittgenstein 1958: §116.

³³Kripke 1982: 49-50.

subject ideology'³⁴. The phrase 'cerebral subject' denotes the idea of the essentiality of the brain to the constitution of a human person, her identity and her capacity to act. And thus Vidal and his colleagues have written critically of such views that the essence of what they see as essentially social categories of behaviour (emotions, for instance³⁵) is reduced to their neural basis. In such cases, I believe a similar forgetting of the role in the developmental course of human interaction of what are cast as mental processes occurs often in social theory and philosophy of social sciences when social institutions are reduced to their social ontology.

One caveat, however, must be noted. The cerebral subject ideology is often thought to draw from a fundamentally *naturalistic* background holding something along the lines that "human beings possess a fixed nature or that their actions can be legitimately explained only in mechanistic terms, as a mere result of law-like, causal, regularities"³⁶. I argue, however, that often even on the face of it antinaturalistic positions, such as collectivism, preserve the ideology in the continuing emphasis on the essentiality of the mental source of human and social action. That some forms of collectivism should be seen as adherents to the cerebral subject ideology is to me justified by two observations. First, as I argued above in Chapter 5, collectivism too can be seen to draw from the emphasis laid in early modern philosophy on human cognition—in Vidal's view, the cerebral subject is an "anthropological figure inherent to modernity"³⁷ the formative historical roots of which he locates in the Cartesian-Lockean picture of human selfhood with consciousness as its only necessary property. Second, claims like Searle's do not so much base their plausibility on empirical findings—consider here for example what Searle says on the Background—but upon them having, in Wittgenstein's words, "a form of account which is very convincing to us"³⁸. That is, they build upon the intuitive picture that what is essential about human and social action is its mental source. Similarly, as Vidal puts it, "[t]he idea that 'we are our brains' " underlying the cerebral subject ideology "is not a corollary of neuroscientific

³⁴See Vidal 2009 and Ortega & Vidal 2010.

³⁵See Ehrenberg 2010.

³⁶Meloni 2010: 109.

³⁷Vidal 2009: 5.

³⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §158. The same can I think be seen to go for a whole host of other ontological views expressed in collectivist positions such as Giddens' unconscious and mutual knowledge (see Chapter 6 above), David Bloor's alignment of sources or indeed Barnes's bootstrapping model of human cognition and Theodore Schatzki's unformulable knowledge (see Chapters 8 and 9 below, respectively).

advances, but a prerequisite of neuroscientific investigation”³⁹. I shall return to the issue of the conjuring trick again on a number of occasions below.

Where There is No Body There Is Spirit

Let us now turn to the second problem for Searle, this one a problem in the internal cohesion of his social ontology.

Something similar to what I have described as Wittgenstein’s non-ontological approach is explicitly rejected by Searle when he argues that the social reality cannot be sufficiently described “from the external behaviorist point of view, because the description of the overt behaviour of people dealing with money, property, etc., misses the underlying structures that make the behaviour possible”⁴⁰. Moreover, Searle seems to dismiss such an approach as an easy task that does not get to the core of human sociality. Everyone knows that “[c]ars are for driving; dollars for earning, spending, and saving; bathtubs for taking a bath”⁴¹, but Searle suggests that the real intellectual challenge begins, and Searle’s analytical task begins, when we attempt to get beyond the functional understanding of the role of things in our lives: “we are left with a harder intellectual task of identifying things in terms of their intrinsic features without reference to our interests, purposes and goals”, Searle says⁴². In a way, then, Searle is engaged in exactly the opposite project from Wittgenstein’s.

In Searle’s view, to understand human sociality we must dig into the structures of social ontology significant parts of which he has traced to reside in people’s minds as unconscious dispositions and the like (the Background). On the other hand, in a dramatic turn of plot, Searle appears to set his ontological approach a challenge by writing that we cannot “describe those [mental] structures as sets of unconscious computational rules, ... because it is incoherent to postulate an unconscious following of rules that is inaccessible in principle to consciousness”⁴³. His problem, as he sets it, is that he wants “a causal explanation that will explain the intricacy, the complexity, and the sensitivity of our behavior as well as [its] spontaneity, creativity, and originality”⁴⁴ that at the same time does not

³⁹Vidal 2009: 7.

⁴⁰Searle 1996: 5. Note however that Wittgenstein was not a behaviourist for reasons indicated earlier in this chapter.

⁴¹Searle 1996: 4.

⁴²Searle 1996: 5.

⁴³Searle 1996: 5.

⁴⁴Searle 1996: 141.

“postulate an unconscious following of rules that is inaccessible in principle to consciousness”. In other words, Searle wants to account for the immense complexity of social reality by appeal to our knowledge of it —significant parts of which must be unconscious, it seems— without appealing to a problematic, in principle inaccessible, form of unconscious knowledge.

Searle attempts to meet this challenge by way of the idea that our knowledge of the social

can be causally sensitive to the specific forms of the constitutive rules of the institution without actually containing any beliefs or desires or representations of those rules.⁴⁵

The same idea is repeated shortly after:

[the social actor] doesn't need to know the rules of the institution and to follow them in order to conform to the rules; rather, he is just disposed to behave in a certain way, but he has acquired those unconscious dispositions and capacities in a way that is sensitive to the rule structure of the institution.⁴⁶

In other words, the picture proposed here by Searle seems to be that social life is organised by rules but that the mental contents of the minds of individuals, which power our actions in social reality, need not necessarily be of those rules but merely something functionally equivalent to those rules. On the face of it, this seems intuitive: I need not know the laws of football exactly as they are written in the book but only in ways that make my actions sensitive to those rules⁴⁷.

Now, whatever the intuitive merits of Searle's account, it yields a contradiction within the ontology of his system. The dilemma is that these unconscious dispositions and the like are said *not* to be the rule structures themselves, but merely *sensitive* to the rule structures, which is confusing as the rules should, according to Searle, at the same time *consist* of shared intentional structures (see p. 137 above). So it seems that in Searle's ontology the rule structures both are and are not shared intentional structures which is a contradiction. Remember, Searle declared at the start that his aim was to lay bare the ontology of social reality without appeals to any curious ontological creatures, yet by divorcing rules

⁴⁵Searle 1996: 141.

⁴⁶Searle 1996: 144.

⁴⁷This example is adopted from Gunter Gebauer's discussion of Searle (Gebauer 2009: 152).

from intentions in individual minds he has set rules ontologically free again. The football laws have become ontological free-floaters to which individual players' intentions are causally sensitive.

Also, as far as I can see, Searle has not given an account of unconscious rule-following either. To the contrary, he remains committed to holding both that unconscious rule-following is incoherent and that one may follow rules without having "any beliefs or desires or representations of those rules".

Searle thus fails to meet the challenge he set himself and it is instructive to consider why. In the most immediate sense, he is not able to give a plausible account of how individuals are supposed to hold all this extensive and shared knowledge about social statuses and functions without a recourse to the idea of the knowledge being unconscious, an idea which Searle himself recognises as questionable. He resorts to a fix from dispositions coupled with the idea of their causal sensitivity to rule structures which, however, conflicts with the ontology of collective acceptance he has posited earlier as the glue holding society together.

In my view, however, there is a deeper underlying problem here having to do with the conjuring trick of defining the ontological as the proper object of investigation. Informing Searle's approach is the implicit assumption that phenomena designated by terms such as rules, knowledge, and beliefs must reduce to something ontological, in particular, to the shared mental source of social action —and hence the feeling of the necessity of offering a theory of social ontology. This is an aspect of the above explored picture of human and social action as springing from a mental source and the collectivist view of the human being as a social being in possession of culturally mediated conceptions that drive our activities. The mental source is conceived of as our knowledge of the social, our concepts and motivations, and where the attribution of explicit knowledge seems problematic we attribute it to the unconscious, sometimes also habitual, character of this knowledge. In Wittgenstein's metaphoric words, "[w]here our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a *spirit*"⁴⁸ which allows us to preserve the paradigm that human and social action is "everywhere bounded by rules"⁴⁹. That is, where we think beliefs must guide our activities, but we cannot quite plausibly attribute certain beliefs and knowledge to ourselves, we come up with the fix that the beliefs and knowledge are unconscious. Hence

⁴⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §36.

⁴⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §84.

we preserve the paradigm by satisfying ourselves that here too our activities are guided by beliefs, albeit unconscious ones.

Such ideas, however, as we have seen with Searle, lead to problems in the internal cohesion of his social ontology. Hence, I conclude that we abandon the ideological approach to the shared mental source of human action and try something else. Here we come, then, to Wittgenstein's approach in which, as I read him, social life is viewed as a set of (often recurring) developmental processes in which knowledge and beliefs figure as modes or moves within the developmental course of human interaction. As I shall attempt to illustrate below, looking at human sociality as a set of developing processes turns attention to the organisation of human interaction. In the analogy I develop between Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas and certain social theoretical issues, the points made can be articulated in terms of the notions of division of labour, individual differences in perspective and therefore in knowledge of the social. In the remaining sections of this chapter I take up a more detailed characterisation of these ideas.

Source and Surroundings

I begin with a discussion of Wittgenstein's source-surroundings distinction. The distinction is implicit in the foregoing discussion and it is central to Wittgenstein's philosophy reflecting the aforementioned non-ontological character of his approach.

Consider this passage in the *Investigations*:

If one says that knowing the ABC is a state of the mind, one is thinking of a state of a mental apparatus (perhaps of the brain) by means of which we explain the *manifestations* of that knowledge. ... [but] there ought to be two different criteria for such a state: a knowledge of the construction of the apparatus, quite apart from what it does.⁵⁰

Wittgenstein indicates here that 'knowledge of the ABC' can well be thought of as a mental phenomenon, the state of mind that is knowing the ABC — or however exactly the ontology of knowing should indeed be best described, whether as a state, disposition or something else. However, Wittgenstein adds, knowing the ABC can also be described in terms of what this knowledge of the ABC does, what it is, as it were, good for. The latter is a matter of seeing in what ways the knowledge of the ABC can be significant in the flow of human life. As I argued

⁵⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §149.

above with reference to Wittgenstein's example of a pupil completing a series of numbers (p. 139), in my reading Wittgenstein's approach is fundamentally characterised by this latter point. I believe that the reading of Wittgenstein constructed around this point, and in particular how this underlies the contrast with the family of the so-called ideological approaches, constitutes a novel approach to his later philosophy.

Again, in Chapter 5 above, I argued that Wittgenstein's approach to meaning does not so much focus on the meaning of expressions as the *surroundings* of the use of expressions. In this vein, for instance Wittgenstein's view of the meaning of 'pain' focuses on human interaction as it were *around* pains and pain-language focusing in this way on the significance of pains in human life, I argued. The turn side of this is that Wittgenstein rejected the view of pain as an *essentially* physiological (neural) or phenomenal (as experienced by the subject) thing. In the *Investigations*, the same treatment is given to a number of phenomena such as reading⁵¹, intending⁵², knowing and understanding⁵³. By *analogy* from these cases, I argue that human and social action too is not to be analysed in terms of its (shared, tacit, unconscious) mental source but it is to be looked at as an organised system, or a set of systems, of human interaction.

Wittgenstein did not deny that human beings have mental goings-on when we understand, mean, read, or calculate—he appears to be in a certain sense agnostic about the mental⁵⁴. His point is rather that the ordinary usage of such terms as 'pain', 'to read' and 'to intend' is not correctly elucidated when they are seen as making reference to the mental source of activity or capacity designated by these terms. Rather, we must see these uses in a wider picture of human life within which we take interest in such things as pains and the ability to read. Strikingly contrasting claims from John Searle and Saul Kripke were quoted earlier in this chapter that identify the significance of the ability to speak English and faking pains with a mental going-on or lack of it.

The present view thus is that, while there may be senses in which it is perfectly

⁵¹Wittgenstein 1958: §156. ff.

⁵²Wittgenstein 1958: §34.

⁵³Wittgenstein 1958: §148.

⁵⁴Consider e.g. "Now, ask yourself: what do you *know* about these things?" (Wittgenstein 1958: §158.) and "So we have to deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium." (Wittgenstein 1958: §308.) Wittgenstein seems also to have entertained the possibility of a radical rejection of the idea that human action has a mental source or cause: "No supposition seems to me more natural than that there is no process in the brain correlated with associating or with thinking" (Wittgenstein 1981: §608., see also footnote 55 below).

legitimate to be interested in understanding, reading or pain as material or neural processes (for example, in the development of pain killers), if however we are interested in understanding human sociality we must focus on the role, the use, of expression in social life with particular reference to the significance to human life of what occurs, what is being talked about and so on. Wittgenstein's example of the significance of children's naming dolls discussed above in Chapter 5 argued a similar point in an interesting manner: it illustrated that name is not just a tag but gives a being or a thing a certain place and significance in human life whatever that may be in particular cases. An analogous point was made in Chapter 6 in the critical discussion of mastery as a conceptual skill amounting to knowledge of the criteria in terms of which we identify social kinds in our environment: there is a difference between social criteria of identification of events, artefacts and so on and their role, use and significance in human life.

Thinking about the role, significance or function of words or phrases, and more generally of expressions, in human life means effectively to look at human life as a set of processes that, as it were, develop and go somewhere. In this thesis I have spoken about the organisation of human activity to denote this process-aspect of human existence. In my reading, Wittgenstein's use of language-game and form of life implies a similar perspective to social life.

Consider here the following passages from the *Investigations* that contain important general insights into Wittgenstein's methodology:

Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a 'proto-phenomenon' [Urphänomene]. That is, where we ought to have said: *this language-game is played*.⁵⁵

The question is not one of explaining a language-game by means of our experiences, but of noting a language-game.⁵⁶

In these passages, 'explanation' and 'experiences' denote aspects of the kind of view that Wittgenstein opposes, namely that there is for instance a mental process of intending that signals a mental going-on, the alleged source and essence of

⁵⁵Wittgenstein 1958: §654. The word 'Urphänomen' most likely refers to Goethe's use of it in his natural philosophical writings. Wittgenstein is known to have been attracted by Goethe's ideas e.g. about causality and from time to time apparent allusions to Goethe appear, although unreferenced, in Wittgenstein's writings (as in the above quoted passages, see also Wittgenstein 1981: §605. ff., in particular the example from the seed in §608.). Unfortunately, I cannot pursue this interesting line of research here. James C. Klagge's work are a good source of further study into the topic (Klagge 2003, 1999, 1989).

⁵⁶Wittgenstein 1958: §655.

intending. For Wittgenstein the relation of ‘the essence’ and the context is converse: for him thinking, intention and knowledge appear as features of the model or prototype: “[t]hat is to say, the phenomena of hope [or knowledge, intention, etc.] are modes of this complicated form of life”⁵⁷, to quote in full the passage we have already referred to. The point is, to attribute to someone for instance an intention or knowledge should not be seen as noting or assuming a mental going-on, but essentially as situating her actions and words in a wider context of action, its surroundings. In this picture, one notes not only that the other person is angry but also why and what consequences this may have. In these cases, as I argued above, there obtain individual differences as to what we have ‘nose for’, what we know of, are interested in or are sensitive to.

I think it is important to observe that when I above summarised Wittgenstein as saying that attributions of intention or knowledge are not attributions of a mental going-on to a person, I do not mean Wittgenstein wanted to give an *a priori* judgement as to what *must* be going on when a person attributes to another an intention. Rather, in the present reading, the issue is all about adopting a particular organisatory perspective to human life. When Wittgenstein spoke of language-games and forms of life as often recursive processes within which human life is lived, he was not attempting thereby to trace what people *must* be doing, what *must* be going on in our heads, when we ‘play’ a language-game. One could say that the point is to distinguish the actual ontology of understanding, whatever that may be, from our reflective accounts of it and take care of “presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison —as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality *must* correspond”, as Wittgenstein put it⁵⁸. Our accounts should not be thought of as probing “the basis, or essence, of everything empirical”⁵⁹ such as the essence of social action in shared knowledge and expectations about what happens in social life as social theory often has it.⁶⁰ Yet, we can say, as I have done on a couple of occasions above, that to understand social reality is to understand it as a process (language-game, form

⁵⁷Wittgenstein 1958: Part II : i (p. 174).

⁵⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §131.

⁵⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §89.

⁶⁰It is worth emphasising again, as we did above in Chapter 6 in our discussion of Weber, that the point is not a sceptical one of it being beyond human capacity to analyse the source of social action or that one would not be able to get to know what people really think or know. This relates to Wittgenstein’s point about a *logically* private —that is, not even in principle understandable— language, thoughts and feelings cancelling out as irrelevant comparable to the irrelevance of a turning cog wheel not connected to any other wheel.

of life) —to which we, however, have different perspectives and in which we take different interests and so on. This, it should be stressed, is not an ontological point about the structure of human understanding, but an observation about the general purposeful character of human activities. In such a view, social processes do thus appear as having a point or another, that is, human activities develop and go somewhere. This is not, however, to attribute a *particular* goal, motivation or the like to the participants.

This relates to Wittgenstein’s approach of giving a *grammatical* as contrasted with a *causal* account. The former kind of an account he also sometimes called giving a “logical” or “conceptual”⁶¹ account. Wittgenstein was, first of all, clear that his approach “is not a causal but a conceptual [grammatical, logical] one”⁶². We gather from various passages in the *Investigations* that descriptions of grammar involve describing the use of for example words and phrases in the context, surroundings or circumstances of the flow of human life, descriptions that tend to have an essentially mundane and everyday character⁶³. A causal explanation, in contrast to a grammatical account, aims at elucidating the *mental source* of human action. Thus, Wittgenstein said that giving a causal explanation of rule-following might involve the description of the causal mechanism given rise to by conditioning such that “I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way, and now I do so react to it”. Wittgenstein then added that “[b]ut that is only to give a causal connexion; to tell how it has come about that we now go by the sign-post; not what is actually essential about this going-by-the-sign [worin dieses Dem-Zeichen-Folgen eigentlich besteht]”⁶⁴. It is essential, Wittgenstein concluded, that “there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom”. That is, as I read the passage in the light of the present organisatory reading, it is essential that the going-by-the-sign is seen in some wider context of human activity such that the going-by-the-sign appears as part of a system or as serving a purpose. In Wittgenstein’s view, then, we should not be tracing the mental mechanism behind human action —for “ask yourself: what do you *know* about

⁶¹Wittgenstein 1958: §566., Part II : xi (p. 203).

⁶²Wittgenstein 1958: Part II : xi (p. 203).

⁶³Consider e.g. Wittgenstein’s frequent appeals to our knowledge of the ‘circumstances’ of language use in the *Investigations* (§33., §87., §117.)

⁶⁴Wittgenstein 1958: §198. I have rendered the original translation “not what this going-by-the-sign really consists in” to “not what actually is essential about this going-by-the-sign”. In German one distinguishes between ‘bestehen in’ and ‘bestehen aus’ where the latter can be used to denote the parts that compose something, whereas the former phrase is used to denote the essential feature(s) of something.

these things?”⁶⁵— but describing the processes in which we follow rules such as, say, when we follow the sign-post indicating a one-way street. In Wittgenstein’s view, what is essential about one-way street signs is not that everyone is *disposed* not to go the wrong way upon seeing one (even if we all were), but that there exists a system in which such signs play a role. Grammatical accounts describe such systems, and not for instance their ontological basis in a (shared) mentality, ideology or the like (even if there was one).

As a further clarification one might add that for me to give a *reason* for having done something is seen by Wittgenstein as relating my act to some system of human action (“I couldn’t drive down there as it is a one-way street”), and not indicating that a particular mental going-on (reasoning, consideration, motivation) went through my head and caused me doing so. Yet, there is a great temptation to think that a reason—or knowledge, belief, intention—is ultimately or essentially a mental going-on out of which also spins the picture of social action as action under the guidance of shared (unconscious and tacit) beliefs (as discussed in Chapter 5). In such an ontological view, reasons appear as “quasi-objects”⁶⁶ in the human mentality and as such effectively as causes of action.

I wrote earlier that to my knowledge the present reading of Wittgenstein, in particular the use I make of this reading, presents a novel approach to his later philosophy and above (in Chapter 6) I have already indicated how, for example, Giddens’ Wittgenstein-inspired social theory is in a certain core respect (mutual knowledge) an ideological approach and thus in contrast with the present view. I shall discuss other examples of Wittgensteinian social theory in this and later chapters. Now I want to show that some Wittgenstein commentators in philosophy do not appear to have fully appreciated the radical nature of Wittgenstein’s de-focus away from the mental source as the essence of meaning and understanding.

Consider for example the reading of Wittgenstein’s concept of understanding provided by the prominent Wittgenstein commentators Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker⁶⁷. They quite correctly reject a number of views of the *source* of human

⁶⁵Wittgenstein 1958: §158.

⁶⁶Pleasants 1999: 108.

