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THE TRUTH OF POLITICS

Antinomies of Theorising International Relations in Political Realist, Constructivist, and Poststructuralist Thinking

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A INTRODUCTION

1 Antinomies in International Theory

In this work, we read three schools of thought in the field of International Relations in an unconventional but not unfounded way. For this kind of reading we assume political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism as theoretical lens through which not only an empirical world can be construed, but also the theorists and theories *themselves*. Although these three schools of thought should, first and foremost, help us to think about the essence of world politics, they also contain instructions of how to think about themselves *as part* of this world. When read in this way, theorists and theories appear as their own ›empirical feed‹.

This journey to the fundamental bedrock of these works should bring about more clarity about the self-images and self-conceptions of both theorists and theories. Most of all, this review aims to critically ascertain the *consistency* of the theoretical scaffolds being read. Is what the theorist claims about the world in accordance with her own position *as* theorist? Does a theory's description of the empirical sphere ›out there‹ conform to its own status *as* theory?

Political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism should appear as consistent with their own postulates and stipulations when read against themselves. If they are not, these theoretical works would

leave the reader faced with *contradictions*. A theorist would, in Aristotle's ([1857]: 87) words, absurdly »suppose that at the same time the same thing should be and not be«. We thus intend to eventually find out whether theorist and theory present themselves in a consistent way, free of contradictions—and, if not, examine *why* these contradictions arise in the first place.

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Our intention to read these theoretical ideas by holding a mirror up to themselves is driven by the ambition to find contradictions *within* those works. But that's not the whole story. What we attempt to discover are not simple contradictions, but those which are *unresolvable*. This quest is at the heart of our work, and promptly brings about a deeper consideration of the notion of antinomies.

What is an antinomy? Imagine reading the sentence *›This sentence is false‹*. If we now were asked to decide whether this sentence is true or false, we soon find ourselves at an impasse. The sentence *›This sentence is false‹* is true, if and only if it is false. Again, if the sentence is held false, it does what it says—and must thus be considered true. This is an antinomy. In a peculiar manner, the strange sentence contradicts itself over and over again; and no decisive answer can be given. An antinomy therewith appears as »a logically correct reasoning, which justifies an equivalence: *P if and only if non-P*« (Łukowski 2011: 2).

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If we read political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism through their own lens, we might unveil antinomies which appear as unresolvable contradictions. Thereby, our search is not plucked out of thin air. More than once, the discovery of an antinomy has shaken the very foundations of an academic work. Whenever an academic work is revealed to contain antinomic statements, it requires explanation. It is as if a suspect accused of having committed a crime gives a contradictory alibi—perhaps the suspect speaks the truth, but she must make a clarification. Maybe, she even convinces us that the contradiction is no scientific crime at all.

In the course of this investigation we are guided by two ambitions. At first, we read the theoretical works as testimonies or descriptions of both theorist and theory themselves. Secondly, we ask whether these self-images and self-descriptions can be stated in a consistent way, or if they fall into unresolvable antinomies. Hence, the underlying research question is plain:

Do political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism harbour antinomic statements?

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Behind this question lurks an obvious suspicion. The reason why we chose political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism as cases for our readings is fuelled by the presumption that these theoretical contributions are indeed founded on antinomic statements, and might therefore turn out to be unresolvably contradictory. If we read these theoretical works against themselves, a few decisive questions have to be posed. They touch on the position and status of both theorist and theory, and thus allude to their self-image and self-conception.

Think about the political realist's core assumption that human beings are driven by the will for power, which blinds rational thought so that even »the scholar seeking knowledge seeks power« (Morgenthau 1972: 31). If the political realist herself is blinded by the strive for power, how can she *objectively* observe this very drive in an unblinded way? Moreover, if political realism itself must be considered a mere testimony of a power-seeking scholar, how can we consider this theory as *objective* knowledge—and not an act of power towards other academics at that time?

Recall the social constructivist's proclamation that »reality is socially constructed« (Wendt 1999: 238). Social phenomena such as knowledge claims, identities or ideas are taken to be nothing more than products of social interaction. But if the social constructivist herself is deeply embedded within the machinery of intersubjectivities, how can she take up an *objective* stance of observation? More generally, if »reality is being caused by theory rather than vice-versa« (Wendt 1999: 76), how can we grasp social constructivism as an *objective* theory about reality—and not an ephemeral academic contingency?

Finally, poststructuralists advocate »critical readings« (Ashley, Walker 1990b: 370) of how »any ›reality‹ is mediated by a mode of representation« (Shapiro 1989b: 13)—and therewith, of how theories, meaning formations, and arguments create the world of ours. But if the poststructuralist herself takes part in the discursive reproduction of meaning she aims to criticise, how can she adopt a critical stance towards herself? And how can the poststructuralist critique be understood other than as a mere representation, knowledge claim, or ›made‹ fact of the discursive world?

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Due to these questions, we have reason to believe that our reading of these theorists and theories as their own empirical feed contain serious, unresolvable contradictions in the form of antinomies. What a theorist claims—the universal power-blindness of all humans, their social constitution, or their embeddedness in discursive practices—seems to contradict her own position *as* a theorist. Likewise, what a theory maintains—the power-dependence of knowledge, its social constructiveness, or its discursive making of facts—appears to be contradictory towards the theory's own status. Roughly speaking, these three theoretical works in the discipline of International Relations seem to be plagued by unsolvable antinomies.

This work aims at illuminating these objections. Guided by the question whether political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism harbour antinomic statements, we investigate those theoretical contributions by reading them as self-images and self-descriptions. We finally arrive at the condensation of several *antinomic statements* implicitly put forth by these schools of thought, and consequently conclude the argument by drawing on the inherent limitations and impossibilities of International Relations theorising. As we will find, the antinomic tensions inherent in these theoretical contributions can be seen in the broader context of the relativism debate. As such, the ›politicisation of truth‹ appears as impossible undertaking.

2 Plan of This Work

This work consists of two larger sections. At first, a theoretical examination of the nature and history of antinomies is given, before we think about the question of how to analyse antinomies *as* statements. Finally, the elaboration of three schools of thought in International Relations and their theoretical foundations lies at the heart of our argument, through which we aim to unveil antinomic statements.

2.1 Structure and Overview

Our elaborations begin with a short overview of the nature of antinomies. With Kant's (1855 [1787]: 256) remark that antinomic statements reflect a »conflict of the laws of pure reason«, a brief discussion of Aristotle's three ›laws of thought‹ appears to be a good starting point. We then distinguish simple contradictions and paradoxes from the notion of antinomies, and eventually arrive at a first definition and classification. In this sense, both *ontological* and *semantical* antinomies can be understood as statements harshly violating the Aristotelian laws of logic. Whereas ontological antinomies circle around notional resources such as

entity, *class*, or *concept*, semantical antinomies relate to semantical resources such as *truth*, *meaning*, or *interpretation rules*.

The argument that the occurrence of antinomies can have devastating and destructive effects on the theory ›behind‹ these antinomic statements is mainly inspired by the debate on a logical-mathematical dilemma which emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. With Bertrand Russell's discovery of the ontological ›barber's antinomy‹ and Kurt Gödel's deployment of the semantical ›liar's antinomy‹, the very foundations of a broad programme of logics and mathematics had been shattered—and almost destroyed. However, there have been prominent attempts to overcome the disenchanting consequences of both antinomies. With the theoretical stipulation of ontological and semantical ›hierarchies‹ suggested by Bertrand Russell and Alfred Tarski, the formulation of antinomic statements was simply prohibited. Unfortunately, both hierarchical solutions turned out as containing new antinomies or inadequacies; and therewith, all efforts were doomed to failure. These insights about the ›aporia of antinomies‹ show the interplay between the occurrence of antinomies in particular theories and the attempts to block them through hierarchical settings within these theories will be crucial to our further considerations.

We continue with the question of how to read theories as descriptions of themselves. How can we think about both theorist and theory as their own ›empirical feed‹? If the theorist's position and the theory's status are reflected as *ontological* or *semantical* statements, such a reading is possible. Whereas ontological statements reflect how the theorist herself relates to what she theorises about, semantical statements express how the theory itself refers to ›the theorised‹.

Some of these statements are consistent and non-contradictory, but others are not. Whenever theoretical statements bear what we will call an ›antinomic figure‹, the picture of the theorist or theory as part of what is stated about the empirical world turns out to be contradictory. In these cases, either the theorist or the theory advocates a claim which mismatches the whole theoretical narrative. At this point, the methodical path we will take is set out briefly. By reading the theoretical cases as ontological or semantical statements, we can easily comprehend whether ontological or semantical antinomies are being yielded, and, finally, whether ontological or semantical hierarchies have been erected. In short, antinomic statements can be distilled from our reading.

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We read the works of three theoretical schools of International Relations to examine whether and how an antinomic figure can be found in their statements. Whenever possible, the main opuses of the respective school's most prominent advocate will be scrutinised. As a figurehead of realist thinking in world politics, Hans Morgenthau's writings serve as good foundation for our considerations on political realism. Without a doubt, Alexander Wendt's main works best represent the thin version of social constructivism. Taking account of the fragmentised character of poststructuralist critiques, selected contributions of Richard Ashley, Robert B. J. Walker, and Michael Shapiro will be read.

It is further argued that none of these schools of thinking are genuine accomplishments as political theories in the discipline of International Relations. In this sense, Morgenthau's political realism turns out as advancement of the psychoanalytical drive theory, Wendt's social theory of international politics appears as adoption of constructivist thinking in sociology, and Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's poststructuralist critiques are deeply inspired by the wave of linguistic criticisms. Our ambition to carve out these works' essential statements therefore requires a thorough reading of their *theoretical foundations*. For this reason, the investigation of political realism will be carried out against the background of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical scripts, social constructivism is read from the perspective of Niklas Luhmann's radical constructivism, and poststructuralist ideas are interpreted against the groundbreaking works of Ludwig Wittgenstein's language critique.

We conclude by arguing that political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralist critiques harbour antinomic statements which appear to intrude on their theoretical foundations. These antinomies reflect the impossibility of drawing a consistent self-conception of both theorist and theory. These shortcomings turn out as unresolvable, and—as our concluding remark shows—appear as variety of a deeper philosophical dilemma better known as the ›relativism debate‹.

2.2 Citation Notes and Additional Remarks

For the sake of clarity, some standard forms of citation are not followed—especially those of Plato's and Aristotle's work. In these cases, quotations are referred to the respective edition instead of the usual numbering and citations schemes. Solely in the case of Wittgenstein's ›Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus‹ and ›Philosophical Investigations‹, quotations are cited by Wittgenstein's own numbering system. Moreover, for all quotations of non-English authors such as Kant, Frege, Gödel, Tarski, Freud, Luhmann, or Wittgenstein, English translations of their works are used.

Instead of an overly extended and redundant introduction at this point, each main chapter begins with some introductory remarks and a short overview. Each of these main chapters is concluded by a synopsis and a shorthand description of the most relevant notions and terms used in this work. Each subchapter starts with a brief résumé paragraph.

In the field of International Relations, the study of antinomic statements within theoretical works has rarely been carried out.[1] Although numerous authors discovered contradictions or paradoxes in international theorising, the framing of these inconsistencies *as* antinomies—if possible—has not been undertaken so far.[2] Many critics have put forward some of the ideas presented in this work, but not framed these *as* antinomies. For this reason, we refrain from any misled attempt to reconstruct a state of research, but instead put the unveiled antinomic figures in the broader context of their respective debates. If, for instance, an antinomic statement can be found in the theory of political realism, we will discuss this occurrence as intellectual challenge *for* this theoretical school. It is argued that some of the antinomies we found have been thematised in other words and within different debates; and thus, these thematisations will be sketched *as* a state of research with regard to these different theoretical schools. At this point, only one remark is made on past studies of antinomies in International Relations theory.

Müller's influential essay on the ›antinomy of democratic peace‹ misuses, as we will find, the notion of antinomies. In fact, he describes a simple contradiction which arises from liberal conceptions of the state. Müller (2004: 506) finds »*two opposite conclusions* that can *both* be rooted in the interpretation of Kantian philosophy«. Other than antinomies, in which one conclusion necessarily leads to its opposite in the form of *›if X, then not X‹*, Müller's contradiction solely reflects that two opposite conclusions in the form of *›X and not X‹* can be interpreted independently from each other—they, as opposed to antinomies, do not mutually define each other. In this sense, Müller's antinomy is not of interest for this work. He should rather have been talking of a ›contradiction of democratic peace‹. With Müller's use as an example, we will

[1] Østerud's (1996) explicit study of the ›antinomy of poststructuralism‹ is surely an exception and will be discussed elsewhere (C, 3.2d).

[2] As we will find (C, 3.2a), especially poststructuralist scholarship was engaged in unveiling paradoxes in theorising international relations as a critique of Western rationalism and logocentrism.

often be confronted with ambiguous notions of paradoxes or antinomies; and hereafter only consider those which turn out as ›real‹ ones according to our definition.

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The nature of antinomies and their destructive effect on whole theories has been debated since ancient times (Chernavskiĭ 1994: 205). As a matter of fact, the academic corpus of studies and considerations on this theme is vast. An exhaustive examination of the historical and scientific deployments of the notion of antinomy cannot and should not be subject to this work. Instead, we will solely consider as relevant those academic works which contribute to the sharpening of our argument. Consequently, some thinkers such as Hegel, Marx, or Durkheim will be excluded from our investigations.

As a final remark, it should be noted that our reading of political realism, social constructivism, and post-structuralism is one of many accounts. It would be presumptuous to assume that this interpretation of these scientific texts is the ›right‹ one. Obviously, each of these readings turns out to be one possible perspective. Nevertheless, even if one of these interpretations might be rejected or criticised, the argument developed hereafter should however contribute to the understanding of the logical and semantical limitations of International Relations theorising.

B EXPOSITION

1 The Nature of Antinomies

Most scholars find themselves on a quest for theoretical statements that are free of any contradictions, and thus reflect a consistent and meaningful expression about the theorist's field of inquiry. If, by contrast, *contradictory* statements are derivable from one and the same theory, the theoretical scaffold as a whole is threatened to fail. Many scientists therefore seek to formulate scientific statements according to Aristotle's famous ›laws of thought‹. By adhering to the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of excluded middle, the three core principles of logical reasoning are steadily borne in mind to guide the making of consistent scientific statements—and how to form meaningful arguments:

> »Logic […] is concerned with form […]. An argument is *logically valid*, its conclusion is a *logical consequence* of its premises, its premises *logically imply* its conclusions—three ways of saying the same thing—if and only if the argument is an instance of a logically valid form of argument« (Burgess 2009: 2).

Despite all the author's efforts, some arguments comprise harsh contradictions, and thereby violate one or more of Aristotle's laws. If, for instance, some mad astronomer makes the absurd statement that ›the earth is a disc *and* a globe at the same time‹, we can easily see that two contradictory propositions have been

asserted. In this case, the ludicrous contradiction could simply be resolved. In other cases, any solution fails.

Paradoxes wear the mask of contradictions; they entice us to draw contradictory conclusions. Imagine, for instance, that someone had celebrated his birthday only five times by the age of 21. Although we might be surprised by this paradox at first, we soon find the satisfactory answer that this unfortunate person was born on February 29 and, thus, had the pleasure of receiving birthday presents only once in a leap year. We thus can assert that paradoxes solely reflect *apparent* contradictions and can be resolved as soon as one unveils the hidden secret ›behind‹ them.

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Antinomies cannot be resolved. No matter how long we search for a hidden fault, they remain intractable. Think about a notorious liar who states *›I am lying right now‹*. Does this liar speak the truth? If he is a liar, his statement should obviously be a lie. But if so, the statement that he is lying is a lie itself, and thus its opposite should be true—which would mean the he is speaking the truth. Surprisingly, the question we sought to answer turns out to be undecidable, and we are lost in a regress *ad infinitum*. This is an antinomy in its purest form. We face antinomies of this kind whenever we find ourselves trapped in a vicious circle of logical thinking, or if our reasoning gets caught in the ever-same contradictions, or if we, like an ouroboros biting its own tail, again and again have to start out where we just came from. Thus, in Kant's words,

> »an antinomy is a philosophical problem in which we are led to contradictory conclusions regarding a metaphysical issue based on arguments that are *prima facie* equally good« (McDonald 2008a: 44).

For some, antinomies are nothing more than a mind game or a little conundrum; and in fact, the presence of an antinomy does not affect most of our everyday thinking. However, for others, the occurrence of an antinomy can shake the very foundations of their thoughts and ideas. Philosophers, logicians, mathematicians, physicists, linguists—all of them have been challenged by devastating antinomies within their disciplines. Once antinomies arise, theories become infested with unresolvable contradictions and inconsistencies. As these contradictions are in discord with the most basic laws of thought and logic, theories suddenly threaten to collapse.

Some scholars have desperately sought to find theoretical scaffolds to block or ban the formulation or antinomic statements within their disciplines. They have erected what are called ›hierarchies‹ of concepts and languages to find a way out. Imagine, for instance, a hierarchical rule holds that every self-referring statement must be considered meaningless. Then, the liar's statement could be conceived as meaningless as well, because the liar clearly made a self-referring statement. But what about the hierarchical rule itself? Was this rule, expressed as a statement, nothing less than a meaningless statement violating its own stipulation?

Some antinomies inspired thinkers to advance and overcome established theories, as »an antinomy often leads to a thorough revision of the theory as a whole, attracts attention to new effects, and ultimately stimulates further studies« (Chernavskiĭ 1994: 205). Other theorists still see themselves helplessly faced by unresolvable contradictions which threaten their theories' plausibility and consistency. For some of them, there is no hope for salvation. Any attempt at ›solving‹ antinomies—or at least blocking them through hierarchical stipulations—again induces new contradictions. We therefore are led to believe that some antinomies are inevitably unresolvable, and that theories plagued by those inconsistencies are hard to maintain. This conjecture is the point of departure for this work.

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Our investigations on the nature of antinomies start with Aristotle's *three laws of thought* (1.1), which are violated whenever theories entail *contradictions* (1.2). While *paradoxes* (1.3) are built on alleged contradictions which can be resolved, *antinomies* (1.4) remain intractable in the light of classical logic and cannot be resolved. We then enter the discipline of logic and mathematics, in which we elaborate the trail of *antinomic destruction* (1.5) caused by those contradictory statements. After some theorists intended to ban antinomies from their fields through the erection of logical and semantical ›hierarchies‹, they nevertheless saw their undertaking fail in the face of the self-contradicting interplays between *antinomies and hierarchies* (1.6). Is the history of the nature of antinomies thus more like a drama of the *antinomy's aporia* (1.7)?

1 Overview — ›The Nature of Antinomies‹

Aristotle's Three ›Laws of Thought‹	1.1	*Aristotle's three laws of thought laid the foundation for classical logic—and therewith, for the forming of consistent statements.*
Contradictions	1.2	*Contradictions are statements which claim X and ›not X‹ at the same time. In most scientific theories, they indicate something false or inconsistent.*
Paradoxes	1.3	*Paradoxes yield alleged contradictions, which however turn out to be veridical or falsidical in the end. They thus solely reflect ›apparent‹ contradictions.*
Antinomies	1.4	*Antinomies express unsolvable contradictions characterised by their recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion. Antinomies exhibiting the logical form ›If A, then not A‹ can be of the ontological or semantical type—with the barber's antinomy and the liar's antinomy as typical paradigms.*
Antinomic Destruction	1.5	*If antinomies arise as scientific statements, they often cause the ›destruction‹ of the whole theory ›in retrospect‹. For instance, Frege's and Hilbert's logical-mathematical programmes were shattered by Russell's and Gödel's antinomy.*
Antinomies and Hierarchies	1.6	*Hierarchical solutions such as those suggested by Russell and Tarski were intended to block the occurrence of antinomies—but ended in confusion.*
Antinomy's Aporia: Hierarchy and Destruction	1.7	*Any hierarchical solution is founded on either antinomic statements or an impossible ›God's Eye View‹. Antinomies thus appear unsolvable.*

1.1 Aristotle's Three ›Laws of Thought‹

How can we make meaningful statements? As a classical cornerstone, Aristotle's famous three ›laws of thought‹ encompassing the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle clarify how we should express logical and consistent statements. These three laws remained as the almost uncontested foundation of logic and reason for more than two millennia. Critical voices were raised in modern times. But surprisingly, both those who resist accepting Aristotle's laws as well as those who advocate them as scientific ›rules of the game‹ sometimes witness a strange confusion of these laws when making meaningful statements about the world. This insight brings us closer to the understanding of contradictory statements arising within antinomies—which are, as a matter of fact, one of the most stubborn confusions in human thought.

To understand the sometimes destructive effect of antinomies in the field of logical reasoning, a look at the foundations of logic itself is inevitable. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1855 [1787]: 256) noticed that, as soon as we begin to scrutinise the concept of antinomies, we are

> »entering this region of discord and confusion, which the conflict of the laws of pure reason (antinomy) produces«.

Apparently, we have to consider these ›reasonable‹ laws that most of us would believe are guiding our way to rational conclusions and deductions to foreshadow the dramatic effects antinomies may have on logical thinking. With the laws of identity, non-contradiction, and exclusion of the middle, Aristotle formulated three principles of thought which remained almost unquestioned until the late Middle Ages in Europe—and still play an overriding role for most contemporary logicians and philosophers who take these principles for granted. The Aristotelian laws have thus been considered the underlying foundation for logical reasoning, and can be put in a very simple and generally known form. First, *A* is *A*, if two things or properties are identical. Second, *A* cannot be assumed to be *›not A‹* at the same time. Third, we must either assume *A* or *›not A‹*. Olsson (2007: 192) describes these laws in terms of truth and falseness, so that these laws

> »formalize the three principles of identity (everything is what it is), contradiction (contradictory statements cannot both be true), and excluded middle (of two contradictory statements one must be true, the other false)«.

These laws can be formulated in a more ontological and existential jargon. If something is true, it can be; if something is false, it cannot. In this sense, Russell (1998 [1912]: 40) summarises the laws of thought he denoted as ›self-evident logical principles‹ which do not need any further proof:

> »(1) *The law of identity:* ›Whatever is, is.‹
> (2) *The law of contradiction:* ›Nothing can both be and not be.‹
> (3) *The law of excluded middle:* ›Everything must either be or not be.‹«

These laws have, especially from the perspective of classical logicians, long been considered inviolable and axiomatic truths, as their validity seemed to be unquestionably irrefutable. They simply form the basis for almost all intellectual and perceptual undertakings, and this might be the reason for their widely uncontested status not only among logicians for centuries. Frege (1964 [1893]: 12), although emphasising the prescriptive nature of the Aristotelian laws, argues that

> »they are the most general laws, which prescribe universally the way in which one ought to think if one is to think at all«.

British mathematician and logician George Boole, who today stands out as founder of the formalisation of classical logic, introduced what we know and still use as Boolean algebra. These symbols are closely related to the three laws of thought, and help to express these laws formally.[3] For him, the laws of thought therefore occupy their rightful place as his work's centrepiece—or, in Boole's (1854: 11) own words:

> »It is to be remembered that it is the business of science not to create laws, but to discover them. We do not originate the constitution of our own minds, greatly as it may be in our power to modify their character. And as the laws of the human intellect do not depend upon our will, so the forms of the science, of which they constitute the basis, are in all essential regards independent of individual choices«.

a) Law of Identity

The first of the three laws of thought seems to be the most primitive and self-evident truths of logic. Simply put, the law of identity states that

A is A

showing that everything is composed of a set of particular characteristics such as unique properties or discriminable features upon which the thing's identity is built. If a thing exhibits exactly same properties another thing has, both can be assumed identical. Accordingly, one thing will be regarded as this particular thing as long as it exhibits all the properties and features necessary to its actual existence. If we compare the properties of ›the Sun King‹ and ›Louis XIV‹, we will soon conclude that they are identical. Both names stand for one and the same thing; both are *numerically* identical. Consequently, the law also shows that any statement of the form ›*A* is *A*‹ must be true.

German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Leibniz was one of the first thinkers to try to formally express this fundamental law of identity.[4] In his critical engagement with Leibniz' philosophy, Nicholas Rescher (1967: 48) translated what became popular as ›Leibniz' Law‹ in the field of classical logic:

> »Things are the same (or *identical*), one of which can be substituted in place of the other with preservation of truth«.

Consequently, two things comprised from the very same properties or features can be regarded as identical. Tarski (1995 [1941]: 55) offers a comparable definition, as he states that the identity of *x* and *y* is given »if, and only if, *x* and *y* have every property in common«. In this sense, the law of identity says something about the comparability and differentiability of things or statements. A brother is a brother, since he exhibits all the properties which allow for the category ›brother‹. So if we compare two brothers, we can easily conclude that both of them interchangeably exhibit the same properties which qualify as brother. Gottlob Frege (1964 [1893]: 129) took up this idea by claiming that

> »identity is a relation given to us in such a specific form that it is inconceivable that various forms of it should occur«.

Frege's statement is an attempt to characterise relations between things as something unique and unitary. A brother can tell his sister that they both were born to the same, identical mother. Therefore, the proper-

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[3] As classical logic was mostly intended to analyse and operate on mathematical arguments (Burgess 2009: 1), Boole's formalisation supported its applicability and practicability to an immense extent. His symbols of conjunction (∩), disjunction (∪), and negation (¬) are still used today, and may be seen as the ›short form‹ of dealing with Aristotle's laws.

[4] Fred Feldman (1970: 510) points out that it is unclear »where or how Leibniz is supposed to have stated this principle [of identity]«. Nevertheless, numerous scholars are purported to have identified passages in which Leibniz formulated the law of identity.

ty ›is a child of *X*‹ identically applies to both the brother and his sister being born to *X*. When Frege speaks about the inconceivability of *various* forms of an identical relation, its meaning should now become clear. It is impossible that the brother and the sister only partly exhibit the property ›is a child of *X*‹. Quite the contrary, they either *are* a child of *X* or they are not.[5]

b) Law of Non-Contradiction

The second law of thought is, especially in the light of rational reasoning and logical inference, as accessible as the law of identity. In its shortest form, the law of non-contradiction states that

A is not ›not A‹

and thereby reflects the insight that a thing cannot be true and false at the same time. It goes without saying that, although ›Louis XIV‹ and ›the Sun King‹ are clearly names for one and the same person, Napoléon Bonaparte was a different king. Hence, it would be false to state that ›Louis XIV is the Sun King and Napoléon Bonaparte‹. We then would maintain a contradiction.

Apparently, the law of non-contradiction closely relates to the law of identity. As shown, things are identical if they exhibit the same properties. Since these properties—in most cases expressible through predicates or propositions—contradict each other, the law of non-contradiction is broken. To this effect, Kant (1855 [1787]: 115) elaborated that »[n]o subject can have a predicate that contradicts it«. If, for instance, the statement is made that ›Mount Everest is the world's highest mountain and, at the same time, is *not* the highest mountain‹, a clear contradiction has been asserted. The predicate ›is the world's highest mountain‹ and this predicate's negation ›is *not* the world's highest mountain‹ have been uttered within one and the same statement. However, as Wald (1975: 118) notices,

> »the law of non-contradiction forbids only those judgements where the predicate is and is not available to the subject, at the same time and in the same relationship, but admits of judgements where two contradictory predicates are ascribable to the same subject«.

Imagine that a climber tells that ›Mount Everest is both the world's highest and most beautiful mountain‹. Obviously, the predicate ›is the world's highest mountain‹ is different from the predicate ›is the world's most beautiful mountain‹. In point of fact, the second predicate could also be read as some kind of negation of the first, as ›most beautiful‹ is *not* the same as ›highest‹. However, both predicates are ascribable to the object ›Mount Everest‹ coherently, as they are not standing in a contradictory relation to each other in the sense that one predicate is the other's negation—difference is different from negation. In this sense, Hood (2004: 100) attempts to further specify the law of non-contradiction:

> »The law of non-contradiction states that one cannot simultaneously predicate contrary attributes of the same subject, in the same respect, at the same time. Socrates cannot be both tall and short at the same time and in the same respect and in relation to the same individual«.

c) Law of Exclusion of the Middle

The third of the laws of thought again correlates with the laws of identity and non-contradiction. In its simplest form, the law of exclusion of the middle holds that

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[5] Nevertheless, some properties like ›moves at low speed‹ or ›is smaller than‹ admit of varieties and nuances so that relations between things exhibiting these properties may *not* be identical to each other. For instance, the property ›moves at low speed‹ could be applied to both a turtle and a snail—without suggesting that the speed of turtle and snail could be assumed to be identical.

either A or ›not A‹

so that every thing has either the property *A* or the property *›not A‹*—no middle ground between these both logical paths is thinkable, no third alternative is known in classical logic. For instance, Louis XIV is either the Sun King or not. It is simply not thinkable that, besides the predicates ›being the Sun King‹ and ›*not* being the Sun King‹, there is some value in between these options. The law of exclusion of the middle obviously alludes to the bivalence of truth and falseness—or, as Gibson (1998: 92) puts it,

> »the law of excluded middle entails the principle of bivalence, understood as the principle that there are only two truth-values, true and false«.

Hence, either a statement is true, or its opposite is true. For some authors, the law of the exclusive middle brings about an ontological commitment as well. Imagine the statement ›Mount Everest either exists or *not*‹. Clearly, as we talk of ›existence‹ in its very sense, the principle of bivalence must apply. It is either the case that something exists, or the case that something does *not* exist. Acknowledging the ontological consequences of both the law of non-contradiction and the law of the exclusive middle, Mellor (2012: 105) argues that

> »we can take the laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle to hold, where they do, as a consequence of two ontological facts: all entities must either exist or not, and cannot do both«.

Although the law of excluded middle states something about two contradictory statements—namely, of *A* and its negation *›not A‹*—, it should not be confused with the law of non-contradiction. Whereas the latter solely prescribes that a thing or a statement cannot be true and false at the same time, the law of the excluded middle states that either a thing or a statement is true or, if not, its negation is true. In this sense, the latter law guides the principle of double negation, so that the statement that ›not the negation of *B*‹ is equivalent to *B*.

It should again be underlined that the law of excluded middle states something about a statement and its negation, not its opposite. As in the case of two contradictory statements, negations simply include the prefixed word ›not‹ such as the pairs ›fast—not fast‹ or ›hot—not hot‹. In this respect, Hospers (2013: 58) remarks:

> »The Law of Exclusive Middle does not say that the car is going either fast or slow. Nor does it say that a given temperature is either hot or cold […]. Each of these is a pair of *opposites*, and there may be a middle ground between them […]. The Law of Excluded Middle does not say that there is no middle ground between opposites […]. It only says that there is no middle ground between a term and its *negative*«.

d) ›Twenty Questions‹

At the end of the 19th century, Mansfield Walsorth (1882) published a book about the rules of the popular guessing game ›Twenty Questions‹. These rules are simple. One player assumes the role of the answerer, the other players are questioners. The answerer thinks up a thing or person he wants to play, whereby the questioners are kept in the dark about the answerer's choice. Now the questioners try to guess which object or subject the answerer has chosen to be by asking questions that can be answered with either ›yes‹ or ›no‹—for instance, ›Are you a woman?‹, ›Are you yellow?‹, or ›Are you smaller than a tin can?‹. If the questioners posed twenty questions without guessing what the answerer is, they lost.

If the questioners have understood the Aristotelian laws of thought, it's an easier match for them. Aristotle found one of the most fundamental connections between the way we think about the world and how we *logically* and *meaningfully* make statements about this world. ›Twenty Questions‹ is about making such

statements. The game builds on the validity of the laws of identity, non-contradiction, and excluded middle. Imagine the answerer has chosen the role ›Marie Curie‹. If a questioner asks whether the answerer is a chemist, the answer must be ›yes‹ due to the law of identity. If the proposition ›A chemist is a person who analyses the structure of substances‹ is true, then we can conclude that Marie Curie is a person who exhibited the very same properties mentioned, and therefore could correctly be called a chemist. If, secondly, the question is raised whether the answerer really existed, the answer must be ›yes‹ as well. Although Marie Curie died in 1934, she actually existed as a real person; and the law of non-contradiction states that a subject or an object cannot be both existent and non-existent at the same time. If, thirdly, a questioner asks whether the answerer had lived before 1800, the answer must be ›no‹. Now the law of the excluded middle prescribes that if a statement is false, its negation must be true. Hence, if the answerer did not live before 1800, she must have been born after that date—because this conclusion implies the statement's negation. Now, this game's rules are easily explained, and Walsorth surely needed no sorcery to write his book on how ›Twenty Questions‹ works. It, roughly speaking, was about *making meaningful statements* about something.

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›Twenty Questions‹ illustrates in a simple way the profound and basic function of the Aristotelian laws for human reasoning and the world we think we live in. This is why players of the game trust in the Aristotelian laws as »first ›true‹ logic« (Thayer-Bacon 2000: 24) or »standard logic« (Gamut 1991: 156). Without them, neither questioner nor answerer could decide »what is true or false, right or wrong« (Olsson 2007: 192). Aristotle's laws thus determine how we comprehend and express statements in a logical and meaningful way. They frame our questions, and they may also limit our answers insofar as

> »the three laws of reason frame a binary universe and instruct anyone living in it to define her terms clearly and to use them consistently in a non-contradictory fashion« (Lawless 2005: 151).

To understand the philosophy of science of the 20th century means to understand the academic discourse being held about the Aristotelian laws and its meaning and validity for making scientific statements. Some attempted to play ›Twenty Questions‹ with regard to any scientific problem. They tried to show that most scientific statements can be built on the logical laws underlying this game. Others intended to show that the game's preconditions are solely valid as rules for this very game, and that the laws of definite ›yesses‹ and ›nos‹ have no validity as soon as one leaves the game table. But who is right? Who knows if Aristotle's laws are the only way of making meaningful scientific statements?

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The laws by which ›Twenty Questions‹ is played have, although used for more than two thousand years, also been questioned. Alternative laws were proposed which violate the doctrines of Aristotle's ›classical logic‹[6]. Some logicians have attacked his second law of non-contradiction which seemed to have been set in stone for over two millennia.[7] Others argued that his third law of excluded middle seemed to suffer the very same fate.[8] And one, thus, may rightly wonder if we can still adhere to those laws today—or rather

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[6] Among others, approaches such temporal, conditional, relevantistic, or modal logic have been popularised as ›non-classical logic‹ by Burgess (2009), Gamut (1991: 156–194), Haack (1974), or Priest (2008)—thereby leading some scholars to speak of a »plurality of logics« (Jacquette 2007a: 5) and approaches »rivalling classical logic« (Haack 1974: xi). Beside these new approaches, Abel (1976: 52–55) discusses more general criticisms of Aristotle's laws.

[7] As Priest and Beall (2004) nicely sketch, Aristotle's second law of non-contradiction came under fire from various angles. For proponents of *paraconsistent logic* and *dialetheism*, the ›principle of explosion‹ holding that »the inference from something that can never be true to an arbitrary statement is always valid« (Kapsner 2014: 2) is refused. Contradictions are thus sometimes considered true (Priest 1998b: 416, 2008: 75).

[8] Aristotle's third law of excluded middle has also given cause for criticism. Aristotle himself made his ›sea battle argument‹ by asking whether it is true to state that ›There is a sea battle tomorrow‹. Because »whatever happens could not possibly happen

scrutinise their »fundamental status« (Copi, Cohen 1990: 294). We will not answer these questions, and not dare to take any position in these debates. Instead, we will emphasise solely the narrowness with which these criticisms have been formulated. Most of the rejections in the history of non-classical logic were motivated by requirements of »specific topics« (Akama 1997: 3); and hardly anyone has, until now, challenged Aristotle's laws in a universal way. The reason is simple. A rejection of Aristotle's laws and the *rules* of ›Twenty Questions‹—not to be confused with the refusal of the *game* as such—opens the door to arbitrariness and logical despotism, so that »the whole foundation of logic would […] collapse« (Lawless 2005: 149). It therefore seems that the three laws strongly determine any undertaking of understanding, perception, or knowledge something:

> »[I]t is physically impossible to make a left shoe into a right shoe by turning it over through a fourth dimension. But crystallographers, topologists and philosophers can coherently study this kind of mirror reversal. They are interested in a wider domain of possibility. Logic is at the limit of this scale of possibility. Consequently, logical impossibilities are maximally coercive. Even the skeptic is careful to keep his scenarios within the bounds of logical law« (Sorensen 2002: 132).

This carefulness should especially be maintained as we will soon approach the notion of antinomies against the background of Aristotle's laws. As antinomic statements first and foremost should be examined with regard to his law on non-contradiction, a final remark has to be made for those who critically challenge this law's validity. In this vein, there is an anecdote is being told about the famous logician Saul Kripke and the debates about the law of non-contradiction's significance in the light of modern philosophy:

> »In a meeting of faculty from other departments, several were trying to argue that the law of noncontradiction should be done away with, as it was a relic of male-dominated, Western, polarizing thinking. Kripke replied, ›Good, let's get rid of it. Then we can keep it too‹« (DeWeese, Moreland 2005: 13).

Kripke argued that any attempt to put a question mark on the second of Aristotle's law would remain a futile effort because of the inevitable consequence of getting caught up in contradictions itself. Several authors similarly admit the impossibility of breaking the law and therefore disagree with its critics' suggestions to limit the law and allow for the truth value ›both true *and* false‹:

> »Attempts to break the law of non-contradiction are themselves contradictions, and they are obviously and in all circumstances wrong« (Baggini, Fosl 2010: 40).

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Should we play the ›game of science‹ in the way Walsorth's quiz is being played? Can we, accordingly, apply Aristotle's simple laws to make meaningful scientific statements about the world? Most natural scientists play by the rules of ›Twenty Questions‹ within their discipline. Some scientists in the humanities do not. In natural science, most questions at stake can be answered with a simple ›yes‹ or ›no‹. In the humanities, some questioners have recognised that they will not solve their problems with such clear answers. We will become familiar with both sorts of theories in the humanities—just to witness how advocates *and* opponents of the game are faced with insurmountable obstacles. No matter if they play by the rules of

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except as it does« (Smith 1995: 46), Aristotle's third law was questioned by scholars who concluded that »that the principle of bivalence […] involves an undesirable commitment to fatalism« (Humberstone 1998: 84). Hence, Polish logician Jan Łukasiewicz (1967 [1930]: 53) proposed the introduction of the third truth value ›possible‹ for propositions which are »at the moment neither true nor false and must possess a third value«, and therewith answered Aristotle's question about the future sea battle. From a mathematical standpoint, Luitzen Brower (1967: 491) also advocated »[t]he rejection of the thoughtless use of the logical principle of excluded middle«, thereby giving rise to intuitionistic logic. Brouwer did not maintain the values ›true‹ and ›false‹, so that propositions and their contradictories are solely assumed ›verifiable‹. Thus, a class remains which is »syntactically correct, but neither verifiable nor the contradictories of verifiable propositions« (Russell 2013 [1940]: 275).

›Twenty Questions‹ or not, those schools of thought we elaborate seem to be plagued by the destructive force of an unresolvable form of contradiction.

The first group of theorists willing to play by the game's logical rules however witnessed inconsistencies and insoluble stalemates even when these simple rules were obeyed in the best way possible. The insight that the underlying Aristotelian rules of ›Twenty Questions‹, as alluringly simple as they may seem for any scientific description, might not be used as a foundation of these school's philosophical underpinning often destroyed the hopes of whole academic generations in some fields. And even the other group of theorists who refused to play the logical game in their scientific field appear to have suffered the same fate. Soon, they saw that the game's ›binary universe‹ that they rejected appeared to be an inescapable cage—though not in its traditional understanding. Although these theorists declared themselves free from the dictate of logic, from logocentrism's laws of binary oppositions, or from the necessity of thinking in terms of truth and falseness—they all seem to get caught up again by the inevitability of the logical mechanism guiding ›Twenty Questions‹. After all, they also saw themselves faced with unresolvable antinomies. All these countless theorists—among them, Critical Theorists as their spearhead—who tried to remove logic from their philosophical considerations, seemed to fail as they all »had to cast its arguments in Logic's terms« (Anderson *et al.* 1986: 129). To understand why both proponents and opponents of ›Twenty Questions‹ are haunted by a confusion in the logical laws they either comply with or intend to discard, we will turn our attention to *how* these logical perplexities arise. This question brings us closer to the idea of ›contradictions‹, which is commonly believed to reflect a violation of Aristotle's laws; and, as the name suggests, alludes especially to the breaking of the second law of non-contradiction.

1.2 Contradictions

Whenever we face a ›contradiction‹, the absurd statement is made that an affirmative proposition and its negation are simultaneously maintained as true. Such a statement obviously violates Aristotle's laws of thought. If a scientist faces such a contradictory statement within his discipline, the school of thought she advocates undergoes scrutiny in most cases. Hence, for most—but not all—scholars, the occurrence of a contradiction poses a serious pitfall in developing a consistent, non-contradictory theory. Can we thus conclude that contradictory statements yielded by a scientific theory are bad omens for the theoretical scaffold as such?

French philosopher René Descartes (2000 [1649]: 295) stated that »it implies a contradiction that there should be atoms which we conceive as both extended and indivisible«. If an atom is extended, it should be divisible, because an extended thing consists of mass or space which again is supposed to be divisible theoretically. Roughly speaking, the property ›is extended‹ can be read as the negation of the property ›is indivisible‹, so that a thing should either exhibit one or another property. For Descartes, a statement expressing both opposite propositions must inevitably be held as a harsh contradiction. If the simple statement is made that

x is A and x is ›not A‹

at the same time, we face a *contradiction*. Such a contradiction is regarded as false in most theories built on classical logic, as one proposition's truth should logically implicate its counterpart's falsity. Hence, both propositions are usually assumed to be incompatible and mutually exclusive. We then feel committed to the law of non-contradiction formulated by Aristotle ([1857]: 87) who stated that

> »it is impossible for the same inquirer to suppose that at the same time the same things should be and not be«.

Usually, contradictory statements are signs of falseness—or, if not, at least cues of suspicion that something might be wrong. We surely would not trust a mathematician who stated that ›1 = 1, and 1 = 2‹. Nor would we be convinced by an astronomer claiming that ›The earth is round, and the earth is flat‹. In both cases, we would call our counterpart's attention to the dilemma that his conjugated propositions are contradictory and therefore false. If ›1 = 1‹, we must conclude that ›1 ≠ 2‹. If the earth is round, it cannot be flat. We hence can generally assume that if a proposition is true, its negation must be false. Contrarily, if a proposition is false, its negation must be true. But within a contradictory statement, both a proposition *and* its negation are assumed to be true; and therewith, the contradiction as such is logically false. Again, this is why so many scholars hold Aristotle's second law of non-contradiction as the foundation of meaningful statements.

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The presence of contradictions has always encouraged scientists and explorers to set out on new quests for clarity and truth. The need to resolve contradictory statements within scientific programs prompted scientists in all areas to challenge conventional theories or models. In 1887, Albert Michelson and Edward Morley detected that the speed of light is *not* relative to the observer's speed, but constant everywhere in the universe. This observation contravened Isaac Newton's prevailing doctrines of classical mechanics, whereupon the speed of light was relative to the preferred inertial system. As an *experimentum crucis*, Michelson and Morley's results led to a harsh contradiction in classical physics at that time. The Newtonian proposition ›The speed of light is always relative‹ and the opposite proposition ›The speed of light is always constant‹ could obviously not be held true at the same time. With his idea of special relativity, Einstein overcame this contradiction in 1905, and laid a new foundation for making meaningful, consistent statements in physics.

Since a contradiction arises, theories or theoretical statements ›behind‹ the contradiction's conflicting propositions are challenged. Usually, we expect a theoretical framework to allow for deriving statements and assumptions about something in accordance with Aristotle's laws; and thus, a contradiction is generally taken as a bad omen for a faulty or misled theory which has to be rehabilitated or discarded. For instance, Einstein rejected the Newtonian system of classical mechanics, from which the proposition ›The speed of light is always relative‹ had been derived. In Einstein's own theory, this proposition could not be deduced anymore.

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Is science a mere search for non-contradictory statements? Think about the ambitious programme of modern physicists' search for a ›Theory of Everything‹ to unify all the contradicting physical theories of our times. On the ground of such a final theory, all natural phenomena could be described and predicted in the form of consistent statements. Once established by a gifted physicist, the theory's laws and propositions would not lead to any contradiction; otherwise, the theory *itself* would be considered contradictory. Regardless of this theory's seriousness, it however shows some theorists' understanding of contradictory statements as an indication of something false or wrong in the first place. Following this assumption, French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (2007 [1670]: 128) pointed out that these contradictions would be held as »a bad sign of truth«. To him, contradictory statements touched a theoretical system's inconsistency and insufficiency—and these falsities would prompt scientists to revisit their putative theories, laws, or propositions. He seemingly knew about the devastating effects of contradictions that appear to be or, even worse, actually *are* irresolvable in a given system of thought.

To be candid about it, we will take a similar course and regard the occurrence of contradictions as serious pitfalls for the theories and theoretical schools we will evaluate. However, as we will also see, those contradictions can arise in several forms. Some may turn out to be resolvable, others impossible to overcome. With the latter form having our undivided attention, we now are introduced to how these contradictions seem to arise in the form of paradoxes and, after that, in the form of antinomies. Thereby, Pascal's bad premonition about the destructive force of contradictions was, among others, shared by philosopher and logician Willard Quine (1962: 84) who remarked that contradictory statements in the form of what many describe as ›paradoxes‹ have similar effects on the way we theorise and develop theoretical convictions:

> »More than once in history the discovery of paradox has been the occasion for major reconstruction at the foundations of thought«.

1.3 Paradoxes[9]

A paradoxical statement entails an apparent contradiction between one or more propositions and the conclusion. Quine differentiates between two types of paradoxes. ›Veridical‹ paradoxes are comprised of true propositions and a true conclusion, whereas ›falsidical‹ paradoxes build on either false propositions or a false or self-contradictory conclusion. Notwithstanding their absurdity or mysteriousness, both types of paradoxes can eventually be resolved by carefully examining the paradoxes' inner composition; and therewith, what at first appeared as contradiction turns out as flawed reasoning or deceptive fallacy in the end.

Paradoxes are strange statements that seem to contradict themselves, but nevertheless can be resolved. Thus, paradoxes contain solely an *apparent* contradiction by ›pretending‹ an alleged undecidability between a claim and its opposite stated as paradoxical statement. Other than ›real‹ contradictions which reflect a clear and unambiguous statement combining two incompatible propositions such as ›*A*‹ and ›not *A*‹, paradoxes seem plausible and consistent at first sight, but then turn out to reflect an apparent contradiction. Charles Chihara (1979: 590) thus defines a paradox by alluding to the ›apparent‹ character of its parts insofar as

> »an argument that begins with premises that appear to be clearly true, that proceeds according to inference rules that appear to be valid, but that ends in contradiction«.

Although we consider this contradiction as apparent as well, we can easily see how paradoxical statements seemingly violate one or more of Aristotle's laws of thought. If a reader is faced with a paradox, she applies these Aristotelian principles by following all derivable inference rules and all laws of reason and logic. But nonetheless, her quest seems doomed to failure. Something appears to go wrong, and she finds herself trapped in a strange contradiction. The reader becomes victim to the paradox' deceitful semblance at first. Once she discovers the hidden fallacy that led to the apparent contradiction, a sudden solution catches her eye. Hence, Nicholas Rescher (2001: xxi) recognised the mere *apparent* character of contradictions underlying paradoxes, so that his definition alludes to the

[9] In this work, Quine's (1962) delineation of paradoxes will be stressed which however differs from a variety of alternative definitions such as Sorensen (2003: 3 ff.), Mackie (1973: 7 f.), Matthews (1999: 126 ff.), Cargile (2002: 105 ff.), Parsons (1974: 381), Lazerowitz (2013 [1968]: 19), Deleuze (1994 [1968]: 286, 1990 [1969]: 18), Chang (2013: 1), whereas Rescher's (2001: 6), Chihara's (1979: 590), and Sainsbury's (1995 [1987]: 1) definitions come closest to Quine's understanding. The hereafter presented notion of paradoxes has been selected with respect to a sharp demarcation of antinomies. As a matter of fact, paradoxes are often conflated with antinomies. Especially in the anglophone world, both notions are to a large part used synonymously. In this regard, Łukowski (2011: 2) claims that »[i]n a narrower sense, a paradox is an antinomy«. This definition will not be pursued, as paradoxes will be distinguished from antinomies in terms of their solvability.

> »apparently untenable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises«.

This notion of paradoxes resembles Sainsbury's (1995 [1987]: 1) famous understanding, as an apparent—as opposed to a ›real‹ or factual—contradiction veils some hidden mistake or premise causing the paradoxical statement. For instance, consider the popular ›twin paradox‹ debated after Einstein's presentation of his theory of special relativity. Einstein claimed that, if one twin travels at almost the speed of light through space while the other remains on earth, the latter will age more than the first who, after a while, returns back to earth. Paradoxically, each twin sees the other moving according to his own inertial system; and, according to Einstein's postulate, thus also sees the other aging faster: for each twin, the other's time passes more slowly than one's own. One twin experiences ›more‹ time relatively to the other, and appears to grow older faster. However, the paradoxical effect comes from an incorrect interpretation of the principle of simultaneity which has to be understood in relativistic terms as well.[10] We can thus conclude that the twin paradox »is not really paradoxical« (Callender 2011: 8). From the paradox's proposition that one twin sees the other aging faster and *vice versa*, the paradoxical statement was derived that one twin should expect the other to be older than himself and *vice versa* simultaneously. More precisely, the contradiction ›twin *A* is older than twin *B*, and twin *B* is older than twin *A*‹ is being expressed as the paradox' conclusion. However, as briefly suggested, this conclusion is false, as it rests on false assumptions about the principle of simultaneity. We were therefore duped by an apparent contradiction, not a ›real‹ one.

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Now that we see paradoxical statements as compounded from one or more apparently true propositions which lead to an apparent contradictory conclusion, a central logical question is at stake: can paradoxes as such be resolved as either true or false? As shown, the twin paradox turned out to be false or ›unreal‹, because its conclusion was based on a misconception. We can hence assume that paradoxes might be broken down into two types; with the first relating to paradoxes that are simply based on false premises or impossible conclusions, and the latter to these paradoxes that can be resolved as true in a sense.

Philosopher and logician Willard Van Orman Quine (1962) suggested a differentiation between *veridical* and *falsidical* paradoxes. The first type designates paradoxical statements which consist of true propositions and a true conclusion. Quine illustrated the form of veridical paradoxes by introducing the puzzle of Frederic, the protagonist of ›The Pirates of Penzance‹. At the age of 21, Frederic had celebrated his birthday only five times. Although this fact seems to depict a paradox, its solution becomes obvious through a simple consideration. Frederic was born at February 29, and this circumstance leads to the conclusion that he only celebrates once every leap year. Hence, Frederic had his last birthday at the age of 20, when he celebrated for the fifth time. For Quine, the puzzle of Frederic is clearly a veridical paradox. Admittedly, the point of departure seems somewhat absurd; there should be no person living on this earth who is not x years old on his x^{th} birthday, but both the premise and the conclusion of Frederic's case are however unambiguously true. Above all, the argument that Frederic's birthday is on February 29 connects both the premise and the conclusion in a meaningful, logical way. Quine (1962: 84) argues that, in this respect, various paradoxes may appear as impossible absurdities; but as soon as a sustaining argument ›behind‹ this absurdity can be found, all parts and premises of the alleged paradox make sense again. There's nothing illogical or confusing about it anymore, so that veridical paradoxes can be seen as »lines of reasoning that are eventually vindicated« (Sorensen 2003: 351).

[10] Kennedy (2014 [2003]: 210 ff.) gives a plain introduction on Einstein's thoughts about the twin paradox on which our logical considerations rest.

The second group of paradoxes are ›falsidical‹, as either their propositions or their conclusion turn out to be false or self-contradictory. As example, Quine (1962: 85) mentions De Morgan's argument for an alleged proof that ›2 = 1‹:

> »Let $x = 1$. Then $x^2 = x$. So $x^2 - 1 = x - 1$. Dividing both sides by $x - 1$, we conclude that $x + 1 = 1$; that is, since $x = 1$, $2 = 1$. The fallacy comes in the division by $x - 1$, which is 0«.

Other than veridical paradoxes, a falsidical one always entails a false component. In the above example, the operation of dividing both arguments of the equation through ›$x - 1$‹—which, in this case, was ›0‹—led to the fallacy of the argument. What makes De Morgan's argument that ›2 = 1‹ a falsidical paradox is the simple fact that it is mathematically false, although it appears to be true. The falsity stems from the somewhat hidden division by zero; although at a first glance, all operations that lead to the alleged equation's solution seemed correct. The reader remains convinced that the contradiction he faces is based on mathematical calculations, until he finally notices the mentioned mistake. Similarly, the twin paradox can now be classified as falsidical, as it at first suggests a physical necessity, but then can be explained in a consistent, non-contradictory way.

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Both Frederic's birthday puzzle and De Morgan's argument turned out to be more or less simple mental challenges. After having taken into account the existence of leap years in Frederic's case and the consequences of dividing a mathematical argument by zero in De Morgan's case, both paradoxical statements turned out to be either true or false, and thus could be easily categorised as either veridical or falsidical. Roughly speaking, there always was an unambiguous answer to be found which lifted the strange secret surrounding the paradox. And thus, the contradictions apparently comprised in paradoxes turned out to be nothing more than logical flashes in the pan. But what if such contradictions cannot be solved in this way? What if there is no secret to be uncovered? What if the contradiction reflected in a theoretical statement remains indissoluble? By thinking about ›antinomies‹, we now learn about statements comprised of two contradictory parts which necessarily follow from each other—and make any solution impossible.

1.4 Antinomies

Other than veridical or falsidical paradoxes, antinomic statements cannot be resolved. Even more seriously, the contradictory statements expressed within an antinomy derive logically from each other: the truth of X implies the truth of its opposite ›non-X‹, and vice versa. A first attempt at defining antinomies unveils three characteristics—the ›recursive form‹ of a statement, a ›critical disposition‹ being expressed, and a resulting ›circular inversion‹. We then arrive at an antinomy's logical form which, strangely enough, yields that ›If X is true, then X is false‹. Ramsey differentiates between two classes of antinomies, whereby ›ontological‹ antinomies occur in formal systems compounded of entities, classes and concepts, and ›semantical‹ antinomies following from statements containing semantical resources such as truth, meaning, or interpretative rules.

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A statement comprised of two conflicting propositions is called ›antinomy‹, if the contradiction at hand cannot be resolved as simple veridical or falsidical paradox. Strangely enough, contradictions entailed in antinomic statements mutually define each other; and no matter how hard we try to find the lapse of thought we may have made, an error in our logical deduction and inference, or some easily overlooked mistake—we will never arrive at a solution in the way we found answers to the paradoxes of Frederic's birthday or De Morgan's argument. Quine (1962: 89) has nicely sketched this distinction between veridical or falsidical paradoxes on the one hand and antinomies at the other:

> »A veridical paradox packs a surprise, but the surprise quickly dissipates itself as we ponder the proof. A falsidical paradox packs a surprise, but it is seen as a false alarm when we solve the underlying fallacy. An antinomy, however, packs a surprise that can be accommodated by nothing less than a repudiation of part of our conceptual heritage«.

a) A Tripartite Definition

What is an antinomy? Admittedly, any attempt to give a precise and unambiguous answer is doomed to failure simply due to the differing uses of this notion, its various occurrences in different academic fields, and the multiplicity of interpretations and explanations for this phenomenon. We therefore limit our answer in order to take into account these imponderabilities, and instead put forward a wider approach on disambiguating the notion antinomy. Hence, we now are introduced to a rough description going back to Kant's deployment of the idea, from which we develop a tripartite definition. Exposing its *recursive form*, the entailed *critical disposition*, and the resulting *circular inversion* as parts inherent in any antinomic statement, we pave the way for a definition of antinomies refining it later for the development of the ›antinomic figure‹[11].

To Kant, antinomies expose a contradiction of the ›laws of pure reason‹, even though these laws were not applied illogically or inconsistently when answering particular questions. The way Kant approached antinomic statements might thus have been as astonishing as for those who see Aristotle's laws of thought shattering in the face of an unresolvable antinomy. Indeed, Kant soon realised that he could not solve these contradictions as veridical or falsidical paradoxes, and thus attached great importance to them with regard to the constitution of human reason. And although his popular ›antinomies of pure reason‹ might not have had the same vigour as the antinomies we soon will learn about, his antinomic statement about space and time nevertheless provides a good starting point for developing our first definitory remarks. Kant's antinomy resembles one of mankind's oldest problems, which some hundred years earlier was mentioned by French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (2007 [1670]: 27) while pondering the phenomenon of infinity:

> »He who regards himself in this light will be afraid of himself, and observing himself sustained in the body given him by nature between those abysses of Infinite and Nothing, will tremble at the sight of these marvels; and I think that, as his curiosity changes into admiration, he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence than to examine them with presumption«.

Perhaps inspired by these words, Kant (1855 [1787]: 266) presented the well-known thesis that »[t]he world has a beginning in time, and is also limited in regard to space«. This statement seems fully supported by the laws of pure reason, and, for the time being, no logical inconsistency is derivable. There is no reason to regard Kant's thesis as illogical or disputable, and we can fairly make the statement that

The world has a beginning in time and limits in space.

It seems that the statement expresses one of the necessary truths of humans living in this world, and that a denial of its claim would be tantamount to doubting the strongholds of human reasoning. However, Kant (1855 [1787]: 266) also formulated this statement's antithesis by indicating that »[t]he world has no begin-

[11] The description of the ›antinomic figure‹ is to be carried out soon (B, 3.1), and then be used as theoretical scaffold for all further investigations. We therefore forgo any detailed debate about the tripartite definition at this point, and instead pare down to a brief introduction of these three parts inherent in any antinomic statement.

ning, and no limits in space, but is, in relation both to time and space, infinite«. Again, the latter statement as such is derivable through the laws of pure reason, and we also should accept the antithetic statement that

The world has no beginning in time and no limits in space.

Curiously, although both thetic and antithetic statement contradict each other, we neither can justify one nor the other. Once we think about how time and space correspond to the world we live in, both statements appears in accordance with the laws of pure reason. For us as rational thinkers, his first statement appears as valid and legitimate as the contradictory second one; and therewith, we face a contradiction which cannot be resolved:

> »Thus in applying the notions of division of space and time in a systematic way […], we seem driven by our understanding of these concepts to make two utterly unreconcilable assertions, which both seem equally well founded« (Taylor 1975: 228).

For our further considerations, we will neither follow Kant's transcendental philosophical conclusions nor any novel physical insights on the notions of time and space to solve his antinomy. We instead treat Kant's antinomy as a mere example of how particular statements can elicit antinomic reasoning in the first place, and thus assume the equal justification of both contradictory statements to now develop a tripartite definition of the notion of antinomies.

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The first characteristic obviously inherent in Kant's antinomy is reflected by its *recursive form*. Borrowed from the study of formal systems, the notion of recursion thereby relates to »a function of itself‹, a paradoxical way of stating things« (Monin 2003: 44). If a statement entails or is itself built on a recursive form, something is defined in terms of itself. In some similar cases, we can speak of self-reference as well. However, the idea of recursion is being deployed hereafter to emphasise its literal meaning of ›repeatedly running backward‹ or ›referring back‹. We thereby accept that our notion of recursion obviously differs from its use in mathematics and computer science.[12]

In the case of Kant's antinomy, we easily witness the recursive form of both the thetic and antithetic statement.[13] His antinomy circles around the question of whether the world as a whole—or, better, as a totality—can be seen *within* finite limits of time and space or as *beyond* infinite time and space. Kant thereby argues that to suppose the world a total »successive synthesis of our understanding of things« (Limnatis 2008: 52), it must be built *within* time and space limits. How else could be grasp an infinite regress of temporal states preceding the ›now‹? How else could the totality of the space be comprehensible? On the other hand, he realises »that the postulation of a finite cosmos requires positing a premundane empty time and space« (Grier 2010: 201). Hence, the definition of the ›world as a totality‹ is based on a recursive definition of Kant's thesis and antithesis:

> »A concept of totality is again formed and this new totality is again used as an element. This conflict between concluding and beginning anew, between forming a totality and using this totality as a new element, is the actual ground of the antinomy […]. Kant saw quite clearly that antinomies rest on this antithesis between making a conclusion and going beyond the conclusion« (Martin 1955: 55).

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[12] This definition is neither completely different from its use as »recursive function« (Fejer, Simovici 1991: 215) in computer science, nor—as we will carry out in its use as informal description (B, 3.1a)—absolutely identical.

[13] Kant admittedly presents the impossibility of both thesis and antithesis as two independent proofs by *reduction ad absurdum* (Limnatis 2008: 52). However, the dismissal of the thesis is logically tied to the dismissal of the antithesis. We therefore treat the definitions presented in thesis and antithesis as mutually dependent.

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The second characteristic possessed by Kant's antinomy is its *critical disposition*. At first, a disposition might be seen as what logicians would name a ›proposition‹ or ›propositional function‹, or, more precisely, the »intension of a sentence« (Chapman 2000: 72). In its critical form, we can understand a disposition as the deployment of two oppositional counterparts or propositions within an antinomic statement. Think about Aristotle's law of non-contradiction which requires that no thing can be both *A* and ›not *A*‹. Hence, a critical disposition reflects the assumption of a negation or contradictory opposite in the sense of claiming ›not *A*‹—in contrast its positive complement.

In Kant's statements, we can easily discover a critical disposition. His antinomy is built on the opposition of ›finite‹ and ›infinite‹ which, in a similar way, could be exposed as the constellation of totality and limits—or, in his original words as ›has a beginning in time and space‹ and ›has *not* a beginning in time and space‹. Kant (1855 [1787]: 314) himself describes this opposition which he later attempts to resolve as »dialectical« as the assumption that

> »the world is either infinite in extension, or it is not infinite […], and if the former proposition is false, its contradictory opposite […] must be true«.

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The third characteristic immanent in Kant's antinomy is the principle of *circular inversion*, which reflects the strange interplay between the first two parts of an antinomic statement—namely, a statement's recursive form and the comprised critical disposition. If the disposition describes its own statement by virtue of the recursive, sometimes self-referent form, a peculiar ›back and forth‹ between two signs must be concluded. It then remains undecidable whether the statement itself accords to its claimed disposition—for instance, if the statement is true or false, meaningful or meaningless, or ›does something‹ or ›does not something‹.

Kant's antinomy adheres to the principle of circular inversion. He maintains that if the world is seen *as a totality*, it must adhere to the one of the disposition's two propositions ›is finite‹ or ›is *not* finite‹. As the notion ›world as totality‹ is defined recursively, this assignment to one of the propositions turns out undecidable. Again, to think of something within limits, human reason always requires something *beyond* these limits. Otherwise, the conception of ›limit‹ would make no sense at all. But then, by grasping the notion of ›the world as a totality‹, we would have to admit the infinity of time and space. Both the recursive form and the critical disposition inherent in Kant's antinomy now elicit the back and forth between two contradictory propositions we denote as circular inversion. *A* requires *B*, while *B* requires *A*; or, a whole requires limits, while limits require the whole. In this sense, the one-sided assumption of »the world being either infinite or finite« (Basterra 2015: 27) impedes any third answer, and inevitably leads to the vicious circle of Kant's antinomy.

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The tripartite architecture of Kant's antinomy of time and space can be seen more easily to illustrate its circular nexus of two equally justified propositions within one statement. Imagine an archivist who wants to index every finished book of the world and seal it, so that he can be sure that no one would ever change the book's contents in order to consider the books as ›factually‹ finished. Whenever a finished book has been sealed, the archivist issues the book with a consecutive number. After years of work, the archivist seals the last finished book he found in this world. But once he attempts to note down the last consecutive number for this last book, he surprisingly recognises an irresolvable dilemma. To his misfortune, he himself used a book to list all the consecutive numbers. Now that he apparently finished this collection in form of the ›book of all books‹, he, by definition, also would have to seal this book *itself*. But what would happen if he did so? He would either have to admit that by sealing the book, the list of con-

secutive numbers instantly became incomplete. The list *inside* the book would not entail the ›real last‹ number of the book *itself*. If he however *not* sealed the book, it would not serve its purpose of containing a *complete* list in the sense of a finished book. Both Kant's antinomy and its ›archivist example‹ circle around similar questions. Is the book of all books part of its own numeration? Are the limits of time and space part of the whole? In both cases, an answer seems impossible. Both propositions of each statement seem to reciprocally justify each other in the same way, and thus trigger an infinite circle of reasoning.

As in Kant's antinomy, the archivist's example possesses the characteristics of recursive form, critical opposition, and circular inversion. The recursive definition of the book of all books depends on itself. The book can solely be regarded as finished, if it itself is sealed and contains itself at the same time. The critical disposition is exposed through the propositions ›sealed and numbered‹ and ›*not* sealed and numbered‹, which also can be understood as ›finished‹ and ›*not* finished‹. The circular inversion arises if the critical disposition is applied to itself through the recursive definition; that is, if we ask whether the book of all books can itself *be* finished and sealed according to its own definition. The questions for Kant and the archivist are quite similar. Does the book of all books contain its own number? Does the totality of the ›world as a whole‹ contain its own limits?

The tripartite definition of ›antinomy‹ is founded on the interplay between recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion. Hence, we must concede that our elaboration of Kant's antinomy was—at least to some extent—presented in an unbalanced and one-sided way for the sake of our argument. We left aside several interpretations and clarifications which, to some scholars, lead to an answer or solution to Kant's puzzle.[14] But we did so without remorse, as we were interested solely in how antinomic statements are composed so that a solution becomes *impossible*, and thus treated Kant's antinomy as genuine by ignoring how a reinterpretation of underlying concepts or meanings *could* be used as remedy. Hence, even though modern physicists may offer simple solutions to the questions of time and space, the questions inherent in the antinomic statement composed of the presented tripartite characterisation is not decidable in this way. We were, at this point, solely interested in the *form* of such statements, not in what they say about the world. And we are not alone with this ambition. With the famous barber's and liar's antinomy now being introduced, two paradigmatic antinomic statements are illuminated that posed serious dilemmas in different academic disciplines—not because of *what* they stated, but *how* their statements were formed.

b) Two Paradigms

The first of these two antinomies was postulated by the mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell. After he found a fundamental antinomy within naïve set theory in 1902, Bertrand Russell—who we also know as a politically active philosopher (Russell 2010 [1959])—published a simple illustration of his discovery which, sixteen years later, became widely known as the ›barber paradox‹[15]:

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[14] In this sense, Kant (1855 [1787]: 316) himself suggests that we should reject the idea »that the world […] is a thing in itself«. This assumption paves the way for a solution to the antinomy in question. We however solely turn our attention to the way antinomies are being composed as unresolvable puzzles, and therefore focus on the definitive characteristics preventing any solution. In this sense, Kant's antinomy is indeed unresolvable if we regard the idea of ›the world as a whole‹ as a conceptual entity—which is, as we will see, a paradigm for various unresolvable antinomies.

[15] Throughout this work, the barber's paradox will be referred to, in most cases, as an antinomy synonymously with the term ›barber's antinomy‹. As will be shown (B, 1.4b), Russell created the barber's paradox for purposes of illustration. The original problem was in fact a set-theoretical one that, at that time, shook mathematics to its foundations. But, as in »Russell's antinomy there is more than a hint of the paradox of the barber« (Quine 1962: 11). The distinction between the original antinomy and its paradoxical illustration will not be maintained in most cases. If we, hence, refer to the barber's paradox in the further course of

> »You can define the barber as ›one who shaves all those, and those only, who do not shave themselves‹. The question is, does the barber shave himself?« (Russell 1986 [1918]: 228).

We presumably fail in an attempt to find a comprehensible answer to Russell's question. Since we assume that there is only one barber in the village and that everyone in this town keeps himself shaven, two possible options for each villager including the barber are thinkable. In this village, either one shaves himself or one gets shaved by the barber. For everyone except the barber, we can unambiguously conclude that those villagers who do not shave themselves *must* be shaved by the barber. If we now are to decide whether the barber shaves himself or not, we should again think about the distinction made in the ›barber's statement‹ that

The barber shaves all those who do not shave themselves.

What about the barber himself? If he shaves himself, he can impossibly be the barber, as the barber shaves only those who do *not* shave themselves. But if he, as a consequence, does not shave himself, he must by definition be shaved by the barber—which means that he must shave himself. We then can ascertain that the assignment of who is shaven by the barber cannot be applied to the barber himself without getting entangled in a harsh contradiction. The question whether the barber shaves himself or not remains undecidable. Due to the circular and self-referent characteristic of the barber's puzzle, none of the possible answers is valid. We simply cannot finally solve the problem, and again are trapped in the vicious cycle of paradoxical reasoning we already know from Kant's self-referent antinomy.

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The second of both antinomies had been conveyed by ancient Greek philosopher Eubulides of Miletus. His ›liar antinomy‹ appears as closely related to the structure of the barber's antinomy, and its outcome is reminiscent of the barber's unfortunate dilemma. In a famous variant, Eubulides' antinomy had been reported by Apostle Paul in a letter to Titus by writing about an unknown Cretan prophet:

> »One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, the Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true« (Titus 1:12).

Roughly speaking, Apostle Paul's excerpt can be reduced to the statement that ›A Cretan says that all Cretans are liars‹. If we define ›liars‹ as people who *always* make false statements, Paul's sentences lead inevitably to an antinomy. Its circular character arises with the strange circumstance that a Cretan prophet claims that *all* Cretans are liars. If he is right and all Cretans are in fact liars, the prophet's confession ›All Cretans are liars‹ must consequentially be exposed as a lie as well, because the prophet himself hails from Crete. But if we then assume that the statement ›All Cretans are liars‹ is false, its negation must be true; and therewith, we should admit that all Cretans say the truth after all. But with this conclusion, we again must convict the Cretan prophet of lying, so that we ascertain that not all Cretans are truthful. The liar's antinomy can also be expressed by making the ›liar's statement‹ that

This sentence is false.

Is the sentence true or false? Once we try to decide this question, we soon find ourselves caught in the antinomic circle of the Cretan's statement. If the sentence ›This sentence is false‹ is false *itself*, its opposite must be true as a consequence. But then, the sentence states a true proposition, which again means that ›This sentence is false‹ is true. We thus again arrive at an unresolvable contradiction when being faced with

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our investigations, we emphasise its *antinomic* character as unresolvable statement. For us, the barber's paradox is therefore being treated almost exactly as Russell's antinomy.

the antinomy of the »strengthened liar« (Simmons 1993: 6) as a shorter, but also more captious annotation:

> »This statement is not true« (Feferman, Feferman 2004: 111).

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Both the barber's and the liar's antinomy exhibit the characteristics of the tripartite definition of recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion. At first, both the barber and the liar's statement are defined and *formed recursively*. While the barber as ›one of the villagers‹ can only be defined once we know how the barber is shaved, the truth of the liar as ›one of the lying Cretans‹ can only be determined once we know about the truth of the liar's statement itself. Moreover, both antinomic statements are built on a critical disposition. Whereas the barber either ›does shave himself‹ or ›does *not* shave himself‹, the liar either ›does say the truth‹ or ›does *not* say the truth‹. The disposition is critical insofar as the underlying definition concerns ›all those who do *not* shave themselves‹ and, in a slightly changed version, ›all those who do *not* say the truth‹. Finally, both antinomies arise from a circular inversion. If the recursive definition of the barber expressed in the critical disposition ›does *not* shave himself‹ is applied to itself, an undecidable question arises. If the recursive form of the Cretan's statement encompassing the critical disposition ›does not say the truth‹ is applied to itself, we get stuck in a similar dead end. With these insights, we can now think about the resulting logical form of these antinomies.

c) Logical Form

Antinomies absurdly incorporate a somehow fluent interplay between affirmation and negation, possibility and impossibility, and truth and falseness. Roughly speaking, both the barber's and the liar's antinomies resulted in the aberrant assumption that if *X*, then ›not *X*‹, and, *vice versa*, if ›not *X*‹, then *X*. This unreasonable conclusion seems to be yielded by a statement characterised by the three attributes of recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion. In the end, we found ourselves struggling with a harsh contradiction, although we strictly obeyed *all* principles of logical deduction and took account of *all* of Aristotle's laws of thought.

We learnt about these contradictions as the conjunction of a sentence *X* and its negation in the form of ›*X* and not *X*‹. Other than paradoxes which mostly can be solved by finding a hidden or false assumption that it is unclear at first sight, contradictions expressed by antinomies have a further characteristic. Both the sentence *X* and its negation must necessarily follow from each other, so that both parts are equally justifiable and provable. The underlying laws from which antinomies are deduced—for instance, in the form of the barber's or the Cretan's statement—inevitably lead to the reasonable assumption of both the sentence *X* and its negation, again expressed by the absurd statement that

If X, then ›not X‹.

Statements that allow for the logical deduction of such conclusions are now defined as antinomies. This definition thereby accounts for the consideration that an »antinomy produces a self-contradiction by accepted ways of reasoning« (Quine 1962: 87). Its productive character reflects the conditional connection between the sentence ›*X* is given‹ and its deducted opposite sentence ›*X* is not given‹, whereby the deduction itself follows from the principles of logical reasoning and Aristotle's laws of thought. In this sense, Łukowski (2011: 2) claims that »an antinomy is a logically correct reasoning, which justifies an equivalence: *P if and only if non-P*«. Thus, antinomies result from an act of logical deduction and can be constructed only within a system of logical laws and rules of inference. And because he held logical deduction as act of human thought within the system of reason, Kant (1855 [1787]: 256) proposed a widely recognised defini-

tion of antinomies as »conflict of the laws of pure reasoning«. For instance, the procedure of logical deduction we undertook to develop both the barber's and the liar's antinomy reflected the classical principles adhering to Aristotle's laws of thought—knowing well, however, that some scholars attempt to refuse those laws[16]. But strangely enough, for all those who respect these laws, the logical conclusion of both the barber's and the liar's antinomic statements left the aftertaste of illogicality:

> »An *antinomy* […] of logic takes place when two contradicting statements *A* and ~*A* are derived, or equivalently *A* ≡ (~*A*) is derived, without committing a simple logical error« (Krajewski 1981: 22).

We thus can conclude that an antinomy of the form ›*X*, if and only if not *X*‹ violates Aristotle's laws of thought in the worst possible way. While the law of identity prescribes that *X* must always be *X*, the second law of non-contradiction aims at impeding the assumption of *X* and ›not *X*‹ at the same time. The third law of excluded middle requires that we must either claim *X* or ›not *X*‹, which, in the case of antinomies, leads to the endless circularity of assuming both propositions. And although antinomic statements yielding unresolvable contradictions first and foremost violate Aristotle's second law, we should also remark that we found his laws of thought *as a whole* broken.

d) A Dual Classification

Both the barber's and the liar's antinomy have been treated in the same way so far. They both were presented as possessing the three essential characteristics of recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion leading to the contradictory conclusion that ›*X* if and only if not *X*‹. But they also can be distinguished from each other, and thus stand as paradigms of *ontological* and *semantical* antinomies. This classificatory distinction goes back to the ideas of British mathematician and logician Frank Ramsey (1925) which, although not being followed completely, serve as a foundation for our own classification.

Ramsey suggests dividing antinomies into two different groups. First, syntactical or logical antinomies arise in logical or mathematical systems which, for instance, refer to classes, sets, or numbers occurring »in any system rich enough to represent properties as objects having properties, or classes as members of classes« (Craig 1998: 361). Second, semantical or epistemological antinomies always include or relate to particular notions of truth or falseness. Ramsey argued that these kinds of antinomies could not be constructed as logical arguments, but emerged as a consequence of language- or meaning-related problems. Hence, antinomies have been categorised as either ›logical‹ or ›semantic‹ by Ramsey (1925: 352 f.) who described how logical antinomies denoted as ›Group A‹ differ from semantical ones classified as ›Group B‹:

> »Group A consists of contradictions, which […] would occur in a logical or mathematical system itself. They involve only logical or mathematical terms such as class and number […]. But the contradictions of Group B are not purely logical […]. So they may be due […] to faulty ideas concerning thought and language«.

[16] In line with the criticisms of Aristotle's second law of non-contradiction, Priest (1979: 220) thinks of the barber's and the liar's antinomy as examples for true contradictions, and consequently recommends treating these antinomies as »brute facts« rather than logical dilemmas. But even though we would agree with Priest's suggestion to abandon the idea of solving antinomies in favour of accepting their dichotomy of being true and false simultaneously, some other antinomies will however remain problematic—for instance, for most logicians, the ›strengthened‹ version of the liar's antinomy cannot be approached through Priest's method. As Patrick Grim (1991: 26 f.) states, ›strengthened liar‹ statements such as ›This sentence is not true‹ or, in an even more strengthened version, ›This sentence is both true and false and not both true and false‹ imply the same antinomic effects the dialetheistic sought to avoid. However, Priest (2006 [1987]: 24) contradicted this criticism indicating that these versions of the liar's antinomy »are not really novel […], but merely manifestations of one and the same problem«. Not only because of this shortcoming, advocates of both paraconsistent logics and dialethism received criticisms from various angles (Priest 1998a: 210; Sainsbury 1995 [1987]: 135 ff.) and even were denigrated as »counsel of despair« (Grim 1991: 26).

In the tradition of Ramsey's suggestion—but slightly changed—, we differentiate between *ontological* and *semantical* antinomies.[17] To begin with, the first classification relates to what Ramsey designated as logical antinomies, but includes all antinomies based on unanswerable questions of concepts and classes in general. In most cases, these antinomies raise questions about what traditionally has been understood as »definition‹ of set« (Fraenkel *et al.* 1973: 18). We, however, are broadening the understanding of ontological antinomies by opposing the view that these questions »involve only concepts or conceptual relations from mathematics and logic« (Ziegler 1996: 15). By contrast, ontological antinomies will be treated as »not specifically mathematical but […] of general logical character« (Carnap 1959: 139). With our classification as ontological, we furthermore put forward the idea that these antinomies not only appear as mathematical or pure logical problems. They, in contrast, can reflect formal and philosophical considerations on concepts, ideas, objects, classes, universals, or totalities. We thus define an antinomy as ontological, whenever the underlying statement relates to a possible *entity*, *class*, or *concept* in the broadest sense such as the entities ›village‹ or ›barber‹. The notion ›ontological‹ should thereby not be conflated with any metaphysical claim itself, but be simply differentiated from the second classification.

Semantical antinomies cannot be understood as more or less simple claims about entities, classes, or concepts. As the name suggests, the antinomic character can rather be traced back to the semantical level of a statement and thus results from the »ambiguity of the semantical concepts designation, definition and truth« (Krajewski 1981: 28). In these types of antinomies, different linguistic levels seem to be amalgamated within one and the same language system. We thus witness »semantical terms referring to the expression of that system, or terms which allow to define such terms« (Łukowski 2011: 119). In this sense, semantical antinomies exhibit »explicit reference to symbols or sentences, that is, both linguistic expressions and their meanings are present« (Ziegler 1996: 15). With our classification as semantical, we hence suggest that these antinomies are not bound to formal or logical inconsistencies. They, by contrast, reflect linguistic difficulties of speaking *about* language *within* this very language system. We thus define an antinomy as semantic, whenever the underlying statement relates to any form of *truth*, *meaning*, or *interpretation rules*—for instance, the truth of ›lying‹ or the meaning of ›saying the truth‹.

	Ontological Antinomies	***Semantical Antinomies***
Recursive Form	statement about *entity*, *class*, or *concept* refers to and is defined with reference to itself	statement about *truth*, *meaning*, or *interpretation* refers to and is defined by its own semantical resources
Critical Disposition	*logical opposition* of member—no member, part—no part, ›does something‹—›does not something‹, is—is not	*semantical opposition* of true—false, meaningful—meaningless, absolute—relative, subjective—objective, necessary—contingent
Regressive Inversion	an ontological statement applied to itself leads to ›back and forth‹ of logical opposites	a semantical statement applied to itself leads to ›back and forth‹ of semantical opposites
Logical Form	*X*, if ›not *X*‹ and *vice versa*	*X*: ›*X* is false‹ and *vice versa*
Examples	*A barber shaves all those who do not shave themselves.*	*A Cretan states that all Cretans are liars.*

A Dual Classification: *Ontological and semantical antinomies*

[17] The classificatory notion ›ontological‹ in contrast to the widely spread label ›logical‹ has been introduced by Brendel (1992: 51 ff.) in the German-speaking world.

The difference between ontological and semantical antinomies also stems from the distinction between ontological and semantical statements. As we will learn, ontological statements refer to the essence and consistency of entities, classes, and concepts such as the sentences ›All whales are mammals‹ or ›Kant observed the world of time and space‹. By contrast, semantical statements refer to the variety of semantical resources and claims about truth, meaning, or interpretations such as the sentences ›It is false that whales are fish‹ or ›Everything Kant said about the world is meaningless‹. As we will see, the distinction between ontological and semantical statements is often carried out arbitrarily and blurred; and thus, the differences between ontological and semantical antinomies suffer from the same vagueness.

The classification as ontological and semantical statements mainly derives from the character of the underlying statement. While the barber's antinomy is a notorious class-related problem, the liar's antinomy brings along confusion of the semantical resources ›truth‹ and ›falseness‹. Accordingly, Quine (1962: 11) suggested that Russell's barber and the liar antinomy of Eubulides can be classified in the tradition of Ramsey, and also be denoted as either ontological or semantical:

> »The crucial words in Russell's antinomy are ›class‹ and ›member‹, and neither of these is definable in terms of ›true‹, ›true of‹, or the like«.

How useful is the distinction between semantical and ontological antinomies? Is Ramsey correct if he advocates such an exact discrimination? Again, Ramsey's argument was that many semantical antinomies could not be translated into a logical or ontological scheme, as central semantical concepts such as truth or falseness could not be constructed properly. But this assumption seems to be questionable in the light of novel developments in the theory of mathematics and logics. Based on such mathematical-logical perspectives, »the structure of semantic and logical antinomies turns out to be the same« (Ziegler 1996: 15). Similarly, Chernavskiĭ (1994: 207) points out that the distinction between semantical and logic antinomies seems largely arbitrary because »[m]any semantic antinomies may be stated in a logical form and vice versa«. For instance, Charles Parsons (1974: 381) tried to understand the liar's puzzle not as semantical, but as a set-theoretical problem insofar as

> »the semantical paradoxes should be treated in a way that stresses their analogies with paradoxes of set theory.«

We will, where appropriate, refer to Ramsey's distinction on our way to discover ontological and semantical antinomies in humanist theories. At the same time, we feel allowed disregarding the distinction whenever we debate of what both ontological and semantical antinomies share as common feature. These characteristics similarly refer to ontological antinomies and the question of entities, classes, and concepts *and* to semantical antinomies and problems of truth, meaning, and interpretations. In this sense, as Fritz McDonald (2008a: 45) states, both types of antinomies »reveal that our naïve, pretheoretical conceptions of truth and class stand in need of refinement«. More generally, this conclusion can be drawn with regard to the dilemmatic assumption of recursive totalities, as

> »antinomies, whether logical or semantic, share a common feature that might be roughly and loosely described as self-reference. In all of them the crucial entity is defined, or characterized, with the help of a totality to which it belongs itself« (Fraenkel *et al.* 1973: 11).

1.5 Antinomic Destruction

If antinomies are discovered within a theory's foundation, the whole theoretical scaffold begins to crumble. Both the barber's and the liar's antinomy had such a devastating effect on two logical-mathematical programs which both became part of the famous ›Grundlagenkrise‹ at the beginning of the 20th century. Frege's ambitious ›logicism‹ was devastated by exposing the ontological barber's antinomy by Russell. In the same way, Hilbert's ›formalism‹ was severely damaged by the construction of the semantical liar's antinomy by Gödel. In both cases, the phenomenon of ›antinomic destruction‹ left deep questions and incongruities—which, despite all efforts, could not be solved. These two examples of how an ontological and a semantical antinomy threatened two ›large theories‹ may therefore serve as a reminder for all theorists and their works, and furthermore gives fundamental insights for the elaboration of antinomic statements in humanist theories.

With the tripartite definition of characteristics, their logical form, and their ontological or semantical classification, we took a step in the right direction of understanding the nature of antinomies. But why do we pay so much attention to the phenomenon of antinomies in the first place? Why is it that scholars spend their entire research career on this logical peculiarity? Obviously, the occurrence of antinomies has often shaken the foundations of whole schools of thought, whole philosophies, and whole academic disciplines. And although we aim at elaborating antinomic figures in theories of the humanities, our first access to these questions is the study of the destructiveness of the barber's and the liar's antinomy in ›formal systems‹[18] based on formal languages, rules, or axioms. As we will find, the destructive effect of antinomies is however similar to systems of thought based on natural languages such as in most approaches of the human sciences.

We thus have to become familiar with the systems ›behind‹ the logical chains leading to the barber's and liar's antinomy. This journey takes us to the homeland of antinomic thinking—namely, the field of logics and mathematics.[19] Within these fields, two prestigious programmes in called ›logicism‹ and ›formalism‹ were severely shaken by the discovery of two antinomies. While the occurence of the barber's antinomy led to the begin of the *Grundlagenkrise* as the foundational crisis of mathematics in 1903, the deployment of the liar's antinomy in Gödel's famous ›Incompleteness Theorem‹ in 1930 brought about a sudden end to this debate. Our brief description of the ontological barber's and the semantical liar's antinomy in the logical-mathematical field lets understand why whole systems are threatened by these odd inconsistencies, and, even more importantly, why so many solutions fail.

a) The Ontological Antinomy of the Barber – Frege and Russell

We begin our considerations on the destructiveness of the barber's antinomy by introducing a simple solution which however leads us to a larger mathematical-logical problem. Quine's (1962: 2) solution of the barber's antinomy is a simple *reductio ad absurdum*. By employing such a proof, we show that the assumption of a statement's opposite leads to a contradiction, as the »the process of deriving a direct contradiction […] from a premise, justifies the denial of that premise« (Cauman 1998: 36). Quine argues that the barber's antinomy is the end state of such a proof via *reductio ad absurdum*:

[18] According to Hilbert (1996 [1923]: 1137), a formal system expresses formal questions in a uniform way, so that, for instance, mathematics »becomes a stock of formulae«. In this sense, a formal system consists of a *formal language* which again is based on well-defined symbols and derivation rules; furthermore, expressions are being deduced through these derivation rules from a set of axioms. To Hilbert, »a formal system is the Leibnizian ›thread of Ariadne‹ leading him through the labyrinth of mathematical propositions and theories« (Körner 1986 [1960]: 85).

[19] Due to the clear humanist account of this work, these logical and mathematical considerations are being described in the easiest and briefest way possible. As will be shown, this detour is however necessary to understand how antinomic statements have been formulated and tried to be solved afterwards.

> »We are confronted with nothing more mysterious than what logicians have been referring to for a couple of thousand years as a *reductio ad absurdum*. We disprove the barber by assuming him and deducing the absurdity that he shaves himself if and only if he does not. The paradox is simply a proof that no village can contain a man who shaves all and only those men in it who do not shave themselves« (Quine 1962: 86).

Quine obviously defuses the alleged antinomy by simply considering it to represent a veridical paradox which can be resolved; and the solution of the barber's paradox was, short and sweet, that no such barber exists. The reason why Quine's solution for the barber's antinomy seems unsatisfying at a second glance lies in its actual origin. The antinomy was merely an image or thought experiment for a more fundamental mathematical problem—like Einstein's ›twin paradox‹ was for the theoretical notion of time dilation, or ›Schrödinger's cat‹ for the theory of quantum mechanics. And as such, Quine's solution fails.

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Russell introduced the barber's antinomy to illustrate a more profound mathematical, set-theoretical problem being popularised as ›Russell's antinomy‹ a short time later. In its original form, this problem was clearly embedded in a class-related context (Russell 1903: 102):

> »A class as one may be a term of itself as many. Thus the class of all classes is a class; the class of all the terms that are not men is not a man, and so on. Do all the classes that have this property form a class? If so, is it as one a member of itself as many or not? If it is, then it is one of the classes which, as ones, are not members of themselves as many, and vice versa. Thus we must conclude again that the classes which as ones are not members of themselves as many do not form a class—or rather, that they do not form a class as one, for the argument cannot show that they do not form a class as many«.

In short, Russell's crucial question was whether or not there is a class X that contains all classes that do not contain themselves. Imagine, for instance, the class T of all ›things that can be written down‹. This class will be compounded of members such as numbers, notions, or names. Among these things, it is similarly imaginable that a *class as such* can be written down. We just had to grab a pencil to then write down the letters of which the word ›class *T*‹ consists. For this reason, class T as the class of ›all things that can be written down‹ must necessarily contain itself. So far, there is no contradiction to be feared. But what if we think about the class X which, as stated, contains all classes that do *not* contain themselves? Such classes could, for instance, be compounded of materials such as wood, water, or wallets. It is absurd to imagine that a class X_{wood} which contains all things that are made of wood is itself made of wood. Classes are logical entities, not wooden things. For this reason, the classes X_{wood}, X_{water}, and X_{wallet} are all considered classes which do not contain themselves. If we now again think of a class X that contains all classes that do *not* contain themselves such as X_{wood}, X_{water}, and X_{wallet}, we soon get entangled in a unresolvable contradiction. Think about the statement that

There is a class X of all classes that do not contain themselves.

If class X does not contain itself, then X would not be complete; as X should be compounded of all classes not containing themselves, even X itself. But if X contains itself, it is not a class anymore that does not contain itself. This is a contradiction. In a similar vein, Nagel and Newman (2001: 23) illustrate Russell's antinomy by referring to ›normal‹ classes which do *not* contain themselves, as opposed to ›non-normal‹ classes containing themselves:

> »An example of a normal class is the class of mathematicians, for patently the class itself is not a mathematician and is therefore not a member of itself. An example of a non-normal class is the class of all thinkable things; for the class of all thinkable things is itself thinkable and is therefore a member of itself. Let ›N‹ by definition stand for the class of *all* normal classes. We ask whether N itself is a normal class. If N is normal, it is a member of itself (for by definition N contains all normal classes); but, in that case, N is non-normal, be-

> cause by definition a class that contains itself as a member is non-normal. On the other hand, if N is non-normal, it is a member of itself (by definition of ›non-normal‹); but in that case, N is normal, because by definition the members of N are normal classes. In short, N is normal if, and only if, N is non-normal«.

The similarities of the barber's and Russell's antinomy are obvious. The barber shaves himself if and only if he does *not* shave himself. The class of all classes that do not contain themselves contains itself if and only if it does *not* contain itself. We thus can conclude our reflections on both the barber's and Russell's antinomy by remarking that both puzzles circle around the question of classes and concepts, and, more problematically, leave us in an undecidable position. Nevertheless, Quine's simple solution now seems to be mistaken, as he himself admitted:

> »The barber paradox barely qualifies as paradox in that we are mildly surprised at being able to exclude the barber on purely logical grounds by reducing him to absurdity (…). Russell's paradox is a genuine antinomy because the principle of class existence that it compels us to give up is so fundamental« (Quine 1962: 91).

But what was the foundational system Russell's discovery shook so heavily? Shortly before Russell published his antinomy in 1903, he sent a version of his findings to German mathematician Gottlob Frege, who, at that time, had already finished large parts of his work on the construction of mathematics. Frege (1980 [1884]) tried to show that mathematics—or, to be more precise, arithmetic—is not more than a variety of logic, and that all mathematical proofs and conclusions can be traced back to logical laws.[20] To this end, the program of *logicism* found its way into mathematicians' and philosophers' vocabulary of the time (Grattan-Guinness 2000: 367). From now on, logicists were denoted as those thinkers who were in search of logical concepts »about the grounds of mathematical truth, about the grounds of our claims to know things about mathematical objects« (Sullivan 2003: 32). For instance, formulas like ›$x = x$‹ reflect logical axioms, and, as we correctly remember, resemble the first of Aristotle's three laws of thought.

Unfortunately, Frege missed his ambitious aim to give these proofs »without making use of truths which are not of a general logical nature« (Frege 1980 [1884]: 4). His failure became clear when he received a letter of Russell, in which Frege's attention was drawn to the introduced class antinomy. To Frege's misfortune, the existence of *classes* was essential to his logistic program, so that the discovered antinomy destroyed his work almost completely by wiping out his results at a stroke. Even worse, not only the mathematical system was threatened by the destructive force of Russell's antinomy, but

> »logic itself was endangered. Only a slight shift in the formulation was required in order to turn Russell's antinomy into a contradiction that could be formulated in terms of most logical concepts« (Fraenkel *et al.* 1973: 2).