⁶⁷Baker and Hacker wrote the monumental four volume exegesis of the *Investigations* (some of which has recently been revised by Hacker). Whether one agrees with their view or not, the volumes continue to be a very valuable source on Wittgenstein in particular because they frequently provide references to earlier or similar versions of the passage or phrase at hand in numerous other manuscripts and notebooks written by Wittgenstein giving thereby interesting

action as various types of state of the human mental apparatus: experience, process, mental state, dispositional state or disposition. In my view, however, they take the wrong turn as they go on to identify Wittgenstein's conception of understanding as "akin to an ability", for this struggles to make a clear break between the ontological approach to the source of human action and the non-ontological approach to the surroundings of human action. This can be seen in the following passage referring to Wittgenstein's learning to complete series of numbers example:

[W]hat is signalled by the utterance 'Now I understand!', is the *dawning of an ability*, not the performance of a mental act signified by the verb 'to understand' in an occurrent sense.⁶⁸

The passage thus rejects understanding as a mental occurrence in the brain. Yet, what is this 'dawning of an ability' with which occurrences are replaced if not something taking place in the mental life of the person at hand? It may not be right to say that in the process of learning there is a moment where the person for the first time performs some one particular 'mental act of understanding', but to replace this talk with talk of the dawning of an ability merely suggests that the learning process is gradual (dawning) process but a mental process nonetheless leading to the establishment of an ability. At the very least there is ambiguity here as to what extent an ontological approach to understanding is rejected by Baker and Hacker.

In a number of places Baker and Hacker, as well as Hacker separately, characterise Wittgenstein's project as "clarification of concepts"⁶⁹ which on the face of it would seem like a non-ontological project. Yet, the concepts to be clarified are said to be those actual concepts that people employ which is an ontological claim: "to say of a person that he understands a word is to characterize him as having, at a particular time, a capacity, a mastery of a technique", Hacker writes⁷⁰. The point is related to the above considered critique by Lars Hertzberg of Hacker's emphasis on the linguistic skill as a conceptual capacity (Chapter 6, p. 121 above). Again, elsewhere Baker and Hacker write first that "the meanings

insights into the developmental history of and internal connections in Wittgenstein's ideas. Indicating the status enjoyed by Baker and Hacker's work, Crispin Wright called theirs 'the official view' of Wittgenstein's philosophy.

⁶⁸Baker & Hacker 2009: 382.

⁶⁹Hacker 2001: 282.

⁷⁰Hacker 2001: 282.

of words are not entities of any kind” and so “*a fortiori* they are not ideas in the mind”, but a little later they say that “the meaning of a word is an object of understanding. It is what is understood or known when one has mastered the technique of the use of that word”⁷¹.

Given that Wittgenstein quite explicitly asked us not to think of understanding as a mental process at all, it is surprising to find Wittgensteinian philosophers persisting with thinking of understanding as a matter of concepts that the subject entertains and keeping the focus on the mind as the locus of human action. Thus, Theodore Schatzki, for instance, argued that historically Wittgenstein’s view “can be seen as swimming in the emergent stream of [late 19th century] process-metaphysical approaches to mind”⁷² according to which “behavior ... expresses such and such a condition” only in the setting of human activity or “practices on the background of which others are able, on the basis of that behavior, to understand and say that this is the actor’s condition”⁷³. Given the source-surroundings distinction, I think it is, first, wrong to say that Wittgenstein’s philosophy is underlined by a process concept of the mind and, second, that the significance of pain-behaviour is that it shows that a person is in a particular mental condition (as discussed above in Chapter 6, p. 120 ff.). In my reading, to requote Wittgenstein, he tried “not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’ at all” and saw the significance of pain-behaviour in their place in and consequences to the developmental process of human interaction.

Agreement in Form of Life

Having above discussed Wittgenstein’s distinction between the source and the surroundings of human and social action, I shall now turn to the implications of the distinction to the nature of sharing or agreement underlying social life. The approach splits in two arguments. The one given in this section focuses on elucidating Wittgenstein’s notion of agreement in form of life as agreement in *organisation* of human life as opposed to ideology. The section after puts forward a view of the agreement drawing from a particular understanding of what Wittgenstein called the blindness of rule-following as characterising agreement in form of life.

⁷¹Baker & Hacker 2009: 144 and 148.

⁷²Schatzki 1996: 26.

⁷³Schatzki 1996: 24.

Let us, then, begin with the question: what is the nature of collective agreement underlying social life if not ontologically characterisable as shared beliefs, conceptions, dispositions and the like giving rise to coordinated social action? In my reading, Wittgenstein's account of the collective agreement underlying social institutions is agreement in organisation implying quite an explicit rejection of agreement in ideology. As Wittgenstein put it, the agreement underlying social life "is not agreement in opinions but in form of life"⁷⁴.

What, then, is agreement in form of life? We do not find Wittgenstein's views on this issue summarised neatly in one place, but must attempt to construct a picture of the place of this idea in Wittgenstein's system of thought. I shall construct a picture in which agreement in form of life is agreement by the fact that human life is *organised* around certain shared forms of interlocking activities.

Let us have an exegetical look at 'the agreement in form of life passage', §241. There, as quoted above, Wittgenstein describes the human agreement underlying social life as agreement in form of life (*Übereinstimmung der Lebensform*) and not in opinions (*Übereinstimmung der Meinungen*). But then, in §242., he describes the agreement also as agreement in definitions (*Definitionen*) and judgements (*Urteilen*). We are thus faced with this exegetical question: if Wittgenstein rejects shared opinions, but not definitions and judgements, as characterising the collective agreement in what way do definitions and judgements differ from opinions?

Studying a number of passages in the *Investigations* where the German word for 'judgement', *das Urteil*, and its cognates appear⁷⁵, we see that in these passages Wittgenstein again emphasises the importance of seeing the talk of judgement of competence and intention, *not* as making reference to a mental state of the competent or intending person, but as against the backdrop of the circumstances in which one makes judgements of competence and intention or in which one exhibits competence and intention. This is, as we have seen, a recurring and a central theme in Wittgenstein's writings. The same treatment is given to definitions. Wittgenstein points out that there are particular circumstances for the giving and making use of ostensive definitions as well as criteria by which we

⁷⁴Wittgenstein 1958: §241. It is sometimes said that because the term 'form of life' makes only a very small number of appearances in Wittgenstein's writings it must not be a central concept to his approach. However, a striking general characteristic of Wittgenstein's philosophical work is how much space is devoted to exposing and dispelling confusions, a symptom of which is that terms constitutive of his positive contribution, such as 'form of life', make only rare appearances.

⁷⁵See e.g. Wittgenstein 1958: §487-9.

judge that such a definition has been understood⁷⁶.

The point, as I read it, goes back to the idea of social life as a developmental process and for example judgements and definitions as moves or modes of such processes. It is intuitive to think that a judgement, for instance, is quite a definite mental occurrence and that the person having that occurrence can well tell what she means, intends, knows, believes and so on: “it is just the queer thing about *intention*, about the mental process, that the existence of a custom, of a technique, is not necessary to it”, as Wittgenstein had his interlocutor say⁷⁷. Wittgenstein, however, thought that there lie various dangers here in thinking about intentions as having this independent character. It can appear, for instance, that my intention is this mental object in my mind, that somehow contains everything that I mean. This way it begins to seem that “the whole *use* of a word” must be “before my mind” when I understand it, a view that Wittgenstein evidently thought of as an absurdity⁷⁸. One may then also be led to make all kinds of assumptions about this mental object and its ‘queer’ capacities, perhaps casting some of them as unconscious contents of the mind: thinking appears as “an incorporeal process which lends life and sense to speaking, and which it would be possible to detach from speaking”, Wittgenstein wrote⁷⁹. Another danger is that social life begins to seem like a mere spin-off of human mental capacities, and thus for instance that I can really only surmise that others are in pain, a view that Wittgenstein evidently also thought of as an absurdity⁸⁰.

Most interestingly for the present purposes, placing overt focus on human mentalities makes us lose the view of social life as a set of developmental processes engaged in by differently placed actors. Hence, as I argued above, the essence of learning does not reside in some mental occurrences in the mind, but from a social developmental perspective, learning is a social process involving the interaction of at least the teacher and the pupil. Looked at as a process, the essential moves made in teaching are the quite ordinary moves of the teacher giving examples, the pupil responding in them and so on. Wittgenstein, thus, as it were turned the frame of reference around and saw the social processes as primary and intentions and knowledge as mere moves or modes of social processes. And, to go back

⁷⁶See Wittgenstein 1958: §28.-30.

⁷⁷Wittgenstein 1958: §205.

⁷⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §139.

⁷⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §339.

⁸⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §246.

to the discussion at hand, judgements and definitions too must be seen in the context of their use, and not as independent mental goings-on in a person's mind.

What, however, of agreement in opinions? How does this contrast with agreement in judgements and definitions, as Wittgenstein appears to suggest? I suggest reading the passages under consideration (§241. and §242.) in the light of the source-surroundings distinction and seeing Wittgenstein's objective as critical. In such a reading, 'opinion' is used by Wittgenstein as a kind of a belief in the sense in which I above spoke of independent mental goings-on giving rise to a picture of social life as a mere spin-off. Opinion is thus used in a critical sense similar to Wittgenstein's use of 'rule' discussed above (Chapter 6, p. 122). These uses relate to his general rejection of the view that speaking and thinking are like "operating a calculus according to definite rules"⁸¹ where the application is "everywhere bounded by rules"⁸². Wittgenstein's view of course is that we should not think of opinions as mental goings-on at all, but as moves taking place in the course of social processes, which expresses the non-ontological character of his approach.

All this points to a particular understanding of the collective agreement underlying human life. We should not think of the agreement in form of life to consist of agreement in opinions, but in agreement about some wider frame within which particulars appear. This agreement about the wider frame in turn is not essentially ideological agreement—that is, sharing of knowledge and the like about the social—but agreement in *organisation*. The underlying motivation for this view is the aforementioned idea that social life is a set of interactive processes characterised by their process-character (language-game or form of life), not by what goes on in the heads of the participants. To agree in form of life is thus not necessarily to know the same as other participants but to share a life's sphere with others, or to live life organised in a particular way.

Think here again of Wittgenstein's builders (see the earlier discussion in Chapter 6, p. 123). I indicated above that we can even think of the builder and the assistant as having differing knowledge about the slabs and other building materials, but what they have in common is that they both contribute to the same process, namely that of building something. The builder and the assistant could thus be said to operate in a system of *division of labour*. One could enquire into the reasons as to *why* the builder and the assistant engage in the building pro-

⁸¹Wittgenstein 1958: §81.

⁸²Wittgenstein 1958: §84.

cess, but arguably this would no longer be an analysis of the constitution of the social process, for the answers would be of some particular kind such as ‘I need to work to earn money’ or some other such individually divergent motivation which arguably do not characterise the essence of the total social process. Something similar could easily turn out to be the case should we examine the knowledge of the social process that the builder and the assistant respectively hold. Their knowledge and interests in the building process would quite possibly differ. The important point is that their knowledges could be considerably different, yet the building process would not suffer from this provided that they both still cover their differing, particular lots. This is to say, the building process in its totality need not be ‘present’ in the builders’ mentalities in order for the process to succeed. Hence also, the social process of building cannot be analysed by looking at the mentalities, collective or otherwise, of the builders, for this would yield a partial picture only. Essential is that the builders be seen working within a shared organisation of activity and this they do in reciprocal and complementary roles. In my reading, this is precisely the gist of the builders scenario in Wittgenstein, namely, that it illustrates the meaning-as-use of expressions such as “block!”, “pillar!” and “slab!” in the system of building the house. Their meaning-as-use resides essentially in their employment in the building process, not in what the builders thereby think.

In sum, the social process in its totality is not present in my mentality as I perform my lot in it, yet any one of us is a performer of the system as a whole. We thus as it were agree in form of life, or in the organisation of our activity by contributing to it. And hence, due to the lack of a total representation of the social process in the heads of the performers, we can say following Wittgenstein: our collective performance of the social is *blind*. Next section discusses the appearance of this idea in Wittgenstein.

I Obey the Rule Blindly

The word ‘blind’ refers to Wittgenstein’s use of the word in the *Investigations* §219. There he writes: “When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly*”. The central difficulty with a non-ontological approach to the social is the one of giving an account of our collective performance of social reality that does not over-intellectualise and ideologically homogenise us and do this in the face of the powerful contrary intuitions embodied in the ideological approach and

the paradigm from sharing. Blind agreement in form of life is intended to describe just this kind of a non-intellectual blind agreement in the organisation of human life.

I shall approach the issue by discussing a differing reading of Wittgenstein's notion of blindness given by David Bloor. I offer a more exhaustive discussion of Bloor's views in Chapter 8.

In Bloor's reading the blindness is conceived ontologically as designating certain habitual, machine-like operations of the human cognitive capacities, for example as we classify objects as instances of some particular kind of a thing. As Bloor argues, in place of a causal-deterministic approach to rule-following "Wittgenstein substituted a more down-to-earth account, using biological ideas"⁸³. The biological analogy, Bloor continues, is that "we should think of ourselves as having instinctive responses to the examples used in teaching"⁸⁴. The instinct is, as Bloor clarifies, that upon being presented a limited set of samples "we instinctively generalise"⁸⁵ and automatically continue to label similar things as instances of the same thing. This is in our biological make up and one would be inclined to say that it therefore operates causally. Yet, Wittgenstein explicitly rejected causal explanations: "Our problem is not a causal but a conceptual one", he wrote⁸⁶.

We may have biological instincts in the sense that Bloor argues, but I doubt that Wittgenstein was making a reference to them in the places that Bloor cites as the source of his attribution of this view to Wittgenstein. Thus, Bloor cites Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* and keeping in mind that there the general topic and context of discussion is sceptical doubt, among others, of our ordinary knowledge attributions, will help us to see that no biological analogy is being made use of by Wittgenstein there.

A typical line of reasoning we find in *On Certainty* goes as follows. In ordinary situations we quite comfortably say things like I know that the train leaves at two, meaning for instance that I have double checked the time-table, Wittgenstein observes⁸⁷. Sceptical doubts, of course, press beyond such assurances questioning everything, any ground we could give. Yet, it seems absurd to express sceptical

⁸³Bloor 1997: 13.

⁸⁴Bloor 1997: 13.

⁸⁵Bloor 1997: 13.

⁸⁶Wittgenstein 1958: 203.

⁸⁷Wittgenstein 1975: §444.

doubts about our ordinary convictions as well as to attempt to give grounds for everyday certainty. Here Wittgenstein offers two passages characterising our ordinary convictions and certainty in relation to the demand for justification, both of which Bloor cites in support of his biological view. The passages read:

Now I would like to regard this certainty, not as something akin to hastiness or superficiality, but as a form of life. (That is very badly expressed and probably badly thought as well.)⁸⁸

But that means I want to conceive it as something that lies beyond being justified or unjustified; as it were, as something animal.⁸⁹

Despite certain connotations attached to the word ‘animal’ in the latter passage, the appearance of the phrase ‘form of life’ in the former passage makes clear that no biological instinct is offered as the mechanism by which we have ordinary epistemological certainty. Wittgenstein is not talking about biologically grounded instinct when he speaks of our ordinary certainty as something animal. As the first approximation, let us say he is talking about the matter-of-course naturalness in which the familiar course of the flow of everyday human life is familiar to us. The issue is not about the character of our knowledge of everyday life being perhaps like a habit—living routine everyday life can require considerable mental efforts on daily basis—but that certain things are naturally a part, and others are not, of our activities or language-game: “it is there—like our life”, Wittgenstein wrote⁹⁰. We do not deal here with extreme subtleties underlying our language use and hidden from view but, as Wittgenstein observes in a passage that we have already quoted above, “[f]or each one of these sentences I can imagine circumstances that turn it into a move in one of our language-games, and by that it loses everything that is philosophically astonishing”⁹¹. In these and other ordinary circumstances it is clear what it is to know and to be justified. But philosophy distorts these ordinary well-known uses as brought out by this amusing passage from *On Certainty*:

⁸⁸Wittgenstein 1975: §358.

⁸⁹Wittgenstein 1975: §359. A note on the remark in brackets. I would not read this as Wittgenstein questioning his own point as Baker and Hacker suggest (1985: 241). I read it as an expression of Wittgenstein’s life long doubts about his own capacities and the accompanying self-disciplining towards ever higher achievements and clarity of thought (see Monk 1990: 23 ff. and Janik & Toulmin 1996: 236 ff.). One should also bear in mind that *On Certainty* is by no means a polished text but a posthumously published notebook, essentially a philosophical diary showing Wittgenstein at work filling up his notebook from one day to the next.

⁹⁰Wittgenstein 1975: §559.

⁹¹Wittgenstein 1975: §622.

I am sitting with a philosopher in the garden; he says again and again “I know that that’s a tree”, pointing to a tree that is near us. Someone else arrives and hears this, and I tell him: “This fellow isn’t insane. We are only doing philosophy.”⁹²

Consider another passage from Wittgenstein that Bloor cites in support of his biological view, presumably again because of the word ‘animal’:

I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination [Raisonnement]. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination.⁹³

This passage too we can read as pointing, not to a biological instinct, but to the familiar course of human life in which we communicate in ways that relate to the familiar activities in the frame of forms of life. The human being as ‘an animal in a primitive state’ is the human being in everydayness engaged in everyday actions within which she also employs specific forms of language, knowledge and so on.

One of the central points made by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty* is that our reliance on everyday knowledge is based neither on ignorance nor an implicit refutation of sceptical doubts, but as I would like to put it: on the *organisation* of life around everyday knowledge, activities, artefacts and so on. Thus, Wittgenstein spoke of there being no place for sceptical doubts in everyday life, unlike how everyday knowledge (‘the train arrives at 05:15’) ties with my intentions, material objects around me, and so on. Suppose the sceptic posed us the question how could one ever be sure of not having been to the moon? Wittgenstein writes:

Why is it not possible for me to doubt that I have never been on the moon? And how could I try to doubt it?

First and foremost, the supposition that perhaps I have been there would strike me as *idle*. Nothing would follow from it, nothing be explained by it. It would not tie in with anything in my life.⁹⁴

From the point of view of everyday circumstances, the doubt about one having been on the moon seems exceedingly irrelevant as nothing in life seems to point to that possibility. There is no *place* for such an event in our lives, unlike there is a place and role for double-checking the train timetable.

⁹²Wittgenstein 1975: §467..

⁹³Wittgenstein 1975: §475.

⁹⁴Wittgenstein 1975: §117.

Wittgenstein, however, presses the matter further and observes that just as nothing speaks in favour of one having been to the moon, so nothing speaks against it. Perhaps one just forgot the episode? The doubt, however, is so outlandish that one, as it were, can neither seriously entertain it nor completely deny it either.

If one cannot deny a sceptical doubt, can one affirm some apparently core belief about our existence, say, “the principle that what has always happened will happen again (or something like it)”, Wittgenstein enquired, and wrote then:

What does it mean to follow this principle? Do we really introduce it into our reasoning? Or is it merely the *natural law* which our inferring apparently follows? This latter it may be. It is not an item in our considerations.⁹⁵

Wittgenstein’s conclusion thus is: at least in ordinary circumstances, considerations that counter sceptical doubts are not explicit ‘items in our considerations’. Again and again, throughout *On Certainty* and elsewhere, Wittgenstein must observe the groundlessness of our form of life and language-games. We do go about our activities with certainty that we have not been on the moon or that the table continues to exist when I am not looking at it. And here Wittgenstein makes the above quoted remark: “I would like to regard this certainty, not as something akin to hastiness or superficiality, but as a form of life”⁹⁶. He is not talking about habitual certainty, implicit or explicit assumptions, or anything of the kind. The certainty, rather, flows from what is naturally a part of human life and what is not.

The certainty talked about here is not *ideological* but *organisatory* in nature, a crucial categorical difference. Gunter Gebauer expresses this well writing that Wittgenstein’s philosophical position builds upon certainty as a “non-epistemic attitude to the world”⁹⁷ where the certainty is “woven into the language-game itself”⁹⁸, the way it functions.

Similarly, in the analogy that I have been developing from Wittgenstein’s philosophical views to social theory, to agree in the organisation of everyday life is not to be analysed ideologically as a set of conscious or unconscious epistemic

⁹⁵Wittgenstein 1975: §135.

⁹⁶Wittgenstein 1975: §358.

⁹⁷Gebauer 2009: 158. “Hier hat Wittgenstein eine Möglichkeit gefunden, aus einer nicht-epistemischen Einstellung zu Welt eine *philosophische Haltung* zu gewinnen.”

⁹⁸Gebauer 2009: 159. “Aber das Eigentümliche dieser Gewißheiten ist, daß sie in die Sprachspiele selbst eingewoben sind wie Muster in eine Textur.”

attitudes, but as having a deeper character of the very process of living human life being tied to its organisation. The difficulty here is one of resisting the temptation of giving an account of our knowledge and performance of social reality that over-intellectualises that performance —or one that intellectually homogenises the actors, we might add. That is, there are the temptations discussed above to think that our knowledge is more complete than we can formulate, and that the essential processes of knowing are hidden in the unconscious and tacit medium of the human mind. This idea, that there is more than meets the eye, is particularly apparent in Searle’s idea of the Background and also there in Bloor’s appeal to biological instincts. They are attempts “to get hold of the mental process of understanding which seems to be hidden behind those coarser and therefore more readily visible accompaniments”, as Wittgenstein put it⁹⁹. Repeatedly Wittgenstein insisted, however, that we do not need a philosopher —or indeed a social scientist— to tell us how human sociality really looks like. This comes out in remarks such as that of the order ‘stand roughly there’ as not requiring a philosophical analysis to make its meaning clear¹⁰⁰. The certainty we have to do with here is non-epistemic, that is, not a matter of beliefs or knowledge of some kind, but of human life taking place in particular surroundings.

The point can also be made in terms of the role of certain “constancies” of human life, examples of which in the *Investigations* often pertain to the constancies of the material world. Just like the assumption of the persistence of the size of the object is not part of my hidden assumptions as I weigh cheese, to use Wittgenstein’s point¹⁰¹, so too in the analogy I am developing from Wittgenstein’s philosophical views to social theory various aspects of social reality are not implicitly assumed or known by me when I operate in social reality. Baker and Hacker’s words convey the point: “we teach and explain ... our language-games under certain conditions ... but that background is not part of the explanation” and it is not “written into the concepts” we use¹⁰².

In my reading, then, what Wittgenstein is trying to get at with his musings on certainty, blind rule following and agreement in form of life all amount to the same basic idea: human life is lived under certain conditions and our relationship to those conditions is non-epistemic. By analogy to social theoretical problems, it

⁹⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §153.

¹⁰⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §71.

¹⁰¹Wittgenstein 1958: §142.

¹⁰²Baker & Hacker 1985: 230.

is a distortion to attempt to analyse our relationship to our societal surroundings as fundamentally epistemic. Rather, social life is best looked at as a set of often recurring developmental processes, language-games or forms of life organised in particular ways of which no particular social actor, or a majority of them, need to have shared knowledge or beliefs.

Note that this takes us back to the idea of the *everyday* character of our societal existence talked about in detail in Part 1 (see Chapters 3 and 4). We emphasised there, and again here in connection of Wittgenstein's views, that the human being is a thinking being but that we should be careful not to homogenise us as intellectual beings and over-intellectualise our collective performance of the social by attributing to it a shared general mental source. As the historical examples of Part 1 illustrated, we can very well see human action as very much an intellectual achievement, but the considerations coming to bear in people's everyday activities concern essentially the local and particular situations at hand and display therefore great individual variety. As I read him, the same idea appears in Wittgenstein in a slightly different guise. The key idea is that it is in vain to look for representations of the *general societal conditions* of our existence in the minds of the actors. We often are blind to the general conditions of our existence. Yet, this is not to deny that "all sorts of things"¹⁰³ may go on in people's heads as they operate in social reality although there is nothing "philosophically astonishing" about these possibly complex and intellectually demanding but still essentially very *mundane and everyday* considerations that we engage in the course of our everyday activities. Thus, the picture we have in Wittgenstein of social action is very much the same as we saw in Part 1 to underlie our collective performance of global industrial market society: we are engaged in a considerable variety of everyday activities marked by global division of labour but it would be wrong to think of them all having some deep, hidden, philosophically or sociologically astonishing, shared and general mental source.

Finally, let us round up by noting that the issue of Wittgenstein's remarks on blind rule following relates closely to the suggestion once made in the Wittgenstein literature that it was because of his *conservatism* that Wittgenstein advocated the picture of blind, de-intellectual human adherence to established forms of life¹⁰⁴. In this argument, for a conservative thinker there is something in the *nature* of

¹⁰³Wittgenstein 1958: §335.

¹⁰⁴See Nyíri 1976, 1982 and Bloor 2004. Mannheim 1986 is a classic historico-sociological articulation of the nature of conservatism.

the human being that sees her act traditionally, without reason(s) and reflexivity.

Now, I note first that biographical work on Wittgenstein does not unequivocally support the claim from his conservatism¹⁰⁵. Second, while there may be more than a kernel of truth to the conservative picture, I believe that his would misconstrue Wittgenstein's picture of the human being as, as it were, a de-intellectual being. To see this, note that had Wittgenstein made use of the conservative picture he would have been slipping from what I take to be his general occupation, namely that of describing the *surroundings*, to searching for the *source* of human action, in this case in the inherent conservative quality of the human being. Thus, to keep with the central general character of Wittgenstein's approach, we must look for an account of the de-intellectualised picture of the human being as an account of actors in particular societal *surroundings*, in the social frame, within which the human being lives life.

Wittgenstein and the Cultural Causes of Environmental Problems

Having above developed the key themes of the present Wittgensteinian approach I now want to relate them explicitly to the argument of Part 1 from the cultural causes of environmental problems.

In Part 1 I argued that it is essential to see our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems as *organisatory rather than ideological* in character. In Part 2 I have argued that an approach capable of picturing this is forthcoming in the later Wittgenstein's *non-ontological* perspective to the *surroundings* rather than the *mental source* of language, thought and action. That is, in this perspective, essential to social action is its *process-like, reciprocal and complementary* character engaged in by *differently placed actors in division of roles or labour* who nevertheless *agree in form of life* or in the *organisation* of human interaction.

In the reading of Wittgenstein that I developed above social life emerges as a process of interaction of differently placed actors. In my reading central to Wittgenstein's thinking was that any attempt to grasp these processes proceeds by way of a model, language-game or form of life. A language-game, however, is not essentially a hypothesis about what must be going on in the mentality of those who engage in the form of life but rather a picture of the course and development of these processes. This is not to say that the members of a collective necessarily

¹⁰⁵Monk 1990 and Janik & Toulmin 1996.

share a picture of the process in which they engage —this would again be to look for the shared source of social action. Rather, as I have emphasised all along, there will be individual differences in how we conceptualise social reality.

This again does not preclude agreement in form of life, for in social life I have daily interactions with people whose full perspective I know next to nothing about: I shop at the supermarket without necessarily knowing anything about how the shop is run and what are its wider organisational and institutional pre-conditions. The same can be argued to go for many core institutions within which we live life: I act within them without extensive stock of knowledge about central aspects of their functioning. In the analogy I have been developing from Wittgenstein's philosophical concerns to social theory, this non-epistemic relation of social actors to the majority of the conditions of our societal existence is the gist of Wittgenstein's remarks on blind rule-following. There will be others, say the supermarket manager, who acts in a complementary role taking care of that side of the social process. I will naturally have some expectations about how others link up with my activities, yet in the perspective proposed here essential for interaction is not that actors know the same things about it, but that we work in differing but complementary roles within a shared organisation of human life.

In Part 1 I argued that one chief aspect in terms of which a constructivist or collectivist account of social life fails to account for the deep problematic character of environmental problems resides in them viewing the organisation of human life as an ultimately *arbitrary*, collective, culturally mediated decision. I shall discuss the theme more closely and with an example from social theory in Chapter 8 below. Here I want to note, however, that in the Wittgensteinian organisatory perspective social processes are very much characterised by their purpose. The purpose, to be sure, is not to be understood simply as a Parsonian 'system goal', but as potentially individually variable, denoting simply the general purposeful nature of human activities. Hence I have emphasised the individuality of our motivations, conceptions and knowledge.

How purposes are built into the Wittgensteinian organisatory and developmental perspective can also be seen in the case of pain-behaviour discussed in a couple of connections above. Here pain-behaviour is not seen simply as an expression of an underlying physical condition but as a mode or move in circumstances with human significance. That is, certainly a humanly significant aspect about having pains is that they hinder satisfying human life and that something should

be done about them, which of course are philosophically unastonishing remarks about pains but nevertheless of great human significance. Via the notion of human significance, human activities around pains thus display a certain purposeful orientation towards curing pains and towards restoring and preserving satisfying human life. By contrast, as argued above, many philosophical and social theoretical accounts have often focused on pains merely as something one can display and for which there is collectively known and accepted criteria.

Finally, the organisatory perspective can also accommodate the idea that social systems and processes —for instance global industrial market society— can serve an important purpose —the maintenance of human material well-being (all inequalities notwithstanding), for instance— that at the same time does not as such have to appear in the motivational, conceptual or other contents of any of the actors involved in the reproduction of the system. As argued above, in my reading something analogous emerges as the underlying point of Wittgenstein’s builders scenario, namely, to illustrate the meaning-as-use of the commands employed in the building process *with respect to the function of the building process* regardless of what the builders themselves happen to think as they use these notions.

The foregoing has placed a lot of weight on the notion of ‘organisation’ but denied that this can be cashed out in terms of what people singly or collectively know and believe about it. What, then, does define organisation? In a fundamental sense, the present approach holds onto the view of a fundamental vagueness pertaining to the idea of organisation, one that parallels Wittgenstein’s rejection of ‘essences’. In Wittgenstein’s view, our demand for clarity must give in in the face of the vagueness of the phenomena we want to sum up under a common term, for “these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, —but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways”, he wrote¹⁰⁶. One could say, organisation is a family-resemblance phenomenon: “the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres”, as Wittgenstein characterised it¹⁰⁷. He also emphasised that our articulations of the essence are purpose-laden (“Only whom are we informing of this? And on what occasion?”¹⁰⁸) which relates to the aforementioned view that an explanation is best seen as a model, ‘an object of comparison’, not ‘tracing the essence

¹⁰⁶Wittgenstein 1958: §65.

¹⁰⁷Wittgenstein 1958: §66.

¹⁰⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §296.

of everything empirical’.

In this thesis I have connected these theoretical views with the more empirical phenomena of division of labour and the resulting differences in actors’ perspective and knowledge of the social systems and processes that we nevertheless collectively perform. The organisation of human productive activity on global industrial market societal basis is a family-resemblance phenomenon defined by the relationality or interconnectedness of the component activities. The whole will appear differently as seen from the different perspectives and the whole is not represented in any individual’s head in its totality —or at least this is not essential to the functionality of the whole or the individual within the whole. At the same time, the various everyday productive and consumptive activities can of course be brought under the common header of, say, ‘world-economy’ by the analyst ‘for a particular purpose’.

We have here, then, an approach to social action that gives us all the essential elements for conceptualising the cultural causes of environmental problems. Our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems can be seen as flowing —not essentially from a shared set of attitudes, knowledge or conceptions of nature— but from everyday activity within the larger scale organisation of human life on everyday basis. Our relationship to the organisation of our activities, furthermore, is non-epistemic in that the organisation constitutes the everyday conditions of our societal existence and activities. Yet, we engage in the collective performance of the social in an immense variety of activities springing from an immense variety of considerations, interests and knowledge. These activities and the mental goings-on underlying them, however, are not philosophically or social theoretically very astonishing but rather everyday and mundane, yet the complexity of organised human life is astonishing. I think Nigel Pleasants’ observation about Wittgenstein’s approach is spot on here:

Wittgenstein has often been criticised for advocating a ‘commonsense’ view of the social and natural world, in which everything is just what it appears to be, and there is nothing puzzling, troubling or mysterious to understand ... However, I think that Wittgenstein’s attitude is quite the opposite of this; he is trying to say that, on the contrary, the world is vastly more complex, puzzling and mysterious than can be captured in a philosophical theory.¹⁰⁹

I have argued that upon a closer look, a differing and intellectually homogenis-

¹⁰⁹Pleasants 1999: 23.

ing tendency can be seen at work in the family of views I have termed the ideological approach. One of the central challenges in this thesis has been to counter the powerful intuitions that steer our thinking for example about social action towards an ideological approach. Forming the core of these intuitions I designated the idea of the essentiality of the mind to human action, the view that human action is essentially action under the guidance of beliefs. I argued that in sociologically minded thought this core idea is often *collectivised* giving rise to the so-called paradigm from sharing: social action is action under the guidance of shared beliefs, knowledge, normative orientation, world-view or the like. I cast the environmentalist argument from the ideological nature of the cultural causes of environmental problems as a form of the same collectivist argument. In my mind, such views wrongly intellectually homogenise human action.

Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of John Searle's analysis of social institutions whose account, in a useful contrast to the present Wittgensteinian approach, focuses on the *source* of human and social action. This led us to characterise Wittgenstein's approach to the social as non-ontological drawing from the idea of the surroundings or the *organisation* of human life, as opposed to the *source*, in analysis of human and social action. I introduced the key Wittgensteinian themes of agreement in form of life and blindness of rule-following illustrating how my reading differs from certain other readings in Wittgenstein-scholarship. Finally, I related these ideas to the view expressed Part 1 of the cultural causes of environmental problems.

In the remaining chapters I shall continue the exposition of the present organisatory social theory by way of a series of critical comparative discussions with existing works in social theory. In the next chapter, I shall discuss the present reading of Wittgenstein in relation to the issue of the social character of normativity, an issue that most readily would seem to relate Wittgenstein to the ideological approach. In the final chapter I shall attempt to draw some interesting, constructive as well as critical parallels with existing social theory.

Chapter 8

Collective Inquisition and a Private Ceremony for Nothing

Even so, it moves.

— Galileo Galilei

In this chapter we shall discuss the notion that would most readily seem to tie Wittgenstein's later philosophy with the paradigm from sharing and the ideological approach more generally, namely that of the social nature of normativity and the closely related idea of the social, collectivist or constructivist, nature of meaning. According to a somewhat popular reading of the later Wittgenstein, language-games and forms of life are best seen as conceptual schemes particular to, for instance, a culture or other such community and that they can be incommensurable with one another. Most importantly, according to this view, conceptual schemes are given raise to and maintained self-referentially by the community.¹

In the foregoing chapters we have already critically discussed several aspects of the idea that the essence of human sociality resides in shared mentalities, world-views, or conceptual schemes, as one might also call them. What I shall do in this chapter, however, is to give the organisatory point of view to a number of debates had about normativity and the social nature of meaning in the Wittgensteinian literature. The purpose is to show that the ideological reading of Wittgenstein is not the only way to make sense of Wittgenstein's remarks about these issues.

¹For a recent Wittgensteinian take on the issue, see Glock 2008. Some classic philosophical contributions to the debate here include Winch 1964 and Davidson 2001.

I begin with a critical discussion of normativity as conceptualised in the so-called Strong Programme. The Programme, associated with the work of David Bloor, Barry Barnes and others, has done a great deal in sociology of scientific knowledge towards countering what could be called causal-deterministic approaches—or meaning determinism and normative determinism, in Bloor’s terminology²—to the history of science in philosophy and history of science as well as to more theoretical issues in philosophy of language. According to this so-called causal-deterministic family of views that Bloor and others have justifiably attacked, meaning is in general, or in some circumscribed areas of discourse, solely or ideally a matter of causal contact of individuals with the world in the process of which entities, or human experiences of entities, become meanings of words and that it is only contingent, and unfortunate, that meanings are in some way socially influenced.

Despite this remarkable historical role of the Programme, I shall argue that the Programme understands the social nature of meaning in a way that conflicts with another central later Wittgensteinian theme, namely that of the rejection of the focus on *the mental source* of meaning, language, thought and action in favour of their *surroundings* as discussed above in Chapter 7. Quite emphatically Wittgenstein said that “try not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’ at all”³, yet I think it can fairly easily be illustrated, as I shall do below, that the Programme’s reading of Wittgenstein builds upon a particular ontological view of the cognitive processes underlying human sociality. Ultimately, I object to the Programme’s theoretical views of the social nature of meaning and normativity because they can be seen to support the paradigm from sharing and the ideological approach to human and social action. As we shall see below, in the Programmers’ accounts the idea of sharing, in particular ideological sharing, plays a crucial role.

Barnes and Bloor on the Social Nature of Meaning

I begin with a critical review of Barry Barnes and David Bloor’s account of the social nature of meaning the core of which is the Programme’s account of normativity. I will consider Barnes first, for in many ways the aspects of the Programme’s theoretical contribution that I shall critique receive their clearest expression in Barnes. Bloor has indeed praised Barnes’s account of the social

²Bloor 1997: Introduction.

³Wittgenstein 1958: §154.

nature of meaning over such classic Wittgensteinian philosophers as Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Winch saying that “[t]he most developed account, and the one that I have found most useful, is Barry Barnes’: ‘Social Life as Bootstrapped Induction’”⁴. For expositional reasons, my critical discussion of Barnes, however, begins with a different paper, yet, as we shall see below, the views expressed in the two papers are practically identical.

In Barnes’s *On the Conventional Character of Knowledge and Cognition* the exposition of the social nature of meaning begins thus:

[t]he present concern ... is to obtain some understanding of concept application. And the obvious way is to consider how people learn to apply concepts — that is, how they learn to classify.⁵

This passage reflects the character of many later works in the Programme in its taking classificatory activities as the paradigmatic example in terms of which the Programme’s theoretical contribution is articulated⁶. Barnes writes, however, that “[t]he conclusions derived will ... be offered as conjectures concerning concepts and beliefs generally”⁷, that is, that “all systems of verbal culture” can be elucidated by the example of classificatory activities⁸.

Barnes would appear to be suggesting that classifications provide us with a way of understanding the meaning of general terms. A general term, say ‘animal’, stands for all these creatures that we call animals, or the meaning of ‘animal’ is this group of creatures. However, Barnes goes on to point out, the need may arise to include new members in the group, and as this happens it needs to be negotiated as to whether the new candidate in fact is an animal. Existing members of a group will bear a certain resemblance to each other on the basis of which they have been classified in that group. These resemblances, based on the properties of the individuals in question, aid us when we wonder whether the new instance should be included in the group.⁹

⁴Bloor 1996: Footnote 3. Bloor refers to Barnes 1983.

⁵Barnes 1981: 305.

⁶As we shall see below, most classic articulations of the Programme’s theoretical stance make use of the example from classification. Other examples are MacKenzie 2006, Schyfter 2009 and Rees 2010.

⁷Barnes 1981: 305.

⁸Barnes 1981: 315.

⁹Barnes 1981: 309. Barnes replaces the term ‘extension’ with that of ‘tension’ in order to distinguish his approach from the tradition in philosophy. The contrast is illustrated by Barnes as follows: “To talk ... of the tension of a term is to accept that its future usage is indeterminate. To talk of extension is to imply that future proper usage is determined already.” (Barnes 1981: Footnote 7).

However, says Barnes, it can never be unequivocal as to whether the new instance in fact is similar enough to warrant inclusion or not: “there is no scale for weighting of similarity”¹⁰, Barnes claims. Reality does not come neatly packaged and labelled, or as Barnes puts it: “‘[r]eality’ does not mind how we cluster it”¹¹.

Why, then, do systems of classification tend to remain reasonably stable and have a seeming normative weight upon our usage? Here Barnes offers his *sociological* conclusion: socially managed training and directing of the identification skills see the individual make the right decision between the different available ways to classify experience. ‘Right’ here means the right or correct way to classify according to a given community or group of language users. In other words, certain social processes make sure that, of all the systems available, individuals choose and stick to one particular kind of a classificatory system. As Barnes puts it:

Suppose ... that two individuals in a community were to differ over what they took to be a routine act of concept application. ... Perhaps the two individuals were developing the notions of sameness for different ends. Consider now ... which of the two individuals had correctly labeled the creature. ... [I]f, in their particular community, all other competent members happened to agree with the ascription [of one individual] ..., then that would be ... the correct ascription.¹²

Here we have an important statement of Barnes’s position as to where the social nature of meaning resides that needs to be made explicit. The role of the social is to bring the individual in line with the rest of the community by the social processes, on the one hand, of driving her attention to these rather than those similarities and, on the other hand, of correcting the individual in her usage such that she exercises her cognitive capacities upon the same similarities as the rest of the community does. In this connection Barnes speaks of “verification” of the individual’s usage by the community¹³.

In Barnes’s view the language learning situation is one in which the teacher, if she does not use linguistic definitions, “makes direct reference to the environment” (ostension) as a result of which the learner “acquires all his information about the concepts of the community”¹⁴. The linguistic skill so acquired is represented

¹⁰Barnes 1981: 309.

¹¹Barnes 1981: 315.

¹²Barnes 1981: 315.

¹³Barnes 1981: 314.

¹⁴Barnes 1981: 307.

by the individual's network of concepts, "a model of the conceptual resources acquired by an individual as he becomes a competent member of his community", Barnes says¹⁵.

As indicated above, the points made above appear also in what has become somewhat of a classic in the Programme literature, Barnes's *Social Life as Bootstrapped Induction*¹⁶. In the bootstrapping paper, the social nature of meaning is again discussed by the example of classification, this time by the question how does the general term 'leaf' come to stand for all leaves? Barnes contrasts his own 'inductive boot-strapping model' with another referred to as 'the pattern-recognition stereotype'.

The latter model is basically the causal-deterministic model and has it that as we observe various particular instances of leaves we acquire 'a pattern for leaf' with the aid of which we are able to conduct 'routinized, habituated, pattern-matching' procedures¹⁷. How does Barnes's inductive boot-strapping model differ from this other model? Barnes accepts the pattern-recognition model in so far as that both models can be construed as involving the operation of what Barnes terms *the designation device*. It is a "reification" representing "the property of an individual agent, his means of routinely attaching a specific term to instances"¹⁸. In other words, a designation device is a way of characterising someone's cognitive system into which observations enter and in which they are labelled as instances of, say, leaves. The difference between the two models is that in Barnes's model there is an additional social element bringing in the normative element to the classification. The fixing of the reference of a term is cast as convergence in individual judgements due to collective reinforcement of particular kinds of judgements. In other words, in both models the human cognitive system operates in the same way, that is as an individual designation device, but in Barnes's model the individual cognitive systems are joined together in a system characterised by social feedback loops that reinforce individual classifications in line with the community.

Although Barnes would protest, we can I think see why the picture put for-

¹⁵Barnes 1981: 309. The model Barnes describes as *Hesse Nets* referring to the work of the philosopher of science Mary Hesse. In Barnes they represent the conceptual system, or a part thereof, possessed by individuals. It is a network of concepts (like 'cat', 'dog', including also processes and properties) (Barnes 1981: 308) with associated instances (Bill Clinton's cat, Garfield, etc.) put under general concepts ('animal').

¹⁶Barnes 1983.

¹⁷Barnes 1983: 525.