Russell's antinomy seemed scathing for the young logicist program. If his discovered antinomy could be derived by the logical axioms and rules of inference proposed by Frege, then these axioms and rules could never be drawn on as the foundation of mathematics. Deeply disappointed, Frege (1964 [1893]: 127) who shortly before receiving Russell's letter finished his work admitted that »[h]ardly anything more unwelcome can befall a scientific writer than that one of the foundations of his edifice be shaken after the work is finished«. As he saw his logicist framework being overthrown, he lost confidence that the logicist program could ever be accomplished and gave up his ambitions. He simply could not find any solution to solve Russell's antinomy.

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[20] Frege (1964 [1893]), probably the first prominent proponent of logicism, thought about his main opus ›The Basic Laws of Arithmetic‹ as an attempt to show that arithmetic can be fully derived by the basic laws of logic. To this end, Frege (1972 [1879]) suggested a compilation of both logical axioms and rules of inference which supposedly should reflect the basic laws of pure thought in a formalised language.

Throughout our considerations, we will often be given ›simple‹ solutions to ontological antinomies in the style of Quine's answer. But anytime we are told that a particular antinomy shows the impossibility of the entity, class, or concept in question, we should carefully examine whether the whole system ›behind it‹ is threatened in the same way. As Frege recognised, the impossibility of a particular ›logical class‹ implied the impossibility of the logicist programme of mathematics *as a whole*, and not only a proof of the non-existence of this class.

b) The Semantical Antinomy of the Liar – Hilbert and Gödel

Similar to the barber's antinomy, the construction of the liar's antinomy in one of the most famous programmes in mathematics at the beginning of the 20th century had a disastrous effect on both mathematicians and logicians. Just as we considered Frege's logicist programme as a system of thought, we now will consider the work Russell, together with his colleague Alfred Whitehead, had published on the foundations of mathematics entitled ›*Principia Mathematica*‹. As we will see, after the ontological barber's antinomy was claimed to be successfully eliminated, Russell's and Whitehead's publication became the fundamental work in mathematics. It was, however, not proven to be *consistent* at that time; and even though ›Principia Mathematica‹ was expected to »be powerful enough to prove all the true mathematical statements« (Shankar 1994: 16), the attempt to do so however turned out as a »spectacular and definite failure« (Kałuszyńska 1995 [1994]: 85).

On August 8, 1900, mathematician David Hilbert presented a list of twenty-three unresolved, mathematical problems at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Paris. Among them, the second problem reflected the question of whether the arithmetic axioms described at that time were non-contradictory. Hilbert (1902 [1900]: 447) thus endeavored »[t]o prove that they are not contradictory, that is, that a finite number of logical steps based upon them lead to contradictory results«. For Hilbert, such a proof would show that mathematics could be founded on the basis of an arithmetic system of axioms, and all mathematical truths could be derived from this system by logical deduction so that it »is never possible to derive the formula $a \neq a$« (Mancosu 2010: 139) as contradictions or antinomies arising from such a system. In contrast to Frege's logicist dreams, Hilbert intended to see that

> »mathematics is reduced in formalism to a game like chess. People play chess; they do not ask what a particularly game ›means‹. Conceivably chess may some day be interpreted in terms of the weather, or politics, or psychiatry; it will then acquire a meaning« (Bell 1967 [1940]: 567).[21]

In 1931, Austrian logician and mathematician Kurt Gödel gave the deathblow to the Hilbert's famous ›Programme‹. At the beginning of his ground-breaking essay, Gödel (1986 [1931]: 145) unpretentiously announced what his work meant for the debate about the foundations of mathematics, and, in particular, for the system of Russell's and Whitehead's ›Principia Mathematica‹ from which one

> »might […] conjecture that these axioms and rules of inference are sufficient to decide any mathematical question that can at all be formally expressed in these systems. It will be shown […] that this is not the case«.

[21] Hilbert's approach thus differs from Frege's. With the metamathematical notions of consistency and completeness, he intended to describe »a system first in terms of formation rules that say which are and which are not permissible combinations of marks and therefore well-formed formulas« (Solomon 1989: 16).

To understand his unusual approach to prove the incompleteness and inconsistency of formal systems, it is vital to consider his idea of how to say something *about* a system—namely, its consistency and completeness—by saying it in a language expressed *within* the system. The system he used was Russell's and Whitehead's masterpiece ›Principia Mathematica‹, but he was able to show that his results applied to any similar formal system.[22] Gödel used a simple mathematical language to express metamathematical statements and operations. Every formula, every proposition, and even mathematical proofs could be formulated and combined[23] through this uniform language. Or, as Gödel (1986 [1931]: 147) himself argued, »it can be shown that the notions ›formula‹, ›proof array‹, and ›provable formula‹ can be defined in the system«. Surprisingly, Gödel thereby was also able to construct the statement

G says that there exists a formula G which cannot be proven

so that the sentence appears synonymous to the statement ›*G* says that *G* is not provable‹. The first part of the sentence ›*G* says‹ is thus interpretable as formulation of a function which can be either true or false. If formula *G* is true, then the sentence's second part ›there exists a formula *G* which cannot be proven‹ is true. The formula *G*, which of itself says to be improvable, is now paradoxically proven true. By »*proving* that there are *true* arithmetical propositions that are not *provable*« (Goldstein 2005: 165), it is plain that Gödel embeds a self-contradiction within his overall proof to achieve his aim. More colloquially, the formula *G* can be rephrased for the sake of simplification, so that the sentence

G says: ›I'm not provable‹

now fully unveils the self-referent character of formula *G*. This formula is intended to unfold a somewhat paradoxical character, as Gödel (1986 [1931]: 147) wanted to »construct an undecidable proposition of the system […], that is, a proposition *A* for which neither *A* nor *not-A* is provable«. Consequently, two interpretations are possible. First, if we assume *G* to be true, then the statement that *G* is not provable is true as a consequence. If true sentences are not provable by the formal system, then this very system must by definition be *incomplete*. Second, if we assume *G* to be false, then the statement that *G* is provable must be true, although *G* says something different. Thus, the system is either *inconsistent*, or, given that the system had earlier been proved to be consistent, its consistency is not provable. Hence, Gödel proved that Hilbert's Programme could never be achieved.

Gödel's artifice to construct an antinomic sentence so that *G* says ›I'm not provable‹ is nothing else than an analogy of the liar's paradox (Gödel 1986 [1931]: 149). Thus, as Goldstein (2005: 165) correctly points out, Gödel's »overall strategy of the proof—the delightfully accessible part of the proof—can be grasped in the context of the oldest known paradox of all, the liar's paradox«. His formula *G* hence reflects the notorious liar's sentence in the form

This sentence is false.

Gödel's stroke of genius was his translation and embedding of the liar's paradox within the formal language he was using, so that its corrosiveness destroyed both Hilbert's and Russell's foundations severely; or, as Globus (2003: 130) sums up:

> »Gödel ingeniously found a way to embed this ›liar paradox‹ (which has many versions) within a self-referential formula, *G*, in a formalized calculus […] with axiomatized resources of a certain richness«.

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[22] Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems apply to a variety of formal systems similar to the ›Principia Mathematica‹ and the Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory (Gödel 1986 [1931]: 195).

[23] The combination of natural numbers on the one hand and formulas and propositions on the other was accomplished by introducing the method of ›Gödel numbering‹, whereby every symbol of the mathematical language was clearly assigned to a natural number (Gödel 1986 [1931]: 157).

Gödel's theorems left both mathematicians and logicians speechless, as he showed that »the entirely natural idea that we can give a complete theory […] with a tidy set of axioms is wrong« (Smith 2013 [2007]: 3). His insights also gained prominence in neighbouring disciplines, most famously as the ›Halting Problem‹ in Alan Turing's application of Gödel's proof in the field of computer sciences.[24]

We already saw how Russell's ontological antinomy »destroyed Frege's system« (Wolénski 2004: 37) of a logicist foundation for mathematics. Gödel's construction of a semantical antinomy had a similar effect on Hilbert's hopes, as, roughly speaking, »Gödel's results destroyed Hilbert's programme« (Brown 1999: 82). By now at the latest, we should realise the destructive power of antinomies for whole systems of thought; although in our case, these ›antinomic destructions‹ took place within formal systems. We will however soon discover similar antinomies in humanist theories, and should therefore be prepared to witness similar consequences for those unfortunate theoretical scaffolds.

	Russell's Antinomy and Frege	**Gödel's Antinomy and Hilbert**
Antinomy	barber's antinomy as illustration of Russell's class antinomy	liar's antinomy as illustration of Gödel's *provable* statement ›I am not provable‹
Attacked System	Frege's logicist foundation of mathematics	Hilbert's formalist foundation of mathematics
Attacked Notions	logical notion of class	metalogical notion of consistency and completeness
Form of Attack	statement *within* system as inconsistent	statement *about* system is expressed inconsistently *within* system

Antinomic Destruction: *How Russell destroyed Frege, and Gödel did the same with Hilbert*

The antinomic destruction we witnessed followed a simple pattern. An ontological antinomy revealed the inconsistency of the notion ›class‹, and thereby left Frege's logicist system built on this notion in wreckage. In the same vein, a semantical antinomy was constructed that yielded the *provable* sentence ›I am not provable‹, and thereby demonstrated the inconsistency and incompleteness of Hilbert's formal system in which the sentence could be constructed.

We also found the tripartite characterisation of antinomies at hand in both cases. While Russell's antinomy was recursively formed as class dependent on a property of ›all classes‹, Gödel's liar sentence took the recursive form of a provable sentence ›saying of itself‹ to be not provable. The critical disposition was reflected in the proposition ›is not a member of itself‹ and, respectively, ›is not provable‹. Finally, Russell's antinomy caused a circular inversion by the logical fact that the definition of the ›class of all classes‹ in-

[24] Shortly after the publication of Gödel's ground-breaking work, Turing (1937) proved convincingly the limits of computers' calculability. In computer science, strings are calculated through algorithms as »an ordered set of unambiguous steps that produces a result and terminates in a finite time« (Forouzan, Mosharraf 2008: 223). The question popularised as *›Entscheidungsproblem‹* by Hilbert and Ackermann (1950 [1928]: 112 ff.) was if one could determine whether such an algorithm »stops after finite steps« (Mainer 2007: 192). If not, the algorithm would »remain in undecidable limbo« (Isaacson 2014: 43). Hilbert's question about the provability of a formal system's consistency and completeness is thus nothing else than Turing's question whether an algorithm can or cannot calculate any mathematical problem in finite steps. It thus comes as no surprise that both proofs are strikingly similar. Turing resembled Gödel's idea of expressing meta-levelled notions in ›lower-levelled‹ language (Chaitin 1982: 944; Priestley 2011: 96), so that he was able to ›feed‹ an algorithm with itself. In this sense, both Gödel and Turing adopted an approach called »arithmetisation« (Cooper 2004: 117) by expressing metamathematical notions in a simple mathematical language. Gossett (2009: 216) gives a nicely simplified sketch of Turing's proof.

versely depends on the ›prefixed‹ property in the same way the provability of Gödel's statement depends on *what* the statement said of its ›own‹ provability.

1.6 Antinomies and Hierarchies

Antinomies cannot be resolved. They, however, were sought to be banned from the system of thought they occurred. With both Russell's and Gödel's antinomy destroying the programmes of logicism and formalism, a new theoretical approach was to be erected to restore the damages. With the idea of a ›hierarchy‹ of conceptual and language levels blocking the formulation of antinomic statements, promising attempts were made. While Russell himself introduced his ›theory of types‹ to prevent from yielding the barber's antinomy through a hierarchy of objects and classes, Tarski proposed his ›semantical theory of truth‹ to ban the liar's antinomy through a hierarchy of languages. They however, as Wittgenstein and Putnam argued, failed since they, to formulate their theories, either required an impossible ›God's Eye View‹ or yielded ›new‹ antinomies by violating their own hierarchical rules.

While Russell demonstrated how the ontological barber's antinomy put Frege's programme of a logicist foundation of mathematics in a predicament, Gödel proved that the construction of the semantical liar's antinomy vanquished Hilbert's hopes of finding a consistent and complete formal system to derive all mathematical truths. Despite these bad omens, two novel works were published in which the devastating antinomies were sought to be blocked. With Russell's ›type theory‹ and Tarski's ›semantical theory of truth‹, two *hierarchical* orderings were laid out. With these theories, the occurrence of recursive and circular antinomic statements was claimed to be precluded through different levels onto which propositions and statements had to be expressed. These hierarchies then restricted one from formulating statements which referred to themselves or to levels of higher order. But, unfortunately, these proposals had their deficiencies and failings as well, although they might historically be seen as most promising attempts to solve antinomies.

a) Ontological Hierarchies – Russell and Wittgenstein

Frege's and Russell's intentions were quite similar, as they both were convinced that mathematics could be founded on the pillars of logic. Russell was however well aware that this undertaking could only succeed if he overcame the antinomy he himself had discovered, and, in the same way, that had become an insurmountable stumbling block for his intellectual father Frege. But Russell was confident; and indeed, he soon was to present both a solution to the antinomy and a logicist framework. When he finally published his work, Russell (1903: v) optimistically declared that he now could prove that

> »all pure mathematics deals exclusively with concepts definable in terms of a very small number of fundamental logical concepts, and that all its propositions are deducible from a very small number of fundamental logical principles«.

Russell's way of solving the antinomy—which was indispensable to his success—was as simple as persuasive.[25] He recognised that the core problem was a too loose and indistinct notion of class, which resulted

[25] Russell's theory of types is hereafter presented as an alleged solution to the ontological barber's antinomy, but can however be used to ›solve‹ the liar's antinomy as well. If we think of the latter antinomy as a class problem—that is, the question of whether the statement ›does not say the truth‹ belongs itself to the ›totality of lies‹—, both antinomies show clear parallels. In this sense, Adler (2008: 23) states that »[e]ven though Russell's Paradox is one of set-theory and the Liar one of semantics, they have striking similarities«. In the same vein, Sainsbury (2010 [1979]: 237) sees Russell setting up »the hierarchy of orders, designed to block the

in an illegitimate, deceptive understanding of what the *totality* of these classes is comprised. For Russell, the dilemma circled around the question of whether the totality of the class ›does not shave himself‹ encompasses the barber himself. In their textbook ›Principia Mathematica‹, Russell and together with Whitehead realised that an antinomy's form acted as ›vicious circle‹:

> »An analysis of the paradoxes to be avoided shows that they all result from a kind of vicious circle. The vicious circles in question arise from supposing that a collection of objects may contain members which can only be defined by means of the collection as a whole […]. We shall, therefore, have to say that statements about ›all propositions‹ are meaningless« (Whitehead, Russell 1963 [1910]: 37).

If these propositions could be blocked, no antinomy would be possible anymore. Thus, no recursive vicious circle would be caused allowing »that a class can contain members which are defined by means of the class as a whole« (Hunnings 1988: 44), or that a »sentence […] talks about itself, ascribing to itself in effect the property of falsity« (Martin 1958: 137), or that »a proposition whose subject is this proposition itself« (Ziegler 1996: 24).

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Russell's theory of types attempts to avoid the illegitimate use of the supposed totalities which leads to the vicious circle of recursion. He suggested banning those statements and propositions including recursive definitions from his theoretical scaffold, and declared that these supposed totalities of »›all propositions‹ is illegitimate« (Russell 1908: 224). To prevent from such illegitimate recursive formulations, his theory of types simply »prevents any set from being an element of itself, so that the argument for the paradox cannot even get started« (Sheppard 2014: 180). The core idea behind his prominent approach was to set up a clear hierarchy of *types*, to which all logical notions such as ›elements‹ and ›classes‹ could be assigned to:

> »It will now be necessary to distinguish (1) terms, (2) classes, (3) classes of classes, and so on *ad infinitum*; we shall have to hold that no member of one set is a member of any other set, and that $x \in u$ requires that x should be of a set of a degree lower by one than the set to which u belongs. Thus $x \in x$ will become a meaningless proposition; and in this way the contradiction is avoided« (Russell 1903: 517).

How can such a hierarchy of types be understood? Simply, a class and its members are hierarchically separated insofar as the class is set on a superordinate and its members on a subordinate level. For instance, the class ›orchestra‹ is of higher type than its members ›violins‹, ›trumpets‹, and so on. Thereby, the totality of orchestral instruments forms the orchestra, and the property ›plays in the orchestra‹ again connects the orchestra's members. However, the orchestra itself is neither defined by the property ›plays in the orchestra‹, nor by making the orchestra a member of itself and thereby allows for a supposed totality. Instead, the class ›orchestra‹ can, again, be assigned to the next higher type of, for instance, the class ›musical ensemble‹. Russell therefore suggested that »[e]very class belongs to some definite type, and the types form a hierarchy from lower to higher« (Bostock 2012: 47). Russell's theory of types is thus founded on the principles that Russell's hierarchy of types is potentially infinite and that statements in the form of ›x is y‹ are only significant if the type of x is lower than the type of y (Copi 2011 [1971]: 11). Thereby, Russell's own class antinomy could be solved[26]:

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semantic paradoxes, and the hierarchy of types, designed to block the logical paradoxes«. Hence, what we now learn about Russell's theory of types has not only logical-mathematical implications, but also touches a semantical background.

[26] As indicated, Russell (1908: 240) also provided for a solution for the liar's antinomy by elaborating that »when a man says ›I am lying,‹ we must interpret him as meaning: ›There is a proposition of order n, which I affirm, and which is false.‹ This is a proposition of order n+1; hence the man is not affirming any proposition of order n; hence this statement is false, and yet its falsehood does not imply, as that of ›I am lying‹ appeared to do, that he is making a true statement. This solves the liar«. The core conclusion Russell draws is that, »when Epimenides made the statement that ›All Cretans are liars‹, this was a second-order-statement concerning a number of first-order statements made by Cretans« (Eames 1969 [2013]: 71).

> »if we ask: ›But how about the class of all classes? Is not that a class, and so a member of itself?‹, the answer is twofold. First, if ›the class of all classes of type *t*‹ means ›the class of all classes of whatever type‹, then there is no such notion. Secondly, if ›the class of all classes‹ means ›the class of all classes of type *t*‹, then this is a class of the next type above *t*, and is therefore again not a member of itself«.[27]

At least for a short time, Russell's theory of types set the standard for guiding the legitimate construction of sentences or statements in the language of formal arithmetic. Russell seemed to have succeeded in building on Frege's legacy of providing a logicist foundation of mathematics. Thereby, the theory of types was founded on one more or less simple rule which sought to avoid self-reference through the *hierarchical* setting—or, as Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1922: 3.332) trenchantly put it:

> »No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself (that is the ›whole theory of types‹)«.

Today, Russell's approach »is no longer the preferred vehicle for investigating the foundations of mathematics« (Urquhart 2003: 306).[28] The reasons for the subsequent rejection of ›Principia Mathematica‹ can be found in the artificiality of the axioms he deployed[29] and the required hierarchy. Various critics loudly maintained that the theory had not been derived *exclusively* from pure logical considerations, as »the question of whether mathematics could be reduced to logic […] remained open« (Godwyn, Irvine 2003: 185). This prominent line of criticism suggested that the authors of ›Principia Mathematica‹ had arbitrarily decided what should be allowed and what not:

> »It is as though Russell is attempting to stand outside language and the world and look down on them from above, deciding where the boundary between sense and nonsense lay by seeing where language did, or did not, fit the world« (White 2006: 10).

Although he attempted to find a consistent foundation for mathematics solely on the basis of logic, he had to express non-logicistic limitations and assumptions. It now seems that Russell tried to establish logic as the only language mathematicians should speak, but had to speak in a different language to do so. As we will see, this line of criticism can be sharpened even more. In this sense, Wittgenstein was convinced that Russell had made an assertion *about* logic rather than deriving an inevitable, inherent *logical* outcome.[30]

> »Wittgenstein […] found Russell's solution, the Theory of Types, to be vitiated by the very condition it was meant to resolve, namely, by an illegitimate attempt at reflexive self-reference. The Theory of Types is, after all, a theory—and one that turns out to be by no means self-evident or noncontroversial; and it is a theory that attempts to assert generalizations about logic, in this case about the logic of classes« (Sass 2001: 127).

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[27] If, however, the barber's puzzle is considered a non-genuine antinomy (Murphey 1993: 242), the solution—as Quine (B, 1.5a) demonstrated—would be to deny the existence of such a barber.

[28] After long debates about the legitimacy and applicability of Russell's theory of types and his contribution to the ›Principia Mathematica‹, an alternative approach gradually gained ground. Russell's paradox could not be derivied by the axioms suggested by mathematician Ernst Zermelo (1967), so that after several modifications the ›Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory‹ commenced its triumphant advance in the mid-1950s.

[29] Stevens (2012: 439) and Sandu (2005: 245) exemplarily show the consequences of assuming the so-called ›axiom of infinity‹ and the impossibility to derivate it from logic or a logical proposition. This also applies to the second ›axiom of reducibility‹ restricting the use of propositional functions insofar as these functions were sorted into different hierarchical levels.

[30] Wittgenstein (1922: 3.333) gives an alternative solution to the antinomy. He hereby argues that a function $F(fx)$ says, for instance, ›*X* is lying‹. Now, the function is taken as its own argument, so that $F(fx)$ is inserted in fx. Then, the proposition $F(F(fx))$ says that ›*X* is lying that *X* is lying‹. Wittgenstein now shows that the outer function $F(F(fx))$ must be different from the inner function $F(fx)$ by using the metavariables φ and ψ for the function term *F*. Finally, we see that the inner function has the form $\varphi(fx)$ and the outer has the form $\psi(\varphi(fx))$—both are obviously different. According to Wittgenstein's picture theory we learn about elsewhere (C, 3.1), it is argued that if the forms are different, then their meaning must be different as well (Jacquette 1998: 141).

The theory of types first and foremost was to restrict the use of particular *quantifiers* in propositional functions such as the *universal* quantifier ›all‹ in the barber's statement's part ›*all* those‹ or, likewise, ›*all* villagers‹. In this sense, a universal quantifier traditionally assigns a certain predicate to all objects determined within a statement (Cook 2009: 301). Again, this general assignment is prohibited by the rules of the theory of types, as any universal quantification would violate the different levels of the logical hierarchy. But what about Russell's rule itself? Isn't Russell's theory itself built on a universal quantifier insofar as an assertion is made about *all* types within the theory itself? When we derive the proposition ›There is no such thing as a class of all classes‹ from Russell's theory of types, the proposition *itself* reflects an illegitimate statement *about* ›all classes‹:

> »Wittgenstein points out that Russell's theory of types cannot be stated without violating the very rules that it tries to lay down. This criticism […] does not presuppose Wittgenstein's own view […]. Rather it takes Russell's theory at face value and points out that, even by its own say-so, it is self-refuting« (Bradley 1992: 158).

We now see the full extent of the criticism of self-refutation. His attempt to ban antinomies from mathematical discourses resulted in the emergence of a *new* antinomy, which reflected the impossibility of renouncing universal notions such as ›all‹ or ›every‹. To come into force, this restriction would itself have to contain such a universal notion and thus »degenerate into hopeless antinomies« (Shileds 1993: 14). Simply put, the statement that

> »›Any meaningful statement can talk only about objects of a lower type‹, to be useful, has to restrict *all statements*, of *every type*; but then it violates its own rule and declares itself meaningless« (Gensler 2010: 210).

But then, as Ongley and Carey (2013: 100) rightly point out, we should similarly be disallowed to »enunciate a theory of types« by virtue of Russell's own rules, as he clearly restricted the use of universal quantifiers »only to all the objects of a single type« (Orenstein 2014 [2002]: 59). However, he necessarily *had* to deploy a universal quantifier to *all* objects and classes of *all* types to formulate his restrictive theory. In this sense, Russell posited the absurd statement that

It is a universal law that no universal laws should apply to all levels of types.

As we obviously see, this law contradicts itself. If Russell's theory were true, then its most fundamental law would be meaningless. With regard to his theory of types, he had to accept that it was impossible to express »its own metatheory […] in the logical theory itself« (Hintikka 2009: 282). Russell had to distance himself from his very own rules to establish those rules in the first place; and thus, his »hierarchy of types is rejected as a conception rooted in the postulate of a metalanguage« (Meyer 1996: 314). He therefore had to take up a position we later know as the ›God's Eye View‹—that is, an inaccessible standpoint from which the infinity of all hierarchical types should be adopted. This criticism that Russell contradicted his very own hierarchy is hence closely related to the allegation that this hierarchy was rather ›made‹ than logically necessary. To put it simply, just because

> »these rules were made up by Mr. Bertrand Russell […], must this mean that we can never allow a person to examine his or her own experience? […] If we have […] two human beings, how do we decide who is ›meta‹ to whom?« (Segal 2001: 42).

b) Semantical Hierarchies – Tarski and Putnam

Polish logician and mathematician Alfred Tarski offered a hierarchical solution to the liar's antinomy in formal systems. He knew well about Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem well and about the impossibility to prove the consistency of a formal system *within* the system itself. Tarski interpreted and used these insights

for his own ›Undefinability Theorem‹, stating that arithmetic truth cannot be expressed in arithmetic itself. In its generalised form, the theorem formulates the impossibility to prove a sentence true or false *within* the language system.

What is truth? What is a ›true thing‹ or a true sentence? To answer these questions, Tarski (1983 [1933]: 152) was convinced that »the task is to construct—with reference to a given language—a materially adequate and formally correct definition of the term ›true sentence‹«. He tried to introduce a notion of truth within a formalised apparatus, so that the central problem of the liar's antinomy—namely, how to define whether a sentence can be considered true or false—could be approached from ›outside‹ the sentence. This is why his approach is a *semantical* theory. Tarksi (1944: 341) thus aimed to »specify the conditions under which the definition of truth will be considered adequate from the material point of view«. In his ›semantical theory of truth‹, he introduced such a specification by examining the now famous question under which condition the statement *›snow is white‹* is true.

He, at first, examined the statement ›snow is white‹ as such. We can mark this statement as *X*, so that *X* is the name for the statement ›snow is white‹. At the same time, the statement denotes a particular state; and as such, we will denote this actual statement as *p*. Now, if someone utters the statement ›snow is white‹, he relates a statement's name *X* to a particular statement *p*. If we then ask ourselves under which conditions the statement *X* turns out to be true, we must conclude that ›*X* is true if and only if *p*‹. The correspondence between a statement's name *X* and its denoted statement *p* has been popularised by Tarski (1944: 343) by alluding to the example of someone uttering the statement ›snow is white‹:

> »The sentence ›snow is white‹ is true if, and only if, snow is white«.

Again, *X* can be supposed true if and only if it is equivalent to *p*; so that the relation between *X* and *p* explains »wherein the truth of this one individual sentence consists« (Tarski 1944: 344). However, to understand the essence of Tarski's considerations, we have to elaborate the way in which a *name* of a statement and the statement as such is given—which leads us directly to the difference between something expressed in *object* and *metalanguage*:

> »The first of these languages is the language which is ›talked about‹ and which is the subject-matter of the whole discussion; the definition of truth which we are seeking applies to the sentences of this language. The second is the language in which we ›talk about‹ the first language, and in terms of which we wish, in particular, to construct the definition of truth for the first language« (Tarski 1944: 349 f.).

Metalanguage contains any sentence which is or can be expressed in object language as well as the general logical rules such as set-theoretical notions, basic logical conjunctions, or truth predicates like ›is true‹ or ›is false‹. Furthermore, metalanguage should adhere to the »usual formal rules« (Tarski 1944: 351), so that it can be expressed abstractly as with programming languages, the ›language‹ of set theory, or logical chains. If we now again think about the sentence ›snow is white‹, we can make the Tarskian statement that

›Snow is white‹ is true in the English language, if and only if snow is white.

What Tarski meant with the semantical definition of truth should become even more obvious if we switch the object language that was, in our latest case, English. If we, for instance, think about the same sentence in French, we could state the assertion under which conditions the French sentence ›La neige est blanche‹ in the French language is true in our English metalanguage:

›La neige est blanche‹ is true in the French language, if and only if snow is white.

In this obvious case, English is used as the metalanguage and French as the object language. We thereby see how Tarski was able to avoid the philosophical dubiety of classical correspondence theories. The ques-

tion whether the statement ›snow is white‹ is true in the sense of empirical truthfulness was completely ignored. Tarski would never investigate the real colour of snowflakes as a natural scientist. Quite the contrary, he understands truth solely as a property of sentences. Thus, his truth theory is labelled as ›semantic‹. He never investigated truth in the sense of a statement's and a state of affair's correspondence—for instance, whether the statement ›the sun is white‹ corresponds to a real state of affairs:

> »It holds that his truth-definition has nothing to do with the traditional conception of truth as correspondence to the world. Tarski offers us, instead, an account of how sentences of one language, the object-language, are correlated with those of another, the metalanguage […]. No metaphysical consequences follow from this« (Sluga 2002: 93).

From this assumption, Tarski formulated his ›Undefinability Theorem‹ as a restriction for formal languages.[31] Because of his considerations on object and metalanguage, he concluded that it is impossible to define a semantical foundation for truth predicates within the same hierarchical level—that is, within the object language in use. Tarski (1983 [1933]: 274) notes:

> »It is impossible to establish the semantics of a language in this way if the order of the language of its morphology is at most equal to that of the language itself«.

Tarski claimed that by setting up a hierarchy of object and metalanguage, he would be able to overcome antinomies such as the liar's puzzle. At first, this antinomy occurs if we use exclusively one and the same language for expressing both a sentence as such and its truth proposition—namely, if we implicitly formulate the expression of the truth predicate ›is true‹ in the object language. Remember that we reformulated the liar's antinomy so that we are faced with the statement that ›This sentence is false‹. We now see that both the sentence as such and its truth predicate are combined within one language level, and that, at least from Tarski's perspective, this violation leads to the seemingly unresolvable antinomy. For Tarski, the sentence ›This sentence is false‹—which leads to the liar's antinomy when used in object language—cannot be true according to his own definition of ›truth‹, as the truth predicate is misused and causes a self-referent, antinomic phenomenon. Given Tarski's semantical definition of truth, the liar sentence can therefore never be true in the sense of his language hierarchies:

> »The Liar sentence is not true at any level« (Woods 2003: 241).

Roughly speaking, Tarski forbade the use of truth definitions or truth predicates within a language that contains such truth concepts within itself: no language can contain its own truth predicates. Like Russell, he restricted the use of universal quantifiers with regard to any truth definition within object language (Patterson 2012: 6), and made the term ›are *all* liars‹ impossible. Instead, he proposed the use of a hierarchy of an object language and a metalanguage to overcome the dilemma of the antinomy caused by the liar; in fact, by denying that ›truth‹ is a unitary concept. But is this suggestion, although it apparently gives a successful solution for the liar's paradox, a good one?

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[31] Both in its way of proving and in terms of its consequences, Tarski's theorem is very similar to the path taken by Gödel, as »[i]ts consequences run parallel with the important results which Gödel has reported« (Tarski 1983 [1933]: 274). As Gödel formulated metamathematical operations in terms of mathematical object language, he was able to construct the liar's antinomy within the system of ›Principia Mathematica‹. Tarski thus concluded that, if the notion of truth as metalanguage shall be defined, object language cannot be used to accomplish the definition. Hence, as Rogers (1971: 213) stated, »[i]f T is a consistent theory, then […] the set of true sentences of T are not […] definable in T«. As a formal system's »syntax is too poor to cover semantics« (Woleński 2009: 51), Tarski's hierarchical setting of object and metalanguages alluded to the »distinction between purely syntactic accounts of formal languages and a semantic treatment« (Priestley 2011: 95). In this regard, Horsten (2011: 36) gives a sketch of Tarski's proof in more colloquial terms.

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However, Tarski's promising hierarchical theory exposed the same weaknesses that gave place to criticisms of Russell's hierarchy of types. In this sense, Hilary Putnam admitted that Tarski managed to disenchant the semantical paradoxes' secret by stating that the predicate ›is true‹ cannot be expressed in the object language in use. Instead, the existence of a higher metalanguage solves the dilemma of self-reference and the notion of truth. But what if we want to state something about the metalanguage we are using? What happens if we, as Putnam (1990: 13) did, ask:

> »[I]n what language is Tarski himself supposed to be saying all this?«

To investigate the language in which Tarski is supposed to have formulated his own theory, we would have to translate his proposition ›There exists a hierarchy of languages‹ according to his semantical theory's truth definitions. If the proposition is defined as true, it can only be expressed by using a metalanguage, because we would have to deploy the semantical notion ›is true‹ which cannot be formulated in object language. Now think about Tarski's sentence in his own schema:

›There is a hierarchy of languages‹ is true in L
if and only if there is a hierarchy of languages.

At first, we should clarify what is meant by ›is true in *L*‹ in our context. According to his own theory, Tarski's sentence cannot be expected to be universally true, but only if the statement's name in *L* coheres to the statement in the metalanguage of *L*. However, this very statement should also apply to *all* languages to qualify as a truth theory's basic premises, and not just in the context of *L* and its metalanguage. The dilemma now is that a generalised statement *about* all languages would require a metalanguage of all languages as well. Again, this latter statement must also be expressed in a language of higher order so that this question would eventually open a Pandora's Box of an infinite regress of metalanguages. Putnam (1990: 13 f.) discovered this disastrous weakness in a similar way:

> »Tarski's theory introduces a ›hierarchy of languages‹. There is the object language (this can be any language which is itself free of such ›semantical‹ notions as reference and truth); there is the metalanguage, the meta-metalanguage, and so on. For every finite number *n*, there is a metalanguage of level *n*. These languages form a hierarchy. Using the so-called transfinite numbers, one can even extend the hierarchy into the transfinite—there are metalanguages of higher and higher infinite orders. The paradoxical aspect of Tarski's theory, indeed of any hierarchical theory, is that one has to stand outside the whole hierarchy even to formulate the statement that the hierarchy exists. But what is this ›outside place‹—›informal language‹—supposed to be?«

Did Putnam sound the death knell for Tarski with that shattering question? On the one side, Putnam indicates the inherent paradox embedded in Tarski's approach—that is, the problem of infinite regress created by the construction of the metalanguages' infinite hierarchy. On the other side, Putnam criticises Tarski's notion of truth predicates which apply to all statements and sentences regardless of their actual meaning. Thus, from a philosophical standpoint, Putnam reproaches Tarski for his meaningless notion of truth and diagnoses that »Tarksi's theory fails as badly as it is possible for an account to fail« (Putnam 1994: 333).

But even if we put aside the philosophical value of his truth theory, the »paradoxical aspect of Tarski's theory« as identified by Putnam (1990: 14) leaves a much more unpleasant aftertaste. It seems that Tarski's attempt to ban antinomies through a hierarchical setting of languages and metalanguages created its own antinomy, as he had to speak in a generalised way about all languages to frame his theory's core idea. But thereby, the theory *itself* cannot adequately be measured by its own claims and thus resembles the miserable fate of Russell's hierarchical theory:

»There is always a cut between the observer's language and the totality of languages he generalizes over. The ›God's Eye View‹—the view from which absolutely all languages are equally part of the totality being scrutinized—is forever inaccessible« (Putnam 1990: 17).

	Russell's Theory of Types	Tarski's Semantic Theory of Truth
Problem	ontological antinomy of the barber; ›vicious circle‹ of class definition	semantical antinomy of the liar; definition of language's own semantics
Hierarchical Solution	hierarchy of types	hierarchy of languages
›Blockers‹	no supposed totality of propositions, no recursive definition of classes	no recursive definition of an object language's own semantics
›God's Eye‹ Criticism	Russell as standing »outside language and the world« (White 2006: 10)	Tarski as standing »outside the whole hierarchy« (Putnam 1990: 14)
Antinomy of Theory	Russell's hierarchy as founded on supposed totality of ›all types‹ *itself*	Tarski's hierarchy as founded on generalisation on ›all languages‹ *itself*

Two Hierarchical Systems: *Russell's ontological and Tarski's semantical hierarchy*

Both Russell's and Tarski's hierarchical solutions appear similar in form and shape. Unfortunately, their futile attempts to block the occurrence of antinomies fall at two hurdles. At first, both scholars have been criticised for implicitly taking up a ›God's Eye View‹ position to erect their hierarchies. Why should we believe in Russell's hierarchy, if not founded on the logical laws it presupposes? Why should we accept Tarski's hierarchy, if not founded on the formal language apparatus it theorises about? Finally, both hierarchical theories contradict their own instructions, and thus lead to new antinomies. How should we treat Russell's statement about the hierarchy of ›*all* types‹, if he bans any proposition about totalities? How can we interpret Tarski's statement about the hierarchy of ›*all* languages‹, if such a statement about an absolute totality should be impossible?

In this sense, both Russell and Tarski have made promising attempts at prohibiting the formulation of antinomies by their hierarchical stipulations and, within their disciplinary field, were successful at first. We thus can assume that, if we work within the mathematical or formal-logical framework Russell or Tarski proposed, the statement of antinomic sentences was made impossible. The barber's antinomy could not be stated within the type hierarchy, and the liar's sentence could not be expressed in Tarski's language hierarchy. If we think about hierarchies ›from the outside‹, their foundations crumble. The hierarchies themselves appear as inconsistent or illogical scaffolds, and the circle of the ›antinomy's aporia‹ begins.

1.7 Antinomy's Aporia: Hierarchy and Destruction

Why do hierarchical solutions aimed at preventing ›antinomic destruction‹ fail so often? A brief résumé recaps the hurdles of any hierarchical approach to ban antinomies from the theoretical discourses they occurred in. Hierarchies were constructed to block recursive definitions or statements through levelling. But, unfortunately, these hierarchical orderings require themselves either for a ›God's Eye View‹ from outside the hierarchy, or for a violation of the hierarchical rules. How else could a hierar-

chical theory say somethings about all entities or all statements? This hopeless conclusion might therefore be referred to as the ›aporia of antinomies‹.

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Ontological antinomies are found in ontological statements; semantical antinomies arise within semantical statements. Ontological antinomies occur, as we already learnt, in theories or systems of thought representing entities such as »objects having properties, or classes as members of classes« (Craig 1998: 361). On the other hand, semantical antinomies were determined as stemming from »faulty ideas concerning thought and language« by Ramsey (1925: 352 f.). We then saw how hierarchical rescue efforts failed, and therefore were left with more questions than answers.

Are antinomies solvable? Can their notorious recursive form, the critical disposition, and the circular inversion be broken up to avoid the occurrence of antinomic statements? Any tentative answers to these questions should be expressed with caution for several reasons. We, by now, have investigated antinomies only within *formal systems* based on *formal languages*. Our considerations however lead to the elaboration of antinomic statements in humanist theories; and therewith, to theoretical approaches based on *natural* languages. Hence, what we learnt about antinomic destructions and hierarchical solutions will appear differently in the sphere of the humanities. We also left aside numerous other theories, interpretations, and attempts at solutions for antinomies, and became familiar with a few paradigms instead rather than a comprehensive overview on the history and development of antinomic thinking. Hence, if we now formulate a first conclusion on what we call ›aporia of antinomies‹ as play between antinomic destruction and hierarchical erection, we should keep these limitations in mind.

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What is antinomic destruction? We saw, at first, Frege's logicist dream destroyed by Russell's ontological antinomy. Similarly, Hilbert's formalist programme was convicted of allowing the construction of a semantical antinomy by Gödel. In both cases, antinomies caused the downfall of two ambitious programmes. Because Frege thought that »classes are all ›objects‹ without distinction of type« (Linsky 1999: 293), Russell's ontological antinomy could be formed, as no hierarchy of types could prevent it. Hilbert's formalist programme was shattered in a similar way. Because he wished to see a formal system having »proven its own consistency« (Oppy 2006: 249) as syntactic—and not semantical—proof, Gödel's antinomy could be constructed. Both Frege's and Hilbert's programmes were therefore arranged ›nonhierarchically‹[32]. Neither Frege nor Hilbert differentiated any levels or planes for their notions, and thereby opened up a loophole for recursive definitions of barber-like supposed totalities and liar-like self-refuting sentences.

What is a hierarchy in antinomic thinking? To give back hope to Frege's logicism, Russell introduced his type hierarchy. In the same vein, Tarski presented his hierarchy of languages as the rescue for formal systems after Gödel's corrosive proof. In both cases, antinomies were sought to be avoided through strict hierarchies. To prevent ontological antinomies like the barber in Frege's system, Russell introduced a hierarchy of »(1) terms, (2) classes, (3) classes of classes, and so on *ad infinitum*«, and therefore advocated a clear hierarchical foundation for his ›theory of types‹. Similarly, Tarski (1944: 350) arrived »at a whole hierarchy of languages« consisting of an object language, a metalanguage, a meta-meta-language, and so forth. He clearly attempted to avoid semantical antinomies by hierarchising the apparatus of formal languages,

[32] We should thereby not conflate the hierarchical elements in both theories. Frege deployed »a hierarchy of concepts« (Demopoulos, Clark 2005: 149), but did not consider a hierarchical structuring of classes. Similarly, Hilbert planned the erection of a »hierarchy of theories« (Grattan-Guinness 1981: 498), in which the consistency of mathematics would be subject to »metamathematics, which would fall within the province of metametamathematics, and so on« (Dieudonné 1971: 265)—but did not expect that these metamathematical notions could be expressed in a mathematical language.

so that his »hierarchical approach via meta-languages became the accepted wisdom on the semantical paradoxes« (Rathjen 2004: 193). Both hierarchical solutions are thus strikingly similar. [33]

What is the aporia of antinomies? Although Russell's and Tarski's works created great expectations, both fell under the wheels of ›new‹ antinomies, as Wittgenstein's and Putnam's critiques showed. Russell's solution was refuted by Wittgenstein, who applied the hierarchical ordering of types to the theory of types *itself*, so that Russell's statement about *all* statements and classes violated his own hierarchical rule banning universal statements. Tarski's suggestion was criticised by Putnam, who argued that Tarski's own language created a gap towards his statement about *all* languages. In both cases, these violations have raised the criticism that Russell and Tarski had taken up an impossible ›God's Eye View‹ detached from—and thereby obviously violating—their own hierarchical drafts.

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The aporia of antinomies gives a first impression of the interplay between the occurrence of antinomies and the attempts to avoid them. At first, both ontological and semantical antinomies were discovered in two logical programmes allowing for the construction of recursive definitions of classes and statements. But once a hierarchical solution was set up, the very theories ›behind‹ these hierarchies *themselves* turned out to be antinomic, as the theoretical legitimation of the hierarchical orderings in question again required for recursive definitions about *all* hierarchies.

This aporetic dilemma seems inevitable. The blocking of antinomies requires hierarchies, but any hierarchical order requires an antinomic definition or statement violating the hierarchy itself. Priest's (1979: 220) therefore lost hope that any solution could ever be found:

> »A solution would tell us which premise is false or which step invalid; but moreover it would give us an *independent reason* for believing the premise or the step to be wrong. If we have no reason for rejecting the premise or the step other than that it blocks the conclusions, then the ›solution‹ is *ad hoc* and unilluminating. Virtually all known ›solutions‹ to the paradoxes fail this test and this is why I say that no solution has yet been found«.

Why is it that hierarchies so often fail to avoid antinomic destructions? Why do these hierarchies, once erected, get themselves entangled in new antinomies? Both the barber's and the liar's antinomy caused a vicious circle through the recursive definition they encompassed. Ontological antinomies encompassed universal quantifiers such as ›*all* villagers‹ or ›*all* classes‹, and Russell's hierarchy of types prohibiting such definitions had to be founded, however, on a definition for ›*all* types‹. Likewise, semantical antinomies carried with them similar generalisations about ›*all* Cretans‹ or ›*all* statements‹, and Tarski's hierarchy of languages banning such phrasings was however expressed through a generalisation about ›*all* languages‹. The alleged hierarchical solutions were thus themselves pervaded with antinomic formulations—or, as we saw, required the inaccessible position of a ›God's Eye View‹.

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Imagine a feudal system in the Middle Ages with a clear hierarchy of peasants, knights, nobles, and—as the ultimate power on the highest level of society—the king. In this system, the lowest-ranked peasants are vassals of the knights, who are vassals of the nobles, who, in turn, are vassals of the king. In this societal system, the knights can adopt laws for the peasants, the nobles can pass laws for the knights *and* the peasants, and, with the crown wielding absolute power, the king can enact laws for all social classes. It is not possible to reverse the route of legislation from the highest to the lowest level. To avoid inconsistencies in the legal system—or, in our case, ›antinomies‹ in their literal sense of an incompatibility of laws—,

[33] Russell's hierarchical logic is only slightly different from Tarski's approach. As Church (1976: 756) has shown, »Russell's resolution of the semantical antinomies is not a different one than Tarski's but is a special case of it«.

the king decides to enforce a law prescribing that whenever a member of a social class imposes a law upon a lower class, the lawmaker requires the approval of a member of a higher class. For instance, if a knight sets up a law stipulating tax levies on the peasants, he needs the consent of a higher-ranked noble. In the king's eyes, such a legal regulation would prevent conflicts among the various lawmakers. Hence, the king formulates a law requiring that ›Every law must be approved by a higher power to come into force‹.

The king's law is no different from Russell's and Tarski's hierarchical rules. Both propositions and statements had to be expressed with regard to these Russellian and Tarskian rules in order to avoid the occurrence of antinomies. And just as these rules were themselves afflicted with an antinomic tension, the feudal system's king gets into the same trouble—obviously, by a generalised statement about ›*every* law‹. Imagine that an ingenious noble read the new law, and soon confronted the king with his own legislative undertaking. If the king's law stipulates that every law has to find approval by a higher-ranked power, then the king's law *itself* must be measured in terms of its own stipulation. If only the king had formulated a law regulating solely the affairs of the lower-ranked which would obviously *not* have included the king himself, no contradictory law would have been at issue. But with his new law, the regulatory frame was about to disappear. Which higher-ranked power could approve the king's own law, if the king *was* the ultimate power in the whole system?

This illustration might demonstrate the impossibility of hierarchical solutions to curb antinomic destructions. If the king passed this law according to its own stipulation, it would require an infinity of higher-ranked powers—a position which has been described as ›God's Eye View‹. If the law however came into force, it would obviously create a new antinomy within the feudal legal system. Nothing different happened to the hierarchical solutions of Russell and Tarski.

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Most scholars are in search of consistent statements and would seek to avoid self-contradicting rules or sentences such as the king's law. However, some statements seem to inherently carry with them antinomies which, despite all efforts, cannot be solved. Hitherto, our examinations of these odd statements took place mainly within the discipline of logic and mathematics. Thus, we must think about *if* and *how* antinomic statements have afflicted theories of the humanities, and ask about the occurrence of such logical-mathematical phenomena in scientific statements in the human sciences.

Synopsis — ›The Nature of Antinomies‹

Antinomies are stubborn contradictions violating Aristotle's laws of thought. In contrast to veridical or falsidical paradoxes, they cannot be simply resolved as their strange form ›If *A*, then not *A*‹ appears unbreakable. Ontological antinomies such as the barber's puzzle include notions of entities, classes, and concepts, whereas their semantical counterparts such as the liar's sentence relate to questions of truth, meaning, and interpretation.

To prevent theoretical scaffolds from ›antinomic destruction‹, hierarchical solutions have been suggested that block the devastating constellation of an antinomy's recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion. Unfortunately, these alleged solutions also fell prey to the endless regress of an antinomy's aporia, leading either to ›new‹ antinomies or requiring an impossible ›God's Eye View‹. It seems we must accept this hopelessness.

Contradiction	The propositions *A* and ›not *A*‹ are stated at the same time.
Paradox	A statement is made that contradicts itself, but turns out to be either true or false—and thus can be either veridical or falsidical.
Antinomy	The statement is made that if *A*, then ›not *A*‹, and *vice versa*. Antinomies are recursively formed, include a critical disposition, and lead to a circular inversion.
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Barber's Antinomy	A barber in a village shaves all those, and those only, who do not shave themselves. Does the barber shave himself?
Liar's Antinomy	A liar says: ›I'm lying‹. Is he telling the truth?
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Destruction of Frege's ›logicism‹	Russell shows that in Frege's system, the barber antinomy in the form of the ›class of all classes that do not contain themselves‹ is logically derivable.
Destruction of Hilbert's ›formalism‹	Gödel shows that in Hilbert's programme, the liar antinomy in the form of the formula ›*G* says that *G* cannot be proven‹ can logically be proven.
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Russell's ›hierarchy of types‹	Russell suggests a hierarchical levelling of types—objects, classes, classes of classes—, but Wittgenstein proves his ›rules‹ to violate their own hierarchical order.
Tarski's ›hierarchy of languages‹	Tarski suggests a hierarchical levelling of languages—object, metalanguages, meta-metalanguages—, but Putnam proves his ›rules‹ to violate their own hierarchy.

2 Antinomic Statements

Antinomies pose serious threats to the integrity of scientific theories. They reveal their inconsistencies in blatant ways, they forebode general inaccuracies and defects, they even wreck the very foundation of entire theoretical frameworks. Even though ambitious intellectual programmes such as the Russelian and Tarskian hierarchy were developed, the antinomy's aporia still seems inexorable. With these insights, the dark presentiment grows stronger that antinomies might not only cause devastation in scientific disciplines based on formal systems and languages. What if they do harm to humanistic theories as well? What about all those theoretical approaches formulated in ›natural languages‹? More importantly, what about those theories built on recursive formulations—which, as we already know, are the trap door for any antinomic confusion?

In order to track down antinomies in humanistic theories, we have to ask ourselves in which form these inconsistencies occur in the first place. This question leads us to the way scientific statements present themselves *as* theoretical claims. Hence, for the elaboration of antinomic statements within humanistic theories, the elaboration of *scientific statements* is decisive. We however refrain from giving any philosophical definition of what theories and statements are, as we—together with Tarski (1944: 370)—treat those notions »with all of the vagueness and ambiguity with which they occur in philosophical literature«. In this

sense, an analytical skeleton is suggested which—although differing from some conventional perspectives—takes into account this vagueness and attempts at to remain as broad as possible. At the heart of this perspective lies the idea that the theorist and the theory ›instruct‹ how to read their statements.

Ontological statements are built on the triad of a *theorist*, something being *theorised* about, and the *theorising* as such. For instance, Copernicus as a theorist claimed about the theorised ›earth‹ the theorising claim ›circles around the sun‹. Semantical statements are similar, except from its reference to a *theory* instead of a theorist. For instance, Foscarini—who attempted at vindicating Copernicus' discredited theory—claimed about the theorised ›the statements of Copernicus‹ the theorising ›are in accordance with the bible‹. When considered from this stance, scientific statements may be described as triad of a *theorist* or *theory* which relates the *theorised* to the *theorising*.

Among these statements, some exhibit a peculiar form. They not only say something about the theorised such as ›All wars are caused by economic struggles‹ or ›Political facts should be presented as statistics‹. Some of them furthermore refer to themselves in a particular manner. Think about Aristotle's ontological statement ›Man is a *zoon politikon*‹. We obviously find that the theorised notion ›man‹ also relates to the theorist—in this case, Aristotle—himself. Hence, Aristotle as a theorist became part of what he theorised about. Imagine, furthermore, Aristotle's semantical statement that ›Philosophical theories should pursue truths through contemplation‹. We soon recognise that the theorised ›the truth of philosophical theories‹ refers back to Aristotle's own statement. Consequently, Aristotle's theory of ›a theory's truth pursuit‹ becomes part of its own stipulations. Although theoretically unproblematic in most cases, some of these statements' recursive forms lead to antinomic circularities; and thus, the question of whether or not a theorist or a theory becomes its own ›theoretical material‹ is the baptism of fire of every examination of antinomic statements.

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Russell and Tarski taught that hierarchical stipulations prevent the formulation of recursive statements. However, other than in theories developed as formal systems and expressed in formal languages, humanist scholars mostly use natural languages to make their scientific statements. As we will find, the use of natural languages obstructs the possibilities of banning antinomies through hierarchical scaffolds. Although humanist theories are often built on conceptual or semantical hierarchies, they are—without giving too much away—more prone to antinomies than their formal counterparts. Hence, the following considerations on theorists and theories becoming their own theorised material will be a first step to pave the way for the methodical path we will embark upon to finally find antinomies in theoretical statements.

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Our considerations begin with the question of generality in *two forms of scientific statements* (2.1), whereby a theorist or theory is considered to relate ›the theorised‹ to ›the theorising‹ within ontological and semantical statements. Some statements in the humanities are comprised by recursive forms, if the theorists or theories become their own theoretical feed in *›wag the dog‹: theorist and theory* (2.2). Finally, the question of *recursive statements and natural languages* (2.3) leads to the problematic attempt at avoiding recursive forms through hierarchical stipulations in the style of Russell and Tarski.

2 Overview — ›Antinomic Statements‹

Two Forms of Scientific Statements 2.1 *Both ontological and semantical statements can be presented as triad of a theorist or theory relating ›the theorised‹ to ›the theorising‹.*

›Wag the Dog‹: Recursing Theorist and Theory 2.2 *If a theorist or a theory becomes part of what they theorised about, the scientific statements incorporate a recursive form.*

Recursive Statements and Natural Languages 2.3 *Scientific statements of humanist theories are written in natural language—hierarchies to ban recursive forms thus often fail.*

2.1 Two Forms of Scientific Statements

The form of scientific statements can be distinguished in two ways. Whereas ontological statements mostly express how theorists ›say something‹ about general notions such entities, classes, or concepts; semantical statements relate to general semantical resources such as truth, meaning, or interpretation rules. As scientific statements, a theorist or theory relates ›the theorised‹ to ›the theorising‹. Four brief examples of ontological and semantical statements derived from Plato's, Rousseau's, Newton's, and Einstein's theories reflect this idea.

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Our way to approach a theory's scientific statements is, as the description of the nature of antinomies already has suggested, inspired by the works of analytical philosophers such as Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and Quine at the beginning of the 20th century. However, this inspiration has not enticed us to think about the question of how language and reality are related, or how we could best formulate meaningful statements depicting the real world. We rather feel committed to revive another aspiration which was posed at the beginning of the »Age of Analysis« (Ammermann 1990: 1). Together with early Wittgenstein (1922: 4.112), we can express this analytical quest by holding that

> »[t]he object of philosophy is the logical clarification of our thoughts […]. Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are […] opaque and blurred«.

Standing in the analytic tradition, Wittgenstein clearly alluded to the clarification of language and statements to do so. Our considerations share this ambition. We attempt to both discover and understand antinomies in theoretical statements; and thereby, to clarify the pressing question of what the occurrence of an antinomic statement *means* for a theory. Hence, we need to think of scientific statements solely in the narrow context of the theory it has been uttered within. We neither intend to falsify a theory in some way, nor to empirically validate its theoretical claims. We judge a statement only against the background of its theoretical apparatus.

How do we read scientific statements? Under which conditions do we think of an academic author as being mistaken, and why do we believe certain theories to be veracious and others not? There are countless ways of proving a theoretical approach true or false—whether through empirical validation, through a comparison with other schools of thought, or by examining the soundness of its arguments. We however pursue a slightly different, but not unorthodox way of thinking about theories. For us, the question is whether a theory is free from antinomies and if a theoretical approach presents itself as *consistent*. We therefore again see our considerations inspired by the analytical way of examining statements against their theory's background:

> »A theory […] is a set of fully interpreted sentences […]. In specifying a theory we must indeed fully specify, in our own words, what sentences are to comprise the theory« (Quine 1968: 202).

However, other than Quine's relativist account we are not interested to what extent and under which conditions a theory's statements are meaningful or true, but solely in if these statements accord with the theory's ›general jargon‹. In the case of antinomic destructions, one or more statements contradict the theory itself; and thus, we solely investigate how and why this can happen. To do so, we think about the consistency of theories from the angle of the *theorist* herself and the *theory* itself. Think, as a brief example, of a somewhat naïve astronomer claiming that each star shines; and furthermore, that her theory is proven. Examining the role of the theorist, we at first would think about the statement that

An astronomer observes all stars which are shining.

Is this statement consistent? As we are solely concerned with the statement's consistency and *not* with its empirical validation, we should conclude that no antinomies or other contradictions are to be found. Whether all stars are ›really‹ shining is irrelevant to us. We solely wish to reflect the *theorist* herself in relation to the statement she made. Finally, we would then think about the theory itself by turning our attention to the *semantical statement* that

An astronomical theory proves that ›all stars shine‹.

Is this statement consistent? Again, if we refrain from verifying the statement in an empirical way, we can draw the conclusion that the statement as such does *not* contradict itself, and therefore is free from antinomies. Again, how the theory proves something is not of interest for us. We simply examine the relationship between the *theory* itself and the statement being made.

Both statements are in accordance with Aristotle's three laws of thought. By reflecting both the theorist's and the theory's ›inclusion‹ within a statement, two different forms of how we read scientific works can be distinguished. Within ontological statements, a theorist says something about notions such as entities, classes, and concepts in a generalised way—for instance, if an astronomer speaks about ›all stars‹. Semantical statements relate semantical resources such as truth, meaning, and interpretation rules to a theory's statements—for instance, how an astronomical theory proves its statement in a generalised way. In this sense, most scientific statements are classifiable into *ontological* and *semantical* types[34], and thereby resemble the classification of antinomies we already learnt about. But before we think about the differences between ontological and semantical statements, another remark on the phenomenon of *generality* in scientific statements should be made. As we will see, a theorist or theory can be recursively related to what is theorised about within a statement, and thereby reflect the bridge to how statements present themselves as self-instructive to the reader.

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Most scientific statements suggest some sense of generality or universality of what they say. These may be expressed as laws, universal principles, general cases, or generalised theses. How does this idea of generality condense in the formulation of statements? As we will find, scientific statements are often equipped with prefixed terms such as ›There is‹, ›Every‹, ›At least two‹, or ›Nothing is‹. These terms are broadly understood as *determiners*, and therewith denote »a modifying word that determines the kind of reference a noun or noun group has, for example *a*, *the*, *every*« (Stevensson 2010: 478). In most cases, a determiner in scientific statements indicates some degree of generality or universality of the scientific statement—for instance, in form of what we already know as ›general quantifier‹[35].

Most theories are expressed as general statements about something. They either relate to a class of phenomena, a concept of empirical things, a universal category, or a totality of particular things. They might also express absolute or relative truths, apply to a certain quantity of cases, or allude to a common meaning or interpretation of a given sphere of ideas. In the case of a scientific statement made by an ornithologist, they would presumably relate to a particular class of birds; whereas a psychologist's statement might

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[34] The search for a clear and unambiguous definition of ›scientific statements‹ is and will be in vain, as the term is used differently in different academic disciplines—for instance, in the field of logic, mathematics, linguistics, or philosophy of science in general. In a textbook fashion, some define a statement as »typically a declarative sentence« (Hurley 2012: 2), while others refer to Popper's (2002 [1935]: 82) notorious »basic statements« within falsifiable theories. Although these definitions may be suitable, we however refrain from a clear definition and instead suggest a purely descriptive approach. In this sense, statements express what we early denoted as *›dispositions‹*—that is, »a written or declarative sentence used in such a way that it is true or false« (Epstein 2006: 2)—about *notional* or *semantic resources*.

[35] ›Generalised quantifiers‹ have often been studied from the perspective of logic or mathematical logic in the Russellian sense, but also as linguistic notions in language or semantic contexts in later works (Einstein 1934). The treatment of those quantifiers should, for the following considerations, be understood in this younger tradition.

refer to the general idea of the psychological reality. They finally advocate particular laws, law-like hypotheses, or other general motives suggesting, as Popper (2002 [1935]: 106) would argue, some »degree of universality«. Without following his view on the nature of statements in science, his appraisement of how the notion of generality resides in these statements might however strikes the right tone:

> »According to Popper, theories are stated in the form of generalisations which are put forward as conjectures« (Akinci 2004: 41).

In this sense, the use of general terms will be often encountered when reading scientific statements. In almost each scientific program, a certain degree of generality is regarded as one of the most important cornerstones of building theories of whatever kind. Even if the scientific interest might be aimed at exploring just a single case, in almost any academic undertaking a general narrative is told in the end:

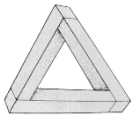
> »Why does water turn to steam when heated? […] If the water is heated sufficiently the molecules acquire enough energy to overcome the intermolecular forces—they fly apart and escape into the atmosphere. […] How does this work? What is it about our little story, and scientific explanations generally, that gives us understanding of the world? […] First, what is explained is a general regularity or pattern of behaviour—a law, if you like—i. e., that water turns to steam when heated« (Friedman 1974: 5).

As we will see, particular notions of generality—for instance, such as ›all‹, ›some‹, or even ›these two‹—allow for the inclusion of the theory or the theorist within the extension of what was theorised about. Hence, our brief remarks on a statement's generality are crucial to the understanding of how recursive forms within statements become possible.

Within scientific theories, the term ›generality‹ often appears as an indispensable and essential part of what is theorised about. The inner logic of theories is founded on the principle of generality, and different theories can thus appear to be of a similar form. But how does a theorist say something in a generalised sense? What is a theory as such made of? The way we will think about theorist and theory can be easily illustrated by considering how *definitions* are constructed, although we obviously do not suggest that theories *are* like definitions. Think, for instance, about a definitory example from an introductory book on the discipline of botany written for ›schools and young persons‹. Its author Jane Loudon (1841: 6) defines the notion ›stem‹ in a few words:

> »The *stem* of the plant is the upright part which rises from the root, and supports the branches laden with leaves, flowers, and fruit«.

Definer: botanist Jane Loudon in 1841



Definiendum: »the stem«

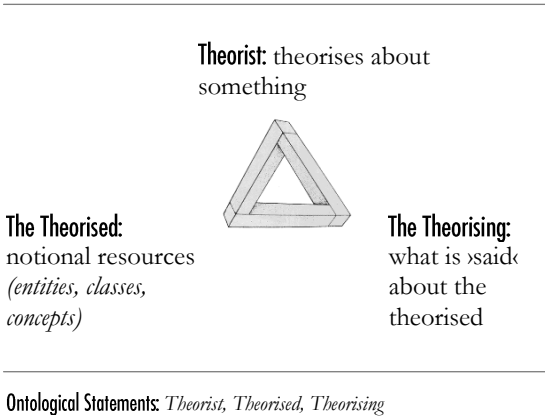
Definiens: »the upright part which rises from the root«

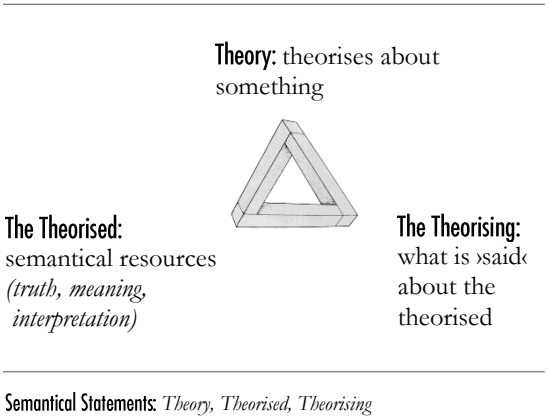
Jane Loudon Defines a ›Stem‹ in 1841: *The tripartite composition of definitions*

The form of this definition is quite simple. First, we can think of Jane Loudon as *definer*. She declared how a stem can be understood in definitory terms. Hence, we can consider her botanical description a definition. Then, the notion ›stem‹ represents the *definiendum* as the term ›what is defined‹. Finally, her description ›upright part which rises from the root‹ given in her definition of what a stem is can be called *definiens*. We will soon see how, in some statements, the definer, theorist, or author becomes

part of what she defined in the *definiendum*. If the *definiendum* contains the definer herself, the door for recursion and antinomic circles is open. In this sense, we can then fairly speak of a self-instructive definition in a broader sense.

Our description of a definition which basically consists of a *definiendum* and a *definiens* resembles the classical understanding of phrasing definitions (Parry, Hacker 1991: 84), except for the inclusion of the *definer* who, in our case, was the botanist Jane Loudon. This simple sketch of how definitions can be given in scientific contexts also illustrates the way we suggest reading and understanding scientific statements in our further considerations. The constellation of a definer who relates the *definiendum* to a *definiens* is thereby similar to our understanding of a theorist or theory referring a theorised to the theorising. In statements of a scientific theory, the role of the definer is taken by the theorist or the theory itself. What we denoted as *definiendum* can be understood as what is theorised—or, slightly shorter, the theorised. As an equivalent to *definiens*, we speak of the theorising.





One final distinction is made. In a scientific theory's ontological statement, the theorist relates the theorised to the theorising. For instance, the famous theorist Nicolaus Copernicus spoke about the theorised ›earth‹ by referring to the theorising ›moves around the sun‹. However, in semantical statements, a theory as such expresses the relation between the theorised and the theorising. For instance, in 1615, the theorist Paolo Antonio Foscarini published a book in which he argued that the Copernican theory was in accordance with the Holy Bible. In this sense, his own theory relates the theorised ›all of Copernicus' statements‹ to the theorising ›are in accordance with the bible‹. These differences are now to be more closely elucidated. For this purpose, we briefly think about four statements derived from the work of Plato's ›theory of forms‹, Rousseau's ›theory of the social contract‹, Newton's ›theory of gravity‹, and Einstein's ›theory of relativity‹. We then find how *ontological statements* relate to how the theorist understood the ›world‹ he theorises about, while *semantical statements* carry out what theories say about the world of truth, meaning, and interpretation. We then will be well equipped to comprehend how a theory or theorist can become part of what was theorised about in the same way way some definitions contain the definer. Finally, some of these theories can be regarded as completely self-instructive, as their statements are framed *generally* in order to include the theorist or theory as such.

a) ›The Theorist and the Theorised‹: Ontological Statements[36]

To understand how a theorist might become involved in what is theorised about, a brief exemplification on how we read scientific statements from the stance of the triad ›theorist—theorised—theorising‹ is presented. Let's think about four well-known ontological statements from popular theories in order to learn more about their form and formulation. Recall, first, Plato's ([1997]: 66) theory of forms in which he stated that ideas govern »all those things which we mark with the seal of ›what it is‹«. Also remember Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (2003 [1762]: 11) political theory in which he argued that »each individual […] may have a particular will contrary […] to the general will«. Then again, Isaac Newton (1729 [1687]: 20) described the gravitational forces exerted between objects insofar as »[t]o every Action there is always opposed an equal Reaction«. Finally, think about Albert Einstein's (1920a [1905]: 8) theory of special gravity in which he postulated that »two events […] will not be synchronous when viewed from a system moving relatively to this system«.

How do all these theorists relate ›their‹ theorised to the theorising? If we consider Plato, Rousseau, Newton, and Einstein as authors of these statements, we can formulate ontological statements about well-defined general *notional resources* about particular *entities*, *classes*, and *concepts*. Plato theorised about the general entity of ›ideas‹, Rousseau about the universal class ›each individual‹, Newton wrote about the concept of ›every action‹, and Einstein about the generalised concept of ›two events‹. Although all these statements adhere to different disciplines and philosophical world views, each of them encompassed a particular description of the theorised. Apparently, ontological statements are built on a theorist's expression of a general notional resource as theorised—or, in other words, on particular entities, classes, or concepts being spoken about in a generalised sense. For instance, a theorist could *generally* refer to the theorised as ›numbers‹, ›mankind‹, or ›the feudal system‹; she might think about classes such as ›all wars‹, ›some particular trees‹, or ›those animals walking upright‹; she could also think about concepts such as ›the human soul‹, ›history‹, or ›the principle of relativity‹.

Theorist, Theorised, Theorising: Ontological Statements

Plato	*Plato thinks about all those things which we mark with the seal of ›what it is‹.*
Rousseau	*Rousseau observes each individual who may have a particular will contrary to the general will.*
Newton	*Newton observes every action to which there is always opposed an equal reaction.*
Einstein	*Einstein observes two events which are not synchronous when viewed from a system moving relatively to this system.*

How to Think About Theorist and Her Theory as a Whole: *The condensation of ontological statements of four famous theories*

In ontological statements, something is generally proposed about the theorised in terms of what we call ›the theorising‹. This metaphor illustrates the way a theorist thinks about the theorised as notional resource—the entity, class, or notion she speaks about—against the background of its ontological constitu-

[36] For a particular kind of statement, we will now apply the label ›ontological‹. Without attempting to pigeonhole these statements as ›exclusively ontological‹ and nothing else, we will keep this classification as vague as possible. The reason is that the notion of ontological statements is not always clearly distinguishable from what we later learn to know as ›semantic statement‹—and therefore is foremost intended to serve as an analytical bridge to extract ontological antinomies in theories of the humanities.

tion. Hence, the theorised could be thought of as a conglomerate of material objects, a sphere of invisible categories and ideas, the mathematical universe, or a social reality of norms and institutions—which always is related to the theorising. For instance, Plato stated that the general entity of ›idea‹ referred to the theorising ›all those things which we mark with the seal of what it is‹. Rousseau thought about the general class of ›each individual‹ by drawing on the theorising ›having a particular will contrary to the general will‹. Newton asserted that his general concept ›every action‹ can be examined by observing its accordance to the theorising ›is always opposed to an equal action‹. Finally, Einstein's general concept of ›two events‹ should correspond to the theorising ›being not synchronous‹. All these theorists declared how the theorised could be thought in terms of the theorising; and as such, we are able to enter the theorist's world by examining their ontological statements.

The idea that theorists refer to a supposed, own world through her theorising is however nothing more than a makeshift for our further considerations. If we assume an ontological statement is comprised of theorists pointing or referring to the theorised of their world, we nevertheless refrain from any existential or metaphysical commitments—even if we hold that the theorised is not really existent in empirical terms or may be interpreted differently by other readers. Its form within ontological statements remains the same, even though for some,

> »statements are true by virtue of the meaning assigned to their empirical terms and […] different people or event the same people at different times may assign different meanings to empirical terms« (Olson 1967: 121).

In this sense, we feel inspired by Quine's (1948: 24) core idea of »expanding our universe to include so-called *possible entities*«—without completely following his further considerations[37]. In this sense, ontological statements solely express the relation between the theorised and the theorising, whereby we obviously are not interested in the theory's actual empirical truth or falseness. In our further examinations of antinomic statements in theories of the humanities, we will thus—at the most—think about ontological statements as representing an author referring to the theorist's world, without investigating any ›real‹ empirical correspondence. Be that as it may, the theorised can however be understood in terms of a theorist's empirical world. As we will see, this admittedly vague description is to be maintained as bridge to our further considerations on recursive ontological statements. Whenever a theorist herself is part of what she theorises about, a recursive form exists which, in the worst case, might lead to an unresolvable antinomy.

b) ›The Theory and the Theorised‹: Semantical Statements

To grasp how a theory can become drawn into what is theorised about, our exemplification on how we read scientific statements from the stance of the triad ›theory—theorised—theorising‹ continues in a slightly different way. Let's reconsider four semantical statements formulated within Plato's, Rousseau's, Newton's, and Einstein's theoretical descriptions. Plato's ([1997]: 368) theory of forms is based on the insight that »it follow[s] that each particular knowledge that belongs to us is in turn knowledge of some particular thing in the world«—that is, actual forms are not accessible to the human being. Rousseau (2003 [1762]: 10) speaks about his brave idea of a social contract by criticising the work of other political theorists who did not dare to raise their voices against the monarchs at the time, and thus reminded us that »if […] writers had adopted true principles, […] it would have been a sad truth for them to tell«. By contrast, Newton (1729 [1687]: 40) mentions that he »was only willing to shew by those examples, the great extent and certainty of the third law of motion«. Finally, Einstein (1920b [1905]: 170) raises concerns about his principle of special relativity, as he carried out that »it is not known whether this principle will remain true

[37] Quine's (1948: 29 f.) suggestions about the nature and existence of universals, properties, names, or attributes is not shared in our definition, as we solely intend to describe a certain form of statement—regardless of if these statements are uttered in a meaningful way.

in the case of other physical laws«. These four theoretical fragments apparently differ to some extent from the ontological statements expressed by the same authors.

How do all these theories express a relation between the theorised and the theorising? To begin with, all statements referred to semantical resources such as *truth*, *meaning*, and *interpretation* in a generalised way, which necessarily stand for the semantics of sentences, statements, facts, principles, or laws. Plato spoke about the theorised by using the resource ›It follows that‹ to indicate the logical derivations and true inferences within his theory of forms. Rousseau carried out a peculiar assumption about the theorised ›sad truth‹ of true principles, which applied generally to any honest political scientist who wrote about the political world. Newton suggested the general provability of ›the great extent and certainty‹ of the law he explained, and Einstein generally raised concerns about the truth of his principle. Although coming from different academic fields, all theorists formulated the theorised in a more or less similar way. In each case, a particular semantic resource such as truth[38] or a particular truth value[39], meaning, or interpretation was assigned or expressed in a general sense. Unlike ontological statements, the theory itself—and not the theorist—is considered saying something about these semantical resources.

Theorist, Theorised, Theorising: Semantical Statements

Plato	*It follows from Plato's theory that each particular knowledge is knowledge of a thing in the world.*
Rousseau	*Rousseau's theory holds that it is a sad truth to tell if political theorists adopted true principles.*
Newton	*By those examples of Netwon's theory, the great extent and certainty of the law can be shown.*
Einstein	*It is not known whether the principle of Einstein's theory will remain true.*

How to Think About Theorist and Her Theory as a Whole: *The condensation of semantical statements of four famous theories*

Other than ontological statements relating a notional resource to the theorising, semantical statements contain semantical resources such as laws, principles, subordinate statements, facts, or sentences expressed in this theory.[40] Recall that Plato related the general semantical resource ›it follows that‹ to the theorising ›knowledge of some particular thing in the world‹. Rousseau famously assigned the general semantical notion of ›sad truth‹ to all unfortunate—but, at the same time, true—statements of political theories. Newton's general semantic resource of ›great extent and certainty‹ was related to the theorising ›those examples‹ of his groundbreaking theory. Finally, Einstein thought about his theory's ›principle‹, which he related to the general semantic notion of ›truth‹—albeit expressed as pessimistic concern.

[38] Truth in scientific theories can be »based upon notions of coherence, consensus, ideal acceptability, warranted assertability, and utility […]« (Niiniluoto 2007: 183). Regarding the truth of sentences, some scholars think that the »meaning of a sentence is something that determines the conditions under which the sentence is true or false« (Lewis 1970: 22). These conditions can be determined within semantical statements. As we recall Tarski's considerations on his semantical theory of truth, promising attempts have been made to determine a »definition of truth« (Tarski 1983 [1933]: 152) in this way.

[39] However, truth values can, but need not to be assumed as integral part of scientific statements. For instance, whereas instrumentalists would deny the possibility of adhering truth values to statements, constructive empiricists acknowledge the truth value of comprehensive theories, and scientific realists obviously postulate the truth of all statements of a scientific theory (Niiniluoto 2007: 183).

[40] In most cases, these ›connections‹ are maintained by the simple word ›that‹ as *complementiser*—or, when indicating the relation of a statement saying something about another statement, referred to as ›subordinate conjunction‹ in the sense of »like *that* […] as in She said that she would come« (Trask 2007: 50).

The theorised to which semantical statements refer is thus the counterpart of the theorist's world of ontological statements. If we use semantical resources such as truth values, meaning relations, or rules of interpretation, we mostly use them to refer other statements of the theoretical corpus; for instance, such as principles, laws, sentences, facts, or knowledge claims. Hence, by formulating semantical statements, we speak *about* the truth, meaning, or interpretation of the theorised or the theoretical ›pieces‹; for instance, by claiming that a statement is true or false, that a fact is or is not proven, that a sentence is or is not meaningful, or that a sign must be interpreted in this or that way. In the further course of our considerations, we will thus regard semantical statements as consisting of semantical resources of a theory's statements, symbols, facts, sentences, or findings—in sum, anything which we can speak about *as* statements. We will however remain silent about the actual nature or essence of this relation. We take no position regarding the question of, for instance, whether Saussure's (2011 [1959]: 67) assignment of »signified [signifié] and signifier [signifiant]« or Derrida's (1997 [1967]: 89) »name […] in a chain or a system of differences« better describes the relation between a semantical resource and a theoretical statement, or if we have to think of this relation as »two-sided entity« (Holdcroft 1991: 66) or »dichotomy« (Lees-Hurwitz 1993: 23). Again, this very broad description is held with regard to our considerations about recursive statements.

How useful is the distinction between ontological and semantical statements? Most certainly, the attentive reader already knows about the parallels to the discussion about distinguishing between ontological and semantical antinomies. We defined ontological antinomies as puzzles relating the notion of entities, classes, or concepts, whereas semantical antinomies appeared related to semantical resources such as truth, meaning, or interpretation. At first, the differentiation between ontological and semantical statements contributes to the view that both forms of antinomies appear in different spheres—namely, the ontological sphere of notional resources of the theorist's world, and the semantical sphere of the theory's sphere of truth, meaning and interpretation.

	Ontological Statements	**Semantical Statements**
›The Theorised‹	*general notional resources* such as entity, class, and concepts—›what is theorised about‹	*general semantical resources* such as truth, meaning, and interpretation—›what is theorised about‹
›The Theorising‹	proposition, definition, claim—›what is said about the theorised‹	how the truth, meaning, or interpretation applies to ›what is theorised‹
Plato's Statement	*Ideas are inherent in all those things which we mark with the seal of ›what it is‹.*	*It follows that each particular knowledge is in turn knowledge of some thing in the world.*
Rousseau's Statement	*Each individual may have a particular will contrary to the general will.*	*It is a sad truth to tell if political theorists adopted true principles.*
Newton's Statement	*To every action there is always opposed an equal reaction.*	*By those examples, the great extent and certainty of the law can be shown.*
Einstein's Statement	*Two events are not synchronous when viewed from a system moving relatively to this system.*	*It is not known whether this principle will remain true.*

Two Forms of Scientific Statements: *How theorists and theories make ontological and semantical statements*

We will use this distinction in our following considerations about antinomies in scientific theories, but we will not neglect the dissent and debate among various scholars regarding this differentiation. In their view, ontological statements could more or less be expressed as semantical ones and *vice versa*; and, moreover, the structure of both forms could be declared as similar.[41] The differentiation between ontological and semantical statements can thus be regarded as more or less artificial[42], just as the distinction between ontological and semantical antinomies. However, as *analytical demarcation*, the distinction between both types will help us to identify and reflect upon the way some statements contain recursive forms. In those cases, the theorist or theory is ›referred back‹ to the theorised—which, as we will find, is one of the essential causes of antinomic confusion.

2.2 ›Wag the Dog‹: Recursing Theorist and Theory

Now that we are familiar with how theorist and theory relate the theorised to the theorising, we turn our attention to a special case of scientific statements. Sometimes, a theorist or theory become part of its own›theoretical material—for instance, if a human theorist theorises about ›all humans‹ or a written theory is about ›all writings‹. In these cases, scientific statements incorporate recursive forms, which, as we know, are the beginning of any antinomic confusion.

From a more general view on how we can read scientific statements in terms of their consistency, we now turn our attention to the special case of certain theories in the humanities. In this sense, we think about ontological and semantical statements in which recursive forms can be found. The mechanism behind this form of self-relation is as simple as it is consequential. As we learnt, ontological statements reflect how a theorist relates the theorised to the theorising, whereas semantical statements refer to this relation from the perspective of the theory itself. In the special cases we consider now, ontological statements represent theorists as *part* of what they theorised about and semantical ones as theories becoming part of themselves. This form of self-reference is not problematic *per se*, but can lead to serious antinomies. We will now understand these statements as containing a recursion.

a) ›Theorist à la Russell‹: Recursion in Ontological Statements

Think about the differences between Newton's and Einstein's scientific statements on the one hand and Plato's and Rousseau's considerations on the other. Each theory could be expressed as ontological and semantical statements which represented a theorist's notional and a theory's semantical resources. What is the difference?

In the tradition of natural scientific theories, Newton and Einstein said something about their world of ›actions‹ and ›events‹. In this sense, they *instruct* the reader of their physical laws about how the world of actions and events is constituted. It goes without saying that the described theorised itself is by no means

[41] If, for instance, someone stated ›Paris sounds nice‹ and thereby referred to a name instead of a physical capital, we, at first, would conclude that a semantical statement is at hand which, however, could be expressed in another way. If we reformulate this statement by deploying a notional resource, we could claim that ›There is a nice-sounding city's name, and this is Paris‹. Seen in this light, the semantical statement appears almost like an ontological statement. As is true for the difference between ontological and semantic antinomies, the forms of both the ontological and semantical statements appear similar. Hence, we will conclude that semantical statements, if any, represent a special case of ontological statements.

[42] It is further argued that several classical problems in philosophy stem from the problem of reifying the difference between ontological and semantic statements, thereby leading to puzzling dichotomies such as the »traditional induction-deduction dichotomy« (Meheus 2004: 95), the »dichotomy between metalanguage and language« (Ward 1995: 210), the »subject-object dichotomy« (Mensch 1981: 93), or the »dichotomy between the organism and its environment« (Morris 2014: 125).

related to the theorist herself. Neither Newton understood himself as ›action‹, nor did Einstein consider himself as ›event‹. As theorists, they saw themselves not as part of the natural scientific world they theorised about. They, as theorists, spoke *about* the theorised and the theorising.

But what about Plato's and Rousseau's ontological statements? If we think about Plato's general definition of ideas as inherent in ›all those things which we mark the seal of what it is‹, we notice that the theorist himself is a ›thing‹ being marked by the seal of ›what it is‹. Hence, Plato's general notion about the nature of ideas related to the theorist himself—or, roughly speaking, the theorist became part of the world of things he theorised about. He could consider himself to be inherited by the ideas he is speaking of. Hence, this ontological statement implied that the theorist himself relates to what he theorised about: Plato *is* part of the general notion ›thing‹ in his own sense.

Likewise, Rousseau stated about the concept of ›each individual‹ that it ›may have a particular will contrary to the general will‹. If we now consider Rousseau as being one of the ›each individual‹ he theorised about, we can conclude that he himself is accordingly part of the ›world of wills‹. Obviously, the ontological statement in which Rousseau as theorist claims something about the world he investigated contains a recursive element: Rousseau became subject to his own theoretical considerations. Again, the theorist become part of the theorised, and is therefore similarly describable by the theorising.

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Recursive forms are found in various theories of the humanities. In all those cases, a theorist's statement *about* something in the world turns out to be a statement about the theorist *herself*; or, more colloquially, a theorist becomes her own theoretical or empirical ›feed‹. Think about a psychologist's theory about human emotions. To define the general notion of human emotions, she would have to put her *own* emotions into the definition. Imagine a sociologist who analyses the way we perceive social norms. Her general analysis of social norms should necessarily account for how she herself perceives these norms as well. In all cases, a theorist's description of the theorised refers back to itself—she described and theorised about *herself*. Finally, as a paradigm of recursive forms in ontological statements, recall the barber's puzzle. If we consider the barber as theorist, he referred the general notion of the theorised ›all villagers‹ to the theorising ›either shave themselves or are shaved by the barber‹. Just like in Plato's and Rousseau's cases, the barber suddenly became part of the world he was speaking about. If we therefore speak of a *theory à la Russell*, we feel reminded to the Russellian barber's antinomy, in which the theorised ›all villagers‹ was related to the theorist ›the barber‹.

b) ›Theory à la Gödel‹: Recursion in Semantical Statements

Presented as natural scientific theories, Newton's and Einstein's semantical statements relate a semantical resource of ›those examples‹ and ›these principles‹ to the theorising. Hence, they instruct the reader to understand their physical laws in terms of their either ›great extent and certainty‹ or, in Einstein's case, their ›unknown truth‹. By no means are these semantical resources of the theorised intended to relate to Newton's and Einstein's statements *themselves*. Similarly, the statement that ›All physical laws are true‹ relates solely to statements carrying out physical laws, but that does not mean that the statement ›All physical laws are true‹ is *itself* true. Neither Newton's nor Einstein's theories themselves became part of the *theorised*; or, in other words, were touched by the semantical resources reflected by the theorised.

But if we now ask about how Plato's and Rousseau's theories present themselvesas semantical statements, the picture changes. Plato's theory of ›each particular knowledge‹ is *itself* a knowledge claim; and thus, the statement that any knowledge ›is in turn knowledge of something in the world‹ applies to his theory *itself*. In this sense, Plato's theory became part of the world of knowledge it theorised about: his statement *is*

particular knowledge. We therefore consider the semantical statement on Plato's theory as recursively formulated. The semantical resources expressed as the theorised also encompassed the theory itself.

Similarly, Rousseau's theory about the work of political theorists is itself a work of a political theorist; and thus, the statement that ›it is a sad truth to tell if political theorists adopted true principles‹ applies to his theory itself. Even though Rousseau's own statement was intended to relate to the theoretical world of *other* political theorists' statements, the general notion of ›political theorists‹ recursively related Rousseau's own work to this disposition. In this sense, Rousseau's theory itself was part of what it theorised about. It did not only speak about other theories, but also about itself.

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Humanist theories can often be expressed as statements exhibiting recursive forms.[43] In these cases, a semantical statement declaring the status of the theoretical world of laws, principles, or facts becomes a statement about *itself*. Imagine a political scientist claiming that ›All political theories are politically biased‹. In this case, she would surely have to assume her own statement to be politically biased as well. Also think about a linguist stating that ›Language is always a picture of reality‹. We would then assume that the linguist's own statement is also a picture of reality. Eventually, we could consider the liar's puzzle as a paradigm of recursive forms in semantical statements. If we think about the problem as ›Cretan liar's theory‹, we see how the semantic resource of the theorised ›the truth value of all Cretan statements‹ was related to the theorising ›is false‹. Like Plato's and Rousseau's statements, the liar's statement becomes part of the totality of ›all statements‹ he talked about.

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Ontological and semantical statements as fragments of theories in the humanities are often formulated recursively. As we saw, the principle of generality—for instance, as in notions such as ›*all* humans‹ or ›*every* theoretical principle‹—often refer back to the theorist or the theory. Hence, a theorist making a statement about ›all humans‹ eventually becomes her own theoretical material. She *is* one of the human world she theorises about. Similarly, a theoretical statement about ›every theoretical principle‹ necessarily refers to itself. The statement *is* one of the principles it speaks about. As we will see, these forms of self-relation stem from the characteristic of *reflexivity*.

So far, we have not been too clear about the notions ›the theorist‹ and ›the theory‹. Obviously, Newton is a theorist, and his statements about the principles of gravitational forces are a theory. However, we will refer to these terms in a more metaphorical sense. The theorist is not to be imagined as an actual living scholar, but rather as symbol of the academic persona, an independent observer, a scientific analyst in general or an objective scholar. Likewise, the theory can allegorically be understood as academic text, as a conglomerate of theoretical statements, or as scientific instructions, laws, or theses. Hence, the image of the theorist *as* theorised rather alludes to the consistency and possibility of a scientific statement, just like the theory *as* theorised reflects the question if a theoretical text accords to its own inscriptions. Finally, a theorist or theory can become ›part‹ of what is theorised if and only if the embedded claim to generality allows for such a referring back; for instance, in the form of ›all political humans‹, ›all political scientists‹, ›every principle of politics‹, or ›no political text‹. Particularly for political theorists, the Foucauldian problematisation of this entanglement—which will be one of our main concern hereafter—should come as no surprise whenever »theorist and theory, politics and political theory, are […] inextricably linked with each other« (Troyer 2000: 221). If we thus consider a *theory à la Gödel*, we are reminded of the Gödel's deployment of the liar's antinomy, in which the theorised ›all Cretans‹ was related to the theorist ›the liar‹.

[43] As true as for the distinction between ontological and semantical statements, the classification of which theories potentially refer back to themselves is often open to debate. In some sense, Newton is himself an ›object of mass‹, and Einstein's own observation may be interpreted as ›event‹.

2.3 Recursive Statements and Natural Languages

Some statements in humanities contain recursive forms, and can therefore lead to antinomies. As we know, recursive or self-referring statements were sought to be avoided through hierarchical rules in the style of Russell or Tarski. *As logicians and mathematicians, the latter theorists however worked with statements expressed in formal languages. By contrast, most statements in the humanities are formulated in natural languages which turn out as unsuitable for being ›ordered‹ or ›levelled‹ by formal hierarchies. Hence, they are more prone to antinomies than their formal equivalents—despite the fact that some hierarchical drafts have nevertheless been accomplished in humanist theories to separate the theorist or theory from what is theorised about.*

If a theorist becomes her own theoretical or empirical feed, if theories become their own theoretical material, statements exhibit the element of *recursion*—and thus are prone to antinomies and their recursive form. In theories expressed in formal languages, these self-relations have been attempted to be blocked through hierarchies; for instance, in the style of Russell's ontological hierarchies of types or Tarski's semantic hierarchies of languages. Although some theories of the humanities similarly entail hierarchical settings, they often fail. But why are formal theories different from humanistic ones? Why is it impossible to avoid the formulation of recursive statements through hierarchical stipulations in these disciplines?

Most of the scientific statements in theories of the humanities are expressed in *natural language*—that is, languages such as English or French. Natural language »possesses all of the universal characteristics of human languages« (Trask 1999: 133), and therefore is strikingly different from *formal languages*. We however began most of our considerations by drawing on the insights of mathematicians and logicians who clearly formulated their theories and approaches in formal languages—that is, a language apparatus compounded of highly abstract signs and notions such as in the case of the ›languages‹ of mathematics or logic. However, on closer inspection, the insights we gained on the nature of antinomies turn out to be similar for both formal and natural languages. Antinomies are regarded as unresolvable contradictions, no matter if we speak a formal or natural language. However, one exception must be made which relates to the attempts to *solve* antinomies. In a nutshell, no hierarchical solution is applicable in the domain of natural languages. Therewith, what Russell and Tarski attempted by setting up hierarchies to prevent formulating antinomic statements is impossible whenever natural languages are used.

To begin with, the reason Russell and Tarski—among uncountable other scholars at the beginning of the 20th century—tried to solve antinomies within formal languages was simple. Through the construction of highly idealised and artificial formal languages mostly being used in what we already learnt as ›formal systems‹, the attempt was carried out to overcome the impreciseness and vagueness of natural languages in which antinomic statements of recursive form could easily be formed:

> »Formal philosophers believed that ordinary language was too vague, ambiguous, and imprecise for doing precise conceptual analysis and that ordinary language had to first be translated into a formal language« (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 449).

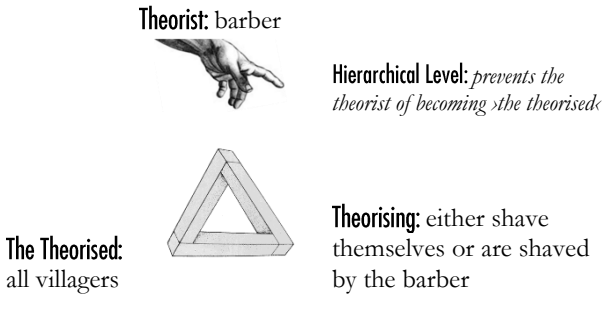
These scholars hoped that if we were to speak in an idealised and hierarchised language no antinomies would ever arise. The formulation of self-relating statements would simply be prohibited through hierarchical rules. However, in the domain of natural languages, this undertaking turned out to be *generally* impossible for one simple reason, which Tarski's own considerations can best show. In his hierarchical distinction between object and metalanguage, he claimed that metalanguage should be ›essentially richer‹ than object language so »that it contain[s] variables of a higher logical type than those of the object-language«

(Tarski 1944: 351). For instance, truth predictions should be assignable solely by use of a higher-levelled metalanguage. If we thus attempted at deploying Tarski's hierarchy to prevent antinomic statements in natural language, we would have to to search for a superordinate metalanguage of the natural language used. Unfortunately, this search is in vain.

According to Tarski (1969: 67), »the common language is universal«. Hence, there is no metalanguage to be imagined which could be superordinate to or higher-levelled than a universal language. Quite the contrary, »we cannot speak any language essentially richer than a universal language« (McGee 1991: 71). Hence, Tarski's theory is not capable of scientifically investigating ordinary, common language. Tarski (1944: 347) himself knew about this problem and, as a consequence, restricted his approach to formal languages. If we thus use natural language to approach antinomies like the barber's or the liar's puzzle, no hierarchy can help us to prevent antinomies. Without the required hierarchically ›higher‹ metalanguage, the liar is still uncontested.

Russell's hierarchical solution suffers the same fate. His theory of types cannot be used as framework to express consistent statements about concepts or classes in natural language, and therefore is limited to a mere »recommendation for constructing a special artificial language […] free from contradictions« (Copi 2011 [1971]: 12):

> »If some system is imposed, such as a theory of types or Tarski's principle that no language can include its own meta-language, the result will not apply to natural languages or therefore any language capable of expressing reflective thought« (Braine 2014: 273).