¹⁸Barnes 1983: 527.

ward by Barnes could be called *individualistic* completed by social processes of training and correction by virtue of which, according to Barnes, the nature of meaning can be said to be social. Note that David Bloor characterises his sociological account of normativity by saying that in such a theory “[t]he emphasis must shift from individual, psychological and biological processes to sociological processes”¹⁹. However, although Bloor obviously takes Barnes’s work to champion just that kind of a switch, once we have scrutinised Barnes’s social account of normativity we see, I think, that the sort of a shift of emphasis called for by Bloor is not obviously true of Barnes’s account: there is hardly a shift of emphasis *away* from individual, psychological and biological as much as a mere addition of a social element to the traditional picture. Barnes after all runs his argument exactly as the traditional causal-deterministic approach would, except for the addition of the social processes of training and correction.

The sense in which I identify Barnes’s views as individualistic is succinctly described in the words of Theodore R. Schatzki: “[m]any alleged ontological nonindividualisms turn out to be ontological individualisms ... their “opposition” to individualism ... being a stand against too narrow a construal of the stratum of the individual”²⁰. In my view, the Programme is individualistic in this sense charging narrow individualism for ignoring the effect of the social processes of training and correction on the constitution of the individual cognition.

We find this form of argument also in Bloor. The example case discussed is the familiar one from classification and a dummy position constructed by Bloor for the ease of making his argument is the causal-deterministic position according to which the meaning of a term, say ‘dog’, is the ‘inner pattern’ inside the individual’s head that she acquires by empirical, causal, contact with dogs that by its similarity to future cases determines the future correct usage of the term. Here Bloor points out that

[s]urely that inner pattern provides the content of the name ‘dog’, that to which outer reality must be fitted if it is to be counted as a dog. Admittedly, this only gives us the individual language user’s own, personal understanding of the word ‘dog’.²¹

Bloor continues saying that “[a]s yet the causal machinery invoked in the model doesn’t contain any provision for using, say, the word ‘dog’, rightly or

¹⁹Bloor 1996: 848.

²⁰Schatzki 2002b: 127.

²¹Bloor 1996: 847.

wrongly”²². Here Bloor’s “claim is that normativity is grounded in consensus” and “consensus operates by reference to its normative character —that is, it is created and exists through its use as a standard for commentary and sanction”²³.

Elsewhere Bloor reaches the same conclusion by using Wittgenstein’s example from the pupil being taught to continue a series of numbers. Upon being given the order to continue the series 2, 4, 6, the pupil is always in principle faced with “the problem of taking the next step, of moving from previously known cases to new cases”, Bloor argues²⁴. In Bloor’s characterisation the problem is ontological having to do with the abilities of the brain: “we cannot possibly conjure up in our mind, or bring into consciousness, all of these cases to which the rule is ‘meant’ to apply. The content of our consciousness in this regard must be finite”, Bloor writes²⁵. In the picture Bloor proposes, instead of having the mind contain the blueprint of an infinite number of future applications, “we should think of ourselves as having instinctive responses to the examples used”²⁶. Thus, in Bloor’s view, we have an “innate tendency” to generalise from examples and it operates such that “we do not extract from them any general idea ... [but] instinctively pass on”²⁷.

This parallels Barnes’s view of the human mind as a finite pattern-matching designation device considered above, as does the next step that Bloor takes in his argument. For Bloor goes on to note that “[s]o far the account has said nothing about whether the move to the next putative instance of a rule or concept is right or wrong”²⁸. Normativity requires a standard of comparison which is social in nature: “following a rule counts as a ‘right’ step ... if it is aligned with the steps everyone else, or nearly everyone else, takes”, Bloor writes²⁹. That is to say,

[t]he normative properties of rules, then, do not derive from the instinctive sources of individual activity, but from the alignment of these different sources in the majority of cases ...”³⁰

We see then that Bloor’s account is ontologically individualistic in the same sense as Barnes’s, namely in that it does not in fact reject but merely compen-

²²Bloor 1996: 846.

²³Bloor 1996: 848.

²⁴Bloor 1997: 10.

²⁵Bloor 1997: 13.

²⁶Bloor 1997: 13.

²⁷Bloor 1997: 15, 13.

²⁸Bloor 1997: 15.

²⁹Bloor 1997: 15-6.

³⁰Bloor 1997: 16.

sates the causal-deterministic picture with the sociological add-on of the social processes of training and correction that align individual mental sources. In a way the Programme's view is thus not far from Parsons' collectivism (see Chapter 5 above)³¹, in that in both views human sociality is consensual based on sharing of norms, knowledge and beliefs.

The Programme's reading also bears a certain resemblance to Saul Kripke's prominent Wittgenstein reading. Kripke famously claimed that Wittgenstein posed "the sceptical problem ... that anything in my head leaves it undetermined *what*" I actually intend, mean and so on³². Let us note first that Kripke attributes here to Wittgenstein, I think wrongly, an ontological albeit sceptical view supposed to "deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium" that Wittgenstein claimed to know nothing about and not to be interested in³³. At any rate, the solution Kripke saw Wittgenstein as offering here revolved around the idea, also found in the Programme, that the community "have justification conditions for attributing correct or incorrect rule following to the [lone] subject"³⁴. Thus, the individual "who claims to have mastered [a] concept ... will be judged by the community to have done so if his particular responses agree with those of the community" and that "[t]hose who deviate are corrected and told ... that they have not grasped the concept"³⁵. Here of course, as with most views focused on the criteria of concept application as the essence of human sociality, the community being in possession of justification conditions effectively functions as the shared mental source of the community's judgements and their activity.

Kripke identifies two aspects in Wittgenstein's view: one, the idea of collective justification or assertability conditions and, two, the observation "that the game of asserting ... has a role [or utility] in our lives"³⁶. The second aspect promises to keep the use of concepts in focus, but it is notable that, as far as I can see, the aspect in fact plays no fundamental explanatory or other role in Kripke's view, although he mentions the aspect frequently. Similarly to Hacker and others' view discussed in Chapter 6 below (p. 120), and to the Programme's view of money discussed later in this chapter, the focus is fundamentally on the collective

³¹This has also been noted by Haugaard 1997: 33.

³²Kripke 1982: 82.

³³Wittgenstein 1958: §308.

³⁴Kripke 1982: 89.

³⁵Kripke 1982: 92.

³⁶Kripke 1982: 76-78.

criteria of attribution of concepts, and not at all on what humanly significant may be going on in situations in which one for example reports pains³⁷. As argued in Chapter 7, in the present reading of Wittgenstein, looking at the use of expressions, conduct and so on as moves made in the context of some wider social process shifts the focus on the developmental course of this social process as an organised process going somewhere. Essential here is the organisation of this developmental process, not that the social actors know or believe the same things about the process, which they in fact may not do.

Why I cannot adopt the Programme's account of the social nature of meaning in addressing the cultural causes of environmental problems goes back to objections essentially similar to those I have regarding Kripke's view. First of all, the Programme's reading of Wittgenstein is ontological and, as illustrated in Chapter 7, the correctness of reading Wittgenstein as providing an account of the *source* of human and social action, is highly suspect if not plainly mistaken *as a reading of Wittgenstein*.

I believe, secondly, that collectivism can reject individualism in a more fundamental way which involves rejecting the ontological in favour of a non-ontological organisatory approach to social action, more of which below. Third, the core of my objection to the Programme is the same as I have raised in previous chapters against other ideological approaches, namely, that it is wrong to construe human sociality as residing fundamentally in shared ideology (consensus)³⁸. As I have argued in previous chapters, given differences in people's perspective, interests, knowledge and beliefs about the social, and division of labour as the foundation of social systems and processes, a shared ideology cannot be considered the foun-

³⁷Consider e.g. the example cases of describing a dream, saying I'm in pain and identifying a table (Kripke 1982: Footnote 82, p. 99, p. 105).

³⁸I should note that there is in my mind quite a significant gap between the theoretical pronouncements of the Programme and some of its actual empirical work. In my view, the Programme's official methodology accords no place for the study of the *circumstances* of language use and conduct focusing instead on the processes of collective alignment of *sources*. Yet, for instance, in an early book length treatise (Barnes 1977) Barnes's approach builds upon the idea of the constitutive relation of (scientific) knowledge to *interests* with which we engage in knowledge production in the sense in which for instance map making is typically orientated to the practical usage of maps for navigation. Another example is Bloor's discussion of Ludwig Fleck's account of the emergence of syphilis as an illness (Bloor 1983: 34). In terms of its theory, in a range of publications, the Programme is at best ambiguous about the distinction between human sociality as based on shared beliefs as contrasted with shared organisation of activity, and at worst it lands in the beliefs side of the distinction. Thus, while Bloor does sometime speak of "agreement in action" (Bloor 1997: 16), there remains an overwhelming sense to the theoretical view of the Programme that it builds upon the idea of social life as 'alignment of sources', that is agreement in norms, knowledge and beliefs.

dation of human sociality and social action. Ideological consensus as the basis of human sociality fails because there is no extensive sharing of knowledge about the social and that cannot thus be the object upon which consensus operates. A more plausible notion of consensus, I suggest, concerns the sharing of organisation of human life where the sharing and agreement in question is not ideological but organisatory in nature, a crucial categorical difference. I shall elucidate these complex claims in the next section.

Organisation and the Social Nature of Meaning

As argued above, in the Programme's account, meaning and normativity draw essentially from consensus understood ideologically as socially constructed and enforced 'alignment of sources' of human and social action, to requote Bloor's phrase. By contrast, throughout this thesis, the objective has been to cast doubts on the idea that social life builds essentially upon ideological sharing advocating instead the view of social life as agreement in the organisation of human life. In this section I shall explore the contrast between these two conceptions of consensus and consider the implications to the notions of social nature of meaning and normativity of switching the focus from the source of human and social action to the organisation of human life.

A crucial element to the Programme's conception of normativity is that there are collective checks (Barnes's 'verification') upon individual conduct as well as initiatory training to novices these being the mechanisms that socially construct and maintain the alignment in the sources of human and social action. Bloor goes as far as to say that without consensus there is no meaning: "Meaning, surely, is that by reference to which we determine right or wrong usage. So as yet, meaning hasn't been provided for".³⁹

It is not clear to me why an idea having not been accepted collectively, that is, it having no normativity, would mean that the idea is contentless and therefore meaningless —yet, this is exactly what Bloor seems to argue: "no normativity, no content; no content, no meaning", he writes⁴⁰. For example, that I think that a whale is a fish but be subsequently corrected by the community who call it a mammal should not really mean that my thought that whales are not mammals or that they are fish was meaningless!

³⁹Bloor 1996: 846.

⁴⁰Bloor 1996: 848.

As I see it, Bloor's argument seems to invoke an equivocation of the meaning of the words 'content' and 'meaning'. We may say that social acceptance is capable of shifting meaning such that old usage is no longer accepted as meaningful, that is, as correct. This the community could be thought to be able to achieve by 'the power-move' of simple stigmatisation of deviance. The various senses in which someone can be deviant here are "actors' categories", as Bloor puts it⁴¹, involving a community deciding that someone is deviant and so she is deviant. Here in my view a *soft* sense of the words 'meaningful' and 'meaningless' is employed by Bloor and it can amount to a number of things. It may mean that using a given concept in the old way would be met with puzzlement, possibly by incomprehension, or that it would be seen as an outdated practice, somewhat as the parents' involvement in the negotiation of a future husband for their daughter is in many cultures now outdated. This does not exclude the possibility of, for example, historical knowledge of the old ways of using concepts, that is, of recovering the meaningfulness or intelligibility of the old usage —and that not by adopting the practice of which it is a part, but by comprehending it. I do not take Bloor to want to deny this, but I think this is what his position implies.

In contrast to the soft sense, there is, however, also this *hard* sense of meaningfulness, or lack of it: something is plain nonsense or otherwise incomprehensible, it has no meaning, it has no content. Bloor's choice of words ('no content') suggests the latter hard usage, but the view of normativity as relying on a consensual 'power-move' only supports the conclusion employing the former softer use. This is significant because the question from the social nature of meaning revolves around it: does the community determine meaning by a power-move of simply stigmatising the deviant use or does community have a stronger role here of determining content and meaning in the harder sense too?

My answer builds around the idea of agreement in organisation of human life from Chapter 7: performativity is based on agreement in the organisation of human life essential to which is not to know the same things as other actors but to engage in reciprocal complementary processes of human activity. From such a point of view, a consensual power-move that stigmatises deviance is a possibility of which we indeed have historical examples such as the case of Galileo. Stigmatisation, however, is not a particularly interesting phenomenon from the point of view of philosophy of language and meaning. As to the harder 'no

⁴¹Bloor 1997: 105.

content' sense of a community determining meaning(lessness), when we think about situations in which a collective could be said to verify conduct, what this verification is like and what its object is, we should see that such processes are not usefully thought of as consisting essentially of verification of individual knowledge and conduct by the community which result in unconditional declarations of meaninglessness.

To see this better, begin with considering a problem regarding the idea of collective verification of conduct as noted by Stephen Turner whose challenges to the paradigm from sharing we discussed above in Chapter 6. Turner makes his points against Kripke's collectivism but due to the similarity of the Programme's and Kripke's views⁴², the point can be raised against the former too. Where Barnes spoke of 'verification', Kripke used the word 'tests'⁴³ upon which Turner seizes and points out that in fact "[t]he are no such tests for most of the practices that are transmitted as part of a 'form of life' "⁴⁴. Moreover, Turner continues, the community of speakers arguably contains a good number of moderately as well as seriously deviant persons "and perhaps no perfect speaker"⁴⁵.

In support of the view that the idea of collective verification or test is problematic one might note that where mathematical operations, as well as scientific taxonomical activities, are perhaps an example of practices that are fairly clearly delineable activities and where a rather explicit collective check upon individuals can perhaps be argued to exist, for a great number of other social activities this is not so. Taking a mathematics exam at school seems to be a prime example of a collective check operating upon a fairly well delineable activity. For a great number of other practices, however, there cannot really be said to exist explicit tests, nor is the activity itself clearly cut out from the surroundings. Baker and Hacker seem to be onto something similar as they write that "[m]astery of a technique is manifest *in practice*, in doing certain things" but that "a single act in accord with a rule is not (save in complex settings) an exhibition of mastery of a technique"⁴⁶. Thus, for example, on the face of it my behaviour may fail to comply, say, with regard to some norm about friendship. Yet, it is conceivable that further debate can be had and reasons advanced as to why I did not comply,

⁴²See Bloor 1997: 7 ff. for a discussion on differences and similarities.

⁴³Kripke 1982: 92 and *in passim*.

⁴⁴Turner 1994: 75.

⁴⁵Turner 1994: 74.

⁴⁶Baker & Hacker 1985: 161.

or to what extent did I not comply, what anyway is compliance, and so on. In such cases normativity is not a clear dualistic matter of deviance or compliance, but a matter of looking at the various facets of the ‘complex setting’ within which the act can be seen to appear.

This can be elucidated further by considering Peter Winch’s view of normativity based on the idea of intelligibility. Published first in 1958, Winch’s seminal *The Idea of a Social Science* was an early attempt to trace Wittgenstein’s significance to social sciences. At first blush Winch seems to be making the very same points as the Programme concerning the social processes of training and communal verification/tests of individual conduct: “it is contact with other individuals which alone makes possible the external check on one’s actions which is inseparable from an established standard” and “given a certain sort of training everybody does, as a matter of course, continue to use these words in the same way as would everybody else”, Winch writes⁴⁷.

Yet, Winch also makes the point that for us to have a reason to think that someone was following a rule it suffices that it is “in principle possible for other people to grasp”⁴⁸ what the person is doing. The phrase ‘in principle’ allows for some considerable flexibility in interpretation of conduct, *and rightly so*. For instance, often we do not just write off another person’s deviant behaviour but try to make sense of it, even if we find it unorthodox or perhaps morally objectionable. We are to a significant extent able to make sense of, make intelligible, deviant behaviour. It seems to me that the nature of normativity is understood in Winch more broadly than in Bloor. Winch’s conception allows us to take a broader look at some form of organisation of human life in which the deviant conduct might be seen to fit. Or as Winch puts it: we look for a context in which “[i]n view of such and such considerations this [a deviant act] will be a reasonable thing to do”⁴⁹.

By contrast, the point of view proposed by Bloor is that a given piece of conduct can be intelligible in so far as we see it against “the background of paradigmatic social interaction”⁵⁰. Saul Kripke makes a similar point: in making the conduct of an individual intelligible we “are taking him into our community”⁵¹,

⁴⁷Winch 1980: 31-2.

⁴⁸Winch 1980: 33.

⁴⁹Winch 1980: 81.

⁵⁰Bloor 1997: 100.

⁵¹Kripke 1982: 110.

that is, we see his conduct as exemplifying something we know from our own community. In sum, the contrast between Bloor and Winch is this: where Bloor ties all intelligibility to the possibility of drawing an analogy with existing practices, Winch's view allows that enquiries into a foreign practice do not in all cases have to proceed by seeking analogies with what we know, but merely seeking to construe the foreign organisation of human life as a form of organisation.

Robinson Crusoe

The contrast matches the two different positions taken by Peter Hacker (and Winch) on the one hand and by David Bloor (and Saul Kripke) on the other hand in the once fierce debate in Wittgensteinian literature on the question from the nature of rule-following by the solitary Robinson Crusoe⁵². The significance of the case of Crusoe is this: if the ship-wrecked loner can follow rules in isolation, then rule-following would not seem to be an essentially communal business.

The discussion must be prefaced by a host of clarifications. First, the case of Crusoe's rule-following could be seen to contain two separate questions: one, *is Crusoe able* to set himself rules and follow them in isolation, and two, upon what *basis* can an external observer of Crusoe plausibly *attribute* rule-following to Crusoe? Secondly and relatedly, it is often insisted that the issue is not about Crusoe's ability to *remember* what he did in the past, but a *conceptual* issue about the nature of rule-following as a concept. There are in my view, however, significant wobbles in the literature as to what extent writers keep with this insistence to which we shall return soon.

Third, most would agree that the human capacity for language and thought can only develop properly in a social setting of human interactions—hence, feral children often fail to develop in these respects—, so the abilities of Crusoe too have a developmental history of that kind. Fourth, most would again admit that certain practices are social activities by definition, such as commerce defined as exchange between at least *two* parties. The question is rather whether some similar line of thought applies to other kinds of rule-following.

Consider now what seems to me to be an obvious departure from the insistence that the issue is purely conceptual. One such would seem to be the Programme's conception of normativity as the basis of which the following passage from Wittgenstein is often quoted: in solitary rule-following "whatever is going

⁵²See Hacker 2001: Chapter 10 and Bloor 1997: Chapter 8 and Kripke 1982: 110.

to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right' ”⁵³. One aspect of the Programme's understanding of this passage is that in it Wittgenstein raises the threat of misidentification faced by the lone Crusoe and that it is sceptical in import: “take 100 trained language users, operating to the same specification, and before long, some of the outputs will diverge from one another”, Bloor argued⁵⁴. This to me seems to imply the non-conceptual worry that the individual ‘labelling machines’ cannot be trusted to continue to remember right and thus, without communal checks, mistakes made by individuals will eventually “reduce norms to the merest subjectivity”⁵⁵. A related way in which the Programme discusses normativity as a non-conceptual issue is in the sense in which the community could be thought to be able to make a power-move and simply stigmatise deviance. This is not a conceptual point about meaning and hence rule-following, but about how community excludes certain meanings by a power-move, somewhat as the Catholic Church apparently practically forced Galileo Galilei to denounce heliocentrism.

Here is another way in which the debate slips from being conceptual and draws in the question of human abilities, this time those of the external observer trying to determine whether Crusoe follows rules or not. To requote Bloor and Kripke above, in their view we are able to make Crusoe's conduct intelligible in so far as we see it against “the background of paradigmatic social interaction” or in so far as we “are taking him into our community”. By contrast, Peter Hacker insists that “our judgement that he is following his rules is quite independent of any judgement about how most members of the English-Speaking Peoples would react”⁵⁶. In other words, according to the Bloor-Kripke position intelligibility can only flow from viewing the foreign in analogy with what we know however abstract the analogy, whereas Hacker insist that understanding does not require an analogy at all but that the human mind is capable of understanding the foreign organisation even if it lacks any analogy with ours, provided that “*regularities* of action of sufficient *complexity*”⁵⁷ can be observed in the foreigner's conduct. The latter would also describe Peter Winch's account of intelligibility above.

Now, the problem I have with *both* positions is that they are not conceptual

⁵³Wittgenstein 1958: §258.

⁵⁴Bloor 1996: 847.

⁵⁵Bloor 1997: 15.

⁵⁶Hacker 2001: 298.

⁵⁷Hacker 2001: 299.

but ontological in nature. They appear to me as revolving around a dispute about the human capacity to understand, a question of as to what degree of abstraction can human understanding get to in trying to conceptualise foreign conduct and to what degree an individual is able to remember. This to me is the underlying, although unmentioned, issue in Bloor's characterisation of his disagreement with Baker and Hacker⁵⁸: the latter hold that human individual 'natural propensities' (to focus attention and remember fairly consistently, etc.) can generate regularity and complexity of conduct and hence normativity, whereas for Bloor this position simply fails to account for normativity by simply positing it. Where we go wrong here, I suggest, is that the question from normativity is framed ontologically as a question about mental contents, beliefs and the like, that then invite ontological speculations about human mental capacities, the capacities of beliefs to determine future activities and so on.

As discussed at length in Chapter 7, in my reading Wittgenstein's approach was not ontological at all. I believe Wittgenstein's intention was to highlight the organisatory aspect of human life with warts and all—that is, with human ingenuity, errors and insufficiencies included—as the hallmark of human life, *whatever* its basis in knowledge and beliefs. Thus, I believe the case of Robinson Crusoe too is not helpfully approached as a question about Crusoe's capacities to set himself rules or external observers' capacities to understand Crusoe. Rather, all we can say is that in so far as Crusoe leads a human life it will display organisation, regularity, a function or directedness (intentionality) towards a point to *whatever* extent he may be capable of it in isolation.

To see this by way of an example, imagine Crusoe giving himself the rule to stand on one foot for a minute each morning. We can imagine that he would slip from obeying this rule, remember it wrong and whatnot. But now, by contrast consider that some rule set by Crusoe for himself becomes truly embedded in the flow of his life, in this case of solitary life, and that the action sanctioned by the rule becomes an important part of the organisation of that form of life and consequently harder to drop without modifying the form of life. Our Crusoe may have, for example, set himself the rule that every day at noon he is to erect a temporary shade for his tomato plants to protect them from the burning sun. Now he might well on occasion forget this, but it is also clear that continual forgetting would have an impact on the kind of life he lives—for example, that

⁵⁸(Bloor 2007: Footnote 9).

he leads a farmer's life, or that he has access to tomatoes with nutritional value central to Crusoe's survival, and so forth. And of course there would be that shade lying about, as well as other gardening equipment that he regularly uses, reminding him of what he is to do —although 'reminding' is not the right word here, for gardening equipment and practices are an essential part of how he lives life on a day to day basis, not something he has to *remember* or *decide* to use.

The point is, it is all the same whether Crusoe can remember or will eventually get confused with the rules he gives himself —at most it is tragic if he forgets. What is important is that he attempts to live an organised life and this is the hallmark of human life. From this perspective it makes little sense to ask whether he could forget the practice, for then he would be forgetting how to live his life. Also the worry from 'whatever is going to seem right to him is right' is out of place here.

What, then, was Wittgenstein on about in the above quoted passage about whatever is going to seem right is right? The context is the example case of someone keeping a private diary "about the recurrence of a certain sensation" which the person notes in her diary by the letter S⁵⁹. This (PI §258.) and the following passages are complex in the course of which a number of points are made, but in my reading the line that comes two remarks later at §260. sums up the moral of the discussion: "... a note [in a diary] has a function, and this "S" so far has none". That is to say, human activities are part of organised activity with a point or function (a conceptual observation) whatever that may be —we do *not* need to agree on this (individual differences in knowledge)—, and the private diarist's markings too need to be seen in relation to some such system and a function otherwise we are merely left wondering with Wittgenstein: "[b]ut what is this ceremony for? for that is all it seems to be!" —a private ceremony for nothing⁶⁰.

The same point about human conduct being characterised as systematic and having a function is also made at PI §268.:

⁵⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §258. In 'Notes for the Philosophical Lecture' found in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* (MS 166), the diary is referred to as Robinson Crusoe's diary. See Rush Rhees' notes on a lecture with this topic in Wittgenstein 1993: Chapter 11. The availability since 2000 in electronic format of virtually all of Wittgenstein's unpublished writings, his *Nachlass* (Wittgenstein 2000, 1996), allows us to easily locate several mentions of Robinson Crusoe by Wittgenstein in these writings, some of which have also been translated and published in *Philosophical Occasions* (Wittgenstein 1993: Chapters 10., 11. and 14.). Unfortunately, space does not permit an exegesis of these mentions here.

⁶⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §258.

Why can't my right hand give my left hand money? —My right hand can put it into my left hand. My right hand can write a deed of gift and my left hand a receipt.— But the further practical consequences would not be those of a gift. When the left hand has taken the money from the right, etc., we shall ask: “Well, and what of it?” [*Nun, und was weiter?*] And the same could be asked if a person had given himself a private definition of a word; I mean, if he has said the word to himself and at the same time has directed his attention to a sensation.

As I read it, the passage makes two points. First, giving a gift is typically something taking place between persons —although this is not quite right as I can give myself a gift in the sense that I can as it were reward or spoil myself for a job well done —it seems to me that this could be legitimately referred to as ‘giving a gift’. Bloor makes this conceptual point about the quoted passage saying one hand cannot “genuinely buy” from the other if buying is understood in the usual sense of an exchange between two parties⁶¹. We have no problem with admitting this conceptual point, for as noted towards the start of this section, most would agree that certain activities by definition involve more than one person.

We can also follow Bloor saying that Crusoe can name a previously unknown bird he finds on the island, but that he cannot bring the institution of naming to a “culmination” which Bloor characterises as it becoming “a veritable institution” or “a collective practice”⁶². As far as I understand, these are remarks about social institutions typically involving many people. Bloor’s points, being conceptual, are correct, yet the other points he makes about normativity —the one from power-moves and the human labelling machines being prone to mistakes— are not conceptual.

The second point, also conceptual but distinct from Bloor’s, that the above quoted passage from Wittgenstein makes is this: the right hand giving the left hand money is divorced from any point or function. We can as it were imagine the transaction to take place but ‘what of it?’ —it would seem to have no point. We can think of a function for it —say, someone does it as a joke— and then it makes sense. The same goes for private definitions: it is conceivable that I keep a diary of a recurring pain and show it to my doctor to aid his diagnosis. Here it is even conceivable that I struggle to describe what kind of a pain I have, and in this sense my pain could be said to be private. The doctor may also have a fair reason, and she may be right, to think that I am confused about the pain I have

⁶¹Bloor 1997: 92.

⁶²Bloor 1997: 96-7.

if she is unable to correlate it with anything in my physical condition. But cases like this are also part of human life, of social reality.

Let us sum up the complex considerations of the foregoing two sections. I set out with noting the central role of the idea of communal verification or tests to the Programme's ideas of normativity but argued, drawing from Turner, Baker and Hacker, and Winch, that such communal checks hardly ever are clear cut matters such that we could speak of communal verification and acceptance or rejection of individual conduct. The Programme was shown to operate with a strong notion of normativity that claims to be able to radically split between deviance and compliance illustrated for example by the fact that in Bloor consensus is drawn in as determinant of meaning. I sought to clarify the battle lines by distinguishing between conceptual and non-conceptual remarks about the issue. Non-conceptually, meaning and normativity are social in nature for instance by the collective being in principle capable of a power-move that represses deviant meanings. Wittgenstein, however, I argued, approaches meaning solely conceptually and his approach here can be characterised as organisatory: whatever problems his isolation and limitations of capacities might pose for Crusoe, in so far as Crusoe leads a human life his conduct will display organisation, function and directedness towards one point or another. In this point of view, essential to meaning, intelligibility and meaningfulness of human conduct —whether individual or social action— is that it is organised. This admits of lapses in memory and mistakes without immediately calling to question that organised human life is taking place. Also, in this point of view, the question of collective verification and collective declaration of deviance are of secondary importance.

In closing, I would like to point out that I am aware that Bloor's point with his attack on individualism was to counter the idea that if we allow that individuals can initiate institutions by themselves then we have moved a great deal towards accepting the causal-deterministic picture of meaning, rule-following and associated issues. It is important to Bloor and the Programme that human life does not appear as being spun in the privacy of individuals' heads, an insistence with which we sympathise. I want to highlight that the organisatory approach does not challenge such views. To the contrary, to view social life as an essentially organisatory achievement is very much to stress the sociality of human existence. The present disagreement with the Programme lies in its relation with the ideological approach and the paradigm from sharing: as discussed above, ultimately

the Programme views social life as based upon the *alignment in sources* of social action to use Bloor's phrase.

Organisation and Arbitrariness

I conclude this chapter with another critical challenge to the Programme, in particular to its collectivist constructivism. As noted on a couple of occasions above, one of the major points of the collectivist-constructivist position is the observation of a certain *arbitrariness* pertaining to meaning arising from certain self-referential, collectively performative nature of social institutions. In this view, the striking characteristic of social reality becomes its self-referentiality, that is, how it appears to be given rise to by a collective decision, and *not* whatever *purposes* or *point* it might serve, hence the arbitrariness, contingency. In this vein, some Strong Programmers have argued that for example the nature of a technological artefact cannot be exhaustively defined by its function, as apparently some rather recent approaches in the relevant branch of sociology have argued, but that it is essential to note the self-referential nature of what it is to use an artefact correctly⁶³. The point is fair as such, but by downplaying functions constructivism in general threatens to lose contact with human life as purposeful activity. Let me try to explain.

Recall here the argument of Part 1 that the difficulty of meaningfully addressing environmental problems resides in the tight coupling of human well-being with the organisation of human life on a global industrial market economy basis —all the inequalities and conflict notwithstanding. In other words, one might say that global industrial market society serves an important function, namely that of maintaining a certain level of human well-being on this planet, all inequalities notwithstanding. Moreover, to dismantle the organisation would throw up the challenge of transferring to some other form of organising the everyday life and well-being of the masses.

Now, conceptualising the global industrial market societal form of organisation of human life *as a self-referential achievement* does not as such allow us to comprehend the drastic changes needed in the organisation in order to address environmental problems precisely because of the de-emphasis on the function of the organisation by the collectivist-constructivist position. To requote Conrad Lodziak, he pointed out that “[w]hen the consumption of food, for example, is

⁶³Schyfter 2009.

treated solely as a symbolic activity, the main purpose of consuming food does not figure in its explanation”⁶⁴. Similarly, to understand the problematicity of environmental problems and that of addressing them is to understand the deep *functional* interconnections between the form of organisation of human life and the quality of human life as we have it, as well as its environmental burden. This way, the collectivist-constructivist position, due to its claim from the arbitrariness of function, does not allow us to grasp the depth of the problem with environmental problems.

In the Programme, for instance, the performativity and self-referentiality of social institutions has tended to have been conceived ideologically as performances of something like a collective *will or belief*. For example, Barry Barnes summarises the import of self-referentiality of social institutions in the phrase “what we take to be money is money”⁶⁵. The example is favoured by the Programmers and so David Bloor wrote that “[i]f everyone were to cease to think of coins, then bits of metal would continue to exist, but coins would vanish into thin air”⁶⁶ and Martin Kusch that “[m]oney, we might say, is what we collectively take to be money”⁶⁷.

The core idea of the Programme is true enough: money does not owe its existence to some naturalistic fact but is in some sense fundamentally a human construct. Yet, in the present view it is essential to see that bits of metal as coins are not brought in and out of social existence by acts of collective *thinking*, conceptualising, remembering or lack thereof. The institution of money is a particularly complex matter only one aspect of which is anything like an explicit belief, public trust, in the stability of currency —a bank run being a favourite example of how collective beliefs give rise to and maintain social kinds. Money, in its various forms, is also a central vehicle of exchanges in the trade of goods and services in global industrial market society. Money economy, thus, is an essential structural component of market society and associated phenomena such as wage labour and the commodification of production. The institution of money in its many forms is performed, not by a collective *belief* in money, but when market economy is performed in a variety of countless everyday activities —and hence, as argued above, the actors’ attitudes to money are to a significant extent non-epistemic. As such, there would not in fact seem to be a single object to the

⁶⁴Lodziak 2002: 15.

⁶⁵Barnes 1983: 533.

⁶⁶Bloor 2001: 102.

⁶⁷Kusch 1997: 8.

consensual belief in money as money, which speaking of consensus and communal agreement would seem to presuppose, and so, our collective performance of money should be seen as organisatory rather than conceptual, that is ideological, in nature.

That the idea of performativity is so easily expressed as a linguistic thing, as a property of certain type of utterances and the beliefs that utterances are thought to reflect, may be explained by the fact that in one of the first and most prominent uses of the term in the philosopher J. L. Austin's work from the 1950s⁶⁸ it is used exactly in this sense, that is, as a property of certain type of utterances called performatives. There is a great danger of a misrepresentation here. The social is first and foremost about *interaction*.

The Programme's view from the arbitrariness of meaning is supported by their reading of Wittgenstein's familiar example, completing a series of numbers. We have discussed this above, but let us quickly run through the details again. In the course of the discussion Wittgenstein recounts a commonsensical picture about rule-following and the mental processes underlying it, one that he is however going to reject, describing its core message thus: "understanding ... is a state which is the *source* of the correct use". In giving this kind of an account, Wittgenstein writes, one is probably thinking of understanding and thus of rule-following by the model "of the derivation of a series from its algebraic formula" where the formula would be the mental representation of the rule according to which one is to proceed. Yet, and here comes the key claim from Wittgenstein, also seized upon by the Programme: "we can think of more than *one* application of an algebraic formula; and every type of application can in turn be formulated algebraically"⁶⁹. What is the point he is making here?

According to the Programme, the point is that in principle at any given moment any number of possibilities of glossing a rule exist. Barnes expressed this by saying that " '[r]eality' does not mind how we cluster it"⁷⁰ and that social processes of training and verification are needed to give focus and duration to our classifications. The point also underlies the Programme's so-called *finitism* in that, in Bloor's words, as "[t]he number of illustrations and examples a teacher can offer a pupil must always be *finite*"⁷¹ then "the content of [the pupil's] con-

⁶⁸Austin 1962.

⁶⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §146.

⁷⁰Barnes 1981: 315.

⁷¹Bloor 1997: 10.

sciousness in this regard must be finite”⁷² and thus “[w]e *could* take our concepts or rules anywhere, in any direction, and count anything as a new member of an old class”⁷³.

In the present reading, however, Wittgenstein’s point was not to highlight the problem generated by finite examples for later application but to reject the *whole picture* of understanding, rule-following and the like as essentially issues of *mental* processes and their ability, or lack of it, to determine future applications. This becomes clear only a few remarks later as Wittgenstein writes “[t]ry not to think of understanding as a ‘mental process’ at all”⁷⁴. The problem of many interpretations of an algebraic formula is another paradox that Wittgenstein spun to the proposal that understanding and meaning are mental processes. It is not meant to have a solution for example by appeal to collective verification.⁷⁵

A similar paradox was Wittgenstein’s observation that once we replace the mental representation of a rule with a physical schema, for example a schema of arrows about how to read a table⁷⁶, it begins to seem that the physical schema falls short of the mental representation of the rule because the physical schema needs interpretation whereas the mental representation does not⁷⁷. This Wittgenstein thought of as an absurdity illustrating that what really does most work in such lines of reasoning is just an almost mystical picture of the queer capacities of mental processes.

Wittgenstein’s posing of the problem of many interpretations paves the way—not to the collectivist contention that social processes of training and correction can alleviate the problem—but to the idea that we should think of the issue in wholly different terms. This would be to defocus from the ontology of rule-following to the significance of understanding and intending to the developmental course of human life. The point I am making is of course the same as I have developed all throughout the thesis, another succinct summary of which by Wittgenstein goes thus:

⁷²Bloor 1997: 13.

⁷³Bloor 1997: 19.

⁷⁴Wittgenstein 1958: §154. This remark gains additional weight in that it comes as the conclusion of a sustained discussion stretching from §143. until §155. of the completing series according to a formation rule example.

⁷⁵For a similar reading, see Nigel Pleasants on Wittgenstein’s “immanent critique” and the private language argument as of the *reductio ad absurdum* form (Pleasants 1999: 25 ff).

⁷⁶Wittgenstein 1958: §86.

⁷⁷A lengthier and more explicit discussion than in the *Investigations* of the point can be found in Wittgenstein 1969: 34 ff.

What we deny is that the picture of the inner process gives us the correct idea of the use of the word ‘to remember’. We say that this picture with its ramifications stands in the way of our seeing the use of the word as it is.⁷⁸

The point is closely analogous to the one in Wittgenstein’s so-called ‘beetle in the box’ scenario in which Wittgenstein critically discussed the view of pain as essentially an internal, neural or phenomenal thing. For Wittgenstein, in such a picture peoples’ having pains is as if “everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a “beetle”. No one can look into anyone else’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle”, Wittgenstein describes. Now, under these conditions, Wittgenstein continues, it is imaginable that each person’s beetle could be something different, it could be always changing or even not exist at all, without talk and activities around it being affected at all. Thus, Wittgenstein concludes: “if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’ the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant”⁷⁹. The point, as I understand it, is not that feeling pain is irrelevant but that what is in question in human interactions around pains is essentially the role of pains, pain-language, understanding and claims of understanding in the course and development of human interaction.

Going back to the idea of arbitrariness of meaning, the reason why the Programme’s claim that a rule can be developed in any way whatsoever seems (and is) so outlandish is because it effectively divorces the meaning of doing or saying of something from its point, role and surroundings. We saw this in a number of contexts above: money is money because we decide so, a whale is not a fish because we decide so, and so on. Yet, certainly an organisatory analysis of money will look different from one of classifications, but an important general point is to look at both of them as playing a role in (some area of) the wider organisation of human activity with a point.

Conclusion

This chapter elucidated the nature of the organisatory point of view to a number of debates had about normativity and the social nature of meaning in the Wittgensteinian literature. I critically discussed one of the most prominent and

⁷⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §305.

⁷⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §293.

extensive uses made in the literature of certain Wittgensteinian ideas about the social nature of meaning and normativity, namely, that by the Strong Programme. I illustrated the contrasts in which a non-ontological, organisatory reading of Wittgenstein stands to the Programme's reading as well as to some other Wittgenstein readings. I expanded the discussion to a general critique of constructivism as unable to account for the functional dimension of social organisation. Constructivism, I argued, being blind to the functions of social organisations, is thereby blind also to the coupling of human well-being with the organisation of human life and therefore, as argued in Part 1, also to the essentially structural quality of human environmental burden.

Chapter 9

As Humble as Table, Lamp and Door

There's an evenin' haze settlin' over the town
Starlight by the edge of the creek
The buyin' power of the proletariat's gone down
Money's gettin' shallow and weak
The place I love best is a sweet memory
It's a new path that we trod
They say low wages are a reality
If we want to compete abroad
— Bob Dylan, Workingman's Blues #2

To me Dylan's lyric perceptively captures something essential about human existence. In the quoted verse, Dylan interlaces the very mundane experiences, hopes and dreams of an individual with the often harsh societal realities she is confronted with capturing thereby two distinct but important dimensions of human life: the 'subjectivity' of the individual perspective and the 'objectivity' of the societal frame of her existence. Whether or not it has come through in the preceding pages, a similar view of human existence informs this thesis: we must note and respect individuality, the differences in people's perspectives, yet we must also note the impersonal forces shaping human societal existence. To put the same in social theoretical jargon, I have in a way sought to take methodological individualism seriously and acknowledge the human actor in her subjectivity and individuality but to do this in a way that does not lose track of the human being as a societal being. I believe the Wittgensteinian idea discussed above of

agreement of form of life or in the organisation of human life creates the space for this kind of conceptualisation of human life.

In this chapter I shall draw a series of parallels between the core Wittgensteinian ideas of the present approach and a number of works in human sciences. These are Norbert Elias' idea of multiple perspectives, Foucault's characterisation of historical 'emergence', Marx's historical materialism and, finally, a comparatively recent entrant to the social theoretical scene, the so-called practice theory. As a connecting theme emerges the idea of the *mundane, everyday* quality of our collective performance of the social, a theme whose presence in Wittgenstein's philosophy I shall also illustrate.

Elias on Perspectives

The epistemological worries discussed in Chapter 6 suggest that there are individual differences in perspective and knowledge of the social. In this section I shall discuss the present Wittgensteinian line of thought in relation to the idea of multiple perspectives from the German sociologist Norbert Elias.

Let us begin with a passage in Elias' classic *The Civilizing Process*:

... from the interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions —whether tending in the same direction or in divergent and hostile directions— something comes into being that was planned and intended by none of these individuals, yet has emerged nevertheless from their intentions and actions. And really this is the whole secret of social figurations, their compelling dynamics, their structural regularities, their process character and their development; this is the secret of sociogenesis and of relational dynamics.¹

Another work by Elias's, titled *What is Sociology?*², is a distinctly theoretical work written late in the author's career and helps to get to grips with many of the technical terms appearing in the quoted passage. In the introduction to the work Elias emerges as an advocate of a new methodology for sociology. One of Elias's leading themes is the idea of the long term of social change. Social change is a longer process —“two or three generations”, Elias says³— requiring the emergence of appropriate social conditions for the new ideas to be able to be articulated, take root and flourish. Moreover, social change is a dynamic *process*,

¹Elias 2000: 312.

²Elias 1978.

³Elias 1978: 21.

a process of *interweaving*, as Elias's technical term goes. Thus, when Elias in the above quoted passage speaks of 'the interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions' that in their multiplicity nevertheless produce something concrete he has in mind a longer phase of interweaving where, despite the divergent elements —individual intentions for instance—, a particular direction is discernible. This direction emerges when we study developments over the long term, as Elias demonstrates in *The Civilizing Process* studying changes in attitudes and habits over a long span from the medieval to early modern times.

Writing in the late 1970s, Elias argued that sociology needs a new set of concepts to better comprehend social life and to avoid certain pitfalls of the tradition. In an observation interestingly parallel to Wittgenstein's Elias argues that "[o]ur languages tend to place at the forefront of our attention substantives, which have the character of things in a state of rest"⁴. The parallel I see here to Wittgenstein's views relates to his claim that great philosophical confusion results when processes such as thinking, reading, intending, being in pain, and meaning more generally, are thought of as 'substantives', things essentially residing somewhere, for example in the person's mind or brain or perhaps in some platonic realm. In a number of contexts in the foregoing chapters I have attempted to illustrate the nature of the Wittgensteinian organisatory and non-ontological alternative based on the idea of looking at the exhibition of pains, understanding and other allegedly essentially mental phenomena as moves in the developmental course of human interaction.