Blocking the Barber: *How hierarchies formally prevent self-reference*

Russell's and Tarski's approaches told us something about the way we have to formulate statements in the scientific contexts of formal languages—whether they are of philosophical, mathematical or logical form. They intended to block recursive ontological and semantical antinomies from the scientific arena, and thus warned against not differentiating between hierarchical levels within statements such as between the theorist herself and the theorised. However, these hierarchies become useless once we leave the playground of *formal* languages. Crucially, any attempt to translate natural to formal languages is doomed to failure[44]. For this reason, Tarski (1983 [1933]: 164) never tried to apply his hierarchical apparatus to natural languages which, to him,

> »seems to be almost hopeless, at least as far as natural language is concerned. For this language is not something finished, closed, or bounded by clear limits«.

Indeed, the hope to find an ideal language to which any statements expressed in natural language could be transformed or translated was in vain. Eventually, all efforts were abandoned during the second half of the 20th century[45], and the search for hierarchical solutions took a backseat as well. Without intending to meet

[44] In this sense, Floyd (2013: 1033) states that »in order to rigorize the general notion of a formal system, one could not simply write down another formal system. One had instead to articulate a point of view from which we could see the general idea of what a formal system *is*«.

[45] Again, Tarski »seemed to shatter all reasonable hopes for a universal mathematical language and thereby to logicism« (Hintikka 2009: 283), as his approach was based on the assignment of truth values to a metalanguage.

trouble halfway, we have to expect the occurrence of antinomies *because of* the use of natural language in humanist theories. In an ominous premonition, Tarski also knew that the problem of antinomies

> »lies with the universality of ordinary language, which allows one to express in it not only statements about extra-linguistic matters but also about matters of meaning and truth in the language itself« (Feferman, Feferman 2004: 111).

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What was all this talk about hierarchies? Why did we turn our attention to Russell's and Tarski's attempted solutions, if they are useless for natural languages anyway? Furthermore, our work is not driven to suggest any kind of ideal language which could be used to make scientific statements free from antinomies, and neither will we make any claim on how antinomies could be banned from the scientific arena. Finally, not every humanist theory containing recursive formulations is inconsistent. Whenever a theorist becomes part of her own theorised world or a theory relates to itself, we do not necessarily have to fear that antinomic tensions would arise.

Surprisingly, some other theories formulated in natural languages are nevertheless founded on supposed hierarchies very similar to Russell's and Tarski's approaches. Although they obviously are not expressed in the same formal jargon, they seemingly intend to serve a similar purpose. In these cases, the theorist is often framed as ›standing above‹ what she theorises about. Similarly, a theoretical frame can be thought of as a metaphysical scaffold unaffected by what it claims about the world. Two ideas best illustrate this argument; and we again consider two statements which contain recursive forms. First, think about a reflexive observer. She observes her own observation; just to then observe her second-order observation, and so on. This ontological or conceptual ›hierarchy of observations‹ works on the same principles as Russell's hierarchy of types. Second, imagine someone claiming that ›truth is relative‹. Again, an endless hierarchy of reflection about this alleged *absolute* truth of all relative truths would be required. This semantical ›hierarchy of truths‹ obviously resembles Tarksi's hierarchy of languages. Both statements are built on hierarchical orderings; but, as we will find, most of these hierarchical orders are not to be maintained.

Several humanistic theories are built on hierarchical principles similar to Russell's and Tarski's drafts to escape from antinomic tensions which, in most cases, stem from unblocked recursive statements. These hierarchies are however difficult to maintain, as natural languages are unsuitable to allow for any formal ways of levelling or ordering. Hence, despite attempts at setting up hierarchical scaffolds, theories formulated in natural languages seem even more prone to antinomies than their formal counterparts—not only in the sense of yielding new antinomies or requiring a ›God's Eye View‹. This is why, as Tarski (1983 [1933]: 164) paradoxically holds, natural languages »must be inconsistent«; and hence, we should be prepared to unveil severe antinomies statements in statements formulated in recursive everyday language.

Synopsis — ›Antinomic Statements‹

Humanist theories are composed of scientific statements. One way to read those statements is by following the implicite instructions presumed by the theorist or theory itself. These instructions are given in the form of how a theorist or theory relates *the theorised* to *the theorising* within either ontological or semantical statements. Within some of these statements, the theorist or theory becomes part of what is theorised about. The resulting recursive form is also inherent in antinomic statements—and thus, we should treat those statements with caution.

As statements of humanist theories are mostly formulated in natural language, hierarchical solutions in the style of Russell or Tarski fail. Hence, the danger of ›antinomic destructions‹ is even greater than in formal statements. Surprisingly, some humanist theories are however built on hierarchical structures similar to those we already know.

Generality	Most scientific statements are based on some notion of ›generality‹—which can cause recursive forms within those statements.
Scientific statement	A theorist or theory relates ›the theorised‹ to ›the theorising‹.
	•
Ontological statement	A statement comprising the theorisation of a notional resource such as entities, classes, or concepts.
Semantical statement	A statement comprising the theorisation of a semantical resource such as truth, meaning, or interpretation rules.
Antinomic statement	An ontological or semantical statement yielding an antinomy caused by recursive forms.
	•
Natural language	A universal language which evades any form of hierarchical ordering to ban the formulation of antinomic statements.

3 Method of Antinomic Discovery

How can we analyse a theory's statements? How can we find antinomies within these statements? First, we have to translate the tripartite definition of antinomies as being composed of a recursive form, a critical disposition, and circular inversion to a more accessible definition. We then arrive at the image of an ›antinomic figure‹, which—more as an illustration than a description—shows how the three parts of antinomic statements appear as phenomena of natural languages. With the *mise en abyme*, the *antitheton*, and the circling *Penrosing*, three cogs in the antinomic wheel are depicted which form the heart of our search for antinomic statements in humanist theories.

Which theories in the field of International Relations should be investigated in order to find an antinomic figure? At first, theories of world politics can be defined as either *rationalist* or *reflectivist*. The latter group is not only founded on the assumption that social actors constitute and ›make‹ social phenomena, but also that the social scientist and her theory is part of what she observes and analyses. For this reason, we can expect reflectivist theories to allow for recursive forms within their statements. Furthermore, as reflectivists often critically oppose the deployment of positivism within the work of their rationalist colleagues, we may also expect the creation of a critical disposition—which, together with the recursive form, can lead to

the circular inversion of an antinomic statement. Hence, we select three famous theories of International Relations which tend to exhibit both recursive forms and critical dispositions as reflective theories.

With Morgenthau's political realism, Wendt's social constructivism, and the poststructuralist critiques of Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro, three prominent schools of theory are taken into closer examination because they exhibit these two essential features of any antinomy. Finally, these three theories will be read and interpreted from the stance of their intellectual foundations which lay outside the discipline. With Freud's psychoanalysis, Luhmann's radical constructivism, and Wittgenstein's language-theoretical works, three bedrocks of international theorising are considered.

In accordance with our considerations about recursive forms entailed in scientific statements, a methodical path is laid out regarding how to read the selected theories and how to discover antinomies and hierarchical stipulations within their statements. As an example of the path we follow, a brief discussion of Wrangler's peculiar book ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹ is undertaken to then arrive at two paradigmatic antinomies encompassed in his work. Wrangler's self-referential book is, in this sense, the point of departure for our further considerations on unresolvable antinomies of theorisation in the humanities.

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After introducing the *antinomic figure* (3.1), we find International Relations theories mostly formulated as *rationalist and reflective theorising* (3.2), and select three theories of the latter tradition. To analyse these theories and their theoretical foundations, a *methodical path* (3.3) is laid out. As a short demonstration of how to follow this path, Wrangler's book on *how to read a book in the best way possible* (3.4) is scrutinised briefly.

3 Overview — ›Method of Antinomic Discovery‹

Antinomic Figure	3.1	*Each antinomic figure is composed of the recursive form of ›mise en abyme‹, the critical disposition of ›antitheton‹, and a circular inversion called ›Penrosing‹.*
Rationalist and Reflective Theorising	3.2	*We select three cases from the variety of reflective theories for our analysis of antinomic statements—among them, political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralist critiques.*
Methodical Path	3.3	*Our three theory cases and their foundations are selected to be examined with regard to the discovery of antinomic statements.*
›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹	3.4	*Wrangler's book instructs how to read books ›in the best way possible‹. Does it instruct itself? Can it be understood by ›uninstructed‹, improficient readers?*

3.1 Antinomic Figure

The tripartite definition of antinomy was framed in formal jargon. We now translate these three essential parts to a broader, nonformalist language. We then arrive at the ›antinomic figure‹, which will be at the heart of our further considerations. With the ›mise en abyme‹, the ›antitheton‹, and the ›Penrosing‹, the three characteristics of any antinomy are illustrated in a more accessible way.

With its recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion, we found three characteristics of statements which can cause ontological or semantical antinomies of the logical form ›If *X*, then not *X*‹. However, the paradigmatic antinomies of the barber and the liar have largely been the concern of mathematicians, logicians, and linguists; and as such have mostly been treated as phenomena occurring within formal systems and formal languages. Although our investigation of antinomies in humanist theories mostly expressed in natural languages is obviously inspired by these considerations, we inevitably have to leave the terrain of formal science—with all the consequences this entails. We lose the possibility to express statements in an idealised language of different hierarchical levels. In contrast, as we will see, proposed hierarchical scaffolds in natural languages evidently fail. Although these hierarchies are set up slightly differently in systems of natural languages, the dilemma of a ›God Eye's View‹ and the creation of new antinomies is as unavoidable as it is in formal systems.

Unfortunately, we therewith found that antinomies pose the same dilemmas in fields in which natural languages are spoken; they cause the same confusion for scholars of these fields; and they have the same characteristics as in the disciplines of formal systems. Nevertheless, we obviously have to speak about the tripartite definition of antinomies in a slightly different jargon. Just as various notions have already been translated from the study of formal systems to humanist approaches, the three definitory attributes of recursive form, critical disposition, and circular inversion are now to be understood in an *informal* way. Our insights may then be used for the study of humanist problems expressed in natural language, although we started our exploration of antinomies in a more formal language. We will now elaborate the allegorical form of an antinomic figure, which will guide us in our elaborations of scientific statements in the humanities. In this sense, we understand a statement's encompassed recursive form as ›mise en abyme‹, the critical disposition as ›antitheton‹, and the circular inversion as ›Penrosing‹.

a) ›Mise en Abyme‹: Recursive Form

In William Shakespeare's famous tragedy, the protagonist Prince Hamlet plots to take revenge for the murder of his father, who was killed by his uncle Claudius. To prove his uncle's guilt, Hamlet invites him to watch the play ›The Murder of Gonzago‹ in which a king is murdered by his rival in the same way Claudius murdered Hamlet's father. After Claudius sees this scene, he is visibly disturbed and leaves the room—and, therewith, confirms Hamlet's suspicions.

Jan van Eyck's celebrated panel painting ›The Arnolfini Wedding‹ shows an apparently wealthy couple holding hands in a richly decorated room, presumably symbolising a gesture of marriage. On the rear wall of the room, we can see a convex mirror reflecting, again presumably, the painter himself standing with another figure in the doorway. Above the mirror, the inscription *›Johannes de eyck fuit hic 1434‹* can be read on the wall—which might surprise the viewer. Why did the painter decide to write on the couple's room wall that *›Jan van Eyck was here in 1434‹* instead of putting his signature in, say, the lower right corner of the painting as usual?

What is a ›mise en abyme‹? In both Shakespeare's tragedy and in van Eyck's painting, a recursive form can be discovered. The play ›Hamlet‹ itself contains the play ›The Murder of Gonzago‹, in which the very same narrative is told. The painting ›The Arnolfini Wedding‹ itself contains a picture of both the painter reflected in the mirror and his inscription on the wall. Both Shakespeare's play within a play and van Eyck's painting within a painting inspired French author André Gide (2000 [1893]: 30) to remark in his diary that

> »[i]n a work of art I rather like to find transposed […] the very subject of that work […]. What […] I strove for […] is a comparison with the device of heraldry that consists in setting in the escutcheon a smaller one *›en abyme‹*, at the heart-point«.

Gide was inspired by his observation that some artworks contained miniatures, references, or portrayals of themselves. He thus created the notion *›mise en abyme‹* to describe a figure referring back to itself, or inscribing oneself in one's own representation, or embedding the author in his own story. It is therefore similar to the notion of recursive forms in its literal sense, as something that refers backwards or relates back to itself so that

> »the *mise en abyme*, as means by which the work turns back on itself, appears to be a kind of *reflexion*« (Dällenbach 1989 [1977]: 8).

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Antinomic statements are founded on the recursive form we now know as *mise en abyme*. Whenever an ontological statement claims a definition that includes itself, whenever a semantical statement refers to itself, we are faced with this peculiar form. And thus, antinomic confusion is always caused through the impossible separation of the different planes yielded through the *mise en abyme*—for instance, the play and the ›play within the play‹, or the painting and the ›painting within the painting‹. Even worse, the blending of these different planes is brought about through their relation, as one quotes the other, creates a space for interpretation, or symbolises and takes up its core ›theme‹:

> »The term *mise en abyme* refers to a representation or narrative segment which is embedded within a larger narrative, and which reflects, reproduces or mirrors an aspect of the larger primary narrative« (McCallum 2004: 594).

As the *mise en abyme* instructs how »the larger narrative might be interpreted« (Stephens 1993: 105), we now can understand how this narrative of both the barber's and the liar's antinomy grows into a contradiction. The narrative segment of both antinomies is nothing more than one part of the recursive definition of the barber and the liar, expressed in critical the dispositions ›shaves all those who do not shave themselves‹ and ›All Cretans are liars‹. They would usually instruct the reader how to interpret the larger narrative. In these cases, the definition of who shaves the barber and whether or not the Cretan prophet is lying. Unfortunately, the greater narrative and the narrative segment yield an antinomy when interpreted according to the instruction. The *mise en abyme* is hence reflected in the form of the barber's recursion of his own definition and the liar's recursion of its own statement. In sum, both antinomies are built on the recursive form of a picture within a picture, a story within a story, or a play within a play. Or, as Wittgenstein would argue, the Cretan's statement includes »within itself a picture of itself« (Jacquette 2007b: 142).

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In humanist theories, the recursive form of various statements being made is inevitable. If a human theorist theorises about the human nature, she theorises about *herself* as well. If someone thinks about the constitution of societal systems we live in, she thinks about a system she *herself* lives in. Finally, if someone writes about linguistics and language, she *herself* uses linguistics and language to do so. The *mise en abyme* is

thus nothing else than a metaphor for a scientific statement's entailed recursive form which, like a vicious mechanism, is inevitable whenever a theorist or theory is being fed by what was theorised about.

b) ›Antitheton‹: The Critical Disposition

After the Battle of Crocus Field, in which Macedonian King Philip II defeated the army of Phocians and Athenians, a peace treaty between both parties was concluded. To negotiate the accord, an embassy was dispatched by Athens consisting of Philocrates, Demosthenes, and Aeschines. However, in the aftermath of the ›Peace of Philocrates‹, Demosthenes become a decisive opponent of the agreement, and also raised bitter accusations against Aeschines and his alleged neglect of Athenian interests. When it came to a trial, Demosthenes ([1912]: XVIII: 265) tried to convince the court of his righteousness and moral integrity by blaming his adversary:

> »And now review the history of your life and of mine, side by side […] and then ask these gentlemen which fortune, of the two, each of them would choose. You taught letters; I attended school. You conducted initiations; I was initiated. You were a clerk; I a member of the Assembly: you, a third-rate actor, I a spectator of the play. You used to be driven from the stage, while I hissed. Your political life has all been lived for the good of our enemies, mine for the good of my country«.

Demosthenes chose the rhetorical figure of the ›antitheton‹ to create an opposition between his own fortunate person and the contemptuous character of his counterpart. However, this figure was not similar to the classical composition of a thesis and its logical antithesis in the sense of presenting ›*A*‹ and ›not *A*‹. Instead he presents the contrast between two counter pieces which—while not relating to each other *as* contradictions—had the effect of *becoming* contradictions. For instance, his claim that ›I attended school‹ should, as contradiction to his oration, be phrased as ›You did *not* attend school‹. Instead, Demosthenes chose to accuse Aeschines by holding that ›You taught letters‹, and thereby achieved the very same effect by constructing his »malicious antitheton« (Hermogenes [2005]: 231). In this sense, English writer and literary critic George Puttenham (1869 [1589]: 219) gave an apt description by comparing the figure with a characteristic role of »the Quarreller«, as

> »which to answer the Greeke terme, we may call the encounter, but following the Latine name by reason of his contentious nature, we may call him the Quarreller, for so be al such persons as delight in taking the contrary part of whatsoeuer shalbe spoken«.

As musical figure, the *antitheton* therewith was used to »express contrasting phenomena« (Barsky 1996: 118) such as the interplay of dissonant and consonant, or homophonic and polyphonic passages. Particularly as a musical-rhetorical figure in baroque music, the antitheton characteristically denotes a

> »musical passage in which we express opposing affections, as Giacomo Carrissimi contrasted Heraclitus's laughing with Democritus's weeping, or as Leonus Leoni expressed: ›I sleep, but my heart wakes‹« (Bartel 1997: 199).

In its logical form ›If *A*, then not *A*‹, an antinomy usually exhibits two contradicting counterparts. With the figure of the *antitheton*, this integral element of antinomic statements can be broadened. If an ontological or semantical statement is being contemplated, the critical disposition we now know as *antitheton* leads to an unsolvable confusion about this disposition's two counterparts. In contrast to a formal interpretation of this contradiction, the *antitheton* shows us that contradicting opposites need not necessarily be un-

derstood as negation of the disposition. We can rather assume that the critical disposition can be put forward by the statement's author herself. If she, for instance, claims that ›Every sentence expresses a fantasy, not a truth‹, she creates a critical disposition based on the alleged opposition ›fantasy‹ and ›truth‹. Using the figure of the antitheton, she thereby states that the opposite of fantasy *is* truth; and thereby deliberately negates any other potential opposition such as, for instance, ›falseness‹, ›lie‹, or ›untruth‹. Hence, the logical form of the antitheton might be formulated as ›If *A*, then not *B*‹, but however under the condition that *A* and ›not *B*‹ are argued to be contradictory.

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The humanist theories we elaborate in our further considerations are mostly founded on the figure of the *antitheton*. As critical theories, these theories' authors tend to create an opposition between a renowned theoretical statement and their own, novel statement neglecting the first one. However, therewith they suggest a binary understanding of the created disposition. If, for instance, someone theorises about man's drive for power, she creates an opposition to the image of man as reasonable being. If someone thinks about the constructiveness of social systems, she thereby expresses a refutation to the perception of social kinds as given, objective facts. If, finally, someone considers language as performative, she denies the concept of language as means of representation. In all these cases, the critical disposition does not necessarily expose a logical negation, but rather a ›created‹ opposition.

c) ›Penrosing‹: Circular Inversion

After Swedish artist Oscar Reutersvärd painted two-dimensional ›impossible figures‹ of an appearing three-dimensional staircase, British psychiatrist Lionel Penrose and his son (1958: 31)—although unaware of Reutersvärd's work—popularised one of these impossible pictures. This became known as ›Penrosre stairs‹, which literally show

> »the impossibility in terms of such a phenomenon as a continually descending or ascending path […]. Each part of the structure is acceptable as representing a flight of steps but the connexions are such that the picture, as a whole, is inconsistent; the steps continually descend in a clockwise direction«.

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What does the artificial word ›Penrosing‹ mean? Think about the endless journey a viewer is forced to embark upon once she, in her mind's eye, starts taking the first step down the stairs. After a few steps, she might lose her narrow focus on the single steps and be pulled out to see the whole picture—which then leads to an immediate shift in perspective. If we started walking down the stairs, a sudden envisioning about the stairs as a whole makes us realised that we should be walking up the stairs—and *vice versa*. In M. C. Escher's famous painting ›Ascending and Descending‹, he takes up this idea of the Penrose stairs more artistically. The picture shows the impossible staircase as constructed within a castle building, whereby several monks are either ascending or descending. Escher skilfully is able to make the viewer become

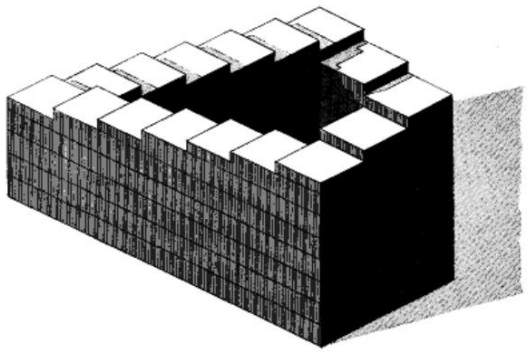

Fig. 3. Continuous flight of steps: shadowed drawing.

No Ascending, No Descending: *Penrose's ›impossible staircase‹ painted in 1958*

> »repeatedly thrown back in frustration as well as in fascination with the endless self-referring loop that circulates […] through his or her attempts to process the work consistently, completely, and without contradicting established frames of visual understanding« (Caraher 1992: 10).

For us, the artificial word ›Penrosing‹ relates to the phenomenon that the two parts of a statement's recursive form—what the statements says through its critical disposition and what the statement therewith says about itself—are undecidably opposed to each other. Both potential answers mutually define each other, and thereby swing like an endless pendulum between those two possibilities.

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In antinomic statements, *Penrosing* refers to the impossible connection between a recursive form such as the Penrose stairs and a critical disposition such as ›not walking down‹ or ›not walking up‹. If both recursive form and critical disposition lead to a circular inversion between part and whole, disposition and whole definition, or member and totality, we speak of *Penrosing*. We can, for instance, regard the Penrose stairs‹ as a total, allegedly complete picture, and thereby draw a comparison to the supposed completeness of ›*all* villagers‹ or ›*all* Cretan statements‹. The direction of the stairway however seems to change whenever we focus on some *individual* steps—that is, whenever we decide to go ›up or down‹. Just as the critical dispositions ›does not shave himself‹ and ›does not tell the truth‹ change the direction of the whole definition of all villagers and all Cretan statements, the direction of Penrose's stairs seem to change whenever we shift perspectives between each level.[46] Hence, *Penrosing* can be understood as what we referred to as circular inversion. Finally, walking on this staircase is like endlessly rethinking the vicious circle of an antinomy such as the disturbing›chain of thoughts in any attempt of solving the liar's statement: *›If he lies, his lie is a truth; but then, he is truly lying; but then, his lie is a lie again; … ‹*. Is this chain of thought any different to endlessly walking on Penrose's stairs?

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In humanist theories, the phenomenon of *Penrosing* can be found whenever the constellation of both recursive form *and* critical disposition lead to an endless, undecidable circling between two alternatives, answers, or potential solutions. If a scientific statement forces the reader to conclude such a circular inversion is *Penrosing*, the theory ›behind‹ this very statement must be scrutinised thoroughly.

3.2 Rationalist and Reflective Theorising

Equipped with the concept of the antinomic figure, we are prepared to elaborate scientific statements in the discipline of International Relations. With the distinction between rationalist and reflective theories, our attention is drawn to the latter group. Those scholars think of their own role as theorists and their theory's status as being part of the world they theorise about, and hence appear as prone to recursive forms. Furthermore, these stances are often built on critical dispositions towards the rationalist's deployment of positivism, objectivism, or a positive science. If both the recursive form and the critical disposition allow for the Penrosing effect, an antinomy lies at hand. We thus select political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralist critiques as cases of our investigations of academic contributions whose statements are, at least partly, founded on recursive forms and critical dispositions.

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[46] It may be helpful to think of the *single* Cretan prophet as equivalent to one step on Penrose's staircase. If we went down this step, the whole staircase would appear as impossibly leading up—and *vice versa*. Similarly, if we think of the single Cretan's prophet statement as a lie, the ›totality‹ of all Cretan statements would appear as truth—and *vice versa*. Finally, the barber's antinomy is marked by a similar connection between ›single barber‹ and ›all villagers‹.

The question of how we should study world politics has been debated since the incipience of the discipline. A first attempt at disentangling theories and approaches of the discipline led to the idea of politics as play between different levels of an individual, state, and international »image« (Waltz 1959: 12). This suggestion brought about a rethinking of how we observe and analyse our field of inquiry. In this sense, David Singer (1961: 77)—who, together with Waltz, popularised the ›level-of-analysis problem‹ in the 1960s—claimed that

> »[w]hether in the physical or social sciences, the observer may choose to focus upon the parts or upon the whole […]. Hey may, for example, choose between the flowers or the garden, the rocks or the quarry, the trees or the forest, the houses or the neighbourhood, the cars or the traffic jam, the delinquents or the gang, the legislators or the legislative, and so on […]. Yet the choice often turns out to be quite difficult«.

The ›level of analysis‹ problem grew after its intellectual birth in the early 1960s, and served as an anchor point for countless subsequent political studies. However, the famous debates held in the field of International Relations hardly fitted to the level logic. Theorists did not only ask about how politics was ›made‹; for instance, from the nature human beings, from nations' foreign policies, or compelled by the international system's anarchical structure. They were rather interested in how theories and methods should be applied to meaningfully study the subject. At the beginning of the 1990s, Hollis and Smith (1990: 1) gave a nice illustration of how theoretical approaches may be read from the angle of an ›inside‹ and an ›outside‹:

> »One story is an outsider's, told in the manner of a natural scientist seeking to explain the workings of nature and treating the human realm as part of nature. The other is an insider's, told so as to make us understand what the events mean, in a sense distinct from any meaning found in unearthing the laws of nature«.

This distinction is also a good point of departure for understanding the different angles through which the story of International Relations can be told. In particular, the ›inside—outside‹ demarcation suggesting an »explaining-understanding contrast« (Hollis, Smith 1990: 4) illustrates a core problem of the discipline as social science. In this sense, theorists have to clarify how they see their own position with regard to the object of research. They also have to consider how their theories relate to their subject. Theoretical statements from the ›outside‹ are made by theorists as independent and unaffected observers, whereas ›inside‹ statements are formulated by a theorist embedded in political and social life.

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Although studying the status of international institutions, it is argued that Robert Keohane (1988) implicitly drew on this ›inside—outside‹ distinction. Alluding to Herbert Simon's (1985: 295) notion of »substantive rationality«, Keohane argued that *rationalist* theorists formulate hypotheses about an actor's behaviour within a given, well-defined environment. He then contrasted this programme with *reflective* scholars, who emphasise an actor's reflection about the way she acts within her environment. Keohane however saw his distinction mainly as a guiding line to understand social actors and the relation to institutions, and remained silent about the role of the social scientist as such.

By taking Keohane at his words, we thus ask about the implications of the rationalist's and reflectivist's self-image *as* theorist. If human beings or social actors are framed as *generally* according to the rationalist or reflectivist description, these theorists *as* human beings and *as* social actors must be describable in the very same way. At this point, Hollis and Smith's image of an ›inside—outside‹ distinction appears in a new light. Can rationalists be assumed as telling the story of world politics from an outside perspective, whereas reflectivists observe the international arena from an inside stance? And what would we think about a reflectivist scholar who claims to study from an outside perspective, but thereby obviously contradicts her own status as reflectivist agent?

Recall that Keohane argued that rationalists find actors as being confronted with institutions, and acting rationally towards them. By contrast, reflectivists consider these actors as being constitutively embedded within these institutions. If we now—and only if the rationalist or reflective theory in question ›allows‹ for such a conclusion—think about international theorists *as* social agents acting and relating towards their research subject, widely known social scientific problems arise. A rationalist would, according to her descriptions of social actors, find a given, independent confrontation her object of research. A reflectivist would have to consider herself as being embedded within the object of research she observes and analyses. These problems are nothing new:

> »In the social sciences, reflexivity often refers […] to the problem of accounting for the role of social scientists as participants in the cultures they study. Beyond the question of the personal biases that may affect research, social scientists need reflexive awareness of their impact on the objects of study« (Calhoun 2002: 404).

What Keohane originally described as attributes of social actors and institutions can, on that note, be understood as a description of the International Relations theorist's role. Whereas scholars arguing for rationalist theories see their own perspective as independent and isolated from what they observe, proponents of reflectivist theories acknowledge their own view as constitutive and embedded for their observation. We thereby expand Keohane's distinction to the question of theorist and theory themselves, and consequently consider most approaches in the field of International Relations as either rationalistic or reflective in a broader sense. At this point, we not only come back to the ›inside—outside distinction‹, but also the paradigm of ›explaining—understanding‹:

> »The IR theory debate translated the positivistic-interpretative and explanation-understanding poles in social science into a theoretical dichotomy. Keohane […] coined the concepts ›rationalistic‹ and ›reflective‹ theories« (Ekengren 2002: 17).

For International Relations theorists, the classification of theories as either rationalist or reflective is nothing new, but mostly considered an attribute of describing social actors rather than the social scientist or her theory. If this view is broadened towards the question of theorist and theory, a first distinction can be drawn:

> »Neo-liberalism and neorealism share a set of assumptions that permits them to be classified as rationalist approaches; by way of contrast, reflective theories (for example, critical theory, feminist theory, postmodern theory, and normative theory) are those theories that see theory as constitutive of the social world« (Smith 2000: 37).

In most cases, reflectivist approaches are also opposed to positivism in general. The reason for this is simple. Think about positivist accounts as »empiricist and […] phenomenalist, in claiming to keep close to observational data« (Bunge 1996: 9). The observations positivists make are considered to be given facts from an outer world, which exist independent of the observing theorists. As such, the proximity of rationalists and positivists is evindent, and International Relations theories are no exception[47]:

> »If we take the reflective theories of International Relations—critical theory, postmodernism, some feminism and constructivism—and look at their commonalities, what we find is that they all share just one thing: an aversion to the scientific world of positivism« (Harrison, Callan 2013: 105).

[47] As rationalist approaches, all those theoretical stances should be considered which are built on the »view of rationality as a theoretical axiom« (Freyberg-Inan 2016: 62). This also includes positivist methodologies and, at least partly, idealist-liberal conceptions.

In this sense, we find the theories of neoliberalism, neorealism, and rational choice approaches as being framed from a rationalistic stance and a clear commitment to positivism. In contrast, more recent approaches such as constructivism, critical theories, and feminist and poststructuralist critiques clearly take a reflectivist stance—and, in most cases[48], stand in opposition to positivism. Furthermore, we also regard political realism and »Morgenthau's critical stance toward rationalism« (Kahler 1998b: 924) as rather reflectivist theory with a critical stance to positivist methods.

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Two paradigmatic comments on the status of politics may help at this point. With Kant, we refer to a scholar who described the subordination of politics under reasons and rationality. In contrast, Plato maintained that politics is one of the highest goods superordinating human reason, life, and scientific examination. Hence, for the conception of rationalist theorists, a description of Kant's view might strike the right note:

> »In Kant's view, moral principles actively influence politics by analogy. Pure principles of right impart the universal form of moral reason to political practice […]. The two paradigmatic institutions embodying political right are publicness *(Öffentlichkeit)* and the republican civil constitution […]. [T]hese political institutions […] exhibit the decidedly organismic attributes of reciprocity, harmonious unity, and rational purposive spontaneous activity« (Cheah 2003: 92).

Politics is seen as subordinate to reason, the reality of human and social life, and institutions founded on the principle of rationality. In this case, politics is ›tamed‹ and, even more important, seen as objectively accessible through scientific inquiry. For reflectivist scholars, another judgement must be passed; and what would be more appropriate to describe the primacy of politics than an apt description of the Greek *polis* in Plato's sense of ›critical politics‹:

> »The Greeks recognized little distinction between state and society. Society was political society. Their art was public art, just as their most important athletic competitions, the Olympics, were organized around competition between *poleis* and aroused strong patriotic sentiments […]. The subordination of economic life achieved its fullest expression in Sparta, where the citizens, the Spartiates, devoted their time to military and political activity […]. The *polis* was an educational institution […]. As the poet Simonides says, ›The *polis* educates man‹ […]« (Klosko 2006: 6).

Resembling Plato's thought, such a description best reflects the reflectivist's stance. Politics is seen as ›superior‹. The social life, institutions, economics, and even academic reflection adhere to the highest aim of politics. Every aspect of life and academic reflection appears to be overlaid by the political sphere. As such, the theorist herself is part of the object of research she studies.

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Our attention has been drawn to reflectivist theories of International Relations according to Plato's superordinate idea of the political sphere for a simple reason. We aim to discover an antinomic figure in theories by analysing ontological and semantical statements in social theories. Reflectivist theories are, as the name suggests, built on the foundation of reflectivism; and we thus expect both theorist and theory to allow for recursive forms within their statements. With their critical stance towards rationalism and positivism, these theorists might also have created critical dispositions—for instance, by rejecting or scrutinising of positivism as »positive philosophy« (Comte 2009 [1851]: 407). We will study these recursive forms

[48] Wendt's (1999: 39) version of social constructivism is, for instance, a theory comprised of reflectivist and positivist elements.

and critical dispositions to eventually search for circular inversions as the strange effect that ontological or semantic statements are entangled in an endless vicious circle or reasoning.

We decide to elaborate three reflectivist theories in order to find an antinomic figure. Some of these theories should rather be understood as ›critically rationalist‹ than ›purely reflectivist‹, and others solely contain reflectivist elements by being founded on the pillars of positivism. However, as we will find, they nevertheless can yield an antinomic figure because of the possibility to see the theorist and theory as part of what they theorised about; and, furthermore, to understand their theoretical contribution as creating a critical disposition the perspectives of positivism.[49] We thus decide to select Hans Morgenthau's ›political realism‹, Alexander Wendt's ›social constructivism‹, and the poststructuralist critiques by Richard Ashley, Robert B. J. Walker, and Michael Shapiro as material for our elaborations. It is argued that all these theories allow for recursive forms and the distilling of a critical disposition—and are thus prone to antinomic statements.

3.3 Methodical Path

In our further examinations, six theories of the humanities will be elaborated—three of them as genuine theories of International Relations, and three of them as their foundational works. The suggested methodical path helps us to read these theories as scientific statements, and to finally find a way to examine the occurrence of antinomies within these statements. It is argued that the path we take is implicitly or explicitly shown by the ›hidden‹ instructions given by theorist or theory, in which they show how to think about the empirical world.

a) Three Cases and Their Foundations

Three theoretical families in the discipline of International Relations, namely political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism, appear inclined to exhibit antinomic tensions for two reasons. At first, these approaches allow for the expression of statements containing recursive forms. Although essential to any antinomic formulation, this characteristic is not necessarily different from other theoretical schools in the academic field. Secondly, we can understand these works as expressing a critical disposition—for instance, by creating a ›negative‹ opposition against most rationalists' deployment of positivism. As we will see, this critical conception often stands in an inner opposition to how the theorist herself and the theory itself is conceptualised.

However, we will not only turn our attention to these three cases. As a matter of fact, most International Relations theories have been inspired or translated from approaches beyond the discipline's frontiers. It is argued that political realism has mainly been inspired by psychoanalytic and drive-theoretical thinking. Similarly, constructivism was born as biologist and sociologist approach. Finally, poststructuralist critiques stem from the tradition of those philosophical works galvanised by the ›linguistic turn‹. Although all these approaches gained notable prominence within their own disciplinary borders, they all have been slightly ›changed‹ *as* political theories. We therefore decide to first elaborate a theory's foundation, before carrying out a thorough examination of the international theory as sucht. To this end, the Freudian theory of psy-

[49] As true as for the nature of the Great Debates, the critical dispositions being created within theories and during the history of International Relations theorising can surely not be narrated as ›one against the other‹, as »the great debate approach advances a too tidy construction of the field as a series of binary confrontations« (Malchow 2016: 22). However, the confronting character of the debates as such at least suggests the critical stance of some scholars towards mainstream concepts, which now is roughly distinguished through the opposition of rationalist and reflectivist theories.

choanalysis is to be investigated as the foundation of political realism, Luhmann's constructivist theory of social systems as bedrock for social constructivism, and Wittgenstein's philosophy of language will be seen as the foundation for poststructuralist works. The reading of these foundational works can then be used as ›instructions‹ to understand the selected International Relations theories. Furthermore, these theoretical foundations will help us to read the political theories in a consistent way—for instance, if rationalist-positivist elements are being intertwined with reflective interpretations. Finally, all three theories of International Relations will be, as far as possible, seen from the perspective of their intellectual fathers. Political realism is read in the sense of Morgenthau's ideas, whereas Wendt's work is considered in the context social constructivism. As proponents of poststructuralist critiques, the contributions of Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro are scrutinised.

b) How to Discover Antinomic Statements

The methodical path to finding antinomic statements within the three theoretical cases and their foundations is laid out in the nature of the antinomy itself. Whenever Aristotle's three laws of thought are violated by unresolvable contradictions, a statement exhibits an antinomy. The theories incorporating such antinomic statements are then threatened by what we called ›antinomic destruction‹—a harsh contradiction leads to critical scrutiny of the whole theoretical apparatus, because something is wrong. Even worse, hierarchical stipulations or ›rules‹ to prevent the formulation of antinomies can create new antinomies or require an impossible ›God's Eye View‹.

To examine the antinomic character of these theories means to examine the scientific statements made by the theorist or the theory. Theoretical ideas can be expressed as ontological statements based on general notions such as entities, classes, or concepts, whereas semantical statements carry out general semantical resources such as truth, meanings, or interpretation rules. Whenever we think of a theory's statement, we pose two crucial questions. How does the theorist herself ›instruct‹ us to read her own theory? And how does the theory contain ›instructions‹ on how to be read itself? The first question allows for the formulation of a theory's ontological statements, whereas the second forms the foundation of condensing semantical statements. As such, these statements are argued to depict a theorist's and theory's core tenets. Without them, statements appear as philosophically empty:

> »For example, the statement ›God exists‹, although grammatically complete, is not an intelligible philosophical claim in abstraction from the particular theory in which it occurs, since it could occur in an definite number of radically different theories« (Dye 1967: 50).

At the heart of our examination, these theoretical statements are being brought to the gallows. With the antinomic figure as judge, a thorough investigation is carried out on *whether* and *how* they incorporate the recursive form of a *mise en abyme*, a critical disposition or *antitheton*, and the circular inversion of the *Penrosing*. If these three parts make a whole antinomy, any ontological or semantical hierarchy attempting at avoid or prevent the crucial antinomic statement ends either in new antinomies or the misguided assumption of a ›God's Eye View‹. These mechanisms will be traced.

For the sake of the argument, the statements at stake will often be illustrated as short sentences. These examples may help to better understand what the theorist or theory ›really‹ say from their *own* sentences, and best reflect the antinomic deadlock. Again, we refrain from any methodological or theoretical guidelines when thinking about these sentences. In contrast, we will limit our own interpretation of a theorist's or theory's sentences solely to the implicit or explicit instructions already given by virtue of the recursive forms. For instance, the liar's antinomy has often been expressed through the short sentence *›This sentence is false‹*. If we were faced with a theory claiming that, for instance, language is always used to represent

things, we could—with good faith—express the short sentence *›This sentence represents things‹* as a statement in accordance with the theory itself. Again, these sentences are mere examples for a theory's statements.

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The methodical path we follow to analyse antinomic statements is laid out by the considerations given above. We analyse Morgenthau's theory of political realism through the eyes of Freud's psychoanalysis; Wendt's social constructivist account is seen as inspired by Luhmann's radical constructivism; and finally, the poststructuralist critiques of Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro are examined against the background of Wittgenstein's language-theoretical insights. After sketching their ›critique of rationalism‹, each theory will be briefly laid out, before its ontological and semantical statements are examined with regard to the occurrence of an antinomic form.

	Ontological Statements	**Semantical Statements**
Recursive Form of Scientific Statements	— the theorist's ›instructions‹ — ontological statement on notional resources such as entity, class, or concept *Is the theorist considered to be ›part‹ of what she theorises about?*	— the theory's ›instructions‹ — semantical statement on semantical resource such as truth, meaning, interpretation rules *Is the theory considered to be ›part‹ of what it theorises about?*
Antinomic Figure	— examination of the antinomic figure inherent in the condensed ontological statement *›Mise en abyme‹: What is the recursive form?* *›Antitheton‹: What is the critical disposition?* *›Penrosing‹: What is the circular inversion?*	— examination of the antinomic figure inherent in the condensed semantical statement *›Mise en abyme‹: What is the recursive form?* *›Antitheton‹: What is the critical disposition?* *›Penrosing‹: What is the circular inversion?*
Supposed Hierarchical Solutions	— examination of a supposed ontological hierarchy as solution *Is the ontological antinomy attempted to be resolved through a hierarchical solution in the style of Russell?* *Are ›new‹ antinomies yielded or is a ›God's Eye View‹ assumed?*	— examination of a supposed semantical hierarchy as solution *Is the semantical antinomy attempted to be resolved through a hierarchical solution in the style of Tarski?* *Are ›new‹ antinomies yielded or is a ›God's Eye View‹ assumed?*
Theory Cases and their Foundations	Freud's psychoanalysis—Morgenthau's political realism Luhmann's radical constructivism—Wendt's social constructivism Wittgenstein's language critique—Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's poststructuralist critiques	

Methodical Path: *How to find antinomies in scientific statements*

3.4 ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹

A first, surely exaggerated example is given on how theoretical programmes can be afflicted by antinomies. In this sense, we will think about a book written as an instruction on how to read and understand books themselves. This example can be seen as a baptism of fire, as the methodical path suggested is being pursued for the first time. After we condensed the book's statement, we find two antinomies which are impossible to resolve. As such, the strange book may be understood as blueprint for all theorists and theories giving instructions on how to read the ›empirical world‹—but, at the same time, instruct themselves in an impossible way.

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In 1860, A. Wrangler wrote a book entitled ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹. His work was not intended to introduce the simple grammatical or morphological rules necessary to read a book, but rather to present a guideline of particular considerations a reader should make before reading a book—such as basic rules of how to accomplish the goal of fully comprehending and understanding the texts printed in a book. In this sense, Wrangler (1860: 8) seemingly knew about the merits of ›correct reading‹, but bemoaned that

> »[t]here are scarcely any who place before themselves the settled aim, to get the highest good from a book, by reading it in the best way; and if they did do so, there is no one to tell them what that way is: even in the seats of learning such a guide is not to be found«.

Wrangler's shattering diagnosis therewith becomes as plain as his honourable objectives. At first, he intends to provide an instructive guide helping unskilled readers to learn how to read a book appropriately. Apparently, no such guide could be found. Therefore, Wrangler decided to fill this gap with his own book. He was convinced that almost nobody was able to read a book in such a way that he or she could fully grasp the book's content or meaning. If readers ignore parts of a book, if they skip important passages, if they won't take breaks from reading, or if they do not read with ›pencil and paper‹ to memorise the book's thread, they would miss the work's main message. In such a case, an improficient reader reads a book *in the wrong way*—and what the author actually meant escapes her attention. To avoid such unfortunate occurrences, Wrangler wrote his book ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹, so that each untalented reader would be able to recognise her own mistakes.

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What is the ontological statement Wrangler implicitly made in his book?[50] At first, there was no book or guide to be found which served the purpose of Wrangler's instruction. This he wanted to change. However, his intention is recursively formed, as his book is part of what it theorises about—the instruction about all books is itself a book. Hence, his own book is apparently part of the general class of *all* books it uses as ›empirical feed‹; and therefore, we witness the *mise en abyme* of a book instructing itself.

Furthermore, he created a critical disposition by stating that the *antitheton* ›instructs itself—is instructed by Wrangler's book‹. Either a book gives *itself* instructions on how to be read in the best way, or one has to read Wrangler's guidelines first. For instance, a book could be self-instructing by giving specific reading instructions on how its chapters are structured or which abbreviations it uses, but will never give any general instruction on how to read *any* book in Wrangler's sense. Hence, whereas Wrangler's book is equipped

[50] Obviously, our considerations of Wrangler's book have been somewhat exaggerated for clarity's sake. However, the train of thought clearly indicates a strong contradiction that resembles the dead end in which we have sometimes been stuck when faced with the barber's or the liar's antinomy.

with instructions on how to read a book in general, all others either instruct themselves *or* are instructed by Wrangler's book. We can therefore fairly assume the ontological statement that

Wrangler's book instructs all those books which do not instruct themselves.

We are now taken aback any time we think about this ontological statement. Obviously, the statement made refers to the actual purpose of Wrangler's book—namely, that his guide puts unskilled readers in the position of being able to read uninstructed books. But what about Wrangler's book itself? Is it possible that his book provides instructions for itself? In attempting to answer this question, we soon get caught in the *Penrosing* of a vicious circle we already know from the notorious barber's antinomy. If Wrangler's book does *not* instruct itself, it should—as uninstructed book—be instructed by Wrangler's book. Then, it should instruct itself. This is an antinomy, which inevitably stems from the assumption that Wrangler supposed his own book as the *only* one instructing how to read uninstructed books. Hence, either a book is uninstructed or one holds Wrangler's book in one's hands. We are faced with a supposed totality of books assignable either to the class ›is instructed by Wrangler's book‹ or ›instructs itself‹.[51]

We are faced with an ontological antinomy. As undecidable as the barber's puzzle was, Wrangler's book appears as a logical predicament if we hold it to its word. However, the ontological statement ›Wrangler's book instructs all books that do not instruct themselves‹ is not the only logical hurdle when thinking about this literary piece. There is worse to come.

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What is the semantical statement implicitly assumed in Wrangler's manuscript? Wrangler attempted to put improficient readers in the position of being able to fully comprehend a book's content and meaning. He thereby recursively defined a book as a literary piece that contains a specific message or suggests a definite meaning, whereby his book *itself* is in accordance with this general semantical resource of meaning. As for all other books, Wrangler's work also is something to be learnt or something to be understood; and thus, a *mise en abyme* lies at hand reflecting a book's ›complete‹ meaning being defined by referring back to itself.

Moreover, he set up a critical position. A book's message or meaning is solely accessible to those who know *how* to read a book. Conversely, if someone does not know how to read, she might misunderstand certain passages due to her improficiency. For the improficient reader, a true meaning or true message appears as ›false‹ or ›incomplete‹. Hence, the *antitheton* ›is understood correctly—appears false to you‹ is established. Now, if an improficient reader attempts to read Wrangler's book, she will soon be confronted with Wrangler's statement that an improficient reader will read any book in a false way. To think about this situation, we can make the semantical statement that

An improficient reader reads: ›Everything you read appears false to you‹.[52]

Does the statement appear true or false to the improficient reader? If the reader—who knows about her own improficiency—thinks the statement to appear false or incomplete to her, it follows that she expects the *antitheton's* ›counterpart‹ to be true. Then, she must assume that everything she reads appears true to her. But then, she would have to conclude that the statement ›what you now read appears false to you‹ is is in fact appearing true to her, and that hence, everything appears false to her. This is where the reader faces

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[51] For the sake of the argument, there is no class such as ›is not instructed‹—similar to the barber's antinomy which does not know the class ›is not shaved‹. Just as everyone is always shaved in the barber's village, every book must be instructed from Wrangler's perspective.

[52] This semantical statement could be expressed in various other ways. Imagine that someone read the sentence ›This sentence appears false to you‹. Also, think about the statement that ›Wrangler's book holds that no improficient reader can truly understand a book's sentences‹. In all these cases, we are faced with a variety of the liar's antinomy.

the vicious circle of *Penrosing,* trying to decidewhat is true and false to her—but, as a consequence of the circular inversion, never finds a conclusive answer.

Wrangler was obviously convinced that the readers he addressed were unable to fully penetrate and understand a book's content, as they read incorrectly or inaccurately. For this readership, Wrangler wrote his book that instructs people how to read ›truly‹. But here lies the crux of the matter. Wrangler's publication itself is a book that obviously needs to be read before it can be truly understood. Imagine the paradoxical situation in which one of the improficient readers he addressed now holds Wrangler's book in her hands. As soon as she read Wrangler's statement about improficient readers, she would never be able to decide if what she just read appears true or false to her.

We have witnessed a semantical antinomy. It is as inconclusive as when we addressed the liar's antinomy, and we now find trapped ourselves in a similar circle of reasoning. Both in the wider concept and in one of its statements, Wrangler's book appeared to be another example of how antinomies can represent a serious obstacle. The ontological statement ›Wrangler's book instructs all books that do not instruct themselves‹ and the semantical statement that a reader reads that ›Everything you read appears false to you‹ are unveiled as instances of both the barber's and the liar's antinomy.

	Wrangler's Ontological Antinomy	**Wrangler's Semantical Antinomy**
Antinomic Statement	*Wrangler's book instructs all books that do not instruct themselves.*	*An improficient reader reads: ›Everything you read appears false to you‹.*
›Mise en abyme‹	— class of ›*all* books‹ accords to Wrangler's book itself — general notion of supposed totality	— meaning of ›everything you read‹ applies to Wrangler's book itself — general resource of ›all truths‹ or ›all meanings‹
›Antitheton‹	›instructs itself—is instructed by Wrangler's book‹	›is understood correctly—appears false to the reader‹
›Penrosing‹	a book is both instructed and uninstructed	a book's meaning appears both true or false

What Makes Wrangler's Book An Impossible Manuscript: *›How To Read a Book in the Best Way‹ hides an ontological and a semantical antinomy*

How would Russell and Tarski deal with the dilemma of Wrangler's book? Russell's ontological hierarchy of types would surely prescribe different hierarchical levels for objects such as ›books‹ and properties such as ›do not instruct themselves‹ instead of the universal determiner supposing a totality of ›all books‹. Hence, the class ›do not instruct themselves‹ cannot be a member of itself. The statement that Wrangler's book instructs all books that do not instruct themselves is simply meaningless, as »there is no such notion« (Russell 1908: 249)—his book cannot keep its promises.

Tarski's ›semantical theory of truth‹ would analyse the way in which Wrangler adopted truth predicates in his book. Like Russell, Tarski would suggest a semantical hierarchy prescribing different levels of languages. By alluding to the semantical antinomy of the improficient reader, he would point out that Wrangler employed the truth predicate ›appears false‹ within object language. If Wrangler wrote his book as a ›meta-book‹, no antinomies should occur. If ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹ was written in meta-language, he could easily refer to a statement in object language by providing a truth predicate for the

statements in question. However, Wrangler mixed up expressions in object language such as ›improficient reader‹ and ›uninstructed books‹ with metalanguage notions such as ›appears false‹. Hence, Wrangler's antinomic sentences again appear as meaningless, as they do not adhere to Tarski's hierarchy of languages.

Did Wrangler think about his book as applying to Russell's class ›does not instruct itself‹? Is Wrangler's ›instructional text‹ itself written in a Tarskian metalanguage, whereas all other books are formulated in an object language? If so, he would have had to assume his book was readable without any instructions—but this would then contradict its own stipulation that *no* book can be read without instruction. That being the case, two conclusions can be drawn which are already known to us. Either, we have to assume an infinite—and therewith impossible—hierarchy of instructional books or of meta-books, or Wrangler's book has to be regarded as only being readable from a ›God's Eye View‹. As such, the impossible hierarchy of classes of instructions or levels of meta-instructions could be seen as closed and completed. Both conclusions are untenable.

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The undecidability of Wrangler's book is surely over-caricatured for the sake of the argument. However, it gives us a good idea of how to think about ontological and semantical statements given in theoretical texts. It is argued that the theories we encounter—Morgenthau's, Wendt's, and the poststructuralist works of Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro—are equipped with theoretical instructions to make the reader understand what has been theorised about and how to read their empirical world. In some cases, these instructions also relate to the theorist's and theory's own conceptions, and therewith often emerge as an antinomic figure. The theorist becomes part of what he theorised about, and his theory is part of what it instructed.

Synopsis — ›Method of Antinomic Discovery‹

Which statements of theories of International Relations might be plagued by an inherent ›antinomic figure‹? With those theorists holding that politics is superordinate to and determinative of reason, reality, or language, a critical disposition is developed which makes any statement of recursive form ›vulnerable‹ to antinomic tensions. Following a methodical path, the examination of antinomies in political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralist critiques—and, furthermore, their theoretical foundations—will be at the heart of our considerations. Giving a taster of these critical appraisals, the notable self-referring book ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹ is scrutinised in accordance along this methodical path.

›Mise en abyme‹	A statement contains a recursive form—a definition referring to itself, or a statement relating to itself.
›Antitheton‹	A statement contains a critical disposition so that an opposition is implicitly ›created‹.
›Penrosing‹	A statement's conclusion leads to a circular inversion—both opposing ›answers‹ are equally justified.
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New ›level of analysis‹ problem	In Plato's sense, politics is either seen as ›superordinate‹ to reason, reality, and language—or, in Kant's sense, as ›subordinate‹.
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Wrangler's book	Wrangler wrote a book about how to read a book in the best way. Does this book also instruct on how to be read itself? And which improficient reader is able to read it?

C DEVELOPMENT

1 The Antinomy of Political Realism

As one of the forefathers of International Relations theorising, Morgenthau shattered the way in which scholars thought about world politics. His ›political realism‹ was a thunderbolt for liberal thinkers and their ideals of reason and rationality. The novelty of his account was his blatant view on human nature, far removed from tradition of enlightment and reason. Morgenthau radically evinced the inevitable drive for power inherent in every human being, and thereby put his finger on the wounds of the alleged liberalist credulity advocated since Kant's ideas of a perpetual peace. Morgenthau set an academic movement in motion which strongly advocated a relentless revealing of these immanent drives—and their manifestations in the political world.

And although Morgenthau stands in the tradition of realist thinkers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, or Hobbes, his theory's main theme of a power drive alludes to the philosophical heritage of one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. After Freud published his drive-theoretical ideas, psychoanalysis has echoed through various disciplines over the decades—among them, sociological and political approaches. In this sense, Morgenthau's political realism can be read as a ›psychoanalysis of world politics‹. The sphere of politics is, from this stance, a mere consequence of individuals struggling for power, regardless of whether one ›analyses‹ wars, conflicts, peace agreements, or trade relations.

On closer inspection, however, Freud's theory contained an antinomic figure inherent in the academic reflection of man's universal drive. As Freud thought of human drives as grounded in the subconscious which is not open or accessible to oneself, he set an impossible hurdle for observing and analysing those drives. If we do not know how our own drives affect our thought, behavior, and perception, how then can we know that these drives ›really‹ exist? Is Freud's theory about the subconscious a scientific fact, or a mere manifestation of Freud's own neurotic, driven resentments? When thinking about these questions, we soon arrive at an ontological and a semantical antinomy of Freud's work. The first reflects the dilemma of a theorist who claims to observe the hidden drives of human beings, but who then would have to observe his *own* inaccessible consciousness to preclude any objections that his own observations might be driven and lost in reveries as well. The second antinomy alludes to the status of Freud's assumed ›psychic reality‹. If what we take to be true is merely our *own* psychic reality driven by subconscious wishes and needs, the insight about this very fact may be driven and ›unreal‹ as well. As such, Freud's own theory of psychoanalysis rather appears as a testimony of a subconsciously driven analysand told on an analyst's couch.

The proximity of Morgenthau's political realism to the Freudian ideas of subconscious drives now threatened to doom its theoretical consistency. Founded on Freud's theoretical examinations, Morgenthau's ideas of a hidden drive for power, its distorting and blinding effect on reason and rationality, and the grounding of truth as dependent on rather subjective, partial political realities turned out to be similar, unavoidable pitfall. Just the way Freud had to face serious antinomies in his work, Morgenthau now was taken to task.

At the heart of Morgenthau's ontological antinomy lies the question of how the human drive for power could be discovered in the first place, if this universal disposition affects the way we think, perceive, and observe as an immanent blind spot. For Morgenthau, the struggle for power blinds humans towards reasonable and rational behaviour and decisions—as his passionate critique of Kant's proclaimed supremacy of reason and *ratio* easily reveals. However, if we follow Morgenthau entirely, we must assume that he himself is driven by the struggle for power as a universal constant. Thus, his own considerations and observations may also be blinded by the blurring effects of the hidden desire for power. The question, whether Morgenthau's observations *about* the universal law of power are themselves blinded *by* these very laws, remains undecidable. If Morgenthau was able to discover his own power blindness, his observation would turn out as complete and unblinded. But would he then not contradict his actual appraisal that *every* observation is inherently and universally blinded by the drive for power?

The semantical antinomy in Morgenthau's oeuvre alludes to a similar point. By holding that truth and falseness is always bounded to power and historical realities, he emphasises one of realism's core assumptions. What was regarded as true two centuries ago might appear false nowadays. What could be interpreted as politically meaningful in the Middle Ages might now turn out to be senseless and outdated, as power distributions and historical contingencies have changed. But then, Morgenthau's realist statement that ›All truth is determined by power‹ seems to represent an undecidable truth itself. Is the statement itself just a snapshot of the post-war era, influenced by the political conditions at that time? Might the statement's truth *itself* change in the face of new power constellations? Unfortunately, we got stymied if we try to answer these questions. If Morgenthau's statement about the relation between power and truth is *itself* true, it could turn out to be false in the face of new historical and political conditions. But how can a potentially false statement claim something true?

Both antinomies present steep hurdles if we take Morgenthau's drive-theoretical assumptions seriously—and we do so by reading his theory from a Freudian perspective. Both Morgenthau and Freud see themselves faced with unresolvable antinomies, which arise whenever we take their theories at their word and judge both approaches by their own assumptions. If we feed their theories with themselves as ›empirical food‹, the unveiled antinomies arise. They thereby not only reflect noteworthy contradictions within drive-

theoretical conceptions of the individual and social life, but rather allude to larger metatheoretical and philosophical problems ›behind‹ such approaches.

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After presenting the academic work of *Freud and the roots of political realism* (1.1), we will identify an antinomic figure in his drive-theoretical descriptions. The discovered antinomies do thereby not only play a role for psychoanalytic thinking, but also shatter the theoretical foundations of *Morgenthau's ›political realism‹* (1.2).

1 Overview — ›The Antinomy of Political Realism‹

Freud and the Roots of Political Realism	1.1	*Freud's psychoanalysis can be read as the foundation of Morgenthau's political realism—with its drive-theoretical insights at the heart.*
Morgenthau's ›Political Realism‹	1.2	*Morgenthau's theory contains an antinomic form derived from the assumption of the ›universality of the power drive‹ and the amalgamation with its own theoretical reflection.*

1.1 Freud and the Roots of Political Realism

Freud's groundbreaking work on the constitution of the subconscious and human drives can be read as the foundation of Morgenthau's political realism. Thinking about the inner-psychic mechanisms of ›transference‹, Freud argued that both what we observe and what we hold as true and real is determined by our drives and subconscious needs. However, when it comes to the theoretical reflection of these insights, an undecidable claim must be made. Freud as theorist observes, and psychoanalysis as theory is developed as true and ›real‹ academic work—and thereby, both theorist and theory underlie their own descriptions as their own ›empirical food‹. This causes unresolvable antinomies.

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Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud surely was one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. Among his most famous works is the analysis of the human psyche, which he saw determined by what he popularised as ›the subconscious‹. For good reasons, his theory can be seen as a paradigm of new thinking, although the »admiration for Freud and his work combined with scepticism of […] many, if not most, academic psychologists« (Hook 1990 [1959]: 213) should clearly be acknowledged. Psychoanalysis was and still is a contested theory, which many have labelled as ›unscientific‹ or ›methodically questionable‹. However, these allegations will not be subject to our further considerations, although we admittedly intend to unveil several problematic theoretical assumptions within Freud's groundbreaking works. We will rather read the Freudian theory against the background of its deployment in political thinking, and, more precisely, its foundation for the theoretical school of political realism in International Relations.

Why we consider Freud as the intellectual father of Morgenthau's idea will be examined elsewhere.[53] The reason why Freudian ideas met great approval across disciplinary borders can however be understood more generally. Although the original motivation was surely to develop a psychological theory of the human psyche, Freud's theory also comprised the individual's external relations, and thereby opened the doors to the socio-political sphere. Psychologist Heinz Hartmann (1990 [1959]: 14), who devoted his academic life to the advancement of psychoanalytic thinking, accordingly remarked that Freud's theory was *not* limited to the study of the internal human psyche:

> »Psychoanalysis […] has never considered ›inner-psychic‹ processes only, but also, and not only accidentally, includes the consideration of the individual's interactions with the environment«.

It is thus hardly surprising that the philosophical tenor of psychoanalysis was taken up by numerous scholars within their studies. The theory's openness to the social, cultural, and political sphere attracted attention from neighbouring disciplines, although its theoretical core is still to be found in the key theme of the subconscious insofar as

> »the conflictual nature of the psychic life seems to be primary and spills over into the social and political realm« (Kovacevic 2007: 50).

Psychoanalysis is a genuine *psychological* theory. And although there are various interpretations of all its facets, Freud's thought must primarily be understood as a theory of the human psyche. This remark should be no means suggest any limits or boundaries beyond which psychoanalysis may be meaningless. However, any adaption and advancement of Freud's theory should be undertaken with respect to its origin. Freud himself showed how psychoanalysis could be used to understand environmental phenomena. And after Freud himself paved the way for a psychoanalytic understanding of sociality and politics, »social and political theory has consistently drawn on his ideas« (Lapping 2011: 1). As the last peak of these adaptions, the critical and more radical approaches of the social and political life by the Frankfurt

[53] A brief description of the Freudian foundation of political realism will be elaborated soon (C, 1.2b).

School and its Freudian-Marxist theories and by Lacanian ideas (Frosh 2010: 187 f.) gained wide prominence. And these academic developments are surely not the end of the story:

> »Freud frequently reiterates that psychoanalysis has a bright future regarding ›further discoveries‹ about the individual, civilization, and their connections« (Levine 2000: 1).

a) Psychoanalysis and the Critique of Reason and Rationality

It is argued that the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis can be read as a critique of the classical conception of reason and rationality. In this sense, psychoanalytic thought is based on the conviction that the human mind becomes a plaything between the subconscious and its almost mechanical *repression*. Only if we gain *insight* into these mechanisms, are we able to reasonably and rationally live and think in healthy accordance with our psychic life. To understand Freud's implicit critique of reason and rationality, we have to comprehend the notions of the subconscious, repression, and insight.

The way in which Freud exercised criticism of traditional ideas of reason or rationality can be traced by unveiling how he »divided the mind into three psychic areas« (Tonnesmann 2005: 165) within his structural model of the human psyche. This division runs along the spheres of the ›Id‹, the ›Ego‹, and the ›Super-Ego‹—and thereby, as we will see, forms the foundation of the popular critique of the human mind as a rational and veracious apparatus.

In Freud's view, the human psyche's Id encompasses all drives, wishes, and needs in their purest ›natural‹ form; but those parts of the psyche are inaccessible to the individual. The Id—striving for nutrition, driven by sexual desire, tending to aggression—demands its impulses to be realised by the Ego, which itself has to mediate these impulses towards the Super-Ego. The latter demands compliance with cultural norms und social rules, and therefore is in most cases diametrically opposed to the Id. Freud's structural model of a trisection of the Id, Ego, and Super-Ego hence always articulates the tension between the instinct-driven, animalistic Id, the norm-enforcing, societally formed Super-Ego, and the Ego permanently attempting to conciliate both instances. In short, the Id urges the immediate satisfaction of needs, and the Ego tries to translate these demands in a socially acceptable way.

How does the reasonable and rational human mind cope with these subconscious wishes? In a developed stage[54], the individual begins to defer her needs by virtue of *repression*. Thus, the Ego converts the wishes and requirements of the Id ›into reality‹, and thereby reflects »the idea that in each individual there is a coherent organization of mental processes« (Freud 1960 [1923]: 8). However, as time goes by, the Id's ›original‹ needs become more and more disguised, as all its wishes and demands have been transformed into socially appropriate, rational claims by the Ego. The long and the short of it is that the Id's world results in a complete lock-out from the individual's conscious thought. These drives are now subconscious, but determine daily life.

In this sense, Freud (1960 [1923]: 5) mentions that »[t]he repressed is the prototype of the conscious for us«. An individual's psychological development, beginning with the initial state of the need-driven Id in the first year of life, thereupon successively exerting the instances of the Ego and the Super-Ego during its

[54] As a new born, the psyche contains solely the Id with its most basic needs such as nutrition, water, sleep, and warmth, but also oral pleasures such as sucking and suckling. Within the first five years of life, the Ego and the Super-Ego gradually develop besides the Id. Now the child is able to suppress the Id's needs and desires for short times. It learns, for instance, that when it feels hungry, this drive needs not to be satisfied immediately.

childhood, results in an adult person torn between her infantile drives, on the one part, and her moral and social restrictions, on the other:

> »Human beings are […] condemned to a struggle with our inner forces […]. Doomed to anxiety, to the thwarting of at least some of our driving impulses, we experience tension and conflict. We are endlessly defending ourselves against the forces of the id, which stand ever alert to topple us« (Schultz, Schultz 2005: 68).

In 1895, Freud together with his colleague Josef Breuer published several case studies including one on the psychoanalytic treatment of the patient Bertha Pappenheim[55]. This case, which later became of paradigm for the successful cure of ›hysteria‹, can be seen as an illustration of both Freud's image of the human and the psychoanalytic conception of the inner life.

After Anna O. developed the symptoms of hysteria, which by then was understood as »a psychosis of a peculiar kind« (Breuer 1957 [1895]: 22), she was treated in Breuer's practice. Although she suffered not only from psychotic symptoms, Freud and Breuer were convinced that mental causes had been responsible even for her strongest physical complaints. In fact, Anna O. experienced two states of consciousness; the first one was her normal, self-conscious and self-controlled state, whereas the second one was characterised as a hypnoid state between being awake and asleep. In this respect, Breuer (1957 [1895]: 45) found that

> »the patient was entirely clear and well-ordered in her mind and normal as regards her feeling and volition so long as none of the products of her secondary state was acting as a stimulus ›in the unconscious‹. The extremely marked psychosis […] showed the degree to which those products influenced the psychical events of her ›normal‹ state«.

Why is the second, psychotic state acting ›in‹ the subconscious? According to Freud's later theory of psychoanalysis, the second, hypnoid state had a regulating function. If a patient experienced one or more traumas in his past, the Ego developed defence mechanisms against the Id's anxieties and fears that helped to repress these traumatic memories. As a trauma is being repressed, the patient is unable to remember it—a mechanism we already are acquainted with from our study of the inaccessible Id and the repressing Ego. The Id would naturally try to provoke emotions of guilt, shame, or low self-esteem, but, as the Ego and the Super-Ego ›fight‹ these impulses, the defence mechanism of repression veils these emotions. Consequently, the patient has no direct memory of any of his or her traumas, but suffers from the effects of his or her repression. Nevertheless, the repressed trauma is assumed to give even more pain than the actual neurosis, which again is a consequence of the patient's repression.

In Anna O.'s case, these effects had been observed when she experienced the second state; her neurotic symptoms—anxiety states, disturbed vision, headaches, dissociative disorders—hence were nothing else than repressions of the Id's impulses. However, the actual causes for these symptoms lay in the repressed traumatic experiences, and the patient was not able to access these memories consciously. Whenever Anna O. tried to think about or remember these experiences, she obviously failed to do so in the face of strongest resistance. This simple observation reflected one of the most important insights of psychoanalysis: if wishes, needs, and impulses are being repressed by the Ego and Super-Ego, the individual becomes a plaything of neurotic or psychotic tendencies.

In the course of his treatment, Breuer noticed that the symptoms improved when she *talked* about them in a safe environment. From the very beginning of her sessions with the therapist, she managed to speak more and more about her thoughts and fears, and at the same time, Breuer was able to get closer and

[55] In their case study, Breuer and Freud (1957 [1895]) related to their patient Pappenheim through the pseudonym ›Anna O.‹.

closer to her subconscious. Every step in this direction brought her closer to a cure, as Breuer (1957 [1895]: 30) reports:

> »She aptly described this procedure, speaking seriously, as a ›talking cure‹, while she referred to it jokingly as ›chimney-sweeping‹. She knew that after she had given utterance to her hallucinations she would lose all her obstinacy and what she described as her ›energy‹«.

This finding led Freud to the formulation of his popular theory. If the therapist was able to make the patient talk about what he or she experienced, the hysterical symptoms would diminish. Because the patient was not able to access his or her own repressions, the therapist's task was to discover these repressed impulses, and then talk about them in order to gain the curative *insight* of his or her illness. In short, if we know about the causes of why we suffer, and if we give the pain a name, we will eventually be healed. Gold (2002: 278) acknowledges that

> »[i]nsight has long been considered to be a central […] change process in clinical psychoanalysis. The term refers to the activity wherein the patient becomes aware of the meaning and purpose of his or her unconscious psychological activity«.

Thus, we have approached the bedrock of psychoanalytic thinking. Freud argued that every human being is driven by subconscious wishes and needs which are, at first, repressed by us. If these repression mechanisms manifest themselves in serious mental disorders, the patient must gain insight into these mechanisms. Hence, we can easily discover how this idea broke with various alternative approaches in psychological thinking. What we regard as rational or reasonable thoughts, what we think of as ›our conclusions‹ or ›our mind‹ is nothing more than repressed subconscious impulses. This groundbreaking novel perspective on reason and rationality becomes even more explosive if we think about the theoretical foundation of the reasonable and rational therapist herself, and thereby forms the basis of the antinomic tension inherent in Freud's arguments.

b) The Theoretical Foundation of Psychoanalysis

After Freud discovered the repression of the psyche's subconscious and the healing effect of gaining insight into this principle, he asked about how to make this general psychical machinery visible. He soon arrived at the mechanism of *transference* as a way patients see and perceive themselves and their social environment—albeit in a distorted and biased manner. With recommending self-analyses of the therapist to overcome her own *countertransference* onto the patient, Freud touched a deep philosophical question. How must the therapist herself be seen in relation to the patient? And, consequently, how must the psychoanalytic theorist be seen against the background of her own theory?

Freud realised early on that insight would lead to a psychic cure. If a patient was enabled to learn how the Id's impulses are repressed by the Ego and the Super-Ego, and what these impulses are, the subconscious sphere of his psyche ›becomes conscious‹ to him. So Freud addressed the question of how to make the patient talk in order to achieve insight into his earliest traumatic experiences. As these traumas were by definition repressed and not conscious, Freud had to find a therapeutic detour. How could the patient be brought to speak about the unspeakable traumas? This question again resembles the foundational principle of insight in psychoanalytic thinking, as both Freud and his colleague Breuer held that

> »a mutual endeavour to achieve insight remained the hallmark of psychoanalytic technique. The acquisition of insight remains the sine qua non of psychoanalytic change today« (Pulver 1995: 90).

To bring the patient to achieve insight, Freud had to redefine the role of the therapist. He already had found that every individual tends to transfer past feelings or emotions repeatedly towards objects or persons. If, as happened in the case of Anna O., the father was an idolised and adored key person since the earliest childhood, all the emotions related to this idolisation and adoration would be transferred to other persons who shared one or more similar traits, roles, or characteristics. For instance, if a person has an image of the father similar to Anna O.'s perception, he or she might transfer these feelings to other male supervisors, authorities, relatives, or lovers. Colloquially speaking, if we meet a person who reminds us of another whom we feel familiar with, we tend to transfer our emotions and expectancies from the known to the ›new‹ person subconsciously. As a matter of fact, the very same mechanism takes place between a patient and a therapist. Hence, one of Freud's central discoveries

> »was the presence and analysis of transference and the transference neurosis, which come about as the patient displaces repressed conflicts onto the person of the analyst« (Rangell 2010: 1305).

The mechanism of transference that at first seemed to represent a big hurdle for therapeutic success became a key tool for Freud's psychoanalysis. At the earliest stages of the therapy, the patient begins to redirect his feelings and emotions from the key persons in his life to the therapist. As things develop, the patient will express hate, love, trust, or anger towards the therapist due to the transference mechanism—with those expressions reflecting nothing other than past emotions experienced in past relationships. Freud (1957 [1895]: 302 f.) himself gives a good example from his own therapeutic experience:

> »In one of my patients the origin of a particular hysterical symptom lay in a wish, which she had had many years earlier and had at once relegated to the unconscious, that the man she was talking to at the time might boldly take the initiative and give her a kiss. On one occasion, at the end of a session, a similar wish came up in her about me. She was horrified at it […]. What had happened therefore was this. The content of the wish had appeared first of all in the patient's consciousness without any memories of the surrounding circumstances which would have assigned it to a past time. This wish which was present was then […] linked to my person […]. Since I have discovered this, I have been able […] to presume that transference and a false connection have once more taken place«.

From Freud's deliberations on the mechanism of the patient's tendency to transfer emotions and expectations onto the therapist, a further, more general conclusion must be drawn. The discovery of the transference mechanism was not limited to the therapy as such, but also contributed to Freud's image of the human in general:

> »Thus from the beginning Freud saw transference not as a product of the analytic situation, but as a natural part of life« (Grant, Crawley 2002: 38).

Hence, every human being is permanently subject to the mechanism of transference—notwithstanding the psychopathological severity of the emerging symptoms caused by the transferring act. According to the psychoanalytic approach, each of us is determined by past experiences, and each of us becomes a victim of transference when encountering ›new‹ subjects or objects. As such, the principle of transference turns out to be one of the core conditions of how the human psyche determines rational thought and reasonable considerations.

Unfortunately, these conditions are particularly given in the case of the therapist herself, although she *should* be free from this alleged obstacle for the sake of therapeutic success. But everyday treatment practice seems to show that therapists actually transfer their feelings and their emotions to the patient as well. Freud (2001 [1910]: 144 f.) noted this fact in his later work:

> »We have become aware of the ›countertransference‹, which arises in [the therapist] as a result of the patient's influence on his unconscious feelings, and we are almost inclined to insist that he shall recognize this countertransference in himself and overcome it«.

Freud's insight that all humans are affected by the bias of transference was now applied to the role of the therapist, who also develops attitudes and feelings towards the patient[56]. But if this were the case, psychoanalytic therapy would be doomed to failure. If, for instance, the therapist responds very protectively towards the patient, the latter would likely echo the therapist's offered ›strong shoulder‹, whereas the therapist himself is transferring his past experiences towards his own child or a past father-daughter relationship onto the patient. Imagine, secondly, that the therapist feels in love with the patient, and then transfers past feelings from a former relationship onto the patient. In both cases, the therapist would give up his objective, neutral position towards the patient. Assuming that such a mechanism takes effect in *every* human relationship and *every* human interaction, Freud held the wolf by the ears. How could a therapist who naturally is entrapped in his own transferential reaction ever successfully diagnose or treat the patient appropriately?

> »The task of the classical therapist is to become a tabula rasa, free of subjective distortions. This means that the therapist strives to banish emotional reactions to the patient in order more effectively to attend to the patient's unconscious communication. Only by maintaining neutrality can the therapist accurately interpret the patient's transference distortions« (Keller, Stricker 2004: 233).

Again, the question arises of how the therapist can become a ›tabula rasa‹, who sees the patient in a completely neutral, objective, and unbiased perspective? In an address given at the opening of the Second Psychoanalytic Congress in March 1910, Freud sketched his solution for the challenge of *countertransference* in the therapeutic process. At first, he claimed that a patient's transference on the therapist can be used in order to unveil subconscious conflicts or wishes that give insight into the causes of a patient's illness. Finally, Freud (1910 [1924]: 289) required that each therapist

> »should begin his practice with a self-analysis and should extend and deepen this constantly while making his observations on his patients. Anyone who cannot succeed in this self-analysis may without more ado regard himself as unable to treat neurotics by analysis«.

Hence, before a psychoanalyst begins her treatment, she obligatory has to undergo a supervision process. Roughly speaking, the therapist herself needs to be ›treated‹ in order to unveil her own transferential relations. Hence, the role of supervision in psychoanalysis turns out to be indispensable. The supervisor has to help the therapist in figuring out all manifest transference mechanisms. For instance, if a therapist refrained from challenging a patient's statement because of inconsistencies or discrepancies, the therapist himself could be biased. In Freud's perspective, a therapist can be ›healed‹ from the misperceptions and distortions caused by countertransferential relations. Since the early 1920s, he therefore clearly advocated training analysis and supervising processes to guarantee the therapist's objectivity (Goldberg 2013 [1990]: 36). This supervision process is still central to the psychoanalytic education of therapists in a therapeutic and didactic sense. However, the general principle of countertransference suffers from one antinomic

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[56] Masterson (1983: viii) referred to the notion of countertransference not only as »those emotions the therapist felt for important persons in his early life that are transferred onto the patient, but rather as *all of those emotional reactions of the therapist that impede his therapeutic work with the patient*«.

shortcoming—which inevitably raises not only questions about the relation between therapist and patient, but also about how the psychoanalytic theorist refers to her own theory.

c) The Ontological ›Analyst's Antinomy‹ of Psychoanalysis

With having sketched the mechanisms of transference and countertransference as the foundation of gaining insight into the repression tendencies towards the subconscious, a serious dilemma remains. How could the ›creator‹ of psychoanalytic thought be sure that he himself was free of those subconscious drives? How could Freud know that his own theory was an objective scientific work, and not written under the misguidance of subconscious distortions? This question of how the theorist Freud thought about the theorised subconscious brings us to the ontological antinomy in his work.

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Freud's assumptions about the human psyche were expressed as the constitutive feature of the individual in two ways. At first, he declared that humans are determined by the structural interplay between the subconscious and the Ego. What we experience, feel, or hold to be true is nothing more than a result of this interplay. Finally, Freud argued that solely *insight* about the subconscious' forces and the Ego's defence mechanisms can put us on the right path. The only rescue to release ourselves from these distortions is through work with a psychoanalyst who ›uses‹ the mechanism of transference to make the patient reflect on her subconscious impulses. However, if we now try to get to the bottom of the constitution of the psychoanalyst herself, severe contradictions arise:

> »The problem presented to Freud […] is that the patient uncompromisingly lives out the determination of her/his character or anatomy. This is the truth of the patient's form of life. Assuming that the psychoanalyst does not have a patent on absolute truth […], to convince the patient that a compromise on her/his form of life is truer than her/his uncompromising stance is simply to seduce or trick the patient […]. The analyst is then […] importing her/his own values or commitments or assumptions into the patient's life« (Barris 2003: 31).

The problem with Freud's theory is simple, while its solution appears almost impossible. Given that the analyst is determined by her own subconscious drives as well, and that her view is distorted by subjective feelings and thoughts, how then can the analyst *herself* ever cast off this blindness? If we rethink Freud's own role in establishing his theory of psychoanalysis, a similar problem comes up. How could Freud ever feel certain that he himself was free of subjective distortions so that he could formulate his undistorted theory as objective work? How could he liberate himself from his own subconscious drives, his own defence mechanisms, and the transferences that blurred his own thinking? How did Freud make ›tabula rasa‹ with himself?

We thus have to think about an ontological statement reflecting these presuppositions. If Freud is determined by his own subconscious drives affecting his analytical view, and if the resulting mechanism of transference can only be removed through analysis with another psychoanalyst, we can assume Freud's paradoxical role by stating that

Freud is someone who analyses those who cannot analyse themselves.

Does Freud analyse himself? Now, if he does, he ›cannot be Freud‹, because his theory implicates that no one can gain insight into his own psychic life on his own and analyse himself. Freud can thus only analyse those who cannot analyse themselves. An antinomy arises when concluding that, if he does not analyse himself, he again must be the one who analyses himself. As the inventor of psychoanalysis, he must be the

only one able to perform analyses. We obviously are faced with an ontological antinomy in the style of the barber's puzzle. But how meaningful is this antinomy in the light of Freud's theory? Is it just a mental game, or does it indeed unveil a contradictory tension in psychoanalysis?

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The barber's antinomy was founded on one basic assumption. The barber himself was supposed to be the *only* person in the village who is able to shave other people, as every man either shaves himself or is being shaved by the barber. In the presented ontological antinomy of psychoanalysis, a similar role was assigned to Freud. As inventor or discoverer of his theory, no one else can be assumed to be able to analyse patients in the way Freud demonstrated. Moreover, no one else can be assumed to have undergone a self-analysis putting a potential therapist in the position to be aware of his own countertransferential feelings towards a patient. Only after a supervision or self-analysis through an educated psychoanalyst is carried out, can a therapist shake off all distorting, delusive, and ›untrue‹ motions affecting his mind and thoughts. Now, the view of Freud's theory as an undistorted, nondelusive, and ›true‹ approach would presuppose that Freud himself has undergone a self-analysis with the help of another psychoanalyst—which obviously is impossible, as Freud was the inventor of psychoanalysis.

If we formulate the ontological statement that Freud analyses only those who cannot analyse themselves, we express the very fact that psychoanalyses can be conducted by an educated analyst. In any other case, the therapist would transfer his emotions and feelings onto the patient. However, the ontological statement also indicates that Freud must have been undistorted *before* he formulated his theory; otherwise, his theory had to be seen as an approach infected by the subconscious transferences of Freud himself.

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Freud argued that man is inevitably bound to the subconscious mechanisms guiding individual thinking and perceiving, and that the subconscious' impenetrability eludes any form of introspection. In this case, Freud could have never cleared the hurdle necessary to cast off from the subconscious distortions that obscure an objective, non-psychical view of reality. In fact, Freud was presumably aware of this dilemma, as he clearly advocated the necessity of getting insight into the therapist's or analyst's way of countertransferring. If Freud himself could free himself from these distortions, he would have been able to see and relate to things free from transference. Again, this would be the accomplishment of a self-analysis in the sense of an objective introspection which was deemed necessary by Freud. But, as a matter of consequence, this analysis could be conducted only by someone who is already able to draw objective, undistorted conclusions on the psychical conditions of others. If Freud was analysing himself, he would have got mired in his own psychical reality, unable to tear down the walls of his own subconscious. It is therefore even more surprising that Freud claimed to have undergone a self-analysis, as

> »[p]sychoanalysis eschews the possibility of self-analysis for precisely this reason. Even though Freud claims to have performed a self-analysis and even published the results, he doesn't develop this as a general practice or possibility. In fact, Jacques Lacan often calls Freud's self-analysis the ›original sin‹ of psychoanalysis« (McGowan 2013: 20).

Born in such an original sin, the Freudian theory appears in a different light. His statements on the human psyche turn out to be problematic when related to his own psyche. Freud claims that every human being is determined by the subconscious which is not accessible to the individual, so that we act in certain ways without really knowing *why* we do so. Hence, Freud argues that the true causes for human action and thinking are hidden from us, and that we act upon distorted knowledge of our own motives. As already shown, this assumption turns out to be unreasonable. If it were true, the subconscious could never be investigated by oneself. But then, Freud would have never been able to come up with his theories, because

those theories are expressly built on the assertion that its creator *did* break through the wall of the subconscious.

Freud, paradoxically, had to presuppose his own objectivity—or, to speak in Freud's jargon, the insight into his own subconscious drives and transference mechanisms—to formulate his theory *about* these subconscious drives and transference mechanisms. In short, he had to observe what he then designated as unobservable by oneself. Hence, the dilemma of the ›observability of unobservability‹ is nicely illustrated by the ontological antinomy inherent in Freud's work, which also alludes to the sometimes paradoxical interpretations of the »dilemmas that arise in the relational paradigm between therapist and client« (Holmes 2005: xi).

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Another serious problem arises with this conclusion. Freud's theory was designed mainly to treat patients suffering from psychological disorders. However, as Freud described his theory as a general stance on the human psyche, the conclusion can be drawn that his very theory was nothing else than a manifestation of his own transferential mechanisms. Is Freud's claim that every psychoanalyst has to undergo a self-analysis to uncover his transferential mechanisms an indication that he himself anticipated to suffer from some sort of mental illness? Or, in short, is Freud's theory a mirror of his own psychical disposition? What about his own blind spot?

As is known, he worked as a therapist before he came up with his psychoanalytic idea, and he thus may have gained insight into the inner life of his patients. But even though he may have been convinced that his theory was a result of the observation of *other* people, he had to examine whether the observation of his patients was misled by his own subconscious transferences. For instance, his thoughts on self-observation could have been distorted by his subconscious which ›made‹ him assume those thoughts. In short, we now are forced to ask whether Freud's psychoanalysis is a general theory or, if Freud's work is judged by its own premises, nothing more than the distorted, blurred view of a pseudo-scientist misled by his own inner psychic life. If we think of the mechanisms of transference and countertransference in the sense of a »structural blind spot of psychoanalysis« (Vos 2008: 107), the problem's full extent becomes clearer:

> »[L]et us start with the fact that Freud had to undertake his *own* analysis. So, logically, he had to stumble on the difficulty that one cannot analyse the ground upon which one stands […]. In this way, the production of psychoanalytic theory could be seen as departing from Freud reaching the boundaries of his own neurosis« (Vos 2008: 107).

Our ontological statement about the observation of the subconscious—or, more precisely, the self-initiated insight into one's own transference mechanisms—now becomes more substantial dilemma for the theory-building of psychoanalysis. The theory's core assumption of a blind spot inherent in patients, therapists, *and* the scientist who frames the psychoanalytic approach becomes an obstacle for the consistency of the theory itself. Once we slightly changed our ontological statement's wording, this problem can clearly be seen as stemming from the philosophy of science ›behind‹ the theory itself:

A theorist observes the blind spots of all those who cannot observe their blind spots.

Again, the question is whether the theorist—in our case, Freud himself—can observe his own blind spot. If so, he can not possibly be one of those who cannot observe their own blind spots. However, this is what his scientific undertaking is required to achieve—namely, an observation that includes *all* the blind spots necessary for the scientific theory's consistency. But then, the scientist would be required to observe his own blind spot, which turns out to be *logically* impossible. The antinomy thus turns out to reflect one

of the most severe challenges of psychoanalytic theory-building, and, as will be shown, for various similar theories as well.[57]

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According to the dilemma of »countertransference as reflecting the analyst's own blind spots« (Yakeley 2014: 37), Freud himself could have been suffering from neurosis. In that case, his theory of psychoanalysis would be nothing more than an intellectual result from his disease. As we will see, this supposed disease affecting Freud's theoretical work is just one example of a dilemma of far broader extent. And although we will now briefly investigate Freud's own medical history, this investigation should not be seen solely as an empirical finding, but as an exemplification of the logical problem expressed in the mentioned ontological antinomy. Even more, these examples might best explain why Freud himself was faced with criticisms regarding his own mental constitution.

As a matter of fact, Freud underwent one or more neurotic episodes between 1894 and 1900 when he suffered from the symptoms of a psychosomatic illness[58], so that some of his adversaries »contend that he was a severely ill man, and psychoanalysis was the expression of a neurosis« (Ellenberger 1981: 447). This finding corroborates the supposition that Freud's psychoanalytic theory contains a strong inconsistency already pointed out—namely, that Freud declared the subconscious to be inaccessible to the human individual. But surprisingly, Freud claimed that he did access the psychic sphere through the concept of transference and countertransference.

In this respect, Henri Ellenberger suggested that Freud *was* ill, and that the illness clearly affected his later work. He referred to letters written by Freud who allegedly describe his search for the true causes of his disease, which was, at least in the eyes of Ellenberger, characterised by his purported highly speculative thoughts, his inadequate and blurred self-analysis, and his unreflected work with patients. In this sense, Ellenberger (1981: 447) diagnosed Freud with a ›creative illness‹, which is assumed to have afflicted many philosophers and writers:

> »A creative illness succeeds a period of intense preoccupation with an idea and search for a certain truth. It […] can take the shape of depression, neurosis, psychosomatic ailments, or even psychosis […]. Throughout the illness the subject never loses the thread of his dominating preoccupation. It is often compatible with normal, professional activity and family life«.

If we recap our previous considerations, we can more clearly frame the accusations Freud was and still is faced with. The theory of psychoanalysis states that human beings are subconsciously driven by transference mechanisms. However, if those mechanisms can be revealed in order to allow *insight* into these subconscious phenomena, the ›true‹ causes can be found. Again, these phenomena can never be unveiled by oneself, as, otherwise, they could not be deemed as subconscious. But at this point, it becomes clear that the critical problem with Freud's theory turns out to be unresolvable. As Freud claimed that he founded his psychoanalytic theory after he underwent a self-analysis that released him from the chains of the subconscious, we now must ask two questions. First, how did Freud perform this self-analysis and uncover his own subconscious transference mechanisms, if these very mechanisms are not analysable by oneself? Finally, if somebody else analysed Freud, how did this analyst get rid of the shackles of the subconscious—or, in other words, who analysed the analyst?

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[57] We should however note that the theorist's antinomy can only come into light if it is unclear whether or not the observer *himself* belongs to the class of ›those being observed‹.

[58] In this period, Freud complained about »highly depressed moods, disquieting self-doubts, an obsessive preoccupation with his own death, and various gastrointestinal and cardiac disturbances« (Sulloway 1992: 215).

It is impossible to think about the first man who was free of the distortions caused by the subconscious. Even though Freud's discovery of the analyst's countertransference seems to be central to both the therapeutic success and the foundations of psychoanalysis, it is still inconceivable how someone could relieved himself of these fetters which, as Freud argued, *every* human being had been placed. Without any ›first‹ analyst who was free from repressed subconscious drives—or at least had gained insight into these impulses—, the theory of psychoanalysis gets entangled in a harsh contradiction, because the theory itself would turn out to be poisoned by its creator's subconscious biases. Consequently, Freud's theory suggests either an infinite ontological hierarchy of therapists seeking for their own self-analysis by a ›supervision therapist‹, or requires for the notorious ›God's Eye View‹ to create the impossible first, undistorted therapist.

Upon expressing the ontological antinomy of Freud's observation of the unobservable, we also touched upon an even broader problem for scientific theory-building. If we understand Freud's theory as an attempt to cope with the scientific observer's blind spot, we must assume that this antinomy inflicts damage to all those theories encompassing human beings whose view or perspective is blurred or distorted. As the theorist herself *is* a human being and is therefore drawn into the recursive definition of ›all humans‹, her view or perspective must be assumed to be blurred or distorted as well—with problematic implications for the theory she expounded in the first place. In this sense, various philosophers wondered about this question in psychoanalytic thinking without, however, finding a substantial way out of the aporia of this antinomy, since

> »the history of psychoanalysis is permeated with these problems, whether they emerge as the third party (the *ménage-à-trois*, gossip), the wild analyst (Freud's name and the transmissibility of analysis) or the transference-countertransference system (the other scene, the mechanism of the relay). Whether they are theorised in the dialect of Lacan or Derrida, these are the aporia of analysis« (Forrester 1990: 242).

At this point, we may be reminded of the ontological antinomy of Wrangler's ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹. As we remember, the statement that ›Wrangler's book instructs all books that do not instruct themselves‹ was revealed as antinomy. If Wrangler's book instructs itself, it cannot be ›Wrangler's book‹, because it instructs only those books that do *not* instruct themselves. If we now interpret Freud's psychoanalytic theory as an instruction of how to gain insight into one's own subconscious transference mechanisms, obvious similarities come to light. The impossibility of the ›psychoanalytic instruction‹ of the psychoanalyst himself resembles Wrangler's problem of instructing how to read his book. Again, both ontological antinomies are nothing more than a variant of the barber's puzzle—save that they now reflect a more profound inconsistency in a broader sense. Indeed, as we will see, this ontological antinomy is entailed in numerous other theories about human beings.

d) The Semantical ›Antinomy of Psychic Reality‹

Whenever we ask about the truth or objectivity of psychoanalysis *as* a theory itself, we face another dilemma similar to the ontological antinomy. When sketching the philosophical foundation of psychologism, this tension appears as a more profound philosophical problem of Freudian thought. If psychoanalysis holds that truth and objectivity are nothing more than facets of psychic realities, how can the theory itself proclaim a general status? This question of how the theory of psychoanalysis relates to the theorised ›psychic truths‹ leads us to the semantical antinomy of Freud's ideas.

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The strange ontological antinomy of the analyst is not the only hurdle Freud faced. Besides the logical inconsistency of assuming a human observer who is subject to the same psychological distortions she

should be observing, a further semantical antinomy is found in Freud's main opus. It comes as little surprise that this antinomy is closely related to the ontological antinomy discussed so far, as both antinomies circle around a similar question. While we asked whether or not an analyst can observe his own blind spot within the ontological observer's antinomy, we will now question under which conditions a psychotheoretical statement in the Freudian world can be true—and thereby eventually arrive at a semantical antinomy. To understand this problematic account of truth and truthfulness in psychological theories, we must comprehend the notion of psychic reality in Freud's works.

As shown, Freud claimed that every human being is constantly affected by transferences of all kinds. As we think, encounter, or relate to ›new‹ subjects or objects, we transfer old attitudes, feelings, and expectations to those subjects that may blur our perception. Again, transference in this sense means, especially in the form of countertransference, that human beings are not able to hold a neutral, objective position towards new subjects or objects. Moreover, as transference mechanisms are not detected by the transferring individual, humans cannot access the true motives guiding their behaviour. The subconscious keeps the secret of the true impulses ›behind‹ our daily thoughts and actions; and for individual, this truth is inaccessible. In this respect, Wegner (2013: 98) points out Freud's discovery

> »that a truth, or rather, subjective truth, is not in itself the truth«.