Elias claims that what results in sociology of this 'substantivisation' of aspects of social life are misleading "conceptual distinctions between the actor and his activity, between structures and processes, or between objects and relationships"⁵. And so, "[o]ne can find oneself caught up in long discussions of the nature of the relationship between these two apparently separate objects"⁶. Elias's ideas of the 'process of interweaving' is meant to bring relief to the situation.

One particularly interesting idea that Elias uses to articulate the meaning of 'interweaving' is the idea from "multiple perspectives"⁷. In the functionalist tradition (e.g. Parsons) we find the idea of subsystems as functional to the maintenance of the larger social system. In Elias's view, this is single-perspectival

⁴Elias 1978: 112.

⁵Elias 1978: 113.

⁶Elias 1978: 113.

⁷Elias 1978: 126.

thinking focusing too much around the functioning of the given social system. Elias argues that this conceals the fact that

those who form them [social systems], institutions never perform a function exclusively for the so-called ‘system’, ... they also perform a function for their members.⁸

A crucial virtue of the view from multiple perspectives is that “it enables us to see people again behind all the impersonal, even seemingly extra-human, social structures”, Elias adds⁹. One might say Elias calls here for sensitivity to individuality and plurality within social systems and processes.

The meaning of ‘process’ and ‘interweaving’ can be further characterised by considering another technical term from Elias, that of *figuration*, mentioned also in the quoted passage with which this section began. While Elias has enabled us to see the individuals again, social systems are not to be characterised by one-sided individual perspectives only:

the perspectives of individual players intermesh to create a game which no single player can control. ... it is more likely that the players’ moves, plans and perspectives will be influenced by the game.¹⁰

Therefore, Elias continues, “we can never think of people singly and alone; we must always think of them as people in figurations”¹¹. The central idea of figurations is that, while “it is still possible to bow to tradition, and to speak of the ‘game’ as if it had an existence of its own”¹², the game is being shaped by the players’ actions as much as these are being shaped by the framework of the game. There obtains a certain dynamic of interweaving.

In *What Is Sociology?* Elias describes a number of ‘game models’ the workings of which are supposed to illustrate the process of interweaving in figurations: “[b]y using the image of people playing a game as a metaphor for people forming societies together, it is easier to rethink”¹³ the tradition, Elias writes. As Elias frames these models, they appear principally as figurations of *power* relations as they involve players of different strengths competing against each other.

⁸Elias 1978: 126.

⁹Elias 1978: 127.

¹⁰Elias 1978: 127.

¹¹Elias 1978: 127.

¹²Elias 1978: 130.

¹³Elias 1978: 92.

Now, one of the interesting conclusions drawn by Elias from his game models is that “[t]he more the game comes to resemble a social process” —that is one where all players have a role in shaping the outcome of the social process— “the less it comes to resemble the implementation of an individual plan”¹⁴. The reasoning here is that as individuals exercise their powers in the world and on each other this process of interweaving does go in some particular direction but, since no player alone is able to dictate the direction, there is no individual plan that the process realises. Hence, one could conclude in the words of the above quoted passage from *The Civilizing Process*: “something comes into being that was planned and intended by none of these individuals, yet has emerged nevertheless from their intentions and actions. And really this is the whole secret of social figurations”.

For the present purposes the logic of social processes proposed by Elias is worth thinking about a little bit more. The logic is that, as social processes bring together people to interact with each other, it should at least not be assumed straight up that the direction in which the individuals pull is uniform. This point Elias raises in particular against the structural-functional tradition emanating from Talcott Parsons. That tradition saw social systems as standing or falling according to the level of social cohesion exhibited by them. Social cohesion was understood by Parsons first and foremost to mean the sharing of a normative orientation. What did not conform was seen as an anomaly.

On a final note on Elias, reading his *What Is Sociology?* one is struck by the complete absence of the important technical term of *The Civilizing Process*, namely that of *habitus*, and it is in general the latter work and the concept of *habitus* that Elias is associated with¹⁵. While the view of *What Is Sociology?* would seem to emphasise the plurality and differences among the interweaving actors, in *The Civilizing Process* Elias writes that “the change in *habitus* characteristic of a civilizing process is subject to a quite specific order and direction”. Elias continues saying that “[a]s more and more people must attune their conduct to that of others, the web of actions must be organized more and more strictly and accurately”. In these circumstances individuals develop a “psychic *habitus*”, a mechanism of self-regulation, “an automatism, a self-compulsion that he or she cannot resist even if he or she consciously wishes to”, Elias explains.¹⁶ This is the historical civilizing process in which in place of external, often physical and

¹⁴Elias 1978: 82.

¹⁵Linklater & Mennell 2010

¹⁶Elias 2000: 367.

violent constraints exercised by the strong, develop psychic constraints that in a novel way regulate social existence. The picture here is rather Parsonian, one that Elias attacks vigorously in *What Is Sociology?*

Foucault on Emergence

Before inspecting more closely in the following section the parallel between Elias and Wittgenstein, I note that Elias's idea from multiple perspectives seems to me to be in many ways similar to what Michel Foucault writes on historical genealogy and processes of historical emergence. In his *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*¹⁷, Foucault provides reflections characterisable as philosophy of history employing the Nietzschean notion *genealogy* as well as *power*, the latter most famous from Foucault himself.

We may begin with Foucault's use of the notion of power discussed in a paper titled *The Subject and Power*¹⁸. In the paper Foucault contrasts two concepts of power. One is the *binary* conception that sets power up against that which it actively and explicitly limits and suppresses¹⁹. This conception of power, however, does not allow us to expose that character of power which "makes for its productiveness, its strategic resourcefulness", Foucault argues²⁰. To expose this facet of power, one must see that power "masks a substantial part of itself"²¹.

Foucault gives the following historical example. Historically, emerging powers such as monarchic institutions "presented themselves as agencies of regulation, arbitration, ... as a way of introducing order", he writes²². This way power is as it were concealed by making it synonymous with order and the submission to power concealed as restoration of order. This is a form of power "whose operation is ... ensured ... by technique ... by normalization ... by control", Foucault describes²³.

Now, with this concept of power in mind, let us review Foucault's philosophy of history by considering his notions of genealogy and emergence. According to Foucault, history, as well as society, can be seen as a *process* in which forces "play", struggle or clash²⁴. One way to understand this could be this: differently

¹⁷Foucault 1977.

¹⁸Foucault 1982.

¹⁹Foucault 1982: 83 ff.

²⁰Foucault 1982: 87.

²¹Foucault 1982: 86.

²²Foucault 1982: 86.

²³Foucault 1982: 89.

²⁴Foucault 1977: 148.

positioned individuals and groups act in society from the points of view of their respective positions. They try to assert their concepts and notions of normalcy in terms of which social reality is to be articulated and organised. In the course of these processes ideas, institutions, and so on are acted out, emerge and renew—the process is their emergence, their genealogy.

Foucault argues, however, that given the nature of power as an attempt to introduce mechanisms of control and normalisation, it can be said that “no one is responsible for an emergence”²⁵. What this means is that since for example ideas in the Foucaultian view are products of (ongoing) clashes of forces, no one really is in control of what the final product will be, hence ‘no one is responsible’ for it. To get a grasp of the meaning of this metaphoric language I find it helpful to think of the historical emergence, say, of an idea as a *compromise* that reflects various factors that played a part in its genealogy.

What this suggests to the study of history and society is that we see historical events in a larger context of their emergence and their continual development in human interaction. One is reminded of the words of the British philosopher and archaeologist R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943):

Better historical thinking, deeper historical knowledge, would show us ... not a single unchanged idea, but a dynamic interplay of ideas, containing elements which, even quite early, prepare its conversion into [something else].²⁶

A similar methodological view is expressed in Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge*²⁷. There Foucault characterises the writing of history as an encounter with “a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities”²⁸. In other words, historical analysis is about *organising* aspects of history in some sort of wholes, constructing ‘constraints’ on the given materials by organising it. Now, Foucault’s project contrasts with this. His is “an enterprise that wishes”, Foucault says, “to reveal how these constraints could come about”²⁹. This way he intends “to question teleologies and totalisations”³⁰ constructed in historical writing.

²⁵Foucault 1977: 150.

²⁶Reprinted in Budd 2009: 249. A similar argument is advanced persuasively in Skinner 1969 with examples from historical literature.

²⁷Foucault 1989.

²⁸Foucault 1989: 8.

²⁹Foucault 1989: 16.

³⁰Foucault 1989: 17.

At the same time, Foucault adds, the approach “is not critical, most of the time”, and “it is not a way of saying that everyone else is wrong”³¹. It is perhaps fair to characterise Foucault’s project as one of trying to show that there are *alternatives*: “These pre-existing forms of continuity, all these syntheses that are accepted without question, must remain in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively of course, but the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed”³². He continues saying that

we must show that they [the syntheses, continuities, discontinuities] do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinised: we must define in what conditions and in view of which analyses certain of them are legitimate; and we must indicate which of them can never be accepted in any circumstances.³³

The project described here, one could say, aims at revealing the complex processes of emergence that characterises events as well as later articulations of our knowledge about them. This is an attempt of a “genealogical critique ... to reveal the contingent, practical, and historical condition of our existence”, as one commentator put it³⁴. Moreover, the project can be seen to draw from a picture of social life as a continual process of emergence or interweaving engaged in by differently placed actors.

In this connection, I want to briefly attempt to situate this thesis with respect to the larger although perhaps vague, and therefore dangerous, theme of post-modernity. One commentator described postmodernism as the view that “the language system we use to think and communicate [is] forever separate from the supposed reality about which we speak”³⁵. If it is fair to characterise Foucault’s thought as postmodern then this is not the message I take home from him. To me a central character of postmodern thinking, exemplified for instance in Foucault, is the conviction that there will always be various forces at play both in the development of social-historical situations themselves as well as in the creation of later accounts of them. There is this sense to the Foucaultian continual process of emergence. Postmodernity, then, is first and foremost humility in the face of complexity and recognition of the intrinsic difficulty of knowing: knowledge of

³¹Foucault 1989: 18.

³²Foucault 1989: 28.

³³Foucault 1989: 28.

³⁴Mahon 1992: 2.

³⁵Sire 2004: 116.

the social-historical is *not easy*, but our efforts to know are continually hampered by the complexity of the phenomena we are trying to get to grips with as well as that we look at it from our own perspective. If, as it did for one historian, the Enlightenment represented a ‘recovery of the nerve’ to boldly declare the discovery of wisdom and knowledge³⁶, then postmodernity represents a certain shirking back from this surety, a certain losing of nerve if you like, but in the present view it is a more balanced and realistic view of human knowledge. This to me is one of the chief lessons from Foucault as well as ‘postmodernity’ in general, and I see the present thesis as a part of that same intellectual current. By contrast, as discussed with examples in Part 1 (in particular Chapter 3), many ideological arguments, as found in environmentalism and environmental history, effectively reduce the complexity of ‘historical emergence’ to its alleged essence in shared or elite ideology.

As Humble as Table, Lamp and Door

The picture of the social process, of social and historical emergence, that we find in Foucault and Elias (of *What Is Sociology?*) is characterised by the interplay of various forces and differently situated actors in a sinuous, multifaceted set of ongoing processes. In Chapter 7 I discussed my reading of Wittgenstein’s blind agreement in form of life as yielding a similar picture of social life: differently placed actors agree in the organisation of human life, not fundamentally by shared knowledge of it, but by our engagement in it in complementary and reciprocal roles, or in division of labour. What I have called Wittgenstein’s non-ontological approach to the surroundings, not the source, of human and social action are just other facets of the same perspective to social reality.

One particular aspect of this is the idea of the *mundane, everyday* quality of the activities in terms of which we participate in the collective performance of the social. A number of passages can be found in the later Wittgenstein where he would seem to be making a similar point. He argued, for instance, that

[t]he aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something —because it is always before one’s eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless *that* fact has at some time struck him.³⁷

³⁶Gay 1969.

³⁷Wittgenstein 1958: §129.

In another place he wrote that

What we have to mention in order to explain the significance, I mean the importance, of a concept, are often extremely general facts of nature: such facts as are hardly ever mentioned because of their great generality”³⁸.

Again, in Wittgenstein’s perspective, the essential aspects about language and social life are “already in plain view”³⁹. The *meaning-as-use* of language, actions and so on, is “as humble a one as that of the words ‘table’, ‘lamp’, ‘door’ ”, he wrote⁴⁰. In my reading, Wittgenstein conceptualised the mundane everyday uses of language, and thereby the wider everyday human activities with which they are interwoven, as a sort of a base level, a kind of an “original home” as he called it⁴¹, of meaning. This is to say, we see the meaning of expressions by looking at their uses or function in the course of everyday activities.

This takes us to the often quoted passage about the kind of method that Wittgenstein recommends for philosophy:

we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place.⁴²

In the reading I advocate, words such as ‘theory’, ‘hypothetical’ and ‘explanation’ refer here to attempts at getting to the underlying, hidden mental *source* of human activity. ‘Theory’ is used here in the sense of making a hypothesis about the mechanism that underlies the activity of reading: “what reading consists in, we shall be inclined to say: it is a special conscious activity of mind”, Wittgenstein had his interlocutor say. To this Wittgenstein replied: “But these mechanisms are only hypotheses, models designed to explain, to sum up, what you observe”⁴³. As indicated in a number of connections above Wittgenstein rejected all theories, hypothesis, explanations of the hidden source of human activity.

What, then, is Wittgenstein’s alternative descriptive approach? It would appear to consist of the essentially philosophically unastonishing activity of “arranging [surveying] what we have always known” [Zusammenstellung des längst

³⁸Wittgenstein 1958: §56.

³⁹Wittgenstein 1958: §89.

⁴⁰Wittgenstein 1958: §97.

⁴¹Wittgenstein 1958: §116.

⁴²Wittgenstein 1958: §109.

⁴³Wittgenstein 1958: §156.

Bekanntem]⁴⁴. Yet, to requote Wittgenstein, he did not think this would necessarily be an easy task: “[t]he use of [a word] in the ordinary circumstances of our life is of course extremely familiar to us. But the part the word plays in our life, and therewith the language-game in which we employ it, would be difficult to describe even in rough outline”⁴⁵. However, in the organisatory reading, the essential point in a description in Wittgenstein’s sense is that describes an organised system of action, hence the terms Wittgenstein used to refer to it, (language-)game, technique⁴⁶, form (of life), which can all be read as highlighting the system-like, organised character of the activities in question. It is also in this fundamental aspect of the later Wittgenstein’s thought that we shall next look for the similarity to Karl Marx’s thought.

Marx and Wittgenstein

In his *One Dimensional Man*⁴⁷, citing passages from the *Investigations* such as that the meaning is as humble as table, lamp and door, Herbert Marcuse took on Wittgenstein for his alleged conservatism seeing no value whatsoever in Wittgenstein for a thinker with a critical purpose. I think I understand where this critique comes from, although in my reading of Wittgenstein it is misguided. In fact, the present thesis can be read as providing, if you like, a critical materialist —as opposed to a collectivist-constructivist— reading of the later Wittgenstein.

That there are similarities between Marx’s and the later Wittgenstein’s ideas is by now a reasonably well recognised and discussed theme in the literature⁴⁸. The most important channel of influence of Marx’s ideas upon Wittgenstein appears to have been the Italian economist Piero Sraffa. In the 1930s in Cambridge, Wittgenstein had discussions with Sraffa about his earlier philosophy expressed

⁴⁴Wittgenstein 1958: §109.

⁴⁵Wittgenstein 1958: §156.

⁴⁶See e.g. Wittgenstein 1958: §199., §337., §557.

⁴⁷Marcuse 1964.

⁴⁸Early attempts include the book length works by David Rubinstein (1981) and Susan Easton (1983) and the papers in Kitching & Pleasants 2002: Part V. More recent works include the collection of papers by Kitching and Pleasants (2002). A paper by Marion (2005) is one of the few, if not the only one around, to discuss mentions of Sraffa in Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass* (Wittgenstein 2000, 1996) but the use made of these is minimal. Biographically and otherwise interesting paper by the economist and a friend of Sraffa’s Amartya Sen (2003) is worth mentioning. Sinha 2009 contains some interesting passages from letters between Sraffa and Wittgenstein. Rothhaupt (2011) cites and notes the importance of, but only briefly explores, the Sraffa passages in the *Nachlass*. Other works I know of include Read 2000 and Gebauer 2009: 139 ff.

in *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. In this period Wittgenstein began more and more intensely to doubt his views in the *Tractatus* and to develop his so-called ‘later philosophy’. Wittgenstein himself acknowledges Sraffa’s influence in the Preface to the *Investigations* saying that for many years Sraffa practiced unceasing criticism on Wittgenstein’s thoughts and gave him the “stimulus for the most consequential ideas of” the *Investigations*.

There is thus no doubt about the influence of conversations with Sraffa upon Wittgenstein, but due to the lack of details as to what the two thinkers actually talked about the exact nature of the influence remains unclear. In principle, it would seem that the influence could consist of *almost anything*: did Sraffa, for instance, convey Marx’s or Marxian ideas to Wittgenstein?; and what was Sraffa’s reading of them?; and in how much detail were they conveyed?; or did Sraffa convey merely something that was in his own interests at that time?; and what did Wittgenstein take home of all this?; or was Wittgenstein perhaps the one who largely dictated the subject matter of these conversations? There are bits and pieces of information available that could be alluded to in favour of one or the other point of view, but in principle the possibilities for speculation seem endless.

And indeed, a host of different types of approaches to the Marxian influence upon Wittgenstein exist ranging from close readings of works by Sraffa and Wittgenstein with an eye on a common similarity to tracing of some broader methodological similarity in Marx and Wittgenstein, and a lot else in between. The present approach is, first of all, heavily tinged with the main issue of this thesis, namely, that of providing a critical discussion of the contrast between what I have called the ideological and the (Wittgensteinian) organisatory approaches to human and social action. Secondly, perhaps typically for a *philosophical* reading of the similarity (as opposed to, say, an economist’s reading), I shall be looking for a fairly abstract methodological similarity between Marx and Wittgenstein.

Perhaps the most striking and often noted general similarity in Marx’s and Wittgenstein’s views is their rejection of metaphysics. In my reading, in both thinkers this amounts to the rejection of ideological analyses of social action that focus on the (shared) ideas allegedly underlying social action. Instead, both thinkers put an emphasis on the everyday organisation of human interaction and the significance of this to human life. This will allow us to pit the two against the ideological approach. By contrast, in Wittgenstein the rejection of metaphysics

has been taken to mean emphasis on public criteria and standards for internal states, a reading that I have criticised on a number of occasions above. Similarly, the common rejection of metaphysics by Wittgenstein and Marx has been taken to reside both taking a middle position in the so-called culture vs. nature issue⁴⁹.

Marx and Structures

Some key aspects of Marx's views can be construed as follows. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels argued that as a biological being the human being must somehow acquire her sustenance which inevitably requires productive acts of one kind or another. The term 'materialism' and its cognates are used by Marx to refer to the methods and processes of the human wrestling of living out of our environment.

Marx and Engels argue that the human being is essentially a social being in that as a matter of fact her productive activities have historically always taken place within some kind of a social setting, a tribe, family, village, town and now increasingly the global economic system. In Marx's terminology, as a social and productive being the human being enters into various *relations of production* and these relations form the *economic structure of society*. Relations of production obtain between people, for example such that the master owns the slave, but also between people and more abstract entities, for example such that the proletarian owns her labour power, that is her ability and skill to work, and the capitalist owns the means of production, for example the instruments of production and raw materials. The form of organisation, of course, varies historically, dynamics of which Marx and Engels provide ample illustrations and examples⁵⁰ as well as a theory of their historical development, a philosophy of history.

Marx saw this kind of a material basis of human existence as the scene where the real, significant processes of human existence are played out. This view is expressed with force in the much quoted claims such as that "[t]he mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life" and that "[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness".⁵¹ In Marx's view, in human sciences a crucial priority should be given to the *base*

⁴⁹See Rubinstein 2002.

⁵⁰See e.g. Marx & Engels 2007: 57 ff. and 68 ff.

⁵¹Marx 2009.

(die Basis), that is, the organisation of the human effort to acquire the material basis of her existence, over the *superstructure* (der *Überbau*) of ideas or ideology.

Many commentators have tended to see Marx's assertion from the base over superstructure as too radical —economically deterministic— and, furthermore, that he did not really hold it in such a radical form⁵². However, what we cannot deny is the role of the base as the setting in which everyday human life takes place. One powerful reason for thinking that the base is of foremost importance is that the intensified division of labour and economic relations increasingly permeate our existence on the base level. Through the historical intensification of division of labour, the web of interactions upon which human existence relies, has become ever more complicated. That is to say, the web of human interactions that provides the material basis of our existence has become ever more complicated. At the same time, division of labour has taken a global extent tying various geographically and ideologically distinct areas together in one world economic system. We may say the human being acts in society characterised by its advanced *commodification* and the commodified society structurally permeates our lives by setting up a complicated web of interconnections with geographically and ideologically distinct others on a recursive and daily basis. The pervasive significance of this form of organisation of human activity to everyday interaction must surely be given a crucial role in accounts of social action. This was the foundation of my argument in Chapter 4 above.