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Consider, for instance, the ›Little Hans‹ case study by Sigmund Freud (2001 [1909]). Hans, a five-year old boy, developed a phobia of horses after he witnessed how a horse pulling a cart fell down with a loud noise. After this event, Little Hans was constantly afraid to be bitten by a horse, and often refused to leave the house. A layman would probably conclude that the phobia Hans was suffering from had been caused by the accident as such. A small child is often shocked when things like a traffic collision happen. But Freud disagreed. He examined the boy over a long period of time, and he drew a quite different conclusion. At that time of the accident, Hans was dealing with an oedipal conflict which led him to lust after his mother and to spur to compete with his father. Hence, Hans was afraid of his father who might punish him for his sexual love for his mother, so that Freud (2001 [1909]: 8) assumed that Little Hans suffered from the »castration complex«. To Freud, the symbol of the horse was nothing else than an image of the strong father; the boy's anxiety was not caused by the accident, but by the unresolved oedipal tension he experienced. What seemed to be the real cause at first glance turned out to be a distorted manifestation of a deeper, psychological conflict.

Besides the question of whether Freud's interpretation of the real causes of Little Hans' phobia was right or wrong, we will rather address the key assumptions behind this diagnosis—which is simple and, as will be shown, problematic at the same time. Freud states that, as subconscious wishes and needs directed Little Hans' thinking, the real underlying reasons for the developing phobia lay hidden. Anything Hans said about himself and his fears were manifestations of the oedipal conflict he underwent rather than ›true‹ statements about his own behaviour or thoughts. In short, the subconscious makes it impossible to get insight into the real motives and causes guiding our life. If Little Hans had been able to access his subconscious, he might have been able to introspect in order to identify the real cause of his anxiety—that is, that he was not afraid of the horse as such, but of his father who was symbolised by the horse. Thus, the five-year-old held a false assumption about his own motives, and his actual neurosis—the phobia of horses that manifested in various symptoms—had been interpreted falsely. If, for instance, Hans had stated that he was afraid of horses due to their height or their strength, he would only consider his conscious perceptions of himself.

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Freud alludes to the notion of psychic reality to explain Little Hans's misperceptions. When a person suffers from neurotic or psychotic diseases, it is impossible for her to reflect on the impulses or triggers that led to neuroses or psychoses. Patients can perceive only their own, conscious reality in the form of their neurotic truths, phantasies, slips, or dreams. Freud (2001 [1916, 1917]: 126) argues that

> »phantasies possess *psychical* as contrasted with material reality, and we gradually learn to understand that *in the world of neuroses it is psychical reality which is the decisive kind*«.

Psychical reality turns out to serve as the starting point for any psychoanalytic interrogation. No matter how ›far from reality‹ she is, the patient is supposed to tell the analyst about her subjective experiences, her dream material, imaginations, and her life reality. The analyst can use those narratives to help the patient achieve insights into the roots of her conflicts and, furthermore, into her whole case history—that is, the patient's historical truth in terms of her own subjective experiences:

> »Truth, understood within a Freudian theory of practice, is not to be equated with the scientific notion of truth understood as a one to one correspondence with reality. Rather, it is what is best referred to as subjective truth. It is a truth that pertains to and has validity within the context of psychical rather than material reality« (Moran 2010: 120).

Hence, Freud's foundation of psychoanalysis lies in the assumption that needs, expectations, or wishes developed in childhood subconsciously lead to transferences. This mechanism can be explained by drawing on the Freudian concept of the human, whereby the Id is being regulated by the Ego. The latter subconsciously represses the Id's tendencies, so that the conscious part of the individual only perceives distorted, disguised thoughts or motives. This psychical reality is therefore true for the individual, but can never correspond to the ›real‹ causes leading to the subjective view of reality. But what is the difference between the psychical and a supposed ›true‹ reality? As Frankland (2004: 184) remarks on Freud's way of theorising and treatment,

> »Freud believes a fictional construction can be both significant and therapeutic, but it cannot be just any fiction«.

Psychical reality is clearly existent for the individual. Freud, however, seemingly differentiates between that form of subjective perception and a more or less objective construction of psychical reality. No matter what image an individual draws of both herself and her environment, the way in which the image is being drawn seems to adhere to an objectively graspable mechanism. But is this assumption restricted solely to the psychoanalytic perspective on a patient? Or, as we saw in the observer's antinomy, does this assumption also furnish a basis for the building of psychoanalytic theories?

If we try to distill the central line through which Freudian work runs, one core idea has to be grasped swiftly. Everything we supposed to be true is nothing more than our own, subjective psychical reality. To Freud, we are governed by repressed, subconscious motives as our unique source for the way we experience, feel, and perceive. And thus, not only a patient suffering from any sort of neurosis, but any human being is guided and distorted by these mechanisms. Everyone is governed by his psychical reality, and everyone thinks and perceives within the bounds of his psychological apparatus. We therefore are left to ask which ›sort‹ of reality Freud is assuming when stating the ›real‹ causes behind psychical reality. Are his theoretical concepts—the subconscious, transference, insight—real in the sense of an objective reality? How can he demarcate real concepts from the psychical reality every human being—including the psychoanalyst—experiences?

By advocating that the human psyche not only governs our experiences and thoughts, but also the logic ›behind‹ these experiences and thoughts, Freud stands in the tradition of *psychologism* as a scientific movement which gained prominence between the 1880s and 1920s. According to Dale Jacquette (2006: 2), psychologism simply »includes any attempt to ground philosophical explanation in psychological phenomena«, and may thus be seen as a critique of human reason and rationality. Psychologists claim that even logic, mathematics, and epistemological questions can be reduced to empirical laws of psychology. Everything we hold as true or false, everything we see or hear, and everything we think and conclude is reducible and derivable solely from our psychological constitution.

Psychologism can be considered an approach in the philosophy of science that attempts to introduce a new paradigm in the philosophy of science. Its premises were intended to portray ›all‹ science—and therewith, all truths and falsities—as determined solely by psychological constants. Admittedly, this position had been proposed some centuries earlier, when English philosopher John Locke (1996 [1689]: 7) wrote

> »how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of innate impressions […]. For I imagine anyone will easily grant, that it would be impertinent to suppose, the *ideas* of colors innate in a creature, to whom God has given sight, and a power to receive them by the eyes from external objects«.

It goes without saying that Locke's perspective on knowledge and the foundation of science was clearly grounded on a psychologist-empiricist foundation, as opposed to the doctrine that innate ideas guide human perception. Locke supposes the way of knowing things as similar to the psychological properties of the mind. How things *are* known depends on how things *can* be known within the human mind. For instance, causality may be commonly regarded as a natural, objective law; however, Locke rather thinks about it as a mental precondition to perceive things. In other words, he assumes that no absolute truths can be known, but only what the mind ›allows‹ to be known. Psychologism is therefore a relativist perspective on science and knowledge.

Locke's assumption that we have to study the psychological conditions of humans to gather insights into human perception and thought reflected psychologism's fundamental guide. In this light, Freud's theory can clearly be identified as psychologist in its very essence. As shown, Freud reduced human behaviour, human perception, and even culture and social interaction to psychological principles, thereby advocating a *relativist* understanding of truth and reality. What a subject sees or thinks is a mirror of her psychological constitution; and no subject can see or think otherwise than her psyche would ›allow‹. In this sense, Heaton (2014: 23) carves out Freud's psychologist stance in his psychoanalyst theory:

> »Freud's psychologism lies behind his complaint that everyone *makes up his own psychology for himself.* Most of us confuse our ideas with truth, hence the many psychologies«.

Similarly, Kovel (1998: 74) argues that Freud's »psychologism was the according of primacy to fantasy over actuality«. To Freud, repressed wishes and subconscious drives determine *what* and *how* we see things. Cultural achievements, social relationships, personal aims, or ethical standards are, according to Freud, caused by repressed, subconscious struggles such as the famous Oedipus complex. Again, this assumption reflects the quintessence of psychologism: everything we feel, think, speak about, and do is determined by our psyche. If we want to understand *why* we act in a particular way, we have to analyse our psyche.

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We now arrive at our considerations about the semantical antinomy psychoanalytic thought—and therewith, most psychologist approaches—is inflicted with. Freud's perspective goes hand in hand with the assumption that truth is psychologically regulated. However, the question asking on which scale Freud's

own theory is supposed to prove true remains unanswered.[59] We already saw that Freud seemingly applied double standards when it came to the truthfulness of humans' psychic reality *and* his own theory of psychoanalysis. Whereas psychic reality is only true or ›real‹ for the experiencing subject, the truth of Freud's psychoanalytic theory is laid out as an objective approach describing general laws of the human psyche. However, if every human being is caught in her psychic reality, then the same must be true for Freud's *own* psychic reality, whose psychoanalytic theory itself is a part or piece of. In this sense,

> »all truth claims of psychoanalysis are ultimately summed up in the narrative structure of psychoanalytic facts« (Ricoeur 1981: 268).

Psychoanalytic theory is based on facts, however, these facts must relate to the psychoanalytic view of psychical reality. Do these facts stand ›above‹ the psychical reality Freud spoke of? Is there a sphere of objectivity paving the way for the scientific investigation of psychical realities? If we attempt to reflect this Freudian foundation of psychoanalytic theories, we can make the semantical statement that

Psychoanalysis claims the objective fact that truth is subjective.

Is psychoanalysis's own statement which we denoted as ›objective fact‹ subjectively or objectively true? If the statement is objectively true, then *every* statement must be of subjective nature and solely be true within the limits of someone's psychical reality. Hence, psychoanalysis's statement must be subjective as well, which contradicts its objectivity as a fact. If something is only true for a subject, it cannot be true objectively in the Freudian sense of objectivity and truth. However, Freud assumes that *if and only if* his fact is objectively true, then all truth is subjective. Roughly speaking, we have to decide whether it is an objective fact that every fact is subjective—which obviously is an undecidable question. We thus are faced with a semantical antinomy reflecting the tension between Freud's assumptions that »psychoanalysis required analytic objectivity« (Smith *et al.* 2009: 33) and that even the analyst's view is distorted by his own, subjective psychical reality.[60] In a similar way, Eagle (2011: 32) describes this antinomy with regard to Freud's concept of perception and cognition[61] which resembles the antinomic idea of the ›objective fact of subjective truths‹:

> »There is a seeming paradox in Freud's view of cognition. On the one hand, […] cognition, including perception, is ultimately in the service of drive gratification […], and on the other hand, Freud held what can be called a replica theory of perception […]. The seeming paradox is the following one: If the wish and its potential distorting influences are ever present in cognition, how can one, at the same time, maintain that perception mirrors reality?«

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[59] Freud never alluded to any philosophical notion of truth, so that »nowhere in his writings about psychoanalysis is the concept of truth discussed« (Thompson 1994: 1). Our considerations therefore arise from the referred analyses of his work, in which he suggested how truth and reality can be understood within the psychoanalyst jargon.

[60] Of course, some scholars deny the existence of an antinomy in Freud's theoretical assumptions. For instance, Heinrich Racker (1990: 180) argues that »[t]rue objectivity is based upon a form of internal division that enables the analyst to make himself […] the object of his continuous observation and analysis. This position also enables him to be relatively ›objective‹ toward the analysand«. However, Racker's view cannot contribute to the solution of the question of how the psychoanalyst's image of the human being in general can stand in a consistent relation to psychoanalytic ›facts‹.

[61] However, Eagle (2011: 32) denotes this paradox as ›seeming‹ and offers Freud's solution that »only when cognition reflects reality with reasonable accuracy can it adequately serve to achieve actual drive gratification«. This argument falls short, as the balance between Ego and Id reflecting this tension between drive and reality was not equally framed in Freud's theory. By contrast, he clearly emphasised the power of the drives which determine *what* is seen and perceived. Hence, humans live under the rule of the Id, whereas the Ego acts as pure conciliator. And although Freud sometimes admits that the Ego is generally capable of reflecting reality, this assumption runs counter to the psychologist account of his theory and the logic of transference and self-analysis.

This antinomy of subjective truth however arises not only in Freud's psychoanalytic theory. A more general criticism puts in question not only the Freudian approach, but psychologism as a whole. Again, psychologists advocate a philosophical program that had the reduction of all intellectual and mental acts to psychological laws written on its flag. For instance, if someone states the street is wet because it had rained before, she would refer to the principle of causality to underpin her statement. However, a psychologist would refuse this idea and, by contrast, claim that causality is nothing more than a psychological law. In her opinion, we just experience things appearing one after the other, but this form of appearance is less of an objective necessity than a subjective ›mode‹ of experiencing and perceiving. However, this perspective has drawn criticism even in the earliest stages of psychologist theory-building.

Frege was a declared opponent of psychologist approaches. He feared that psychologism would be given too much weight as the supreme discipline in philosophical questions and worriedly warned of »the corrupting incursion of psychology into logic« (Frege 1964 [1893]: 12). Other than psychologists, Frege (1980 [1884]: x) suggested to

> »always separate sharply the psychological from the logical, the subjective from the objective«.

One of the psychologist's grave mistakes was thus the subjectification of the objective sphere, because, as Frege argues, logic is independent from human thought. Psychologists would study any conception—for instance, the proposition that ›1 + 1 = 2‹, the claim that the sky is blue, or the statement that the earth circles around the sun—from a psychological-historical perspective. Every concept used by humans was asserted to have been developed in the course of time, and therefore, logic was nothing more than law of thoughts constituted by the human mind over the millennia. Mathematical equations as well as facts about our world are not objective truths, but constantly changing, evolving concepts, with each having its own genesis, its own history. Consequently, a concept that today might appear as true has been different in the past and will be different in the future. But to Frege (1980 [1884]: vii), this very assumption of flux, emergence, and indefinite concepts constituted the central psychologist fallacy:

> »We suppose, it would seem, that concepts sprout in the individual mind like leaves on a tree, and we think to discover their nature by studying their birth: we seek to define them psychologically, in terms of the nature of the human mind. But this account makes everything subjective, and if we follow it through to the end, does away with truth«.

What happens if we handle the conception of truth as suggested by the psychologists? Obviously, a vague notion of truth implies that *every* conception is open to change—and therewith, the conception of truth as well. Frege accuses psychologism of treating truth as a subjective, mentally constructed affair. But if psychologists claim that every concept is a mental representation changing and developing over time, then the concept of truth must be interpreted under the same sign. Psychologism as a scientific program can be true or false; and if it is true, it must itself be considered a subjective, changing approach. However, psychologists advocate their discipline as an objective truth. More paradoxically, they present their key assumption that truth is subjective *as an objective fact*. We could think about this well-known problem of someone stating that every thing, even the notion of truth, is subjective. Is this sentence ›everything is subjective‹ an objective truth? And, if not, can this sentence be true at all—recalling the fact that there is no such thing as ›objectively true‹ or ›objectively false‹?

Further considering that psychologism is a variety or neighbouring discipline of empiricism, we are taught to conclude that knowledge—notions, conceptions, ideas, or categories—is solely based on experience. As psychologists, we refuse to think of truth or causality as objective conceptions, but grasp them as rather subjective, mental constructions constituted through ›psychic experience‹. Hence, empiricists would assume that the laws of thought are constituted through experience and perception of the outer world, whereas psychologists consider their psychic reality as only source of knowledge insofar that »experience as a psychic fact has only ideas of the mind as its proper object« (Sukale 1976: 44).

We now get closer to the actual questions that led us to the semantical antinomy of subjective truth inherent in psychologist approaches. If psychologists are on the right track by portraying truth as a vague and constantly changing notion, to what extent can psychologism be true in the same sense? If someone states that everything humans hold true is solely subjectively true, and that truth must therefore be subjective as well, should this very statement not be judged by its own premises? And, if *X* claims that nothing can be objectively true, can't we counter that what *X* just said cannot be objectively true as well? And what if *X* then counters that our answer was just what he claimed in the first place? With these questions, we arrive at our final considerations on the semantical antinomy in Freud's work.

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Our investigation of psychologism's semantical antinomy has led us from the tension between objective facts and subjective, psychical realities to question of ›subjective truths‹ which play a major role in psychologist thinking. However, notions such as subjective truths which denote the vagueness and inexactness of psychologist laws and theories are as vulnerable as Freud's assumption of psychical realities. Their main criticisms again go back to Frege's initial thoughts.

Austrian philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl took up Frege's idea and sharpened his argument even further. Just as Frege, he saw philosophical discipline threatened by the relativism many psychologists advocated. If it were true, the search for truth would be subject to solely psychologist inquiry, and truth or logical laws could only be thought of as relative notions. As already mentioned, psychologism is a primarily empirical discipline; and therewith, all scientific results such as laws or theories are of *probabilistic* nature. If we, for instance, think about the law of gravitation, we will certainly conclude that its validity is limited to the cases we have observed in the past. However, to state that the law of gravity will hold true in future cases is a possibility, but by no means a universal truth. As for all inductively established regularities, this burden of probability rests on all empirical laws. As Husserl (2001 [1900]: 47) remarks,

> »[t]hough the law of gravitation is recommended by the most comprehensive inductions and verifications, no investigator of nature would now look on it as an absolutely valid law […]. We know that, in view of ineliminable observational imprecision, it would be foolish to look for a uniquely true law«.

Psychologist laws are of probabilistic form. Opposing objective or universal laws—no matter whether these exist or not—, psychologists state that every law must be *relative* in the sense that they might change in the course of time or, likewise, differ from the perspective of different standpoints. At this point, Husserl (2001 [1900]: 49) holds a mirror up to both psychologism and its doctrine of probabilism itself:

> »We need only instance one of the grave consequences of this doctrine. Laws of thought, as causal laws governing acts of knowledge in their mental interweaving, could only be stated in the form of probabilities. On this basis, no assertion could be *certainly* judged correct, since probabilities, taken as the standard of all certainty, must impress a merely probabilistic stamp on all knowledge. We should stand confronted by the most extreme probabilism. Even the assertion that all knowledge was merely probable would itself only hold probably: this would hold of this latter assertion, and so on *in infinitum*«.

In a nutshell, Husserl accuses psychologists of paradoxically propagating the universality of all psychologist laws by drawing on the impossible ›hierarchy of assertions‹ and hiding from the inevitable consequence to apply this ›rule of probability‹ to its own premises. To them, the validity of laws is bounded by the principles of relativity and probability; but therewith, their own theoretical premises are affected by these very principles. As a result, psychologism gets itself entangled in unresolvable contradictions. If we further intensify the psychologist argument in the Husserlian sense, its self-destructive force comes to full effect. To this end, we will reduce the contradictory psychologist argument to its most fundamental es-

sence—namely, both the requirement of »rendering the laws of logic vague and inexact« (Monhanty 2006: 120) *and* the requirement that this assumption should be held universally valid.

›All laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ is a vague and inexact law.

Is the above law itself vague and inexact? If it is not vague, then it contradicts itself, as it obviously states that *all* laws are vague. But then, if it is indeed vague itself, its claim that all laws are vague cannot be assumed to be a universal, law-like truth, as it implies that some laws may be exact. Again, the law would contradict itself in this case. At this point, we clearly recognise our statement as a semantical antinomy. Think about the law's basic requirement which can be condensed to the—admittedly nested—statement that if the law is itself vague, then it is also vague that all laws are vague.

If we furthermore acknowledge that the semantical antinomy at stake explicitly incorporates the laws of logic, the dilemma posed becomes clearer. As we learnt from Aristotle, the laws of logic frame the idea of truth and falseness. What happens if these laws are thought to be vague and inexact? In such a case, the statement ›It is a law that all laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ cannot be held true or false in an exact sense, and thus, the statement's opposite ›It is *not* a law that all laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ can claim validity as well. At this point, the semantical antinomy of vague laws comes to force. If the law is itself vague, then its opposite can be valid as well. But then, the laws of logic could be assumed to be exact, which again would prove that the law itself is indeed vague. At this point, we find ourselves in the notorious vicious circle of antinomic reasoning which unsurprisingly became subject to poststructuralist critique, as this

> »allows us to glimpse what a *psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis* might look like at the level of culture and politics« (Elliot 2004: 104).

Apparently, this ›psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis‹ would again require an endless semantical hierarchy of analyses—or, in the same way, an impossible ›God's Eye View‹. From which hierarchical level could the exactness of psychoanalysis be proved? Which perspective could allow for the statement that psychoanalysis is or is not a vague statement? Similarly, the psychologists' statement ›It is a law that all laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ is being applied in the form of a semantical statement containing a recursive form. Well-knowing that someone who states a constant, universal property or regularity of something speaks about a *law*, we are able to identify statements in the form of ›Every *X* has the property *Y*‹ as a law itself. However, in the case of Husserl's criticism of psychologism, the statement ›All laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ is now being convicted to constitute a law itself. As a consequence, the very property ›is vague and inexact‹ must be applicable exactly the way it has been applied to all other laws. However, when being applied to itself, the law ›All laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ fails to serve its actual purpose. A vague law can change in the course of time, it can lose its validity when facing to new observations, or it can be discarded completely—which makes it, as stated, a *probabilistic* law. If the law is now supposed to be valid in an exact sense, it can itself not be exact without contradicting itself. But if we assert that it is *not* exact, the inevitable conclusion must be drawn that not all laws at all times can be assumed to be vague and inexact. A probabilistic, vague statement is not exact or universal. Paradoxically, this is ›exactly‹ what the law claimed—and thus, we obviously remain captured in the antinomy's clutches. Hence, when psychologists present their insight that all laws are vague as general truth, they seemingly accept a semantical antinomy inflicted with their philosophy of science. The resulting contradiction is, in this case, a variety of what we learnt as the antinomy of subjective truth—only that we spoke of an individual, psychical reality in one case and the vague, subjective character of scientific laws in the other. It is argued that this paradoxical insight led Wittgenstein (1922: 5.62) to claim that »[i]n fact what solipsism means, is quite correct, only it cannot be said, but it shows itself«.

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We saw that the semantical antinomy found not only in Freud's work, but in the psychologist philosophy of science as a whole, can be formulated along two lines. First, the semantical statement that ›Freud states the objective fact that truth is subjective‹ turned out to reflect an antinomy derived by the critical disposition of a psychoanalytic fact and the psychical reality in which human beings are bound in. Second, if we understand this tension as an antagonism between objective and subjective truth, we finally arrive at psychologism's core statement ›It is a law that all laws of logic are vague and inexact‹—which also resembled the semantical antinomy of Freud's approach. As shown, this antinomy can be seen as one of the most severe hurdles for psychologism's consistency. If Freud suggests that every human is bound to her psychic reality, should his own scientific undertaking be comprehended as nothing more than his personal psychic reality? And if so, can we still speak of a universal psychoanalytic theory, or rather as the literary work of a psychologist who described his own ›reality‹ while trying to cope with his subconscious drives and wishes?

At this point, we again should recall the semantical antinomy of Wrangler's ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹. The author's statement that an improficient reader reads that ›Everything you read appears false to you‹ could be exposed as a semantical antinomy. If the reader now supposes the statement appears false to her, she must expect its opposite to be true. Then, she would have to assume that everything she reads appears true to her. If we interpret Freud's psychoanalysis and psychologism as a whole as a statement which can be read, we arrive at a similar antinomy. Imagine that someone reads that *anything* he reads is solely true within her psychical reality. She then would have to assume that some of her insights were true for her, but false in an objective sense. Therefore, the ›law of psychical reality‹ could also be false, which again would prove that she is able to access an objective reality. The impossibility of Wrangler's readers and Freud's psychical reality is thus similar to the semantical antinomy of the liar, since it is clear that its implications are devastating for the task of psychoanalytic and psychologist theories. Unfortunately, we will see that the semantical antinomy is used and missed in various other theories in human science.

e) Antinomies of Psychologism

Psychoanalytic theory is plagued by ontological and semantical antinomies which, as a matter of fact, unveiled the antinomic figure inherent in Freudian ideas. At first, both antinomic statements were built on the recursive form of the *mise en abyme*. As an ontological claim, the theorist ›Freud‹ spoke about the theorised ›patients‹. However, by deploying the general notions of subconscious, repression, transference and countertransference, and insight as universal mechanisms characterising both theorist and theorised, Freud became part of what he claimed about his patients. This recursive form was also found in the semantical statements of his ideas. Psychoanalysis as theory ›said something‹ about the psychic and subjective constitution of facts and laws. We saw, however, that the psychoanalytic theory itself can be seen as such a fact and law itself.

The critical disposition of the *antitheton* was, on the one hand, expressed within Freud's implied opposition of ›transference‹ and ›insight‹. If a patient's perception was blinded by transferential mechanisms, she had to gain insight into those distortions to see clearly again. Similarly, the critical disposition ›subjective truth—objective reality‹ was drawn in the semantical statements of psychoanalytic reasoning. Only psychoanalytic therapy can help patients to overcome the blurred view of their realities and truths.

What we defined as *Penrosing* or circular inversion could then be witnessed in both ontological and semantical statements. The constellation of the psychoanalyst *as* analysand led to the undecidable question of how a ›first therapist‹ could ever supervision her self-analysis and self-observation. Finally, if we considered the ›psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis‹, no logical answer could be given. Is the psychoanalytic theory itself an objective fact, or rather the manifestation of the subjective truth of its author?

Both in its ontological and semantical form, the antinomic figure appears as an unresolvable hurdle of psychoanalytic thinking. The question of a first therapist required for either an ontological hierarchy of

self-analysing and supervising therapists or an impossible ›God's Eye View‹ which we accused Freud of having taken. How else could the first insight about the unobservability and inaccessibility of the subconscious be gained objectively? Similarly, the programme of analysing psychoanalysis would turn out an as in infinite regress in form of a semantical hierarchy of ›analyses of analyses of analyses‹—and thus can merely allude to the impossible ›God's Eye View‹ of the psychoanalytic theory itself. That is why any attempt at setting up a meta-psychoanalytic theory is in vain.

	Ontological Antinomy	***Semantical Antinomy***
›Mise en abyme‹	recursive form of *theorist* as ›analyst‹ and *theorised* as ›analysand‹	recursive form of *theory* as ›truth of psychoanalysis‹ and *theorised* as ›psychic truth‹
›Antitheton‹	critical disposition of ›transference—insight‹ and ›blind spot—insight‹	critical disposition of ›objective fact—psychic, subjective fact‹
›Penrosing‹	circular inversion of ›analyst as an analysand‹	circular inversion of ›psychoanalysis as psychic reality‹
Hierarchies	infinite ontological hierarchy of psychoanalysts and countertransferences; ›God's Eyes View‹ on unobservable blind spots	regress of semantical hierarchy of ›analyses of psychoanalyses‹; ›God's Eyes View‹ on objective or exact psychoanalytic theory
Examples	*Freud is someone who analyses those who cannot analyse themselves.* *A theorist observes the blind spots of all those who cannot observe their blind spots.*	*Psychoanalysis claims the objective fact that truth is subjective.* *›All laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ is a vague and inexact law.*

Freud Himself on the Psychoanalyst's Couch: *Antinomies of Psychologism*

With these remarks on the antinomic figure inherent in Freud's work, we now turn our attention to the theory of political realism. As we will see, its philosophical foundation is—just as Freud's own psychoanalytic theory—based on individualist descriptions of human beings. And with its popular maxim that all politics is based on individual power drives, political realists turn out to be psychoanalysts in disguise. Even more, we dare to hold that

> »[e]very theory of the human being is inevitably a comment on psychoanalysis« (Vos 2008: 108).

1.2 Morgenthau's ›Political Realism‹

After having sketched the antinomic confusion within Freud's psychoanalytic theory, we now turn to Morgenthau's political realism against this background. With the assumption of a universal drive for power at the heart of his approach, Morgenthau opened the door for the same antinomic figure Freud was plagued with. If we take Morgenthau at his word, then all observation and all truth is nothing more than a power-driven political reality. However, Morgenthau's own observation and own ›true‹ statements about these contingencies appear as antinomic. Is Morgenthau himself blinded by his own hidden power drives? Is his theory itself a mere historico-political testimony of its time rather than a universal and true reflection?

Many contemporary scholars tend to brush aside Morgenthau's work as full of »vague and at times openly contradictory statements« (Tucker 1952: 216), »incoherent« (Little 2007: 96), or simply »obscure« (Donnelly 2000: 29). In the light of the debates held in the years after Morgenthau's debut works, most of these criticisms had been acknowledged even by the author himself. After the intellectual foundation of his work had been laid out in 1946 and 1948, Morgenthau (1970: 5) himself would regard them as »premature« over two decades later, and as »pretheoretical« (Rosenthal 2004: 3) by his critics. However, each honest scholar who refers to and criticises his early works should acknowledge the pioneering feat of his undertaking which, as almost any intellectual innovation, is not free of shortcomings and insufficiencies.

The broad criticisms Morgenthau's work has drawn over the years will not be pondered explicitly hereafter. Instead, we will elaborate the philosophical view ›behind‹ Morgenthau's theory of political realism *in general*—and this journey surprisingly will bring us back to Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. Morgenthau's image of a human being driven by the »lust for power as an end in itself« (Wight 2006: 399) obviously resembles Freudian thought, and may therefore be prone to the same antinomies Freud's work was permeated with. Our evaluation of Morgenthau's realism therefore takes another form as might be expected, and we will suggest a more original reading of political realism. As opposed to many interpretations that adhere to the so-called ›rationality assumption‹, we will emphasise the more psychologist foundation of realism in the sense of Freudian motivational theory. We refuse to naïvely and inadequately adopt notions of reason and rationality within the realist jargon ›out of context‹. The main argument is that power does not only guide behaviour and interests, but also affects human thinking, perception, and observation. We challenge not only the view of statesmen as purely rational actors, but also that of the political theorist who analyses world politics from a political-realist perspective. She herself is subject to the distorting effects of the power drive she claims are inherent in any human being's observation and thus one's observation of the international arena. Such a psychologist reading obviously runs counter to what some political realists would themselves describe as their epistemological and methodological working foundations:

> »Realists obviously do not believe their motivational assumptions to have a distorting effect on their interpretations of political phenomena. They naturally do not believe that policies developed based on realist arguments suffer from any harmful bias« (Freyberg-Inan 2004: 6).

We argue in the words of Robert Tucker (1952: 215) that Morgenthau's theory is based on a psychologist perspective, and that the »results of this political monism call to mind a psychological theory«. And indeed, Freud's psychoanalytic thinking was flooding the intellectual landscape since the beginning of the century—with severe consequences for rationalist and liberal approaches on the human. After the horrors of the two World Wars, the faith in a peaceful, idealistic world order appeared as a utopia for more and more political theorists and theories. The birth of Morgenthau's political theory at this time might thus be seen as the nexus between the spreading intellectual spirit of psychoanalytic thought in various disciplines *and* the disappointment with rationalist and liberal ideas after the devastating rise of nationalist and fascist societies in Europe. His rejection of rationalism and liberal thought goes hand in hand with his psychologist perspective on world politics.

a) Political Realism and the Critique of Reason and Rationalism

Morgenthau was convinced that humans are driven by the will for power, and, like Freud, thought of that drive as a universal law. His conviction resulted from a deep disappointment with idealist and liberalist ideas, which blinded political theorists from seeing the world ›how it is‹. The Kantian image of the human as rational and reasonable was a dream castle to Morgenthau, and with it the philosophy of scienticism advocating the scholarly study of world politics by rationalist and scientific means. Morgenthau's critique

of reason and rationality thereby alludes to the peculiarity of the political world in which we appear as the *animus dominandi* rather than as enlightened thinkers.

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Morgenthau's theory of political realism is built on the idea of international politics as the result of power games. In the arena of states, power is the only currency in which any political action is rewarded. The reason why power appears as the decisive driving force behind politics lies in the nature of man. Every human being seeks power, and the state acts like a human as well. And as the human lust for power has existed since the dawn of human civilisation, this »iron law of international politics« (Morgenthau 1951: 144) shows that, beyond any historical or social contingency, striving for power is a universal principle in all social constellations.

Although Morgenthau is seen rooted in the tradition of Thucydides, Machiavelli, and Hobbes, a notable difference between him and his scholarly ancestors cannot be disregarded. Morgenthau was, more than any of his realist intellectual fathers, interested in finding a universally applicable *law* to understand world politics. In this sense, his former student Kenneth Thompson (1984: 28) saw Morgenthau on

> »the search for the general as opposed to the particular, recurrent patterns as distinct from unique historical events, ›laws‹ and principles of politics, and the political consequences of the nature of man«.

For Morgenthau (1948: 17), the struggle for power *is* universal. We not only witness this struggle in the animal kingdom or between human beings in families or societal clubs, but also within the field of domestic and international politics. Roughly speaking, if two male gorillas fight each other, they are striving for dominance and leadership within their group in the same way that two enemy states fight each other by political or military means. They, as Morgenthau (1948: 21) famously argued, all seek »to keep power, to increase power, or to demonstrate power«. In any social situation, Morgenthau »identifies the *animus dominandi*« (Murray 1997: 81) as an individual actor, because human beings intend solely to satisfy their desire for power in any manner possible.

Morgenthau (1948: 13) understood power as »man's control over the minds and actions of other men«. In the political arena within nations and states, this power is exemplified as the relation between public authorities and the people they regulate. On the international level, this principle remains unchanged—except for the obvious fact that statesmen as representatives of their countries take over the role of the power-hungry animal. We thus see that even in the realm of politics as a field in which we often think of legal entities, formal organisations, or abstract statehoods, the *human* drive for power becomes the point of departure. Morgenthau thus attempts to »bring humankind and the human factor back into politics« (Behr, Rösch 2012: 42), and necessarily dismisses the determining power of idealist conceptions of states, peace, and order. But what exactly led Morgenthau to lose his faith in the programme of liberalism and its idealistic ambitions? Why did he turn away from the theoretical and ethical principles based of thinkers such as Kant, Rousseau, Mill, or Montesquieu?

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Liberal scholars see man as fundamentally *rational*. Recall, for instance, that Kant was convinced that we »exist as rational human animals« (Hanna 2006: 50). That image of man blatantly contradicts Morgenthau's realist conception of the *animus dominandi*. The drive for power is not something rational. Someone who pursues power at all costs will *not* necessarily make rational decisions. And Morgenthau believed in this very instinct for power so strongly that he even held Kant and his ideas responsible »for the catastrophes of the twentieth century« (Patomäki 2002: 2). In his eyes, the misled idea of a rational man blinded both scholars and society from seeing the ›real‹ nature of the power-striving individual. Whereas rationalists ponder ways to achieve an ideal society, realists accept the ›real‹ world as it is:

> »Our aspirations, moulding our expectations, take account of what we would like the empirical world to look like rather than what it actually is« (Morgenthau 1984: 16).

For Morgenthau, rationalism ignores the nature of man, describable in terms of irrational drives and lusts, and the character of social problems as such. Rationalist philosophy furthermore led to the misbelief that world peace could be restored if man accepted the reign of reason, and that a peaceful international order could be founded on reasonable laws. Here again, Morgenthau saw the programme of political liberalism perishing on the battlefields of both world wars. What he would call ›scientific ethics‹ was lying on its deathbed. The horror of war disproved man's ability to learn how to become good, just, and reasonable—and also the impossibility of a peaceful world order founded on rationality and deliberation[62]. In Morgenthau's (1965 [1946]: 153) eyes, the rationalist school of thought misconceived three decisive characteristics of the social world resulting from

> »the misunderstanding of the nature of man; of the nature of the world, especially the social world; and, finally, of the nature of reason itself«

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Facing the rationalist shortcoming of drawing a blurred image of the human and disguising the reality of political power games, Morgenthau lost faith and dismissed liberal philosophy. But by denying the »fundamental identity between the human mind and the laws which govern the world« (Morgenthau 1965 [1946]: 11), he also refused the scientific programme and its rational way of conceiving and approaching social and political problems. What he would roughly refer to as ›scientism‹ or simply ›modern science‹ was a paraphrase for the philosophical idea of rationalism and the rationalist way of answering academic and practical questions. However, Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 1) saw the »confidence in the power of reason, as represented by modern science, to solve the social problems of our age« as dangerously misleading. He thereby warned against regarding ›modern science‹ as a panacea for almost all intellectual and practical problems of the world—especially in the field of social inquiry. For him, the methods of modern science were unsuitable when it came to the investigation of social problems, as the underlying philosophical stance originated from an academic tradition based on reason and rationality:

> »The main characteristic of this philosophy is the reliance on reason to find through a series of logical deductions from either postulated or empirical premises the truths of philosophy, ethics, and politics alike« (Morgenthau 1965 [1946]: 3).

If natural and social problems are assumed to be identical, the methods to solve them must be similar as well. Hence, the traditional philosophy of political liberalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth century has been the means of first resort for centuries—and therewith, the tackling of both natural and social problems through rational reasoning. For Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 215), this assumption turns out to be a fallacy:

> »The reconsideration of the problem of social action must start with the recognition of the fundamental distinction which exists between social problems and those with which the natural sciences deal«.

The natural and the social world are different. Natural scientific methods cannot adequately be applied to social scientific questions. Whereas natural scientific problems are mostly foreseeable due to simple cause-effect relations, social challenges are *not* predictable. The success of a military campaign is as unforeseeable as any other social planning or political strategy—too many factors, causes, and contingencies play a role. Hence, the assignment of one cause to a particular effect might work in natural sciences, but by no means

[62] In this sense, Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 75) saw the liberalist misbelief that »[a]ll conflicts among nations are considered to be capable of rational solution« as gravest mistake.

in the discipline of social and political sciences. At what temperature water boils at sea level may be answered for any situation, as cause and effect are always the same. When and if a war breaks out can have thousands of reasons, and none of them will lead to a simple cause-effect relation:

> »While the natural sciences have to do with isolated causes operating upon motionless objects, the social sciences deal with interminable chains of causes and effects, each of which […] is the cause of another reacting effect, and so forth ad infinitum« (Morgenthau 1965 [1946]: 129).

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With Morgenthau's criticism of political liberalism in mind, we can now better comprehend how he tried to overcome the core failures of a rationalist perspective on social problems and how more adequate conceptions of man, the social world, and the nature of reason itself should be used by a social scientist. By refusing rationalism, he elaborates Aristotle's ([1909]: 93) claim that »intellect by itself excites no action«. His conclusion is plain. Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 122 ff.) shifts the focus on scientific, rational solutions for social problems to the sphere of *political action* and interests as dominant driving forces disguising any reasonable thought. No matter what reason or rationality would teach us, we are first and foremost driven by our interests and emotions. Opposing that rational thought is the driving force behind political action, Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 155) rather thinks of reason as being

> »carried by the irrational forces of interest and emotion to where those forces want it to move, regardless of what the inner logic of abstract reason would require«.

We use reason and reasonable thinking after we act; we misuse the logic of rationality to justify our actions in hindsight. In any case, Morgenthau's conception of the human as an irrational, instinctive creature obviously runs counter to the classical understanding of man portrayed by rationalists. And not surprisingly, he thereby broke with the tradition of liberalism just the way Freud's psychoanalysis »destroyed the view that man was a totally rational creature« (Burns, Dobson 1984: 521). At this point, we could ask why Freud's psychological approach contributed so fruitfully to Morgenthau's own theory and his refusal of liberalism's principle of rationality.

b) The Freudian Foundation of Morgenthau's Theory

Morgenthau's idea of a universal will for power openly resembles Freudian drive conceptions. Both see these drives as anthropological constants; and even more surprisingly, Morgenthau developed theoretical mirrors of the psychoianalytical mechanisms such as ›transference‹ or ›balancing‹. Although Morgenthau attempted to disguise his psychoanalyst roots, a thorough reading of his work suggests otherwise.

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Political realism as a theory works almost similar to the way psychoanalysis does. Morgenthau's assumption resembles Freud's idea of the human not as a rational being who consciously and self-reflectively finds himself in an objective world, but as one guided by his drives and living in his own psychic reality. And although »IR, Morgenthau scholarship and international-political theory have almost neglected Freud completely« (Schuett 2007: 55), his influence on the development of realist ideas cannot be overlooked.

Morgenthau's theory would not have been possible without Freud's pioneering work on the human psyche. Whereas Freud's objective was to make sense of psychological facts and narratives through the lens of the human drive nature, Morgenthau similarly investigated political facts from the perspective of the human power drive. While Freud traces all social phenomena—culture, art, or war—back to the apparatus

of the human psyche and subconscious drives, Morgenthau sees the entire social world—communities, states, or war—as necessarily standing in relation to the constitution of human nature and the lust for power. He accordingly attempts to detect the »forces which determine political relations among nations« (Morgenthau 1948: 3) by investigating human nature. His famous credo thus pronounces that if we understand a human's natural, innate drives, we can comprehend why nations *as* groups of people act as they do. Just as Freud sees the subconscious drive as the decisive source of human action, Morgenthau (1948: 17) recognises the

> »elemental bio-psychological drives by which […] society is created. The drives to live, to propagate, and to dominate are common to all men«.

According to the Freudian idea of the bio-psychological human constitution through which sexual drives can lead to egoist or attention-seeking behaviour, he understands the lust for power as being founded in this very constitution. While Freud speaks of an Id as the driving force behind all human action, Morgenthau attributes human nature's *animus dominandi* as determinant for all forms of social interaction. He even resembles Freud's mechanism of repression through social conventions, when he argues that »the relative strength is dependent upon social conditions which may favour one drive and tend to repress another« (Morgenthau 1948: 17). With these striking parallels in mind, can we speak of Morgenthau as a Freudian? Is the theory of political realism inspired by the psychoanalytic programme?

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Robert Schuett (2007: 55) convincingly described the intellectual roots of Morgenthau's political theory by examining an unpublished manuscript on the political nature of man written in 1930. He acknowledges that Morgenthau's notion of man as seeking to keep, increase, and demonstrate power

> »does not derive from immediate survival concerns; man *lust* for power in the sense of Freud's pleasure principle« (Schuett 2007: 58).

Although almost all realist conceptions of politics deploy human nature as the point of departure for their theories' development, differences in the convictions of *how* this nature is constituted vary strikingly. Whereas Machiavelli or Hobbes generally devote particular attention to human fear (Sullivan 2004: 12) and the principle of self-preservation and survival, Morgenthau thinks of the drive for power as an end in itself. He understands the lust for power rather as an instinct surging towards satisfaction, and thus attaches lesser importance to the motive of fear. He shares this view with Freud, who saw human drives as the sole reason for any social behaviour. These striking parallels in sketching human nature lead us to the conclusion that

> »Morgenthau's anthropology is fundamentally based upon Freud's early instinct theory and it may be safely said that Morgenthau is a veiled Freudian« (Schuett 2007: 61).

Not only Freud's anthropological thoughts have obviously been used by Morgenthau, but also the mechanism of transferring individual drives to the state level clearly resembled psychoanalytic insights. Morgenthau argued that most people seemed unable to satisfy their lust for power within the group or nation they live. From this theoretical outset, Morgenthau (1948: 74) follows what a psychoanalyst could not have expressed better:

> »Not being able to find full satisfaction of their desire for power within the national boundaries, the people project those unsatisfied aspirations onto the international scene«.

At this point, we should clearly remember Freud's claim about transference. He described this mechanism as »the transfer of an emotion or thought« (Lear 2005: 142) to another person, and exposed this subcon-

scious action as immanent to all humans. This discovery was now applied by Morgenthau to comprehend the citizen's transference of the hunger for power to the state or the statesman. Freud's famous transference mechanism furnishes the understanding of how citizens and statesman are related, whereby the latter allowed »the power of the state to feed on itself through a process of psychological transference« (Lebow 2007: 252).[63]

Morgenthau goes even further and applies the psychoanalytic logic of the human's Ego balancing the Id's drives and the Super-Ego's collected social restrictions to the international arena. With the nation in the role of the Ego, it has to balance the »lust for power and the constraints of the international community« (Salgó 2014: 30). In this sense, the ›balance of power‹ is nothing more than the notorious defence mechanism we already learnt from the Freudian model. We thus see that Morgenthau—even though he argued against psychologist and psychoanalytic thought, as we will see—borrowed the core principles of his theory from Freud. The structural model of the psyche and the explanation of cultural and social phenomena as psychologically caused are also central to the understanding of Morgenthau's theory's anthropological roots:

> »Man satisfies his lust for power internationally while he abides by the rules domestically. That is the trick Morgenthau learns from Freud« (Schuett 2007: 63).

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As Freud's ideas on human drives and transference mechanisms were spreading throughout the intellectual world, almost no scientist could avoid examining his theories on human nature. Morgenthau was no exception. Not only had Freud been his intellectual father in some way, he also put his own thoughts about war and peace on paper. In his famous correspondence with Albert Einstein shortly before Hitler's seizure of power in Germany, Freud (1960 [1932]) articulated his ideas about international politics—which not coincidentally resembled the realist's jargon. And even over a decade earlier, Freud (1918 [1915]: 18 f.) published his thoughts about man, war, and political ethics. He famously laid the foundations of the realist's programme by claiming that

> »the deepest character of man consists of impulses of an elemental kind which are similar in all human beings, the aim of which is the gratification of certain primitive needs. These impulses are neither good or evil […]. It is conceded that all these impulses which society rejects as evil, such as selfishness and cruelty, are of this primitive nature«.

Morgenthau thought about the power drive in a similar way. As we will see, his own approach resembled the idea of the subconscious character of drives, and thereby sought to find an equivalent for Freud's idea of psychical reality. This intention goes hand in hand with the assumption that subconscious drives are *not* observable by the individual guided and determined by ›hidden forces‹—with severe implications for the scientist's task to observe and analyse these drives. Both Morgenthau and Freud spoke of the universality and law-like nature of the lust for power and, respectively, the psychical drives. Those realities were claimed as ahistorical, independent truths governing the individual's and social life. But how could these realities be discovered, if the individual's reality is determined by the psychical or political drive?

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Notwithstanding the striking similarities of psychoanalysis and political realism, Morgenthau, in his early creative period, tried to conceal his intellectual inspiration in his later works—although he saw Freud's

[63] In the same way, Guilhot (2013: 72) argues that Morgenthau even »follows a rather Freudian understanding of institutions as instances that repress or channel drives in order to make social life possible, and projects it upon the international sphere«.

theory of psychoanalysis as »well suited« (Rösch 2015: 36) for his undertaking of explaining international politics from the perspective of the human soul in his early creative period.[64]

To begin with, most students of International Relations are still taught that Morgenthau's anthropological grounds can be found in the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. Even Morgenthau himself tried to convey the impression that Niebuhr's image of the human was the intellectual inspiration for his work. Our careful examination of Morgenthau's political theory in the light of Freud's psychoanalysis suggests otherwise[65]. Apparently, Morgenthau's and Freud's way of thinking about the human's constitution shows some resemblance:

> »Their reasoning is fairly similar. Has Morgenthau drawn from Niebuhr? No, from Freud. Has Niebuhr read Freud too closely? This is not unlikely« (Schuett 2007: 69).

However, Morgenthau very soon evaded any psychologist interpretation of politics and referred instead to Niebuhr. In hindsight, Morgenthau even felt that his attempt to set up a theory based on psychological drives was an intellectual failure (Neacsu 2010: 47). His abandonment of psychologist philosophy can be best understood by his critique of one of the main thinkers of psychoanalyst entanglement with political theory. He strongly opposed psychoanalyst Erich Fromm's conception of power, which saw statesmen's and leaders' politics as compensation for their inner psychological conflicts. For instance, Fromm (1973) would diagnose Stalin with ›nonsexual sadism‹ and Hitler with ›necrophilia‹. Both dictators' political aims stepped into the background, as their alleged historical objectivity would turn out to be psychologically caused. Fromm suggested a more psychologist analysis of international politics, whereby the individual statesmen and leaders would necessarily become ›patients on the psychoanalyst's couch‹. This idea of politics *as* psychoanalysis however went too far for Morgenthau. Although clearly inspired by psychoanalyst thinking, he did not share Fromm's psychologist perspective which hampered any objective meaning of politics as such. Morgenthau (1963: 35) argued that political phenomena are *factually* objectively comprehensible independent of their psychological causes:

> »Political phenomena […] have an objective meaning which is independent of the psychological causes assigned to them. For two centuries, the rulers of Russia, regardless of their individual psychological qualities, have had a vital interest in the domination of Poland«.

Morgenthau not only seemed to move away from psychologist conceptions of international politics, he also was dissatisfied with psychoanalyst thinking in his later work. Even though he derived his individualist stance on politics through Freud's image of the human being, he became pessimistic about the whole psychoanalytic theory. For this reason, Morgenthau (1984: 14) remarked that

> »what defeats a psychoanalytic theory of politics is the impossibility of accounting for complexities and varieties of political experience with the simplicities of a reductionist theory«.

For Freud, politics was a consequence of the individual's drives. War, for instance, could be understood as the inevitable outcome of a destructive drive. For Morgenthau, war was *not* an end in itself, and the occurrence of war no necessity in itself (Frei 2001: 164). He dismissed the way psychoanalysts explained political phenomena by accusing them of reductionism. If anything, what happens in the political sphere was

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[64] Even in his most famous opus, he still speaks of »psychological trends« (Morgenthau 1948: 75) or the concept of a »psychological relation« (Morgenthau 1948: 14) which determines human interaction. Although he rejected psychologism as a suitable philosophical foundation, he nevertheless accepted psychological bedrock for his theory of political realism and its image of the human.

[65] We will however not deny the general intellectual heritage of Niebuhr's work for Morgenthau's theory. Both scholars stood in permanent exchange (Rice 2013: 145 ff.). However, the particular *anthropological* grounding of Morgenthau's political approach is hereafter considered to be genuine Freudian.

considered a *consequence* and not an independent political act. Politics had to be explained in pure psychologist terms. Morgenthau showed himself reluctant to do so.

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Surprisingly, he decided to take a path that inevitably led him to such a perspective—only that he found that man's drive was to be described as power, and not as sexual or destructive motivation. Moreover, Morgenthau clearly recommended seeing *any* political act in terms of power, so that a policy's actual form and content receded into the background. No matter if a statesman acted in a humanitarian act of friendship, if he opened a dialogue of reconciliation, or if he promoted peaceful policies, Morgenthau (1948: 13) would always argue that all these actions show their true colours when seen as an act of power:

> »Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim«.

Morgenthau thus again resembles the psychologist programme of reducing the interpretation of any fact or phenomenon to the psychical constitution of the human being—only that he interpreted political events and relations from the perspective of the power-driven constitution of man. But psychologism as metatheoretical stance goes even further by claiming that also observation, thought, and perception are driven by these psychic impulses. And, as we will see, Morgenthau draws similar conclusion on how we can observe and think as political realists. It is this argument that leads us to believe that Morgenthau's ›ultimate aim of power‹ is no different from Freud's (2001 [1910]: 118) idea that

> »although the ultimate aim of each drive remains unchangeable, there may yet be different paths leading to the same ultimate aim«.

	Freud's Psychoanalysis	***Morgenthau's Political Realism***
Setting	psychologism as ›making sense‹ of facts through universal psychological drives	realism as ›making sense‹ of facts through universal power drive
Anthropology	humans as driven by the Id	humans as driven by lust for power
Dynamics	transference of wishes and needs onto people and objects	transference of ›power need‹ to state level
Drive Model	subconscious of drives distorting human's thought and perception as ›psychical reality‹	hiddenness of drives governing human's thought and perception as ›political reality‹
Method	objective interpretation	objective and rational analysis
Laws	objectivity and ahistoricity of human drive nature	objectivity and ahistoricity of the universal law of power
Foundation	bio-psychological constitution of human beings	man as an *animus dominandi*

Morgenthau's ›Drive for Power‹ Is a Psychologist Idea: *The Freudian foundation of political realism*

Both Morgenthau and Freud see humans as guided by more or less hidden drives that disguise any action. Both have also to conclude that these drives are of a universal character, even though the actors of their field of investigation may not be conscious of this fact. They also have to see any socio-political phenomenon—states, war, or laws—as necessary consequences of the individual's drive. We will thus, together

with Schuett (2007: 57), argue that »there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Freud had a profound impact on Morgenthau's thought«. Even more, we conclude that both theories are built on the same philosophical foundation—namely, the idea that human beings are driven by inner forces, that they have a hidden motivation behind their thoughts and actions, and that they constantly try to satisfy their drive-induced needs. And with this assumption, we support Schuett's (2010: ix) view that IR scholars have largely neglected

> »one of the most controversial concepts in the sciences and humanities haunting humankind […]: human nature and Sigmund Freud«.

c) The Ontological ›Observer's Antinomy‹ of Political Realism

A brief examination of Morgenthau's idea of scientific observation will now unveil an ontological antinomy plaguing his work. As he echoed Freudian drive theory, any observation turns out as distorted, biased, and driven by the will for power—even in the case of the observing and theorising political realist. But how then can Morgenthau claim to have found a universal law of human nature, if his observation is determined by the drive for power? How can he convincingly set out how he, while being driven by power himself, could observe the political world rationally and objectively?

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Having sketched the common foundation of Morgenthau's and Freud's theory, we have to assume that the antinomy inherent in psychoanalytic theory might spring up in political realism in the same way. For this reason, we have to ask if the ontological antinomy inherent in Freud's work poses a similar dilemma for Morgenthau's considerations. Again, the ontological analyst's antinomy denoted the undecidable problem of a psychoanalytic scientist who, in an impossible way, has to observe her own blind spot evoked by the unobservable subconscious. If she is able to observe herself, she must come to the conclusion that she cannot observe herself; and if she is not able to observe herself, it surprisingly has to follow that she *can* observe herself. This antinomy reflected the dilemma of ascribing an attribute to the ›totality of all humans‹—in Freud's case, the existence of subconscious drives that necessarily imply the impossibility of objective observation. However, the ascription of this attribute could only be made by an observation of *all* humans, and led to an antinomy when being applied to the observer of that totality.

The form of the Freudian analyst's antinomy has been shown to apply to various theorists taking an individualist perspective on their field of investigation—for instance, humanist theories about the human nature or social phenomena. This antinomy always arises if the individual is described as being driven, blurred, or steered by inner forces, by her perceptual apparatus, or by impulses of any kind. In such cases, the observing scientist must be assumed to be describable by this very attributes as well. Thus, her scientific observation *of* the individual must be considered to be equally driven, blurred, or steered as assigned *to* the individual. Freud tried to flee from this antinomy's clutches through his idea of the psychoanalyst's self-analysis and the principle of countertransference, which however ended in the emergence of a new antinomy of the ›analysts' hierarchy‹ or the impossible ›God's Eye View‹.

To examine whether Morgenthau's theory of political realism falls victim to similar ontological antinomy, we have to investigate in what way he intended to observe the arena of political power plays. How is the power-hungry human supposed to observe and be observed in Morgenthau's theory? Is she blinded by her lust for power in the same way the Freudian individual is misguided by her drives? These questions will lead us to the first form of an observer's antinomy in Morgenthau's work.

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How does Morgenthau suggest studying world politics methodically? How can we understand his individualist stance on the international arena *as* political scientists? Morgenthau gives a simple, but also somewhat unclear answer. In his famous manifest ›Six Principles of Political Realism‹ by which Morgenthau (1954) introduces the second edition of his main opus ›Politics among Nations‹, he gives some indication of the method of political realism. At first, Morgenthau (1954: 5) recommends taking his individualist stance on international politics seriously and accordingly remarks that we methodically have to look over the statesman's shoulder

> »when he writes his dispatches; we listen in on his conversations with other statesmen; we read and anticipate his very thoughts. Thinking in terms of interest defined as power, we think as he does, and as disinterested observers we understand his thoughts and actions perhaps better than he, the actor on the political scene, does himself«.

In this sense, Morgenthau attempts to make the power-seeking nature of the human visible by taking a ›disinterested observer‹ position which remarkably resembles the Freudian role of the psychoanalyst who, at least theoretically, had to act as »neutral observer« (Dufresne 2003: 43). Evidently, this assumption of a disinterested or neutral observer—both in the case of political realism and psychoanalysis—seems flawed faced with the presumptions made about the theory itself. For this reason, Morgenthau does not think of statesmen as the sole source of knowledge for gaining ›political facts‹, since he rejected empiricist and positivist fact-gathering as meaningless. But how can we think of power as a universal law one the one hand and his widespread criticism of positivist—or, to use his jargon, ›scientific‹—epistemology? Morgenthau (1954: 10) borrows a famous metaphor to describe this tension:

> »The difference between international politics as it actually is and a rational theory derived from it is like the difference between a photograph and a painted portrait. The photograph shows everything that can be seen by the naked eye; the painted portrait does not show everything that can be seen by the naked eye, but it shows […] one thing that the naked eye cannot see: the human essence of the person portrayed«.

To Morgenthau, it is meaningless to comprise politics the way one would take a detailed photograph. All the details, all the presumed facts of a scientific photograph would be nothing without a meaning assigned to them. If we instead see the work of the social scientist as that of a painter, we can better comprehend the »human factor in the construction of reality« (Behr, Rösch 2014: 117). We again see that this reality cannot be approached by positivist or empiricist thinking, as any knowledge claim in Morgenthau's sense is dependent on the time it is being made, on the social conditions, the historical context, and political landscape. Just as the painter chooses specific colours, uses different brushes, and creates a particular style, the political scientist has to do the same. The only thing she knows is that politics and social life are governed by the universal law of power, and anything else is contingent and conditional. Even more, political reality is created by the interaction of human beings, and power is the only general mechanism regulating these interactions.

This assumption draws on the problem that human nature itself—while being part of Morgenthau's social world—is not as accurately observable as physical or natural objects are. Both human nature and the human being as a social actor cannot be described merely in terms of natural-scientific numbers, equations, or models. Morgenthau as a social scientist has to concede the vagueness and inexactness of social inquiry. However, this argument begs the question of how we can observe not only the political sphere, but the universal laws guiding human action. If we cannot fall back on the method of rationalism and scientism, how else can we work as political scientists? And, in the end, how can the political scientist observe the objective law governing human beings?

At first, we have to ask ourselves how Morgenthau could observe and discover man's lust for power as a general law, while all its manifestations have varied and changed in the course of history. Morgenthau's answer is simple. He argues that any of these roots lie in human nature as such, and that this essential constitution is unchanged and »located outside of history« (Guilhot 2013: 71). Hence, whenever Morgenthau speaks of objectivity, he actually means that something is rooted in human nature as an unchangeable, permanent constituent.[66]

Unfortunately, Morgenthau himself remained almost silent on the question of *how* he found that man is a power-driven animal—as opposed to the liberalists' ideas. He mostly referred to the work of Niebuhr (Rice 2013: 145 f.; Wrightson 1996: 354 ff.) and Nietzsche (Frei 2001: 94 ff.; Neacsu 2010: 36 ff.; Rösch 2015: 34 f.; Emden 2014: 330), although philosophical differences between those thinkers are obvious. As we will see, he later described »the insights of a Jeremiah, Plato, or Hobbes« (Molloy 2006: 81) as intellectual fathers. The designation of the human drive for power as objective law could hence at first be disparaged as mere presumption, drawn by reference to thinkers who saw humans as power-striving beings. On closer inspection, we nevertheless see Morgenthau's idea of power as carrying Freud's signature.

As a matter of fact, he described the drive for power as ›something subconscious‹ several times. The lust for power is distorted and blurred—or, to say it with Freud's (1960 [1923]: 5) word, »repressed«—by the human mind, and therefore not consciously accessible to the acting human. Not surprisingly, Morgenthau borrows this concept of subconscious drives from Freud. Even though the hunger for power has been described as a core attribute of humans within social relations, the drive as such must be understood as subconscious and repressed. Morgenthau (1954: 16) remarks that

> »the human mind in its day-by-day operations cannot bear to look the truth of politics straight in the face. It must disguise, distort, belittle, and embellish the truth […]. For only by deceiving himself about the nature of politics and the role he plays on the political scene is man able to live contentedly as a political animal«.

Morgenthau's unambiguous descriptions of the characteristics of the power drive clearly bear the mark of Freud. Obviously, the theory of political realism could not have been framed in another way but in the sense of a classical drive theory. Especially against the background of Morgenthau's liberal adversaries' conceptions, his idea of understanding man as driven—and not as a rational thinker—had necessarily to be interwoven with the concept of the subconscious. We may know about the existence of essential drives, but we are not always aware of them. We may reflect on our thoughts directed to aggressive or ›pseudo-rational‹ actualisations, but we cannot know the true motives behind these thoughts. We could even believe that we act in a moral way, but the driving forces of our consciousness will always fog our minds and disguise the actual intentions of our actions. In the same way, Morgenthau thought about the lust for power. The actor as individual politician can never be sure *why* he pursues certain interests, he only knows *that* he strives for something. With this psychological founding, political realism adopts a drive-theoretical understanding which obviously makes room for the subconscious:

> »With drive, comes the idea of motives that remain hard to access because of defences that conceal them and the operation of a thought process discrepant with that of ordinary, rational thought« (Sherman 2000: 159).

Moreover, Morgenthau (1948: 74) also adapts the logic of the Freudian Super-Ego by arguing that »[s]ociety has established a network of rules of conduct and institutional devices for controlling individual power drives«. He even borrowed the principle of projection to describe the transference of individual

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[66] However, the ›assumption of universality‹ seems to be played down by some scholars arguing that »[r]ealist logic does not require that all individuals be aggressive or self-interested, simply that some of them are« (Barkin 2006: 416). Although we do not talk of the realist's ›universal law‹ as empirical finding in one way or the other, such claims obviously contradict the drive-theoretical foundation of Morgenthau's image of man. Although different actors may show power aspirations to a different degree, the drive behind this motivation must be considered an existential characteristic in the theory of realism.

drives to the state level.[67] Obviously, all these dynamics are not thinkable without assuming the *subconscious* character of basic drives. Neither the idea of a drive as such, nor the regulating function of the human mind and social norms are coherently conflatable within a drive theory lacking of a theoretical level of the subconscious. For this reason, Morgenthau's drive-theoretical foundation is no exception. And finally, with some scholars remarking Nietzsche's influence, the resulting conclusion nevertheless resembles Freudian thought:

> »Nietzsche provided Morgenthau with a psychology of the drive towards power, which also investigates the subconscious and recognizes the basic human drive in the ›will to power‹« (Küng 1998: 42).

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At this point, an antinomic tension inherent in the theory of political realism arises. Drawing on a psychological concept of the drive for power, Morgenthau implied the necessary condition of a subconscious embedding which blurs and disguises man's reason. And just as Freud's own theory became afflicted with an observer's antinomy, Morgenthau suffered the same fate. In Freud's case, the dilemma of the inaccessibility of the human psyche and its subconscious stood in contradiction to his observations about this very constitution—which famously was referred to as a ›blind spot‹. The question of how this blind spot and the impossibility of self-analysis could be overcome now arises for Morgenthau. If the lust for power is a subconscious drive distorting our rational thoughts, how could Morgenthau discover this force? If the hunger to gain more power is existent in every human being, how can we be sure that Morgenthau's own work is an objective textbook, and not an act of power game itself? Recall that Morgenthau (1954: 5) prominently described that to

> »search for the clue to foreign policy exclusively in the motives of statesmen is both futile and deceptive. It is futile because motives are the most illusive of psychological data, distorted as they are, frequently beyond recognition, by the interest and emotions of actor and observer alike. Do we really know what our own motives are? And what do we know of the motives of others?«

By stating that the actual motives behind human behaviour and recognition are inaccessible, he clearly advocates a Freudian understanding of man. But unfortunately, he accordingly describes the impossibility of discovering the ›real motives‹ as true for both the acting human *and* the observer of these actions, and thereby prescribes the role of the political realist *as* observer as well. But how could Morgenthau then observe the drive for power in the first place? And even if he found a suitable method for doing so, how can he be sure to recognise and apply this method independent of the distorting drives he also is determined by?

Imagine Morgenthau as an observer of the human drives. He must then be seen as guided and distorted by these drives as well. Anything he sees, perceives, or thinks must be motivated by the inner forces which are existent in every human being. In any other case, his assumption of this drive's universality would be false. Holding such an assumption borrowed from Freud and Nietzsche, he thus has to concede that his own »drives affect the agent's perceptions of reason« (Katsafanas 2013: 747)—that is, all he observes is determined and guided by his own drives *while he observes*. It seems therefore highly problematic to think of a man determined by his drives and, at the same time, allow for a rational leeway:

> »Laws of human behavior […] are highly deterministic. As far as these laws apply, it is meaningless to speak of human choice or agency« (Freyberg-Inan 2004: 34).

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[67] In the same way, Morgenthau's idea of the ›balance of power‹ was framed as »result of states' subconscious reactions« (Salgó 2014: 15) in which they rather react in a spontaneous manner than as rational calculator.

Morgenthau's theory thus seemingly contains a problematic dualism of ›objective observation‹ and ›observation determined by power‹. On the one hand, he maintains that the basic laws of human nature are objectively observable as universally valid. On the other hand, he advocates the assumption that power drives guide *all* human action such as behaviour, emotions, thought, and even perception and observation in the sense Freud and Nietzsche proposed. However, this form of observation and perception by political actors can never be objective in the same sense that Morgenthau suggested when discovering the ›objective laws of human nature‹. The crucial question is how he managed to weigh these dichotomous notions of objectivity and observation, and how he observed the political arena and the way he himself observed what he did. This tension might be best understood if we sketch Morgenthau's scientific undertaking by making the ontological statement that

Morgenthau objectively observes all those whose observations are driven by power.

An antinomy arises if we see the critical disposition of ›objective observation‹ and ›observation driven by power‹ as two contradictory counterparts. The question is whether Morgenthau can observe himself—which stands for the dilemma of how Morgenthau himself dealt with the problem of the power bias *his own* observation must necessarily contain, and thereby alludes to a deep epistemological and methodological problem of political realism. If Morgenthau objectively observes himself, he must conclude that his self-observation is driven by power as well. But then, his observation cannot be objective in Morgenthau's own sense—which is a contradiction to our starting point. This is the antinomy's impossible core: only if Morgenthau's own observation is power-biased, his can *objectively* assume that *all* observations are power biased.[68] The ontological statement which reflects Morgenthau's core claim is thus neither false nor true. It is true if and only if it is false.

With the formulation ›driven by power‹ as equivalent to his idea of ›not objective‹, this antinomy comes to force. Obviously, this dilemma could be resolved if Morgenthau claimed two modes of observation—for instance, that the scientist observes objectively and the politician observes in terms of power. However, after discovering the Freudian foundation of Morgenthau's assumptions, such an ontological separation of observation modes would contradict the drive-theoretical stance of political realism. Both Freud and Morgenthau imply that objective observation is possible in a scientific way, but obviously violate their own stipulations on how humans are guided by drives. The Morgenthauian observer's antinomy reflects this tension. And it was perhaps this dilemma that led Robert Gilpin (1986: 304) to argue that political realism might be »best viewed as an attitude regarding the human condition« rather than a universal law.

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Morgenthau himself gives an explanation on how a universal law of human nature could be detected in the face of drive-induced biases and distortions. As seen, he adopts the Freudian assumption that drives govern reason—which is nothing new. He then argues that these drives have led to the discovery of the universal laws of nature, which is, as we soon will see, an untenable conclusion. As an explanation, Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 161) states that

> »the universality of the laws of nature is recognized only because and in so far as universally held interests and emotions are driving reason toward the discovery and application of these laws«.

On the one hand, Morgenthau argues that the investigation of universal laws is widely influenced by a constant societal power struggle—which, as will be shown, affects the relation between truth and power. On the other hand, Morgenthau assumes that human drives themselves have drawn attention to ›their‹ discovery. In this respect, he seemingly anticipated the ontological antinomy that arises with this conclu-

[68] Again, the assumption of a totality of ›all observations‹ is merely used as an illustration of the presumed notion of universality.

sion. If drives guide our perception, thought, and observations, then the discovery of *any* law must be power-driven. The denotation of the label ›universal‹ to the law he thought to have found could also be blurred by his drive for power—just as the Catholic Church's adherence to the universal law of the geocentric world during Europe's renaissance or the alleged universal laws of eugenics during German fascism.

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In this sense, Beer and Hariman (1996: 389) argue that the realist's observation and interpretation is obviously blinded by the very category of power he pretends to discover, and »so walls off alternative accounts that it produces a blind spot«. This blindness becomes apparent if we elaborate the reading of one of realism's foundational texts. In Thucydides' ›Melian Dialogue‹, this power bias has not only become obvious in most of realist interpretations, but also in Thucydides' rhetoric as well:

> »As realists read this passage, it identifies the essential, natural condition of international politics. The complexities of political life are reduced to a calculus of power, justice is reduced to self-interest, appearances are reduced to the reality they conceal, and ultimately, language is reduced to the world it would represent« (Beer, Hariman 1996: 390).

We will however resist maintaining the standpoint that Morgenthau's observation of international politics is undecidable because it may be blinded by its own presumptions. We unveil the undecidability in his work solely by alluding to the tension inherent in the alleged objective observation that *all* observation is driven by power. The antinomy reflects the dilemma that Morgenthau's observation is objective if and only if it is *not* objective.

As we elaborated the observer's antinomy inherent in Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, we came to the same conclusion. If Freud's assumption is true, then Freud himself must have been unable to access his subconscious drives that might have blurred him and the building of his theory. Again, his theory is thus neither true nor false in the sense Freud thought about truth and falseness. The antinomy revealed points to the dilemma that if Freud's observation is true in an objective sense, it must be *not* objective. If subconscious drives prevent one from the represetnation of a real world, then the real observation of this very fact must be ›unreal‹ as well. Hence, without claiming the falseness of Freud's theory, we turned our attention to this problem by thinking about Freud *as an observer* who might have been blinded by the very drives he presumed to have discovered.

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Some scholars such as Ellenberger (1981: 447) diagnosed Freud with ›creative illness‹ to explain the latter's »preoccupation with an idea and search for a certain truth«. Ellenberger's argument reflects the tension set out in the Freudian ontological antinomy. In the same way, an elaboration of how Morgenthau might have been preoccupied by the ideas—or, better, by drives leading to the emergence of these ideas—leading to his main opus will serve the same purpose. These questions are nothing more than mere illustrations of the observer's antinomy we discovered in his work, and should not be confused with any accusation of his undertakings in an empirical sense. Nevertheless, we might better understand why some personal or biographical criticisms of Morgenthau *as* theorist arose, and how these critiques refer to realism's antinomic tension.

Several of Morgenthau's critics made the reproach that his theory was more of a mirror of his time than an ahistorical, objective account. His sharp criticism of liberal and rationalist thought was clearly connected with its ›practical failure‹ culminating in the Second World War. Morgenthau was not a hard-nosed realist in his younger years, but apparently changed his view in the course of the 1930s. In this sense, Honig (1996: 184) states that

> »he was anything but a realist during his early years, and […] was the events surrounding the Second World War which ›radicalized‹ his thinking«.

Morgenthau's discovery of the evil nature of the power-seeking human has hence been often described as being related to the fact that he personally suffered from both the consequences of the Nazi seizure of power and the horror of the world wars. The emergence of the whole school of realism is thus closely linked to these historical developments (Mollov 2002: 2 ff.), and especially Morgenthau's own experience as a Jewish emigrant who was very early confronted with discrimination and provocation in Germany had contributed to the harshness of his realist world view:

> »Morgenthau clearly articulated Realist assumptions concerning the conflictual and tragic nature of human existence, which […] was affected by Jewish influences, particularly those of anti-Semitism and the earlier idealism of the German-Jewish experience of the nineteenth century in reaction to Nazism« (Mollov 2014: 25).

Without suggesting that Morgenthau's intellectual work has to be reinterpreted in the light of his personal development, the illustration of how the observer's antinomy might be thought of in an informal sense may contribute to the understanding of more biographical accounts. Whenever Morgenthau's image of the human is read against the historical and societal background of his time, the question of how Morgenthau himself accords to this image should necessarily be posed. This dilemma is reflected in the observer's antinomy. Was Morgenthau blinded by the shadows of his time, and did he himself think of his life as a struggle for power? Should he be accused in the same way Freud was by his critics? Keeping in mind that the antinomic tension inherent in those questions cannot be resolved, we at least can better understand why »his intellectual origins have only recently moved into the spotlight« (Jütersonke 2010: 21). In the course of critical readings, these very questions have been posed to elaborate the relation between theorist and theorised, observer and the observed, and the scientist and her field of investigation.

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The ontological antinomy arising from the critical disposition of ›objective observation‹ and ›observation driven by power‹ can be found in another form. Recall Morgenthau's criticism of rationalism and liberalism on the one hand, but his vehement commitment to the academic consideration of irrational drives on the other hand. Obviously, Morgenthau's juggle with the notion of rationality and rationalism as either philosophical perspective, or scientific method, or practical reasoning gave rise to misunderstandings. It will however be argued that the basic tenor of all these notions is a common understanding of how the human as a *rational being* is theoretically treated. We will soon see that the necessarily implied tension between the view of man as either rational or power-striving leads to another form of the already described observer's antinomy.

We are hereby alluding to a common criticism of political realism. At first, Morgenthau maintained that man is driven by power, and therefore does not and cannot act rationally. In this sense, he voiced criticism against the liberal-rationalist way of observing and comprising world politics. He argued that the view of man as a rational, reasonable being led to illusory ideas of how international peace and order could be established. Surprisingly, he also called for a view of both scientists and statesmen as being able to rationally act in their fields. Morgenthau (1954: 10) instructs the political scientist to contribute to a »rationalist theory of international politics« and the statesman to pursue a »rational foreign policy«. The question now is how this postulate of rationality can be maintained against the background of irrational drives as the foundation for all of Morgenthau's further considerations. As true as for the objective observer, the dichotomous treatment of rationality and irrationality within his theoretical settings could only have worked if Morgenthau had not clung to the idea of drives. If, however, the concept of the drive for power necessarily determines the way of thinking and behaving, such an ›isolated‹ treatment would turn out contradic-

tory. Put simply, if drives could be treated or controlled in a rational way, then why had rationalism and liberalism been abandoned as philosophical programme by Morgenthau?

By maintaining the »distinction between rationalism and rationality« (Neacsu 2010: 171), Morgenthau was criticised for giving rise to a contradiction inherent in his works, even though he later tried to clarify his position in more detail. He was convinced that reason and rationality was »carried by the irrational forces of interest and emotion« (Morgenthau 1965 [1946]: 155), and that rationality was merely used to satisfy man's greed for power. Through this apparent dichotomy of ›rationality driven by irrationality‹, Morgenthau argues that statesmen and states perform rational foreign policies to satisfy their irrational drive of power-seeking. For this reason, political realism is often said to be founded on the »rationality assumption« (Keohane 1984b: 66) referring to the description of states as egoistic, power-maximizing actors pursuing their national interest. However, advocates of this assumption have to admit that this form of rationality does not give us any clue about *what* interests and *what* actions states choose to pursue:

> »Interests become interesting only when they acquire substance—which is provided not by calculating, instrumental reason but by the passions (interests, desires)« (Donnelly 2000: 65).

Consequently, whenever Morgenthau speaks of rationality or the rational behaviour of states, he leaves room for misunderstandings. What he actually means is that statesmen and states are driven by the hunger for power, and, in a quasi-rational manner, attempt to still this hunger in appropriate, realistic ways. The problem with Morgenthau's assumption is, however, that the motive as such is irrational by definition, and that he thus promotes the paradox notion of the »irrational assertion of rationality« (Walker 2002: 21) in the tradition of Carl Schmitt. He thereby, as Guzzini (2013: 112) remarks, problematically gives rise to the »confusion between the level of action and the level of observation«.

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The way Morgenthau fostered the »marriage of realist tenets and rationalist models« (Kahler 1998a: 924) could not overcome the pitfall that human nature is *either* determined by irrational *or* rational forces. And, as we saw, he decided that rationality and reason are »subordinate instruments« (Griffiths 1992: 40) in the arena of power games. Even though we might be led to interpret notions such as interest and egoism in rationalist terms, we thereby forget the actual embedding of these notions under the umbrella of irrationality:

> »To appeal to ›interest‹ alone (in rationalist terms) is to misunderstand how reason as pure instrumentality is linked to irrationality and violence« (Williams 2005: 183).

The often misunderstood difference between irrational forces and instrumental rationality seems to stem from the neglect of Morgenthau's Freudian roots. If some International Relations scholars argue—and, surprisingly, Morgenthau (1954: 10) himself was among them—that statesmen and states can be seen as rational actors pursuing egoistic interests, they seemingly overlook Freud's legacy. As Freud knew, drives are »intrinsically irrational« (Cavell 2002: 282). Take the biological drive of hunger as an example, and imagine a starving person's behaviour directed to still this hunger. She might begin to gnaw a piece of wood if she does not find anything edible, even though this desperate act would not help her to avoid starvation. Is this person's behaviour rational or irrational? The consequences of the drive for food would surely lead to irrational thinking and emotional, instinctive, and dangerous behaviour. A hungry person is not expected to act rationally in its very sense. Even worse, the more famished a person is, the more irrationally she thinks and behaves. This again is one of the pitfalls of Morgenthau's adaption of drive in terms of power: how ›hungry‹ is a statesman in his pursuit of power? What will he do to amass power?

Accordingly, this question touches upon the role of the theorist as well. If he is guided by irrational drives, he necessarily seeks power in his field. So how could we expect him to set out a rational theory of foreign

policy in the sense Morgenthau required? Clearly, his undertaking of developing such a theory would not be dependent on its truthfulness or its argument's rationality, but solely on the scientist's gain of power. Surprisingly, Morgenthau (1972: 31) himself advocated such a view of the scientist's motives:

> »Thus the scholar seeking knowledge seeks power; so does the poet who endeavours to express his thoughts and feelings in words. So do the mountain climber, the hunter, the collector of rare objects. They all seek to assert themselves as individuals against the world by mastering it«.

He famously refers to the dual role of Karl Marx who, as a scientist, declared the inevitability of the class struggle to then, as a revolutionary, enable that movement through his scientific work. With this example in mind, can we still adhere to the separation of the scientist's and the statesman's rationality? Can we assume that a theory set up by a power-seeking scientist accords with the requirements of a rational approach? Think about the ontological statement that

A political realist rationally observes all those whose observations are irrationally driven by power.

Again, this antinomy emerges from the Morgenthau's balancing act to carry with him the notions of irrational drives and rational observation at the same time. If we ask whether Morgenthau's own observation is rational or irrational, we soon get trapped in logical contradictions. If he rationally observes himself, he must be one of those whose observations are irrationally driven by power. But then, he would *not* be able to rationally observe himself—which is a contradiction to our starting point. We thereby touch the dilemma between objectivity and relativism which, as we saw, also is at hand whenever we think about the difference between rational and irrational observers insofar as

> »we may consider objective knowledge to be that which is the same to any rational observer […]. Similarly, the self-evident ideas beloved of the rationalists were self-evident to whomever was capable of clearly perceiving them—which all rational people should do. Relativism, on the other hand, argues that […] everything depends on the perspective you adopt. Something may be true for you, true for human beings, true in the twenty-first century and so on, but nothing is just true, full stop« (Baggini, Southwell 2012: 43).

The Morgenthauian observer's antinomy alludes to the inherent tension of a rational observer to observe humans' irrational drives, and resembles the puzzling antinomy of the ›objective observation‹ and ›observation driven by power‹ understood as *relativistic* observation. Again, the problem arises due to the dichotomous use of the notions rationality and irrationality in an impossible way. The observer assumes a characteristic or attribute of *what* he observes; and thereby has to presuppose this characteristic or attribute to be constitutive of his own observation. Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 142 f.) himself seems to advocate such a view by arguing that the social scientist as observer is not independent of his object of research. In contrast, she always affects what she sees:

> »The social scientist as such stands in the streams of social causation as an acting and reacting agent. What he sees and what he does not see are determined by his position in those streams; and by revealing what he sees in terms of his science he directly intervenes in the social process«.

If we see the political theorist as part of the social process, we must also assume that she acts within this process by the rules of the power game. The theorist is then rather seen as one of the countless fighters in the struggle for power—just like the clerk, the artist, and the statesman. According to Morgenthau's argument, the scientist must assure that what she ›achieves‹ with her theory contributes to the power position he holds. Calling on the observer's antinomy, we are forced to draw the conclusion that the role of the theoretical observer is impossible to frame whenever she includes her *own* observation within his theory. If she can rationally observe herself, she must be irrationally driven by power; and if she cannot ration-

ally observe herself, she must rationally observe herself by her own definition. It can further be argued that this theoretical tension is one of the reasons why some scholars saw a constructivist undertone in Morgenthau's theory—and, at the same time, a conceptual change he seemed to undergo after the publication of his debut work in 1946:

> »What Morgenthau is arguing against in *Scientific Man* is the attempt to understand the world as a rational place rather than to rationally understand the world. What he is contending in *Politics among Nations* is that there is a problem in attempting to rationally understand the world, when the world is not, in fact, a rational place. In other words, both books are arguing the same point but coming at it from different directions. This interpretation does suggest an incompatibility between classical realism and rational choice theory. It does, however, suggest a compatibility between classical realism and neoclassical, or thin, constructivism« (Barkin 2006: 417).

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A last consideration will make the argument on the ontological antinomy complete. What is the reason Morgenthau implicitly introduced the critical disposition ›objective observation‹ and ›observation driven by power‹, and, in a similar way, ›rationally observes‹ and ›observation irrationally driven by power‹? Wasn't he aware that he created an unresolvable tension between *describing* the human power drive as distorting and irrational, but holding the assumption that a theorist can *observe* this drive in an objective and rational way?

Like Freud, Morgenthau attempted to take two different perspectives at the same time. On the one hand, he would argue that any human's behaviour and thought is determined by irrational drives distorting any ›clear view‹. On the other, he suggested a *methodological* instruction of how to observe these irrational drives. Although Morgenthau clearly proposed a non-positivist concept of objectivity as opposed to a naïve, realist understanding of observation in his work, he nevertheless laid himself open to attack. His suggestion of the power concept as universally valid was not to understand as an ontological claim, but was rather introduced as an »epistemological tool« (Behr 2014: 163). With this tool at hand, a theorist can observe international politics methodically. But does the deployment of such a method conform to Morgenthau's conclusions on the human being? Can we assume man's ability to act and think as being distorted by the striving for power *and* the existence of a universally valid tool that make observations in the political sphere possible?

The dilemma with Morgenthau's method to understand and interpret political events arises whenever we try to combine his image of the human with the methodological instructions given of how humans should and can observe humans. The observer *is* one of the humans she observes, she is constituted by the same pieces she observes. As being described with the very same attributes of interests and power, the way she uses a method or an epistemological tool will similarly be dependent by the way her nature as a power-seeking being determines.

Hence, the method or ›epistemological tool‹ a political realist deploys cannot consistently be thought of as universally valid in the sense Morgenthau intended. If the tool was applicable independently of the power-seeking nature of man, the whole realist concept of power drives would appear as antinomic. Morgenthau's conception of drives prescribes not only a particular image of man, but also has implications for the epistemological constitution of the human being. If power-driven nature disguises all human actions, all their intentions, and all their thoughts, it appears undecidable—but however neither true nor false—to prescribe a universal category which enables one to rationally observe these actions, intentions, and thought. If Morgenthau's method was universally valid, then his image of the human could not be valid at the same time—and *vice versa*. We now see that the observer's antinomy arises as conflict between Morgenthau's epistemological ideas and, in contrast to that, his methodological concepts. Roughly speaking, the way he *described* humans is not compatible with the way he recommends to *observe* humans scientifically.

Although Morgenthau vehemently rejected positivist methodology, the admission of universal, »mind-independent« (Behr, Rösch 2012: 37) categories such as ›power as universal drive‹, ›power as objective category‹, or ›power as epistemological tool‹ contradict the relativist elements of his theory. The assumption of such categories inevitably has to be thought of in a scientific, positivist sense. Even in Morgenthau's anti-positivist reading, the essential constitution of humans as driven by power is taken as a *fact*, as an unchangeable and ahistorical constant determining all individual and political action. Although the way this factual drive manifests itself in concealed and disguised phenomena, Morgenthau assumes the human nature behind those masks as unquestionable fact. Again, this tension between the ›positivist justification of anti-positivism‹ has given rise to the observer's antinomy we already witnessed—and could thus be found in the *antitheton* of ›objective observation‹ and ›observation driven by power‹, and the assumption of ›rational observation‹ and ›observation irrationally driven by power‹.

A brief synopsis of what the ontological antinomy is and which conclusions must be drawn will now contribute to a better understanding of why the contradictions in Morgenthau's theory inevitably lead to even more severe consequences for both the truth and meaning of his own arguments. The Freudian foundation of political realism led to a conflation of drive-theoretical and observer-theoretical implications. Drives hamper rational thinking, and, therewith, observation as well. Through his argument, Morgenthau created the critical disposition of ›rationality‹ and ›irrational drives‹ or ›objective observation‹ and ›observation driven by power‹. An observer is then to be seen as driven and restricted by her own power drives, and the observations she makes are rather insights from her own perspective than objective or universal truths:

> »The perspective of the observer determines what can be known and how it is to be understood« (Morgenthau 1959: 21).

With these attributes assignable to the theoretical observer of world politics, we are led to ask about Morgenthau's *own* perspective; and as we did, an antinomy arose whenever we asked whether Morgenthau's own observation should be added to the ›totality‹ of all observations he theorised about. This question turned out to be undecidable. Now an unambiguous answer could be given as to whether Morgenthau's own perspective *was* or *was not* driven and blurred by his own power drives—and hence, if the proclaimed universality of power turned out as an acceptable or contradictory statement. As we now will see, the implications of the observer's antinomy also touch the dimension of truth and meaning in his theoretical work.

Finally, we find an alleged ontological ›hierarchical solution‹ to the unresolvable observer's antinomy in his theory. Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 220) himself argued that the political realist has to overcome the fetters of the opaque and obscure power play he might be intertwined with:

> »The key to those laws of man is not in the facts from whose uniformity the sciences derive their laws. It is in the insight and the wisdom by which more-than-scientific man elevates his experiences into the universal laws of human nature«.

But what is the ›more-than-scientific man‹ who elevates the game of power meant to be? Who can know when she is finally freed from any power influences and their distortions? How can we think of Morgenthau's (1954: 5) »disinterested observers« who, in a quasi-hierarchical manner, looks over the statesman's shoulder? At this point, we might feel reminded of the impossible ontological hierarchy of therapists in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, in which any analyst had to be analysed under the supervision of a higher one to gain insight about her countertransferential mechanisms. In the same sense, Morgenthau seems to require a hierarchical position of the theorist from which she could independently observe the power

plays, which however would then contradict the proclaimed universality of the law of power. Even worse, this higher-levelled position would call for what we earlier denoted as ›God's Eye View‹—an individual theorist fully detached from any human characteristics.

d) The Semantical ›Antinomy of Political Truth‹

As with the Freudian antinomy of psychic reality, Morgenthau seems to stumble into the same pitfall by proclaiming the ›partiality‹ of truth—or, in other words, its historical and sociopolitical dependence. But with holding that ›All truth is relative to power‹, Morgenthau opens up the door for antinomic confusion. What about political realism's own truth-dependence? Is Morgenthau's theory to be understood as universal or objective truth, or nothing else than a snapshot of the political landscape of his time?

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By showing the striking likeness of the observer's antinomies arising in Freud's and Morgenthau's work, there is reason to suspect political realism of similarly harbouring a semantical antinomy in the style of psychoanalysis' antinomy of psychic reality. Whereas this antinomic tension was due to the Freudian assumption of an individual psychic reality which entailed a psychologist perspective, Morgenthau (1954: 4) prominently spoke about a »political reality« as well. Did he allow for a Freudian understanding of reality and truth in the sphere of politics? Has he implicitly fostered a psychologist stance on sketching international politics?

The semantical antinomy in Freud's psychoanalytic theory arises in the course of investigating the relativistic assumption of the objective fact that truth is solely dependent on the individual's psyche. In another form, this antinomy was found in the undecidable statement of the ›universal law that all laws of logic are vague and inexact‹, which was largely criticised and eventually became psychologism's pitfall. To explore whether Morgenthau fostered a similar approach, a brief evaluation of how he conceptualised ›political reality‹ is indispensable.

At first, we have to think about the linkages between objectivity, knowledge, and truth in Morgenthau's theory. We already know that, as one of scientism's most passionate critics, he refused to grasp reality in terms of a positivist jargon. For him, world politics could not be represented realistically by just collecting facts and numbers. The way history and politics could be seen faces constant change, and the social theorist observing historical and political phenomena is necessarily subject to these changes. If a theorist attributes a particular meaning to such a phenomenon, she depicts solely a subjective picture the meaning of which will obviously change in the course of academic history. Hence, scientific knowledge of the political reality can never be fixed. But how can we then comprehend the claim of an objective law of power struggle, if this finding should also be seen in the face of a steadily changing political landscape?

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On the one hand, Morgenthau clearly argued that knowledge about politics and social phenomena comes and goes over the course of history, and that any knowable fact about the political and social sphere might appear as scientifically superseded in the future. On the other, he attempted to foster the assumption that the universal law of power is constant and objective. The only way out of this obvious tension seemed to be a double standard of stating the existence of such a law, but conceding a relationist interpretation of this law at the same time. In Morgenthau's eyes, the notion

> »of power as an objective category […] is universally valid but is not endowed with a fixed meaning« (Ben-Itzhak 2011: 312).

In this sense, Morgenthau argues that the objectivity of power cannot be grasped as positivist claim, but endorses a »*relationist* and *perspectivist* understanding of objectivity« (Behr 2014: 161). His idea of objectivity and universality has to be seen against the background of the permanent changes of politics in the course of time.[69] Although Julius Cesar, William the Conqueror, and Winston Churchill pursued completely different politics and had likewise different understandings of what war, peace, and morality meant, their motivation was objectively determined by the struggle for power. Morgenthau attempts to expose this objective law by defying the different meanings and manifestations power politics may have. Thus, the actual policy in which power appears is more of a mask. The conclusion hiding behind this mask is necessarily dependent on the historical, social, and political standpoint an observer takes, and so are the differing *meanings*. But how are we supposed to think about a relational approach on politics carrying the assumption of a universal, objective category? Morgenthau (1948: 4) himself does not see any difficulties in assuming a relationist understanding of objectivity and mentioning the universality of an objective law in the same breath:

> »The observer is surrounded by the contemporary scene with its ever shifting emphasis and changing perspectives. He cannot find solid ground on which to stand, nor objective standards of evaluation«.

Although excluding ›objective standards‹ as the foundation for his theory, Morgenthau nevertheless claims the objectivity of the laws of human nature. With the observer's antinomy in mind, we again have to acknowledge the undecidability of such a claim. Either the objectivity of an observer's finding is possible in general or all observation has to be grasped in relationist or perspectivist terms. This tension now yields a semantical antinomy as soon as we relate these assumptions to Morgenthau's notion of truth and knowledge. It is not only that he claims the existence of an objective law and the impossibility of objective observation at the same time, he also thinks of scientific truth in the latter sense. Truth can never be objective, but is always dependent on the observer and his perspective. A political scientist working in a Soviet university during the era of the Cold War will have another understanding of ›truth‹ than an American colleague. Disturbingly, Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 166) claims this perspectivist account on truth to be the sole valid one—despite his general truth of the objective law of power:

> »The truth of the social sciences […] is truth only under the particular perspective of the observer, yet under this perspective it is truth. And this is the only kind of truth to be had in the social sphere«.

Admittedly, Morgenthau does not propagate a pure solipsistic approach to truth and knowledge, although we might be tempted to read the implications of his theoretical frame in such a way. He claims that observation is dependent on a certain standpoint which reflects the junction of a particular historical, sociopolitical, and cultural course. However, if we consider the Freudian foundation of drives underlying Morgenthau's account, this junction is not a random reference point. How truth and meaning develop and manifest themselves in the course of time is a consequence of the interests and struggles of power-driven humans. Not surprisingly, Morgenthau's (1965 [1946]: 166) work has therefore even allowed for post-structuralist interpretations in some way[70]—especially because he claimed that »[t]ruth itself becomes relative to social interests and emotions«.

With the drive for power as the origin of all interests and emotions, he seems to advocate the argument that truth is relative to power. Again, in the light of Freud's assumption of psychic reality as the result of subconscious drives, Morgenthau likewise recognises the link between truth and the drive for power. Alt-

[69] However, Morgenthau (1970: 14) seems to contradict his earlier ideas on the relation between truth and power by arguing that »truth threatens power, and power threatens truth«.

[70] Most prominently, Williams (2005: 164) sees similarities in Morgenthau's works on identity in this respect—however without »certainly not claiming that Morgenthau was a ›post-structuralist‹ all along«.

hough he tries to establish a theory of politics based on the principles of objectivity and rationality, he now describes truth and knowledge as *relative* to power and interests. Paradoxically, he thereby shoots himself in the foot by denying the possibility of objective scientific knowledge as independent of power structures:

> »If there cannot be a scientific knowledge of history—and, for that matter, of politics—it is because knowledge itself is historical, as Morgenthau never tired of repeating« (Guilhot 2013: 71).