Another interrelated reason for giving great explanatory significance to the base is that, by the material organisation of human life constituting the setting in which everyday life is lived, this form of organisation draws in *the masses of people* to the performance of the system *on an enduring, day to day basis*. As is commonly accepted, historically the beginning of the era of capitalism was marked, not by the *qualitative* emergence of the capitalist form of ownership (which is age old), but by the *quantitative* broadening of the population base whose form of organisation of human life is industrial capitalism⁵³.

Now, these may be compelling observations, but what evidence is there that Marx entertained them? In a nutshell, my argument here is that in Marx, as indeed in Wittgenstein, the idea from the organisation of everyday human life in particular ways, and the effects of this on human life, play a constitutive role

⁵²Singer 1980; Wood 2004.

⁵³This is noted, for example, by Weber 1930: Introduction, and Wallerstein 1983.

in their approaches to human sociality. This, I argue, is the major commonality between the two thinkers. Let us begin with the question what role does the idea from the organisation of human life play in Marx?

One fundamental aspect has already been mentioned: Marx argues that the human being produces the material basis of her existence and, most importantly, historically she has engaged in this in the frame afforded by the social organisation of this activity. Moreover, the form of socio-economic organisation of human life is something essentially beyond the control of any individual being: “[i]n the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production”, Marx argued⁵⁴. The indispensability of organisation to human life brings about ‘the necessary need of intercourse with other men’. For Marx, the necessity springs ultimately from the need of the human being to produce the material basis of her existence.

Second, consider this passage in *The German Ideology*:

Language is as old as consciousness, language *is* practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men.

Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.⁵⁵

One way to rephrase an underlying point of this passage is to say that the social organisation of human life is where language is acquired and used. Language arises and is used in the course of human interaction. And again, the need to interact itself arises ultimately from the human need to produce the material basis of her existence which is a collective affair taking place in the frame of the organisation of human life in particular ways.

Third, in contrast to their hoarding mercantilist colleagues, many classical economists such as Adam Smith celebrated the capacity of division of labour to increase productivity seeing it as a precondition to a modern, efficient economy⁵⁶. Marx and Engels agreed, but argued in addition that the division of labour is also a significant source of *antagonism* and *contradictions* in society. Basically, their

⁵⁴Marx 2009.

⁵⁵Marx & Engels 2007: 51.

⁵⁶Smith 1904: Chapter 1.

argument is that, due to the division of labour, people work and live in different spheres of life and thus their interests naturally begin to diverge according to what advances them in the particular role that they play in the economic structure⁵⁷. Importantly, in Marx and Engels' view, the source of antagonisms and contradictions is *systemic or organisational* in nature, it resides in the organisation of human life in particular ways: social life is “antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence”, as Marx put the point⁵⁸. There is a similarity here to Michel Foucault's idea of power discussed earlier in this chapter: antagonism, like power, is not merely binary in character where one represses the other, but rather antagonism is built into the very organisation of human life in capitalist society.

Fourth, in Marx's view, the alienation that industrial market society produces in its performers too has a systemic or organisational source: “we have to grasp the intrinsic connection between private property, greed, the separation of labor, capital and landed property; the connection of exchange and competition, of value and the devaluation of man, of monopoly and competition, etc. —the connection between this whole estrangement and the *money* system”, Marx wrote⁵⁹. The Marx commentator Peter Singer summarised the point well:

... Marx's theory of history is a vision of human beings in a state of alienation. Human beings cannot be free if they are subject to forces that determine their thoughts, their ideas, their very nature as human beings. The materialist conception of history tells us that human beings are totally subject to forces they do not understand and cannot control. Moreover the materialist conception of history tells us that these forces are not supernatural tyrants, for ever above and beyond human control, but the productive powers of human beings themselves.⁶⁰

In general, the argument from alienation employs the idea that the market societal form of organisation puts the individual in a kind of a treadmill of work and consumption that is not conducive to a good life. It can easily be seen that alienation too is a systemic property pertaining to the social organisation of the human productive activity in a certain manner. The general thrust of Marx's

⁵⁷Marx & Engels 2007: 44.

⁵⁸Marx 2009.

⁵⁹Marx 1844: First Manuscript.

⁶⁰Singer 1980: 46.

vision could indeed be described as the attempt to work out the implications of the capitalist form of organisation of human life on the quality of human life⁶¹. Marx's approach is thus fundamentally systemic and orientated to the analysis of the impacts of material organisation of human life on its quality.

From Metaphysical to Everyday Use

How, then, do these ideas make an appearance in Wittgenstein's writings? I argue that in Wittgenstein too, there is an emphasis on the importance of a base of sorts, though it is not of economic nature. This does not, however, refute the present comparison of Marx and Wittgenstein's as analysts of the organisation of human life. The guiding idea is not that the organisation has an economic character, but that it comprises actions of everyday quality.

Thus, as I have argued on a couple of occasions above, Wittgenstein often draws attention to the circumstances surrounding language use, details of which he often leaves unspecified, but of which he talks as if they were very ordinary and well known⁶². Wittgenstein characterised his approach as one where "[w]hat *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" by reminding ourselves of how these words are actually used⁶³. Further examples of the importance of 'everydayness' in Wittgenstein's approach are his discussion of pain and exhibition of pain in ordinary circumstances as opposed to pain being fundamentally a phenomenon of the privacy of one's consciousness⁶⁴ or transcendentalism of scepticism as compared to the everyday knowledge claims we make easily and without doubts⁶⁵, both of which we have discussed in detail in the foregoing chapters.

We see then that Wittgenstein's concern with everydayness is no concern with the economic base as it is in Marx. However, based on the above considerations from the commodification of society, one may argue that the base, as it is experienced by 'the man on the street', is not explicitly economic in character, but rather mundane having to do in general with performing the various facets of one's occupational role as well as engaging in various acts of production and consumption of goods and services. This is one important implication of every

⁶¹Elbe 2010: 598.

⁶²See e.g. Wittgenstein 1958: §29., §33., §87., §117., §154.

⁶³Wittgenstein 1958: §116.

⁶⁴See e.g. Wittgenstein 1958: §244. ff.

⁶⁵Wittgenstein 1975.

artefact, service, commodity and infrastructure linking inextricably with the social processes of their production, maintenance and replacement. Thus, in my view, what characterises the base is the mundane, everyday character of the activities included in it that can at the same time be seen to have a significant economic dimension. I argue thus that both Wittgenstein and Marx seek explanations of social action, societal change and so on, in the *organisation* of human *everyday* activity. To be sure, an important precondition of stable everydayness is the stability of the economic form of its organisation but in everydayness this often fades into the massively complex background that constitutes the setting in which everyday life is lived.

I shall briefly try to peg my argument to some pieces of historical information that we have of the kind of influence Sraffa exerted upon Wittgenstein. The discussion will also give us a chance to look at some passages from Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* —his unpublished notebooks and other writings—, a source that is practically unexploited in the Marx-Wittgenstein literature. This, however, is not the place to analyse these passages here in great exegetical detail.

First, then, the biographical clue: Wittgenstein is reported to have said that “the most important thing he gained from talking to Sraffa was an ‘anthropological’ way of looking at philosophical problems”⁶⁶. The following passage found in Wittgenstein's *Nachlass* would seem to relate to just this statement, for it talks about looking at something anthropologically and attributes the theme to a discussion with Sraffa:

Are the propositions of mathematics anthropological propositions saying how we men infer and calculate? —Is a statute book a work of anthropology telling how the people of this nation deal with a thief etc.? —Could it be said: “The judge looks up a book about anthropology and thereupon sentences the thief to a term of imprisonment”? Well, the judge does not USE the statute book as a manual of anthropology. (Discussion with Sraffa)⁶⁷

The issue of an anthropological way of looking at something is discussed at some length in the surrounding pages of the notebook in which this passage appears, but I want to highlight the following interesting characterisation of the difference

⁶⁶Monk 1990: 261.

⁶⁷MS 117, p. 172. The *Nachlass* is available in Wittgenstein 2000, 1996 and to some extent online at www.wittgensteinsource.org. The original passage is in German. I have used the translation from Wittgenstein 1978: §65. (p. 192), which however omits the phrase in brackets (Discussion with Sraffa) that is there in the original notebook of Wittgenstein's.

between looking at a mathematical proposition anthropologically and looking at it mathematically appearing in the same notebook some pages later:

We shall see contradiction in a quite different light if we look at its occurrence and its consequences as it were anthropologically —and when we look at it with a mathematician’s exasperation. That is to say, we shall look at it differently, if we try merely to *describe* how the contradiction influences language-games, and if we look at it from the point of view of the mathematical law-giver.⁶⁸

The passage is interesting for it connects ‘looking at something anthropologically’ with giving a *description* of it. Most interestingly for the present purposes, it characterises the giving of descriptions as describing ‘how the contradiction influences language-games’. What is this influence like? A little earlier Wittgenstein had written this: “When I say: ‘I don’t know my way about in the calculus’ —I do not mean a mental state, but an inability to do something”⁶⁹. In the present organisatory reading, looking at how a contradiction influences language-games is to look at language-games as *systems* in which the appearance of a contradiction would mean changes in what one does in them. In the present reading, then, an anthropological way of looking at something would involve looking at it as an organised system of doing something.

This reading is supported by remarks such as the following that again attributes the theme to a discussion with Sraffa:

(Sraffa) An engineer is working on a bridge; thereby he consults different manuals; technical manuals and legal manuals. In one of them he learns that the bridge will collapse if he constructs this part weaker than etc. etc.; in the other that he would be locked up if he would/wanted to build the bridge so and so ... —Now, do these manuals both stand on the same level?— It depends on what kind of a role they play in his life ... The legal manual can be for him simply a book about the natural history of the people around him.⁷⁰

The case discussed here is different but essentially analogous to the one in the above quoted passage, namely, one involving a contrast between descriptions such as are given in technical manuals as opposed to prescriptions given in a legal manual. A legal manual too, however, can be read as a mere description, that is as an anthropological or natural historical observation. (The way the

⁶⁸Translation from Wittgenstein 1978: §87. (p. 220), original in MS 117, p. 256.

⁶⁹Translation from Wittgenstein 1978: §80. (p. 210), original in MS 117, p. 232.

⁷⁰MS 212: 709. My translation.

terms ‘anthropological’, ‘descriptive’ and ‘natural historical’ (and cognates) work and intermingle in the *Nachlass* passages gives us a strong reason to think that they are names for one and the same thing.) That is to say, a legal manual can play such a role in someone’s life, as Wittgenstein put it. But to reiterate the point for bringing up these passages here: to describe something (or to look at it anthropologically or natural historically) is to describe it as an organised system of living human life, part of which is to look at the effect of the appearance of a contradiction upon this system, or again, to look at the role of something within such a system.

A contrasting account of the ‘anthropological way’ is given by Peter Hacker. The main lines of Hacker’s view are familiar from our discussion of mastery and criteria in Chapter 6 above. Hacker argues that “[w]hat warrants using the epithets ‘ethnological approach’ or ‘anthropological approach’ in describing Wittgenstein’s later philosophy” resides in that it views concepts

as techniques of using words. To have mastered a certain concept is to have mastered the technique of the use of a certain word in some language or other. To possess a concept is to be able to use a word or phrase correctly, to explain what one means by it in a given context, and to respond with understanding to its use.⁷¹

In discussion of Hacker’s views in Chapter 6 above I argued, one, that this view of concepts does not pay adequate attention at individual differences in knowledge of criteria, but as in the above passage links quite straightforwardly the possession of a concept with its manifestation in use, the criteria for which we are in collective possession. And, two, I argued that in this view of concepts essential is actually not that they are used but that there are collective criteria for them. In other words, in a characterisation such as Hacker’s, human sociality appears as defined by the concept that social actors possess and share, whereas in the organisatory reading the defining aspect is the social *process* with an *organisation* characterised by reciprocity and complementarity of actions by differently placed actors with no assumption of concepts being shared. And thus, despite the reference to the accepted use of concepts as the criteria of their possession, Hacker’s view too is ontological based on the idea of concepts as shared mental presentations.

I believe the above considerations allow the development of a fresh angle to the question of Marx’s influence on the later Wittgenstein. Possibly due to the

⁷¹Hacker 2010: 18.

constructivist-collectivist ontology often attributed to the later Wittgenstein, a central aspect of Marx's approach, namely the tracing of structural effects of the organisation of human life on the character and quality of human life has not been conceived as having possibly found its way in Wittgenstein's views. Yet, in the present reading of Wittgenstein, he shares with Marx the non-ontological focus on the organisation of human life where the organisation is characterised, not essentially by some shared ideology, mentality or the like, but the organisation of human activity marked by reciprocity and complementarity, that is, by division of labour, which may also embody disharmony or antagonisms as Marx was keen to illustrate. To requote Marx and Engels, "language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men" which in my reading is echoed in Wittgenstein's "the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life"⁷². That is, in these perspectives language is looked at functionally as part of organised, purposeful human interaction. Admittedly Marx employed the idea to give a theory of class antagonism embodied in the organisation of human life, which does not characterise Wittgenstein's views, but the underlying functional view of language they shared.

Practice Theory

I shall close this chapter with a final comparison, this time with the so-called practice theory. The concept of practice has its roots in the works of Anthony Giddens as well as Pierre Bourdieu and Charles Taylor. However, the example of a practice theory that I shall review here is that of Theodore Schatzki's laid out in his *Social Practices*⁷³. The focus on Schatzki is justified in that his social theory is heavily inspired by Wittgenstein allowing us to discuss the present Wittgensteinian approach in contrast to another representative of Wittgensteinian approaches in social theory.

In Schatzki's view, expressed in an introductory piece to a collection of papers on practice theory, altogether four points can be seen to characterise the practice theory⁷⁴. First, there is the belief that "such phenomena as knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, language, social institutions, and historical transformation occur with and are aspects or components of the *field of*

⁷²Wittgenstein 1958: §23.

⁷³Schatzki 1996.

⁷⁴Schatzki 2001: 2 ff.

practices”, Schatzki writes. Second, the field of practices is characterised by the interweaving within them of human activity with material entities and artefacts. Third, the human performance of the field crucially involves “shared skills or understandings”. Fourth, “bodies and activities are ‘constituted’ within practices” for instance in the sense that the practice highlights and perhaps even in some sense defines certain properties of the human body. The last two points echo Charles Taylor’s idea of *embodied* knowledge meaning such things as, in Taylor’s example, that “the sense I have of my own importance is carried in the way I swagger”⁷⁵.

Schatzki presents his Wittgensteinian approach by way of a bewildering array of distinctions and technical terms that can overwhelm the reader. The main ideas, however, are clear enough. Central to Schatzki’s view of social life is that it is a field of practices. A practice is “a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings”⁷⁶ and social life in its totality a ‘nexus of practices’ (‘the weave of life’). Practices involve *recursive* doings and sayings by the participants in a *continuous flow* of interaction in particular locations with associated material equipment. Schatzki also gives considerable space to a discussion of the social nature of the human mind and body as expressing ‘conditions of life’ and ‘how things stand are going for someone’⁷⁷.

Next, Schatzki (together with many Wittgenstein commentators, as we have seen) goes on to characterise his view of what effectively seems to be the *source* of action, or doings and sayings, in practices. In Schatzki’s view, doings and sayings link together in practices by way of, first, “understandings, for example, of what to say and do”, and sometimes also, second, “explicit rules, principles, precepts, and instructions”. There is a third component that Schatzki calls “teleoaffective structures”, that is, “ends, projects, tasks, purposes” with appropriate “beliefs, emotions, and moods”⁷⁸. The three together Schatzki refers to as “the organization” of practice⁷⁹.

As in Giddens, what in some ways looks first like a rather classic conception of knowledge of the social as mental content of some kind, goes also in Schatzki through some significant modifications. First, similarly to Giddens, Schatzki

⁷⁵Taylor 1995: 170-1.

⁷⁶Schatzki 1996: 89.

⁷⁷Schatzki 1996: Chapters 2 and 3.

⁷⁸Schatzki 1996: 89.

⁷⁹Schatzki 1996: 99.

argues that actors' knowledge is in many cases *practical know-how* and often "unformulable" in language⁸⁰. The point is obviously important to Schatzki as it is discussed at some length and vigour, more so than for example in Giddens. I shall have more to say on this shortly.

The second aspect in terms of which Schatzki modifies the classic conception of knowledge of the social is, as Schatzki writes, that

the teleological organization is attributed to the firm, not its employees. Parallel remarks apply to the rules and understandings ... since participants observe different subsets of a practice's rules and act out different subarrays of its understandings.⁸¹

Now, this passage could perhaps be read as making a point analogous to the one argued in Chapter 6 above that there are great individual differences in knowledge, sensitivity, interests and perspectives to social reality. It appears that in Schatzki's view, the core of a practice does not reside solely in 'the organization' as shared (tacit, unconscious or 'unformulable') mental content of the practitioners, but rather at least as much in the interconnections of doings and sayings performed by differently situated individuals in possession of differing situated knowledge ('subsets and subarrays'). But then, Schatzki never explicitly makes this kind of statements and does not develop these ideas about subarrays and subsets in any length. As shown above, in Giddens too there are significant seeds for acknowledging individual differences in knowledge of the social but both Schatzki and Giddens fail to pursue the implications.

Consider the point a bit closer. In a move with which we can agree Schatzki denies that actors' understandings *cause* their doings and sayings⁸² and writes that 'the organization' does not exist "in the minds of the actors" but "out there in the practices themselves"⁸³. This means that most of the phenomena Schatzki discusses —such as understandings, the expressive body and human mental episodes— have identity only in the context of the flow of practices: they gain "status from their place in the play of phenomena, occasions, and existing life conditions, all this contextualized within practices of reaction, attribution, and education"⁸⁴. This would suggest that the social nature of meaning does not reside in shared mentalities, but in shared frame of action.

⁸⁰Schatzki 1996: 129 and 126 ff.

⁸¹Schatzki 1996: 105.

⁸²Schatzki 1996: 109.

⁸³Schatzki 1996: 105. Schatzki quotes these phrases from Charles Taylor.

⁸⁴Schatzki 1996: 33.

Then, by contrast, for example in Schatzki's discussions of terms such as 'understandings', but also 'signifying'⁸⁵, 'mattering'⁸⁶, 'intelligibility' and others—all these describing various ways in which meanings exist and function in social settings—differences in peoples' knowledge of various aspects of the social do not play any noticeable role. Moreover, Schatzki appears to dismiss such differences as pertaining only to, in Schatzki's words, larger scale ““cultural or societal” divisions in understanding and intelligibility” arising from the *mixing of practices*⁸⁷. In a similar vein, occasionally we even find phrases in Schatzki that echo the shared ideology picture: “actors and their we's ... posses most of the understandings against which their behavior expresses particular conditions”⁸⁸.

I note, however, that as compared to some other approaches, a so-called practice theory, such as Schatzki's is still rather sensitive to differences in knowledge because conceiving the social as a 'nexus of practices' would seem to allow a rather fine-grained look at the social. Practices would in particular highlight the everyday character of human and social action within practices. Consider here Schatzki's development of Wittgenstein's phrase 'the weave [*Teppich*] of life'⁸⁹. Schatzki asks us to view social life as a weave of practices occurring “at particular places for particular lengths of time”⁹⁰. Such an “intermeshing of practices” would seem to allow for a rather flexible analysis of social life as an on-going 'emergence' (in the Foucaultian sense discussed above) of mutually interacting, conflicting as well as supporting, 'perspectives'.

A large body of theoretical work pursued for instance by a number of sociologists of scientific knowledge (e.g. Harry Collins and Andrew Pickering) exists around the ideas from which Schatzki also draws. Themes here include the idea of the agency of material things appreciating the role that instruments and other artefacts play in shaping the practices involving them⁹¹. Authors speak of *posthumanist* theorising to contrast themselves with the classic (over-)emphasis on human cognition and agency as the sole root of all action in social life. They champion the view, in the words of Andrew Pickering, that “the doings of machines, instruments, microbes, the weather, you name it” play a significant role

⁸⁵Schatzki 1996: 121.

⁸⁶Schatzki 1996: 123.

⁸⁷Schatzki 1996: 126.

⁸⁸Schatzki 1996: 108.

⁸⁹Wittgenstein 1958: Part II : i (p. 174).

⁹⁰Schatzki 1996: 200.

⁹¹Latour 1988.

in what transpires in social life, that is, “the non-human world is constitutively implicated in the extension of culture and what precipitates out of it”⁹². Another theme is the study of social actors in the very midst of their practical engagement in their art in connection of which for instance Harry Collins has mounted a spirited defence of the idea of tacit knowledge against critics such as Stephen Turner (see Chapter 6 above)⁹³.

I close on a critical note on the family of practice theories. While Schatzki’s views can be formulated in a way that agrees with the present approach, the position of some features of the practice theory to the questions from the individual differences in knowledge of the social and the related one of a shared ideology as the core of human sociality still remains, in my view, to an extent ambiguous. To illustrate the ambiguous position of the practice theory to the individual differences in knowledge, consider here the American sociologist Ann Swidler’s take on how the practice theory deals with ‘the problem of the subjectiveness of meaning’. This problem relates closely to the idea of individual differences in knowledge of the social in drawing from the observation that the central constituent elements of culture we encounter in classic sociology (Weber, Parsons), such as ideas and values, are difficult to find “in any coherent or consensual form in the heads of particular actors” whose conduct allegedly is powered by such ideologies, as Swidler puts it.⁹⁴

Swidler argues that practice theories have dealt with the problem by two means. First, having “de-emphasized what was going on in the heads of actors, either individuals or collectives”, they cast human and social action as taking place in the frame of practices and in these predominantly “as routine activities (rather than consciously chosen actions)”⁹⁵. The second move has been to identifying “the impersonal area of discourse”⁹⁶ that, together with practices, forms an “observable object for the study of culture”⁹⁷.