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We now arrive at a semantical antinomy inherent in Morgenthau's work. He sets up a theory that claims the impossibility of universal knowledge and truth, but does so by claiming the universality and objectivity of the law of power as the core foundation of his own theory. Consequently, Morgenthau has to link his relationist approach of truth with the drive-theoretical concept on power. For him, the political scientist is—just as are all humans—driven by power, and her interpretation of world politics is therefore relative to the position she adopts within the historical struggle for power. Thus, we think of power in Morgenthau's (1948: 13) original psychological jargon—namely, as »man's control over the minds of other men«. Surprisingly, power in this sense »is not primarily materialistic but ideational« (Neacsu 2010: 88). Whereas traditional readings of Morgenthau's work might suggest otherwise, a precise elaboration of his definition of power alludes to the non-materialistic stance of his theory. Power is not solely understandable in terms of capacities such as material resources, weapons or physical strength, or what Morgenthau (1948: 73 ff.) later described as »national power« in terms of geography, population, or industrial capacity. By contrast, his foundational definition of power rather suggests the *actual* essence of power comprises the ability to impose a particular interpretation, an image of reality, and a way of perceiving the social world. We then arrive, together with Neacsu (2010: 179), at the conclusion that

> »Morgenthau employs a relational understanding of power, and the essence of politics is revealed in the ongoing struggle for meaning imposition among various agents«.

If we see knowledge and truth as dependent on the historical, political, and cultural context, power can indeed be understood in more ideational terms. Up to this point, Morgenthau's political realism makes perfect sense. By emulating a Freudian drive model, he finds that not only our behaviour, but all our thought and perception is guided by this drive, which, in his case, is the lust for power. Morgenthau has now no other choice than concluding that what we regard as true and knowable must also be provoked by our subconscious drives. Hence, truth and knowledge must be seen as relative to power as an end in itself—with severe implications for the scientific work, as these basic principles do not spare the academic field. The struggle for scientific truth and knowledge must then be considered a struggle for meanings. We can therefore reduce Morgenthau's core claim to the semantical statement that

Political realism claims that all truth is relational to power.

This statement becomes antinomic if we ask about the truth of political realism's own statement. If its statement is also relational to power, it cannot state something about ›all truth‹. Any statements about the totality or universality of truth—for instance, as knowable facts or as universal laws—would be open to change whenever the struggle for power changes in one way or another. Surprisingly, this is exactly what the statement says. Hence, Morgenthau's statement on all truths is true if and if only if his statement is relative to power; and if so, the statement cannot comprise a ›totality of truths‹. Keeping in mind that »Morgenthau had determined that ›good science‹ was the separation of truth from falsehood« (Molloy 2006: 80), it turns out that he failed to live up to his own theoretical standards—simply as he created a statement sketching his approach in a nutshell which was neither true nor false. Again, this semantical

antinomy resembles the tension we already found in the theory of psychoanalysis, as Freud assumed the objective fact that ›truth is subjective‹. In both cases, the statement as such becomes undecidable.

A last question should be posed to fully understand the soundness of the semantical antinomy we discovered. Why can we see the notion of ›relational to power‹ as counterpart of ›universally true‹? Has Morgenthau in fact created a critical disposition between ›relative truth‹ and ›absolute truth‹ within his work? Whereas his relativist tendencies have already been shown, the universal Archimedean point can easliy be found as well. The assumption of the human drive for power was stated *as* a universal law independent from any historical, political, or cultural developments. Morgenthau's image of the human is the sole constant his theory offers—unchangeable, universally valid, and objectively graspable. It is this presupposition that leads to the severe semantical antinomy built on the critical disposition of ›universal law of power‹ and ›relativistic truth‹.

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The semantical antinomy of Morgenthau's work appears in another form, which however is nothing more than a variety of its original. If we elaborate Morgenthau's considerations on the role of the political scientist, more light can be shed on the antinomic structure of his respective statement. We will also see clear parallels to the observer's antinomy, in which we highlighted the impossible task of the political theorist as rational observer. With now taking a clearer perspective on how Morgenthau thought about the entanglement of the human being, truth, and meaning, the dilemma in which the theorist resides becomes obvious. Again, Morgenthau understood power originally not as a material, but an ideational capacity, and thereby conflated scientific knowledge and power politics in a problematic way. Thereby, the effect of power on the minds of other men

> »also points towards Morgenthau's concern with man's creative, interpretative potential […]—to one's act of imposing a certain ›version‹, a certain interpretation of reality, upon the others: a meaning imposition« (Neacsu 2010: 88).

Although the political theorist who commits himself to the theory of political realism is searching for objective and rational patterns of foreign policy, she becomes a plaything of the ideational power struggle at the same time. The social scientist in general advocates a certain version or interpretation of the political world surrounding her. Thus, she attempts both to impose her will onto others and is imposed upon by the will of others. As the scientist *is* a human striving for power in any social situation, the advocacy of her version of truth and knowledge is inseparably linked to her power aspirations.

These power dependencies that we now understand as intellectual impositions are both guiding and limiting the social scientist's work—but are, in Morgenthau's eyes, nothing else than power exercises by others. Especially to a political theorist, these power struggles are more than obvious. Morgenthau exemplarily argues that, whereas a medical problem can be approached by different individuals or groups with the same purpose, social problems are unlikely to be solved in the same way as a consequence of those power rivalries. Would a Russian economist living during the Cold War draw the conclusion that communism is inferior to capitalism? Would a Western academic hold the reverse opinion? Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 163) negates these questions by remarking that

> »each social scientist is […] limited in his research by his membership in religious, political, social, and economic groups, which in turn will protect their particular taboos from analytical investigation«.

In short, what a social scientist regards as ›her‹ object of investigation is not a neutral decision. The scientist's attention on what she explores is drawn by the social conditions at hand. Again, these conditions are the consequence of power plays perpetuated within societies. Morgenthau surely was a child of his time, and thus found his assumptions about the relation between truth and power confirmed when he witnessed

the persecution of Jewish intellectuals in the 1930s and the anti-communist attitude of Western scholars during the Cold War. Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 163) thus argued that the

> »value which a particular group puts upon a certain ›truth‹ which is not to be questioned determines the degree of risk which the investigator runs who sets out to question the ›truth‹ nevertheless«.

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Although acknowledging Morgenthau's considerations, the apparent tension between his presumptions and the conclusion on the interwovenness of truth and power must nevertheless be exposed. As already shown, the proclamation of a universal law guiding human nature runs counter to the description of the theorist's role as being unable to state universal truths. By again referring to the notion of irrationality, Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 161) emphasised this assertion by describing the relation between powerful groups and the advocacy of certain truth versions:

> »Yet powerful interests and emotions have at times prevented the universal recognition of the laws of planetary movements and are still preventing universal recognition of the law of evolution. Irrational forces controlling the rational faculties of large groups of men have opposed the recognition of the law of relativity […]. What appears as reason to one group of men is here condemned as unreason by others«.

With this assumption, Morgenthau opens up his own Pandora's Box. If all his considerations hold true—among them, especially the recognition of universal laws as well as the limited, partial truth that a political theorist can observe—, then his own truth cannot be universally valid. Think about Morgenthau's own statement, and relate it to his judgement on all other scientific statements about the political world:

›All scientific statements are only partially true‹ is only partially true.

The notion ›partially true‹ denotes the relativism of Morgenthau's suggested relation between truth and power, which he also found between truth and history. If we now ask about the universal truth of his own statement, a semantical antinomy arises. If Morgenthau's statement is itself universally true, then all statements must be partially true—including his own. But then, Morgenthau's statement is false, and thus only partially true. Again, this is exactly what the statement says. This antinomy also arises if we replace the critical disposition of ›universally true‹ and ›partially true‹ with the notions ›universally true‹ and ›true dependent on power structure‹. Obviously, this antinomic statement can be seen as a variety of the Freudian semantical statement that ›All laws of logic are vague and inexact‹ and the question whether this statement itself is vague and inexact.

Political realism thus implicitly puts forth a semantical antinomy as a consequence of its linkage of truth to power, which, surprisingly, might be understood as a prelude to poststructuralist thinking in world politics. With power defined as a universal human drive distorting man's ability to objectively discovery universal scientific laws, the antinomy is triggered. Numerous criticisms have been raised due to this antinomy, which, as Freyberg-Inan (2004) argues, circle around the objection against a realist bias or realism as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The common denominator of these critiques, although most of them are focussed on empirical findings, is that the proclamation of a universal law leads to the misperceptions and biases of political realists themselves. With the antinomy reveiled, these criticisms can be seen in a new light. If we take the universality of the law of human nature for granted by reading it from a Freudian perspective, the critique must be raised that the assumption *any* law's universality remains undecidable and antinomic. In this sense, Molloy (2006: 81) summarises this »relativist dilemma«[71] of Morgenthau's political realism:

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[71] Molloy (2006: 81) however seems to be convinced that this dilemma can eventually resolved by uncovering the »truth behind the ideological postures«. Again, this argument falls short if we take an interpretation of these perennial truths at a particular time as valid, as there is no ›method‹ to prove the validity of such a claim. The insight that several perspectives similarly have circled

> »If Morgenthau is aware of the partial nature of political truth, what status are we to accord to his own ›truth‹? If truth is socially conditioned by the perspective of the theorist, then surely the same applies to Morgenthau's version of truth? Morgenthau, however, states that his truth is universal and valid for all times and circumstances. The apparent contradiction is resolved by Morgenthau's identification of an eternal ›objective‹ truth of political science as otherwise the insights of a Jeremiah, Plato, or Hobbes would be meaningless to the contemporary world. The fact that these ›truths‹ are accessible to us proves their ›objectivity‹ and thus escapes the ›relativist‹ dilemma at the heart of political science. Morgenthau's preference for political cynicism blinds him to the fact that his position is untenable, if he is to accord truth to one set of philosophers then he must accord truth to the others«.

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Finally, we know that this untenable position is impossible for a simple reason. As political realism suggests how and why the truth of theories or theoretical statements is solely dependent on historical and political power constellations, Morgenthau's own theory seems to stand above it all. As such, realism seems to speak from a Tarskian metalevel by assigning the semantical resource ›truth‹ to all lower knowledge claims being made. As such, political realism's implied universalism sometimes appears as an almost religious mantra of international politics. It is the ›highest‹ truth in the political arena, with its omniscience and irrevocability as pillars of why its proponents think of the theory as real and realistic. It is thus that we tend to think of political realism as an attempted semantical hierarchy in the Tarskian style, designed as the gold standard or political bible within the discipline. However, as soon as we scrutinise this hierarchical ambition, we obviously find political realism's ›God's Eye View‹ as highly questionable. As soon as we ›feed‹ the theory with itself as its own empirical feed, things look different. How would a political realist interpret the theory of political realism? What about the truth of the theory itself?

As a major critique of these quasi-hierarchical conceptions of political realism as higher-levelled theory above historical and social knowledge claims, poststructuralists have gone on the academic stage. They take political realism by its word and analyse Morgenthau's theoretical *texts* from the perspective of its own interwovenness in the societal power play. Again, the theory is being fed with itself as ›empirical feed‹, and thereby attempted at breaking off political realism's proclaimed hierarchical position as assigner of truths:

> »It does not analyze power *in* IR […] as reflected in its discourse but the power *of* precisely this discourse. The poststructuralist critique aims at that level at which such power practices are concealed, that is, the metatheoretical level which underlies realist analysis […]. The realist discourse is attacked as a power practice itself« (Guzzini 2013: 34).

We therefore have to understand the alleged hierarchical scaffold behind political realism in the sense of its metatheory. This scaffold is, as known, disassembled by poststructuralist thinkers. We however have now discovered a new point of departure for these critical investigations. Poststructuralists did nothing else than applying the theory of political realism to its own metatheoretical mechanism of assigning semantical resources as partial truth. As a consequence, its own ›God's Eye View‹ appears rather as a sociohistorical contingency and thus appears as an impossible, undecidable theoretical setting.

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around the discovery of a universal law is itself a perspective. Thus, a distinction between ›partial truth‹ and ›universal truth‹ is itself partial. Is Morgenthau's interpretation of Hobbes objective itself? Or has he been blinded by his power drives to take the ›alleged universality‹ of human nature as perennial truth? Again, this question remains undecidable.

e) Antinomies of Political Realism

Reading Morgenthau's political realism from the Freudian drive-theoretical stance, the picture of two quite similar stories emerges. In both cases, a theorist proclaimed a universal drive determining everyone's behaviour, thought, and reasoning. By rejecting the image of a rational being, the theorist's statement however turns out to be undecidable. Is his discovery of the universal law itself blurred and distorted by the presumed drive? Even worse, the story of both theories also ends badly. Both theories were founded on statements claiming the vagueness or partiality of all truths. But what about these theories' truth themselves? How are we supposed to think of the generality of a psychic reality or political truth?

If we bring to mind the antinomic figure inherent in Morgenthau's theory, both ontological and semantical antinomies can be postulated. These unresolvable contradictions are at first caused by an inherent recursive form of the *mise en abyme*. Morgenthau as theorist stated man's universal drive nature while being part of the theorised ›humans‹ striving for power. Political realism as theory maintains that all knowledge and truth as theorised is relational to power, although Morgenthau's theory itself represented an alleged ›true‹ knowledge claim. The theorist ›Morgenthau‹ became his own empirical feed whenever he spoke about the theorised ›all humans‹, whereas the theory ›political realism‹ had to be assumed as being subject to the theorised ›all truths‹.

Morgenthau furthermore created a critical disposition of the *antitheton* by contrasting the alternatives ›objective observation‹ and ›observation driven by power‹ or, in the same sense, between a ›rational observer‹ and an ›irrational observer‹. In the latter case, an observer—even in her role as political theorist—was assumed to be blinded by her own power drive. Similarly, the critical disposition of ›objective, universal truth‹ and ›truth relational to power‹ was set up. No knowledge claim and no truth value could be assumed as universally or objectively valid, but solely dependent on the historical and political landscape.

	Ontological Antinomy	**Semantical Antinomy**
›Mise en abyme‹	recursive form of *theorist* as ›political realist‹ and *theorised* as ›humans universally driven by power‹	recursive form of *theory* as ›political realism‹ and *theorised* as ›power-dependent truth‹
›Antitheton‹	critical disposition of ›objective observation—observation driven by power‹ or ›rational observer—irrational observer‹	critical disposition of ›objective, universal truth—truth relational to power‹
›Penrosing‹	circular inversion of ›power-driven observation of power‹	circular inversion of ›political realism‹ as power play
Hierarchies	ontological hierarchy of ›more-than-scientific man‹ and a ›disinterested observer‹ as ›God's Eye View‹	semantical hierarchy of political realism as ›truth assigner‹ of knowledge claims
Examples	*Morgenthau objectively observes all those whose observations are driven by power.* *A theorist rationally observes all those whose observations are irrationally driven by power.*	*Political realism claims that all truth is relational to power.* *›All scientific statements are only partially true‹ is only partially true.*

Morgenthau as a Power-Hungry Scientist: *Antinomies of Political Realism*

Finally, the devastating circular inversion we know as *Penrosing* had to be ascertained. If we thought about the political theorist as a power-driven human, an undecidable question emerged about how the theorist's

objective self-observation was thinkable. In the same vein, the ›realist analysis of political realism‹ caused similar confusion. Is the theory of political realism itself an objective truth, or rather an academic instrument of power manifestation? Is Morgenthau's theoretical school anything else than an intellectual witness of its time or a universal description of the political world?

We also found how two alleged hierarchical scaffolds were erected to solve the dilemma of *Penrosing*. However, Morgenthau's ideas of a ›more-than-scientific man‹ as a disinterested observer turned out as positions requiring an impossible ontological hierarchy observed from a ›God's Eye View‹. Which fortunate theorist can honestly claim to be free from the distortions and distractions of the social power game? Likewise, political realism's quasi-hierarchical aspiration as truth assigner conducting sociohistorical knowledge claims falls victim to its own stipulations. We find this claim as similar to Tarski's semantical hierarchy. As the poststructuralist critique reveiled, political realism's own discourse then appears as a power play itself. The appearance of these antinomies leaves the readers of political realism with the disconcerting feeling of an impossible and undecidable position of both theorist and theory.

Synopsis — ›The Antinomy of Political Realism‹

Morgenthau's theory of political realism can and should be read against Freud's psychoanalytic theory of human drives. However, if we understand Morgenthau's universal will for power as a genuine, subconscious drive, the antinomic figure we can discover in Freud's work also springs up in Morgenthau's theory.

If the drive for power blinds rational and reasonable thought, the scientific observation of this very drive ends up in an ontological antinomy. Is the observation of the power drive itself blinded by the observer's own drive for power? Finally, if what we regard as political reality and political truth is seen as a manifestation of individual power games, the theoretical reflection of this ›fact‹ causes a semantical antinomy. Is the reflection of ›truth as power-dependent‹ itself a power-dependent truth?

Subconscious	The ›hidden‹ and inaccessible locus of any human's drives and needs.
Transference	The tendency to redirect subconscious, repressed drive impulses to other things or persons—thereby, drives *cause* one's own psychic reality.
Countertransference	Each psychoanalyst has to undergo a self-analysis to gain insight about her own transferences towards the patient.
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Drive for power	Morgenthau's universal constant of the human as an *animus dominandi*, which can be read as equivalent to Freud's postulated drives.

2 The Antinomy of Constructivism

With his social theory on international politics, Wendt drew broad attention to constructivist thinking in the discipline and eventually established his main work as the textbook of social constructivism in International Relations. Because of his ambition to strike a *via media* between neorealism and neoliberalism, Wendt devised a ›thin‹ version of constructivism. Although he refused constructivist epistemology as a foundation, his ideas on the making of social kinds showed a new intellectual direction. Social phenomena such as the international system, norms and values, institutions, or political roles were considered to be socially constructed. In this sense, Wendt's theory was a prudential rejection of the one-sided logic and givenness of the anarchical structure of world politics.

Wendt himself mentioned several sources of inspiration for his work. However, a less obvious thinker can be considered the actual foundation of the Wendtian approach. Social constructivism is, as the name suggests, a genuine sociologocial idea of how societies emerge and develop. Since his famous studies in the 1980s, Luhmann can rightly be referred to as one of the spearheads of the constructivist movement in sociology. But why should we dedicate our attention to him and his theory, if our real interest is in Wendt's approach?

The social constructivist theory as introduced by Wendt has been rightly designated as ›thin‹, ›moderate‹, or ›soft‹. Indeed, by pursuing his middle course between two other mainstream theories at that time, he showed himself reluctant to draw all the consequences of constructivism's main theses—especially the mentioned, fundamental claim of constructivist epistemology. Luhmann, by contrast, was a radical, full-blooded constructivist. Hence, if we understand Luhmann's programme of constructivist thinking, we may also better comprehend the possible spectrum of how constructivism as theory of social systems and social orders—with all its implications for their scientific observation and theorising.

Luhmann thought of social systems as closed entities, in which permanent chains of communications preserve and reproduce the whole system. How truth or meaning is created within the system of communication remains a contingency. Even more drastically, what we observe and perceive as ›true reality‹ is nothing more than an operation within the system. The way we cognise our environment is a mere act of living and operating in this environment.

However, Luhmann's theoretical scaffold contains an antinomic figure. With proclaiming that even the act of scientifically observing and theorising is a contingent operation *within* a system, he put a question mark on his own observations and theory *about* the system. Is what he observed as social system marked by a blind spot of his own operation? Is his observation just a distorted, blurred extract of the system made from Luhmann's perspective? These questions allude to an ontological antinomy. As Luhmann assumes that each observation—whether it is first- or second-ordered—is systematically blinded through the very act of observing, his own observation *about* this ›fact on blind-spotted observations‹ appear as blind-spotted itself and thus decidable. In short, if an observation is an operation, we may make something rather than just objectively see something. A further semantic antinomy can be found in his assumption of a constructed reality. If everything one holds as true is a mere construction, how then can a theory *about* this construction be different *from* construction? In short, we make our reality rather than just independently reflect on it or think about it. These antinomies might be seen as blueprint for various constructivist approaches and, among them, its variety as theory of International Relations.

Wendt's thin constructivism is of course more conservative. Although he thinks of social kinds as being made within systems similar to Luhmann, he builds his considerations on the firm grounds of scientific realism and positivism. To him, the socially constructed reality can be objectively and independently observed—at least in most cases. However, in the face of social change, the tide turns. The way the constructivist theorist now observes things is different. She must account for her observation's reflectivity, and thus expect to be ›blinded‹ in the Luhmannian sense. Roughly speaking, the observing theorist is intertwined in the construction of new social kinds within the process of social change, although she solely intended to objectively observe this change. This is the blind spot of the constructivist observer; her own participation in the social construction of *what* she observes remains invisible. At this point, we are faced with an ontological antinomy. The observation of the ›nature of blind-spotted observation‹ is made from a blind-spotted observer. How much worth does such an observation have? Is the observer not rather constructing her own observation?

In the case of theorising social change, a similar dilemma can be found. Again, Wendt has to admit that the process of change requires for a reflexive theory frame which includes the theorist's own constitutive part in making what she theorises about. In this sense, a theory is no different from the various social kinds it theorises about, and, as a consequence, cannot be considered an objective, independent scaffold above the changing social kinds. Theory and theorised constitute themselves whenever new social kinds are created within societies. However, this finding resembles Luhmann's semantic antinomy. If a theory *about* social change is constituted *through* social change, how can this theory appear as a necessary, objective truth? If reality is socially constructed, how should we think about the reality of a theory *about* this reality?

We find both antinomies representing serious challenges for the consistency of Wendt's argumentation. Although his moderate variant of constructivism ›saves‹ his theory in the case of static social kinds, its

foundations crumble in the case of social change. In the latter case, Wendt's constructivism is most similar to Luhmann's theory—but also most vulnerable to antinomies. We thus are left with two pressing, surely provocative questions. Can we assume a society to be static most of the time, or do we have to account for the process of permanent change? And how should we think about a constructivist theory which is more or less ›non-constructivist‹ in the case of social standstill, but antinomic in the case of social change?

After introducing the sociologist theory of *Luhmann and the roots of constructivism* (2.1), we sketch the antinomic figure of radical constructivism and its constructed reality. We then find how *Wendt's ›social constructivism‹* (2.2) in its thin approach is prone to the same antinomies whenever social change is being observed and theorised.

2 Overview—›The Antinomy of Constructivism‹

Luhmann and the Roots of Constructivism	2.1	*Luhmann's theory of social systems can be read as the foundation of Wendt's moderate constructivism, to which any social kind is made from social construction.*
Wendt's ›Social Constructivism‹	2.2	*Wendt's theory contains an antinomic form stemming from the postulate of the social construction of social kinds and their theoretical reflection as social theory.*

2.1 Luhmann and the Roots of Constructivism

Luhmann's idea on social systems can be seen as a comprehensive account of constructivist thinking. Founded on the idea that systems are closed and without contact to their environment, all systemic operations are to be thought of in a self-referential way—they construct merely an ›inside‹ and ›outside‹. However, with observation and cognition as permanent operations within those systems, serious questions must be posed regarding the scientific description of these operations. Against this background, Luhmann as theorist and radical constructivism as theory appear as mere operations of observing and cognising within the scientific system—and thus cause devastating antinomies.

Other than the Freudian foundation of Morgenthau's political realism, Luhmann cannot be seen as the spiritual father of Wendt's social theory of international politics. Furthermore, there have been few attempts to relate Luhmann's constructivism to the study of international relations[72]. However, the reason for taking Luhmannian thinking as blueprint for the investigation of antinomies in Wendt's theory is justified by its radical and comprehensive nature. If we understand the inconsistencies in Luhmann's theory, it is plain to see similarities in weaker or more moderate forms of constructivist thinking. However,

> »up to now Luhmann's work has received scant attention by IR scholars only. Although […] not even its most enthusiastic opponents deny that it is one of the (if not *the*) most fully developed and sophisticated macro-theories of society around« (Albert 2004a: 1 f.).

If we understand Wendt's work as one of the first comprehensive attempts to establish constructivist thinking as school of thought in International Relations, we should acknowledge that a similar attempt has successfully been made in the field of sociology by Luhmann, who set up a ›complete‹ sociological theory. It is further argued that his theory reflects all the major implications of constructivist thinking in terms of ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives, and thus can be seen as radical as Freud's theory was for psychologist thinking. We thus dare to argue that if we understand the antinomic tensions afflicted in Luhmann's radical theory, we should be able to understand and discover those tensions in *any* constructivist approach.

Furthermore, we acknowledge the ›constructivist turn‹ in the field of International Relations, which goes hand in hand with a more sociological perspective. Hedley Bull (1977) was perhaps one of the first key thinkers who spoke about an »anarchical society«, and thereby spurred a whole generation of academics to foster sociological and constructivist concepts in the discipline. With Luhmann as the master of the genre of constructivism in the field of sociology, an analysis of his work serves the purpose of evaluating antinomic problems in constructivist thinking in general and social theories in International Relations in particular:

> »All theories of international relations are based on social theories of the relationship between agency, process, and social structure« (Wendt 1992: 422).

a) Constructivism and the Critique of Reality and Rationality

Luhmann's theory of social systems can be read as a critique of traditional notions of reality and rationality. By detaching the individual human from the emergence of any social system, he draws on the principle

[72] However, promising attempts have been undertaken by several authors under the editorships of Albert and Hilkermeier (2004) and Stetter (2007b).

of ›contingent communication‹ as the heart of his approach. Hence, social systems are sketched as *autopoietic*—they produce modes of reality and rationality in a self-referent way.

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A society—whether understood as nation, social group or community—would by most people be understood as association of individuals with similar characteristics. The French society consist of all French citizens, an orchestra is constituted of single musicians, and the labouring class reflects the amount of all employed people working within the industrial sector. However, Luhmann decided to define ›society‹ in a completely different sense. To him, societies consist of *communication* as opposed to the conventional wisdom that a society is formed from physical individuals or actions. Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 138) states that

> »the basal process of social systems, which produces their elements, can only be communication«.

Within a society, communication keeps the societal system alive. However, the constituents of this system are neither the communicating actors nor their receivers. Luhmann refuses any notion of classical subjects or individuals as basic, constituting elements of social systems. Thus, he encourages rejecting the idea that subjects or individuals are the ones who communicate. Communication presents itself as triadic »unity of information, utterance, and understanding« (Luhmann 1995b [1984]: 147), and thereby closely connected to the idea of selectivity. Out of countless possibilities, a definite utterance is made—as opposed to the possibility to make a different utterance. Similarly, by uttering something, information is being selected and differentiated from a huge repertoire of other possible information. Lastly, the act of understanding is a further selection. Out of various possibilities to understand or misunderstand the information passed, a decision is made how to interpret the assignment of information and utterance. Hence, communication as reflected in this very triadic operation serves this purpose of selection:

> »Communication grasps *something* out of the actual referential horizon that it itself constitutes and leaves *other things* aside. Communication is the processing of selection. Of course, it does not select in the same way in which one grabs one thing or another off the rack […]. The selection that is actualized in communication constitutes its own horizon; communication constitutes what it chooses, by virtue of that choice, as a selection, namely as information« (Luhmann 1995b [1984]: 140).

But how does the process of selecting something while leaving other things aside work? What is the power guiding the selection of information and communicative events? To Luhmann, communication is *contingent*. The act of a communicative event is, in Luhmann's (1995b [1984]: 106) words, »neither necessary nor impossible«. Furthermore, for communication to emerge, those who speak are not necessarily developing a shared meaning of what they discuss. Luhmann argues that the idea of a common understanding or some intersubjective convergence is mistaken anyway. What a speaker really thinks, feels, or means is and will be unconceivable for the listener and *vice versa*. Both are ›black boxes‹ to each other, even though they might talk about the same thing with each other. As interlocutors communicate on the basis of contingency, the concept of *double contingency* initially introduced by Talcott Parsons[73] eventually led to Luhmann's (1995b [1984]: 110) understanding of the relation between communicating individuals and the social system:

> »They remain separate; they do not merge; they do not understand each other any better than before. They concentrate on what they can observe as input and output […]. They can try to influence what they observe by their own action and can learn further from the feedback. In this way an emergent order can arise that *is conditioned* by the complexity of the systems that make it possible *but that does not depend on this complexity's being calculated or controlled*. We call this emergent order a social system«.

[73] In his groundbreaking work, Parsons (1991 [1951]: 94) suggested the notion of double contingency as »fundamental paradigm of interaction«.

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At this point, Luhmann's unordinary notion of communication should become clearer. Communication means, on the one hand, the processing of *contingent selection*. But he further assumes that, on the other hand, it is *not* individuals who select or decide what information is to be uttered. As already mentioned, Luhmann early on rejected the traditional view of society as composed of subjects or individuals and instead suggested »the radical thesis that *only communication can communicate*« (Borch 2011: 36) for two reasons. Hence, communication as the elementary unit of the societal system can be understood as a chain reaction which, once initiated, leads to further communicative events. Roughly speaking, each communication is followed by another communication. In this sense, every communication is connected with another; and as long as these connections are being formed through new, subsequent communications, the system as such preserves itself.

Luhmann draws a further distinction between communication as such and the uttering and understanding of individuals. To him, human beings do *not* communicate in its very sense, and they are *not* communicating actors. Even though they communicate from an observer's perspective, we cannot be sure about what they think or feel *while* they are speaking to each other[74]. For this reason, the individual's psyche, its consciousness and its thoughts, are separated from the communication. Humans beings take part in the chain reaction of communicating, but communication feeds itself—or, as Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 143) puts it,

> »communication *is possible only as a self-referential process*«.

As a self-referential system, communication is constantly reproducing itself. The social system therefore appears as constituted by the single communicative events which are, according to the ›chain reaction‹ metaphor, subsequently being connected to each other. Borrowing the biological notion of *autopoiesis*, Luhmann further sharpened his concept of a social system of communicative units. An autopoietic system reproduces its own components by virtue of this very components, so that the system

> »continuously generates and specifies its own organization through its operation as a system of production of its own components […] which has its own organization (defining network of relations) as the fundamental variable which it maintains constant« (Maturana, Varela 1980: 79).

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The social system as understood by Luhmann is steadily producing communication as its building blocks; and, *vice versa*, the system is being reproduced by communication. If communication ›ends‹ and is not connectable anymore, the system as such ends as well. In this sense, the Luhmannian social system appears similar to the concept of autopoiesis proposed by Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1980) as description of living organism.[75] As they steadily reproduce their own components, living beings such as cells, animals, or humans create themselves through these processes. For Luhmann, this reproductive cycle is similarly true for the preservation of societies. Through communicative acts, society keeps itself alive—and not, as traditional sociological theorists hold, through individual beings interacting with each other:

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[74] It should be remarked that Luhmann's notion of communication is not limited to verbal expressions, but occurs in a variety of forms such as non-verbal or unaware communication.

[75] For Maturana and Varela (1980: 15 ff.), biological cells represent a paradigm of autopoietic systems. Cells constantly reproduce the components they need as living things through the activity of these very components. A cell is separated from its environment through a membrane which, at the same time, constitutes the cell's unity. This membrane, however, is not hermetically separated from its environment, but permeable insofar that constant exchange processes occurs that facilitates the cell's metabolism. Through these processes, the cell reproduces all its essential components. Besides cells, animals and human beings can be seen as autopoietic systems of different order—they also reproduce the elements they consist of.

> »Society does not weigh exactly as much as all human beings taken together, nor does its weight change with every birth and death« (Luhmann 2012 [1997]: 7).

Luhmann offers a both a challenging and novel account of apprehending social systems. By suggesting the idea that these systems are *not* constituted by its physical carriers, but communication as a self-referential process, he broke with traditional sociological schools. Nevertheless, the question arises how individual human beings and their psyche, their consciousness, and their thoughts act within this system of communication. These answers cannot be given without understanding the immanent critique of universal principles of rationality and reality. Such a generalised perspective seems to be impossible in radical constructivism. As Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 229) argued, these systems are closed and therefore develop their own principles of what appears as rational or real:

> »One must always remember that nerve cells are not a part of the nervous system and human beings are not a part of society«.

Luhmann's radical view of the social system as founded on communication and contingent selection must thus be understood as a critique of rationality. With holding that any social system is more or less detached from the individuals, their minds must be thought as decoupled from these systems as well:

> »Luhmann dismisses both rationality and dissent as illusions. The pursuit of rationality is perhaps the greatest problem inherited from Enlightenment on account of both its instrumentality and its anthropocentricity« (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2010: 17).

Hence, Luhmann criticises any sociological perspective which is built on the human or the human mind as such, as in »a society there is no overarching rationality, only system-specific rationalities« (Borch 2011: 12). As Zinn (2008: 188) summarises, Luhmann's view of rationality is rather based on a historical understanding. We might think about different modes or rationality, but not as a universal, unchangeable category.

But there's more to it than that. Luhmann's critique of rationality as a ›system-dependent principle‹ in the sense of a contingent phenomenon also includes a critique of reality. In more traditional sociological approaches, we are used to thinking of rationality as a particular mode of observing and thinking about reality. However, as Luhmann expels the human individual from the arena of social systems and instead proclaims the reign of contingent communication, then

> »[r]ationality, conceived in this way, is not a specific human property, located in one consciousness or in the dialogical interstice between one person's consciousness and that of another person […]. Instead, rationality is simply the internal reality of an effectively functioning social system« (King, Thornhill 2003: 135).

The strength of the traditional notions of rationality and reality are therefore revoked. For Luhmann, we cannot think about the reality of social systems as rational beings. In contrast, the system itself produces contingent modes of what we perceive as rationality and reality. We thus will understand Luhmann's constructivist theory as being based on a›critique of reality and rationality, and, as we now see, his theoretical foundations accord to this reading.

b) The Theoretical Foundation of Constructivism

With his unusual approach of understanding social systems as makers of modes of reality and rationality, Luhmann seemingly cuts the tie between sociality and individuality in favour of the chain of contingent

communication. However, the question of how the individual's psychic system relate to this system of communication arises. Luhmann holds that both systems are ›operationally closed‹. The social system cannot cause changes in the psychic one and *vice versa*. They are merely structurally coupled through language. As the theoretical foundation of his theory, Luhmann thus introduces a novel understanding of how an individual's psyche is coupled to social systems through language—but nevertheless cannot cross these systems' boundaries.

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The social system's machinery works as an independent, self-referential phenomenon. Individuals take part in the process, but are neither the physical cause nor the trigger for this mantra-like circle of communication. The characteristic of self-reference therefore brought Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 37) to mark social systems as »closed«. Its operations are detached from its environment. Not everything that is being said is part of communication; not every thought is being said. This insight—namely, the operational closeness of the systems of communication on the one hand and thoughts or individual consciousness on the other hand—led Luhmann to the description of a second system.

The psychic system encompasses the individual's consciousness, which to Luhmann is more or less similar to the operations within the social system. As communicative events are subsequently connected to each other, thoughts within the consciousness are developed in the same way. The principle of autopoiesis thus represents the essential characteristic of both the social and the psychic system. Thoughts string together, just like the way communications are steadily reproduced within the social system; and as long these thoughts are being thought, the consciousness exists. Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 273) hence was convinced that

> »the psychic system acquires what one could call the *capacity to form episodes* […]. It can leap from one context of linguistic thought to the next without bringing the self-reproduction of consciousness to an end […]. All this makes the unity of the continuation of the autopoietic reproductive nexus compatible with the constant installation and elaboration of changing structures, which fill up and perform the autopoietic process, which produce breaks and transitions without exposing it to the risk of coming to an end«.

Similar to the social system, the psychic system is operationally closed—simply because thoughts cannot ›leave‹ the consciousness, just as someone cannot become part of the other's consciousness. With this definition of psychic systems, we are brought closer to the decisive question of how the individual human being relates to the social system. We learnt that both the psychic and the social system are operationally closed in the sense that no thought leaves the consciousness, and that communication will never occur outside the social system. The closeness of the psychic and social system may first appear somewhat misleading, as popular belief tells us that humans talk about what they think and think about what they have been told. But, as already indicated, Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 409) understands communication and consciousness in a different, unconventional way:

> »For such a system there are *no environmental contacts on the level of its own functioning*. Just as an organism does not live outside its own skin, or a psychic system operatively extend its consciousness into the world, or an eye create neural contact with what it sees, so a society cannot communicate with its environment. It is completely and without exception a closed system«.

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Now that we know about the two operationally closed systems, the question arises whether or how they are connected to each other. Does communication interfere with the individual's consciousness in any way? Does the social system have any form of contact with the psychic system? Again, Luhmann borrowed Maturana and Varela's notion of ›structural coupling‹ to answer these questions. The latter asked

how two or more autopoietic, closed systems could interact with their surrounding environment without losing their inner organization, and found that

> »if a composite unity is structurally plastic, its conservation of adaptation results in its maintained structural coupling to the medium that selects its path of structural change« (Maturana, Varela 1980: xxi).

An autopoietic systems acts within a milieu as its environment. Human beings and animals, for instance, are coupled with particular milieus; they either live in warm or cold climates, in rainy or dry regions, or in the highlands or lowlands. Living things are integrated with these milieus through structural couplings. They develop a continuous exchange process with their environment. A milieu's perturbation—that is, a change of the environment's state—can lead the autopoietic system to change its structure, but does *not* however constitute a change of its essential organisation. In other words, the structural change of a living thing that goes hand in hand with an environmental perturbation is solely determined and limited by the autopoietic organisation of the living thing itself. If an animal living in a warm climate is suddenly faced with a drop in temperature, its structure changes only insofar that the animal's autopoietic organisation is being maintained.

However, the structural coupling between an autopoietic system and its milieu must not be understood as a causal connection. The system's autopoiesis itself is invariant with respect to perturbations of its milieu. A change of temperature may lead to an animal's structural change, but never to a change of its autopoietic organisation. Roughly speaking, a living thing is autonomous towards its environment. It rather coexists or coevolves with the environment, as

> »structural coupling means a specific, non-causal form of influencing; through mechanisms of structural coupling systems irritate each other by becoming aware of different operations and interpretations of the other systems that can become the cause for international structural adjustments […], over the long run structural coupling is a condition that enables co-evolution of the coupled systems« (Rogowski 2013: 14).

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Luhmann himself clarifies the definition of structural coupling in his discussion of how systems *within* the social systems are interconnected. Among others, the social system contains the political, the economic, and the legal subsystems—each with its own way of communication. These systems reproduce themselves by their own codes of communication. These codes are of binary form, so that the respective subsystem processes its communicative events in a generalised, more or less symbolic way. While the political system operates on the scheme ›power—non-power‹ (Luhmann 1990 [1981]: 157), the legal system proceeds on the logic of ›legal—illegal‹ (Luhmann 2004 [1993]: 174), and the economic system on the code ›payment—non-payment‹ (Luhmann 1993 [1991]: 176 ff.). The form of communication hence reveals which societal subsystem communicates—or, in other words, how the way of speaking about things is bounded within the respective social field:

> »As soon as people communicate through money, everything related to this is economic; as soon as people communicate through power, everything related to this is political« (Schedler, Rüegg-Stürm 2014: 47).

Within the social system, other subsystems such as the educational, religious, ecological, or scientific are to be found, each operating on its own symbolically generalised communication medium, through which the steady reproduction of the subsystem itself is based:

> »Luhmann believes that [...] symbolically generalized communication media is applicable in different fields of society. In his view, money, power, truth, values, art and love belong to this kind of media« (Brunczel 2010: 91).

In the Luhmannian sense, an exchange of information between societal subsystems is not possible. However, a structural coupling similar to the perturbations between the social and the psychic may arise if two or more subsystems co-evolve over time. For instance, a state's constitution can be understood as coupling of the legal and the political system, property as a coupling of the economic and the legal system, or the academicas a coupling of the economic and the scientific system.

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Inspired by the biologist theory of autopoiesis, Luhmann employs the notion of structural coupling to describe the interconnectedness of the psychic and the social system. He is thereby able to relate both systems to each other, even though he characterised both entities as operationally closed. Both the psychic and the social systems are quite similar with regard to their framing as autopoietic systems. While the psychic system reproduces itself through thoughts within the individuals' consciousness, the social system maintains itself through communication. Both systems present themselves as a milieu or environment for each other. As an autopoietic system cannot exist without its milieu, the social makes the psychic system possible, and *vice versa*:

> »Social and psychic systems exhibit a particularly strong form of structural coupling […]. Thus, social systems can count on the fact that, after each communication, the psychic systems involved will react to the communication through utterances that the social system can use to produce new communications« (Seidl, Mormann 2015: 135).

However, the question arises of how the psychic and the social systems' structural coupling manifests itself. Apparently, communication—including its non-verbal and unaware form—and consciousness are interconnected. But what is the link between the continuous stream of communicative events which seems to run simultaneously to the individual's stream of thoughts? To Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 272), structural coupling occurs through the usage of language:

> »Language transfers social complexity into psychic complexity«.

Again, the social system cannot exist without the psychic, and *vice versa*. Through language, both systems can affect each other, although no causal relationship is being established through this connection. As the social and the psychic system coevolve over time, their mutual »interpenetration« (Luhmann 1995b [1984]: 210 ff.) allows for a novel understanding of how the individual relates to sociality. In the Luhmannian sense, human beings are seen as the environment or milieu of the social system—as opposed to the idea of being part or a constituting element of the system.

Luhmann's concept of language is clearly contrary to the traditional view of language as transmission between communicating individuals. As thoughts can solely refer to other thoughts within an individual's consciousness, nothing can leave the subject's mind—just as communicative events cannot leave the system of communication. Nevertheless, language allows for the interpenetration of the communicative and the psychic system insofar as both systems can refer and relate to language. Each system can use language to relate to the other's system operations, and thereby further develop its own operations. The communicative and the psychic systems can contribute to, but never become part of each other. Roughly speaking, the structural coupling of both systems is being enabled by language:

> »In the case of the structural coupling of consciousness and communication, these two systemic realms could mutually build up their complexity by sharing the medium of language. We can think in language and we can communicate linguistically« (Moeller 2006: 19).

c) The Ontological ›Observer's Antinomy‹ of Constructivism

After suggesting the existence of several structurally coupled—yet ›closed‹—systems, the question of how Luhmann thinks about the conditions of observing these systems arises. He first suggests thinking of observation as distinction, and thereby arrives at the problem of an observer's blind spot. To evade the assumption of an antinomic, infinite chain of higher-ordered observations, he suggests the principle of ›reentry‹. Unfortunately, this notion brings about a further antinomy which, according to Luhmann's unconvincing proclamation, would then be ›deparadoxified‹ within the self-observing social system.

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We will discuss a persistent antinomy in Luhmann's constructivist theory.[76] His considerations on social systems were based on three central assumptions. At first, society lives through contingent communication rather than through interacting individuals. These individuals' consciousnesses are bounded within psychic subsystems, which are structurally coupled to the social system. Other subsystems such as the legal, religious, or scientific can also be structurally coupled insofar as they emerge as non-causal milieus to each other. All these systems are however operationally closed. Just as it is impossible to look inside somebody else's mind, no subsystem can ›get access‹ to another one. Finally, the transmission of information or ›interpenetration‹ from one to another system is advanced through language. Be that as it may, one core question raises difficulties. Once we scrutinise the role of Luhmann as theorist, his own mode of observation comes to the fore. Under which conditions can he observe the social system—especially if this system and Luhmann's psychic system must be conceived as delimited from its environment? Or, in a similar way, how can a theorist operating from the scientific subsystem observe a social system which is operationally closed? In which form does this observation take place, if their access is impossible from outside the system?

To begin with, we have to understand what observation means in the Luhmannian sense. Observation and communication are two sides of the same coin. If we communicate something, we choose *what* we say from a large range of things we do *not* say. If we observe something, we similarly do so by focusing something and, at the same time, excluding something from our view. In this respect, Luhmann seemed deeply impressed by the work of the British mathematician George Spencer-Brown (1972 [1969]: 1), who, at the very beginning of his tract, conveyed his pivotal statement that

> »we cannot make an indication without drawing a distinction«.

An observer thus draws a distinction. If she observes something beautiful, she excludes everything that is ugly. This so-called ›first-order observation‹ takes places whenever an individual or a system *indicates* something by *distinguishing* from something—a definition that might remind us of Aristotle's law of identity. Whereas this type of observation relates to *what* the observer observes, the second-order observation accounts for the question of *how* the first-order observer observes.

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Luhmann's approach to observation is clearly inspired by the work of Austrian biophysicist and cybernetic Heinz von Foerster (1981), who alluded to the idea of the blind spot of observations. Biologists know the blind spot from numerous experiments and empirical findings. For instance, ophthalmologists explain the ›scotoma‹ as blind spot of the human eye by the lack of light-detecting cells in a specific region on the

[76] Luhmann himself knew about the antinomies inherent in his theory of social systems, but however discusses them as paradoxes. Moreover, as Borch (2011: 63) argues, some of them seem »in fact to amount to a contradiction rather than a paradox«. We will therefore only refer to Luhmann's ›paradoxes‹, if they are understandable as antinomies—or, in any other case, treat them as simple contradictions.

retina. Although this lack leads to an obscuration of the visual field, the human brain completes the lacking visual information in order to construct a full picture. Hence, the blind spot is usually not noticeable for human beings. Foerster (1973: 215), by referring to similar findings, thus concludes that for

> »all […] receptors that are associated with the sensations of smell, heat and cold, sound, and so on: They are all ›blind‹ as to the quality of their stimulation, responsive only as to their quantity«.

Luhmann based his idea of a blind spot on these reflections, and, as in the case of Maturana and Varela, again referred to biologists' accounts of the concept of cognition and observation. Therewith, we can now more clearly frame the difference between first-order and second-order observation. The blind spot, as understood in the Luhmannian sense, occurs in each and every first-order observation. The observer makes a distinction between what she sees and what she does not see. However, as Maturana and Varela (1992: 242) claim, »we do not see what we do not see«. As a matter of fact, the first-order observer is not able to observe what she excluded through her act of observation, but only the *what* of the observed thing. If someone observes a tree, she thereby distinguishes this very tree from everything that is ›not the tree‹. What remains unobservable to the first-order observer is the distinction she has drawn to constitute his observation. This blind spot—that is, the unobservable distinction—can only be observed by a second-order observer who is able to recognise the first-order observer's distinction. For instance, if she observes a woman who herself is observing a tree, she might notice that the woman made her distinction ›tree—not tree‹ because she is a botanist. The second-order observer is thus able to observe the *›how‹* of the first-order observer's distinction. The blind spot thus becomes visible.

However, although the second-order observer is able to discover the blind spot of a first-order observer, she does so through an act of observation. She thus necessarily draws a distinction as well—but, as a consequence, will therewith be diagnosed with the very same symptoms of the first-order observer. Although she can detect the blind spot and the distinction of the first-order observer, she is unable to observe her *own* blind spot and her *own* distinction. If she, for instance, comprehended the botanist's observation of the tree and her blind spot, she herself is not able to observe her own distinction line—that is, the question of *how* she observed the botanist's observation. Of course, a third-order observer could now remedy the situation; she could easily observe the second order's observation in turn. But obviously, the blind spot would also remain unobservable for her, so that each and every observation—regardless of how many levels of order might be implied in a chain of hierarchical higher-order observations—would inevitably bear a blind spot.

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At this point, we should be taken aback. Luhmann claimed to have observed a chain of higher-order observations. He obviously does not claim that a high-ordered observation of any kind could ever be made which is free of a blind spot; but he however argued to have observed this chain of observations as such. To sketch Luhmann's own suspicious undertaking, we can make the ontological statement[77] that

Luhmann observes all observations which do not include their own blind spots.

Does Luhmann's own observation include its own blind spot? If it does not—and this should be the case if we believe in the Luhmannian principle of observation—, then Luhmann's own observation must be observed by Luhmann himself. However, if Luhmann observes his own observation, he must also observe its blind spot, because, as we learnt, the ›observation of an observation‹ must necessarily unveil the latter's blind spot. But then, Luhmann *does* observe his own blind spot—which is a contradiction to our point of departure. As such, this ontological observer's antinomy shows the undecidability of a theorist who claims

[77] The ontological antinomy we hereafter refer to is obviously a variety of Luhmann's (1988; 1995, 1999) paradox of observation.

that every observation includes a blind spot which can be seen from the perspective of a higher-ordered stance. Luhmann's problematic assumption thereby alludes to the dilemma that the pure act of observing things seems already infested with the distortions and biases that impede the perception of the ›real‹ object:

> »Whatever is observed is observed by an observer, who cuts up reality in a certain way in order to make it observable. Whatever distinction is selected, others remain possible. Each cut highlights certain aspects of reality and obscures others. Reality as such, the unity of the observing system and its environment, the paradoxical sameness of difference, of inside and outside, remains inaccessible; it is what ›one does not perceive when one perceives it‹, the ›blind spot‹ […]« (Knodt 1995 [1984]: xxxiv).

At this point, the Freudian ontological antinomy comes to mind. Whenever Freud claimed that the subconscious can be thought as a blind spot blurring the real motives behind someone's wishes and intentions, he could be faced with the accusation that his theory *itself* might have brought forth its own blind spot—and therewith, might not reflect a ›real‹ description of the human psyche. In the same sense, Morgenthau's blind spot was suggested as a consequence of the individual's embeddedness within the game of power. As a universal drive, power distorted or blurred any form of rational or ›unblinded‹ observation of the world. Now, Luhmann seemingly argues in the same direction by asserting that every observation implies a blind spot. However, as Borch (2011: 137) convincingly argues,

> »[t]his also applies to Luhmann's own observations. By choosing system/environment as the guiding analytical distinction, Luhmann is blinded toward aspects of social life that cannot easily be captured through this distinction«.

Has Luhmann fallen into the same trap Freud and Morgenthau did? Has he developed an antinomic argument? And how does he cope with the dilemma which was resolved in medieval theology when »the observation of God served as the observation of the observation of totality« (Rasch 2000: 13)? In this sense,

> »[t]otality is not the desired synthesis but the necessary precondition of difference, which can only take place when, so to speak, it can no longer take place—when indeed it is already a difference« (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2010: 38).

To make his ontological statement, Luhmann has to conclude that he, at least theoretically, includes the totality of all possible observations *within* his observation. Otherwise, we could not be able to decide if Luhmann's observation might be blurred by its own blind spot—just as Freud and Morgenthau might have been suffering from the blind spot of their own subconscious transferences. However, the question of whether Luhmann, Freud, or Morgenthau can include their *own* observation cannot be decided. If their own observation is included in their claim about *all* observations, they must observe their own blind spot. But if they do so, they have to contradict their own premise that one can only observe other observations and other blind spots. We must thus, based on Spencer-Brown's principle of distinction, follow that they *cannot* observe their own blind spot—and then again, their observations must be included in the totality of all observations by definition, as the

> »observation of the self-observation of the world is enmeshed in its own paradox, for Spencer-Brown's description takes on the form of a total description […]. It seems, in other words, that the thesis that all observation is partial is itself not partial […]. Thus, the unity described as ›the world‹ must be a unity presupposed, not a unity observed« (Rasch 2002: 8 f.).

Again, we see that a supposed totality—or, in a more metaphorical sense, the unity of a description—can itself only be based on an existential presupposition, but not result from an observation of any kind. Just as Russell's supposed totality of types or Tarski's totality of metalanguages, Luhmann likewise seemed to have made a similar erroneous assumption by speaking in the form of a ›total description‹ or the ›unity of the world‹. However, Luhmann (1994: 137) was well aware of this ontological antinomy:

> »The observer cannot see what he cannot see—and fails to see this as well. An observer of this observer may see what the first observer cannot see, but, at the same time, also fails to see what he, the second-level observer, cannot see, and so on«.

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But Luhmann surprisingly never intended to advocate an observation higher than second-order[78], obviously because he knew about the fate of infinite hierarchisations in the style of Russell or Tarski. To find an alternative way out of the observer's antinomy, Luhmann borrowed the notion of re-entry from Spencer-Brown (1972 [1969]: 69 ff.) to describe the act of, as the name suggests, re-entering a distinction in the initial indicated space. Imagine a court hearing in which the penalty for an offender is being decided. In this case, the distinction ›legal—illegal‹ is made to assess the gravity of the offense and impose the penalty. How would Luhmann describe a re-entry of the distinction in such a case? As mentioned, the distinction ›legal—illegal‹ must now be re-entered in what has already been distinguished. If, for instance, the convicted offender pursuits a revision process, the distinction ›legal—illegal‹ is employed to assess the legality of the trial of first instance. The legal system observes *itself* by means of its own code, and therewith reflects upon the question whether the court's blind spot has bounded the judge's eyes and impeded observing the trial's own legality. Through the re-entry, *what* was categorised as legal or illegal is not being observed, but rather *how* the categorisation took place in terms of legality or illegality. Again, this was earlier described as second-order observation. In his reflections on the legal system, Luhmann (1990 [1981]: 182) takes up the idea of the system's self-observation by defining the momentum of re-entry as

> »the decision of whether the distinction between legal and illegal is made legally or not«.

In this sense, the distinction ›system—environment‹ is brought back through the system by virtue of its own operations—for instance, as the legal subsystem is reflected upon by its own operation ›legal—illegal‹. But was Luhmann able to overcome the dilemma of the ontological antinomy by drawing on the concept of re-entry? The path he took led us from the antinomy directed against the possibility of observation to the systemic perspective he advocated in his theory. He then argued that the question of how to overcome the antinomy is no longer a classical observer problem, but a problem of systemic self-description. If we follow Luhmann, we hence must ask if and how the observer's antinomy can be overcome in the face of a society describing itself—for instance, when making the observation that the legal system operates on the codes ›legal—illegal‹. Again, Luhmann himself gives the answer and clearly argues that the process of re-entry necessarily carries an antinomy:

> »For Luhmann the observation of first- or second-order re-entry amounts to the observation of the production and unfolding of a paradox« (Roberts 1999: 32).

Obviously, Luhmann (1999: 18) knew about the fact that the notion of re-entry as form of the form resembled the classical observer's antinomy, and, even more, that we »cannot help but accept that the form

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[78] As Borch (2011: 59) remarks, »Luhmann sees no reason for going further than second-order observations. His point is that a third-order observation […] is structurally similar to a second-order observation in that it, too, observes observation«. However, by promoting such a view, Luhmann did not see any reason to solve the observer's antinomy by proposing a hierarchy of observations—which, as we know, would lead to a new antinomy such as in the case of Russell's hierarchical ›theory of types‹ or Tarski's hierarchical metalanguages.

of the form is a paradox«. Indeed, a distinction is applied to itself; and therewith, we find two instances of the same distinction—at first within the first-order observation, and then within the second-order. Thereby, the distinction in the first- and the second-order unveils its antinomic essence. The distinction is the same and not the same. As Luhmann (1999: 18) himself argues within his ontological statement, »a distinction distinguishes itself in itself«.

Imagine that the legal system is being self-observed through the mechanism of re-entry. Then, the operation code ›legal—illegal‹ is being observed by its operations, which again must be the code ›legal—illegal‹. We could then follow that the legal system's code ›legal—illegal‹ is *itself* legal or illegal. However, what the legal system distinguished from the environment is now part of itself, which, to Luhmann, is a paradox. It is, even in our terminology, an ontological antinomy. If we translate Luhmann's paradoxical statement as an ontological one, we can conclude that a system's re-entry is nothing more than the systemic self-observation of what has been distinguished as system and environment in the first place. But how can the system self-observe what, within the first-order observation, was marked as non-observable environment? How is the re-entry possible, if it observes what the system has distinguished as environmental ›other‹? Just think about Luhmann's (2006: 38) radical ontological statement that

> »a system *is* the difference between system and environment«.

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To comprehend Luhmann's train of thought, imagine a simple, but slightly exaggerated example. Think about a painter who plans a self-portrait that shows herself in the act of painting. Besides a canvas on which she paints, she also looks at a huge mirror in which she sees herself while painting. Now, what happens if the painter tries to start her artist work by holding a brush in her hand and observing herself in the mirror? When she looks in the mirror, she sees herself ›ready to paint‹; but obviously, no brushstroke will be made. If she instead looks on the blank canvas in front of her, she cannot know what to paint, as her mirror image has not been painting anything at that moment. Hence, the regrettable painter finds herself in the clutches of an antinomy. She would have had to paint before she can observe himself; but to observe herself, she would have had to paint first. Or, in other words, she can only paint *if she does not paint*.

The reason why we think of Luhmann's principle of systemic self-observation as of a painter who paints herself while she is painting is simple. Luhmann declared that the act of observation is itself an observation—just as communicating, and just as drawing a distinction. If a system observes itself, it does so by the sort of operation it lives through in the first place. For instance, the legal system which operates on the code ›legal—illegal‹ can solely observe itself through this very code. Likewise, the painter tries to observe herself through the act of painting. Whereas she as painter lives through the operation of using her brush, she observes herself through the very same operation. And, then again, through the painter's act of observation which is done *by* painting, she operates in order to ›preserve‹ herself as painter. We can therefore conclude that the painter's re-entry can be thought of as an observation through the act of painting, and that Luhmann's systems operate and observe themselves in the same way. However, this assumption leads to an antinomy. A system can only observe itself if it carries out an operation. But at the same time, the system can only carry out an operation if it observes itself. Roughly speaking, the system can only observe itself *if it does not observe itself*. In this sense,

> »the function of re-entry is analogous to the production of logical paradox or antinomy by the introduction of self-referential propositions into a syllogism« (Clarke 2008: 70 f.).

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If we now come back to our question of how Luhmann tried to overcome the apparent antinomic tension through the introduction of the principle of re-entry, we now realise that he did not take us any step fur-

ther. His assumptions on systemic self-observations seem to reflect a genuine antinomy, and Luhmann (1990: 68 f.) surprisingly sees it the same way:

> »An operation that uses distinctions in order to designate something we will call ›observation‹. We are caught once again, therefore, in a circle: the distinction between operation and observation appears itself as an element of observation«.

This distinction between operation and observation is the reason why a painter trying to paint herself in the act of painting finds herself in a desperate situation, and therewith, why systemic self-observation turns out to be logically impossible. Luhmann nevertheless tries to make his point, although his argument »has been a familiar one ever since the ›liar's paradox‹ of antiquity« (Wolfe 1998: 66). Indeed, Luhmann's ontological statement that a system observes itself by distinguishing between operation and observation *is* an antinomy. Following his claim that observation means to distinguish *A* from *non-A*, we can follow that distinguishing between operation and observation is nothing else than distinguishing between non-observation and observation, so that we can make the ontological statement[79] that

A system observes itself by distinguishing between observation and non-observation.

If the system observes itself, it distinguishes between this observation and the according non-observation. But then the system observes what it does not observe. Or, in other words, a system can only observe itself if it observes what it cannot observe. If this confusing ontological antinomy were not enough, Luhmann (1998: 1) now claims that his antinomy's solution lies in the very ›logic‹ of this distinction insofar as

> »just as the distinction between operation and observation […] is itself the distinction of an observer. I must leave it with the simple statement that this logical form is the foundation of productive analyses that can resolve their own paradoxes«.

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Luhmann thus tries to convince us that any systemic self-observation—for instance, a self-description of a society—is based on a paradox. The principle of re-entry thus does not solve the paradox, but *creates* it in the first place. However, Luhmann now encourages seeing this paradox not as a sign of an impossibility or logical precariousness, but as an inaccurate description. And if we ask how this paradox self-description is dealt with, Luhmann (1995a [1984]: 482) has a simple answer:

> »Traditional epistemologies consider circles of this sort as grounds for suspicion that statements are false, if not gratuitous. The opposite is true. They force themselves upon us. One cannot avoid them. One can sharpen them as a paradox and leave it at that«.

Luhmann hence suggests to accept the occurrence of such paradoxes of observations, and to see them as »a source of great creativity« (Mowles 2015: 36). Even if a systemic observation might be blurred or mistaken by a paradox, the system *itself* will go on in the communicative process by which it lives and preserves. If a paradox is revealed by the system, it will yield new meanings, new communications, and new observations based on this very paradox—but it will, by no means, end the system's communicative process. We thus see that Luhmann's way out of the paradox is not by relating it to logic and knowledge in a traditional sense, but to society and systems »by examining how the system itself manages to overcome it« (Luhmann, Fuchs 1988: 28). In this sense, he describes a system's bypassing of a paradox as ›deparadoxification‹:

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[79] This statement takes the form of Luhmann's (1998: 34) own antinomic claim that »The observation observes the operation of the observation«.

> »An observer can realize that self-referential systems are constituted in a paradoxical way. The insight itself, however, makes observation impossible […]. Therefore, the assumption of pure and unrestricted self-reference transfers the paradox to the observation itself […]. Therefore, realizing the necessity of interruption in processes of self-referential constitution de-paradoxizes the object of observation and—at the same time—the observation itself« (Luhmann, Fuchs 1988: 35).

For instance, the introduction of a God serves as mechanism to deparadoxising, which, as we already know, has been the metaphor for several impossible solutions of antinomies labelled as ›God Eye's View‹. At the heart of this alleged solution, we also find the idea of a divine intervention to describe an impossible ontological hierarchy of observations or theorists standing ›above‹. By relocating the dilemma of the paradox to a higher power, the paradox itself vanishes. Alternatively, other self-descriptions of society—as, for instance, opposed to a society based on a god-like figure—might fulfil the same purpose. Luhmann thus refrains from understanding the paradox as logical or epistemological problem and instead draws his attention to the variety of actual societal self-descriptions. The paradox of self-observation might continue to exist; the process of how societies overcome this paradox by again and again describing and observing themselves however remains unaffected. This is the main difference between the logical and the systemic way of treating paradoxes and antinomies:

> »If Russell finds paradoxes destructive and seeks to solve them, Luhmann finds them productive and watches them unfold over time« (Rasch 2002: 26).

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Is Luhmann's way of coping with the antinomy convincing? Should we leave the antinomy behind and instead just analyse how societies faced with the dilemma of self-observation continue to communicate and operate ›away from‹ Luhmann's paradox? Is Luhmann's distinction between »a logical and a social approach to paradoxes« (Borch 2011: 62) comprehensible insofar as, in Luhmann (1989 [1986]: 60) words, »[n]o system is destroyed by logic«? Our answer will be clear if we think about the premises Luhmann deployed when introducing his theory. If the paradox has no effect on the logic of a society's constitution, if it is no actual barrier of thinking about a society, then logic as such cannot be understood in the Aristotelian sense. As we remember, Aristotle's three laws were not merely a guide for thinking, as they showed the possibility and impossibility of ontological and epistemological statements as such. For instance, a man cannot be tall and small at the same time, as this statement would contradict Aristotle's law of non-contradiction. However, such a contradiction would not irritate Luhmann when thinking about systemic self-observation. If a contradiction was carried by a paradox of self-observation, the according violation of Aristotle's laws would not be of concern for Luhmann. To him, the paradox could be simply deparadoxified.

However, Luhmann himself furnished his theory with Aristotle's law. As he promotes the principle of distinguishing one thing from another—for instance, as distinction of a system and its environment—, he obviously applied Aristotle's law to the very constituents of his theory. But if this assumption »presupposes an identity-based logic« (Brunczel 2010: 233), Luhmann's theory itself is based on a logical apparatus which cannot be overcome in the sense of deparadoxification. Hence, in the face of this self-violation, Luhmann's paradox which we again would denote as ontological observer's antinomy remains as a hurdle of his sociologist thinking.

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Luhmann's observer's antinomy not only has implication for his own theory, but also for the way theorists approach their object of investigation in general. This problem is not novel, and was also recognised by

Luhmann himself. If, for instance, a sociologist observes the societal system, she will be faced with the observer's antinomy just the way Luhmann was when he set up his theory on social systems.

Whenever sociologists communicate about their own discipline as sociologists, the communication appears to be autological and self-referential. The principle of self-reference we learnt from Luhmann therefore also applies to the scientific subsystem—especially in the case of self-observation. For instance, sociologists observe groups *within* the social system who take part in the communicational game—including themselves.[80] Roughly speaking, sociologists have to observe social systems *and* themselves as part of these systems. Science as such necessarily must both observe *its* objects of investigation and *itself as* object of investigation; or, as Luhmann (1994: 133) argues:

> »Sociology can neither shed its scientific nor its social character. It is a science of the social system and a social system of science«.

To use Luhmann's jargon, the boundary between the scientific system and its environment is steadily drawn by the scientific communication—that is, the permanent distinction between what is regarded as scientific or true and what is claimed as unscientific. Hereby, all these processes and distinctions are contingent. Hence, Luhmann (1994: 137 f.) gives clear advice for sociological theorisation of modern societies:

> »If it is true that modern society operates with contingent [...] observations and communications, then sociological theory must copy this contingent mode of operation in its own operations, the truth of its assumptions would no longer consist of their correspondence with objects, but of this formal congruency between society's and sociology's modes of communication. Borrowing from the language of art, we could say that sociology must become a ›parody‹ of society«.

We now see that the dilemma of a blind-spotted observer has not only affected Freud's and Morgenthau's thinking, but also Luhmann's academic program. And even though the observer's antinomy can be formulated in various ways, its essence seems unambiguous. Luhmann's willingness to take on an antinomic notion of observation while claiming that, as opposed to the sphere of logic, »it usually does not pose a great problem in a social context« (Borch 2011: 62), reflects his unusual approach of coping with antinomies. But, as will be shown, the antinomy we already unveiled is not the only one Luhmann's work is inflicted with. While his examinations on observation and self-description offered a rough framing of how constructivists see the world, his epistemological conclusions complete his picture of social systems—but thereby yield a new, undecidable antinomy.

d) The Semantical ›Antinomy of Constructed Reality‹

Luhmann's principle of observation is, as we now see, closely connected to the understanding of cognition as operation. Therewith, the act of cognising cannot be thought of as perceiving an accurate copy or representation of the cognised. In contrast, what is ›real‹ or ›true‹ depends on the operating subject and system. By drawing on biologist theses, Luhmann assumes that reality and truth are not necessary and objective, but contingent.

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[80] Various scholars have argued that this ›dilemma of observation‹ can also be found in a natural scientific context, and not only in reflexive theories of the humanities. For instance, the groundbreaking approach of quantum mechanics in the discipline of physics »is a problematic theory precisely because it raises the question of the status of the scientist. Is she an observer? Is she a participant? Does she alternate between being observer and participant or is she both simultaneously? Is there any place in all of this for the scientist as pure observer as classical science demands?« (Byers 2011: 101).

Luhmann's work did not only fall at the serious hurdle posed by the described ontological antinomy. As proponent of a radical-constructivist approach, he also offered an epistemological frame for the question of how reality is constructed within societal systems and can be understood from a scientific perspective. As constructivist, Luhmann obviously denied that truth or reality can be perceived objectively. Obviously, such an assumption would contradict his earlier arguments on observation, as

> »just as no observer has direct access to the reality, so no-one has access to the one and single Truth. This follows directly from the constructivist framework which dissolves the One Truth into a plurality of truths where various observers can claim to possess the truth—each constructed according to the distinctions applied by the particular observer« (Borch 2011: 61).

But how do Luhmannian systems reproduce such a truth? How is reality understandable from this point of view? Through the processes of self-observation and re-entry, autopoietic systems are able to construct boundaries of their environment. Although these systems are closed and thus cannot observe things beyond their own operations, the outer world can nevertheless be constructed from the inside. Systemic observation thus never represents an adequate image of the system's environment in terms of correlation or a simple copy or blueprint, but rather a constructed portrait *about* the environment. Operationally closed systems cannot perceive reality ›as it is‹, because they are unable to communicate or operate *with* their environment.

As we already saw, systemic observation through which reality and truth can be constructed is never just a passive epistemological mirroring, but an operation as such. By perceiving, the system does something; and by observing, the system operates. If we then ask how reality is constructed by the system, we have to keep track of how a system in Luhmann's sense would construct something *while operating*. This track leads us back to the biologist approach Luhmann was inspired by. As his theory on social systems was clearly influenced by the work of Maturana and Varela, his ideas on construction, cognition, and epistemology similarly reflect the theoretical framework of these biologists. For them, a living system's operations are synonymous with its cognition. Everything what lives experiences according to its autopoietic organisation:

> »A cognitive system is a system whose organization defines a domain of interactions in which it can act with relevance to the maintenance of itself, and the process of cognition is the actual (inductive) acting or behaving in this domain. *Living system are cognitive systems, and living as a process is a process of cognition*« (Maturana, Varela 1980: 13).

Recall the situation in which a person drinks a glass of warm water. If we now ask how the cognition ›the water is warm‹ flashes through the person's mind, Maturana and Varela's biologist theory provides for a simple explanation. The atoms inside the warm water oscillate faster than those of a cold one. Hence, these atoms trigger a specific electric impulse in the person's nervous system so that she experiences the cognition ›warm‹. Nevertheless, the cognition was not caused by the tongue's sensation of the warm water. In contrast, the living organism ›person‹ as an autopoietic system exhibits a specific nerve structure that enables the sensation through atoms from its environment. The atoms however cannot enter the person's nervous system, but solely trigger the specific process *within* the system. If the warm water was drunk by a different living organism such as a fish or a plant, the triggered sensation would lead to completely different states. For this reason, the cognition ›the water is warm‹ is only experienced by the living system ›person‹, but not necessarily by other systems such as ›fish‹ or ›plant‹. The water as such is not cold or warm as an existing thing; it is solely observed as warm thing by the person, and is observed as something different by other living organisms. To clarify this link between autopoietic systems and cognition, Maturana (2002: 6) decided that

> »the fundamental question was no longer *›what is the essence of that which I observe?‹* but rather *›how do I do what I do as an observer in observing?‹*«

Life is cognition, and cognition is life. A living organism is structurally coupled to its environment, and this linkage reflects the pattern of disturbances or recursive interaction between organism and environment. As opposed to traditional conceptions of cognition, Maturana argues that the specific, structural arrangement of an organism and its environment is equivalent to cognition. The drinking person cognises the warm water according to her structural coupling to the environment, which obviously differs from the cognition of the very same warm water by a fly hurtling around the person's head. Cognition in this sense is tantamount to the actual *process of living*. Hence, the cognition of warm water can only be understood as an act—opposed to the traditional view of perceiving an image or representation of an objective, ›real‹ outer world. As we will see, this assumption on cognition of living systems would eventually be the foundations of constructivist epistemology.

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A further illustration might help to better conceive this perspective on cognition which is central to the understanding of Luhmann's account on reality. Back in 1959, Maturana together with two colleagues published a paper entitled »What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain«. In this study, the researchers concluded that frogs are unable to see a realist image of the outer world—for instance, a fly that could be caught with the frog's tongue. Instead of perceiving real movements, frogs only see moving shadows, which is sufficient to catch their prey. The researchers hence came to the conclusion that living organisms do not perceive an adequate image of the world, but only the parts or sections which are relevant to the preservation of their basal functions. In short, visual or perceptual information is *not* being processed in the frog's brain, but already determined through the frog's physiological constitution:

> »[T]he eye speaks to the brain in a language already highly organised and interpreted, instead of transmitting some more or less accurate copy [of the world]« (Lettvin *et al.* 1959: 1950).

Murana's insights on cognition were inspired by his early experiments with animals which resulted in the insight that, for instance, frogs only see what their eyes ›see‹, and not their brain. For human beings, the same conclusion is drawn. As an empirical factum, the human brain has been discovered to have no direct access to an external world, as a living organism's nervous system interact in a self-referent way. As Maturana and Varela (1980: 26) showed, these systems interact with *themselves* rather than with their environment so that

> »[t]he ability of the nervous system to interact with its own internal states, as if these were independent entities […]. This requires an anatomical and functional internal reflection so that the internal organization of the nervous system can project itself onto itself«.

The nervous system as described by these biologists has no direct access to its environment, and therefore cannot differentiate between something real and unreal. The environment is *not* represented as an image or copy of a real world, so that one can

> »conclude that the nervous system as such cannot distinguish between illusion, hallucination, and perception […]. Therefore, bucketing the orthodoxies of […] perception in terms of representation of the outside world or as informational ›inputs‹ into a system open to its environment, Maturana defined the nervous system as operationally closed, autonomous, and self-referential« (Rasch 2000: 129).

In this sense, the notion of objectivity is debunked as a myth. If the outer world is a construction of our sensory apparatus, it cannot be an adequate image of copy of our environment. This is why Maturana and Varela think about cognition as equal to the process of living. We do not *see* the world how it is, but rather

live in the world and perceive solely what we need to preserve ourselves. While living, we cannot and will not ever understand whether we live in an illusory or a real world, whether we really think rationally or dream. Our environment, as suggested by Maturana and Varela, cannot be unveiled in its real essence, as we remain caught and restricted in our own physical-cognitive constitution.

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We therefore see why Luhmann's constructivism is, at least in its epistemological foundation, similar to Maturana and Varela's biologist conception of cognition. In their opinion, truth is never independent from the perceiving subject. Truth is also not absolute; different subjects perceive different ›truths‹. In the Luhmannian sense, these insights are also true for the cognition and observation of systems. What is held as true in one subsystem can vary from the truth of another one.

Every system observes and cognises in terms of its own possible operations of communication. For instance, the legal system cognises through the binary code ›legal—illegal‹, whereas the economic system observes through its code ›payment—non-payment‹. However, the situation being cognised has no effect on the actual observing system: the legal system cognises a situation as illegal not because the act as such *is* illegal, and the same applies for the economic system. Due to the legal and the economic systems' operational closure, the cognised object is not the cause for what is cognised by the system. The object's ›real‹ essence can never be observed. Hence, there cannot be one truth, but only a plurality of truths stemming from the plurality of observers. However, this basic argument of constructivism runs in danger of entailing an antinomic statement. Rethink the constructivist perspective of truth, which claims that

> »[a]lthough we can speak of truth regarding the description of the world, this truth is not absolute. The truth of the description of the world is not ensured by the fact that it corresponds to the reality, that is, by the fact that it provides the proper representation of the world. Instead, truth is determined by what is regarded as criteria of truth in a given social context or culture. Truth is relative« (Brunczel 2010: 178).

Although clearly acknowledging the fact that Luhmann attempted to not reduce his »epistemological programme to a mere relativism« (Borch 2011: 61), his argument however can be understood as contradicting realist and objectivist truth conceptions. If we express Luhmann's constructivist epistemology as a semantical statement[81], this understanding might become clearer:

Constructivism claims that truth depends on the perceiving subject.

Is the truth of the constructivist claim dependent on the subject? If so, the statement must solely be true depending on who perceives it. But then, the claim can be false dependent on another subject's perception. In such a case, the statement's opposite could instead be true—namely, that the truth of a statement does *not* depend on the perceiving subject. And even though such a statement would contradict what Luhmann stated, it confirms his assumption at the same time. The constructivist statement is itself true, if it is *not* true dependent on other subjects. Roughly speaking, Luhmann's claim is true if and only if it is not true. In this sense, a semantical antinomy lies at hand.

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And although Luhmann tried to overcome a pure relativism, we now see that the semantical antinomy's form is similar to the antinomy of relativism. Imagine someone who states that all truths are relative—for instance, that a statement might be true in one social context, but false in another one. Is what she stated a relative or an absolute truth? This question is undecidable. And even though he wished not to see his

[81] A similar statement could be constructed by following the constructivist assumption that a »plurality of truths« (Borch 2011: 61) stems from the perspective of various observers.

approach as promoting a relativism of truth, Luhmann (1995b [1984]: 485) felt »forced to forgo absolutes«. But can we think of a rejection of necessary, absolute truths without implying the existence of relative ones? And indeed, he further carries out that

> »the social systems of society and of science are only self-conditioning autopoietic systems of a special kind. They observe and describe their own performance, and this does not sublate the relativity, in principle, of all observation and description to a system, in that autopoiesis requires systems« (Luhmann 1995b [1984]: 485).

Luhmann proposed the antinomy of relativism in a different guise by introducing the critical disposition ›necessary—contingent‹ instead of the well-known oppositional pair ›absolute—relative‹. He thereby resembled the classical insight that necessary truths *must* be true, whereas contingent ones »such as those furnished by observation or testimony, which, however firmly *believed to be true*« (Powell 1849: 5), can obviously turn out to be false from another point of observation. In this sense, we could formulate the semantical statement[82] that

›The truth of all statements is contingent‹ is a contingent statement.

How should we think about the statement that ›The truth of all statements is contingent‹? If the statement's truth is not necessary, then it is not true in all instances. Some statements might be true from one, but false from another point of observation. But then, if the statement itself happens to be false in some contexts, its opposite must be true in these cases—which would mean that the truth of all statement is not contingent, but necessary. However, if the statement would be ›necessarily true‹, it contradicts itself. Again, we get entangled in the circular reasoning of a classic semantical antinomy.

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Unfortunately, the antinomy of constructed truth is not the only problem in Luhmann's work. If we try to understand the ground from which constructivists develop their arguments, another problem arises. For this purpose, we should ask ourselves what premises are necessary for a constructivist approach to make sense. Can we, as constructivists, assume that the world as such is constructed? Is the world we see only true in our heads?

Maturana's and Varela's biologist theory has largely been identified as radical constructivist, although both researchers refused to accept this label throughout their lifetime. However, their concept of autopoietic systems necessarily implied an unmistakably constructivist conclusion. The world as it appears to us is not a copy of reality, but a subjective image brought forth by our sensual apparatus. Austrian philosopher Ernst von Glaserfeld (1995 [2002]: 1), who might be considered the most prominent advocate of radical constructivism, points out that the school of thought he stands for

> »is an unconventional approach to the problems of knowledge and knowing. It starts from the assumption that knowledge, no matter how it be defined, is in the heads of persons, and that the thinking subject has no alternative but to construct what he or she knows on the basis of his or her own experience«.

Luhmann was strongly inspired by the ideas of Maturana and Varela. Although Luhmann's theory of social systems is widely described as ›operative constructivism‹ as a label which, for good reason, underlines the significance of the Luhmannian operations of communications and thoughts, the obvious similarities to radical constructivist approaches stem from the shared assumptions on how reality or objectivity is made up within minds, milieus, or societies. The common strand among constructivist approaches is the crucial question of how *cognition* must be understood in a ›non-realist‹ light.

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[82] As will be shown, the notion ›all statements‹ can be substituted in favour of ›all things‹, and thus be detached from a pure semantic understanding of truth which is obviously *not* advocated by Luhmann.

Maturana and Varela's biologist theory of cognition gave a clear answer to this question. They saw individual organisms being coupled to the milieus they live in, and cognition could therefore be used synonymously to the *process* of living within a milieu. Luhmann (1990: 64 f.) adopts a similar stance on the concept of cognition and the question of how we refer to an outer world, but however comes to a more far-reaching conclusion:

> »There is an external world […] but we have no direct contact with it. Without knowing, cognition could not reach the external world […]. Knowledge can only know itself, although it can—as if out of the corner of its eye—determine that this is only possible if there is more than only cognition. Cognition deals with an external world that remains unknown and has to, as a result, come to see that it cannot see what it cannot see«.

Luhmann similarly refers to his idea of cognitive closure and self-reference as he explains that the human brain does not interact with an outer world in terms of its own operations. He thereby clearly builds upon the biologist insights by Maturana and Varela, who stated that living organisms or, more specifically, nervous systems have no direct interaction with their environments, but only with themselves. Luhmann (1990: 64) explicitly refers to these empirical findings in brain research. However, he leaves the level of the individual organism in the course of his further theoretical remarks and translates the notions of operational closure and cognition to his actual field of investigation, although cognition in the Luhmannian sense is used for all kinds of systems such as living, psychic, or social systems:

> »What we know from brain research is also true for communication. *The lack of an operational access to the environment is a necessary condition for cognition*« (Luhmann 1993: 774).

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At this point, Luhmann's argumentation bears a strong resemblance to Murana's and Varela's biologist notion of cognition. He assumes that we cannot know anything of an external world, because our cognitive apparatus allows only for a subjective image of that world. In short, the constitution of our brain does not allow for ›true‹ access to the world. In this statement, Luhmann gives a clear, but puzzling indication about the foundation of the constructivist theory he suggested. He surprisingly compares the *constitution* of a system—that is, the relation to its environment—with results from brain research. In a more general sense, he emphasises that his social theory was derived from a genuine biologist research program. What Maturana and Varela proposed as a description for living systems is now translated in Luhmann's jargon to describe social systems. Roughly speaking, findings from biologist research led to insights in the social and philosophical branch of system theory, especially because both concluded with the assumption that living *and* social systems could be furnished with constructivist thinking. Is Luhmann thus just a biologist in the disguise of a sociologist? Or did he attempt to ›save‹ the very foundations of his constructivist theory by—at least once—speaking from the semantical, hierarchical level of an irrefutable ›empiricist fact‹?

The scientific problem behind this tongue-in-cheek question is of enormous relevance. Think again about Luhmann's constructivist statement that reality and truth are being constructed within systems, which resembles Maturana and Varela's claims. In Luhmann's eyes, anything is constructed—not arbitrarily, but contingently. He considers anything to be changeable, he promotes the plurality of truth, and he thinks of the epistemological inaccessibility of the ›real world‹ and the ›real environment‹. However, at one point, he contradicts his own constructivist view when it comes to the very foundation of all his assumptions. Luhmann implicitly claims that systems as such *really exist* and, more precisely, that systemic cognition as a ›construction machine‹ is a real, empirical fact. In this sense, Rasch (2000: 72) convincingly elaborates that Luhmann,

> »in saying that his inquiry focuses on systems, […] evidently presupposes the reality of at least one class of objects, namely, systems«.[83]

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Obviously, Luhmann postulates the real existence of systems. His constructivist approach is then built upon this obviously objectivist assumption. In the same way, he refers to the natural-scientific research findings as empirical factum (Luhmann 1993: 774). By denoting language as »sort of noise« (Luhmann 2012 [1997]: 60), he also speaks in an empirical, almost physical way. In brief, Luhmann uses objectivist assumptions from the field of biology and natural science to claim the existence of systems and to assert at the same time that these systems are the frame in which all reality is being constructed. This contradictory statement becomes obvious if we understand these biologist and natural-scientific findings as constructions themselves—just as Luhmann explicitly did:

›Every truth is constructed‹ is constructed.

Is the truth that ›every truth is constructed‹ itself a construction?[84] If so, then this truth is a construction which was derived from a particular distinction in the Luhmannian sense—that is, we are faced with a contingent, but not necessary distinction. But then, we can impossibly conclude that the truth of something is necessary in itself. The truth that ›every truth is constructed‹ must therefore itself be contingent or, better, constructed. And therewith, this very truth would be a necessary one, and contradict itself. At this point, we eventually find ourselves faced with a semantical antinomy that turns out to pose an unresolvable problem for Luhmann's constructivist theory. If we attempt to advocate a constructivist world view, it seems that we have to confess at least one objective, necessary, and ›real‹ thing—roughly speaking, that constructivism itself exists. This should obviously remind us to the safe shore the hierarchical orderings Russell and Tarski suggested us. Luhmann's world is conceptualised as a playground for his constructivist operations; but, however, his own theory of constructivism stand itself hierarchically ›above‹ this world. This is accomplished by grounding the constructivist world within a higher-ordered objectivist, empiricist frame as unconstructed mantle. In this sense, we could substitute the notion of constructivism and instead propose the existence of systems, of operations, or of contingency. However, all these existential assumptions seem to solely reveal the necessity of one ›unconstructed‹ truth:

> »Those who champion a constructivist epistemology must live in anticipation of a big bang—the bang, that is, of a realist first crashing down in verification upon a real table« (Rasch 2000: 74).

It should however be acknowledged that constructivists such as Luhmann do not deny an ontic reality—or, so to say, an ›absolute‹ reality. The constructivist's core assumption is rather that *knowledge* cannot objectively be true as›corresponding facts mirroring the real world. Hence, constructivism should be under-

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[83] It should nevertheless be mentioned—and Rasch admittedly does so—that Luhmann also states that he uses the assumption of real existent social systems in an analytical way insofar as he considers them ›objects of research‹. But even with acknowledging this remark, the initial claim »remains a blind presupposition« (Rasch 2000: 73), because such an object would necessarily become subject to the question of existence as well.

[84] Although Luhmann refuses to accept the »thesis that all knowledge is a construction naturally applies to that sentence as well« (Reese-Schäfer 2014: 227), he solely remarks that such a sentence should be disconnected from the self-referential context of empirical first-order observations. Luhmann then describes the predicate ›exists‹ as assigning no further attribute, and suggests transferring the notion of existence to his constructivist design. He thus argues that if science observes itself, by, for instance, reflecting on the scientific notion of existence, it is the scientific system itself which is exclusively ›able‹ to do so. However, this argument proves fruitless again as soon as we draw our attention from the scientific to any other system. If existence or knowledge is not seen as a scientific, but as a religious, social, or legal notion, its truth and meaning will change accordingly. However, Luhmann claims that systems and knowledge exist in a general sense—that is, irrespective of the actual system or subsystem. He furthermore uses the notion constructivism as equivalent for the self-description of the scientific system and thereby implies that scientists can observe ›their‹ and other systems in a constructivist way. This premise however cannot qualify for the assumption that systems as such a structured and constituted in a constructive sense, or that operation and communication proceed constructivistly. This would create one of Luhmann's paradoxes.

stood as epistemological approach. The antinomy inherent in Luhmann's theory is, as in most constructivist approaches, that the question of how knowledge is known cannot be answered. If knowledge does not correspond to the reality of the world, then it cannot correspond to itself in the sense of ›knowing something about knowledge‹. However, if that is not the case, then the constructivist's statement paradoxically delivers what it promises. Constructivists have to presume—just like the ›real‹ big bang—at least the unconstructed reality of knowledge, of the brain, of our epistemological apparatus, of our nervous system's biological constitution, or of a system we live in or a society within we construct knowledge.

e) Antinomies of Constructivism

Luhmann's constructivist stance on social systems harboured ontological and semantical antinomies at the bedrock of his theory. These unresolvable contradictions arise from the antinomic figure inherent in his ideas. At first, Luhmann's theoretical statements were formulated in the recursive form of the *mise en abyme*. If we consider the theorist's observation as part of the theorised ›blind-spotted observations‹, the observing theorist became part of what he theorised about. Luhmann as theorist who metaphorically stands for the principle of systemic observation as such spoke about observations in a generalised form, and thereby became his own ›empirical feed‹ within the ontological statements being made. In the same sense, his theory itself becomes part of what is theorised about. ›Radical constructivism‹ as observational description is nothing more than an operation of a system itself. Hence, the semantical statements *about* social systems are, at the same time, recursive operations *of* the system itself. All these recursive forms eventually derive from the principle of recursive autopoiesis which condenses in all facets of Luhmann's theoretical notions such as operation, cognition, contingency, and observation—even in the natural scientific world, as Luhmann (1994: 131) exemplifies:

> »[p]hysicists and their instruments observe everything that can be observed in physics. The problem is that their observations are themselves physical, and so change what is being observed«.

In his ontological statements, Luhmann draws on the critical disposition of the *antitheton* by creating the opposition of a ›blind spotted observation‹ and a ›higher-ordered observation‹. We also witnessed this disposition as the pairs ›observation—operation‹ and the distinction between ›observation‹ and ›non-observation‹. Within Luhmann's semantical statements on the constructiveness of realty and truth, he then builds on the *antitheton* ›contingent—necessary‹. If a truth is contingent, it might be untrue and unnecessary for another cognising system. In this sense, Luhmann's critique of rationality and reality is thus closely linked to his notion of contingency.

Finally, those statements led to the *Penrosing* as circular inversion, as no decisive answer or position towards Luhmann's claims can be found. At first, the constellation of an ›observation of observations‹ implied an unclear character of the Luhmannian principle of self-observation. Does this form of observation *itself* contain a blind spot? Finally, if we ask about the ›construction of constructivism‹, a similar confusion arises. Is Luhmann's theory itself a contingent truth? Is his self-referent theoretical scaffold just one of thousands of systemic operations?

To escape from the inevitable dilemma of an infinite, hierarchical chain of observations, Luhmann borrowed the notion of re-entry, which he surprisingly denotes as paradoxical. He then seemingly downplays the dilemma by suggesting that social systems themselves deparadoxify these contradictions. We however found that Luhmann's social treatment of the antinomy was rather judged from the perspective of a ›God's Eye View‹ by arbitrarily adducing or rejecting the validity Aristotle's laws of thought. When it comes to the semantical antinomy of constructive truth, he similarly escapes to the ›meta-reality‹ of biologist explanations. By drawing on the *existence* of social systems and the existence of constructivism itself, he speaks from a hierarchical position ›above‹ the world he theorised about, and thereby contradicts his

own presumptions. But what else could he do if the description of system is assumed to emerge from the system itself? Luhmann's escape to the empirical facts of biology and ontological, existential claims is thus an attempt to speak from a semantical hierarchical level above the world of constructions and systems. As we will see, these antinomic statements can occur in various constructivist accounts, and thus pose an unsolvable problem for thinking about the world from the perspective of constructivism.

	Ontological Antinomy	**Semantical Antinomy**
›Mise en abyme‹	recursive form of *theorist* as ›observation‹ and *theorised* as ›blind-spotted observations‹; autopoietic principle	recursive form of *theory* as ›radical constructivism‹ and *theorised* as ›constructed truth‹; autopoietic principle
›Antitheton‹	critical disposition of ›blind-spotted observation—observation‹ and ›observation—non-observation‹	critical disposition of ›contingence—necessity‹
›Penrosing‹	circular inversion of ›observation as operation‹	circular inversion of ›construction of constructivism‹
Hierarchies	infinite ontological hierarchy of higher-ordered observations; ›God's Eyes View‹ on notion of re-entry and deparadoxification	›higher‹ meta-theoretical level of biologist ›facts‹ and existential claims as semantical hierarchy
Examples	*Luhmann observes all observations which do not include their own blind spots.* *A system observes itself by distinguishing between observation and non-observation.*	*Constructivism claims that truth depends on the perceiving subject.* *›The truth of all statements is contingent‹ is a contingent statement.*

Luhmann's Own Observation as Construction: *Antinomies of Constructivism*

The antinomic figure inherent in Luhmann's constructivist oeuvre can be seen as a poignant example for theorising from the perspective of constructivism. As we now find, the philosophical confusion of the statements made in Luhmann's theory are to be found in one of the most popular theories of International Relations. Wendt's social constructivism must however be seen as a ›mild‹ version—especially in contrast with Luhmann radical ideas. Hence, some of Luhmann's core questions are, to the disappointment of constructivists such as Kratochwil (2006: 43), not even posed by Wendt. We therefore cannot expect the antinomic form of Wendt's theory to appear in equal rigour, although the constructivist tenor nevertheless implies severe contradictions.

2.2 Wendt's ›Social Constructivism‹

Wendt's social theory of international politics appears in the guise of a ›mild‹ constructivism—unlike Luhmann's account. Wendt thinks that the philosophy of scientific realism helps him to develop a constructivist theory without leaving the safe haven of independent, objective facts. However, his hope is in vain when it comes to social change and reflexive thinking. In such cases, the social constructivist as theorist and social constructivism as theory appear as what they theorise about—social

agents, social facts, and social phenomena are constructed contingencies. Hence, Wendt's theory unveils an unresolvable antinomic figure.

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Wendt's social constructivism has become a mainstream theory in International Relations. This is hardly surprising, as his main opus carefully attempts to build a *via media* between the most influential approaches in the field and, furthermore, presents its novel insights on the social construction of world politics »within the canons of U. S.-style social science« (Smith 2002a: 32). Our reading of Wendt's theory will accord to Smith's appraisal, but also be seen against the background of Luhmannian ideas on construction and systems.

As such, social constructivism can be seen as »alternative to mainstream rationalism« (Smith 2002b: 227). With constructivist theorising emerging as one of the main schools in the discipline of International Relations during the late 1980s, social constructivism became known as an alternative research programme to the then mainstream approaches in the field. As a rationalist critique, Wendt's social theory can thereby be mentioned in one breath with our reading of Morgenthau's political realism. Both schools found themselves in debates against rationalism. In this sense, Morgenthau's »critique of rationalism« (Neacsu 2010: 171) shows remarkable similarities to Wendt's dissatisfaction with »rationalist orthodoxy« (Murray 1997: 179). Surprisingly, both thinkers then developed theories which clearly entailed rationalist elements such as Morgenthau's »rationality assumption« (Keohane 1984b: 66) or Wendt's pursued »middle ground between rationalist and relativist interpretative approaches« (Adler 1997: 322). We find that this back-pedalling from more radical interpretations of international relations were aimed at preserving an objective, independent standpoint of the theorist and her theory—which, as we will argue, failed.

Our insights on Luhmann's radical constructivist course can be seen as blueprint for the critical stance Wendt took within the »constructivist-rationalist debate« (Zehfuss 2002: 5), and also reflect how Morgenthau's early thoughts on the political dimension of rationalisation have been advanced after his death in 1980. Luhmann's theory thereby helps to unveil the genuine constructivist elements in Wendt's approach, of which some have been blurred through his adherence to scientific realist and positivist foundations.

a) Social Constructivism and the Critique of Rationalism

Wendt's social constructivist approach can be read as middle ground between neorealist and neoliberalist theorising in International Relations. His central claim is that no single logic derives from the presence of an anarchical system. By contrast, actors and structure within the international arena constitute themselves. Consequently, different ›logics of anarchy‹ are possible. Wendt's thin constructivism can thus be seen as a scrutinising of the one-sided principle of rationality advocated by neorealist and neoliberalist accounts.

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In the same way political realism shattered the program of liberalism and its idealistic and rationalist ideas, the emergence of the constructivist approach in the field of International Relations can be understood as counter-concept to the then mainstream theories of the discipline. For some, Wendt's own theory »aimed at undermining neorealism and neoliberalism« (Suganami 2006: 65) as two dominant paradigms, although he himself used a more conciliatory tone by speaking of the objective to »build a bridge« (Wendt 1992: 394). Neorealists assume an objective reality and givenness of the anarchical structure of the international system (McSweeney 1999: 101 ff.), while neoliberalists support this view of the systemic structure as something ›real‹ (Keohane 1984a: 18)—but, however, consider this structure as changeable in a reflexivist

sense. Although their conclusions on what goals political actors pursue within this anarchical system differ, they nevertheless agree on how the rational mechanism of actors operating within this system works. The objective anarchical structure of the system is *independent* of the actors within the system, and the latter thus solely *respond* to the confines of this system. In this way, both schools of theory aimed at »specifying cause-and-effect relationships« (Krasner 1999: 44) between system and actor. Neorealists and neoliberalists explain *why* a political actor conducted a particular behaviour—for instance, why state *X* reacted to a power shift, or why state *Y* decided to cooperate within an institution. Without the assumption of the independent anarchical structure as given, unchangeable fact and political actors as operating on rational calculi, neither neorealism nor neoliberalism could work. Constructivists challenge these assumptions by arguing that

> »neorealist and neoliberal approaches, because of their acceptance of the rational choice assumptions, leave unexplored questions concerning *how* the international system or institutions engender either war or cooperation: specifically, questions of ›social construction‹ or socialisation are not dealt with« (Kurki 2008: 121).

One of these questions was posed by Wendt. He was unwilling to accept the international system's anarchical structure as unchangeable, given circumstance. How did this system emerge in the first place? Who made this ostensible, all-encompassing structure that any political actor on the international level is subjected to? Inspired by the ideas of the fathers of constructivist thinking in International Relations[85], Wendt eventually drew the conclusion that anarchy and the implications of this structural feature was not a God-given fact. It was rather ›made‹ by the actors as constituents. Other than competing rationalist accounts propagating the »causal powers of anarchic structures« (Wendt 1992: 392), he refused the image of states as rational actors with fixed identities and interests interacting in an immutable system environment. Wendt understood an actor's identity and interests as changeable—and therewith, institutions and norms alike. From a rationalist perspective, an actor's behaviour follows necessarily from the international system's anarchical structure, whereas Wendt (1992: 394 f.) famously argues that

> »[t]here is no ›logic‹ of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process. Self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy. *Anarchy is what states make of it*«.

For neorealists and neoliberals, actors find themselves in an unsecure, unchanging anarchical world. In their fight for survival and gains, they pursue either power politics or benefit-maximising goals, as the international system's structure leaves no room for any other political aim. The currency of how they can play the game of world politics is therefore is based on *material* capabilities. The more capabilities an actor has, the more powerful it is and the more gains it can make. *Vice versa*, the less material resources an actor has, the more vulnerable to military or political threats through other actors it is. However, Wendt does not think in terms of material capabilities. For him, the assignment of ›powerful‹ or ›threatening‹ is more of an ideational term. It is the *meaning* an actor is giving to his environment—namely, to itself, to other states, institutions and anarchy as such. The material distribution of power or material resources recedes into the background; knowledge and meaning about oneself and of other states becomes the central element of which interests follow from the anarchical structure of the international system. Wendt (1999: 1), who treat this insight as forming the core of constructivist thinking in International Relations, argues therefore

> »(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature«.

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[85] In this sense, Wendt (1999: 84) commended »the two pioneers of the constructivist turn in IR, Kratochwil and Onuf«, but however alludes to intellectual influence from other scholars as well.

Wendt's (1992: 397) core assumption is thus that »collective meanings« about other actors, institutions, or anarchy as such are decisive for an actor to politically behave in one way or another. He earlier on referred to Anthony Gidden's (1979: 58) idea of »mutual knowledge« which emerges in the course of interacting social agents.[86] All participants of the social games know the rules, norms, and resources of the societal system they are operating in.

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Identity and interest are inseparable. If two states ascribe the role ›enemy‹ to each other, their interests will be to pursue hostile policies against each other. These mutual interactions can then emerge as an institution defined as »relatively stable set or ›structure‹ of identities and interests« (Wendt 1992: 399). Hostile identities will lead to institutions such as war or self-help systems, whereas benign interactions between states with the role ›friend‹ will lead to peace or cooperation. Hence, the institutions being formed in the course of the societal process can be conflictual or cooperative dependent on the agents' intersubjectively assigned identities.

But what comes first? Do identities and interests form institutions, or *vice versa*? In line with the long tradition of constructivist thought, Wendt does not intend to solve this chicken-and-egg problem. For him, the structure containing all rules, institutions, and socials norms and the social agents' identities and interests are *mutually constitutive*. Again, this idea is borrowed from Giddens (1984: 169) who argued that

> »structure is always both enabling and constraining, in virtue of the inherent relation between structure and agency«.

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By presenting a new idea of how social actors both constitute and are constituted by the social structure, Wendt draws conclusions about the institutions emerging in the international system. He then famously argues that, as opposed to any given ›logic of anarchy‹ governing states to conduct self-help behaviours, there are »three cultures of anarchy« (Wendt 1999: 246 ff.) reflecting the social structure and meaning distribution within the international system. Depending on the social agents' mutually assigned roles of ›enemy‹, ›rival‹, and ›friend‹, the agents' practices will adhere to a Hobbesian, Lockean, or Kantian culture of anarchy. These roles are however far from being fixed. Neither an agent's identity nor the institutions of the system are unchangeable. The »change of the games« (Wendt 1992: 419) is always possible.

Together with Robert Keohane (1988), Wendt argues that both neorealism and neorealism are based on a common rationalist perspective, but thereby are constrained by the way questions about system and actor can be scientifically asked. By suggesting the constructivist framing of agent and structure, Wendt tends to break with the paradigm of rationality insofar as he

> »suggests that these theories assume an objective set of preferences with a given logic of rationality that determine human action« (Kivimäki 2016: 28).

We therefore can read Wendt's constructivist theory as a critique of rationalism. However, just as his theory itself is a rather thin form of constructivism, this critique appears as »complementary rather than contradictory« (Adler 2013: 133) to some scholars. It should also be acknowledged that Wendt himself deployed a »thin rationalism« (Guzzini, Leander 2006: 85) in some parts of his theoretical scaffold. Although we do not impute constructivist thinkers of establishing an opposition to the principle of rationality, we nevertheless stress the point that they set forth a critical opposition towards the ›logic of appropriateness‹:

[86] However, Wendt (1999: 76) does not follow Gidden's ideas completely in order to defend causal theorising within his moderate constructivist theory.

> »If the mode of behavior of the individual in rational choice theory can be thought of as following a strategic logic, the mode of behavior of the individual following social norms can be thought of as a logic of appropriateness« (Barkin 2006: 55).

Wendt's social constructivism accords to this distinction, although he, to some extent, uses both logics in his examinations. As we will find, he nevertheless deploys the logic of appropriateness for those theoretical set pieces which form the constructivist foundation. If we thus frame Wendt's constructivist kernel as a critique of rationality and reality, we draw on this theoretical facet. Wendt's (1999: 92) famous credo »ideas all the way down« implies this very scrutinising of the rationalist individual and the social reality those individuals live in.

b) The Luhmannian Foundation of Wendt's Theory

Wendt's moderate constructivism must surely be seen as weakened variety of Luhmann's radical account. But whenever Wendt speaks about a constructivist interpretation of world politics, Luhmannian ideas can be seen as the theoretical foundation. Wendt's rejection of constructivist epistemology is surely a major difference, whereas his assumptions of a systemic view, the focus on ideational over material structures, and the principles of contingency and self-reference resembles Luhmann's thinking the most—albeit in a mild form.

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Luhmann's seminal work can and will not be related to Wendt's ideas in the same sense Freud was described as spiritual father of Morgenthau's theory. For reasons already mentioned, Luhmann's theory of social systems can however be used as blueprint not only for many of Wendt's ideas, but for the understanding of most constructivist approaches—and surely for those with a clear sociological account. As Albert (2004b: 13) convincingly argues, Luhmannian thought »can contribute to further an understanding of a number of core problems of IR theorizing«. These problems relate to the general question of how constructivist and systemic approaches enrich the understanding of world politics, and which theoretical constraints and limitations may be in place. One of these theory-related confinements is the occurrence of antinomies.

A further reason for exploring the Luhmannian work as an archetype for constructivist approaches in International Relations theory is the problem that Wendt's own approach was broadly labelled as constructivist, but entails several ›non-constructivist‹ epistemological and methodological assumptions. However, the argument being developed hereafter has not only implications for theories formulated by ontological constructivists such as Wendt, but also for those approaches founded on constructivist epistemology—which, as we will see, touches numerous thinkers in the field of International Relations. Albert (2015: 93), who convincingly argues for a consideration of Luhmannian thought in constructivist International Relations theory, states that

> »[c]onstructivism should not be addressed from a narrow IR perspective alone precisely because […] constructivism draws on a greater range of—often seemingly incompatible—philosophical traditions«.

As we now elaborate the Luhmannian foundation of Wendt's social theory, we should not think of his accomplishments as trailblazing or pioneering in the discipline of political science. Luhmann has, especially in the Anglophone academia, largely been left unconsidered for a long time. The evolution of constructivist thought in International Relations took another path; and constructivism in the field is thus widely seen as emanating from other thinkers. However, a closer look reveals that Luhmann's thoughts have taken consideration through detours. In this sense, Wendt (1999: 84) saw Friedrich Kratochwil as one of

»two of the pioneers of the constructivist turn in IR«. Strikingly, the latter had not only read Luhmann's work (Albert 2015: 111), but also felt deeply inspired by his social theory. If we therefore attempt to trace the Luhmannian dimension of Wendt's thought, we thereby acknowledge the ›hidden‹ influence of his constructivism programme in social theorising within International Relations theory and, as even stronger justification, the fact that his theory is widely seen as most comprehensive and radical opus of constructivist thinking. Whenever Wendt uses constructivist set pieces resembling Luhmann's ideas, they are prone to antinomies in the same way. Moreover, these antinomies are argued to threaten *any* constructivist programme which takes up similar core assumptions in the tradition of Luhmann's approach.

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Luhmann was fascinated by the question of how systems steadily draw the boundaries of their environment through their operations and thereby reproduce themselves. By contrast, Wendt decided to assume the ontological priority to the state and disregards questions of inclusion and exclusion, which for Kratochwil (2006: 43) »is more than disappointing«. This difference is reflected in Luhmann's constructivist radicalism and Wendt's thin constructivism as promotion of constructivist ontology coupled with a positivist epistemology. If we thus speak of the Luhmannian foundation of Wendt's programme, this essential difference should be bluntly taken into account. Whereas Luhmann decided to concede the whole spectrum of constructivist thinking within his social theory, Wendt obviously refused to adopt epistemological implications. However, as we will see, his theory thereby becomes afflicted not only by simple contradictions and misconceptions, but also antinomic tensions.

Luhmann can however be seen as blueprint for those approaches circling around ontological questions which attempt to describe the individual's construction of reality, and thus allude to the mechanism of how people think about and ›make up‹ reality.[87] Even though such schools do not necessarily share a systemic perspective, they all rest on a similar *ontological* foundation. Nothing is or can be regarded as fixed and objective. In contrast, objectivity is seen as a construct which emerges in the individual's mind or the individual's interaction within society. Hence, those constructivists are relatively open to changes of identities and environments. If anything can be regarded as being constructed, then this construction can also be redeveloped in the course of a ›change of mind‹ or ›change of society‹. Again, Luhmann draws one of the most radical positions in this constructivist spectrum of ontological and epistemological views, and thereby reflects the extreme pole of scholars describing how constructions occur. In contrast, Wendt does not pursue this path, but adheres to a ›limited‹ version of constructivist ontology. Wendt, as we will see, is a positivist. This decision will be crucial to the understanding of Wendt's general course of thinking and the problems accompanying this view.

Luhmann rejects the idea of humans as constituents of societal systems and instead thinks of communication *as* a system. As shown, Wendt (1999: 215) obviously thinks of states as corporate agents by famously claiming that »[s]tates are people too«. He however proposes a constructivist understanding of these states as being embedded in an international system by claiming that agents »act toward objects […] on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them« (Wendt 1992: 396 f.). He thus arrives at the idea that meaning structures reflect best what the international system ›is‹ for its agents. Hence, although Wendt's constructivist idea of systems is less radical than Luhmann's, both share the view that systems are not solely based on material constituents, but on communication and, respectively, meaning.[88] Furthermore, Luhmann's broader definition of communication allows him to see that, for instance,

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[87] Glasersfeld (1995 [2002]: 55 ff.), whose approach stands itself in this tradition, gives a good introduction on Jean Piaget's constructivist theory of knowing which can be seen as pioneer work in this field.

[88] Albert, Kessler, and Stetter (2008: 55) argue that Wendt's perspective on how communication between agents takes place differs from Luhmann's view, as »the concept of interaction is for Wendt theoretically prior to communication«. However, Wendt's ›first encounter‹ example to sketch how shared meanings evolve through interaction has even be used by radical constructivists such as Glasersfeld (1995 [2002]: 141) who clearly influenced Luhmann's thinking (Moeller 2012: 123 f.). In this sense, Wendt

> »[p]ower is not only permitting a certain type of communication, but is itself in fact socially constructed through communication« (Guzzini 2013: 81).

Luhmann sees language—not communication—as mediator between operationally closed systems such as the social and the psychic which are structurally coupled. For instance, the psychic system can ›make sense‹ of the communication developing within the societal system through language. Surprisingly, Wendt (1999: 175) furnishes his social theory of politics in a similar way by adopting Searle's argument that »language does not merely mediate thinking, it makes thinking possible«. It seems however that Wendt resists adding too much weight to language, and does so in the sense of Luhmann's priority of communication over language.

In this sense, Luhmann's and Wendt's approach to institutions such as power resembles the constructivist idea that, either through communication or meaning ascriptions, social reality is constructed. And although ›shared meaning‹ is an almost impossible idea in Luhmann's eyes, he nevertheless seems to pave the way Wendt later followed. Luhmann draws on the concept of contingent selection to explain how communication within a societal system emerges. His view of communication as the processing of these contingent selections is at the heart of numerous constructivist approaches. The idea that agents or systems reproduce themselves—and thereby, the ›self‹ or their identity—in the course of any action they take has also been picked up by Wendt (1999: 36) who argues that

> »actions continually produce and reproduce conceptions of Self and Other, and as such identities and interests are always in process«.

Similar to the process of contingent selection keeping the social system alive, Wendt (1987: 368) also acknowledges both the »contingent nature of structural genesis and reproduction« of the international system and the »contingent feature of anarchy«. Luhmann's principle of contingent selection is thus to be understood as a radical form of one of constructivism's main arguments:

> »Constructivists […] base their arguments in contingency. The logical format of any constructivist argument is that certain people faced an indeterminate set of ›real‹ conditions […] and only arrived at a course of action when they adopted certain social constructs. By creativity or accident, in a moment of contingency they chose one of many possible sets of meanings, thereby […] ›constituting‹ one world from many that were otherwise possible« (Parsons 2010: 88).

These principles of contingency and selection can also be found in the notions of »world society« (Stetter 2007a: 2) and »differentiation theory« (Albert *et al.* 2013) within several sociological approaches inspired by Luhmannian thinking.[89] Wendt's constructivism is no exception. However, it defends some individualist and materialist claims in a more moderate version. Wendt accepts Bull's stance of the international system as a society, but adheres to a more or less state-centric view at the same time. However, this view allows him to slightly adopt differentiation-theoretical assumptions such as the construction of the self through the boundaries of the ›other‹.

Whereas Luhmann's theory is explicitly based on the principle of self-reference, Wendt embraces this idea in a very narrow way. In his conception, states are »endowed with a limited degree of self-reference« (Williams *et al.* 2012: 199). In his own words, Wendt (1999: 74) employs the »self-organization hypothesis« to describe that a state's boundary-drawing is to some extent driven by internal forces, whereas the effects of social kinds such as external discourses complement this constitutive process. Wendt acknowledges self-referent principles guiding the constitution of agency and structure, but avoids too strong an emphasis

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does not adopt the Luhmannian idea of communication, but nevertheless draws on a more or less ›emergent‹ constitution of meaning structures.

[89] As discussed elsewhere (C, 2.2d), the notion of contingency has, at least in the eyes of Kessler (2016), not largely been undermined and undertheorised in constructivist accounts of international relations.

compared to Luhmann's argument. Wendt (1999: 185) adopts the view of the »dependence of structure on agency and the social process«. Ideas and norms are permanently reproduced by agents' practices; and if they are not, they cease to exist. He thereby cautiously resembles Luhmann's idea of the autopoietic reproduction as a process, and even adopts some elements of self-reference and reflection in his discussion of the self-perception of actors (Wendt 1999: 227). Moreover, his ideas on the »endogenisation« (Cederman, Daase 2006: 118) of agency and identity can be seen is this idea of a self-reproducing process. Due to his clear intention to develop a *via media*, these constructivist elements are by no means considered in a full extent such as in Luhmann's radical account.

Both Luhmann's and Wendt's concepts are based on the assumption that systems are rather »ideational« (Wendt 1999: 23) and abstract. As we will see, Wendt nevertheless makes every effort to emphasise the partial materialist dimensions within his moderate account; the actual essence of what makes his perspective constructivist is nevertheless based on the idea of ideational structures. It thus only partly resembles Luhmann's highly abstract notion of systems, which are constituted through idealist as opposed to materialist elements such as communication or consciousnesses. But what makes Luhmann's theory radically constructivist is not solely the general anti-materialist setting, but the refusal of causal questions in favour of *constitutive* ones. The anti-materialism propagated in his approach goes hand in hand with the question about the constitution of things—and not their causal explanation. Luhmann's theory on social system clearly advocates such a view:

> »Luhmann advanced a theory of society which denies the existence either of underlying material structure or of overarching material causality in society […]. In clear hostility to causal explanations of societal process, he argued that no universally formative substructure can be discerned in society […]. To propose causal explanations for social formation means […] to neglect the deeply constitutive fact of modern society« (Thornhill 2013: 267 f.).

Surely, not all constructivist approaches—and, among them, Wendt's theory—are set up as systemic suggesting the constitutive power of social institutions or systems in the way Luhmann presents. Wendt clearly incorporates questions of causality within parts of his approach and thereby takes another path. His theory of international politics is thus designed to addressboth constitutive *and* causal questions, and thereby acknowledging both ideational *and* materialist ideas. As Wendt (1999: 72) argues, »constructivism without nature goes too far«.

If we understand Luhmann's constructivism as one of the most radical forms, his general thrust can be seen as furnishing us with the crucial elements of any theory along this line. Luhmann exemplifies the foundation of constructivist thinking by introducing aversion in which all these elements—if one can speak of them—are being ›thought out‹ radically. If we then investigate Wendt's social constructivism, we find this foundation at hand in a more moderate form. With Luhmann's frame as blueprint for the analysis of any constructivist approach, Wendt's ideas appear as variety with all the crucial concepts necessary for a constructivist stance on International Relations theory. However, Wendt does not dare to adopt a radical version in the Luhmannian sense, but, by contrast, even takes a positivist view when it comes to epistemological and methodological questions.

	Luhmann's Constructivism	Wendt's Social Constructivism
Setting	radical constructivism and reflectivist foundation	constructivist ontology; positivist epistemology with reflectivist elements
System	societal system as communication	international system as meaning
Process	communication as processing of contingent selection	contingent evolution of the international system and its institutions
Self-Reference	communication as self-referent	›self-organisation hypothesis‹ between internal and external forces
Language	structural coupling of operationally closed systems through language	language as mediator
Explanations	constitutive	constitutive and causal
Observation	observation as distinction; logic of re-entry	objective, scientific observation
Foundation	biologist foundation of autopoiesis and blind spots	social kinds as based on material ones; ›rump materialism‹

Luhmann and Wendt Sitting at the Same Table: *The Luhmannian foundation of social constructivism*

c) The Ontological ›Observer's Antinomy‹ of Constructivism

Wendt's constructivism is thin, as he furnishes his ideas with the philosophy of scientific realism to make social kinds observable as mind-independent phenomena and, eventually, to then call himself a positivist. This intertwining might be questionable as such[90]; it however is completely useless when it comes to the understanding of *social change*. In these cases, the reflexive character of social kinds cannot be grasped as scientific realist. A second-order question must be raised to expose its constitutive character—for instance, whenever an actor reflects on her own authorship or her own blind spot in constituting a social kind. At this point, a serious question arises. Has Wendt as social constructivist described his own role by drawing on the reflexivity of social kinds? Is Wendt's mode of observation of social change applicable to the question of his own self-observation as theorist? Finally, by drawing on the example of ›Wendt as professor‹, we find how the observing theorist becomes part of what she pretends to observe and theorise about.

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The radical constructivist does not only see ontological, but also epistemological implications. Every thing is constructed, and there is no thing in its ›real‹ essence to observe. The moderate constructivist tends to climb down; she either waives to suppose the world as ontologically constructed or refuses to assume the individual's mind from the stance of epistemological constructivism. Roughly speaking, either the ob-

[90] This more general criticism alludes to Brglez's (2001: 340) argument that »neither scientific realism nor social constructivism makes much sense in conjunction with positivist methodology«.

served thing as ›theorised‹ or the observer as ›theorist‹ is covered with a non-constructivist robe. Wendt attempts to attack on both fronts. On the one hand, he revokes the pure ideational character of social kinds as observed thing; and on the other, he sketches the positivist perspective of the scientific individual as observer. The attributes ›moderate‹ and ›thin‹ in Wendt's theory thus means that constructivist understandings of the theorised social phenomena's ontology *and* of the theorist's epistemological roots are being retracted to a certain degree. We will however argue that Wendt's theory cannot stay the course when it comes to the decisive question of social change, in which the principle of reflexion and second-order questions plays a role. At this point, an observer's antinomy can be revealed which resembles our findings in Luhmann's theory. Hence, we will argue that this antinomic tension indwells any constructivist reasoning—even in its moderate or conventional forms.

Our considerations aim at examining how Wendt's constructivist theory contributes to the understanding of social change. To this end, a brief evaluation of the metatheoretical frame he adopts is necessary, and we will therefore briefly discuss his adoption of scientific realism and positivist epistemology in his theoretical work. Wendt seemingly juggles with the duality between positivism and post-positivism, natural and social kinds, causal and constitutive understanding, and material and ideational essences of things. Whereas Luhmann clearly takes a radical constructivist stance, Wendt—following his *via media*—tries to soften these boundaries by bringing these dualisms into play. However, by putting more weight on the ideational character of social kinds and a more positivist epistemology, he tries to overcome some of the relativist problems inherent in radical constructivism. The positivist knows no epistemological blind spots, her observation does not account for any reflexive or self-referential principles, and her act of observation is completely independent of what he observes. Wendt however opened the gateway for a constructivist thinking by taking a non-positivist perspective on the ontological nature of social kinds. Wendt (1999: 77) acknowledges that social phenomena, although grounded in a material basis, are socially constructed and exhibit unique features:

> »ontologically, its objects do not exist independent of knowledgeable practices; epistemologically, reference to social kinds will often involve descriptive and relational elements; and methodologically, the hermeneutical recovery of self-understandings must be an essentially aspect of explaining social action«.

This assumption is the starting point for our considerations on the nature of the theorist in Wendt's moderate constructivism and the question about the theorist *as* observer. As a self-acclaimed constructivist, one would expect Wendt to suggest a rather interpretative and reflexive way of scientific observation. But Wendt (1999: 39) persistently intimates that

> »I am a strong believer in science […]. I am a ›positivist‹«.

Positivists assume that they can only trust in the things they see and perceive with their senses. What they then observe is given and factual, the world's things exist mind-independently, and what they see is ›real‹. For these reasons, positivists usually are engaged in the observation of natural kinds, and Wendt acknowledges this scientific tradition as well. However, he claims that the programme of scientific realism also allows for a quasi-positivist evaluation of social kinds, even though these differ from fixed natural ones. This philosophy of science enables the observation of social kinds which, as a matter of fact, are invisible—and therefore, not observable for the classical positivist. Wendt (1999: 60 ff.) remarks that social scientists mostly have to observe unobservables such as states, norms, or the international system. As scientific realists, these unobservables should be described and treated as ›real‹ entities, which some International Relations theorists do not. If, for instance, neorealists assume the state as unitary egoistic and rational, they foster an instrumentalist stance. Even though the state as actor—which, as a matter of fact, is unobservable—might *not* be describable in those terms, this description would however serve the neo-

realist theory's purpose to explain the unobservable in some way. Wendt fiercely opposes such a view, and instead advocates a scientific realist treatment:

> »Waltz accepts that, in reality, states are not as assumed in his theory, but he does not accept that theoretical assumptions need to be realistic. […] Wendt's critique […] is that there is little to be gained […] in theoretically treating the state as unitary egoistic and rational, if, in fact, it is not« (Wight 2006: 39).

We thus see that Wendt views scientific realism as philosophical requirement for theories to say something real about the world, and not to hide behind ›as if‹-explanations. But can we really think of constructivist ontology under the umbrella of scientific realism? Why should we take unobservable social kinds as real, static phenomena? In this sense, Wendt's conclusion seems confusing, and we therefore should reconsider the way he understands the nature of social kinds in relation to how they can be observed methodologically.

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What are social kinds and how can we explore them? By stating that ideational social phenomena can be investigated through scientific realism, Wendt presents how to conduct research methodologically. He takes up the gap between positivists pursuing causal explanations and post-positivists fostering constitutive theories—resulting in either ›why‹ or ›how‹ questions. Although he called himself a positivist, Wendt (1999: 78) at first advocates a »question-driven approach to social inquiry« by which neither type of inquiry is precluded from the outset. For him, ideas can have causal effects, and therewith, some social phenomena need to be explained causally. By contrast, social kinds also exhibit constitutive effects making »properties possible« (Wendt 1999: 83)—either through their internal structure which can be investigated through reductionist methods, or their embeddedness in external, discursive structures which can be explored through interpretative and descriptive methods. As Wendt argues, the selection of the right method for social inquiry thus depends on the question being posed.[91] With these remarks, Wendt's general positivist stance seems confusing insofar as »it is entirely clear where Wendt would position himself« (Guzzini, Leander 2006: 80). So far, our question of how to scientifically analyse social kinds seems to remain unanswered.

What is the difference between natural and social phenomena from an observer's perspective? To Wendt (1999: 69 ff.), social kinds are space-time specific, dependent on beliefs and discourses, dependent on human practices, and constituted by social relations rather than an internal, material structure. By acknowledging these differences between natural and social kinds, Wendt inevitably has to question the realist assumption of the research object's mind-independence. Whereas natural kinds such as trees or water might be assumed as existing independently from the observing subject, social kinds »are constituted mostly by people's ideas« (Wendt 1999: 68). This finding led Morgenthau to refuse scientism as a research programme to study social kinds; however, Wendt is not put out of countenance when applying a slightly different scientific realism. He thus argues that, if social kinds are time-specific, then the observing scientist has to narrow his explanation more case-specifically or solely generalise according to the specific conditions of this case. If social kinds are dependent on and created by beliefs and discourses, the theorist has four options at hand. She can acknowledge the *partial* material foundation of these constitutions, she can draw on the *partial* self-organising nature of social kinds, she can conclude that social kinds are only *partly* constituted by individuals and rather by collectives, or she can think of social kinds as *partly* reified. Our question of how the theorist might approach social kinds now seems to be answered in a very vague and undecided manner.

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[91] Although Wendt (1999: 189) is not tired of drawing on the materialist conditions of social kinds, he admits that »material conditions by themselves explain relatively little«. He thereby seems to attach more importance to questions regarding the constitution of social kinds.

And indeed, all these solutions to the dilemma social phenomena pose to the theorist have left numerous constructivists with open questions. What is meant by ›partly‹? Why has Wendt fobbed off constructivists with so many drawbacks? Why did he draw in his horns when it came to the logical implications of the constructivist ontology he pretended to pursue? We will argue hereafter that Wendt early on recognised the danger of yielding an antinomy within his theoretical framework, and therefore tried to back-pedal from opening of the constructivist Pandora's Box. This move led him to solve the problem by drawing on scientific realism—and thereby escaping from the dilemma of epistemological constructivism to observe social kinds as their constituents.

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Wendt however justifies his quasi-positivist approach on social kinds in another way. To defend his position as both scientific realist *and* social constructivist, Wendt (1999: 75) argues at first that the observing theorist can rightly treat social kinds as mind-independent objects, because

> »[i]ndividuals do not constitute social kinds, collectives do, and as such social kinds confront the individual as objective social facts«.

Wendt's argument seems simple. Once a social kind is constituted, it faces its constituents as given fact. He also argues that the constructivist theorist herself can be considered to be faced by social kinds as objective, mind-independent phenomena. With reference to the groundbreaking work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), he claims that social kinds appear as objective facts to the individual, although they are socially constructed by collectives. At the core of this argument lies the understanding of social kinds as *reifications*. After man constructed social kinds, he

> »is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world, and, further, that the dialectic between man, the producer, and his products is lost to consciousness« (Berger, Luckmann 1966: 106).

We now understand that, whenever Wendt talks of social kinds appearing as objective facts to the individual, he alludes to the process of »objectification« presented in Berger and Luckmann's (1966: 107) social constructivism. Hence, although Wendt uses the term ›objective social facts‹, he should rightly point to the notion of *›objectified* social facts‹ when speaking about the relation between theorist and theorised, observer and observed, or producer and products. If a fact is socially constructed, the objectification ›behind‹ this construction process is what the social scientist should be interested in. If, by contrast, the theorist treats these facts as real objects instead of reifications, she takes the position of the individual who lives *in* this reality instead of the reflexive observer who thinks *about* this reality. For this reason, Berger and Luckmann (1966: 210) indicated that their approach was clearly »non-positivistic«—which should not be seen as an academic decision or theoretical standpoint, but a logical implication of the theory of social construction and objectification. If Wendt, for instance, states that anarchy is socially constructed, he—as an observing theorist—should refer to this social fact as an objectified construction, and not as a given object. Statesmen and states may see anarchy as a fixed and naturally given fact, and from this perspective they cannot do other than behave in a particular way. Constructivists who understand anarchy as solely objectified fact cannot explore this social phenomenon as given object, but as dependent of the statesmen's and states' objectification of this anarchical structure. Even though a state's self-help policy was *caused* by the international system's anarchy from its perspective; the strong constructivist would deny that the anarchical structure caused anything. By contrast, he would argue that the mutual *constitution* of the idea of ›self-help in an anarchical world‹ and the agent acting towards this objectified idea is decisive for understanding such phenomena. Wendt conflates both patterns of reasoning, but thereby misunderstands the impossibility of synthesising both views.

However, this sharp distinction between an object and an objectification is of crucial importance whenever we ask about how a theorist may observe social kinds. If Wendt claims that individuals—and thereby, scientific theorists as well—treat social kinds as given objects, he is on the safe side, if these social kinds remain unchanged. But whenever social kinds change, he would be unable to reflect on how this change occurred. The mechanism behind the change remains unclear. An individual who holds that social kinds are fixed and given objects can never reflect about its own constitutive relation to this object. However, by considering social kinds as *objectifications*, such a reflection would be simple insofar as the very notion ›objectification‹ implies the constitutive relationship between social kind *and* its constituents. We thus see that Wendt's metatheoretical framing only makes sense whenever social kinds remain unchanged. In any other case, he has to find another way out. So, what is Wendt's answer to the problem of social change?

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Wendt (1999: 76) declares that a social kind can sometimes ›know itself‹ in a reflexive way, and thereby »recall its human authorship«. In such a case, the subject-object relation enabling the agents and collectives to observe these social kinds *as* objects begins to transcend. This reflexive momentum of recognising objects *as* objectifications paves the way for changes and recreations of social kinds, as individuals and collectives become aware of the objectified nature of social phenomena—for instance, if anarchy is not interpreted as inducing self-help policies anymore and actors »change the games« (Wendt 1992: 419).

However, the possibility of the reflexive momentum implies another problem. If an individual reflects on why and how a social kind may exist, it can create—or, better, constitute—a new meaning. In these cases, Wendt (1999: 76) has to admit the »reflexive potential« of social kinds. The subject-object distinction he used in his positivist manner cannot be maintained, as object and subject mutually constitute themselves in a new way. At the same time, the social constructivist observes this social change, but constitutes ›her‹ object of research in the very same way. The theorist does not just observe, but take part in the constitutive process. Hence, the philosophy of scientific realism and Wendt's positivism are useless at this point. Wendt, although not fully following, draws on Gidden's (1987: 18) notion of ›double hermeneutics‹ to describe these processes of the social theorist's self-reflexion, as

> »the subjects of study in the social sciences and the humanities are concept-using beings, whose concepts of their actions enter in a constitutive manner into what those actions are«.

In short, the principle of double hermeneutics simply describes how the theorist's insights and concepts *about* social kinds become constituents of themselves. Although the theorist solely intends to observe and describe, her observation and description of changing social kinds becomes constitutive of itself. Wendt tries to overcome this problem by arguing that those reflexive moments only appear in the case of societal change and recreation, and that social kinds can be treated as mind-independent natural ones in other respects. As long as objectified social phenomena remain unchanged, the observing theorist can approach them in a scientific realist way. However, this argument does not help if we *are* faced with the dilemma of social change. If societies experience change or transformation, his theory falters insofar as these

> »transformations violate the assumptions of the causal theory of reference, since reality is being caused by theory rather than vice-versa. If societies were constantly doing this […] we could not be realists about society« (Wendt 1999: 76).

At this point, we have discovered Wendt's most serious pitfall. Whenever social phenomena change, his epistemological assumptions carried by scientific realism and the object's mind-independence cannot be sustained. In these cases of change and transformation, Wendt is forced to become a more radical constructivist in the Luhmannian sense—with all ontological and epistemological implications. As scientific realists are unable to account for reflexive momenta, the dilemma of double hermeneutics contradicts the

core principles of scientific realism, and Wendt has to admit this shortcoming. This weakness has been discovered by Drulák (2001: 366) who remarks that

> »the paradox of change […] refers to the situation in which the meta-theoretical framework […] provides the causal explanations necessary for dealing with the mechanism of transition between alternative cultures of anarchy, but the framework actually excludes reflexivity«.

For Wendt, structure and agency depend on each other in both constitutive and causal ways. Constitutive analysis is static. If we want to investigate structural change, we have to conduct causal analyses to explain how these changes »caused by actions that undermine existing structures and generate new ones« (Wendt 1999: 186). However, if we adopt a causal explanation to investigate structural change, we have to treat the social kinds ›structure‹ and ›agency‹ as similar to natural kinds—independent *of* mind and *as* variables. With this assumption, the process of reflexivity which enables structural change is difficult to be covered theoretically (Drulák 2001: 367).[92]

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The observer is a constituent of what she observers, and social kinds cannot be understood as mind-independent objects in these cases as a consequence of reflexive momenta. We thus have to conclude that the act of observation changes the observed social kind's essence.[93] Wendt (1999: 76) himself gives a good example how these mechanisms work. When Gorbachev self-reflexively observed the Soviet Union's embeddedness in the constitution of the Cold War's hostile environment, he fostered the policies of ›New Thinking‹ and recreated a new social kind of state relations. In this case, Gorbachev's observation was driven by his own theory and way of thinking by acknowledging the constructed, unfixed character of the relations with the West. From a constructivist perspective, Gorbachev can be assumed to have been socialised by the social structures prevalent during the Cold War. With Wendt's (1992: 399) insight that »socialization is a cognitive process, not a behavioral one«, we can furthermore come to the conclusion that not only has his self-conception—his role, his identity, his interests—been mutually constituted by these structures, but also his way of observation and thinking. He might have observed the West's actions as hostile, whereas the policies of Communist countries were perceived as friendly and cooperative. However, with the self-reflexive momentum of recognising these structures as socially constructed, Gorbachev took the position of the observing theorist. He did not observe his own observations of the social structure as given or fixed, but as changeable.

Just as Gorbachev in a momentum of self-reflexion—or, as Wendt (1999: 375) calls it, »second-order reflection«—was able to observe *how* he observed the alleged given structure during the Cold War, the constructivist theorist has to take a similar perspective. In the case of social changes, she has to adopt a view enabling the unveiling of the constitutive features of an actor's observation—for instance, by observing *how* a statesman observes and perceives his counterpart. However, she cannot take his objects of investigation—individuals, collectives, states, ideas—as given or objectified anymore. The self-help structure of the Cold War was not the *cause* for Gorbachev's ›New Thinking‹, but the reflection on this structure. Consequently, the mode of positivist observation cannot be accomplished by realist means, as we already learnt with respect to Luhmann's theory:

> »The difference between realism and constructivism can be conceived in such a way that the former refers to first-order while the latter to second-order observations. Scientific observation […] is a first-order observa-

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[92] Emanuel Adler (2013: 123) summarises the conventional constructivist's suggestions and argues that »[r]egarding the mechanisms of change, some constructivists emphasize collective learning, cognitive evolution, epistemic change, and the ›life cycles of norms‹, all of which involve the institutionalization of people's novel knowledge«.

[93] The challenge of moderate constructivists to account for structural changes has shown by Drulák (2001).

> tion […]; it is naively realist. A second-order observation, however, explores the ›how‹ of the first-order observation« (Brunczel 2010: 195).

Wendt acknowledges these different modes of observation and argues that »second-order questions« circle around the constitutive ›how‹ and ›what‹, whereas first-order questions encompass causal or empirical dimensions. In this sense, we find Gorbachev's perspective as »constitutive theorizing, at the lay level« (Wendt 1999: 375) when he reflected on the constitution of the Cold War's structure.

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As Wendtian constructivists, we have to answer constitutive second-order questions whenever social change is described.[94] As for stable social and cultural environments, we concede—however, not without critique—that scientific realism is appropriate to view objectified social kinds in the sense of first-order questions. For the description of social change, however, we remark that Wendt's theory requires a strong constructivist account; and in this sense, we can now borrow the insights we gained from our critical evaluation of Luhmann's radical constructivism.

As we remember, Luhmann was faced with the very same problem Wendt's theory indwells. Any constitutive description is based on a second-order question; and therewith, a necessary embracement of second-order observations. If we answer constitutive questions of social change by deploying Wendt's moderate constructivism, we observe *how* actors observe their environment, *how* identities and ideas are mutually constituted, and *how* interests and roles coevolve. With these second-order observations of social change, we unveil the first-order observer's blind spots in the way Luhmann (1990: 73) sketched:

> »Constructivism describes an observation of observation that concentrates on *how* the observed observer observes. This constructivist turn makes possible a qualitative change […] in the style of recursive observation, since by this means one can also observe what and how an observed observer *is unable* to observe. In this case one interested in his blind spot, i. e. the means by which things become visible or non-visible« .

If we take up Wendt's example of Gorbachev's ›New Thinking‹, the blind spot of ordered observations can be illustrated. Before the then Soviet leader experienced this change of view, he observed the political environment as given. Any political analysis of this stable world, in which unchanging actors conducted foreign policies according to the international system's given structure, could be accomplished by causal reasoning in the sense Wendt suggested. However, as Gorbachev observed *how* he observed the alleged objective environment he was acting within, he necessarily unveiled a blind spot he was unable to discover before his act of self-observation—namely, his own constitutive entanglement in maintaining the social order of the Cold War. This process of change requires for non-positivist, reflexive modes of observation, as the objectification transcends. What does this mean for the observation of a changing social world?

The reflexive momentum of social change has two implications for the constructivist observer. At first, her own observation should now account for the blind spot of Gorbachev's second-order observation. She, for instance, would sketch *how* Gorbachev's self-observation could be accomplished in the first place and how the novel ideas and beliefs constituted a new culture. We thus see that any second-order observation includes the unveiling of another observation's blind spot, and can follow that the constructivist's academic attention is drawn on observing an observer's blind spot by describing its constitutive embedding. Wendt's understanding of social change is nothing more than the successive reproduction of second-order observations leading to new modes of observation and thinking. Secondly, we also take note of

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[94] Even though the label ›second-order question‹ is reserved for the sphere of meta-theoretical questions of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Carlsnaes 2013: 305), it also applies for the constructivist's routine of answering constitutive questions. A constructivist observes how agents—individuals, groups, states—observe their environment. This mode of second-order observation must be necessary similar when a social scientist deploys constructivist meta-theory to observe *how* scientists themselves observe their objects of their inquiry.

Wendt as being forced to retreat from his ›pure‹ positivism furnished by scientific realism. If reflective thinking is part of the social world—in the minds of individual agents as well as for social kinds as such—, then the observing theorist must accept her own entanglement in reflexive processes in general. This insight gets the scientific realist in trouble. And Wendt himself is not free from blame for this theoretical unbalance. As we saw, he suggests reflexive second-order reasoning even for the elaboration of political theories in the field of International Relations themselves. What is the blind spot of the neorealist when observing ›her‹ world of self-help? What is the neoliberal's blind spot when observing ›her‹ world of institutions? By identifying those blind spots, the constitutive features enabling this or that view can be sketched—and thus lead to the understanding of how observations and perceptions of the world are being socially constructed.

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However, the logic of second-order observation, which plays a central role in Wendt's way of describing social change, is not unproblematic. We already learnt about the observer's antinomy arising in Luhmann's logic of observation; and for Wendt's constitutive reasoning, a similar pitfall can be found. If we ask about Wendt's own perspective on how second-order observation can be conducted scientifically, we arrive at the ontological statement that

Wendt observes all observations which do not include their own blind spots.

As in the case of Luhmann's chain of second-order observations, Wendt has to assume that he observes all those observations which do not include their own blind spot and, for that matter, could also be understood as authorship. This notion illustratively implies that social change is only possible if a social kind is »able to recall its human authorship« (Wendt 1999: 76) and unveils its own blind spot which was invisible in the former observation. With this insight, the constructivist's task is to unveil such blind spots in the same manner. Roughly speaking, the blind spot should be seen as a metaphor for the *co-constitution* of any observation by the observer herself. We constitute, what we see; and we see, what we constituted. Gorbachev could not observe his own blind spot before his self-observation, and he also was not able to observe the blind spot behind his self-observation. Therewith, the unveiling of these blind spots during the process of social change becomes the constructivist's task. Furthermore, neorealists and neoliberals had their own blind spots; consequently, Wendt attempted to set up a constructivist frame which accounts for ›all‹ blind spots in general not only as theory, but metatheoretical scaffold as well. But what about constructivism's own blind spot? Can Wendt's blind spot be theoretically and logically included in his theory?

Hence, the constructivist ontological antinomy arises if we ask whether Wendt's own theoretical observation includes its own blind spot. If it does not, then Wendt's own observation must by definition be observed by himself—which would then lead to the unveiling of his own blind spot. But then again, Wendt cannot be considered to be observing himself, as he only observes those observations which do *not* include their own blind spots. In short, the antinomy alludes to the constructivist's dilemma of being unable to identify the own authorship *as* an observing theorist towards the theorised. We thereby allude to the problematic notion of reflexivity which has been nicely expressed in the field of literary studies as

> »the logical paradox of self-reference. How can the mind come to a full knowledge of itself when the very act of observing itself must be considered the blind spot in its range of vision?« (Henke 2005: 15).

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The unveiled antinomy stands as a metaphor for a more profound logical problem in constructivist theories. Although Wendt has not attached too much importance to the question of how second-order observation might be accomplished, his theory's inherent composition gives sufficient indication on how he

thought about the theorist as reflexive observer. The crucial dilemma represented by the ontological antinomy can thus be expressed in other words. Constructivism is a theory holding that social reality is constructed through the interplay of agents' routines and ideational structures—or, in Wendt's words, of humans and social kinds. If one of these agents who, however bounded in a collective, is now assumed to act both as ›producer‹ *and* theorist of a social kind at the same time, she is assigned an incompatible dual role. Whereas Luhmann (1998: 1) honestly admitted for this paradoxical »distinction between operation and observation«, Wendt seemingly tried to blur this entanglement of constituent *and* observer by claiming the compatibility of ontological constructivism and scientific realism. For the time being, this argument might both appear as ›not really constructivist‹ and contradictory for us, but however cannot be seen as an antinomy yet. However, Wendt left one door open when he admitted that he cannot account for the evaluation of societal change through the lens of scientific realism—and for these cases, he had to take a ›strong‹ constructivist stance. We will therefore argue that the antinomy found in Wendt's and Luhmann's work can be seen as blueprint for those constructivist theories which draw on both ontological and epistemological implications—namely, that the world is socially constructed, and that the reality we perceive and observe is constituted by us.

The ontological antinomy inherent in Wendt's main opus does not only show the problematic simultaneous dual role of constituent and observer. It also reflects the dilemma that the observing theorist cannot observe the world by ›objective‹ means. His mode of observation is, as for any other, determined and guided by his own constitution within the societal discourse. If we therefore think about whether the constructivist theorist can observe her own blind spot, we allude to this very impossibility. In this sense, some scholars have accused Wendt of being misled by his own blind spot. For instance, Zehfuss (2006: 91), although arguing from a different theoretical perspective, sees Wendt himself socialised by the academic community of International Relations and its orthodoxies:

> »Wendt's orthodoxy in terms of the self-understanding of the discipline, along with his orthodoxy in defining politics in terms of the self-understanding of the international society of states alone, undermines the very processual character his theory should in fact have and limits the heterodox challenges of his theory of international politics. It produces a blind spot in his constructivism which one can, in turn, observe«.

The observer's antinomy of constructivism describes this dilemma in a new light. Wendt acts both as a constituent of collective knowledge and observer determined by the alleged insights of this knowledge. Even though he attempted to establish his constructivist theory as observed conglomerate of all ideas and beliefs through which political agents observe their world, it is impossible for him to include the ideas and beliefs through which he *himself* observed their world. This blind spot which inevitably occurs in any strong version of constructivist thinking may be observed by someone else, but this cannot compensate for the *inherent* existence of a blind spot in Wendt's theory. Roughly speaking, Wendt's theory of constructivism must itself be seen as being constructed from a blind spot—and thus gives rise to an ontological antinomy.

Even though we found this antinomy in empirical cases of social change at first, its implications must hold for the reflexive observer itself. It now becomes clear that Wendt's insistence on scientific realism and positivism comes from the intention of not entangling the objective and neutral observer in the net of the social world and its contingencies, intersubjective meanings, and reflexive momenta. The impossibility of this endeavour however comes to halt when thinking about the constructivist view of social and structural change, and thereby unfolds serious implications on the act of the observing theorist herself. This argument can be illustrated by comparing Gorbachev's ›New Thinking‹ with Wendt's constructivism »which has itself become a major new approach within IR« (Wight 2010: 1 f.). It should be obvious that Wendt's new approach must be seen as being guided by the very same reflexive mechanisms as Gorbachev's rethinking was. From this perspective, Wendt himself was determined by the reflection about the social and

academic structures at the time his new theory was born—but thereby inevitabley implied the existence of a blind spot.

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The observer's antinomy arising from Wendt's constructivist perspective can be exemplified by a metaphor used by the author himself. We will now also use this illustration to think about the mechanisms of role distribution. How can we, taking the role of an observing theorist, relate to what we observe and what we theorise about? Are we independent theorists? Wendt often referred to the socially constructed role of ›professors‹ as an example—which we now will also refer to. This role of the professor is at first assigned within the academic practice by the counterpart role ›students‹. For the distribution of the roles ›professor‹ and ›student‹, he recognises these roles to be mainly dependent on external social structures. Individuals always stand in relation to other individuals, and roles can solely be defined in relation to other roles:

> »To be a professor is, by definition, to stand in a certain relation to a student« (Wendt 1999: 71).

Wendt (1999: 122) describes this relational role of a professor by claiming that the »identity of self-schema […] constitutes an interest in teaching and publishing«. This interest is in most cases *not* constituted by human nature or natural kinds, but learnt and adopted in the course of socialisation and role-assignment:

> »People cannot be professors apart from students, nor can they become professor apart from the structures through which they are socialized« (Wendt 1999: 26).

The identity or self-schema of a professor is thus a relational phenomenon which depends on the ideational structure of a societal group. Wendt is also clear that these schemes have cognitive effects. They determine how we think, perceive, and observe. In this sense, identity and interests are unthinkable without the beliefs commonly held by this group's members—or, in our case, if someone only thinks he is a professor, interaction will fail if »that belief is not shared by his students« (Wendt 1999: 224). States are only powerful in relation to other states, groups are only hostile against other groups, and people can only be professors in relation to students. Furthermore, individuals such as professors also take part in societal practices, through which social kinds are ›kept alive‹. It is not only that states or groups do so via state practices; individuals engage in the circle of permanent reproduction of social phenomena and ideas as well:

> »To reproduce the identity of a professor an individual needs to teach« (Wendt 1999: 130).

Hence, professors—who, besides their ›need to teach‹, have an interest to explore things as theorists—are determined by the ideational structures of a society which are the manifestations of these routines and reproductive processes. Through these processes of socialisation, identities and interests are formed. For instance, »professors have an interest in getting tenure because they see themselves as ›professors‹« (Wendt 1999: 170). With these insights about the dependency of socially embedded self-schemes and identities, the role of the observing theorist can be derived in a similar sense. Wendt clearly understood the adaption of roles as interchangeable, as individuals can take the role of professor, father, or musician in different social contexts. This does not however mean that one of these roles was *not* dependent of the constituting social structures. Which role is taken within a particular societal discourse cannot be understood as an individual's decision, but defined by the position the individual takes within the discourse. Roles and identities are inevitably institutionalised within social structures, and thus, the »professor and student are positions in a stock of collective knowledge« (Wendt 1999: 227).

If roles and identities are dependent on the social structures through which they become assigned, we similarly have to critically scrutinise the role of the observing theorist. Obviously, the question arises of how the professor as scientific observer can explore ›her‹ object of research independently from social

kinds, if the assignment of this role, as we saw, is *dependent* on these social kinds. Although Wendt would again argue that theorists can treat those social kinds they observe as objects, his argument fails in the face of reflexive thinking. The question at stake is thus whether the professor as observing theorist engages in reflexive thinking when conducting her observations on the social world. Wendt clearly acknowledges that we are not completely determined by the social structure we are bound in, but that we generally have the ability to reflect on the roles we take. Especially as social scientists, we can apply constitutive theorising which »enhances our collective capacity for critical self-reflection or ›reflexivity‹« (Wendt 1999: 375) in the sense of second-order observation.

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At this point, the ontological antinomy reappears. If we think about self-schemes and roles we reflect upon, we might find the blind spot of our first-order observation. For instance, before Wendt developed social constructivism as a theory of International Relations, he might have been blinded by the orthodoxies of the discipline at that time. As he self-observed his academic practices, he then can be considered to have unveiled the objectifications of these scientific routines. However, as a consequence of the blind spot of reflexive observation, it is not decidable whether Wendt's variant of constructivism is itself blinded or not. Wendt's (1992: 404) remark on the socialised self even strengthens this objection:

> »Conceptions of self and interest tend to ›mirror‹ the practices of significant others over time. This principle of identity-formation is captured by the symbolic interactionist notion of the ›looking-glass self‹, which asserts that the self is a reflection of an actor's socialization«.

We now also understand that roles and identities must also be considered both determined by the process of socialisation *and* potential self-reflexivity. The role of the professor is defined in relation to the social context constituting this role assignment; the professor can nevertheless self-observe about her role's interwovenness with the academic practices. Again, these self-reflections are necessary to understand social and structural change, but they entail an antinomic tension as well.

According to her own considerations, the moderate constructivist as a role play of observing world politics must be a ›type‹ defined and constituted by the academic discourse at that time. If a statesman observes another state's actions as hostile, this observation is dependent on the social structures which constituted the respective roles in the first place. If an individual observes another one's action as friendly, this interpretation necessarily follows from the mutual assignment of the role ›friend‹. Consequently, Wendt as a moderate constructivist observes all these *theorised* observations, roles, and identities according to how he himself has been constituted as *theorist*.

The observer's antinomy derived from the ›professor example‹ is not a mental game or wordplay. It rather alludes to one of the core problems of constructivist research programmes in social sciences. The decisive question is whether the constructivist theorist herself can be assumed to be describable by the very attributes she uses to describe others. Can the constructivist observe social kinds which constituted herself in a meaningful or even ›objective‹ and independent way? Although we already argued that Wendt's positivist stance on this question cannot be held in a logical way, the notion of reflexivity which is central to constructivist approaches condemns even moderate perspectives to fall into the trap of antinomic reasoning. Bearing in mind the same pitfall in Luhmann's work, we thus dare to argue that any constructivist ontology brings about reflexive momenta which can then yield an ontological antinomy of observation.

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A final remark on the problematic adherence to positivist perspectives within constructivist approaches might make this point clearer. The philosophy of scientific realism and the general positivist course were obviously set up to detach the observing theorist from becoming subject to the process of social construc-

tion. We have argued that Wendt thereby tried to banish any relativist ontological or epistemological implications that would necessarily force him to take a non-positivist stance. However, Wendt contradicted this course by conceding that social scientists do *not* act as individual observers who approach social kinds as independent objects of research. This remark makes one wonder, especially as he problematises the ›politics of questions‹ as the phenomenon that theorists seldom choose or determine the phenomena they investigate, but rather are guided by a larger scientific community drawing the individual's attention to particular questions. In this sense, Wendt (1999: 89) argues that

> »it is not individual scientists who naturalize things but whole communities of them, who may be organized, often for decades, around certain uncontested assumptions«.

If these scientific communities act as collective, they—according to Wendt's own assumption—constitute ideas and social kinds themselves. If they perform as corporate agents, they are also part of the discursive net they want to observe and study. Again, this statement stands in contradiction to Wendt's claim that the individual can approach social kinds as reified objects. If scientific knowledge must be seen as social kind, it might appear as object—or, better, objectification—to the individual theorist, but however is constituted through the process of social construction. We thus have again to draw the conclusion that Wendt was not able to overcome the pitfall of the observer's antinomy in his version of constructivism, although he put great effort in the attempt to furnish the role of the theorist as independent observer. However, the notorious blind spot of the constructivist herself remained as an immanent blot within the constructivist programme; and as such, no independent ›God's Eye View‹ could be created from which an ontological hierarchy of observations or observing constructivists could be described.

d) The Semantical ›Antinomy of Social Reality‹

Wendt thinks that successful, mature scientific theories should be seen as references for truth. However, if we, as constructivism usually tells us, see those theories as shared knowledge claims, an antinomic figure is revealed. Is the fact that ›all facts are socially constructed‹ itself a constructed or independent fact? Is the social kind that ›all social kinds are contingent‹ itself a contingent or necessary truth? And, finally, is the truth that ›every truth is socially constructed‹ itself constructed? All these semantic antinomies emerge, as we now find, if we use the social constructivist theory as its own ›empirical food‹. Although Wendt attempted to avoid this antinomic turmoil, his escape to a thinner form of constructivism enmeshed with scientific realist and positivist elements is of no help when we think about social change and reflective relations.

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As we remember, we found the semantical ›antinomy of constructed reality‹ in Luhmann's work. Taking several forms, this antinomy stood for those problematic statements he made on the truth of statements as such—for instance, by assuming that a statement's truth is dependent on the perceiving subject, that the truth of all statements is contingent, or that every truth is constructed. We saw that these statements *about* truth turned out to be antinomic if someone scrutinised these very statements' *own* truth. As we will see, a semantical antinomy of similar kind can be found in Wendt's theory, although he strongly opposed any radical versions of constructivism. As for Luhmann's social theory, the semantical antinomy inherent in Wendtian thinking comes to light if we think about the truth and truthfulness of his own theory. The first question being posed is thus how Wendt understands the status of social theories and scientific statements as such.

Wendt resembles Morgenthau's reaction when confronted with the problem of unobservables. As we remember, the latter argued that the unobservable drive for power had to be existent as »otherwise the

insights of a Jeremiah, Plato, or Hobbes would be meaningless to the contemporary world« (Molloy 2006: 81). This assumption is no different than Wendt's (1999: 50) claim that »mature scientific theories provide knowledge of reality, even when reality is unobservable«—which, as shown, makes him a scientific realist. Both Morgenthau and Wendt thus suggest conventional theories in their fields as panacea for the problem that realists cannot ›really‹ observe unobservables.

Their ontological assumptions on the constitution of humans and the world would logically imply a more naturalistic epistemology excluding the observation of particular phenomena—in Morgenthau's case, the unobservable drive for power and most of Wendt's social kinds. Both thinkers therefore have to refer to ›necessary truths‹ of mature theories which have become established over decades of academic debate. Without this intellectual makeshift, both theorists could not hold onto their ontological and epistemological assumptions at the same time. Morgenthau's drive-theoretical ontology would exclude his epistemological convictions of a »rational […] conceptualization of reality« (Behr, Rösch 2012: 35) in the same way Wendt's constructivist ontology would contradict his positivist epistemology. Hence, with reference to the truth of mature theories, both Wendt and Morgenthau suggest the realist slogan that

> »the world is what it is whether we see it or not; ontology before epistemology« (Wendt 1999: 52).

The profound question of how knowledge relates to reality is expressed within the dilemma of unobservables, and leads directly to the status of mature theories. He thereby tries to prevent »opening the floodgates to the social construction of meaning and truth« (Wendt 1999: 60), and shows himself aware of the pitfall of epistemological relativism bearing the dilemma that any observation has to be regarded as determined by the theory the theorist applies. This is the reason he arrives at the assumption that the theorist's reasoning should be founded on the principle of »inference to the best explanation« (Wendt 1999: 62), reflecting his conviction that mature theories can become an Archimedean point for the observation of unobservables. The principle of inference to the best explanation would, in the case of unobservables, simply accept the most obvious reason for the phenomenon in question:

> »I hear scratching in the wall, the patter of little feet at midnight, my cheese disappears—and I infer that a mouse has come to live with me« (Van Fraassen 1980: 19 f.).

Wendt concludes that mature theories may describe unobservable phenomena in different ways, but refer to the same social kind. As he propagated the mind-independent reality of the international system, it seems irrelevant if we think about the world's ›things‹ in neorealist or constructivist terms or metaphors:

> »We may disagree how to describe it, but we can still be referring to the same thing, just as Ptolemy and Copernicus referred to the same sun« (Wendt 1999: 63).

Wendt then arrives at an ultimate justification for adopting scientific realism as philosophy of science. He simply recognises the progress of science and thereby refers to more natural scientific and technical advances which scientific discoveries and new insights made possible. Science enabled humankind to develop and manipulate their world for its purposes. Seen from this perspective, the rise of scientific knowledge seems to progress over time:

> »We can fly and the Romans could not. Why? That is the question« (Wendt 1999: 64).

To Wendt, the success of mature theories about the structure of the world provides us with the technical and theoretical advances we enjoy in our times. The mere fact that man is able to predict particular phenomena »would be miraculous if our theories did not correspond increasingly to the world« (Wendt 1999: 65). And even though some ›false‹ theories might have predicted correctly in the past; their success never-

theless concedes them. This is simply the scientific realist argument as to why we should believe in the success of mature theories.

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Through his advocacy of scientific realism as philosophy of science, he equips his approach with a »causal theory of reference« (Wendt 1999: 57). According to this idea, a term's meaning is traced back to a supposed ›first‹ speaker's reference to then follow the chain of users of this reference. Such a view on reference does not presuppose any characteristics a reference has to fulfil to accord to a particular meaning. The naming as such is solely seen as an initial act of the first speaker, and anyone else refers to this initial act. He thereby tries to bypass the problem of how to know whether a statement is true or not:

> »Truth presupposes reference, but reference does not presuppose truth. The causal theory allows us to refer successfully to an entity even if we have a mistaken view of its nature« (Wendt 1999: 59).

From this claim, Wendt (1999: 59) draws the conclusion that we cannot know whether a statement's reference is true or not, and should therefore »have confidence only in the referents of ›mature‹ theories that have proven successful«. Again, he thereby tries to avoid the pitfall of validation. His theory cannot be true by any criterion of validity or empirical correspondence whatsoever; it is solely testable against other theories. Social theories can thus not be true by corresponding to any real foundational object whatsoever, but solely in relation to theories explaining this object in this or that form. A theory becomes mature if it explains the social questions better than other ones. A theory which is not mature yet can only become so if it *refers* to mature ones in the sense of the causal theory of reference. In this sense, Wendt is reluctant to speak about truth from a constructivist perspective, as he carefully avoids any indications of epistemological constructivism in his work.

Even if Wendt tried to avoid taking a strong realist or constructivist account of truth, his escape ended in discrepancy all the same. By arguing that the notion of truth is not interesting for his theory, he decided to draw on the concept of mature theories or ›best argument‹ instead. But, as we saw, this stance again produces a dilemma. Even if we discarded the notion of truth together with Wendt, his idea of successful theories cannot fill the theoretical gap he leaves behind. The critical disposition of ›successfulness‹ and ›unsuccessfulness‹ is nothing other than a blurring of the Aristotelian pair ›truthfulness‹ and ›falseness‹. Roughly speaking, if Wendt (1999: 59) argues that some theories help to understand the world's structure better and thereby more successfully than others, he gives more weight to some mature theories which are closer to an »approximate‹ truth« than their rival approaches. However, the idea of a mature theory's success seems to hide Wendt's intention to replace *any* notion of truth, but paradoxically admits that those theories bring

> »our theoretical understanding into conformity with the deep structure of the world out there« (Wendt 1999: 65).

But what is this ›deep structure‹ supposed to mean? As an ontological claim, Wendt would seek to unveil this alleged mind-independent structure through theoretical guidance of mature theories. Such theories would not be regarded as true or false, but judged by their success of giving a better understanding of the world than others. Again, the Aristotelian bivalence principle is only seemingly broken by Wendt, as he still adheres to the pairs ›successful—not successful‹ or ›mature—not mature‹. We thereby again witness the problematic entanglement of constructivist and scientific realist elements in his theory, which inevitably lead to a constructivist interpretation of the idea of successful, mature theories and their change over time.

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At this point, we arrive at the question of how successful social theories evolve in the first place; and hence, how theories can change in the light of better arguments. Wendt's adoption of scientific realism and the theory of causal reference might work nicely for natural kinds, but it struggles in cases in which social kinds are observed in relation to their human authorship. We already discussed this dilemma by alluding to the blind spot yielding the constructivist observer's antinomy, and will make a similar point with regard to the status of social theories. In this sense, O'Loughlin (2014: 63) recognised that

> »Wendt's claim is that only those claims of ›mature theories‹ which have proven successful […] can form the bedrock of knowledge claims, but this is to gloss over the means by which social scientific theories come to be ›mature‹ in the first place«.

Social theories must necessarily be understood as social kinds as well, even in Wendt's scientific realist understanding of constructivism. By holding that social kinds can be investigated objectively, Wendt would argue that social theories can be seen similarly. Nevertheless, a mature theory, having proven successfully in the past, must be expected to potentially be discarded or changed in the future—just as a hostile foreign policy might also change to a more cooperative one. Without asking about the reasons of theory change, we can however assume together with Wendt that mature theories' core statements are open to change as soon as better arguments or better statements are found. Nevertheless, as Wendt clearly opposes the view that such better arguments reflect or correspond to the ›real world‹ more truthfully than others, his constructivist stance brings to the fore the *social* character of scientific theories. Mature theories are nothing other than shared knowledge claims, and they become successful only by virtue of communities or groups which consider them in such a way. In Wendt's eyes, these unobservable theories can be investigated objectively—just like other social kinds such as institutions, shared understandings, or practices can be approached as independent objects. As such, mature theories can be weighed against poorer ones turning out as unsuccessful in the course of academic practice. Nevertheless, social theories *are* the product of social conventions.

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Wendt argues that social facts gained through political and societal practices are the product of social construction. These ›objectified‹ facts—for instance, the alleged fact of self-help caused by the anarchical structure during the Cold War—can be investigated through the lens of Wendt's constructivist theory. If we now turn our attention towards the facts and assumptions on which Wendt's theory *itself* is based, we find him proposing a scientific realist philosophy as foundation—namely, the possibility of objective and mind-independent observation and fact gathering through the constructivist endeavour. This perspective allows us to make the semantical statement that Wendt's approach is based on the assumption that

Constructivism claims the fact that all facts are socially constructed.

Can we assume that the constructivist perspective on facts is objective in the sense of scientific realism? If so, we indeed have to acknowledge that all facts of the social world are socially constructed. But then, the objective fact itself must also be assumed to be constructed. With Wendt's definition of social construction in mind, social facts are reflected in institutions being *constituted* through intersubjective processes. They are not, as Wendt argues in the case of the material world, ›just out there‹ without any human authorship. As is true as for the prominent example of the manifold interpretations and logics of anarchy, the meaning of any social fact is determined through the actors' social practices which co-constitutively created them, as

> »institutions come to confront individuals as more or less coercive social facts, but they are still a function of what actors collectively ›know‹« (Wendt 1992: 399).

If we thus think about the semantical statement ›Constructivism claims the fact that all facts are socially constructed‹, an antinomy arises if we see facts as being both constituted—and thus, without any fixed meaning—*and* objectively valid in the sense of scientific realism. If we ask about the truth of Wendt's statement in the sense of non-contradiction, the antinomy is yielded that Wendt's fact itself can only be true if it is socially constructed, but as such cannot describe the objective fact that all facts are socially constructed. It is true, if it is false[95]—and *vice versa*. This critical disposition of facts being objective or constructed stems from the constructivist core claim that

> »construction and independence are the only two paths to facticity« (Kukla 2000: 93).

This distinction between the two ›modes‹ of facticity reminds us of the difference between objective and objectified facts we already learnt about. Both notions come from the amalgamation of the philosophy of scientific realism on the one hand and the fostering of constructivist ontology on the other. In this sense, the construction of meanings stands in critical disposition to what can be seen as ›objectively true‹. For instance, Wendt might argue that the existence of the material world is objectively and mind-independently true, but that the social world is being constructed through interactions—which can then be observed as objectified institutions, but differ from material things. As an example,

> »Wendt argued that anarchy does not have a timeless objective status. It isn't an objective thing. It is a social construction. Essentially, states constitute the meaning of the international arena through their actions […]. Meaning is a social product, not an objective truth« (Heath-Kelly 2016: 61).

It is this very bivalent opposition of meaning as a social product and as objective truth that Wendt yields by merging constructivist and scientific realist ideas, and that carries with it the antinomic tension within the semantical statement. If Wendt states the fact that all facts are socially constructed, we first have to understand these facts as social. But besides the anarchical structure, friendly relations, or state intentions as social facts, we have to assume the scientific knowledge is nothing other than a social fact. By applying the double standard of objectivity and social products to this notion of facts, we arrive at the curios conclusion. If Wendt states that it is a fact that all facts are socially constructed, this claimed fact itself must be socially constructed—and cannot be thought as having, to use Heath-Kelly's (2016: 61) words again, »a timeless objective status«. But then, the statement that ›all facts are socially constructed‹ cannot be thought as objectively and timelessly valid; which is, strangely enough, exactly what this fact says of itself. If the fact is true, it must have the potential to be false in the sense of semantical change. This problematic critical disposition of constructed and independent facts is reflected in the tension between the process of social construction and its observation through the constructivist theory:

> »Wendt's method requires that social kinds present themselves to the individual as distinct and knowable facts, despite their constitution through intersubjective discursive processes, in order to support his claim that mature scientific methodology can accommodate both causal and constitutive questions« (O'Loughlin 2014: 59).

From a more critical perspective, orthodox or ›generally valid‹ theories are nothing more than established, commonly shared social ideas which frame our thinking and knowledge. They are a conglomerate of what we earlier designated as objectified facts, which are hold by a particular community or group of people. For this reason, Steans (2010: 79) argues that

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[95] It should be mentioned that, in this case, ›true‹ solely means ›non-contradictory‹ in the sense of Aristotle's second law. If Wendt's statement is true, it is logically true and does not contradict itself. We thereby refer to the very same notion of truth Wendt uses by adhering to »bivalence principle of logic (either the world is so, or not so)« (Kratochwil 2006: 39).

> »defending ›mature‹ theories on the grounds that they have ›proven successful in the world‹, as Wendt does, is a curious position to adopt […]. Theories and concepts used to answer questions and the methods used in both scientific and social scientific inquiries are in themselves socially constructed«.

The semantic antinomy inherent in Wendt's constructivist approach thus reflects the unease some of his critics had regarding his advocacy of scientific realism. The question of whether his theory is or is not understandable as constructed social fact appears as undecidable in the face of this antinomic figure. This is the one of the reasons why some of his critics questioned his scientific realist stance—for instance, as Kratochwil (2011: 167) argues:

> »Moreover, the virtually complete neglect of the social component of scientific realism […], on which Wendt often relies, is especially surprising«.

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If a social constructivist objectively argues that the social life is constructed, we would have to assume that her academic framework is of the same nature, even though she might claim to state an objective fact. At this point, we again see the problem of contingency as major hurdle for constructivist theory-building. The meaning of things must be thought as *contingent* within the social constructivist theory:

> »A socially constructed international relations must be a historically contingent international relations, because if our intersubjective understandings of how politics can and should work change, the politics themselves will change« (Barkin 2010: 37).

Luhmann described these processes of social change as contingent selections inherent in observation and self-observation, and Wendt's remarks sound surprisingly similar. For him, change occurs as a consequence of reflexive moments and brings about »*contingent* historical change« (Sárváry 2006: 161). Again, these similarities spring from the common constructivist perspective on societal change, and reflect a general feature of most forms of constructivism. Even if Wendt made any effort to emphasise the material basis of the outside world, its mind-independence, and its general observability, the constructivist interpretation of these social changes cannot blur the fact that social theories must be regarded as construction themselves—and therewith, as historically contingent practices. Even if we bring to mind that Wendt proposes a scientific realist philosophy as the foundation to investigate socially constructed phenomena, the discernible basic tenor of his constructivist theory necessarily implies the view of social theories *as* social kinds themselves—and thus, as contingent social knowledge. We might observe the social world as objectified, but we do so in just the same way any other social agent does:

> »For constructivists […], it is critical to recognize that an actor's reality at any point in time is historically constructed and contingent« (Copeland 2000: 191).

The conflation of constructivism and scientific realism can however not obscure the fact that by claiming the contingency of social changes as the societal productions of meaning and knowledge, a recursive form becomes apparent. Wendt (1999: 25) claims that interactions between individuals are contingent, and so are the produced meaning and knowledge structure. For instance, as Wendt (1999: 146) exemplifies, »the effects of anarchy are contingent«, and hence, there can never be a fixed or given »logic of anarchy«. This principle of contingency must however also apply to the Wendt's theory *as* social kind. We can therefore fairly think about the semantical statement that

›All social kinds are contingent‹ is a contingent social kind.

How should we think about the statement that ›All social kinds are contingent‹? If, for instance, the knowledge about the contingency of social facts is itself considered a social fact, an undecidable question

arises. If the knowledge claim is contingent, it cannot claim objective character, and therefore contradicts itself. We again witness the difficulties Wendt's constructivist theory has if its own stipulations about social kinds are applied to themselves.

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Oliver Kessler (2016: 15), who draws on Luhmann's use of the Parsonian notion of double contingency, interestingly develops the idea of ›triple contingency‹ as a metaphor »that ego and alter are observed by a third person«. To him, we think and speak about the sphere of the *social* as interactions by using ›imaginaries‹. Our thoughts and words about social facts and social notions are guided by these imaginaries of, for instance, ›the market‹:

> »In other words, *the use of one imaginary demands legitimacy* through which certain actors *are put in positions of authority* to speak *for* and in the name of *this imaginary*. In the case of the market, in particular economists with their models, vocabulary, and set of arguments are considered to be able to tell us how to fix markets« (Kessler 2016: 19).

In short, Kessler argues that the scientific theorisation of a societal issue is determined by the principle of triple contingency, through which imaginaries govern the way we academically select and analyse social facts. If and how a theorist as expert or scientist can speak to a particular societal issue changes the form in which this very issue is performed as interaction. The introduced notion of ›triple contingency‹ alludes to this situation in which

> »a third position […] observes ego and alter and through the act of observation changes the mutual observation« (Kessler 2016: 19).

In short, a theory *as* imaginary can change the way in which the theorised—a societal issue, a social fact, a sociohistorical phenomenon—is being observed. But what about this third position of the imaginary itself? Don't we have to think of ›the third‹ as being guided or selected by a fourth position? It is obvious that the problem of Kessler's ›triple contingency‹, as true as it may be, implicitly suggests a theoretical hierarchy of contingent forms. If alter and ego are metaphorically observed or theorised by the third, this very observation and theorisation can be thought as again guided by a fourth or fifth or sixth form of contingency. Finally, with reference to the semantic antinomy we argue to have discovered, the infinite hierarchy of contingency could be expressed by recursively iterating the antinomic statements that *»›All social kinds are contingent‹ is a contingent social kind‹ is a contingent social kind* and so forth.

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The problem of contingency is crucial to the constructivist's endeavour. But how can the scientist himself acquit the wheel of history? How can she detach from the process of contingent meaning production in her own academic undertaking? If the meaning of all social facts can change, how can she maintain that the theory of social constructivism is objectively valid and *not* changeable?[96] Nicholas Onuf (2002: 135) already posed these crucial questions about the »construction of constructivism« and admitted that his answer might not be very satisfying. Maja Zehfuss (2002: 261) similarly remarks that the »representation of construction in constructivism« cannot be accomplished in an objective, neutral way Wendt suggested by advocating scientific realism.

These questions have also been discussed by other scholars. For instance, Thomas Risse and Antje Wiener (2001: 199) argue that constructivist theories have been themselves ›re-constructed‹ within new academic

[96] Kulka (2000: 91 ff.) discusses this question in the sense of two competing social constructions of something as a »problem of the two societies« alluding to the dilemma of constructivist theory-building.

fields, so that the »social construction of social constructivism« opened new debates. Under the same slogan, Guilhot (2005: 170) investigated how social constructivism was constructed and idealised in the course of academic and political practice. All these studies and debates about the construction of the constructivist theory are reflected by the semantical antinomy we found. If constructivist thinking—either based on Wendtian realism or, as in Luhmann's case, even on epistemological relativism—is applied to itself, the antinomy arises. The studies about the construction of constructivism in different times and fields thereby reflect the very same doubts about the theory's objectivity, and we know them from several other accounts and scientific disciplines. Recall the reproach that Freud's theory of psychoanalysis was driven by the author's own psychical constitution, or the objection that Morgenthau's political realism was nothing other than his own political power play in the academic world. Has Wendt (1999: 47 ff.) paved the way for attracting similar criticisms by furnishing his theory with the bivalence of both constructivist and scientific realist elements? Is it impossible to set up a theory of constructivism and then hold that this very theory cannot be understood as constructed social knowledge itself? Some scholars criticising Wendt's course remark that

> »[t]he claim that a naturalistic methodology can unite both causal and constitute theory ignores the intersubjective processes by which the meaning of social reality is constituted through ideas« (O'Loughlin 2014: 63).

In Wendt's case, the scrutinising of his metatheoretical framework becomes obvious whenever he has to deal with the problem of social change, as we already witnessed when debating the ontological antinomy inherent in his work. Social change goes hand in hand with reflective thinking, and we now see that *what* the constructivist theory describes and *how* it can describe itself sparks off a similar fire for Wendt. As he mentions, reality is caused through theory in the case of social transformation—for instance, in the case of Gorbachev's ›New Thinking‹. The causal theory of reference Wendt applied cannot help in such cases. Furthermore, the objectified character of social phenomena is abolished in the transformational processes, as social kinds are constructed through new social actions. In any other case, Wendt (1999: 59) would propose the causal theory of reference to solve the ›truth problem‹, but this does not work in the case of social change.

Social change brings along new logics in the sense of novel social facts and knowledge. What is held true as social fact before a social change occurs might no longer be valid. The construction of ›new truths‹—that is, what is held as true social fact or social knowledge—goes hand in hand with new objectifications. Wendt (1999: 193) therefore reduced his main argument to the description in form of a »constructivist ontology of social life«. However, with constructivist theories as part of this social life, the door for philosophical relativism is opened up. If we understand truth as referring to the group which constructed the conditions for true facts or true social knowledge, we are faced with a relativist perspective.

But even in his discussion of the constitutive effects of culture and context, he offers a philosophical and social perspective on what is held as true and false. From a philosophical stance, Wendt (1999: 175) argues that »truth conditions are ›owned‹ by the community, not by individuals«. The cultural setting determines both the meaning and the truthfulness of statements and assumptions. From a social view, Wendt (1999: 177) draws a similar conclusion by stating that »systems have different *truth conditions* for statements«. If, for instance, a state actor is regarded as hegemon, this identity ascription can solely be formulated by other states insofar as »the truth conditions for identity claims are communal rather than individual« (Wendt 1999: 177). Although he attempts to avoid a radical holist view about culture, Wendt reserved the domain of truth and falseness of a statement for the structural level of culture. It is this assumption that opens the gate for a relativist claim on the truth of theories and statements, which are obviously supported by Wendt's constructivism. We can thus, in an intentionally abridged form, make the semantical statement that

›Every truth is socially constructed‹ is socially constructed.

With the opposition of constructed and independent facts in mind, the statement could also be expressed as ›Every truth is dependent‹. If the statement is true, then every truth must be socially constructed—including the statement's truth as such. But then, this statement could not be understood as absolute in the sense of a timeless, objective description as scientific realist statement. However, it then must be considered potentially changeable—and therewith as potentially false. Paradoxically, the statement should be objective to be true, but it can only be true if it is *not* objective. Among others, this antinomy has been described as ›paradox of cognitive relativism‹ by Jack Meiland (1980: 115) who illustrates the problem of relativist truths in different societies[97]:

> »If someone declares that truth is not objective but only relative to societies, he may very well claim there is no such thing as ›objective truth‹ or ›truth is relative to societies‹. Both assertions, however, clearly purport to be objectively true, and are intended as truths about all societies […]. He thus has to accept that sentences which state his thesis are apparently inconsistent with it«.

We see Wendt's constructivist theory is in general—and most obviously in the case of the description of social change—afflicted by this antinomy. By proposing a scientific realist grounding for his constructivist approach, he creates a critical disposition between constructed and independent facts explicitly. In the case of social changes, the formulation of a strong constructivist thesis can nevertheless only be made by reference to a statement which speaks of the impossibility of objective truth *as* objective truth. Again, this tension is reflected by the famous antinomy of relativism:

> »The claim is that the view that all truth is relative is inherently paradoxical, since it depends on the view that truth is objective even as it holds that truth is relative« (Runzo 1986: 46).

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Finally, we now understand why Wendt attempted to set up a metatheory of scientific realism and adhere to positivist methodologies. He tried to escape the trap of relativism most constructivist approaches are threatened by. Wendt's advocacy of these realist and positivist positions are more of a sheet anchor to think about social constructivism and the social world from a safe, hierarchically higher level. We therewith should again recall Luhmann's undertaking of assuming a biologist and ›partly realist‹ framing of his radical constructivist theory in at least one point—that social systems as such *exist*, and that Luhmann's theory as such *exists*. As a moderate constructivist, Wendt tends to create this semantical hierarchy of objective and assured knowledge much more conservatively than Luhmann. From the secure vantage point of scientific realism and positivism, he views the constructed world of social kinds without being affected by it—which, as we found, is an impossible position to take. Finally, Wendt's attempted semantical hierarchy seems to collapse whenever we think about social change. In these cases, he cannot cling to the lifeline of scientific realism and positivism. But should we think of world politics and the structure of the international system as something static? Is social change really limited to short periods of time? Or should we rather think of social change as ›happening all the time‹? If so, Wendt's constructivism should be thought in a reflexive, strong form—including all the dangers posed by constructivist's antinomic figure.

[97] Meiland however tries to defuse the antinomy's destructive power. However, we and various scholars will not follow his proposed solution for the reason mentioned as »Meiland's position […] of relativism is incomplete« (Beach 1984: 1).

e) Antinomies of Social Constructivism

Wendt's social constructivist perspective on world politics is entangled in both ontological and semantical antinomies, although he pursued a thinner version of constructivism than Luhmann's more radical ideas. Nevertheless, the antinomic figure unveiled in Wendt's work resembles the contradictory entanglements of the Luhmannian theory. At first, some of Wendt's statements turned out to contain the recursive form of the *mise en abyme*. Think about the role of the constructivist theorist who observed all those observations excluding their own authorship or, in the same sense, who are blurred by their own blind spot. In these cases, the theorist herself becomes part of what she theorises about. Similarly, the theory of social constructivism appeared to be part of what it theorised about. Constructivist ideas themselves manifested as shared knowledge claims, as social facts, or as sociohistorical phenomena. Wendt (1999: 76) himself admitted with reference to Giddens that

> »in both social and natural science observation of the world is affected by our theories, but social scientific theories alone have the potential to become part of their world as well«.

In Wendt's ontological statements, a critical disposition of the *antitheton* was created by contrasting ›objective, independent observation‹ with ›blind spotted observation‹. In his own words, he spoke about the difference between first-order and second-order observation. Within Wendt's semantical statements, he used the *antitheton* of ›necessary—contingent‹, ›mature theory—unsuccessful theory‹, and ›independent fact—constructed fact‹. Both forms of the *antitheton* resemble Luhmann's constructivist understanding, who linked these insights to his critique of rationality and reality just the way Wendt did in a more restrained sense. For both authors, this antitheton reflects the basic tenor of constructivist thinking. There is not ›one single‹ rationality, there is not ›only one‹ reality, but a social construction of what is commonly agreed on as rational principle and reality.

Lastly, we witnessed the effect of *Penrosing* as circular inversion whenever we asked about how the social constructivist herself and the theory of social constructivism itself accord to what they theorised about. At first, the question of whether Wendt considered his own blind spot—or, more precisely, his own authorship—was impossible to answer. Can the observations of a social constructivist be considered to be constructed themselves? Finally, whenever we ask about the ›social construction of social constructivism‹, a similar argumentative stalemate was met. Is Wendt's theory a constructed social fact? Is the proclaimed contingency of social kinds itself a contingent statement? In a nutshell, all these undecidable questions reflected the dilemma of how we can read the theory of social constructivism itself, and if these theoretical ideas must themselves be considered to be socially constructed. In this sense, an ontological hierarchy would have had to be erected to solve the problem of blind-spotted observations of co-constituted observers or observing constructivists which, as we know, would lead to an infinite hierarchy of reflective, higher-levelled observations. Wendt also tried to evade these inconsistencies by suggesting a scientific realist perspective and a clear commitment to positivism. By pursuing such a softened approach, the futile attempt to cloak his epistemological claims of his theory in a ›non-constructivist‹, objective jargon failed in the face of social change. In this case, we found Wendt establishing a semantical hierarchy in the sense of Tarski's metalanguage. Even though the social world might be constructed, the theorisation of this world was claimed to be accomplished from a higher-ordered, pure stance of scientific realism and positivism. Wendt appears as having argued from the vantage point of a ›God's Eye View‹ to erase all relational and reflective pitfalls constructivist accounts bring with them. If theorising as such is socially determined, then its theoretical reflection must be socially constructed as well. There is, as our elaboration of Luhmann's radical version has suggested, no way out of this confession. Only a God-like theorist could state and justify Wendt's theory—but *not* as theorist himself, and not within his theory itself.

	Ontological Antinomy	Semantical Antinomy
›Mise en abyme‹	recursive form of *theorist* as ›constructivist‹ and *theorised* as ›constituted social agents‹	recursive form of *theory* as ›social constructivism‹ and *theorised* as ›constructed truth‹
›Antitheton‹	critical disposition of ›blind-spotted observation—objective observation‹	critical disposition of ›constructed fact—independent fact‹, ›contingence—necessity‹, and ›mature theory—unsuccessful theory‹
›Penrosing‹	circular inversion of ›observation as socially determined‹	circular inversion of ›social construction of social constructivism‹
Hierarchies	infinite ontological hierarchy of higher-ordered observations; ›God's Eyes View‹	meta-theoretical level of scientific realism and positivist account on social facts as semantical hierarchy
Examples	*Wendt observes all observations which do not include their own blind spots.*	*Constructivism claims the fact that all facts are socially constructed.* *›All social kinds are contingent‹ is a contingent social kind.* *›Every truth is socially constructed‹ is socially constructed.*

Wendt's ›Social Theory of International Politics‹ as a Construction Itself: *Antinomies of Social Constructivism*

Synopsis — ›The Antinomy of Constructivism‹

With the elaboration of Luhmann's radical constructivism in mind, the reading of Wendt's epochal social theory of international politics appears in a different light. If we carve out the genuine constructivist elements from his social constructivist theory, Wendt's rigid adherence of scientific realist and positivist appears implausible in the face of social change. Instead, we find an antinomic figure.

Reflective observation always requires for the unveiling of an observer's authorship and social constitution. Can the social constructivist then observe her own blind spot and realise what ›makes‹ her a theorist? Finally, truth and meaning are proclaimed as socially constructed contingencies. Is the theory of social constructivism itself socially constructed and, as a consequence, solely a contingent truth with a contingent meaning?

Luhmannian observation	Observation as operation—something is indicated through distinction.
Autopoiesis	An operationally closed, self-reproducing system such as the social or psychic system.
Structural coupling	Noncausal relation between two or more autopoietic systems, through which cognition is possible.
Deparadoxification	Paradoxes are being converted and made ›visible‹ within the system's social process over time.
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Scientific Realism	Wendt's philosophy of science through which he builds his *via media* by assuming an independent world, the success of mature theories, and the covering of unobservables.

3 The Antinomy of Poststructuralism

The wave of poststructuralist works reached the field of International Relations in the 1980s. Since then, the self-image of poststructuralists has only slightly changed—for good reasons. As dissident thinkers, far away from mainstream theories, these scholars positioned themselves at the boundaries of the discipline, in a critical stance towards conventional ideas, and in rejection of dominant themes of Western rationality since the Enlightenment era.

The contributions of poststructuralist thinkers as approaches in international theories—which some would rather regard as ›translations‹—circle around the questions of how language and meaning determine social life, how dominant discourses develop within societies, and how subjects and order are constituted over time. Although we surely find no standard method or methodological programme, poststructuralist analyses are mostly focused on written documents, textual materials, chains of meaning and signifiers, or historical testimonies. The reason for this is simple. The poststructuralist's fundamental conviction is that the way we speak and use meanings reflects the way society and its norms and conventions relate to each other. Language does not represent the world, and meanings are caught in the wheel of time. Both language and meanings are nothing more than mere illustration of a socio-political, historical state of society. Hence, if we read texts in the form of a newspaper, an ancient code of law, or even scientific theories, we

consider the written words and meanings within those ›materials‹ not as representations of something real. They rather reveal how subject and society, how intentions and norms were brought into play through linguistic patterns. For this reason, most poststructuralists feel committed to textual and meaning analyses.

Wittgenstein can surely be seen as forefather of the linguistic turn that inspired poststructuralist and postmodern thinkers. After he suggested approaching philosophical problems solely by scrutinising *how* these problems are manifested and expressed in language, he laid the foundation for the critical analysis of language as philosophical discipline. Most of these problems, he argued, would disappear as soon as we realised the source of all evil—namely, that we used language in a misleading and nonsensical way to express these problems. Some propositions and some statements are nothing more than ›pseudo-problems‹, and should be shrugged off as meaningless utterances.

He soon found that we can use language solely in a limited way to express meaningful propositions. If we, however, used language to speak about *itself* and its logical form, its own propositions, or its abstract concepts, we get entangled in meaningless questions. Although he rejected most of these insights in his later work, Wittgenstein abided by his early conviction. We have to use language meaningfully. However, he himself realised one shortcoming in his own work. By setting the limits of how to use language meaningfully, he had to speak in a language *beyond* these limits. To set forth that we cannot use language to speak about language itself, he inevitably *had* to speak about language itself. This antinomy also appeared in his later work, in which he came up with the groundbreaking idea of ›language games‹. To understand the meaning of words and statements, he argued, we have to comprehend *how* they are used in different social practices. Meaning is not fixed or determined, and interpretations differ in the same way.

The latter idea became the mantra of poststructuralist thinking. Poststructuralist approaches are built on the idea that the *meaning* of an expression, an argument, or a statement solely unfolds within the discourse it is uttered in. They thereby critically scrutinise traditional concepts of rationalism, the representation of the subject, and the discursive constitution of how we create meanings within societal formations:

> »Any social ›meaning‹ develops within the realm of the discursive, which is never fixed but always shifting and, to a large degree, indefinite, leaving open the possibility of social change« (Nabers 2015: 43).

Because of their proximity to Wittgensteinian ideas, the poststructuralist critique is plagued with a similar antinomic tension. In short, they find themselves unable to speak meaningfully about what they do. At first, their ambition to position themselves at the boundaries or limits of traditional theories and ways of thinking appears as problematic. They claim that this analytical distance allows for a critical investigation of how conventional theories and traditional ways of thinking are discursively constituted, and thus do not merely represent things, but create them as constituents. But what about the poststructuralist's own position? What happens if we critically investigate her own constitution, her own way of thinking?

If the poststructuralist and her critique is criticised in the very same way she herself criticises, undecidable questions arise. Roughly speaking, if we read her work through her own lens, the Wittgensteinian antinomy appears in a different light. Is a poststructuralist text itself a product of the discourse? Is such a text written as uncriticised representation *containing* a critique of a representation? What happens if we deconstruct the poststructuralist idea of ›deconstruction‹? Finally, is the notion of performativity itself performative?

These and other questions arise as unresolvable antinomies in the works we discuss hereafter. To stand on firm ground, the poststructuralist would require a position completely ›detached‹ from the world of discourses, fluid meanings, intertextualities, or dissolved subjects she observes. If she, however, acknowledged her own embeddedness in this world, anything she speaks or theorises about appears as feed for a new critique, as mere expression of a discursive truth. It is as if someone claims the ›changing of all meanings‹. Even she is right, one could never speak about this claim as unchangeable, meaningful testimony. In this sense, Wittgenstein's legacy calamitously recurs in various poststructuralist works, in which is spoken

about what cannot be spoken about. This antinomy arises whenever we think about the ›poststructuralist critique of poststructuralism‹.

By sketching *Wittgenstein and the roots of poststructuralism* (3.1), we comprehend an antinomic figure in his early and late work. We then examine *Ashley's, Walker's and Shapiro's ›critiques‹* (3.2) in the light of the Wittgensteinian dilemma—and thus come upon severe antinomies in their works.

3 Overview—›The Antinomy of Poststructuralism‹

Wittgenstein and the Roots of Poststructuralism	3.1	*Wittgenstein claims how we can and should use language in a meaningful way. He however has to do so by contradicting his own claims on meaningful language use.*
Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's ›Critiques‹	3.2	*Poststructuralist works are inspired by Wittgenstein's linguistic turn, but carry with them an antinomic figure destroying their own analytical position.*

3.1 Wittgenstein and the Roots of Poststructuralism

Both Wittgenstein's early and later works can rightly be understood as symbol for the linguistic turn in philosophy. The groundbreaking idea that most philosophical problems could be solved by simply examining the role of language and meaning inspired poststructuralist thinking over decades. However, Wittgenstein was faced with an unresolvable problem in both of his works. He wrote about the limits of language by using language beyond these very limits in his ›Tractatus‹; and he similarly formulated the principle of ›meaning in use‹ by violating this very principle.

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Wittgenstein was surely one of the most astonishing academic personalities of the 20th century. His famous ›Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus‹ had a decisive impact on logicists and analytical philosophers of that time. After his second main opus ›Logical Investigations‹ was published post mortem, his philosophical views had a similar influence on scientific circles—although he surprisingly discarded some of his earlier ideas. Wittgenstein, whose work was ahead of his time, was one of the triggers of what philosopher would later refer to as the ›linguistic turn‹. In his famous anthology, Rorty (1992 [1967]) popularised the idea of such a turn, after the perspective on philosophical problems had been increasingly shifted from the focus on ideas and things towards a critical evaluation of language since the beginning of the 20th century.[98] Philosophers tended to rather analyse *how* we spoke about things than analysing the things themselves. Wittgenstein was as one of the first thinkers who drew attention to the linguistic dimension of philosophical problems, and his work should be viewed in this light. In this vein, Borgmann (1974: 91) states that

> »Wittgenstein […] in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) is credited as the author of the linguistic turn«.