However, it is hard to see how these strategies avoid ‘the problem of the subjectiveness of meaning’. First, to cast human action as routine-like does not really de-emphasise what is going on in the heads of the routinely acting actors. Rather, the move merely banishes the mental activities underlying human and

⁹²Pickering 1997: 331.

⁹³Collins 2001: 107.

⁹⁴Swidler 2001: 74.

⁹⁵Swidler 2001: 74.

⁹⁶Swidler 2001: 75.

⁹⁷Swidler 2001: 76.

social action into some realm of dispositional unconsciousness, a realm that is mental nonetheless and that therefore faces the question of how this knowledge is shared and transmitted. Second, it is not clear without further ado as to how discourses manage to be ‘impersonal areas’ somehow ordaining social action without a recourse to the old ghost of actors’ grasp (ideas) of practices and discourse.

The idea of impersonal areas of discourse Swidler’s paper illustrates by reference to the political scientist and social theorist William Sewell’s notion of ‘cultural schemas’, a notion apparently deriving originally from anthropology⁹⁸. Consider Sewell’s characterisation of schemas: they include “binary oppositions that make up a given society’s fundamental tools of thought, but also the various conventions, recipes, scenarios, principles of action, and habits of speech and gesture built up with these fundamental tools”. Further such elements include “not formally stated prescriptions but the informal and not always conscious schemas, metaphors, or assumptions presupposed by such formal statements”.⁹⁹ Needless to say, all these notions hardly are immune to the charge from masking individual differences in knowledge of them. Thus, I conclude that unfortunately Swidler’s attempt to address individual differences in knowledge of the social appears to come to no more than a re-branding and introduction back into circulation of the old themes.

Conclusion

The connecting theme of the present chapter, the everyday character of our collective performance of the social, highlighted the importance of taking full account in social theory of the organisation of human life as a recursive, mundane process of human interaction characterised by division of labour or roles. Bringing out the mundane nature of human and social action, characterised by interaction of ideologically and geographically dispersed actors, helps to see social action as an essentially *organisatory*, rather than ideological, achievement.

⁹⁸Sewell 1992: 7.

⁹⁹Sewell 1992: 8.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Nie wird es aber plausibel, daß die Menschen aus purer
Dummheit all das tun.
— Ludwig Wittgenstein¹

This thesis has sought to give a multidisciplinary grounded account of the cultural causes of environmental problems discussed as a question in philosophical and sociological theory of social action. The work can be seen to revolve around one core idea employed in different but analogous contexts: to dispute the so-called ideological approach in environmentalism and environmental history as well as in philosophical and sociological theory by contrasting it with the so-called organisatory approach in both areas.

More precisely, I argued that in environmental historical and environmentalist accounts of the human relationship to nature, ideologies (world-views, values) about nature are often cast as the mental drivers of human ecologically consequential action. I claimed that analogously in many popular philosophical and social theoretical works, shared conceptual schemes, shared criteria and standards or the like function as the mental source of social action. I argued then that such so-called ideological approaches cannot explain certain core aspects of our collective causing—or performance, to use the sociological jargon—of environmental problems in global industrial market society. The performance is characterised, not by shared ideology, but by division of labour of culturally and geographically dispersed actors who view global industrial market society from differing perspectives and act in different positions with differing knowledge, be-

¹Wittgenstein 1967: 235.

liefs and interests. Humans are thereby, nevertheless, engaged in the performance of a shared organisation of activity in reciprocal and complementary positions. To account for these characteristics of our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems, I claimed that we need an organisatory approach that sees our collective performance mediated by the organisation of human activity in global industrial market society. All of these ideas I also articulated theoretically by giving an original organisatory reading of Wittgenstein. This reading I contrasted with, as well as positively related to, a range of classic and contemporary approaches in (Wittgensteinian) philosophy and social theory.

Pursuing one argument both in environmental as well as philosophical contexts, the thesis has a marked dual character. This dual character is reflected in the title of the thesis as well as in the division of the thesis in two quite different parts in which very different sets of literature and different, although essentially parallel, arguments were pursued. This parallel resides in the suggestion made in this thesis that the ideological approach to the human relationship to nature can be viewed as a concrete example of the popular philosophical and social theoretical approach of explaining social action by reference to its alleged source in a shared ideology. The bipartite division of the thesis also essentially contributes to an ambitious and hopefully stimulating discussion of a pressing contemporary problems with breadth and depth. There is breadth to the account in that diverse, multidisciplinary literature and issues were covered that yet converge under the common header of the cultural causes of environmental problems. And there is depth to the account in terms of the philosophical dimensions of social action that the thesis explores in some detail. The detailed theoretical discussion of Part 2 allowed in particular the exposition of the deep embeddedness of the ideological approach in our intellectual culture which, however, meant the relative absence of the environmental theme in that part. Posing the issue of our collective causing of environmental problems as a question in philosophical and sociological theory of social or collective action represents a novel as well as ambitious manner of looking at the human relationship to nature in human sciences. The reader may well disagree with some particular observations and points made in the thesis, but I believe that the overall dual manner in which the thesis analyses the human relationship to nature is nonetheless a stimulating and challenging read.

Part 1

In Part 1 my focus was on environmental sociological, environmentalist and environmental historical literature and my intention to examine both the ideological and the socio-economic backgrounds to our environmental crisis. In Chapter 2 I began with a review of two broad orientations in environmental sociology to environmental problems. The so-called Ecological Modernisation Theory is hopeful about the prospect, aided by technological discoveries, of an ecological transformation of political and business institutions and practices towards factoring in environmental considerations in their operations. This view notes the deep dependence of human well-being on global industrial market society as the provider of work and livelihoods to the global masses —global inequalities notwithstanding— and is therefore not keen to disturb the system more than is absolutely necessary. The so-called Treadmill of Production approach, by contrast, is sceptical of the transformation potential indicating the need for more drastic changes in the organisation of human productive and consumptive activities to effectively address overt human environmental burden. I did not seek to pick a side between these two views but to highlight the role of global industrial market society as the essential context in which environmental problems are caused, conceptualised as problems and addressed. Global industrial market society as the context of our environmental predicament indicates that somehow we must reconcile the unreconcilable to overcome our “crushing dilemmas” as George Monbiot called them²; that is, we must find ways to combine environmentally low-intensity organisation of human life with providing the immensely large masses with some sort of bare essentials of human life.

Interestingly, then, as I illustrated in Chapter 3, environmentalist and environmental historical literature is often most readily geared towards an ideological analysis of the human relationship to nature. In such works, as I showed with extensive examples from a wide range of literature, the focus is often on the explication of the role of religious, scientific, philosophical and other ideas as the fundamental drivers of human environmentally consequential activities. Such an ideological approach is not conducive to comprehending the deep organisatory or structural character of the human environmental burden. By close readings of a number of environmental historical case studies, I attempted to show the

²Monbiot 2011d.

often quick, and in my view implausible, attributions of ideological motivational contents and beliefs to the various actors we encounter in the studies. Here also, by way of an original historical case study of John Evelyn's *Sylva*, the 17th century classic of forestry, I attempted to reveal the multiplicity of differently placed actors, perspectives and considerations that go into the making of the human relationship to nature. The ideological approach, I argued later in Part 2, is mirrored in the paradigmatic philosophical and social theoretical view that social action is driven by shared knowledge, beliefs, conceptual schemes or some other such ideology.

In Chapter 4 I presented a more realistic, organisatory, way of thinking about the cultural causes and discussed global industrial market society and its intense structural environmental burden as resulting from the daily activities of the globally dispersed masses. I concluded this discussion with drawing up four points in terms of which of the ideological approach to the cultural causes of environmental problems fails to account for our collective causing of environmental problems. First, global industrial market society brings into interaction a strikingly heterogeneous mass of globally dispersed masses. This interaction is best looked at via its form of organisation, not what the diverse actors might collectively know and believe or what attitudes they might collectively hold.

The second point was that the intensity of the environmental burden generated in global industrial market society is due to it extensively permeating the everyday productive and consumptive activities of the global masses. I used the example of the historical shift from trade in luxury to bulk goods and the implied shift towards mass production and consumption to illustrate this. It is this thus not the extraordinary level of ideologies, but the very ordinary, everyday activities of the masses that we must look at in order to understand the human relationship to nature.

My third point was that, given the very ordinary, *everyday* character of the activities in terms of which we collectively perform global industrial market society, our collective performance cannot be seen to have an effective general ideological source. This point anticipates the theoretical argument of Part 2 in that, given the dominance of methodological individualism and naturalism in philosophy, the default tendency there often is to view human action as action at will under the guidance of beliefs. In my view, however, this is a peculiarly unsuitable starting point for understanding collective, everyday action, for there does not appear to

be any general shared ideology that one could plausibly suppose to find in the heads of the actors engaged in their diverse daily activities. There is nothing “philosophically astonishing”, to use Wittgenstein’s phrase, about our everyday activities. Yet, as illustrated for instance in the discussion of a number of environmental historical case studies in Chapter 3, authors there often evoke dramatic but on closer scrutiny largely empty phrases such as “metaphysical hatred” of wildlife to explain the actions of the historical actors.

My fourth and final point was that when the human relationship to nature is conceived ideologically as driven fundamentally by a set of beliefs, evaluative orientations or a conceptual scheme, the essence of the relationship appears as effectively arbitrary. This point too anticipates the argument of Part 2 in that it works also a critique of the popular philosophical and social theoretical view of social action as building upon collectively held, self-justifying and self-referential beliefs (consensus). A parallel view can be found in the environmentalist literature according to which a change in ideology could bring about an effective change in the human relationship to nature. In my view, this ideological argument effectively serves to obscure the deeply problematic structural character of human environmental burden as a function of, not our ideologies, but the organisation of human productive and consumptive activity.

Part 2

The concern in Part 2 was to show, with reference to a range of social theoretical and philosophical literature as well as Wittgenstein’s philosophy, how we should think about human action and social action in particular, to be disposed to give, not an ideological, but an organisatory account of the cultural causes of environmental problems. At the same time, Part 2 aimed to illustrate that in our intellectual culture strong forces are operational that steer thought to an ideological approach about human action, both individual and collective or social action. Part 2 is a necessary complement to Part 1 in that the former subjects to a philosophical critique the ideological approach to social action as found in a range of philosophical and social theoretical literature that essentially parallels the ideological approach to our collective causing of environmental problems discussed in Part 1.

These aims were pursued as follows. In Chapter 5, I began with a brief historical overview of what might be termed the methodological individualistic

beginnings of modern philosophy in thinkers like Descartes, Locke and Kant who in their distinctive ways set the paradigmatic emphasis on the *essentiality of the mind* to explanations of human action and thought. I argued here that in later classics of sociology, such as Weber and Parsons, individualism was to some extent replaced by collectivism, but in one important sense the replacement was not at all that radical. In these and many subsequent thinkers, the idea of the essentiality of the mind to human action and thought was not disputed but in fact extended to cover social or collective action: social action as collective action at will under the guidance of shared beliefs became the guiding idea of the emerging, and enduring, paradigm from sharing in philosophical and sociological theory of social action. The critical reading of Weber's ideological argument in his classic *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* given in Part 1 (Chapter 3, p. 32) could also have been given here as an explication of this paradigm.

In later chapters of Part 2, one of my main aims was to make explicit the role of the collectivist paradigm from sharing, and the view of the essentiality of the mind that goes with it, in a range of later philosophical and sociological theory. Towards this end, in Chapter 6 I reviewed Stephen Turner's important critical work against a tendency very similar to what I call the paradigm from sharing. I also drew attention to some critical observations by Max Weber and Richard Sennett on the difficulty of motivational analyses as well as on the known problem encountered routinely in survey research of reducing respondents' diverse responses to general conclusions. Similarly, analogous quick attributions of mastery and knowledge of rules can be found in many representatives of Wittgensteinian philosophy of which I gave examples. The chapter also contains a lengthy overview of Anthony Giddens' social theory which I found, despite many indications to the contrary, also to preserve the paradigm from sharing in Giddens' notion of 'mutual knowledge' as the foundation of social action. The issues raised can be read as essentially parallel to the quick and overarching, and in my view implausible, attributions of ideology made in environmental history which I illustrated by several concrete examples in Part 1 (Chapter 3, p. 28).

I realise that the paradigm from sharing cannot be countered only by showing weaknesses in the particular views and arguments it gives rise to. It is also important to suggest an alternative which in this thesis I sought to do in terms of developing an alternative reading of the later Wittgenstein. I began this in Chapter 5 with an overview of the later Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical

analysis, which I continued in much more detail in Chapter 7. In that chapter I engaged in close reading of the later Wittgenstein to illustrate what I call his non-ontological, organisatory and developmental approach to social action and human sociality more generally. The point of contrast in this chapter was the philosophy of John Searle that is explicit in its naturalistic ontological orientation to certain modes of human cognition that in Searle's view drive social action.

In my view, one of the most striking differences between my Wittgensteinian perspective and some ontological approaches such as Searle's is brought out in Searle's claim, quoted in my discussion above, that "[w]hen I say, for example, that I am able to speak English, I am talking about a causal capacity of my brain"³. In my view, this completely disregards the reasons for which someone might convey to the other person that she is able to speak English and what consequences this has to the development of their interaction. In this way, in the Wittgensteinian perspective I propose, utterances about abilities for example should be seen as moves (to use Wittgenstein's term) made for some purpose or another within the developing course of human interaction. Hence, for example, a teaching situation Wittgenstein would not characterise in terms of the mental processes in the teacher's and the pupil's brains or minds. Instead, he would describe it as the very familiar developing process of the teacher giving examples and the pupil responding.

More generally, in Wittgenstein's perspective the focus is upon human interaction as (recurring) processes that develop by participants' reciprocal and complementary moves. Crucially, essential here is not that the participants share collective knowledge about these processes, but rather that their interaction takes place within a common form of organised interaction. This Wittgenstein designated as "not agreement in opinions but in form of life". Analogously to Wittgenstein's idea, in the case of our collective performance of global industrial market society and its environmental problems, the performance is fundamentally characterised by a heterogeneous mass of geographically and culturally dispersed masses acting out a shared form of organisation of their diverse activities. This illustrates the way in which I bring the two parts of my argument, the environmental and the theoretical, to a common conclusion. In my view, for us to come to an organisatory view about the human relationship to nature, it is essential to abandon the paradigm from sharing and the associated idea of the essentiality of the mind

³Searle 1996: 129.

to human action so widespread in philosophy and social theory.

Next, in Chapter 8, I developed my Wittgenstein reading in contrast with that of the so-called Strong Programme associated with the work of David Bloor, Barry Barnes and others. My perhaps most surprising claim here was that even these Wittgensteinian critics of overt individualism can in the end be seen to represent only a slight modification of the traditional emphasis on the essentiality of the mind to explanations of human action. The Programme's Wittgenstein reading is thus a further case in the series of Wittgensteinian and other accounts of social action discussed in this thesis that in my view have failed to appreciate the full scale of Wittgenstein's radically non-ontological, organisatory approach.

In Chapter 9 I sought to draw some positive parallels from my organisatory reading of Wittgenstein with existing literature. I discussed Norbert Elias's views on social processes of interweaving of differently positioned individuals in a later work contrasting this with the in my view ideological character of his approach in the classic *The Civilizing Process*. I positively related my views to the work of the seminal figure of Michel Foucault and the notion of postmodernism. I discussed Foucault's use of the ideas of structural power (as opposed to binary power) and that of historical emergence.

In the same chapter I also contrasted my views with the so-called practice theory, a significant recent development in modern social theory emphasising the situatedness of social action in particular kinds of material settings as well as the embodied quality of human understanding and engagement with artefacts as well as fellow human beings. With regard to this view too, however, I found that while they reject the traditional ontological focus on certain modes of human cognition as the foundation of social action, the focus nevertheless remains in other, for instance, embodied modes of cognition. Therefore, the practice theory, too, in some ways struggles to shed the traditional focus on human cognitive capacities as fundamental to explaining human action.

Finally, also in Chapter 9, I sought to draw a significant parallel between the philosophies of Karl Marx and Wittgenstein. In general, this thesis has sought to highlight Wittgenstein and Marx as thinkers whose ideas offer a clear organisatory alternative to the ideological approach, but certain core ideas of both remain widely rejected or ignored. Wittgenstein for example, wrote the philosopher Paul Johnston, "is widely regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of this century [the 20th] and yet the central thrust of his work is emphatically rejected by the

current philosophical community”. In Johnston’s view, there has been a failure to appreciate that Wittgenstein proposed “a radical new approach to the whole topic of the Inner”⁴, a theme that also underlies my reading of Wittgenstein. Similarly, Marx’s structuralist emphasis on the importance of the organisation of human productive activity (the base, die Basis) over ideologies (the superstructure, der Überbau) is frequently dismissed as too deterministic.

Yet, this thesis argued that a structuralist, non-ontological, organisatory view of human action is needed to comprehend, among others, the deeply problematic character of the human environmental impact. To be able to explain the intensity of the human environmental impact, it is absolutely essential to take into account the different everyday activities of the geographically and culturally dispersed masses in division of labour, which we can best capture by obtaining a view of the organisation of this collective activity.⁵

In Closing

The thesis has not attempted to work out a solution towards addressing environmental problems. Perceptive potential solutions to our environmental dilemma have been sketched by others, notably Herman Daly⁶. However, the thesis has shown, to me at least, the deeply problematic character of the human environmental burden in its deep embeddedness into the very fabric of the organisation of human everyday life on global scale. This is very disconcerting. At the same time, our ideologically orientated philosophical tradition is effectively not in the position to analyse the structural character of our environmental dilemma, more often than not focusing on the mental source of social action instead. More generally, while philosophical theory of social action would seem to be in an excellent position to make a topical contribution to the discussion about the cultural causes

⁴Johnston 1993: ix, x.

⁵In my view, a similar argument could be made about the causes of the current economic crisis that since 2008 continues to plague world economy. There too the widely accepted explanation of the crisis is in many essential respects ideological in that the crisis is attributed to the creed-driven invention of certain financial instruments of speculation and risk taking. An alternative, and in my view deeper explanation, is fundamentally organisatory and found for instance in the work of the Australian economist Steve Keen (2009). George Monbiot (2011b) offers a good summary of Keen’s views. More generally, I find Monbiot’s views on our environmental predicament in many essential ways similar to mine. Monbiot’s perceptive writings on the environmental crisis, many of which appeared in 2011 in *The Guardian* and that I often quote in the preceding chapters, have greatly encouraged me during the writing up process of this thesis.

⁶Daly 1996; Jackson 2009; NEF 2010b.

of environmental problems, this is not a case study in terms of which philosophers have typically framed their views⁷.

The thesis indicates further that, as environmental problems are caused collectively by social action in division of labour, also the solution must be a collective endeavour in this sense. It is clear that global political will is needed to make anything happen. Yet, also essential for meaningfully addressing environmental problems is to afford everyone a tenable position in the new, ecologically more sustainable organisation of human activity —a new division of labour, if you like— otherwise there is no reason to expect effective reductions in the intensity of human environmental impact. Unfortunately, all indications are that this may well be too much to ask.

In an interesting way, then, sensitivity is needed for diversity of positions within a shared broader organisation of human life. Such a sensitivity is apparent, I think, in Wittgenstein's respect of the diversity of human forms of life. In the epigraph to the present chapter, Wittgenstein was commenting on the positivist anthropology that he detected in the classic Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer's (1854—1941) seminal work *The Golden Bough*. Wittgenstein seems to have felt that Frazer's approach to the primitives whose religious and other practices he had studied was not, as we could put it, one of a human being to another, but a much more distant, observational and analytical approach mixed also with (implicit) ridicule of the peculiar ways in which these people with all apparent seriousness engaged in their activities.⁸ And here Wittgenstein wrote the phrase of the epigraph: "it will never be plausible to say that mankind does all that [i.e. engages in ceremonial practices] out of sheer stupidity"⁹.

Now, the parallel I see here with our present topic of our collective causing of environmental problems is that, in a peculiar way, we seem to be in the need of making our own culture and age seem plausible to ourselves. We must not dismiss

⁷Shove 2010.

⁸Also Talcott Parsons criticised Frazer speaking of "positivist thinking" characterised by "the strong tendency ... to minimize the [social] importance of religion, to treat it as a matter of 'superstition' " (Parsons 1954d: 198). In Peter Hacker's view, Wittgenstein felt aversion to the culture represented by Frazer for its incapacity or lack of awareness of "the [universal human] ceremonial impulse to give expression to what is awesome, wondrous, terrible, tragic in human experience" (Hacker 2001: 93).

⁹Wittgenstein 2010: 119. This passage stems from *Bemerkungen über Frazers The Golden Bough* or *Remarks on Frazer's The Golden Bough*, a series of remarks written in German by Wittgenstein in his notebooks over the course of ten years from the early 1930s onwards. They were published posthumously and are rather unpolished. They were first published in 1967 in German (Wittgenstein 1967).

our relationship to nature as dictated by the sheer stupidity of technocratic, consumption-orientated materialism or some other such ideology, aspects that we often ridicule and demonise in our own culture. For never will it become plausible that the modern human being engages in all these activities out of sheer stupidity. A deeper and more complex account is needed to comprehend the deeply problematic character of our present environmental dilemma.

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