As forefather of the linguistic turn, Wittgenstein's work is considered the theoretical foundation of the poststructuralist critiques we will investigate. Although various scholars argue that poststructuralism emerged from the elaboration of his later work, we argue that the ultimate origin of these ideas lies in Wittgenstein's academic debut. After the introduction of poststructuralist thought in International Relations in the 1980s, Fierke (2003 [2015]: 73) saw the epistemological ›Third Debate‹ between positivists and post-positivists in International Relations as reflected in the shift from Wittgenstein's early to his late work, as

> »these two phases in Wittgenstein's work have had an important influence on the approaches to language that inform the two IR sides of the disciplinary debate […]. The phrase ›linguistic turn‹ is often associated with Wittgenstein's later work, particular his *Philosophical Investigations*. But it actually originated with his earlier *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*«.

At first, Wittgenstein saw his ›Tractatus‹ as his only possible contribution to philosophy, and consequently »declared all philosophical problems solved and his involvement with philosophy over« (Last 2008: 3). His credo was that we have to understand *how* to use language to make meaningful statements about the world, and thus attempted to set out principles for an ideal language for any scientific investigation. However, Wittgenstein dismissed this idea of establishing an ideal corpus of language in his later work, in which he surprisingly emphasised the notion of ›normal language‹ as opposed to the idealistic understanding. We will thus take into account both of Wittgenstein's contributions as theoretical foundations of poststructuralist critiques, and eventually condense one simple inconsistency as core problem of advocates

[98] As Smith (1992: 85) understands it, the linguistic turn is based on »the idea that before we involve ourselves with philosophical question and issues we must first make an examination of our intellectual equipment in order to determine whether it is adequate to the task«.

of the linguistic turn—namely, his core assumption that »we cannot use language to talk about language« (Prætorius 1999: 395) which obviously was formulated using language to talk about language.

Before we start our reading of Wittgenstein's early and late work, we should however acknowledge the variety of interpretations that already exist. Several renowned authors have suggested greatly varying interpretations, which make an unambiguous understanding of Wittgenstein's thoughts almost impossible. It should therefore be borne in mind that the reading presented hereafter is one of many which, for the sake of the argument, is argued to strike the right tone for our critique of poststructuralist works in International Relations.

a) Wittgensteinian Philosophy and the Critique of Rationalism

Whereas Wittgenstein aimed to prescribe rules for the meaningful use of language to picture the world in his first work, he changed this direction in his later considerations when arguing that meaning is solely dependent from the ›language game‹ being played. His early ›picture theory‹ sought to solve philosophical pseudo-problems as result of misguided language use, while his later idea of language games fostered the understanding of ›meaning as use‹. By promoting this turn in philosophy, Wittgenstein's contributions can be understood as critique of rationality.

In his first main opus, Wittgenstein denoted most philosophical-logical problems as pseudo-problems. He suggested that these problems are caused by the misuse of language, and that philosophers should be interested in the critical evaluation of underlying linguistic structures rather than dealing with these pseudo-problems—a claim that eventually culminated in the linguistic turn within the whole philosophical discipline. Wittgenstein accused most of his contemporaries of considering metaphysical questions as similar to real world problems, although these questions were expressed as what he called ›nonsensical sentences‹. He encouraged those thinkers to return to the question of *how* these sentences depict problems of our world, and, at the same time, how language can blur the image of a ›real‹ world. In his idea of a picture theory, he suggested that language is nothing more than an according picture of reality. We think in pictures, we talk in pictures, and we perceive the world in pictures. Based on a personal note in June 1930, a story is told of how Wittgenstein came up with this idea.

> »It was in the autumn of 1914, on the Eastern Front. Wittgenstein was reading in a magazine about a lawsuit in Paris concerning an automobile accident. At the trial, a miniature model of the accident was presented before the court. The model here served as a proposition; that is, as a description of a possible state of affairs. It has this function owing to a correspondence between the parts of the model (the miniature-houses, -cars, -people) and things (houses, cars, people) in reality. It now occurred to Wittgenstein that one might reverse the analogy and say that a proposition serves as a model or picture, by virtue of a similar correspondence between its parts and the world. The way in which the parts of the proposition are combined—the structure of the proposition—depicts a possible combination of elements in reality, a possible state of affairs« (Von Wright 2001: 8).

In the Wittgensteinian sense, propositions about the world must be seen as pictures. The *form* of the miniature model employed by the court to represent an actual situation was similar to the form of the real accident—even though the models of the houses, cars, or people have surely been smaller or inaccurate compared to their real counterparts. But as long as the logical form of the model and the real situation was the same, the model could be used as a picture of this very situation. Wittgenstein thus proposed that every picture is structured through a logical form that is essential to its correspondence to an existing or non-existing state of affair:

> »What every picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it at all—rightly or falsely—is the logical form, that is, the form of reality« (Wittgenstein 1922: 2.18).

Wittgenstein therewith postulated that meaningful sentences—or, more precisely, propositions—are essentially similar to pictures of the world. They illustrate a possible state of affair, and they say something about the external world. He claims that, if we want to describe the world in an accurate and true way, the language used for this description and the world must exhibit the same logical form. The structuring order of the world we would encompass through the totality of ›facts‹ must be identical to our propositions' formal structure.[99] Wittgenstein (1922: 2.171) concisely concludes that the »picture can represent every reality whose form it has«. In this sense, Jacquette (1998: 148) notes that for Wittgenstein, »language is essentially descriptive, fact-picturing, or fact-representing«, and not usable for argumentations or conclusions beyond these simple descriptions of the world. With this insight, he was convinced it was much easier to decide which propositions are meaningful as true or false state of affairs of the world, and which sentences are just meaningless, as they attempt to depict something undepictable.

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Although Wittgenstein gained both prominence and reputation among philosophical circles after the publication of the ›Tractatus‹ and his picture theory, his work had been assessed critically during his lifetime and after his death in 1951. However, most of the revisions of his early work had been undertaken by Wittgenstein himself—especially through his second main opus ›Philosophical Investigations‹ which was posthumously published two years after his death. The central challenge of his work was to sketch the foundation of ordinary language use. He thereby surprisingly rejected his picture theory, and instead fostered a new understanding of how language works.

While he clearly attempted to set up a corpus of an ideal language in the ›Tractatus‹ by alluding to philosophical pseudo-problems that arise through the misuse of language, he turned away from this idea in his later work. Wittgenstein realised that language could not be formalised and abstracted in the tradition of mathematical logicism, as language is determined through its *use* within a particular context. Words and meanings cannot be given an ideal-typical, static form of a picture. Their function differs, and the rules for the proper use differ accordingly. Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §43) argues that

> »[f]or the *large* class of cases—though not for *all*—in which we employ the word ›meaning‹ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language«.

The meaning of words and statements unfolds through their actual use. Wittgenstein argues that this way of using language follows particular rules which differ depending on the context in which the word or statement *is* being used. In this sense, language is rather an instrument to *do* something—to compose a poem, to tell a story, to make a joke, or to use an academic jargon to sharpen an argument. Each of these linguistic contexts has its own rules for using words, and the words' meanings differ in each of these contexts. Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §7) coined the term ›language-game‹ to denote the practice of using words for particular actions:

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[99] Wittgenstein was surely not a logicist, but considered his work as a contribution to the philosophy of logical atomism. This ambition might be conveyed in Russell's foreword of Wittgenstein's (1922: 8) ›Tractatus‹, in which he claimed that »the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfils this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate«. Not only Wittgenstein, but also Russell (1985 [1918]) felt himself called to think about the assumption that world is compounded by elementary and indivisible logical atoms, which, if being expressed in sentences of an ideal language, would comprise all truths of the world. In this tradition, Wittgenstein's work was used as both inspiration and foundation by logical positivist Rudolf Carnap (1967 [1928], 2002 [1937]), who tried to use the Tractatian concept of language for his purpose of creating an axiomatic, idealised framework of scientific thinking. He therefore saw his task in fitting a set of axioms in the Wittgensteinian groundwork to show that particular mathematical concepts »could actually be accommodated, at bottom, within a single, Wittgensteinian language« (Carus 2005: 432).

> »We can also think of the whole process of using words […] as one of those games by means of which children learn their native language. I will call these games ›language-games‹ […]. Think of much of the use of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses. I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the ›language-game‹«.

Although Wittgenstein's picture theory and his concept of language games obviously stem from different theoretical convictions, both ideas can be seen as a critique of rationalist framings of philosophical problems. In the ›Tractatus‹, the rational elaboration of philosophical problems was rejected insofar as language instead of reason was claimed as a new Archimedean point. Wittgenstein thereby exposed the unassailable autonomy of language, and necessarily limited rational reasoning. Surely, Wittgenstein still had some »rationalist faith in unaided reason« (Genova 1995: 61), and his appraisal of the logical form suggests this interpretation. We should thus remark that

> »[t]he rational line for both rationalist and irrationalist interpreters is to acknowledge that Wittgenstein's work combines rationalist and irrationalist elements« (Glock 2008: 395).

Obviously, Wittgenstein appeals to accept that language and logical form set the limits for any rational deliberation about the world; but he does so by, as we will find, expressing nonsensical sentences in an irrationalist way. In this sense, Wittgenstein's first work may be seen as a prelude for his critique of rationality in his later considerations. Whenever we decide to treat philosophical questions as language problems, we opt for the subordination of reason under the logical form of language. In the ›Philosophical Investigations‹, this conviction became clearer.

As Wittgenstein postulated the priority of language games as ultimate anchor point for the assignment of meaning and truth, he even radicalised his language-critical assumptions of the ›Tractatus‹. The meaning of a word or sentence was framed as solely dependent on the rules of the game, and, consequently, these rules also dictated the basic principles or reason and rationality. Particularly for questions regarding the social sphere, the idea of language games stood contrary to its rationalist understanding—and therewith contributed to the ›crisis of reason‹:

> »The rationalist position involved the claim that there was an ultimate determinate meaning of ›the social‹ […]. Wittgenstein's philosophy […] illustrated that there was no ultimate foundation to society. The concept of ›language-games‹ provided an awareness of the contingent character of the social« (Isaacs 2006: 169).

In the tradition of Hume, Wittgenstein »rejected all forms of rationalism and meaning determinism« (Bloor 1997: 131) and instead pursued an »alternative to rationalism« (Margolis 1984: 156). Wittgenstein's first work was thus meant to move the philosophical centre of gravity from rationality to language, while his second opus in which he nevertheless rejected his whole picture theory fostered the understanding of the ›use of language‹ as determinative of reason and rationality.

b) The Theoretical Foundation of Wittgensteinian Philosophy

The central question in both of Wittgenstein's philosophical contributions circles around the notions of language and meaning, and the different ways to answer these questions may rightly be seen as theoretical foundation of his works. Whereas meaning depends on the way we formulate sentences about the world in his picture theory, he rejects this idea in his later work and instead suggest his formula of ›meaning as use‹. Meaning is solely dependent on the rules and uses within particular language games. Hence, early Wittgenstein advocates the view that language can picture reality, whereas in his later opinion language is solely used to do things.

If we wanted to describe the world in the way early Wittgenstein (1922: 2) suggested, we would have to to compose a catalogue of all existing states of affairs which we denote as *facts*. States of affairs are always composed of different objects within different relations. For instance, the object ›car‹ can appear in the state of affairs ›car accident‹, ›car factory‹, or ›car theft‹. As these states of affairs are expressed in propositions, the respective objects can be referred to through *names*. Thus, simply put, the name of a thing can be understood as its meaning insofar as one »identifies the meaning of a word with its bearer« (Kenny 1996: 68).[100] Wittgenstein (1922: 3.203) stated that a name *means* an object, and that, *vice versa*, the object is the name's meaning. Hence, meaning as understood by Wittgenstein is nothing more than »beyond the true and false picturing of logically contingent facts« (Jacquette 1998: 148). He therewith arrives at his famous distinction between meaningful, senseless, and nonsensical sentences.

As words are bound in sentences just as names are arranged within propositions, a *meaningful* sentence's essence is to depict the existence or non-existence of a state of affair of the real world. Like pictures, such sentences are expressed or thought according to a particular logical form insofar as the sentence depicts something true or false. For instance, the sentence ›China has a border with Australia‹ functions as a picture—in our case, as a map or a two-dimensional model of the geographical world. In Wittgenstein's jargon, we can therefore claim that this sentence describes a *fact*. Even though the sentence is false, it describes a *possible* state of affair in the world and is thus however meaningful.

Tautological sentences such as ›China is China‹ and contradictory statements such as ›Australia is not Australia‹ canont reflect a picture of a possible state of affair, and therefore are *senseless*. They have no meaning, and they are not descriptions of a real fact. Tautologies are always true, contradictions are always false. Thus, they cannot be used as a meaningful proposition for either an existent or a non-existent state of affair. Wittgenstein (1922: 4.462) argued that »[t]autology and contradiction are not pictures of the reality« and merely exemplify something senseless without any relation to the world.[101]

What is a *nonsensical* sentence in Wittgenstein's tongue?[102] First and foremost, those sentences are neither meaningful nor senseless insofar as they *never* can be true or false: while meaningful sentences propose particular state of affairs that reflect either true facts about something existent or non-existent, and senseless sentences are always true or false, nonsensical sentences can impossibly be assigned to one of these truth values. Wittgenstein's (1922: 3.221) crucial point is that sentences can solely tell us *how* an object is—and not *what* it is.[103] In short, objects can have a meaning, forms not. Therefore, all sentences compounded of forms or logical notions must be nonsensical. Imagine sentences generally consisting of formal concepts like sets, notions, classes, abstract figures, sentences, or logical statements such as ›This assertion is true‹ or ›This logical law is false‹. They all are nonsensical in Wittgenstein's view; they are nothing more

[100] A name of an object is expressed or thought within a proposition. In this sense, a name serves as a definite sign, whereas a proposition consisting of arranged names occurs as a picture. If a name has no real or *possible* equivalent in the world, it consequently must become meaningless.

[101] Finally, he also thought about apriorisms in a similar way. Wittgenstein (1922: 2.225) remarks that »no picture [...] is a priori true«—and, in the same way, no picture is *a priori* false as well. Remember that Kant stated that mathematical statements such as ›1 + 1 = 2‹ must be *a priori* truths. To Wittgenstein, they were nothing more than tautological, senseless expressions to Wittgenstein.

[102] The original German expression ›unsinnig‹ is not only translated with ›nonsensical‹ in English editions of Wittgenstein's work, but sometimes synonymously used with ›senseless‹. In this work, the notion ›senseless‹ however occupies the translation of the German ›sinnlos‹.

[103] To him, all logical sentences—and, among them, the Aristotelian laws of thought—appear as nonsensical. Without having any reference to an empirical state of affair or any correspondence to a fact, they just say nothing. Recall, for instance, the first of Aristotle's first law of identity and its premises. For Wittgenstein (1922: 5.5303), this proposition does not refer to any fact, but only to logic itself—and thus, is nothing more than a nonsensical proposition: »Roughly speaking: to say of *two* things that they are identical is nonsense, and to say of *one* thing that it is identical with itself is to say nothing«.

than games with hollow forms—just void signs referring to nothing. Hence, we cannot speak *about* logic, *about* meta-physics, not even *about* language itself. We would inevitably end up claiming nonsense.[104]

In a broader sense, we now understand why Wittgenstein (1922: 6.123) stated that »the laws of logic cannot in their turn be subject to laws of logic«, and thereby clearly narrowed the »limits of logic« (Jager 2013 [1972]: 124). In Wittgenstein's eyes, any sentence about logic must turn out meaningless. Logic can solely be *shown* through a sentence, but never be *spoken* about. Hence, the philosopher's task is narrowed to the »logical clarification of thoughts« (Wittgenstein 1922: 4.112), and not, as for natural scientists, to describe what as fact is the case. Philosophers should be able to tell us something about human thinking *as* a state of affairs, not what can be thought as facts or pseudo-propositions. He saw the dismissal of such metaphysical problems and ontological questions as essential precondition for the analytical practicing of philosophical activity. Wittgenstein (1922: 6.53) thus postulated that philosophers should rather apply themselves to the genuine task of sharpening and clarifying propositions:

> »The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science, i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions«.

We now turn out attention again to the question of meaning in Wittgenstein's ›Philosophical Investigations‹. As indicated, he refuted his earlier idea that language could meaningfully represent reality in a pictorial way, and instead suggested that meaning depends on the rules and uses in different language games. The meaning of a word or sentence can solely be understood in the context of the game being played. Which sentences are meaningful, senseless, or nonsensical is now a question of the language game's internal stipulations and conventions, and is not a question of form. This foundational shift in his later work may therefore be labelled under

> »the famous presumptive ›doctrine‹ which is often abbreviated as ›meaning is use‹« (Staten 1984: 87).

Wittgenstein thought of language games as equivalents to children's plays or board and card games. Each of these games exhibits characteristics which could be compared with the others—may it be the role of luck, skills, or entertainment. These characteristics are similar to language games. In everyday practice, we use language games in order to perform particular actions—to lie, to command, to explain, or to convince. The sole justification of language games as given is thereby derived from Wittgenstein's (1958 [1953]: I, §19) claim that the »form of life« within a community serves as the foundation of how practices, rules, and language games are being performed. In each of these contexts or forms of life, we *do* something by using the language according to differing, context-dependent rules. Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §11) realised the various functions of words in different settings:

> »Think of the tools in a toolbox: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws.—The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects […]. Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them in speech, or see them written or in print. For their use is not that obvious. Especially when we are doing philosophy!«

With his new conception of language, Wittgenstein broke with the tradition of his early work. He had seemingly lost faith in the logicist program and the overriding goal of establishing an idealised, formalised

[104] In the same way, Wittgenstein claims to have solved the barber's and the liar's antinomy. They both contain itself as a picture and speak about themselves in a meaningless sense so that, as Jacquette (2007b: 142) remarks for all liar-like antinomies, »Wittgenstein […] dismisses the liar sentence as meaningless because of the picture theory of meaning. He argues that no meaningful sentence can […] include within itself a picture of itself«.

language. This shift in Wittgenstein's work had drastic philosophical implications, as Ahmed (2010: 8 f.) remarks:

> »The *Tractatus* had insisted that every sentence say something precise—so that its truth or falsity was determined for every possible situation; other it does not express a thought at all. Wittgenstein now argues […] that that is such a narrow conception of language and of thought as to be inadequate to most of our actual speech, writing and thought«.

As we will find, both conceptions of meaning in its picture-theoretical and language game-theoretical sense could not be uttered without inconsistencies. In both works, we hence find similar antinomies which stem from the attempt of prescribing rules about language by using this very language. Obviously, this conception reminds us of the recursive form of a theorist or theory becoming part of what is theorised about—and the devastating effects of those antinomies founded on these recursions.

c) The Ontological ›Observer's Antinomy‹

In his ›Tractatus‹, Wittgenstein claimed that meaningful sentences can never refer to themselves as propositions *about* a logical form. If a statement speaks about itself, it ›talks‹ nonsense. But what about the ›Tractatus‹ itself? Are the statements made by Wittgenstein as theorist nothing other than sentences about sentences—and therewith nonsensical themselves? We will elaborate this problem as ontological antinomy which also appears in his ›Philosophical Investigations‹, in which Wittgenstein theorises about the relation between rule-following in language games and their observation. If we obey these rules blindly, how can a theorist meaningfully observe her own embeddedness in the game of rule-following?

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At first, we investigate an antinomic tension within Wittgenstein's ›Tractatus‹, and eventually understand the problem of ›silence‹ which he called for regarding the things we cannot speak about.[105] This theme circles around the question of what the key conclusion of the ›Tractatus‹ actually means—not only for philosophers, but also for the work itself. In short, we ask how to interpret his tract as philosophical work written in a distinct language, if the author himself argued that this very language could not be used to write *about* such philosophical questions. Recall that on the one hand Wittgenstein alerts the reader to the dangerous and misleading utterance of nonsensical sentences through an inappropriate use of language. However, in doing so, he uses this language inappropriately to utter his warning. So, what happens if we call Wittgenstein to account and examine if he has broken his own rules?

Other than asking about how his programme on the proper use of language applies to the language he uses himself to write the ›Tractatus‹, we can think about his role as author writing about ›something that cannot be written‹. Wittgenstein's dilemma is reflected by the fact that he has to speak in a nonsensical way to then show why speaking in this very way is misleading—a tension which will later be formulated as a semantical antinomy. Roughly speaking, his ›Tractatus‹ identifies the structure of philosophical pseudo-problems by representing a pseudo-problem itself. In the last paragraphs of his tract, he referred to this dilemma in a few, mysterious sentences. Using his famous metaphor written at the end of his work, Wittgenstein (1922: 6.54) explains that nonsense can only be understood by thinking nonsensically, similar to a ladder which has to be thrown away after climbing up:

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[105] Wittgenstein's argument that we have to remain silent about things ›we cannot speak about‹ will be elaborated as semantical antinomy elsewhere (C, 3.1d).

> »[H]e who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.)«[106]

What later became popularised as ›ladder paradox‹ is Wittgenstein's attempt to speak about something that cannot be spoken about—namely, what solely shows itself. Having limited the way in which meaningful sentences can be expressed, his tract must be understood as a conglomerate of nonsensical sentences. Paradoxically, these unsayable sentences *must* be said in order to put the reader in the position to dismiss these sentences as unsayable. The two purposes of Wittgenstein's, namely

> »its joining together of the propositions and its providing an overview, work together to allow the propositions of the text or the rungs of the ladder to produce the understanding that the entirety of the endeavor of the *Tractatus*, the climb up the rungs of the ladder, is nonsensical *but enlightening in moving the reader beyond its propositions*« (Last 2008: 53).

But how can Wittgenstein's ladder enable the reader to see with clarity after climbing up, if the latter is built of nonsense? And, even more problematic, why should we throw the ladder away as nonsense after having climbed up it? The core claim of the ›Tractatus‹ is that we cannot speak about certain things, as these things only show themselves. Any attempt to speak of them in a logical and language-related way would end in pure nonsense:

> »Was not Wittgenstein always forcing himself ›to express something that cannot be expressed‹ […]? Is it not […] contradictory to write a Tractatus which in the end says that which can only be shown and which, in addition, is supposed to show itself by itself? In a word, does Wittgenstein not say that which can only be shown?« (Meyer 1996: 311).

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At the heart of the ladder paradox lies the contradictory statement that the words in the Tractatus refer to themselves in a nonsensical way. Wittgenstein's work therefore speaks about itself by stating that it cannot speak about itself, which then creates an ontological antinomy. This tension is reflected by the metaphor of Wittgenstein's ladder that »we must climb and then throw away« (Heaton 2014: 13). Wittgenstein's propositions not only show the logical form of reality by providing a convincing account of how things can be ›really‹ spoken and thought about—namely, through the use of natural scientific propositions. They furthermore

> »try to view the world from ›above‹: they construct a ladder to the overview from which the world can be seen aright, and it is just this sort of vantage point which cannot belong to the world« (Binkley 1973: 146).

If propositions refer ›nonhierarchically‹ to the world of real objects in the proposed picture-theoretical way, they *show* the world's logical structure. Once a proposition is expressed as a metalinguistic or metalogical statement by expressing facts *about* language or logic, they become nonsensical. Again, this insight requires for a metalinguistic and metalogical proposition in the first place—and this is where the ontological antinomy inherent in Wittgenstein's ›Tractatus‹ originates. Hold that the ›Tractarian proposition‹ speaks about all those propositions which cannot speak about themselves such as propositions on concepts or logical form. The latter can only *show* themselves, but not speak about themselves. In its shortest form, Wittgenstein (1922: 3.332) formulates this proposition by stating that

> »No proposition can say anything about itself«.

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[106] This very sentence, in which Wittgenstein draws the image of a ladder to justify the breaking of his own rules, led to long philosophical debates. Logi Gunnarsson (2001) gives a brief introduction in the ladder metaphor used by Wittgenstein.

Even though we will later discern that this proposition is afflicted by a semantical antinomy, we can nevertheless think of it as an ontological one as well. Think about the Tractarian proposition as relating to two different kinds of propositions. One kind of proposition does *not* speak about itself, whereas the other kind of proposition does speak about itself. The Tractarian proposition relates to all those propositions which do not speak about themselves by denoting them as meaningful. Roughly speaking, all meaningful propositions are now equipped with an attribute or feature[107] through the Tractarian proposition, whereas all self-referring propositions are identified as nonsensical. As a result, we can think about the generality of all propositions as either being denoted as meaningful and not self-referring through the Tractarian proposition or as nonsensical by not being denoted by this proposition. If we now translate the anyway vague notion of denoting as ›speaking about‹, we arrive at the ontological statement that

The ›Tractarian proposition‹ speaks about all those propositions which cannot speak about themselves.

Does the Tractarian proposition speak about itself? If so, it cannot be the Tractarian proposition, because it only speaks about those propositions which do *not* speak about themselves. But then, if it cannot speak about itself, it reflects the very kind of proposition to which the Tractarian proposition relates. We are thus faced with an ontological antinomy showing that it remains undecidable whether the Tractarian proposition can assign its own attribute ›meaningful‹ or ›does not speak about itself‹ to itself.

We obviously borrowed the barber's paradox as blueprint for Wittgenstein's proposition. Think about this proposition as a barber who, instead of shaving someone, speaks about all those who do not speak about themselves. In this village, no one can speak about himself—which reflects Wittgenstein's proposition that *no* proposition can say anything about itself. However, the antinomic tension persists if we ask whether the barber speaks about himself. In this illustration, we use the notion ›speak about‹ whenever we refer to the Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing. The observer's antinomy thus demonstrates that the Tractarian proposition speaking about all those propositions which do not speak about themselves is not only a semantical problem, but also a class-related, ontological one. Curiously, these antinomies are part of what Wittgenstein attempted to denote as nonsensical pseudo-problems; but again, he could not refer to them without speaking in the very same way he tried to avoid. The ladder he and his reader had to climb up is thus reflected in both the nonsensical Tractarian proposition and the ›speaking barber‹. For these reasons, Cora Diamond (1988: 20) compares anyone who claims to have thrown away Wittgenstein's ladder with a philosophical coward, because

> »[to] chicken out is to pretend to throw away the ladder while standing firmly, or as firmly as one can, on it«.

We will thus argue that the throwing away of the ladder is a strange thing to argue, as the mere logical existence of the ladder cannot be assumed consistently. Framing this problem as ontological antinomy can at least bring us closer to the reasons why the Tractarian proposition cannot be uttered—even when standing on the ladder. In our adaptation of the barber's paradox as a blueprint for the Wittgenstein's ontological antinomy, we had to assume the very same conditions which were at hand in the case of Russell's antinomy. Wittgenstein used language in a nonhierarchical sense, and was therefore not able to account for a hierarchy of different language levels or, as Russell would have suggested, different type levels. To speak in Tarski's words, he used object language, which should be deployed to say something about the world, to say something about language itself—or, as McCarthy (1990: 111) states:

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[107] The Tractarian proposition can thereby be seen as providing the status of meaningfulness—and, thus, potentially ›reality‹—to certain propositions as a *feature*. However, as Diamond (1991: 181) argues, »there are features of reality that cannot be put into words but show themselves«. As we will see, the Tractarian proposition is no exception.

> »If a logically correct language is an object language completely without resources for its own metalinguistic characterization, then what Wittgenstein attempted to say in the *Tractatus* cannot be said«.

The Tractarian proposition must be seen as equal to all other propositions Wittgenstein talks about; there is no hierarchy or metalanguage level he could refer to. Hence, two contradictory statements are yielded in his tract. On the one hand, that no proposition can say anything about itself; and on the other, that the Tractarian proposition does it anyway. Although competing interpretations of Wittgenstein's ladder metaphor still exist[108], we will—based on our considerations about the ontological antinomy in the ›Tractatus‹—argue that

> »by Tractatus standards there is something wrong about the book's own propositions (therefore, eventually they should be thrown away), but Wittgenstein himself has to admit that, for the time being, he cannot do without them« (Schroeder 2006: 107).

If we understand the ladder principle as an attempt to erect an ontological hierarchy, it may be clearer what was wrong with the Tractarian proposition. To climb up this strange ladder would be similar to heaving an impossible ontological hierarchy of propositional ›pseudo-levels‹. But did Wittgenstein attempt to answer a pseudo-question in his Tractatus? Did he ask a question which is impossible to answer in a meaningful way? In this sense, Horwich (2012: 170) reminds us together with Wittgenstein that

> »a pseudo-question […] is one that we should not attempt to answer—not because it is too difficult, but because there is every reason to expect that no objectively correct answer exists«.

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To Wittgenstein, sentences which refer to themselves are nonsense. In this way, Wittgenstein famously claimed to have solved the barber's and liar's antinomy. He simply denoted them as nonsensical sentences, as they never could depict something true or false in its very sense, because, as Dale (1998: 141) summarises,

> »no proposition in the required picture theory sense can literally contain itself as argument, or otherwise designate, refer to, or attribute to or deny properties of itself in the notation«.

Wittgenstein's picture theory prescribes a particular type of language use to avoid the problem of nonsensical pseudo-questions; however, the theory itself contradicts these rules of use. Arising as a consequence of the formulation of nonsensical sentences, both the pseudo-problems identified by Wittgenstein *and* the ›Tractatus‹ itself reflect sentences that by no means can depict real facts. If we, together with Hallett (2008: 45), recap picture theory's guiding principle, the dilemma becomes clearer:

> »According to the *Tractatus*, supposedly factual utterances that do not picture reality in the way prescribed are *unsinnig*, nonsensical«.

With these basic assumptions about picture theory and the alleged revelation of nonsense in language use, Wittgenstein tried to pull himself out of the swamp by his own bootstraps. He obviously denoted sentences which do not say something about the world in a descriptive sense, but, for instance, talk about themselves, as nonsensical. Surprisingly, Wittgenstein, while writing his work, did not say something about the world in the sense of his own theory, but had to speak in a nonsensical way to set up his picture theory in the first place. McCarthy (1990: 111) recognised this contradiction:

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[108] Even after about a decade of its publication, Wittgenstein's ›Tractatus‹ and its nonsensical ladder metaphor »commentators still have not come to an agreement on how the *Tractatus* should be understood« (Cheung 2008: 197).

> »A logically correct language, one in which we can say everything that can be said and only what can be said, provides the resources for a complete description of the world. But it provides no resources for describing its own semantical relation to the world […]. Metalinguistic semantical discourse *about* descriptive language and object-linguistic descriptive discourse *about* the world are finally irreducible to one another«.

Like colours can be used to paint a picture depicting something of the world, they can hardly be used to depict something like the concept of colour. This is how Wittgenstein thought about language and the world according to picture theory. Any other language use—for instance, as metalanguage or metaphysical propositions—must fail. If we now understand Wittgenstein's tract as a conglomerate of sentences that say something *about* the proper use of sentences as metalanguage, this undertaking should consequently also be doomed to failure. Similarly, Danto (1968: 235) draws a similar conclusion by stating that the Wittgensteinian approach

> »was an attempt to destroy philosophy by making it unstable. If it was successful, the *Tractatus* would destroy itself. Hence *it* can be stated only in so far as it is not a complete statement regarding language«.

Admittedly, Wittgenstein tried to destroy philosophical nonsense through his tract. But if we think about this destruction, we might feel reminded of someone who takes a saw to the branch he is sitting on. With the philosophical destruction he called for, Wittgenstein would have been destroying himself. Hacker[109] (2000: 356) takes a similar view:

> »The predicament is serious. It is not merely that Wittgenstein's explanation of what apprehension of the ineffable consists in itself perforce invokes the use of formal concepts. Nor is it merely that Wittgenstein deliberately saws off the branch upon which he is sitting, since if the account of the conditions of representation given in the book is correct, then the sentences of the book are mere pseudo-propositions. But rather, if that is so, then the account of the conditions of representation is itself nonsense. And that seems a *reductio ad absurdum* of the very argument that led to the claim that the sentences of the book are one and all pseudo-propositions«.

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The Tractarian proposition turned out to be an unsayable statement in Wittgenstein's considerations. We will now briefly draw attention to a similar antinomy in his ›Philosophical Investigations‹. At the heart of this contradiction is his assumption that meaning and interpretation are solely dependent on the rules of the language games being played. Wittgenstein argues that we obey these rules blindly, and that the interpretation of these rules can therefore appear as arbitrary and contingent. But just as we scrutinised the unsayability of the Tractarian proposition, we now find his assumption of ›obeying the rule blindly‹ is a similar dead end.

The ontological antinomy of Wittgenstein's later work refers to the problem of rule-following within language games. By acting, we follow rules within the social sphere. We do not need to know these rules, but simply obey them through our practices. However, this rule-following paradigm raises the question of how rules can be interpreted. Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §201) himself denotes this consideration as »paradox«. If any action is similar to the obeying of a rule, what happens if we did *not* obey our interpretation of that rule? Paradoxically, any interpretation of a rule—either correct or incorrect—would, as soon as being carried out *as action*, appear to be ›obeying a rule‹.

This paradox has been debated by various scholars, with Kripke (1982) giving one of the most famous interpretations. As such, the paradox is being read as a ›rule-following dilemma‹ which also alludes to the problematic assumption that, once a rule has been obeyed in the past, no justification is given as to why

[109] Despite his shattering diagnosis on the predicaments Wittgenstein was faced with, Hacker as one of the advocates of the ›New Wittgenstein‹ movement will not be presented as ill-disposed to the ›Tractatus‹ here.

the correct interpretation of this rule leads to its correct obeying in the future.[110] Moreover, the paradox reflects the problem of translatability of one language game to the rules of another one. It seems to make no difference if we obeyed a rule or not—our actions will always be considered to be rule-following practices. We thus need to scrutinise the problematic status of a rule:

> »Given the fact of multiple interpretations, for any action, that action can be characterized both in a way that accords with a given rule and conflicts with it—even if the interpretation of the rule itself were transparent. This is the source of the paradox: even if the application of a rule is correct, the action could be made out to conflict with it« (Williams 1991: 96).

Is the notion of rules meaningless? If we cannot decide whether a rule has been followed correctly or incorrectly, the whole argument behind Wittgenstein's principle of rule-governing seems superfluous at first glance. In short, there seems to be no way to meaningfully interpret rules and their regularities—and, therewith, no fixed meaning of how we could interpret rules can ever be found. Strangely enough, this is the essence of Wittgenstein's idea of language games. Meaning and interpretation can never be thought as objective or static, but are always dependent on the rules of the game:

> »Rule-following cannot be made determinate—or, by extension, meanings cannot be fixed—through interpretation alone« (Fogelin 2012: 96).

Wittgenstein's (1958 [1953]: I, §219) himself suggests a solution by claiming that »I obey the rule blindly«. If social agents are thought as blindly obeying to rules, the gap between rule-following and its interpretation as correct or incorrect appears to be bridged. And even if some agents make an interpretation about how to follow rules correct or incorrectly, this interpretation is a private one. In this sense, rules are manifested in actions—regardless of their interpretation:

> »[W]hat the absurd paradox that rules cannot guide one *shows* is that how one understands a rule need not to be an interpretation, but is manifest *in acting*, in what we call ›following the rule‹« (Baker, Hacker 1984: 13 f.).

The rule-following paradox has been interpreted and explored by various scholars, and we will therefore leave it at that. Nevertheless, the problematic tension between rule-following and correct or incorrect interpretations alludes to a related dilemma. Similar to the ontological antinomies we discovered in several humanist theories so far, we again scrutinise the theorist's relationship with the theorised, and this consideration brings us to the question how Wittgenstein himself could make the statement that ›I obey the rule blindly‹ in the first place. As we will find, this sketchy claim is at the heart of his theory of language games, but presents itself as problematic assertion. However, it should be noted that in this case, we think about one of many readings of Wittgenstein's ideas. The rule-following paradox has been interpreted in various ways, and our account will—and should—not stand out. We rather think of this antinomic tension as a mere preparation of the semantic antinomy we will present hereafter.

The ontological antinomy circles around the notions of Wittgenstein as observing theorist and his claim that rules are being obeyed blindly. In the same way we scrutinised the biographical background of many theorists to put their academic contributions in context, we may better understand Wittgenstein's account on rule-following if we ask about the evolution of his theory of language games. After the success of the ›Tractatus‹, he decided to work as a teacher in an elementary school in Austria. He thereby witnessed how his pupils learn and think about rules, and observed these behaviours with great interest:

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[110] In his interpretation of Wittgenstein's paradox, Kripke (1982: 7 ff.) gives a much cited example. If someone is asked perform the addition ›68 + 57‹, but has never has added numbers greater than 50 in the past, his result could also be ›5‹. His argument could be that, although he might have applied what appeared as an additive function for all mathematical operations before, he really used another function that yielded the correct result ›$x + y$‹ for numbers smaller than 50 and the result ›5‹ for all other ones. With this mental game, Kripke (1982: 22) is left to conclude that, if the meaning of a rule can never be justified exactly, »the entire idea of meaning vanishes into thin air«.

> »There is an element of the elementary school teacher that still clings to Wittgenstein's examples of rule-following. Wittgenstein may be drawing on his experiences teaching young students […], attempting to explain the general rule he was following […], and then encouraging students to continue the series according to the same rule as a criterion of determining […] whether or not he had succeeding in explaining his meaning«.

We may therefore rightly assume that Wittgenstein's ideas on rule-following were—at least partly—inspired by his teaching experiences, and that he *observed* how rules are being followed, learned, applied, and interpreted. At this point, we could make the assumption that Wittgenstein's credo of ›blindly obeying rules‹ had been observed and generalised; and, in this sense, formulated as theory of language games. With the notion of observation of rules which is clearly different from the Wittgensteinian principles of understanding and interpreting rules, we can think about the ontological statement that

Wittgenstein observes all those rules which have been obeyed blindly.

Although if we understand Wittgenstein as theorist in a rather metaphorical sense due to his anti-mentalist account, an antinomy can be found if we ask about the rules Wittgenstein himself followed blindly. Does he observe the rules he obeyed blindly? If so, he had to observe what he cannot observe. If a rule is obeyed blindly, it cannot be observed. But then, given the fact that he has *not* observed these rules, they must have been followed blindly, and as such should be observed by Wittgenstein. This ontological antinomy rests on the assumption that rules are obeyed blindly, and that ›blind rule-following‹ cannot be observed by oneself. Our exemplification shows the problem of interpreting rules in a particular way from the perspective of the observer and theorist, and therewith implies a more general question.

If we follow rules blindly, we cannot observe and correctly interpret or conform to them. We may interpret our actions *as if* we followed a rule—but, as Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §201) himself indicated, this interpretation could be correct or incorrect *independent* of our action's actual essence, as »to think one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule«. However, our notion of observation opens up to another question. If Wittgenstein himself blindly obeyed some rules, then his observation *about* rule-following can be understood as rule-following itself. This would mean that any observation about these rules must either be a rule-following action or an interpretation. The latter cannot be assumed to be correct or incorrect by Wittgenstein's own definitions. If we, however, understand observations *about* rules *as* rule-following actions, we find ourselves in a bind. Wittgenstein himself understands these actions as embedded in social conventions he named language games. As such, an observation as social convention or rule-governed practice—for instance, writing a book on language games, using meanings and words, theorising and publishing this book—is nothing more than blindly following a rule. Eventually, we have to conclude that a rule-following action yields a social observation *about* rule-following actions. Wether this observation can be understood as correct or valid, is therefore dependent on the language game it was uttered within. Our form of the paradox thereby unveils the dilemma of making the assumption of ›blindly obeying rules‹ in the first place—which now rather appears as fixing a social convention. Has Wittgenstein followed the rules of writing about language games? And what are these rules—publishing a scientific work, expressing yourself in an academic jargon, or setting up a theory about something? These unanswerable questions lead us back to the dilemma of the ›Tractatus‹. As such, the observations of rules seem similar to speaking the silence of Wittgenstein's early work. They can only be shown, and cannot be spoken about. At this point, even Ingram's (1995: 321) description of rules and metarules in the Russellian sense seem to allude to the same point, as the

> »postulation of a transcendental metarule governing the application of rules succumbs to Russell's paradox—if the metarule is a member of the class it regulates, it ceases to be ultimate; if it is not, then it ceases to be a rule«.

Wittgenstein's paradox in the form of our ontological antinomy sketches one central challenge—which is nothing new. Wittgenstein himself knew about this antinomy in a slightly different form. As such, the ontological antinomy presented is one of many interpretations of Wittgenstein's paradox, and will be further elaborated in our considerations on the semantical implications of his work. For the time being, we argue that, compared to his early convictions, Wittgenstein's idea of meaning as use underwent massive changes. In this sense, Priest (1995: 232) hits the nail on the head by arguing that Kripke's considerations on the paradox lead to the necessary conclusion that

> »[s]ince meaning is a special case of rule-following, it follows that there is nothing to determine that ›book‹ should be applied to books rather than to motor bikes; and so on for all other words. In other words, there is nothing to determine that words mean anything at all«.

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Both Wittgenstein's ›Tractatus‹ and ›Philosophical Investigations‹ contained two ontological antinomies—which were both known to the author himself. The Tractarian proposition thereby reflected the impossibility of meaningfully speaking about a nonsensical sentence, whereas the rule-following paradox showed the challenge of combining the dogma of ›obeying rules blindly‹ with a principle of ›interpreting rules‹. In both works, the theorist spoke about the constitution and form of language by using language. Although his actual intention was to describe the relation between meaningful language use and reality in tract, and the relation between interpretative meaning and the rules of language games in his ›Philosophical Investigation‹, he had to speak about the meaning of language *itself* in order to do so.

Wittgenstein always intended to avoid any hierarchical orders in the style of Russell or Tarski. The credo of the ›Tractatus‹ was exactly the claim that we can only use language to speak about reality, not about higher-levelled concepts such as logic or language itself. Wittgenstein's picture theory located meaningful language use solely at one single level of description—without requiring any hierarchy of types or languages whatsoever:

> »The representation of facts in language […] does not take place superficially in the conventionally governed perceptible sign system of language. It is rather at the deepest, most penetrating level of atomist structures« (Jacquette 1998: 57).

Indeed, most of Wittgenstein's readers would similarly denote his work as »nonhierarchical picture theory of syntax« (Jacquette 2001: 286), as his theory »forbids hierarchical types or syntax orderings« (Jacquette 1998: 90) the way Russell's theory prescribed.[111] He was driven by this idea that language shows these atomist structures through its form, but is never used to speak *about* this form. Although he discarded his idea of language as picture in his later considerations, he seemed to adhere to this principle in a different way. Rather than assuming atomist structures holding this world together and language showing these structures, he now saw the rules of language games as holding societies together and the use of language showing these conventions. This is why even in his later work, Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §121) clung to the rejection of hierarchical orderings by remarking that

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[111] Wittgenstein argued that »no logical hierarchy of variables« (Ostrow 2002: 106) could ever form the foundation of his thoughts. Quite the contrary, his »picture theory forbids object- and metalanguage stratifications just as it forbids hierarchical types or syntax orderings« (Jacquette 1998: 90) to avoid inconsistencies such as antinomies. Although language and logic is supposed to determine a particular—and, for some, hierarchical—structure itself, Wittgenstein's (1922: 5.556) picture theory was set out to restrict from any stratified or artificial hierarchies, as »[t]here cannot be a hierarchy of forms«. Wittgenstein's prescriptions about the nonhierarchical use of language thus prohibited any hierarchisation of statements, and alternatively alluded to language's sole purpose of picturing the external world: »[T]he idea is that we locate singularities in our semantical concepts, rather than distinguish levels of language in a hierarchy. Semantical predicates are univocal« (Simmons 1993: 95).

> »[o]ne might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word ›philosophy‹ there must be second-ordered philosophy. But it is not so: it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals with the word ›orthography‹ among others without then being second-order«.

However, we found Wittgenstein violating his own nonhierarchical stipulations. As we remember, the ladder metaphor was nothing other then an attempt to erect an ontological hierarchy. After climbing up the ladder, one could realise the nonsense of the ›Tractatus‹ from a higher position. In the same sense, Wittgenstein's principle of blind rule-following turns out to be a theoretical observation from a higher level of an ontological hierarchy of observations of observing rule-followers.

d) The Semantical ›Antinomy of Language‹

The antinomies of the Tractarian proposition and the rule-following paradox appear in different forms. If we take the picture-theoretical stipulations as decisive for the meaningfulness of Wittgenstein's early work, severe contradictions arise. How can the ›Tractatus‹ itself be a meaningful theory, if no theory can speak about the form of propositions and statements? Likewise, his later ›Philosophical Investigations‹ seems to be shattered by its own prescriptions. If the meaning of statements is solely dependent on the language games they are used within, what about the meaning of the work about language games itself?

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With these critical remarks about the contradictions arising in Wittgenstein's early work, the question has to be posed of what can and what cannot be said within the framework of an ideal language of meaningful sentences. Apparently, severe contradictions go hand in hand with the statement that language can only be used within clear limits, because otherwise its use would lead to a philosophical dead end of nonsensical sentences. Advocating a nonhierarchical, non-metaphysical approach, Wittgenstein thereby had to describe language and its semantics ›at one and the same level‹—and thereby paved the way for the occurrence of a semantical antinomy which we will now investigate.

If Wittgenstein's picture theory was correct and language can only be used to describe actual things of the world, then the ›Tractatus‹ must either itself be nonsensical or incomplete. Wittgenstein's work is not a description of a real state of affairs in the world; it does not represent an actual object or qualify a fact of something as true or false. However, Wittgenstein (1922: 4.1272) himself considered this idea to lie at the heart of his approach by, for instance, uttering a statement about the concept of nonsensical sentences:

> »Wherever the word ›object‹ (›thing‹, ›entity‹, etc.) is rightly used, it is expressed in logical symbolism by the variable name […]. Wherever it is used otherwise, i. e. as a proper concept word, there arise senseless pseudo-propositions«.

In this sense, Wittgenstein (1922: 4.121) suggested that »propositions cannot represent the logical form: this mirrors itself in the propositions«. It is impossible to formulate a logical form in language, or to express something *about* logic from *outside* logic—as, for instance, Wittgenstein did with reference to the Aristotelian laws. Although propositions exhibit a logical form, this form can never be stated as fact. We can solely speak about the ›how‹ of things, never about the ›what‹. For instance, we can describe how a tree looks, but not what a tree ›is‹ or what the form or concept of a tree ›means‹. However, in stating this assumption of the ›what‹ and ›how‹ of things, Wittgenstein evidently does what he suggests is not doable. The sentence that ›propositions cannot represent the logical form‹ obviously *is* a proposition about the logical form. It is a fact about logical forms, which, if we take Wittgenstein at his word, is improper. The collection of facts was the natural scientist's task, not the philosopher's. Even worse, we now could accuse Wittgenstein to have written about the classification of meaningful, senseless, and nonsensical sentences *by*

the very use of nonsensical sentences. His tract must consequently be a work consisting of nonsensical propositions, and in this case, the judge and the jury were one and the same person. This is why some scholars argue that Wittgenstein might have been disappointed to face this unresolvable dilemma, as the

> »*Tractatus* by saying that although what his theory says is *unassailably true* and *definitive*, it is nevertheless pure nonsense […]. It is well known that this was in fact one of the reasons for his dissatisfaction with the theory presented in *Tractatus*« (Prætorius 1999: 395).

Recall Wittgenstein's (1922: 3.332) proposition which we already found to be at the heart of the ontological observer's antinomy that »[n]o proposition can say anything about itself«. Obviously, Wittgenstein formulated a proposition which states about *all* propositions that *no* proposition can say anything about itself. This antinomic sentence is by no means an isolated case in his work. If we take the ›Tractatus‹ at his word, we must inevitably see that it broke its own laws. If, for instance, we think about Wittgenstein's (1922: 4.11) assumption that

> »[t]he totality of true propositions is the total natural science«.

How can we interpret Wittgenstein's *own* proposition that all true propositions are subject to natural science? As he considered his ›Tractatus‹ to be a philosophical work, did he assume his proposition about ›all true propositions‹ to be false? Why did he propose so many—fairly obvious—contradictions within his work? Unsurprisingly, Wittgenstein seemed well aware of these inherent tensions. The ladder metaphor is one example; however we cannot be blind to the fact that Wittgenstein cannot say something true or real in his philosophical work. The last sentence of his tract may therefore be read as core insight of Wittgenstein's philosophy—but, at the same time, as its own death warrant:

> »Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent« (Wittgenstein 1922: 7).

As the silence Wittgenstein speaks about is foremost to be applied to metaphysical and metalogical sentences, it must be valid for the sentences of the ›Tractatus‹ as well. His work surely *is* a metaphysical and metalogical theory, as he speaks *about* the physical world and *about* logic. At this point, we might again be reminded of some antinomies' circular structure. If we now return to Wittgenstein's sentences at the end of his tract, the full spectrum of the antinomic tensions within his work lies bare. Think about the final sentence of his opus in which he appeals to be silent about the things one cannot speak of. By stating this, he wrote a sentence of the strange form *›This sentence cannot be spoken of‹*.

Obviously, Wittgenstein *did* speak about things of which he required silence. His last sentence actually *is* such a nonsensical sentence which contradicts all the picture theory's premises of describing something in a meaningful manner. Even worse, Wittgenstein (1922: 6.42) stated that ethical propositions must be nonsensical as a consequence of his picture-theoretical convictions. But is his final sentence any different from an ethical, prescriptive claim? Recall his proposition in which he denigrates his own work as nonsensical. We again could restate Wittgenstein's (1922: 6.54) confession in the following, very abridged sentence:

The ›Tractatus‹ claims that all sentences about a sentence's form are nonsense.[112]

Can we now truly *speak* of the above sentence? If we recall Wittgenstein's definition that nonsensical sentences can never be true or false, then this stipulation should also apply for the truth or falseness of the Wittgensteinian sentences themselves. But how can Wittgenstein's work be seriously considered something true or veracious, if he leaves his work's interpretation on such ambiguous and inconsistent founda-

[112] The notion of ›a sentence's form‹ has been chosen for the sake of the sentence's clarity. As we know, Wittgenstein rather spoke about the logical form of, and conceptual notions within, statements.

tions? How can he claim that all sentences about a sentence's form—which, more precisely, alludes to the ›logical form‹—are nonsense, if he says this by expressing a sentence about a sentence's form?

Recall the liar's antinomy. We were not able break the vicious circle caused by this antinomy, because the justification of one proposition inevitably led to the justification of its opposite. Can we see Wittgenstein's tract in a similar light? Think about the silence he called for regarding the things we cannot speak about—or, better, the application of the label ›nonsense‹ to these sentences. If the sentences of the ›Tractatus‹ were true in the Wittgensteinian sense of truth and falseness and if they represented a *fact* like a picture of the world, then they would not be nonsensical, but would rather represent a real fact. Curiosuly, if we read the ›Tractatus‹ correctly, all of his sentences are indeed framed as true propositions—his definitions, his picture-theoretical insights, his conclusions. However, in conjunction with his allegation of having written nonsense, these propositions can be condensed to the following statement:

›This sentence is nonsensical‹ is a nonsensical sentence.

If we follow Wittgenstein that nonsensical sentences can neither be true nor false, we apparently encountered a strange, modified form of the liar's antinomy. If the sentence is meaningful or true, it cannot be nonsensical—and *vice versa*. Even if we reject any definition of truth with regard to Wittgestein's work, we still have to think within his critical disposition ›meaningful—nonsensical‹. We are thus faced with an unresolvable semantical antinomy. If we believe Wittgenstein's tract, we would have to give up trying to think about such a nonsensical sentence. Then, the sentence could never have been spoken by us. We would have to be silent. However, if we understood the sentences of the ›Tractatus‹ correctly, we *must* believe this sentence as a true and meaningful fact, which, unfortunately, throws us back in the vicious circle, because

> »the very idea of a *meaningless* language is itself a contradiction, so that one cannot even frame what it is philosophers try to do without involving oneself in a paradox« (Block 1996: 148).

Is Wittgenstein's work to be read as an antinomy? Could his tract be unveiled as an unresolvable antinomic picture? It now seems that, although he intended to introduce a corpus and mechanisms for using language in a meaningful and consistent way, the Wittgensteinian approach becomes entangled in a new antinomy as well—and may therefore be interpreted as ›self-refuting‹[113]. Wittgenstein would have had to assume a semantical hierarchy, with the notions of meaning and nonsense similar to Tarski's truth assigner. However, this would amount to a self-violation of his whole programme. Danto (1968: 235) identifies this problem with the Wittgensteinian philosophy:

> »Wittgenstein held the interesting thesis that language is ideally composed of pictures of the world, so that, between the world and language, there is a parity of structure. If, however, language were as he says, what says could not be said. The relation between language and the world cannot be stated in a language which only *shows* the world and does not (because it cannot) show the relation of showing itself. The picturing relationship is at right angles to language, and it is at right angles to the world«.

In Wittgenstein's ›Philosophical Investigations‹, we find a semantical antinomy in a slightly changed form. Although he rejected his idea of a picture theory almost completely, the antinomic figure inherent in his early tract appeared again in his later elaborations. The reason for this lies in Wittgenstein's unchanged

[113] Not all readers share the interpretation of Wittgenstein's sentences as self-refuting or self-defeating. Apart from those who see his later work as a subsequent rejection of the ›Tractatus‹, various scholars such as Conant (2000), Crary and Read (2000), Gunnarsson (2001), or Hacker (2000) advocate another reading of Wittgenstein's early work.

ambition to clarify meaning and language *by* using meaningful language within his theoretical examinations.

In his later creative period, Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §109) still claimed that philosophical approaches should be undertaken in a purely descriptive way, and that »[w]e must do away with all explanation«. Even the description of particular language games leads to a semantical antinomy in the same way the last sentences of the ›Tractatus‹ do. The reason is simple. Wittgenstein argues that every statement is made in accordance to the rules of a particular language game. A statement's meaning can differ depending on the game's rules. However, Wittgenstein himself could be accused playing by the rules of some ›philosophical language game‹—and thus, the meaning of his statements about language games could also differ in the same way. Apel (1975: 56) nicely condenses this problem of self-reference in Wittgenstein's considerations by remarking that

> »the philosopher for his so called descriptions of language games himself needs a language game which stands in a specific relation to all other language games that may be conceived of […]. Otherwise Wittgenstein's program of a critique of language, manifesting itself in his talk of ›nonsense‹ […] would be unintelligible«.

Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §23) argued that new language games may come into existence, whereas others »become obsolete and get forgotten«. We therefore have to ask whether Apel's ›philosophical language game‹—which has to ›contain‹ the descriptive rules for playing language games in general—can itself *not* become obsolete and forgettable, but exhibit a transcendental, unchangeable character. Is Wittgenstein's description of language games to be understood in a metaphysical sense? Must this philosophical language game, as Putnam (1992: 176) asks, be handled »from a metalanguage«?

If we now ask about the philosophical language game[114] as a universal claim about language games and meaning as such, we struggle to justify this claim as something meaningful itself. Once we recall the ontological antinomy of blind rule-following and interpretation, difficult questions arise. How can we know that we followed the rules of, say, the philosophical language game correctly in the past? How can we interpret a rule in the right way? And how can we justify that our interpretation of a rule is right, whereas another one's is incorrect? Boyle develops the idea about the strange philosophical language game as a quasi-universal connection between all possible language games by stating that

> »we should eventually be able to completely connect all language games, developing a ›language game‹ for relating different language games. Obviously, such an interconnective language game would be dangerously close to the universal general propositional form which Wittgenstein […] later sought to move away from« (Boyle 2016: 208).

To clarify this point, think about Wittgenstein's (1958 [1953]: I, §43) semantical statement that »the meaning of a word is its use in the language«. What about the meaning of this statement itself? Recall that what is meant by a statement depends on the social context of the language game it is uttered within. He thereby both denies »that terms have a single fixed meaning« (Campbell 2001: 501) and that language could be used with analytical and idealised clarity. In contrast, a statement's meaning is solely governed by the rules of the social practice—and therewith, the language game which comprises these rules. But if we then ask about the meaning of the statement that ›the meaning of a word is its use in the language‹, we run into difficulties. This statement's meaning depends on its use within a particular language game. Then, just as the statement ›The door is not closed‹ can mean the description of a fact, a request to close the door, or an example of a scholar teaching Wittgensteinian thought, the statement that ›the meaning of a word is its use in the language‹ cannot claim validity as a universal concept which will necessarily be valid in future applications of this very rule. However, it *must* be universal in the sense of describing a general insight how

[114] Wittgenstein would however delimit the notion of a philosophical language game from the broader view of »science as a language game« (Cook 1994: 190) which follows different rules such as the discovery of causal relations.

language games as such can be understood. In other words, Wittgenstein's statement that ›no meaning can be assumed as fixed‹ has, at the same time, to bear a fixed meaning when being applied to itself. If we are unable to specify the correct rule of the meaning game and clarify the question of the meaning of ›meaning‹, we remain trapped in Wittgenstein's impossible rule of the indeterminacy of meaning. But even this circumstance is hard to express in the Wittgensteinian language. Priest (1995: 232) remarks that it is

> »[i]n fact impossible, since Wittgenstein's very thesis is the indeterminacy of the norms of rule-following«.

We are now left to face the dilemma that we are unable to determine whether we have correctly interpreted the rules of a language game. Even more severe, we are left empty-handed when it comes to the justification of why some rules might have been misinterpreted by others. Imagine that someone refuses to use the word ›book‹ in the way a language game's rules have determined in the past. If we now deny his ›new‹ interpretation of this rule, we can hardly »give a precise formulation of exactly what it is that we *are* denying« (Kripke 1982: 70).

Wittgenstein's ›Philosophical Investigations‹ must be seen as a language game itself. Holding this assumption, we can follow that his work describes *that* rules are being followed in every language game, but not *why* these rules are followed. For the players of a particular language game, the situation is no different. By doing something, we are following rules; but we can never know the correct meaning or interpretation of this use. To sketch Wittgenstein's core idea, we can formulate the semantical statement that

›Language game theory‹ claims that every meaning depends on its use.

The meaning of this statement is again twofold. At first, it implies that the language game theory says of itself that its meaning depends on its use in a particular language game, and thereby refers to its appearance within various possible language games and its various possible meanings. As such, the meaning of the theory *itself* seems to ›be what it says‹. It has no fixed meaning, but its meaning depends on its use within different language games. In short, language game theory itself has a fixed and universal meaning for *all* possible language games if and only if its meaning depends on its use—which is an antinomy.

We know the metaphorical statement ›This statement's meaning depends on its use‹ reflects the language game of the ›Philosophical Investigations‹, and that this game is determined by the rules of which it is comprised. Roughly speaking, we can state that Wittgenstein's work itself is made up of words whose meaning might be obeyed correctly in the past, but however could interpreted differently in the future—for instance, as a grammatical demonstration, an example of a sentence, or an artwork title. We can never be sure if the way we interpreted the rules of ›Philosophical Investigations‹ is correct, or that Wittgenstein himself reflected on the existence of the language games meaningfully. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein implicitly presupposes such an understanding. His insight that we *generally* and *at all times* play language games contradicts his own assumption that we can never be sure that our reading of language games was correct:

> »Suppose that the meaning carried by using an expression […] is a function of the sign plus an interpretation placed upon it. For the meaning to determine a standard of correct/incorrect use, the interpretation that grants the sign meaning must be stable. But any given interpretation can only be supplied by using signs. This means that such further sign deployment also stands in need of an interpretation if the meaning of the first sign is to be stable« (Luntly 2003: 94 f.).

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The statement that ›This statement's meaning depends on its use‹ thus contains a semantical antinomy if we explore the meaning of this very statement. If it is dependent on its use in a particular language game, its correct meaning cannot be assumed to be stable or fixed. However, the statement says of itself that its meaning *universally* depends on its use in *every* language game—which contradicts its self-proclaimed use-

dependency. Hence, we are forced to conclude the antinomic conclusion that the statement's meaning is dependent on its use if and only if it is independent of the language game it is used within. Or, in other words, its own instruction for what is a correct or incorrect meaning presupposes a correct meaning interpretation of itself. Therewith, as Apel (1996: 265) convincingly argues, Wittgenstein's

> »theory of meaning relies, in the final analysis, upon actual linguistic usages under pragmatically determined circumstances«.

As a declared foe of any metalanguage, Wittgenstein had no choice but to maintain the statement ›This statement's meaning depends on its use‹ as reflection of how the words in the ›Logical Investigation‹ should be interpreted. However, he thereby allowed for the construction of a statement containing a notion *about* a statement's limits of meaning in general and the unlimited meaning of meaning itself. Whereas Tarski, although perhaps misleadingly, would have argued that a semantical hierarchy of an object and metalanguage could have solved these antinomic tensions, Wittgenstein clung rigidly to the idea that

> »the meaning of most words […] such as ›truth‹, ›rationality, and ›validity‹, is conditioned by our way of life« (Baghramian 2004: 75).

As we saw, this relativisation of notions such as validity—which clearly violates the programmes of those scholars promoting hierarchies of object and metalanguages—give rise to the semantical antinomy we already learnt about. Wittgenstein's ›Philosophical Investigations‹ are implicitly expressed from a hidden semantical hierarchy above the generality of all language games and their core rules such as ›meaning is use‹ or the ›limits of correct meaning‹. But, as Wittgenstein's approach must itself be regarded as language game, the relativisation of notions such as ›meaning is tied to language games‹ lead to its own theoretical suspension. Think about the semantical statement that

›No sentence has a meaning outside its language game‹ has no meaning outside its language game.

If we think about the structure of the above statement, we easily understand the vicious circle it implies. If there is no sentence which has a meaning outside the language games it was uttered within, then there can be no sentence which tells us something about the constitution and meaning attribution of *all* language games. Such a sentence would have to be expressed ›outside‹ its own language game to refer to all other language game.[115] As we already know, such an outside stance would require an impossible ›God's Eye View‹. In this sense, Wittgenstein's ›Philosophical Investigations‹ about all language games were indeed not something written or expressed within a certain language game, but from an outside or above perspective. Surprisingly, this is exactly what the strange sentence says—namely, that no sentence's meaning is to be found outside the language game. Hence, the sentence *has* a meaning for all language games, if it has *not*. And even if we considered a philosophical language game as one in which sentences about all games are being made, we merely put old wine in new bottles. The sentence's meaning within the philosophical language game could never be considered valid, true, or relevant for any other game. We are thus led to believe that Wittgenstein's philosophical language game—that is, the language game of ›thinking about language games‹—remains undecidable and inconsistent:

> »Wittgenstein's one-sided and unsatisfactory thematization of the philosophical language game […] has tended to promote a very general confusion concerning the self-understanding of philosophy« (Apel 1996: 263).

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[115] Even though Priest (2006 [1987]: 204) remarks that Wittgenstein »comes close to saying that inconsistent language games are actually played«, the inconsistency of the philosophical game ends this play. How can the inconsistency of such a game be recognised other than ›outside the game‹ or *within* a logical consistent game?

Wittgenstein's intention to view *every* linguistic act as part of a language game leads to the consideration that his own philosophical considerations cannot be an exemption. This however brings the reader of his work to the questions of the meaning of meaning, the language game of language games, and the impossibility of a correct justification for a correct or incorrect meaning.Truth, validity, meaning and language itself have traditionally been framed as metaphysical notions, but now they become a playball of a use-dependent language game, which yields the semantical antinomy shown. Priest (1995: 233) more drastically judged that Wittgenstein's »considerations, then, destroy meaning«; the philosophical language game tends to be self-suspended:

> »If […] the proof of the self-suspension of the philosophical language game through the performative self-contradiction involved turns out to be the most radical form of the critique of language and meaning, it then becomes possible to think with Wittgenstein against Wittgenstein« (Apel 1996: 258).

We thus one again face the notorious semantical antinomy similar to Wittgenstein's tract. Although he obviously dissociated himself from several assumptions he made in his early work, he also remained silent about the new antinomy inherent in his late opus magnum. The pressing question of whether a theory *about* language games is *itself* a language game cannot be answered without getting entangled in a semantical antinomy. Hence, we can draw the conclusion that Wittgenstein did

> »take into consideration the phenomenon of the self-suspension of the philosophical language game. But he never applied these kinds of analyses in a strictly reflective manner to his own, suggestive statements about philosophy as a disease resulting from a misuse of language. Above all (and particularly after the paradoxical self-suspension of the philosophical language game in the *Tractatus*) he never again posed the reflective question concerning the linguistic conditions of the possibility of one's own language game« (Apel 1996: 261).

The crucial problem is that by stating that ›meaning is use‹, the meaning of this very statement cannot be considered to be dependent on its use. Wittgenstein knew about this dilemma and therefore concluded that no one can meaningfully state that ›all is in flux‹. This statement would, if true, contradict itself—as the assertion ›all is in flux‹ would itself be considered to be static. Surprisingly, Wittgenstein however tended to disregard this dilemma:

> »Wittgenstein's thesis is that all is in flux and his metathesis is that the thesis cannot be stated, that any attempt to state it as a thesis must run up against the limits of language and misfire. Nevertheless, he tried to do it« (Stern 1995: 165).

As a final consideration, we will now briefly turn our attention to a first variety of Wittgenstein's later work, which will be of importance in our investigations of poststructuralist theories. We see Wittgenstein's later view of language games as having striking similarities to the ideas of John Austin, although various differences in, for instance, their conception of the subject are apparent. The idea that language use depends on the rules and characteristics of a social game thus adheres to the concept of *speech acts* as performative utterances not being made to describe something, but to do something. And although Austin was not directly influenced by the work of later Wittgenstein (Levinson 1983: 227) when developing his theory, the first

> »seems to imply that language games are speech acts in the sense of Austin's *How To Do Things With Words*« (Gorlée 2012: 161).

As founder of the speech act theory, Austin (1975 [1962]: 6) introduced the notion of *performative sentences* indicating »that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action«. Other than sentences which describe things—for instance, *constative sentences* such as those used in Wittgenstein's picture-theoretical

sense—and can be true or false, performative sentences ›do something‹. For instance, if someone states that ›There is an apple‹, she expresses a descriptive, constative sentence. If she, by contrast, states that ›I bet there is an apple‹, she performs an action by formulating a contractual utterance. However, by comparing Wittgenstein's notion of meaning as use and Austin's idea of performative sentences, the same semantical antinomy is derivable. Think about the semantical statement that

This sentence is not constative.

Now, is the sentence constative or performative? If it is what is says of itself, it is *not* constative. Then, it cannot describe itself as constative utterance, but must be performative—which, as the notion ›not constative‹ implies, seems fair to say. Curiously, however, we have to conclude that if the sentence is indeed performative, it describes *itself* in the way of a constative one. Therefore, we arrive at a semantical antinomy. If the sentence is *not* constative and has a performative effect, it must be constative as a conclusion, because this is how the sentence describes itself.

We are again faced with the semantical antinomy we already discovered in Wittgenstein's assumption of meaning as use. Austin and all further speech act theorists who refer to the performative function of language run into trouble, as soon as the theory *itself* is understood as a performative act. Did Austin do things with words when writing ›How To Do Things With Words‹? Is someone who tells us that sentences are performative uttering a performative sentence? Finally, we should be cautious in sidestepping these questions to the difference of constatives and performatives—as, when faced with theories solely built on the idea of performativity, the statement that ›All sentences are performative‹ is made. In these cases, the theorist or theory making such a statement is *herself* or *itself* talking in performative sentences[116], and thereby opening the door to antinomic confusion. Again, a semantical hierarchy from which the distinction ›constative—performative‹ or the expression of the notion performativity could be made is impossible.

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As we will find, Wittgenstein's work has met approval beyond its philosophical scope. Austin's speech act theory is just one of various possible examples. However, by pursuing a linguistic turn, Wittgenstein had to elaborate the ways in which language and meaning are being used. Although most commentators on Wittgenstein's see unbridgeable gaps between his early and late work, the antinomies we found in both the ›Tractatus‹ and the ›Philosophical Investigations‹ appear in a similar form. Whereas the first reflects the impossible statement ›This statement is nonsense‹, the latter comprises that ›This statement's meaning is dependent on its use‹. We can therefore follow that although Wittgenstein's contribution to the linguistic turn in philosophy may remain uncontested, he nevertheless seemed to dig his own grave by talking *about* the limits of language by using language beyond these limits. By unveiling these similarities in both of Wittgenstein's works, Priest (1995: 234) corroborates Apel's finding that, whereas the semantical antinomy in the ›Tracatus‹ had been expressed explicitly, he refrained from admitting its existence in his later work:

> »The situation is now a very familiar one: we have another contradiction at the limit of expression. Wittgenstein's account of rule-following entails that the major conclusions of his […] arguments cannot be expressed. The situation is the same as that in the Tractatus. But whilst in the Tractatus Wittgenstein chose to make this conclusion explicit, in the Investigations he had grown more canny (if Kripke is correct), refusing to state the point, and merely hinting at it«.

However, by expressing these limits of expression, Wittgenstein found himself in a philosophical dead end. Stern (2004: 43) states that authors who ›take Wittgenstein by the word‹ think that »[t]he real message

[116] A short introduction on ›performative contradictions‹ in poststructuralist approaches is given by William Slocombe (2001: 215 ff.) and Simon Susan (2015: 255 ff.).

of the *Tractatus* and *Investigations* is that all philosophy, including the philosophy ostensibly presented and endorsed within the *Tractatus* itself, is simply nonsense«. Our evaluation of the antinomic figure inherent in both of Wittgenstein's works may therefore be seen as contribution to Lyotard's (1993 [1983]: 19) argument that

> »[i]t is easy to see that the *Investigations* link onto the *Tractatus*, but the manner of their linkage could not have been foreseen«.

e) Antinomies of Wittgensteinian Philosophy

Both Wittgenstein's early and late contributions to the philosophy of language entailed ontological and semantical antinomies, which, as a matter of fact, have mostly been considered in his own reflections. These inconsistencies have now been elaborated by sketching the antinomic figure inherent in his works. In the ›Tractatus‹ and the ›Philosophical Investigations‹, the recursive form of the *mise en abyme* was deployed, which is hardly surprising as he used language to speak *about* language. If we think of the Tratarian proposition as equivalent to what Wittgenstein as theorist spoke about, we find this proposition is a part of what it theorised about—namely, the meaning and form of all propositions which ›cannot speak about themselves‹. Likewise, we considered Wittgenstein's theorisation of ›blind rule-obeying‹ and interpretations as being part of itself in his later investigations, and necessarily had to conclude that his theorisation reappears in what he theorised. The *mise en abyme* was also characteristic for the semantical statements he made. Wittgenstein's picture theory and his theory of language games were both part of what they theorised about—namely, either as a form of a meaningful proposition or as a language game.

In Wittgenstein's ontological statements, he created several critical dispositions as *antitheton*. The ›Tractatus‹ was built on the opposition of ›meaningful—nonsensical‹, whereby only meaningful sentences could be either true or false. His ›Philosophical Investigations‹ presented itself as a clarification of the notion of meaning, and basically resembled this critical disposition.[117] In his semantical statements, those critical dispositions played a similar role. The picture theory again reflected the form of propositions as either meaningful or nonsensical. In his theory of language games, the question of meaning as use was debated from the stance of the *antitheton* ›fixed—changing‹ and ›dependent—independent‹ as attributes of meaning and interpretation.

Finally, when reading Wittgenstein's statement, we inevitably found ourselves as being caught in the circular inversion of *Penrosing*. In his ontological statements, the question of the meaningfulness of the ›meaningless Tractarian proposition‹ had the same confusing effect as the observation and interpretation of the theorist who blindly follows a language game's rules. The ›statement about statements‹ was just as peculiar as the assumption of an interpretation of blind rule-following. Wittgenstein's semantical statements were also plagued by these strange circularities. What should we think about a self-limiting theory of statements expressed through statements? How can we imagine a language game of language games?

Wittgenstein himself denoted his philosophical programme as ›nonhierarchical‹ as opposed to the ideas of Russell and Tarski. However, he seemed to presuppose a quasi-hierarchical approach to read his works. In the early work, the ladder metaphor can be understood as the most striking example. He required his reader to climb up this ladder to then throw it away, which, in a less illustrative sense, means to read the sentences of the ›Tractatus‹ as being written from a higher-levelled plane of an ontological hierarchy of propositional pseudo-levels. We thus are forced to argue that Wittgenstein claimed nothing other than an impossible ›God's Eye View‹, which any reader who used and understood the ladder could reach. As Wittgenstein himself knew about the antinomic figure in the Tractarian proposition, he obviously had to back-

[117] His ›rule-following paradox‹ was however founded on the antitheton of ›correct—incorrect‹ interpretations.

peddle by denoting the ladder as nonsense. In a similar sense, Wittgenstein had to assume a higher level of a semantical hierarchy of a ›language game of language games‹ in his later philosophy. To make the argument that any meaning is dependent on its use in particular language games, he again had to assume a ›God's Eye View‹—an impossible position above society, from which he could observe and interpret the blind rule-following in language games, the fluidity of meaning, and the changeability of interpretations.

	Ontological Antinomy	***Semantical Antinomy***
›Mise en abyme‹	recursive form of *theorist* as ›Tractarian proposition‹ and *theorised* as ›all propositions‹ similar to ›language gamer‹ and ›language game‹	recursive form of *theory* as ›picture theory‹ and *theorised* as ›meaning of statements‹ similar to ›theory of language games‹ and ›language games‹
›Antitheton‹	critical disposition of ›meaningful—nonsensical‹ and ›fixed—fluid meaning‹	critical disposition of ›meaningful—nonsensical‹ and ›fixed—fluid meaning‹
›Penrosing‹	circular inversion of ›statement about statements‹ similar to ›interpretation of blind rule-following‹	circular inversion of ›statement about statements‹ similar to ›language game of language games‹
Hierarchies	ladder metaphor as ontological hierarchy requiring a ›God's Eye View‹	›Tractatus‹ and ›Philosophical Investigations‹ as meta-texts implying an impossible semantical hierarchy
Examples	*The ›Tractarian proposition‹ speaks about all those propositions which cannot speak about themselves.* *Wittgenstein observes all those rules which have been obeyed blindly.*	*The ›Tractatus‹ claims that all sentences about a sentence's form are nonsense.* *›This sentence is nonsensical‹ is a nonsensical sentence.* *›Language game theory‹ claims that every meaning depends on its use.* *›No sentence has a meaning outside its language game‹ has no meaning outside its language game.*

Wittgenstein's Ladder Cannot Be Climbed: *Antinomies of Wittgensteinian Philosophy*

Particularly for the development of poststructuralist works, Wittgenstein's later work had a decisive influence. With Austin's notion of performativity, the idea of language and meaning as instruments of representation of reality was largely rejected—and therewith, Wittgenstein's earlier ambitions set out in his picture theory. However, as we found, the inherent dilemmas of language-critical accounts could not be abandoned. Quite the contrary, the statements in his ›Philosophical Investigations‹ appeared to be as vulnerable and contestable as those of his early considerations. We therefore have to expect that those works inspired by Wittgenstein's philosophy may be similarly infested with antinomies. For this reason, we will now draw our attentions to poststructuralist critiques in the field of International Relations.

3.2 Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's ›Critiques‹

Poststructuralists think of language not as representation, they reject the determinism of meaning, and they see social conventions and orders as constituted by discursive practices. With the Wittgensteinian foundation of poststructuralist drafts, this highly fragmented group of scholars seem to be plagued by an antinomic figure. While Wittgenstein dared to speak about the self-imposed silence, poststructuralists find themselves in a similar dilemma. Is the poststructuralist critique itself criticisable? Can we read poststructuralist contributions as deconstructable, heterological texts themselves? Is the poststructuralist ›subject‹ itself constituted through discursive practices—just as the subjects it talks about?

Poststructuralism has gained increasing prominence as an alternative to mainstream theories—not as a theory itself, not as a methodological programme, and not as a uniform scholarly group. What brings them together may be rather called a shared position and intention they have within their academic fields. They observe both the discipline and the empirical world from a dissident, alternative, and critical position; and they do so by analysing textual materials, social meaning constitutions, and forms of representations. One may assume that these scholars could set out a common theory or theoretical corpus; but this, as we will see, would harshly contradict their own programme. In any case, poststructuralism

> »seeks to draw attention to the fact that interpretative possibilities are open, that alternative interpretations are generally allowable« (O'Loughlin 2014: 24).

Our elaboration of poststructuralist critiques cannot be accomplished in the same way we investigated the works of Morgenthau or Wendt. Although some scholars may rightly be referred to as intellectual fathers of poststructuralist thought in International Relations, they surely cannot be considered their figureheads. Bearing this in mind, we will elaborate the works of Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro, whose major contributions gained prominence during and after the final stage of the Cold War. In this sense, we see Ashley as an advocate of a critical reflection of the discipline against the dominant images of logocentrism and structuralism, Walker as a proponent of analysing the dissolution of the metaphysical subject between identity and difference, and Shapiro as an intertextualist interested in the investigation of performativity and discursive formations. Whenever it makes sense, we will briefly refer to the works of other scholars, and, furthermore, also discuss the poststructuralist reading of ›securitisation theory‹.

Even though Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's critical engagement with both the discipline itself and the empirical field of international relations are at the heart of our examinations, we will also put their work in context with the philosophical branch of poststructuralist research—which especially leads us to the advancements of French thinkers in the 1960s and 1970s. As these philosophers can also be seen as inspired by Wittgenstein's linguistic turn, we thus may best illustrate the essence and challenges of the poststructuralist endeavour.

a) Poststructuralism and the Critique of Western Rationalism

Poststructuralism is founded on both a critique of traditional views advocated by Western rationalists and a novel understanding of language. With Derrida's critique of the rationalist ›logocentrism‹, Butler's and Austin's principle of performativity, and Foucault's discourse-theoretical considerations, the wave of poststructuralist thinking reached the discipline of International Relations. Various scholars attempted to translate the poststructuralist credo into political studies. Among them, Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's critical investigations can be understood as critiques of rationalist ideas in the field.

The poststructuralist project was at first directed against the modernist school of Western rationalism predominant in academia since Descartes' considerations on the human mind. For decades, the metaphysical debate circled around the question of how the logically structured mind relates to what we *experience*. Poststructuralists try to detach from this overarching debate and its dominating convictions and assumptions:

> »While modernity may not have exhausted all its animating concerns, they are no longer sacred: its concepts'—reason, self-determination, autonomy, dialectic—best days are behind them« (Lumsden 2013: 42).

This renunciation of modern rationalist ideas—and for some authors, Western modern philosophy as a whole—is one reason why poststructuralists have also been labelled as postmodernists or even ›anti-modernists‹ (Bertens 1995: 19). At the heart of poststructuralist criticisms of modern European philosophy lies the fundamental questioning of the conventional wisdom that humans as rational, reasonable subjects can approach objective truth and »maintain the stability of meaning and the validity of reason« (Bunnin, Yu 2004: 401). Scientists have been forced to think and argue in terms of rationality and irrationality, whereas alternative ways of legitimising scientific knowledge have been excluded. However, this ›narrative of rationality‹ deployed by scientific theorists is only one of many—although it dominated the scientific discourse for decades. The strange legitimisation of knowledge as ›scientific‹ and ›universally rational‹ has a long and unquestioned tradition. However, as Jean-François Lyotard (1984 [1979]: 27 f.) argues, this is for illegitimate reasons:

> »what do scientists do when they appear on television or are interviewed in the newspapers after making a ›discovery‹? They recount an epic of knowledge that is in fact wholly unepic. They play by the rules of the narrative game«.

To understand the poststructuralist's rejection of modern rationalism as grand narrative, a further example may serve as a better starting point. Poststructuralist approaches have, as the name suggests, aimed to ›go beyond‹ the premises of structuralism. The latter school of thought became popular as linguistic theory which broke with the conventional idea that the meaning of a sign depends of what has been signified such as a real referent. By contrast, language was seen as being arbitrarily composed of different signs whose meaning is only revealed in relation to other signs. As the intellectual father of structuralist thinking, Saussure (2011 [1959]: 114) introduced this idea by claiming that

> »[l]anguage is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others«.

Saussure claims the existence of a linguistic structure which is completely detached from the real world of referents. He even concludes that a referent can also be seen as a signifier. If someone sees a real apple, the signified ›apple‹ is provoked in her mind. Saussure thereby gave priority to the *signified*—namely, the idea that signs always refer to a signified, and that this signified is to be found in the metaphysical sphere of the intelligible. Although Saussure rejected the naïve assumption of a given relation between sign and real referent, he nevertheless brought along the understanding that a sign always refers to its signified within a given structure.

Poststructuralists were not convinced that this structure—or, as being used in a more sociologist sense, ›order‹—was something *given*, or something objectively existent. They rather began to ask how these structures are upheld and reproduced, and how they depend on the subject speaking within these structures. Why do we assume an intelligible sphere of concepts or ideas to which signs relate? Why do we maintain the idea that signs refer to mental categories such as an ›idea of an apple‹? From which metaphysical standpoint could Saussure argue that such a mental structure exists? To answer these questions, poststructuralists try to overcome »the temptation to use analytical (or ›cognitive‹) models to map all forms of life«

(Dillet *et al.* 2013: 8). We will thus understand poststructuralist ideas as carrying with them the appeal to »dissociate yourself from ›structuralism‹« (Foucault 1972 [1969]: 199).

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Jacques Derrida thinks of Saussure's structuralism as an attempt to perpetuate a ›logocentric‹ argument—that is, the conviction that the meaning of a word as unity of signifier and signified can be seen as present. Although Western modernists have held such a view for a long time by claiming that signifier and signified are two sides of the same coin, Derrida (1997 [1967]: 11 f.) argues that

> »the notion of the sign always implies within itself the distinction between signifier and signified, even if, as Saussure argues, they are distinguished simply as the two faces of one and the same leaf. This notion remains therefore within the heritage of that logocentrism which is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning«.

To Derrida, philosophers since Plato have fallen prey to a fundamental misunderstanding. They saw language as nothing more than an instrument to represent concepts or ideas, and implicitly presumed that this mental sphere of concepts or ideas is the sole reference point for ascribing to meaning to signs. If Plato speaks of an ›idea of an apple‹, language and signs solely serve as—sometimes better, sometimes worse—an instrument to represent this idea. By doing so, philosophers outclassed written language and signs as subordinate to the sphere of mental ideas, and, by contrast, arbitrarily upheld both the existence and priority of such a sphere *within the thinking subject*. This misunderstanding of a metaphysical ordering principle subordinating written language and signs to the reality of the sphere of Platonic ideas was coined ›logocentrism‹. Having discovered this unjustified preference of ideas and concepts as sole bearers of meaning in the course of philosophical thinking, poststructuralist tried to turn the tables.

With Derrida at the fore, this new way of thinking went along with emancipating the sphere of the sign and the written word. For instance, the meaning of a signifying word related to a signified concept is not seen as fixed in a rigid sense. If we try to understand the meaning of the signifier, we cannot find any corresponding signified. There is no external reality guaranteed by the thinking subject, there is only signifiers in the form of written words, sentences, or texts:

> »Derrida is able to utilize this conception only by ignoring Saussure's conception of the originating subject […]. The opposition signified/signifier is called into question: the space of the opposition is elided, there is no signified, there is only the play of signifies« (Strozier 1988: 218).

Maintaining such a view, how can we understand what the signifier as sign means if there is no equivalent signified? Derrida sees only one way out. To him, a signifier does not represent a given signified, but instead refers to other signifiers used in the long history of using signs in the past. We have to search along the whole chain of signifiers in which the meaning is partly enclosed, we have to include what has been meant by a sign in earlier times or other contexts, and we have to pay attention to what the signifier does *not* relate to in these contexts. Derrida's considerations are shattering for traditionalist views. A sign itself never represents a fixed signifier; its meaning solely appears fleetingly, can change all at once in regard to context and time, and is neither graspable objectively nor useful in a rationalist sense. The idea of a universal and ultimate meaning is as misguided as the hope that words and text could represent our world in a rational way. This is why Derrida (1997 [1967]: 19) states that

> »the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos and the related concept of truth«.

What follows from the refusal of the logocentric philosophy of modernism is the breakup of the signifier and the coupled signified. To put it in Derrida's words, the »différance« between signifier and signified

moves to the fore. To Saussure, every notion and every sign stands in relation to its opposite such as, for instance, reflected in the word pairs ›man—woman‹, ›war—peace‹, or ›good—bad‹. However, these oppositions are by no means something true. They are, to Derrida (1981 [1972]: 29), arbitrarily determined by the rationalist narrative:

> »At the point at which the concept of *différance* […] intervenes, all the conceptual oppositions of metaphysics (signifier/signified; sensible/intelligible; writing/speech; passivity/activity; etc.)—to the extent that they ultimately refer to the presence of something present […]—become nonpertinent«.

Roughly speaking, the signifier does not represent the ›real‹ presence of a signified. It also does not allude to a fixed meaning which could be found by approaching its alleged signified equivalent within a binary logic. The misconception of such a reference solely reflects the modernist tendency to *assume* the presence of a fixed meaning of the signifier. Derrida thus urges us to abandon the metaphysical implications of Western logocentrism and its doctrine that these binary oppositions represent something true or real. As these differences yielded by the opposition of signs appear arbitrary, the ›true‹ meaning of a text can never be approached—as, in the course of time, new signs are woven into the net of signifiers. Roughly speaking, if someone uses a signifier, its meaning will change with every new word he says. The comprehension of an absolute meaning of the word being used is made impossible due to the temporary and open structure of texts and language. The meaning of any sign develops and changes in a never-ending game of new differences. We can now understand why Derrida (1978 [1967]: 230) pursued the »deconstruction of logocentrism«. We are left to approach texts and scientific statements by unveiling the inherent dichotomies and oppositions, and not how their signifiers correspond or represent some fixed meaning. We have to discover what has *not* been said in a text, and not solely what was made explicit. We have to explore how particular meanings have been attempted to be left aside, not solely what has been said. Again, these views ridicule the ambitions of rationalist and logocentric philosophers. How can we picture reality through language, if language as a ›tool‹ can never represent things and meanings as a fixed and unchangeable picture?

By holding the view that written language cannot be used to picture reality or to represent signified concepts in a structured way, Derrida (1977 [1972]) took up an idea prominently suggested by Austin's speech act theory. The latter's idea of performativity became an essential part of the poststructuralist jargon. In this sense, Judith Butler tried to investigate how modernist societies reproduce the opposition of ›sex‹ and ›gender‹ by using identity-shaping performatives, and thereby borrowed the ideas of difference and performativity from Derrida and Austin. She first used Derrida's insights to deconstruct the distinction ›sex—gender‹ reflected in modern society in order to then claim how the performativity of gender classification affects identities, as

> »the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality« (Butler 1990: 136).

Butler's argument that the distinction ›sex—gender‹ is a performative act through which identities are reproduced within societies reflects the poststructuralist course of deconstructing and scrutinising the rationalist foundation of modernist thought. By placing »sexuality at the discursive centre of both modernity and our own cotemporary interpretations of the same« (Hemmings 2011: 173), Butler not only refers back to Derrida's and Austin's ideas, but also borrows the postmodernist understanding developed by French philosopher Michel Foucault. His work can »be characterized fairly as a critical history of modernity« (Lemert 2004: 82). Indeed, Foucault (1972 [1969]: 15) himself declared that the aim of his historical studies is

> »not to use the categories of cultural totalities (whether world-view, ideal types, the particular spirit of an age)«.

Together with Derrida and Butler, Foucault refuses to take the principles of rationalism and structuralism as put forward by modernism for granted. He saw Western philosophical culture being marked by Cartesian thought for decades. The »Classical *discourse*« (Foucault 2002 [1966]: 340) encompassed rationalist and mechanistic understandings of science. He thus concluded that discursive formations have to be seen in a historical and social context, and that true or valid arguments made within one formation could be meaningless in another one:

> »Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concept, or thematic choices one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say […] that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*« (Foucault 1972 [1969]: 38).

Foucault tried to sketch these discursive formations by critically examining how established ideologies and world views constituted scientific arguments, logical reasoning, and rational thought. In his famous work on the history of madness, he applies discourse-theoretical thinking by narrating how the concept of madness developed in the course of history. Again, Foucault (1988 [1965]: ix) convincingly shows how the metaphysical programme behind modern thought and its logocentric view during the ›age of reason‹ have been constitutive for both the scientific and social treatment of insanity:

> »What is originative is the caesura that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason; reason's subjugation of non-reason«.

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Although the poststructuralist movement should not be considered to be a uniform group, they nevertheless are bound together by the common rejection of modernist ideas such as rationality and logocentrism. In the field of International Relations, a similar picture is seen. Although poststructuralists surely cannot be lumped together, they share a critical view on modernism and its dogmas. Scholars of this line of tradition

> »insist that post-structuralism is not a theory, a grand theory or a paradigm about international relations. Rather, it is a commitment to certain analytical principles and should foremost be regarded as a critical approach. Nothing, if not critical« (Jørgensen 2010: 165).

Poststructuralist approaches to world politics emerged from a »rather amorphous group of reflectivists« (Hansen 2006: 3) in the early 1990s. A decade earlier, some scholars began to introduce poststructuralist ideas in the discipline—however, at their inception, more as a criticism of realist and liberalist thinking. The latter approaches have been known to imply a rather objectivist understanding of world politics, and therefore resembled modern perspectives on how scientific undertakings should be accomplished. Referring back to the works of Derrida and Foucault, most poststructuralist approaches are

> »dominated by a refusal to acknowledge claims made by objectivist and scientific grand narratives such as Realism« (Malik 2015: 40).

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Ashley may be seen as one of the first thinkers who introduced Foucault's discourse-theoretical and Derrida's deconstructionist ideas to the discipline, and his work nicely reflects the opposition to rationalist and positivist approaches we have already discussed. Ashley's (1987a: 53) perspective of policy as ›interpreta-

tive performance‹ is linked to his appeal to »displace this conventional understanding« of pregiven actors and boundaries. In the same way, he introduced his poststructuralist considerations as inspired by questioning »the unquestioned intellectual paramountcy of structuralism« (Ashley 1984: 226) just the way Saussure's structuralism was scrutinised. Indeed, Ashley (1989: 262) even claims that the associated logocentric view imposes »upon modern theory and practice a blindness«. Onuf (2013 [1989]: 11) similarly saw Ashley's poststructuralism as largely inspired by Foucault and Derrida, and considered the repudiation of »the deepest assumptions of Western rationalism and all that is built upon them« as common thread among those thinkers in the discipline of International Relations.

Ashley's poststructuralist reading of world politics also derives from the investigation of the logocentric principle brought along within the modern discourse. By placing the reasonable man at the interpretative centre of the modern discourse, anything unreasonable stands in opposition to this standard way of reasoning. This is why the modern discourse is closely connected to the allegedly unalterable sovereign state which preserves the equally sovereign and reasonable subject *within* its boundaries and protects it from the opposite irrational anarchy *outside* its boundaries. The sovereign state's *raison d'état* appears thus as subordinate to the reason of man:

> »The result is a social ›compact‹ between reasoning man and state—the former as the source of truth and meaning, the latter as the site and resources that modern discourse reserves for the exercise of force and violence wherever history refuses to bow to man's reason« (Ashley 1989: 268).

What is interpreted as irrational or unreasonable has to be excluded by virtue of the state's force of power. The state will use its power to »tame those ›anarchic dangers‹ of history« (Ashley 1989: 268). As a result, the sphere of domestic politics appears as the shielded rational domain of human reason, whereas the excluded region of anarchy stands in opposition. Hence, the legitimation of the modern state is brought forth by the logocentric discourse of modernity—and thereby, the idea of a reasonable subject at the centre. Moreover, as Ashley (1989: 286) remarks, most theories on world politics uncritically reproduce this picture:

> »The logocentric practice, centering on man, is displayed in the very title of the book, *Man, the State, and War*. On the one side […], there is the sign of man […] as the ideal of a well-bounded rational identity […]. On the other side, […] there is the sign of war […] that escapes the controlling influence of man's reasoned narratives«.

We thus see that poststructuralists not only recognise the interpretative practices of including and excluding in the political life, but also in modern theories *about* politics. Theories are understood as practice, and they accord to the logocentric principle of steadily recreating the role of man as rational, ahistorical identity. As a consequence, the poststructuralist attempts to unveil the historicity of this subjectivation, the historical narratives that lead to this »paradigm of sovereignty«, and the illusion that the constitution of the modern state serves as warrantor for the rational man's exercise of free reason—an investigation that has also been carried out by Shapiro (1991: 468), whose poststructuralist critique of the modern discourse on international politics will now be introduced briefly.

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Ashley is not alone in scrutinising the dominance of modernism in the field of International Relations. Robert Walker (1993: 3) similarly remarked that since Hobbes, »reason and order […] could be envisaged in relation to the discovery of permanent principles«. He saw the Peace of Westphalia as the beginning of »narratives about […] modernity« (Walker 2010: 133). His argument resembles the poststructuralist conviction that modernity and the adherence to the principle of rationality and reason have guided political thought for decades—but that, at the same time, almost no one questioned the legitimacy of this ›logical

supremacy‹. Similar to Ashley, Walker (1993: 118) intends to express a »critique of structuralism« and its interwovenness with modern ideas of identity, reason, and order. It is thus that Walker (1981: 195) sees himself in the tradition of those poststructuralist researchers who condone the dominant view of fixed political structures and order that go hand in hand with the »global hegemony of Western modernity«.

At the heart of his alternative draft of state sovereignty as reified by modern International Relations theorists is the unveiling of the discourses ›behind‹ these very reifications. Walker neither accepts the principle of state sovereignty as permanent and ahistorical, nor assumes its dissolution. The core of his alternative is reflected in the question of *how* this principle is being reified and recreated in both theoretical reflection and political engagement to eventually find this principle's ›purpose‹:

> »The modern principle of state sovereignty has emerged historically as the legal expression of the character and legitimacy of the state. Most fundamentally, it expresses the claim by states to exercise legitimate power within strictly delimited territorial boundaries« (Walker 1993: 165).

As Walker follows, state sovereignty is understood to be exercised *from the inside* as authority and centre of power towards the state's society and *towards the outside* of an anarchical system lacking from any authority or centre of power. This dichotomy of ›inside—outside‹ is central to the poststructuralist critique of the principle of state sovereignty, as Walker (1993: 174) remarks:

> »These two ways of readings state sovereignty, from the inside and the outside, […] seem to express the decisive demarcation between inside and outside, between self and other, identity and difference, community and anarchy«.

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Just as Ashley raised questions about the foundations of modernity, Shapiro (1989b: 11) saw his academic oeuvre also grow out of his critical interpretation of »the social world given to us by modern novel«. He scrutinised how the social world was represented in textual and literary ways, and found—deeply inspired by Foucault's genealogical »analysis of modernity« (Shapiro 1989a: 24)—that meaning is dependent on social and interpretative practices. For instance, by critically investigating the myths of the »legacies of the western political theory«, Shapiro (2006: 65) challenges traditional views on modern statehood and culture by exposing legends, novels, and stories which created historically embedded identities. In this sense, Shapiro (1981: 140) criticises the dogma of naïve structuralism and instead suggests investigating the discursive practices which constitute political structures and their representations in the first place. The tenor of Shapiro's work thus resembles Ashley's intention to critically scrutinise the traditional view of given structures, the dominance of rationality, and language as mere representation.

Shapiro investigates how representational practices in the area of international relations have led to the formation and marginalisation of ›others‹, in the same way as Butler deployed Derrida's deconstructivist method to distinguish between what has been created and what has been excluded within modern discourses on world politics. Shapiro therewith takes up the poststructuralist critique of the modern order as based on the logocentric principle:

> »The ›foreign policies‹ of nation states are based on […] representational practices through which various form of global otherness have been created. For example, to refer to ›Latin America‹ is […] to help reproduce an institutionalized form of dominance, one in which the minority, Hispanic part of populations in the region control the original indigenous groups« (Shapiro 1989b: 15).

Hence, the use of language as representational practice brings about a particular understanding of what is assumed as real or true within a societal discourse. This insight goes hand in hand with a critical evaluation of the discipline itself. How are subjects, objects, and political acts in the international arena reproduced

by the traditional interpretations of political scientists? Does the language used by modern International Relations theorists itself reinforce the separation of identities and others? Similarly to Ashley's appeal to reflect upon the language use in the discipline of International Relations itself, Shapiro (1989b: 20) argues that

> »most traditional forms of political analysis help to naturalize reigning interpretations rather than registering their meaning- and value-constituting effects«.

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Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro take a critical stance on the modernist view of world politics as interplay of sovereign states within given structures. They reject rationalism and logocentrism as mainstream perspectives which exclude alternative interpretations. By putting emphasis solely on ›creating‹ an ideal of sovereignty such as the sovereign state, the sovereign individual, or a sovereign truth, reason and rationality become the only possible references in the rationalist studying of politics. O'Loughlin (2014: 16) summarises these attacks on traditional rationalist conceptions within the discipline by stating that the poststructuralist critique

> »denies the very possibility of obtaining a privileged position from which to make universal claims about international politics […]. Without state sovereignty, the traditional distinction between international and political theory (or the inside/outside distinction) cannot be maintained; without the sovereign individual the […] ideal of rational man is ungrounded, and without the possibility of sovereign truth, the epistemological privileging of some forms of knowledge above others is unjustified«.

Even though poststructuralists attach great importance to not being labelled a homogenous academic group, we can nevertheless identify two essential similarities in their way to study world politics. First, they see their work as a *critique* of traditional, unchallenged approaches and concepts. Second, they see a novel understanding of *language*—as language critique itself, as discourse, or as ›material‹—as their point of departure. Edkins (2007: 94) nicely condenses this basic credo of poststructuralist thinking by stating that

> »poststructuralism is not just a method of textual analysis in the narrow sense of the study of written or spoken texts or discourses. It is an approach that treats social practices, objects and institutions as ›texts‹ in the broadest sense, in that they are capable of being interpreted in terms of their production of meaning, their discursive function and the power relations and structures they produce and in which they are embedded«.

b) The Wittgensteinian Foundation of Poststructuralist Thought

We will argue that Wittgenstein's linguistic turn paved the way for the three core ideas developed by poststructuralist thinkers—namely, the critical reflection of the discipline by scrutinising Western philosopher's sole attention to reason and rationality, a critical evaluation of the metaphysical subject, and the examination of performative language use within discourses. For this reason, poststructuralist thinking can be understood as being largely founded on Wittgensteinian philosophy.

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Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and meaning cannot serve as theoretical foundation for all poststructuralists' critical investigations. Indeed, Wittgenstein did surely not develop his ideas in the direction most poststructuralists moved in the 1960s—but, be that as it may, he nevertheless can

> »be shown to […] appear congruent with poststructuralism and deconstructionism« (Robinson 2009: 62).

Wittgenstein refused to consider himself a member of any philosophical school of thought, but numerous scholars have celebrated the »linguistic turn Wittgenstein initiated in the *Tractatus*« (Bergmann 1992 [1967]: 63). Especially for the French poststructuralists who had a lasting effect on both political theory and theories of International Relations, Wittgenstein's later work sharpened the way this turn took place insofar as

> »the turn taken by the later Wittgenstein who forcefully argued that the linguistic turn, in so far as it sought to furnish metanarratives which were foundational, was mistaken« (Marshall 2004: xvi).

Wittgenstein's linguistic turn changed the philosophical landscape in a radical way. His work reflects the poststructuralist attack on traditional, modern concepts of philosophy. Although Kenny (1998: 377 f.) does not view Wittgenstein's achievements as breaking with Western philosophical thought, he nevertheless claims that »his philosophy is very different from the great systems of the nineteenth century«. The break with conventional ideas—which most poststructuralists ascribe to—is thus unthinkable without Wittgenstein's achievements:

> »If traditional philosophy is characterized as different attempts at answering various philosophical questions, then Wittgenstein's philosophy may be characterized as a systemic questioning of the questions themselves« (Fann 1971: xii).

Wittgenstein's intellectual work can be seen as a critical re-examination of traditional philosophical problems from a novel point of view. Just as poststructuralists have attempted, and still are attempting, to break up conventional thought structures conveyed through decades of Cartesian and rationalist ideas, Wittgenstein pursued a similar goal by taking a radically critical stance towards these established ways of reasoning and speaking. This common ground of both his and the poststructuralist perspective has been described by Wittgenstein (1958 [1953]: I, §109) himself:

> »Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language«.

This bewitchment might be translated into what poststructuralists would reject as blindness towards the illegitimate dominance of reason and rationality in Western thought. Thereby, his account has not always been regarded as a firm critique of Saussure's perspective on language, but a comprehensive interpretation of his work leaves no room for doubt that his rule-based conception of language appears as an »internal critique of structuralism« (Livingston 2008: 12). Some scholars even argue that although this criticism has not been extended to the logocentristic tradition[118], he nevertheless suggested an—in Bloor's (2001: 96) eyes problematic—»antirationalist account of rule-following«. Although he hardly elaborated upon his opposition, Bloor (1997: 131) thus finds Wittgenstein's rejection of rationalism as harsh as Hume's similar attack almost two centuries before, as

> »he rejected all forms of rationalism and meaning determinism in favour of a thorough-going naturalism and conventionalism«.

For poststructuralist thinkers in the field of International Relations, a similar conclusion can be drawn. Wittgenstein's critical stance on the philosophical discipline itself has encouraged numerous poststructuralists to scrutinise traditional ways of reasoning and observing world politics—and thereby, »to be more reflexive about what they are doing when they claim to explain« (Fierke 2010: 93). Onuf (2002: 43), though referring to Wittgenstein as a constructivist, similarly appeals to repudiate the »centuries-long philosophical program in support of the logocentric worldview«. We can thus draw the conclusion that influence of Wittgenstein's work on poststructuralist thinking in world politics stems from the desire to con-

[118] For Llewelyn (1986: 69), »the language games we play are still assumed to be logocentric«. However, he sees Wittgenstein's theory as not too distant from Derrida's antifoundationalist account.

sider »the impact of nonfoundationalist thinking on language as it is used in IR« (Debrix 2003b [2015]: 5) and to critically engage in reappraising the discipline of International Relations *itself*.

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Wittgenstein can be seen as founding father of poststructuralist thinking insofar as he understood a »context such as ›modernity‹ […] as a construct of the interpreter« (Gunnell 2014: 157). But he also paved the way for the poststructuralist conceptions of identity and subjectivity. Wittgenstein's anti-mentalism served as an intellectual foundation for subsequent poststructuralist approaches directed at criticising the metaphysical subject which seemed to be etched in stone over decades in Western modernist thought. By detaching language from the individual's mind, Wittgenstein attempted to see language and language games as solely rooted in social practices, and shattered the bedrock of rationalist conceptions of the subject by arguing

> »against the mentalist view that the meaning of a word is a matter of the images with which it is associated in people's minds. Instead, he thinks, a word's meaning is a matter of its ›whole use in the language‹« (Child 2011: 253).

By understanding meaning not as grounded within mental or intentional acts, Wittgenstein's linguistic turn entailed a shift to the social practice of language games grounded in the ›forms of life‹. These novel ideas have been borrowed by several poststructuralist thinkers. As Robert Dunn (1998: 180) recognises, the »dissolution of the subject« advocated by poststructuralist thinkers aimed at breaking up the modern conception of man being tied to his mind, and at moving the Cartesian idea of human consciousness as Archimedian point of knowledge and meaning. The search for meaning must take place in language itself, rather than in the human's mind. Mouffe (1995: 317) also remarks that postmodernist thinkers resemble Wittgenstein in their critical investigation of the subject:

> »In the philosophy of language of the later Wittgenstein, we also find a critique of the rationalist conception of the subject that indicates that the latter cannot be the source of linguistic meanings since it is through participation in different language games that world is disclosed to us«.

The concept of *différance* as developed by Derrida is directly linked to these criticisms of the metaphysical subject. To argue that Wittgenstein fostered these ideas as radically as Derrida would be presumptuous. It can, however, be assumed that the latter surely pioneered Derrida's train of thought. In this sense, Giddens (1979: 33 f.) carries out that though the routes of both thinkers diverge, the basis of their thoughts appears to be analogous, as

> »language to Wittgenstein is a system of differences in the sense that the meanings of words are not constituted through the nature of utterances or marks as isolated items, but only through the ways in which they acquire an identity through their differentiation as elements of language games«.

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Finally, Wittgenstein's linguistic turn might be seen as point of departure from the poststructuralist development of the interconnected notions of performativity and Foucault's ›discourse‹—even though, as already mentioned, Austin's speech act theory was presumably developed independently of Wittgenstein's influence. The genesis of Foucault's idea of discourses was inspired by Wittgenstein's considerations on the limits of both ideal and ordinary language:

> »The profound tie between Wittgenstein and Foucault is the silence/illusion/limits each imposes on language/discourse« (Aron 1994: 151).

One might see the insight that language has performative effects within discourses as a cornerstone of poststructuralism. Again, Wittgenstein exemplified this idea by exposing the playing of a language game as performance. Language is not framed as representation, but as practice. With his famous claim that even the philosopher's undertaking is nothing more than a rule-based performance, he eventually framed *any* linguistic expression as practice, and thereby became one of the first thinkers who saw both ordinary language use and the scientific reflection of linguistically framed problems as mere practices of particular games:

> »Philosophy has become pure performance« (Genova 1995: 127).

Based on Wittgenstein's conception, Lytoard (1984 [1979]: 28) spoke about the »language game of science« and argued that scientific legitimisation is based on a grand narrative. Rorty's (1979) conception of language games in science also reflects this point of view. Similarly, Derrida took up the Wittgensteinian idea of language as performance, eventually leading to a critical reappraisal of philosophy as a practical discipline. In this sense, Priest (1995: 229) argues that similarities between Wittgenstein's and Derrida's account are strikingly similar insofar as

> »[b]oth reject accounts of meaning based on semantical correlates (though neither puts it that way); both accept the consequent indeterminacy of sense; both take into account the relationship between consciousness and meaning; and both adopt a tantalising, but often frustrating, obliqueness to philosophical issues«.

	Wittgenstein's Philosophy	***Poststructuralist Critiques***
Philosophical Approach	critical questioning of philosophical questions	questioning of dominant concepts
Anti-Rationalism	language analysis as critique of rationalism	critical investigation of traditionalist, logocentrist, and rationalist ideas
Language Conception	rule-based conception of language	poststructuralist conception of language
Meaning	rejection of meaning determination	nonfoundationalist and reflectivist thinking
Subject	anti-mentalism	critique of metaphysical subject
Practices	social practice of language games; language as performance	discursive practices

How Wittgenstein Opened the Door for the Poststructuralist Program: *The Wittgensteinian foundation of poststructuralism*

In International Relations theory, Peter Winch (1958) was the first to receive attention for applying the concept of language games to the field of social sciences. Since then, many theorists have felt inspired to analyse political actions as rule-governed games, and successively emphasised the performative character of language being spoken in these games. In this sense, Fierke (2003 [2015]: 80) tried to convince not only poststructuralist thinkers in International Relations that,

> »if language is in fact used in a number of different ways, a better question to ask is how this strengthens rather than weakens research agenda in IR […]. This would also consist of asking different questions about IR«.

Once we understand Wittgenstein's philosophy of language as an anchor point of poststructuralist critiques in the field of International Relations, the general thrust of these works become clear. As poststructuralists regard themselves as a highly fragmented academic family, the consideration of Wittgensteinian thought as theoretical foundation might help to recognise a similar direction. Like Wittgenstein, poststructuralists think of a critical investigation of language and meaning as an essential starting place. We however have to expect that these undertakings might create a dangerous antinomic figure. Just as in Wittgenstein's work, poststructuralist critiques are written texts about texts, language critiques expressed in language, and deconstructions of meanings formulated through meaningful sentences.

c) The Ontological ›Critic's Antinomy‹

With the Wittgensteinian foundation of the poststructuralist critique, we find three of their main proponents caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. Just like Wittgenstein's dilemma of being unable to speak in a meaningful way, the search for a meaningful position of the poststructuralist critic is in vain. While Ashley and Walker claim to criticise everything which has been uncritically theorised about in an ahistorical sense, questions arise regarding their own position and constitution. Similarly, Shapiro's ›instructional‹ text about how to deconstruct uncritical texts appears as an uncritical text itself. We thus scrutinise the marginal position of these poststructuralist theorists by holding a mirror up to them—and eventually confront their critical stances with their own stipulations.

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Ashley sees the poststructuralist's main task to be finding a position from which the ›observation‹ of modern discourses of world politics can be accomplished. However, he has to clear a high hurdle, as modernity cannot be grasped as an unambiguous, distinct notion encompassing a clear and homogenous field of inquiry. Instead, what is called ›modern‹ can better be described as

> »a multifaceted regime of highly mobile knowledgeable practices—interpretative attitudes and practical dispositions—that are widely circulated across dispersed and varied locales, there to discipline interpretation and conduct, open up domains of freedom, constitute ›modern subjects‹, effect the self-evident truths of modern experience, and enable and dispose these subjects to the further replication and circulation of the practices themselves. In this sense, the regime of modernity is an ›economy of power‹« (Ashley 1989: 260 f.).

Inspired by Derrida's notion of logocentrism, Ashley argues that the regime of modernity has imposed the centrality of an ahistorical, unified sovereign subject as the anchor point of all interpretations and meanings within modern society. Through the logocentric principle, each interpretation within the modern discourse is oriented towards the ›logos‹—and therewith, every meaning interpretation is seen from this logocentric point in relation to its opposite. However, the priority of the ahistorical subject implied by the logocentric principle necessarily veils the actual *historicity* of the subject. In this sense, Ashley (1989: 262) remarks that the

> »logocentric disposition […] imposes upon modern theory and practice a blindness with respect to the inescapable historicity of subject, objects, and modes of conduct«.

Hence, the poststructuralist as social theorist is encouraged to bring to light these ›blind spots‹. She has to ask how the central image of the sovereign subject brings about this blindness towards the historical constitution of what we regard as ›given‹, ›true‹, or ›normal‹—and, finally, the historicity of the subject *itself*. To answer these questions, she has to dismiss the idea of the sovereign, ahistorical subject, and instead assume the Foucauldian

> »figure of a man who is problematically involved in history: a man who […] sees plainly that he is enmeshed in language and in history, indeed, that he is an object of language and history« (Ashley 1989: 265).

In this sense, as Ashley (1989: 266) argues, modern discourse has invoked the illusion of an autonomous, sovereign subject through various discursive practices in the economic, psychological, social, and political spheres among others. However, the principle of historicity is necessarily excluded in all of these interpretations, as the view of history as ›creating‹ an unstable subject would clearly run counter to the logocentric principle. However, by holding the assumption that the subject is already bounded within the discourse of modernity, the question arises of how the poststructuralist researcher *herself* has to be positioned in order to observe and critically investigate this very discourse. Drawing on the perspective of Foucauldian genealogical view, Ashley (1987b: 408) recommends taking this undecidable »view from afar, from up high« to then see that

> »[n]othing is finally stable. There are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits of history. Seen from afar, there is only interpretation«.

How can the poststructuralist detach from the principle of logocentrism? How can she break free from the modern discourse she attempts to understand from the perspective of historicity? Ashley (1989: 272 f.) answers these questions by alluding to the way modern social theories are developed,to then show how the poststructuralist takes a »marginal positioning« to cast off from the blinding logic of conventional theory making. But before we further elaborate Ashley's conception of the poststructuralist theorist as ›working at the margins‹, we will now briefly elaborate Walker's position—to then find the common thrust of both authors.

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Resembling Ashley's account of International Relations theory, Walker critically reviews how modern political scientists—or, in most cases, political realists—have attempted to approach the disruption of world politics after the end of the Cold War. Referring to the mantra of poststructuralist critique, he acknowledges that the political earthquakes after 1989 have largely been met in an old fashion, by rigid adherence to the principles of rationality and reason. Surprised by the persistence of political realism and its venerable instruments to analyse these changes from a new or critical perspective, Walker (1993: 11 f.) follows that political theory *itself* creates what then is analysed as given or reified insofar as

> »analyses of culture, state, class, gender, race or individual subjectivity […] have been systematically marginalised in this context, primarily because the character and location of modern political identity is already taken for granted in the claims of state sovereignty«.

Together with Ashley, Walker sees the reification of the sovereign state as the main scourge of theorising in the field of International Relations, as any critical voices aimed at scrutinising the central image of the sovereign have been systematically silenced. Theories of International Relations may differ with respect to their inner composition, but they limit the field of what Walker (1993: 17) refers to as »horizons of the modern political imagination«. He argues that even though debates are being held among different camps within the discipline, the limits of their theories never transcend any ›imaginative‹ border. In fact, they draw this theoretical boundary over and over again. If, for instance, liberals and realists dispute the role of institutions, they thereby implicitly reify the state as sovereign actor. This is what Walker (1993: 82) aims to critically scrutinise, and eventually became his own research agenda:

> »I affirm the priority of history, and thus of approaches that stress interpretation, practice and the critique of reification«.

Which position does Walker propose to voice his criticism? From which perspective is the poststructuralist enabled to interpret theories of world politics as determined by historicity, by political practice, and by reification? As Walker (2016: 1) looked back on his academic works, he found that, despite its intellectual variety,

> »they all explore situations and contexts in which boundaries can be understood both as characteristic expressions of particular forms of politics and as constitutive practices that produce and reproduce those particular forms of politics«.

For Walker, the poststructuralist researcher must put herself in a position *at the boundaries* of both the political practices and the discipline reflecting these practices. Only from this radical and sometimes dissident perspective can the constitutive procedures and their conventional academic representation be unveiled and critically captured. Now, as Walker's position ›at the boundaries‹ and Ashley's ›marginal positioning‹ seem convergent, their proposals of how the poststructuralist researcher has to conduct her inquiry speak with one voice. It is thus hardly surprising that both scholars authored several joint drafts on the poststructuralist role within the discipline; thus, we will now briefly evaluate their accomplishments to this effect.

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Ashley and Walker (1990b: 367) intended to formulate a general thrust of those approaches tending to »speak from the margins« or, by giving a more drastic formulation, »speaking the language of exile« (Ashley, Walker 1990a). They saw poststructuralist scholarship in constant danger of being excluded from mainstream theorists in the discipline, but, at the same time, recognised the inevitability of such a position. They thus propose that a marginal positioning requires an »interpretative strategy« (Ashley, Walker 1990a: 367) of reading International Relations theory as a *dissident* thinker—or, in other words, by critically encountering these works in a systematic way. For this reason, the critical stance of the poststructuralist interpreter is far from arbitrary. In contrast, the marginality of the position she occupies goes with a strict scrutiny of the theoretical conception of the subject yielded by the logocentric design of international studies.

However, the marginal positioning suggested by Ashley and Walker brings about a strange constellation for any poststructuralist critique. Recall that the logocentric principle has been claimed to invoke a field in which International Relations theorists uncritically accept notions such as sovereignty. Although Ashley (1989: 264) does not think »that modern discourse is anticritical«, he bluntly acknowledges that since the era of Enlightenment,

> »one comes face to face with a ›critical limit attitude‹ that informs and limits the practice of criticism in the regime of modernity«.

These limits of criticism allude to the consequences of adopting the logocentric principle in modern thought. Any critique of the ›logos‹ modern discourses bring along is made impossible, and conceptions such as sovereignty necessarily remain uncriticised. However, if we now assume that poststructuralist theorists criticise all those modernist notions which have been ›used‹ uncritically within modern discourses by virtue of the logocentric principle, we can reach the ontological statement that

Ashley and Walker criticise all those conceptions which have been left uncriticised.

Now, can Ashley's and Walker's own critiques be criticised? If so, they would obviously have to criticise their own conception as being blinded by the logocentric principle and thus appear as uncritical in this sense—which would contradict their own presumptions. But then, if adhering to the logocentric principle and appearing as ›uncritically maintained‹, they should be criticisable by virtue of their own definition—

namely, that Ashley and Walker criticise *all* uncritically maintained conceptions. In this sense, an antinomy is yielded alluding to the undecidable position of a poststructuralist critic.

For several reasons, some poststructuralist scholars have denied any unity or consensus of their critical positions, but steadily reiterated the heterogeneity of the dissident interpretations. Most poststructuralist theorists candidly consider their theoretical diversity as strength and, eventually, as necessary methodical conclusion of their critical theory of the subject. However, the ontological antinomy we maintain reveals a different picture. At first, the antinomic statement holds that Ashley and Walker serve as representation of poststructuralist theorists. Although their approaches may differ in the self-proclaimed variety, they nevertheless commit to refuse any conventional understandings of a stable, ahistorical subject not further scrutinised. From this critical stance, however, the marginal positioning of the poststructuralist thinker herself appears undecidable. Can Ashley and Walker take a critical perspective towards their own position? Can the poststructuralist herself maintain that she critically observed the constitution of ›her‹ subject? And, finally, to what extent can the poststructuralist critique of the subject reconcile itself with its own critique?

The dilemma a marginal positioning implies is that, by virtue of its own theoretical ambitions, no decidable conception of the poststructuralist theorist herself can be approached. Obviously, we would not expect any self-contradictory position of a fixed or reified poststructuralist position, as by maintaining such a position of a »sovereign voice« (Ashley, Walker 1990b: 368), the poststructuralist would bite the hand that feeds her. Poststructuralists are therefore left to take their marginal positioning towards *any* sovereign centre which has been created by virtue of the logocentric principle insofar as

> »their marginality consists in their disposition to maintain their distance from all presumptively sovereign centers of interpretation and judgment« (Ashley, Walker 1990b: 368).

However, the ontological antinomy reflects the indifference of ascribing the notion ›sovereign voice‹ or ›interpretative centre‹ to the poststructuralist critique *itself*. As Derrida and his followers have claimed, the logocentric principle makes us think in hierarchical oppositions which then lead to the preference of the modern subject, the assumption of the signified, or the presumption of a metaphysical sphere of the logos. However, the question arises of how a boundary or a marginal positioning is metaphysically different from a centred one. Is the poststructuralist critique expressed from the ›centre of boundaries‹? Is the self-proclaimed critical voice a sovereign one itself? Ashley and Walker know about the reluctance of poststructuralist scholars to scrutinise their own position:

> »Simply stated, theses critical readings put the question of their own truth in suspension« (Ashley, Walker 1990b: 372).

They thus see the poststructuralist undertaking as reflected by an »intrinsically paradoxical problem that can never be named« (Ashley, Walker 1990b: 375). By criticising the sovereign voices within International Relations theory, poststructuralists have to play the logocentric game themselves. If we criticise something which has no actual presence, we nevertheless refer to this ›non-presence‹ in the same way we scrutinise those who do refer to this alleged presence. If we state that sovereignty is maintained through political practices or interpretative discourses, the criticism of these practices or discourses reproduces this perpetuation. With Ashley's and Walker's (1990b: 375) confession that this »question is one whose naming […] would preclude its practical resolution«, we see the discovered antinomy in a slightly averted form. The dilemma poststructuralist theorists face is that the assumption of the logocentric principle itself has to be carried out in a logocentric sense—namely, by assuming its presence and by accepting the opposition it creates. The poststructuralist critique of the principle is thus recaptured, leaving the poststructuralist with no voice to utter her critique.

This dilemma is reflected by the antinomy we found, and which is built on the opposition between something being assumed as ›uncritically determined by the logocentric principle‹ and something ›criticisable

not determined by the logocentric principle‹—thereby leading to an unanswerable question. If someone attempts to criticise any uncriticised, sovereign position that has been created by the logocentric principle, is her own critique also subject to this dogma and therewith uncritically assumed? If so, her own criticism is nothing other than a repetition of the principle she attacks; if not, her critique appears as itself *uncritically*—and thus must again be suitable for criticism.

The antinomic tension inherent in Ashley's and Walker's suggestions can be viewed from another stance as well. The opposition ›critical—uncritical‹ or ›logocentric—not logocentric‹ both authors establish is also reflected in their use of the binary complements ›boundary‹ and ›centre‹. As shown, they advocate a marginal positioning at the boundaries of the discipline to then unveil the creation of interpretative centres such as the notion of sovereignty. However, this intention creates its own interpretative centre—for instance, the ›sovereign centre of poststructuralist criticism‹. If the notion of sovereignty serves as logos for discipline of international studies, the systematic criticism of this notion accords to the very same logic—namely, *as* interpretative centre itself. The poststructuralist's interpretative practice of criticising is a sovereign voice of its own, even though some advocates would vehemently deny such an accusation. We might compare this poststructuralist dilemma with the role of a devil's advocate who systematically criticises all those assumptions made by logocentric theorists. Even if all her allegations had to be accepted by her logocentric opponents, her own role can hardly be criticised in the same way without accepting her self-refutation. It is as if she heaved her own position onto the level of an impossible ontological hierarchy. But from which level can her own position be observed critically? Which stance of observation allows for the description of an ontological hierarchy of ›a critic of a critic of a critic‹?

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Think about Ashley's and Walker's (1990b: 377) appeal that disciplinary boundaries are to be »written in question marks« in the poststructuralist sense. This systematic critique, which both authors propagate, means that their own notion of ›writing in question marks‹ must be written in question marks as well. By holding an assumption of »no stable position« and no unquestioned, fixated perspective, they ignore their *own* position. This poststructuralist point of view can paradoxically be shown by virtue of the logocentric principle. The poststructuralist's sovereign voice excludes any notion, concept, or meaning as questionable and criticisable and thereby reifies and creates a poststructuralist position which itself stands in a hierarchical position towards these oppositions. The creation of the poststructuralist subject as criticising, questioning, non-theorising, truth-relativising, taking a marginalised position, dissident, and solely guided by intentions and non-dogmatic practices *is itself* a sovereign voice in the proper sense. The poststructuralist subject as reproduced and created through every poststructuralist work has itself taken on the metaphysical character it sought to criticise, and thereby works in the same way it intends to criticise.

This dilemma can again be expressed in the form of an ontological antinomy. Think about the poststructuralist's claim that the constitution of the modern subject cannot critically examine itself due to the logocentric frame within which it is created. To reiterate Ashley's (1989: 262) words, the logocentric disposition »imposes […] a blindness with respect to the inescapable historicity of subjects«. Hence, the poststructuralist aims at observing—or, more precisely, critically interpreting—all those subjects being created and reproduced through the logocentric practices of modern discourses. We can thus make the ontological statement that

A poststructuralist observes all those subjects who are blind towards their own discursive creation.

If we now ask if the poststructuralist observes herself, we are stuck. If she observes herself, she must be blind towards her own discursive creation, and thus cannot critically interpret her own discursive constitution. However, she is part of those discourses and subject creations which necessarily have to be observed

by the poststructuralist by definition of the critical stance she claims to deploy. Roughly speaking, she can only observe herself if she cannot observe herself. She would have to take the poststructuralist identity *and* an ›exempted‹, detached one at the same time. Her position thus appears to be undecidable. Spegele (1995: 214), although thinking about the problem of moral relativism, argues that Ashley and Walker have put themselves in such an undecidable position, as

> »two notable intertextualists, Richard Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, balk at the suggestion that their position is nihilist […]. Even if we accept their protestations on this point, which we are not logically compelled to do, their position would still be vulnerable […]. For the deconstruction of rationality […] would leave them and us with an unanswerable question: ›Who is exempt and how does one know‹?«

By thinking about the meaning of this ontological antinomy, we obviously seem to misuse several notions of the poststructuralist jargon at first glance. How can we speak of an observing subject, if such a subject is assumed to solely be yielded by the logocentric procedure? How can we think of a totality of ›all subjects‹ bounded by modern discourses, if ›totality‹ is itself a notion of this very discourse? How can we adopt an originally class-theoretical antinomy borrowed from a logical-mathematical context to reflect our allegations towards the poststructuralist programme? Our answer is blunt. The poststructuralist herself uses these words, notions, and concepts to describe her critique. By using ›her‹ language, she paradoxically represents the impossibility of representation, she draws on fixed meanings to describe the impossibility of fixed meanings, she claims to unveil the creation of the modern subject through interpretative practices by creating her own subjectivity in the same way. Moreover, she criticises the logocentric procedure of yielding binary oppositions by yielding a binary opposition towards the logocentric procedure, she pretends to unveil the ›unsaid other‹ by herself excluding her own otherness, and she scrutinises the dominance of sovereign voices by speaking as a sovereign voice herself.

The creation of the undecidable poststructuralist subject is not an imperfection or failure of the poststructuralist programme. It solely results from the application of its theoretical presumptions about the role of the theorist herself. As the ontological antinomy exemplifies, the poststructuralist theorist's position at the boundary of the discipline become undecidable when applied to its own presumptions. To better understand this dilemma, we should simply pose one question. What happens if we critically interpret the texts of Derrida, Ashley, or Walker in the poststructuralist sense they suggest for all *other* texts?

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An answer—which unsatisfactorily solely reflects its undecidability—can be given by examining an observer's antinomy in the work of Shapiro (1989b: 17), who felt inspired by the Foucauldian idea of language as power insofar as statements excluding otherness by creating a self-identity are understood as »political resources«. As the political world is represented through language, representational practices of dominant discourses form the basis of what we hold as true and real. At the same time, the poststructuralist acknowledges that language cannot represent reality. Quite the contrary, reality is made *through* the use of language. However, Shapiro thought that a critical appraisal of what has been constituted as reality through language could only be conducted by approaching written texts and scripts in world politics in a novel way.

Shapiro (1989b: 11), perhaps even more clearly than Ashley and Walker, refers to developments in postmodern literature theory since the 1960s to consider how *intertextuality* changes the way texts can be interpreted. He argues that a text's meaning always stands in relation to *other* texts by borrowing Kristeva's (1986 [1966]: 37) famous idea of intertextuality, whereupon

> »any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity«.

To understand the meaning of a text, we should not regard its authorship as the main source of ›truth‹ or validity of an interpretation. If we instead understand a text solely as carrying forward what has been said in previous ones, we better understand which rules, conventions, and representations have been taken up and reproduced in a text. With both Wittgenstein's and Derrida's critiques of the modern subject, the concept of intertextuality resembles this trend by withdrawing the sovereign meaning interpretation from the author herself. Shapiro (1989b: 11) now attempts to use these insights from the literary theory in a more general sense:

> »Insofar as ›social reality‹ emerges in various writing genres, investigations of how the world is apprehended require inquiries into various pre-texts of apprehension, for the meaning and value imposed on the world is structured not by one's immediate consciousness but by the various reality-making scripts one inherits or acquires from one's surrounding cultural/linguistic condition«.

Shaprio thus takes Derrida's critical stance on the logocentric principle. We obviously find him resembling the idea that the meaning of a text can only be approached by its relation to other texts, to the ›chain of signified‹ in earlier texts, and to what is *not* said in the text. With Kristeva's idea of intertextuality, the traditional view of how a text can be interpreted is shattered. A text's meaning is not mediated between an author and its reader, but represented through a literary practice interwoven in the historicity of scripts and interpretations. This idea was most prominently adopted by Roland Barthes (1977 [1968]: 147), who in his ground-breaking essay *›The Death of the Author‹* argued that

> »[o]nce the author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing«.

Shapiro's textual analysis of world politics amounts to the poststructuralist's proclaimed death of the author. The dissolution of the modernist subject did not spare the critique of traditional authorship. Having removed the author, the meaning of a written text has to be understood in a novel way. It is not the genuine work of a subject, but a representation of a political or social practice. But how can we then approach a text? Shapiro (1989b: 15) suggests the Derridean deconstructivist method of unveiling the intertextuality and differences in interpretative practices:

> »Derrida's deconstructive criticism can be shown to disclose how every social order rests on a forgetting of the exclusion practices through which one set of meanings has been institutionalized and various other possibilities—other forms of meaning—have been marginalized«.

Shapiro thus encourages critically reading texts and scripts of world politics from a changed perspective. With Kristeva's idea of intertextuality and Derrida's ›method‹ of deconstruction, he suggests interpreting textual representations in international relations by setting aside the role of the author—and instead viewing texts as linguistic materials in need of critical interpretation. However, as we now will see, this appeal turns out to be highly problematic.

By furnishing the analysis of political texts with Kristeva's and Derrida's insights, he finds his own text in a quandary. Think about Shapiro's text as *instruction* to interpret ›uninstructed texts‹ in Kristeva's and Derrida's sense. Then, any uninstructed text would be seen as textual material at hand for the poststructuralist's critical investigation by the methodical instructions given by Shapiro together with Kristeva and Derrida. In this sense, we might understand poststructuralist literature as consisting

> »of what can only be called instruction manuals, from ›An Introduction of Deconstructionism‹ to ›Deconstruction for the Experts‹, and yet another provides examples of the practice of deconstruction through works which employ the method and demonstrate how this or that canonical text is indeed man-centered and nostalgic for origins« (Hans 1987: xi f.).

With this—admittedly harsh and pigeonholed—understanding of poststructuralist literature as ›instructions‹, we can best understand the problematic disposition of how poststructuralists are forced to design their own textual work in relation to the texts they seek to critically interpret. With Shapiro's text as instruction about how to deconstruct *other* texts that lack instructions, we can make the ontological statement that

Shapiro's text instructs how to deconstruct all those texts that do not instruct themselves.

If we now ask if Shaprio's text is to be instructed by its own instruction, an ontological antinomy arises. If his text is seen as uninstructed due to the self-proclaimed death of the author, it qualifies as textual material to be instructed by Shapiro's method. But then again, the text instructs itself; and thereby, the statement yields an antinomy. In this short form of an ontological antinomy, Shapiro's text stands as metaphor for the poststructuralist theorist who, as we learnt, ›died‹ as an author. However, this claim does not prevent us from considering an instructional text in the same role as a theorist who theorises about something. In this sense, Shapiro's own text appears similar to Wrangler's instructional book ›How to Read a Book in the Best Way‹—which unfortunately might also symbolise the logical problems of writing such a book.

Shapiro's own text *about* the method of adopting deconstruction in international studies thus also amounts to a performative contradiction. Think about his textual instruction as an appeal of the form ›Don't do what the author wants you to do‹. Again, the same contradictory tension becomes obvious if we attempt to follow the instruction Shapiro *as an author* gives us—namely, to not do what the author wants us to do. But how convincing is this antinomy? Can we assume this statement as a serious problem for poststructuralist literature, or is it more of an exaggerated game of ideas?

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The problem that poststructuralist texts bear a contradiction when applied to themselves can demonstrated by an undecidable description of Kristeva's notion of intertextuality. As Friedman (1991: 153 f.) acknowledged, Kristeva's English editor had attempted to ›set right‹ this notion by arguing that the original meaning of intertextuality had been generally misunderstood by various scholars in Europe and the United States. He argued that what was actually meant by Kristeva's French term ›intertextualité‹ has often been misused in a false way. However, if we now think about the unfortunate editor's role in clarifying the notion of intertextuality, his undertaking turns out to be an ironic and self-contradicting interpretative act. As Friedman (1991: 154) mischievously remarks, the editor's

> »disturbance at the ›abuse‹ of Kristeva's term—authorized by Kristeva's own disparaging remarks—reflects the wish for intellectual clarity and precision in terminology, but it also engages in a desire to maintain a fixed meaning, a signified, for intertextuality. The concern for purity of Kristeva's concept—the critique of its ›abuse‹—insists upon the operation of influence in the dissemination of her concepts in its original form on ›both sides of the Atlantic‹. Kristeva *authored* the term, which should be used with the *meaning* she *intended*. I […] emphasize the irony of the discourse of anonymous intertextuality being promoted within the discourse of influence. My point is not to trap Kristeva in an inconsistency but rather to suggest that the discourses of influence and intertextuality have not been and cannot be kept pure, untainted by each other«.

Although not drawing on an inconsistency in Kristeva's work, Friedman's remarks nevertheless reflect the antinomic tension inherent in the poststructuralist notion of intertextuality going hand in hand with the death of the author. The crux of the matter is simply the impossible condition that the corpus of poststructuralist instructions—ways of deconstructing texts, ways of unveiling intertextual relations—must itself be written in a pure, uninstructed style to establish the central notions such as deconstruction or intertextuality in a meaningful manner. By claiming the theoretical absence of any authorship, we are forced to view texts as uninstructed material. But then, however, the claim itself cannot be seen as detached from its author. Some simple questions allude to this dilemma. What happens if we deconstruct

Derrida's notion of deconstruction? How would we relate Kristeva's term ›intertextuality‹ as intertextual phenomenon itself? How can we interpret Shapiro's own text as political representation?

Similar to the difficulties Ashley and Walkerface when attempting to sketch a consistent image of ›the poststructuralist critique‹ and ›the poststructuralist subject‹, Shapiro's poststructuralist instructions become a self-contradicting text. By proclaiming the death of the author and the »delusion of the ownership of meaning« (Shapiro 1989b: 14), the methodical instructions given on how to interpret texts as intertexts turn out to be ambiguous, because they have to be written in an idealistic, positivistic way to enfold their intended meaning. We eventually argue that most poststructuralists have been aware of these theoretical pitfalls. Their reluctance to label ›poststructuralism‹ as a method or theoretical approach might then be seen as a bid to escape, and we might surmise that Derrida's (1988 [1983]: 3) contention »[d]econstruction is not a method« is no different. If a poststructuralist named what she does in a fixed and stable way, she would contradict herself as soon as she related this name to the nonfixivity and instability of *all* names. This impossibility prevents any consistent self-description. Therewith, poststructuralists find themselves unable to describe their own work as theory or method. In a similar sense, Onuf (2013 [1989]: 11) accuses a figurehead of poststructuralist thinking in International Relations by claiming that

> »Ashley cannot do theory without doing what is incorrigibly implicated in the Western project he would cast off«.

The poststructuralist position from which critical and deconstructivist work claims to take place appears untenable. We argue that the way in which these critics try to justify their point of observation remind us of an impossible, higher-level ›God's Eye View‹. To conserve the pureness of their dissident, marginal positioning, poststructuralists tend to claim a peculiar ontological hierarchy of the boundaries they are speaking from. These boundaries, however, are best described by Ashley (1987b: 408) as a hierarchical »view from afar, from up high«. From such a view, the poststructuralist herself can observe and critically examine the social world and its logocentric mechanisms, dominant thinking figures, their captivity in constitutive discourses, and meaning fixations. Again, such a position is only possible if the poststructuralist theorist breaks free from this social world. Unfortunately, this ontological hierarchical position at the boundaries violates the whole poststructuralist programme. In this sense, Derrida's »hierarchy of logocentrism« (Barker 2001: 163) can only be viewed from ›outside‹ or ›above‹ this very hierarchy—which, as we argue, is nothing else than creating an own hierarchical level.

The ontological antinomy we found in several forms does not bode well for the poststructuralist thinker. Her endeavour of observing and critically interpreting social phenomena without getting entangled in her own act of observation and critical interpretation thus turns out as impossible as squaring the circle—and, even more severe, we will also find a semantical antinomy enmeshed in those works built on Ashley's and Walker's genealogical critique and Shapiro's intertextual analyses.

d) The Semantical Antinomy of ›Discursive Truth‹

The observer's antinomy we found in poststructuralist thinking reflected the impossible entanglement of an assumed discursive identity *in general* and the poststructuralist's own critical self-description—or, in the same way, the inconsistent assumption of the intertextual, authorless characterisation of texts *in general* and the poststructuralist's authored ›instructional text‹. Now we will not only think about the poststructuralist role of the critical observer or instructive author, but also about the question of how the poststructuralists' works themselves can be understood. We refrain from seeing these works as theories or methodical statements, and therewith comply with the poststructuralist's self-understanding. We will however regard

the works of Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro as ›paradigmatic texts‹ which, as referred to by various scholars, represent some of the essential core ideas and beliefs of the poststructuralist movement in International Relations theory.

In this sense, Ashley (1989: 272 f.) carries out that all theoretical positions in modern discourses on social theory are located within a limited field whose boundaries are determined by an undecidable question. This question relates to the *paradox* of the radical undecidability of history. Whereas one of the paradox' two contradictory statements claims the dependence of practices on structures, the other holds the dependence of structures on practice. In this sense, it appears undecidable if the social structure must already exist to allow for meaningful practices of ›history making‹ in the first place, or if this very structure is being created through meaningful practices. Taken together, both propositions describe an impossible and undecidable state. Now, in modern social theories, one of both stances is arbitrarily adopted by virtue of the logocentric hierarchy, whereas its opposition is unobtrusively excluded. As a matter of fact, any modern social theory can be located between these twooppositions. There is no other ›alternative‹ to ground social theories in another sense. However, either way »historicity is subordinated to the sovereign voice that theory invokes« (Ashley 1989: 275), and therewith, modern social theory always is given priority over historicity. Poststructuralists aim to invert this hierarchy. Without offering an alternative view, they understand theories as *part* of their own discourse to be able to historicise the theoretical discourse as such. For them, theory is not seen as metaphysically standing above history, but as embedded and created through history. This is the marginal positioning from which the poststructuralist approaches modern social theories in order to discover the historical practices ›behind‹ the making of theories. At this point, we see the poststructuralist engaging in what Gödel famously accomplished—metatheory is expressed as theory, and theories are expressed by what they theorise about.

However, the poststructuralist perspective appears highly disputable when applied to itself. If theoretical discourses are seen as historical and political practices, the poststructuralist critique itself must be seen through this lens. How can the poststructuralist differentiate between the theories she criticises as historical practice and her own theoretical creation? Ashley (1989: 279) seems to be aware of this problematic condition of understanding the doing of theory as arbitrary practice:

> »In this, there is certainly a paradox: the poststructuralist's claim to theoretical integrity and detachment depends upon her readiness to put in question her own subjective standpoint, her competence to write theory and not political ideology«.

How can the poststructuralist accomplish her undertaking? The answer seems simple at first glance. She has to change the way of reading and interpreting texts. Modern social theorists treat history as ›passive‹ reading of a monological text, as a representation of something already interpreted. On the contrary, poststructuralists refrain from understanding history as a text equipped with a fixed, unambiguous meaning. They pay attention to its *heterological* character, to its boundless and incomplete meaning structure, and to its variety of interpretative possibilities. The poststructuralist must, as Ashley (1989: 282) suggests, to proceed »according to the model of a heterologue« by treating texts as bounded within other contexts of cultural and political practices themselves:

> »It is a question of *how*, in history, meaning is imposed, put into question, reinterpreted, and fixed anew« (Ashley 1989: 283).

If a text is understood as monological, we tend to grasp its meaning as being bounded within the text—and nowhere else. A monological interpretation would thus solely be derived from the words, sentences, and metaphors of this very text, and its meaning would solely correspond to ›what has been said‹ in the text. In contrast, a text is read as heterological if we seek its meaning by turning our attention to ›what has

not been said‹—the excluded, the other, the silenced which cannot be found in this very text. In this sense, the treatment of a text in a heterological sense comes close to the poststructuralist's endeavour of breaking up the logocentric, ahistorical, and structuralist hierarchy of understanding things. Der Derian (1990: 297) describes this heterological character of the discourse by carrying out that International Relations theories are *not* representing or reflecting their field, as those approaches

> »use and are used by language, by the tropes, rhetoric, narratives, and grammar that make up an array of ambiguous and indeterminate signifying practices. It is this heterological nature of discourse that dominant powers […] always dream of fixing […] a single, monological meaning«.

Ironically, the description of texts and language as heterological must itself be expressed in a monological way—as otherwise, the meaning of the taxonomy ›heterology‹ would turn out to be self-refuting. We thus arrive again at an impossible disposition of the poststructuralist understanding of discursive theories and the poststructuralist approach as exposing itself as discursive. How can the poststructuralist interpretation be interpreted itself? What if we feed a poststructuralist's text *about* other text with itself? How would we think of a heterological meaning of ›heterology‹?

If we understand the poststructuralist work as text which can be critically interpreted by its own advocated techniques, an undecidable question is created. Take, for instance, Ashley's presumption that a text's meaning has to be understood heterologically. This condition would nicely reflect the poststructuralist course of seeking exclusions, thinking intertextually, and viewing texts as practices. However, to reflect the reading of Ashley's own instructional text, we are led to make the semantical statement that

This sentence is heterological.

If we try to interpret the sentence's meaning, we get into serious difficulties. If the sentence is indeed heterological as suggested by Ashley, its meaning is not ›in the text‹—but has to be found in relation to various other texts and contexts, thereby necessarily implying its instability and nonfixivity. However, this is exactly what the sentence says of itself in a monological manner. Hence, a semantical antinomy arises in the form of a sentence which is heterological if and only if it is not. Unfortunately, Ashley (1989: 281) yields a similar antinomy by suggesting that the ›general text‹ of Western thought cannot be approached in a monological way. There is, for instance, no historical text that carries a single, homogeneous meaning which could be revealed from itself:

> »According to the model of the heterologue […], no structure of *le texte général* can be adequately comprehended as […] text that is fixed […] and homogeneous in its meaning«.

But how are we supposed to think of Ashley's own statement that the meaning of *any* text—and therewith, any sentence written in a text—is of heterological character? Obviously, we again have to ask whether the sentence ›All sentences are heterological‹ is *itself* heterological, only to then follow that Ashley's sentence is heterological if and only if it is not. The impossible status of the poststructuralist work itself is therewith brought to the fore and enfolds its self-defeating effect. Surprisingly, this effect is further aggravated by Ashley's tendency to use the taxonomy ›heterologue‹ in hierarchical opposition to what he called ›monologue‹, and to choose a logocentric path to criticising logocentrism's monological implications. Even more severely, we will conclude that the poststructuralist engagement with poststructuralism itself will leave us with an undecidable disposition reflected by the semantical antinomy we revealed.

To emphasise the seriousness of these problems, we will think about a famous semantical antinomy discovered by Kurt Grelling and Leonard Nelson in 1908. Its form resembles the logic of the liar's antinomy, but it is not built upon the opposition ›true—false‹. Instead, the authors showed the impossibility of assigning the attribute ›heterological‹ in the sense of ›not self-describing‹ to itself. Kenyon gives a good description of what has been popularised as ›Grelling-Nelson Paradox‹:

> »Adjectives, of course, are descriptive terms. Among the things they can describe […] is the adjective itself. So, for example, the adjective ›linguistic‹ is linguistic, just as the adjective ›short‹ is short and ›polysyllabic‹ is polysyllabic. Call adjectives that describe themselves *autological*. On the other hand, most adjectives do not describe themselves. ›Long‹ is not long, ›wet‹ is not wet, and ›plebian‹ is not plebian«. Call adjectives that do not describe themselves *heterological*. Notice, though, that both ›autological‹ and ›heterological‹ are themselves adjectives. So are these two adjectives themselves autological or heterological. In particular, is ›heterological‹ heterological?«

If the attribute ›heterological‹ is itself heterological, it should not describe itself. However, it would then exactly describe its own characteristic. Then, the adjective ›heterological‹ is heterological itself if, and only if, it is not. Although Ashley used the taxonomy ›heterologue‹ in a slightly different sense, the form of the antinomy induced by the self-application of the attribute ›heterological‹ in both Ashley's philosophical and Grelling's and Nelson's pure semantical sense appears similar. Again, this antinomy illustrates the inconsistency of poststructuralist thinking when reflected against its own assumptions. While Ashley critically investigated the foundations of modernity and logocentrism, he harmed the bedrock of his own work in the same way. As Hoffman (1995: 111) remarks, Ashley *as* a postmodernist critic cannot help but fall back onto some of the concepts and logical instruments he intends to criticise:

> »It is the postmodernist practitioners themselves, therefore, who raise the importance of a critical logic. The problem is, however, that they are not always able to sustain it«.

A final concern about Ashley's ambitious reading of modernist theories in International Relations might be confirmed by a simple question. If Ashley argues that monological readings of international theories are misleading, we should ask how his *own* version is any different from such misleading forms of interpretation. Ashley's critique of the realist image of world politics is, in the sense of the poststructuralist's heterological principle, one of many readings, and thereby as prone to new criticisms as any other interpretation:

> »Clearly, Ashley cannot claim that his is a ›true‹ reading of *Man, the State and War*—this would imply a monological reading of the text, which is explicitly excluded as a definitive feature of modernist social theory […]. It has to be presumed that, while not claiming that his reading of Waltz is true, he would want to argue that it is, in some sense, better than other available, or at least that it illuminates the text in interesting ways« (Brown 1994: 227).

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Walker's poststructuralist course appears similar to Ashley's dissident thrust. As a matter of fact, both scholars share the conviction that poststructuralist criticism should break down the cornerstones of modernist thinking and logocentristic theorising. As such, they see themselves faced with the semantical antinomy of the heterologue and the resulting undecidability of the poststructuralist work itself. Walker argued that the monological character of International Relations theories is most evident in the conceptual engraving of the sovereignty principle. Debates between different schools of thought within the discipline are thus limited by the inevitable constitution of the modern state as the mainstay of reasonable political thinking, whereas alternative approaches are systematically excluded through the delimination between the state's sovereign sphere and the anarchical ›outside‹. As such, international theory is more of an uncritical representation of political practices, which eventually leads to an academic legitimation of the principle of sovereignty. Walker (1993: 159), on the contrary, aims to detatch himself from this monological reading of politics and history, and instead encourages unveiling the interpretative practices behind those engravings:

> »To read theories of international relations in this manner […] is to understand them less as an explanation of contemporary world politics than as an expression of processes they are claimed to explain«.

Walker thus seeks to critically examine what has been uncritically reiterated in international theories. He appeals to scrutinise what modern theories frame as ›subject‹ and ›reason‹ by turning their academic prayer wheels over and over again. He fosters a perspective at the boundary of the discipline to observe the constitution of theoretical limits drawn under the principle of logocentrism. His ambitious endeavour circles around the question of how political theories constitute and are constituted by the dogma of sovereignty, which, as has already been argued, inevitably leads him to the discovery of binary oppositions such as ›inside—outside‹, ›self-—other‹, or ›identity—difference‹. Walker (1993: 177) now states that international theorising reflects these oppositions. However, this academic reflection is not an objective perspective and ›what there is‹, but is rather an interpretative practice of demarcating and rigidifying the margins induced by these oppositions. Poststructuralist critique thus aims to unveil these practices performed under the guise of international theorising, and to scrutinise the »central categories, debates and discursive rituals of the discipline« (Walker 1993: 13). The poststructuralist is absorbed in a deeply critical engagement with theories of International Relations, and advocates a different understanding of the theoretical limits and horizons of political thinking. What are her core beliefs? How does she think about theories of political thought?

Walker gives two examples of the entanglement of political theory and political practice. First, by drawing on the »historicity of states« (Walker 1993: 91), he surprisingly finds that international studies treat the state as an *ahistorical* regularity. Through this theoretical shortcoming of framing states as given entities and state sovereignty as given constant, international theorists become part of the discursive reification of state and sovereignty—and thereby left the deep historical embeddedness of both theory and political practice unconsidered. A further example is sketched by alluding to the prominent taxonomy of the hierarchical ›levels of analysis‹. Modern theories are located among these different levels, and reify a spatial character by excluding alternative categories of theorising. Paradoxically, these theories can then be understood »less as an explanation of contemporary world politics than as an expression of processes they are claimed to explain« (Walker 1993: 159).

Furnished with Foucauldian genealogical and Derridean deconstructionist thinking, Walker understands academic reflections on world politics not as mere representation of given structures, actors, and regularities. He rather thinks that these representations are historically bounded interpretations, which, according to the heterological nature of meaning assignment, manifest within political discourses. Hence, even though most international theorists claimed the existence of laws, regularities, ahistorical structures, and given identities, the poststructuralist would regard this claim as naïve and narrow representation of a historical contingency. As Edkins (1999: 108) remarks,

> »for Walker the ideology critique is enmeshed in the tension he sees in modern social and political theory between universalist explanations and historicist understandings«

We now notice Foucault's imprint upon Walker's work, who, as the latter's »main inspiration« (Walker 1993: 23), furnished poststructuralist thinking in International Relations with core insights about the deep historicity of both political and academic practices. With Walker's adoption of Foucauldian thought, he has been challenged by the philosophical problems stemming from discourse-theoretical perspectives which resemble the dilemma of Ashley's heterological concept. At first, we think about Foucault's understanding of statements being made within a political practice or as reflection of scientific knowledge. Such a statement is, to use Foucault's (1972 [1969]: 105) own words,

> »one of those objects that men produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose, and possibly destroy. Instead of being something said once and for all […] the statement […] appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced«.

The understanding of statements as manifested in discourses has been borrowed by Walker to describe the discursive creation of sovereignty within International Relations. However, as accurate as this description may be, the philosophical assumption behind this assumption of an existing »discourse on sovereignty« (Bartelson 1995: 1) remains highly disputable. Recall again that Foucault (1972 [1969]: 105) refused the idea that statements within discourses are »something said once and for all«, but solely impart their meaning within the very discourse they are part of. As a philosophical claim furnishing the poststructuralist idea of discourses as such, we could thus make the semantical statement that

No statement has a universal meaning apart from the discourse.

This statement reflects Walker's tension between universality and discursive historicity. We cannot claim to have found an ahistorical, universal law or structure, but always have to acknowledge that our finding is constituted by the historical process of discursive meaning production. However, if we now ask whether the statement that no statement has a universal meaning is itself universally valid or solely true within a particular discourse, we again are drawn into Russell's vicious circle principle. If the statement has no universal meaning, it cannot generalise about ›all statements‹ in an ahistorical, structural sense. However, this is exactly what the statement claims, and therewith reflects a semantical antinomy inherent in poststructuralist thinking implying that

> »genealogical texts end up subverting themselves, in the ironic sense that their success, their intelligibility, relies on appealing to the very same sort of standards and assumptions they sought to undermine in the first place« (Clifford 2001: 159).

Østerud (1996) makes a similar point. He famously carved out poststructuralism's self-refuting character as a discipline of International Relations. Although he sees enough room for a mild version of consistent poststructuralist scholarship, his general critique of poststructuralism is formulated as an antinomy:

> »The hard core version melts by its own logic. The position is untenable because it also undermines itself. The restless deconstruction should certainly be deconstructed too, in infinite regress. The idea is self-defeating and contradictory« (Østerud 1996: 387).

The semantical antinomy illustrates the undecidable position poststructuralist works have taken so far. By criticising universalities, conservative meaning attributions, classical representation, and ahistorical regularities, they opened the door to relativising any academic knowledge—including their own. Even criticisms of this very postmodern position such as in Laclau and Mouffe's (2001 [1985]: xiii) critical engagement with the »representation of a universality« or Laclau's (1996: 54) »dimension of relative universality«, a similar antinomic position is offered for the same reasons.[119] But how does this antinomy arise from the critique of universal meanings, universal categories, and universal ahistoricity?

For an answer, we should go back to an academic dispute beginning in the late 1970s, in which these dilemmas where already identified. Back then, our semantical antinomy was famously presented by Jürgen Habermas, who held a longstanding debate with Foucault about the role of modernism and postmodernism in philosophy. Habermas (1987 [1985]: 265) touched upon the question of how the Foucauldian idea of discursive knowledge and discursive truth could ever be generalised without yielding the semantical antinomy we sketched:

[119] Boucher (2008: 115) gives a comprehensive critique of Laclau and Mouffe's conception and the reasons why it is »impossible for Laclau and Mouffe to evade their own objection to postmodern theory«.

> »What, then, are the grounds that determine Foucault to shift the meaning of this specific will to knowledge and to truth that is constitutive for the modern form of knowledge in general […] by *generalizing* this will to knowing self-mastery into a will to power per se and to postulate that *all* discourses (by no means only the modern ones) can be shown to have the character of hidden power and derive from practices of power?«

Habermas clearly alluded to what we discovered as semantical antinomy in poststructuralist thought. As Foucault clearly assigned the interwovenness of power and knowledge to *every* discourse, his ›own knowledge‹ was to be judged by the very same touchstone. Hence, Habermas asked on what foundation the knowledge that ›all knowledge is discursive and historical‹ was laid. How could Foucault criticise modern knowledge in his genealogical tradition without becoming a victim of his own critique? The semantical antinomy thus stands for the fact that

> »[s]uch a critique, according to Habermas, is […] theoretically paradoxical […] because it cannot help but surreptitiously presuppose some of the very modern categories and attitudes it claims to have surpassed« (Fraser 1994: 185).

Just as Foucault's idea of discourses and the relation of power and knowledge leads to self-referent, antinomic statements, Walker's (1993: 107) assumption that »the theory of international relations can be portrayed as a web of fragmented discourses« is similarly undecidable. How can Walker, being part of one of the fragmented discourses, generalise *about* the constitution of these fragmented discourses? This problem becomes even more severe if we include the notion of truth within a discursive view. For most poststructuralists, as Edkins (1999: 15) argues, »[t]ruth is produced through discourse«. This conviction is shared by Ashley and Walker (1990b: 378), who, as a consequence of the ›crisis of classical representation‹, draw the conclusion that »the very possibility of truth is put in doubt«. With these almost dogmatic remarks, we can make the semantical statement that

›All truth is discursively constituted‹ is discursively constituted.

This statement, as blunt as it may be, illustrates the dilemma of the poststructuralist endeavour. If we follow Foucault and Walker, the notion of truth is—similar to the notions of meaning, knowledge, and representation—determined by the discourse it is used within. But if so, how can the statement be made in the first place? While refraining from any universalist or fixed truth assignments, the poststructuralist has to accept this ›one‹ truth at the margins of his own account—namely, that truth is nothing more than a myth, reproduced and recreated in various discourses. Again, this is exactly what the statement says. Hence, we are again fettered by the inconsistency of a semantical antinomy which confronts the poststructuralist with a self-refuting proposition. In this sense, Foucault's and Walker's genealogical attempt to deconstruct the sovereign self invoked by Western thought is solely possible if a stable genealogical self is assumed. MacIntyre (1990: 54) trenchantly suggests to

> »[m]ake of the genealogist's self nothing but what genealogy makes of it, and that self is dissolved to the point at which there is no longer a continuous genealogical project«.

It is for this reason that most poststructuralists have been reluctant to label their work as theory or alternative approach. However, the practice of ›nontheorising‹ performed by those dissident works can by no means overcome the crucial dilemma illustrated by the semantical antinomy. Although poststructuralists have, at least in their own view, never attempted to set up an alternative theoretical approach to mainstream theories, they nevertheless assume theory-like regularities such as the limits of language, the heterological character of meaning, the concept of the discourse, or the principle of intertextuality. Hence, their answer to the antinomic disposition of poststructuralism is far from convincing:

> »Can those who live and work in this space now opening conduct themselves on the model of a sovereign figure whose grounds are certain and whose gaze finally captures the truth of the world? No, and this is no

> cause for regret. Can those who live and work in this space rigorously analyze practices of power and speak in a serious, critical, and ethically disciplined way in reply to the problem of sovereignty […]? Yes, and this is an event to celebrate—an event too long postponed« (Ashley, Walker 1990b: 402).

As in the case of Luhmann's or Wittgenstein's social treatment of antinomies, the poststructuralist tends to simply accept these inconsistencies or to sidestep the problem by drawing ethical implications[120] when charged with »relativism, inconsistency or blandness in its treatment of ethics and politics« (Fagan 2013: 6)—or, in the case of Huysmans (1997: 365), by simply stating that »[t]he answer is genealogy« when asked about the problematic historicism of the study of history itself. In light of the inevitable inconsistency of poststructuralism, all these excuses can only be helpful if the inherent antinomies are seen as mere remnants of the modernist programme being criticised, or if the undecidable position of the poststructuralist researcher herself is being ignored or brushed aside, or if the self-contradictory script of the poststructuralist text is treated as alleged antifoundationalist piece. If we, by contrast, take the antinomic disposition of the poststructuralist undertaking as genuine obstacle, we find ourselves once again trapped in a vicious circle. Any other conception would require a semantical hierarchy of the poststructuralist method above the empirical material being theorised about—and this would obviously be no other position than the impossible ›God's Eye View‹. We, together with Friedrichs and Kratochwil (2009: 701), are left to identify the »epistemological deadlock« as core challenge of the poststructuralist debate, and pose the—intendedly—paradoxical question:

> »Shall we dig in, pretending that the foundations of our knowledge are incontrovertible when they are not?«

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Having sketched the antinomies that afflict both Ashley's heterological and Walker's genealogical work, we now turn our eyes to Shapiro's adoption of intertextual analysis. Although his fundamental beliefs are quite comparable with the poststructuralist work of Ashley and Walker, we will put emphasis on the *intertextual* framing he deployed in Derrida's and Kristeva's tradition. As an International Relations theorist, Shapiro intends to investigate how the social reality of world politics is being ›scripted‹ nowadays and in relation to earlier, historical scripts. Politics is being represented within in texts; and political practices are strives for interpretative power. Similar to the dissolution of the authorship in intertextual analyses, the creation of political subjects and political identities is performed in the course of representational practices. The centrality of the ›political man‹ is overturned. By contrast, the reality of the subject is made through representational practices. By approaching the construction of political reality through textual analysis, Shapiro (1989b: 13 f.) attempts to portray those practices leading to the modern political world of rational subjects and sovereign states:

> »To textualize a domain of analysis is to recognize, first of all, that any ›reality‹ is mediated by a mode of representation and, second, that representations are not descriptions of a world of facticity, but are ways of making facticity«.

Borrowing Foucauldian and Derridean ideas on discourse and phonocentrism, Shapiro (1989b: 14) develops an intertextual understanding of discourses as »meaning and value-producing practices in language« by treating language itself as opaque and imbibed with historical and cultural contingencies. Resembling the core idea of poststructuralist thought that truth and meaning is always created through political practices, Shapiro (1988: xi) sharpens this view by solely investigating how these truths and meanings are represented in textual materials:

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[120] See, for instance, the overview given by Cochran (1995: 246 ff.).

> »Representations do not imitate reality but are the practices through which things take on meaning and value; to the extent that when a representation is regarded as realistic, it is because it is so familiar it operates transparently«.

However, by advocating such a view of texts and textual interpretations as political practices, he—just like Ashley and Walker—fosters a heterological, discursive, and intertextual understanding of the research materials he investigates. It is thus hardly surprising that he, in the same way, reveals a sore point which can be touched by simply asking how Shapiro's *own* text relates to the critical interpretation he suggests. Taking his poststructuralist account of political texts seriously, we can thus make the semantical statement that

›This statement does not represent reality‹ does not represent reality.

By drawing on the difference between ›reality‹ and ›meaning through practice‹, Shapiro attempts to distinguish statements which represent something real—for instance, in Austin's sense of constatives—and statements which ›become real‹ through political practices. If we relate his *own* text illustrated by the statement we earlier tauntingly named ›instruction‹, an undecidable position is yielded. If the statement does not represent reality in the sense Shapiro used this notion, its meaning is exclusively assigned through its use *as* political practice. But then, it curiously reflects exactly ›what it says of itself‹. Consequently, a semantical antinomy lies at hand. The statement does *not* represent reality, if and only if it *›really‹* represents what it claims of itself. We are thus again faced with the dilemma that Shapiro's own description of how texts relate to political practices necessarily appears as real representation of what it describes, but then it would contradict its self-proclaimed intertextual principle. Any semantical hierarchy preserving Shapiro's text as meta-text written in a metalanguage would also be in vain, as he would simply contradict his own convictions about the nature of texts.

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Shapiro also suggests Derrida's deconstructive criticism as a proper way to approach the representational practices performed in world politics. As already shown, those practices always strengthen particular meaning interpretations within particular social orders, whereas alternative meanings are systematically silenced insofar as

> »every social order rests on a forgetting of the exclusion practices through which one set of meanings has been institutionalized and various other possibilities—other possible forms of meaning—have been marginalized« (Shapiro 1988: 15).

What Derrida suggests is a radical new reading of texts—whether they are political representations, literary works, or even master pieces of classical theories. Through the deconstruction of those texts, the construction and reproduction of ›dominant‹ meaning structures and the exclusion of others can be unveiled. However, we again arrive at an antinomy once we attempt to deconstruct Derrida's *own* text, which, in our case, accords to Shapiro's text on the textualising of global politics. The antinomic disposition thus results from the inevitable dilemma that both Derrida and Shapiro write texts to then overthrow the traditional way of textuality. Wood (1989: 279) concisely sketches what he understands as paradox in Derrida's work, but acknowledges that Derrida himself was well aware of this paradoxical stance:

> »The paradox lies in the status of what he writes, and the fact that he too is *writing*. If what Derrida writes is true, it would follow that he and other philosopher ought to be read in a new way. But if what he says is true in the ordinary philosophical sense of truth (which he describes as metaphysical), then in fact it *cannot* be true, for there would then be at least one species of writing—namely, Derrida's type of metaphilosophy—that has escaped the universal condition of writing of never just being able to deliver the truth for consumption. But if

> the claim to truth is dropped, then how and why should Derrida's claims about language as writing be believed? Derrida has the problem of saying what he means without meaning what he says«.

As Shapiro adopts Derrida's deconstruction in a remarkably uncritical way, he also is pulled into the vicious circle illustrated by Wood. Shapiro invites us to understand texts not as real representations, but as interpretative practices—which, in turn, means that we cannot just read a text as representation, but must unveil the hidden meanings created by politics of exclusion. Even more radical, we are urged to not seek any truth claims in the text, as truth is solely bounded to shifting and changing discourses. Drawing on Shapiro's understanding of politics and textuality, we can thus make the semantical statement that

›The truth of every statement is indeterminate‹ is an indeterminate truth.

We again understand truth in Shapiro's sense—which, in this case, is framed as representation in opposition to ›interpretative practices‹—and now ask about the truth of the statement itself. If its own truth is indeterminate, we have to conclude that this statement cannot be true as representation of ›what it says‹. However, the statement then exactly represents what it claims in respect to the truth value of *every* statement—namely, that no statement is true as representation. We are again faced with a semantical antinomy yielded by a statement which is true if and only if it is not true as representation. It is thus the intended rejection of textual realism by writing his work *as* textual realist that makes it impossible for Shapiro to get out of a tight spot. We are thus again left to accept Edkin's (1999: 74) shattering conclusion that the

> »criticism that deconstruction is a self-defeating method because it has to speak the language it is trying to critique is difficult to counter«.

Both Derrida and Shapiro have to face the dilemma that their ambitious intention to reject any metaphysical truth definition eventually comes to a dead end. The reason for this, as illustrated by the semantical antinomy and exemplified by Wood (1989: 290), lies in Derrida's pretence of »having set up camp at a distance from philosophy from which he can still *communicate* with it«. We however saw that this communication is impossible by virtue of the indecisive status of both Derrida's and Shapiro's own work. Even more severe, this distance could only be achieved by speaking from a higher level of a semantical hierarchy above philosophy itself—which, as shown, could only be accomplished by taking a ›God's Eye View‹.

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As indicated, Derrida was well aware of the antinomic status of his own text. The introduction of the coinage ›différance‹ as »neither a word nor a concept« (Derrida 1982 [1972]: 7) was obviously intended to address this dilemma. He thereby seemed to prepare for the inevitable call to accomplish the deconstruction of ›deconstruction‹—what would be nothing else than asking the question of how Derrida's own text has to be interpreted in the light of his own instructions. In this sense, Clifford (2001: 159) draws a striking comparison between the potential deconstruction of Derrida's ›différance‹ with Nietzsche's general critique:

> »Yet, by the end of *Beyond Good and Evil*, we see Nietzsche turning his critical suspicion against his own thought, and in so doing, attempting to effect their erasure. We see something like this self-consumption of concepts in Jacques Derrida and his notion of *différance* […]. At some ›strategic point‹, says Derrida, *différance itself* will have to be deconstructed«.

However, this ›strategic point‹ seems as impossible as a potential deconstruction or, alternatively, intertextual analysis of Shapiro's work on the textuality of world politics. In this sense, we now find Derrida's attempt to introduce ›différance‹ as difficult as Wittgenstein's articulation of silence he undertook at the end of his ›Tractatus‹. Furthermore, as Wittgenstein's theory of language games under the principle of

meaning as use seemed afflicted by the very same antinomic tension we now found in Derrida's and Shapiro's works. However, if we recall our postulation of Wittgenstein's linguistic turn as a foundation of poststructuralism, these similarities are hardly surprising. Therewith, the deconstruction of Derrida's ›différance‹ as well as the deconstruction of Shapiro's intertexts appear as problematic as imagining Wittgenstein's theory of language games as language game itself. In all cases, it seems

> »neither plausible nor theoretically sound that postmodern philosophical discourse can put itself beyond its own critique« (Teo 1996: 282).

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Finally, we will end our considerations on semantical antinomies in poststructuralist approaches by briefly debating the notion of performativity we already set out in our discussion on Wittgenstein's and Austin's approaches. The difference of constative and performative utterances as carried out by Austin is seldom used unchanged in most poststructuralist works. The reason for this is simple. To elucidate the framework in which speech acts are being performed, Austin (1975 [1962]: 8) drew on the fixed conceptions of »the speaker […] and other persons« being bound in »necessary circumstances«. For the poststructuralist programme of dissolving the metaphysical subject, Austin's theory seems—at least to a large extent—impractical. However, the idea of performances found its way to the poststructuralist jargon, most prominently being deployed in Butler's (1990) work. In this case, Austin's role of the speaker was largely neglected in order to allow for an investigation of how gendered identities are constructed by virtue of performative acts. Furthermore, the opposition of constatives and performatives was largely dismissed after Derrida demonstrated the »contradictions arising through the use of the opposition performative/constative« (Edkins 1999: 76). Hence, the influence of the »performative turn« (Medina 2010: 275) had different expressions within the poststructuralist movement.

In the field of International Relations, the notion of performativity has prompted different reactions as well. Scholars of both constructivist and poststructuralist coinage use the term, but in different ways. Again, the dividing line between constructivist and poststructuralist interpretation runs between the conception of agency and identity. For the former, the speaker still deploys language as author of the words, whereas the latter grasp language as performance independent of the authorising speaker (Debrix 2003a [2015]: 6 f.). Among contemporary debaters of both schools of thought, the question thus still lingers about

> »the role of ›performativity‹ in the constitution of actors. Although associated with postmodernism and thus constructivist in a broad sense, a divide has emerged […] as this term has come to be defined in IR« (Fearon, Wendt 2013: 54).

With hereafter referring to the poststructuralist understanding of performativity, we have to acknowledge the work of David Campbell (1992) who was the first to establish the notion of performativity in poststructuralist thinking in International Relations theory. His account heavily draws on Butler's study by suggesting that

> »the performative constitution of the gender and the body is analogous to the performative constitution of the state« (Campbell 1992: 9).

For Campbell, foreign policy was no longer investigated as being derived by strategic considerations or by any given national interests. Quite the contrary, the—mostly spoken and linguistically represented—discursive structures conveying the social understanding of foreign policy are brought to the fore. Hence, Campbell (1992: 43) introduces his famous study on the discursive representation of foreign policy by claiming that he

> »is concerned with the representation of history that allows us to talk in terms of ›the state‹ and ›the international system‹, and the impact that problematization has had on our understanding of foreign policy«.

Campbell obviously follows a poststructuralist account by viewing the state's identity as solely determined by the repetition of performative practices such as foreign policy acts. The state is seen as being »unable to reveal the performative nature of its identity« (Campbell 1992: 251). The poststructuralist research is left to unveil those performative acts which bring to life the state as uniform actor. In this sense, Debrix (2003b [2015]: 12) recognises the fact that in

> »poststructuralist scholarship, performativity—the condition of any object or subject being or appearing as a performance of language—denotes the fact that language itself is the performance, independent of the agent's or structure's deeds or intentions. It signifies that language makes (or performs) the deed«.

At this point, we have to ask about the implications of seeing language as performance *in general*. By holding such a general view of discourses as »structured totality resulting from the articulatory practices« (Laclau, Mouffe 2001 [1985]: 105), the relativity of meaning, values, and identities follows necessarily. To Campbell, the ›writing of security‹ has such performative effects on the constitution of national identities; and he thereby acknowledges the general performativity of language. However, we also have to conclude that this generalisation implies that Campell's *own* writing of ›writing of security‹ appears under the same sign. From such a perspective, Campbell either had to confess the constitutive effects on his scientific identity through his performative practice of scientific writing, or to concede the metalanguage character of his study. In both cases, he contradicts his own poststructuralist account on performativity. Either his work is itself a performative act, or he rejects the principle of general performativity by excluding his work from these effects.

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If we briefly think about Lyotard's assumptions on scientific knowledge, this problem might become clearer. As already shown, he applies Wittgenstein's idea of language games to the functioning of scientific discourse. Science is practiced within particular language games, each with its own rules determined by power, validity and truth conditions, and social bounds. This view of science performed in a variety of different games leads Lyotard (1984 [1979]: xxiv) to formulate the popular postmodern slogan of the »incredulity toward metanarratives«. Science, knowledge, and truth are subsumed under the »principle of performativity« (Arriaga 2006: 73). But how are we supposed to think about Lyotard's own scientific contribution? Again, if we ask about the metanarrative of ›the end of metanarratives‹ or the performativity of the ›performativity principle‹, the antinomic constellation put forward in Lyotard's thoughts reveals itself—which reminds us, together with Prickett (2002: 23), of the same disposition inherent in Foucault's work:

> »As in the case of Foucault, the problem with absolute relativism, of course, is that it results in the notorious ›Cretan paradox‹ […]. Lyotard's own arguments about narratives as power, based as they are not on internal evidence of the disciplines involved, but on his pre-conceptions about the nature of power in general, suffer from the same logical flaw«.

And indeed, the propositional form of the liar's antinomy neatly resembles the problematic disposition of Lyotard's argument. Imagine we were told that every sentence is solely true by virtue of the particular rules of the language game being played. We then would assume that Lyotard argues that there is no true statement in a constative sense, as any truth is bounded to the principle of general performativity. We could thus make the semantical statement that

›No statement ‹can be true as ‹constative‹ ‹cannot be true as ‹constative.

Is Lyotard's statement itself true as constative or performative? If so, then the statement that ›no statement can be true as constative‹ would itself be true as constative and thereby contradict itself. We are thus faced with a semantical antinomy which leaves Lyotard's claim with an undecidable status, and are led to conclude in the simple words of Thomson (2011: 131) that, »if Lyotard were right, then we would not believe him«.[121] Frankly speaking, Lyotard would have required a higher position from a semantical hierarchy above the world of science and narratives he theorised about—which would be nothing other than an impossible ›God's Eye View‹.

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Campbell suffers the same fate. What Habermas (1987 [1985]: 185) denoted as »performative contradiction«—namely, a generalised critique of reason and language by *using* reason and language—is also inherent in Campbell's own writing. If we are to believe Campbell's (1992: 85) »fundamental theme in this argument« that subjects and states alike are constituted through performative acts, then Campbell's scientific identity must be assumed to be constituted through his own act of writing as well. If, even more severely, we take what Campbell's implicitly assumed as ›principle of general performative‹ seriously, Lyotard's dilemma of ›knowledge as performativity‹ shakes his fundamental beliefs in the same way. We can therefore draw the conclusion that the general assumption of performativity is open to criticism by alluding to the creation of a undecidable and, in some readings, self-refuting position. Even though the idea of performativity has been interpreted differently by different poststructuralist thinkers, we nevertheless have to note that they *all* put forward a generalised assumption on the performativity of language. In this sense, we are left to corroborate Debrix' (2003b [2015]: 6) appraisal that

> »a poststructuralist cannot go beyond the recognition that language is generally performative«.

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A final remark on the problematic use of the notion of performativity might be made with respect to the emerging field of ›securitisation studies‹. Based on Austin's speech act theory and a—for some scholars a somewhat surprising—entanglement of realist and poststructuralist elements, securitisation theorists ask a simple question:

> »When does an argument with this particular rhetorical and semiotic structure achieve sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed?« (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 25).

For them, security is ›made‹ by authoritative speakers who refer to external threats in the same way performatives are used in linguistic contexts as alert or warning. By accomplishing such ›acts of securitisation‹, societies accept these threat references to then accept extraordinary security measures. But the idea of making security by making performative statements implies a severe difficulty—namely, when it comes to the theoretical representation of securitisation processes. If societal actors can create security threats by simply speaking about them in a particular way, then the scholarly writing about those acts has the same effect. For instance, a more realist reading of securitisation as theory can unintentionally

> »serve to default to dominant meanings and practices of security, while the tendency to suggest that there *is* a fixed meaning or logic of security also (paradoxically) reinforces the dominance of realist approaches to security« (Burke *et al.* 2014: 45).

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[121] However, Thomson (2011: 132) encourages us to not easily overthrow Lyotard's argument by reminding us that the author solely refers to the two »metanarratives of *unity* and *emancipation*«. If this were right, we could not adhere anymore to the principle of ›general performativity‹ and, furthermore, must again believe in a more or less metaphysical dimension of Lyotard's observation of knowledge and science.

Unfortunately, the same flaw can be found in a more poststructuralist reading. If securitisation processes are described from a poststructuralist perspective, these writings themselves must assumed to necessarily unfold performative effects adhering the proclaimed logic of security. Roughly speaking, through the writing *about* securitisation, the securitisation process of which has been written about might be further accelerated or justified. If we think about Campbell's idea of how writing security can create identities, the ›writing about securitisation‹ should also lead to the creation of securitisation theorists' identities. The academic debates about how securitisation takes place must then *itself* be seen as a securitising act. Within discourses about securitisation, theorists are themselves made to pay attention to particular securitisation processes. This tension gives rise to a wave of criticism. For instance, McDonald's (2008b) critique on the limits of the securitization framework and Wilkinson's (2007) objection about the ›Westphalian straitjacket‹ point in this direction—although the antinomic disposition of securitisation theory as ›securitisation text‹ is not fully carried out. However, these lines of criticism might lead to the objection that securitisation theory itself is determined and created by processes of securitisation themselves—for instance, by the power of states or the ›Western security narrative‹.

Our brief consideration of how the notion of performative brings about theoretical challenges for poststructuralist interpretations of securitisation theory is—as true as for other accounts built on this notion—of relevance whenever performativity is assumed to affect not only the political world observed and theorised, but also the logic of observation and theorisation as such. Then, to speak in Wittgenstein's words, the ›game of securitisation‹ cannot be seen as a universal concept, but as being bounded within securitisation processes itself.

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With these debates about the notion of performativity, a final remark on the poststructuralist course should be made. Most postmodernists apply a discursive epistemological programme. At first, the »distinction between a ›rationalist‹ and ›reflectivist‹ approach to the study of international institutions« (Hansen 1997: 339) which was introduced in the famous presidential address by Keohane in 1988 set the new direction of poststructuralist epistemology in the field. Ever since, the critical-reflectivist direction of poststructuralism—as well as Critical Theory and constructivism—as reflectivist approach has been widely considered in the field of International Relations (Chernoff 2007: 131 ff.). However, another brand of poststructuralist thinking has been recognised. Headed by the criticisms of Habermas, poststructuralists were reproached as advocating ›epistemological relativism‹. For Habermas (2003 [1999]: 175), the historicity and discursive embeddedness of the transcendental, modern subject goes back to Hegel's ideas:

> »Hegel was the first to put the transcendental subject back into context and to situate reason in social space and historical time«.

To Habermas, the Hegelian departure of historicising reason—and thereby, of creating the disposition of epistemological relativism—was the original flaw that is later inherent in poststructuralist thought. If we attempt to criticise the constitution of reason and subjectivity against the background of history and culture, we run the risk of refuting any objective grounds to objectively justify our critique. Based on these reservations about the Hegelian programme, Habermas similarly sees Foucault's and Derrida's works as being afflicted by the tendency of advocating epistemological relativism:

> »Derrida is accused of being locked within a ›performative contradiction‹ because he uses the tools of reason to convict reason of being authoritarian in nature […]. Foucault is also accused of being philosophically inconsistent […], he does not provide a convincing justification for the privileged place to his own genealogical approach« (Davis 2004: 39).

As we framed the poststructuralist account in International Relations as mainly inspired by Foucault's and Derrida's works, these thinkers must be subject to the accusation of carrying out epistemological relativism. The argument is made that this problem is inflicted by the notorious problem of Wittgenstein's silence, and as such appears as unclearable hurdle in most poststructuralist critiques.[122] In this sense, Onuf (2015: 246) nicely captures the dilemma of the dissident thinker in International Relations:

> »Insofar as linguistic phenomena cannot represent the world, they constitute a world of their own, a world true only to itself. Words are performative, but only in a theatrical sense. By enacting the propositional content of what is spoken, any such performance simultaneously objectivizes the world it creates and hides behind its representational success. Inevitably, bringing this performative trick into the limelight shifts attention to the self-representing propositional content of whatever is spoken, which the observer aspires to represent intelligibly and thus more or less accurately. Therein lies the paradox of postmodern scholarship: Identifying an ensemble of spoken performances as hegemonic discourse depends on participating in a hegemonic discourse—it takes one to now one«.

What is the dilemma poststructuralists face? Roughly speaking, they cannot speak about what they have to speak about, and their academic undertakings seem similar to the futile image of climbing Wittgenstein's ladder. Even though language, language games, discourses, and deconstruction are in some sense ›true‹ ideas, and they might describe how the world viewed from the poststructuralist's eyes ›really‹ is—they cannot say it. Westphal (1992: 171) provocatively makes this point by comparing Derrida's and Gödel's endeavours, before concluding that the first is unable to speak about what the latter was able to prove mathematically:

> »It is as if […] Derrida […] wants to say of language, experience, writing, ant textuality in general, what Gödel says of certain formal systems. The problem is this. Gödel can simply come out and assert that the systems in question have certain properties, for he has available to him the metalanguage not afflicted by the same radical undecidability […]. But what if one wants to challenge precisely that assumption? Then the language in which one asserts the deep incoherence or undecidability of the language as such is itself part of the language about which this is asserted. Precisely because of its sensitivity to problems of self-reference, postmodernism finds itself in need of saying what it cannot quite say. To resort to the language of ambiguity, it cannot unambiguously assert the ambiguity of all discourse«.

e) Antinomies of Poststructuralism

Although clearly acknowledging the diversity of poststructuralist critiques, we tried to distil a common thread among those critical contributions. It is argued that the investigated contributions in the field yielded an antinomic figure, which could be exposed in several ways. The *mise en abyme* as recursive form could be found whenever we asked about the conception of the poststructuralist theorist, theoretical text, or theoretical critique in relation to the theorised as such. Within ontological statements, the theorist appeared as critic, as instructive text, or as observer who referred to the theorised as uncritical, ›modern‹ theorist, as deconstructable text, or as subject blinded by its own discursive constitution. However, the poststructuralist theorist inevitably became part of what she theorised about, as her own position had to be scrutinised in the very same way she scrutinised her ›empirical food‹. Within semantical statements, a similar picture was demonstrated. The poststructuralist work appeared as criticism, as instruction to deconstruct, or as ›true‹ theoretical elaboration, whereas the theorised laid bare as theoretical practices, as

[122] As Hansen (2006: 15) accurately summarises, »[t]he poststructuralist view of language as relationally structured and ontologically productive is coupled to a discursive epistemology«.

discursively constructed materials, or as discursive truths. Again, whenever we hold a mirror up to the poststructuralist critique itself, an undecidable status of these works was exposed.

Although poststructuralists intend to unveil binary oppositions yielded by the logocentrism of Western rationalism, they showed themselves as being ›tied‹ to these antagonisms. Hence, critical dispositions as *antitheton* were created. In ontological statements, this *antitheton* contained the notions ›criticised—uncriticised‹, ›critical observation—blinded observation‹, or ›instructed—uninstructed‹. All these oppositions reflect the poststructuralist's self-image as standing apart from the modern world of discourses, logocentrisms, and subject creations. Similarly, we found the *antitheton* of ›monological—heterological‹, ›fixed—fluid meanings‹, ›objective truth—discursive truth‹, ›representation—discursive reality‹, and ›constative—performative‹ within semantical statements. Again, these critical dispositions emerged from the alleged distance of poststructuralist theorising to its empirical field.

	Ontological Antinomy	**Semantical Antinomy**
›Mise en abyme‹	recursive form of *theorist* as ›critic‹ and *theorised* as ›criticised‹, as ›subject‹ and ›dissolved subjects‹, and as ›observation‹ and ›blindness towards constitution‹	recursive form of *theory* as ›poststructuralist criticism‹ and *theorised* as ›theories as practices‹ similar to ›truth of poststructuralism‹ and ›discursive truth‹
›Antitheton‹	critical disposition of ›criticised—uncriticised‹, ›critical observation—blinded observation‹, and ›instructed—uninstructed‹	critical disposition of ›monological—heterological‹, ›fixed—fluid meaning‹, ›objective truth—discursive truth‹, ›representation—discursive reality‹, ›constative—performative‹
›Penrosing‹	circular inversion of ›critic of critics‹ similar to ›deconstruction of deconstruction‹	circular inversion of ›poststructuralist critique of poststructuralism‹ similar to ›heterologue of heterologue‹
Hierarchies	marginal position from a supposed ontological hierarchy of critics or critical observations as ›God's Eye View‹	semantical hierarchy of poststructuralism itself, the ›genealogical project‹, and Derrida's ›différance‹ as ›God's Eye View‹; poststructuralist text as meta-text
Examples	*Ashley and Walker criticise all those conceptions which have been left uncriticised.* *A poststructuralist observes all those subjects who are blind towards their own discursive creation.* *Shapiro's text instructs how to deconstruct all those texts that do not instruct themselves.*	*This sentence is heterological.* *No statement has a universal meaning apart from the discourse.* *›All truth is discursively constituted‹ is discursively constituted.* *›This statement does not represent reality‹ does not represent reality.* *›The truth of every statement is indeterminate‹ is an indeterminate truth* *›No statement can be true as constative‹ cannot be true as constative.*

A Poststructuralist Deconstructs Her Own Meta-Text: *Antinomies of Poststructuralism*

The undecidable position of the poststructuralist theorist and her critiques resembles the strange circular inversion we know as *Penrosing*. As soon as we ask about the ›critic of critics‹—or, more precisely, the critical scrutinising of the poststructuralist theorist herself—, no decisive answer can be given. In the same

vein, the ›critique of the poststructuralist critique‹ cannot be accomplished without entangling in the circles of an antinomy. How should we think of the ›heterology of the heterologue‹ or the ›deconstruction of the method of deconstruction‹?

Finally, we found some poststructuralist works engaging in a futile attempt to escape to a hierarchical level to overcome their antinomic dispositions. The proclamation of the poststructuralist position as being marginal, dissident, at the boundaries, or simply a ›view from up high‹ could be unmasked as suggesting a pure, uncriticisable ›God's Eye View‹ through which the ontological hierarchy of boundary positions could be observed. This stance could not be maintained. The hierarchical level onto which the poststructuralist herself intended to take roots begins to crumble as soon as we scrutinise this level with the typical post-structuralist critique. If we think about the texts, theoretical descriptions, or theory-like elaboration we labelled as poststructuralism, we find these contributions are all ›theorising from above‹ a semantical hier-archy. They speak *about* discourses, they tell something *about* the constitution of subjects and order, they recount *about* the theories of Western modernity. However, if the poststructuralist storyteller is *not* being thought as taking a view above the world she narrates, her story itself is nothing more than a chapter of its own. If she, by contrast, somehow justifies the special position she speaks about, she contradicts her own story.

Synopsis — ›The Antinomy of Constructivism‹

The Wittgensteinian foundation of poststructuralist works reveals the challenges that come along with critical examination of language and meaning structures. Some statements and some theoretical assumptions appear untenable, and turn out to be meaningless propositions—even if we, as the later Wittgenstein later did, consider meaning as solely being tied to social practices.

In the same sense, poststructuralists sometimes get entangled in meaningless, antinomic statements. If we read their works through their own lens, both their position and academic contributions appear as mere expressions within than *about* discourses. Does the poststructuralist critic herself speak from an uncriticised position ›outside the discourse‹? And what happens if we take her own work as textual material for the poststructuralist critique?

Logical form	A proposition's structure about which we cannot speak in a meaningful way.
›Ladder metaphor‹	An illustration of the impossible ›God's Eye View‹ we have to take to understand early Wittgenstein's nonsensical sentences in the ›Tractatus‹.
Language game	Later Wittgenstein's idea of language and meaning being bound to social practices and use.
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Logocentrism	The idea that the meaning of words and statements is in our minds or in the external world—and not, as Derrida finds, ›inside the text‹.
Genealogy	Foucauldian method of comprehending the historical constitution of the subject within discourses.
Deconstruction	Meaning can be found *within* texts by unveiling the differences between signs.
›Différance‹	Meaning lies in a chain of signifiers as play of differences and oppositions.

D CODA

1 Conclusion

Our reading of political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism unveiled serious antinomies. Whenever theorists or theories were seen as their own ›empirical feed‹, inconsistent and undecidable statements were yielded. The theorist's self-image and the theory's self-conception appear untenable, as long as we believe in Aristotle's fundamental laws of logic. No hierarchical solution is of help, no conceptual whitewashing can overcome this dilemma. As such, these theoretical schools are built on an inconsistent fundament, and it thus is still debatable whether we consequently have to admit an ›antinomic destruction‹ of a whole theory.

1.1 Antinomies of Theorising World Politics

Our reading of political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism revealed an antinomic figure reflecting the theorist's unclear self-image and the theory's undecidable self-conception. Although all three schools of thought contribute to the understanding of world politics, they seem to become self-contradictory when being used to understand themselves in their own

terms. This dilemma turns out to be undecidable and unresolvable, but illustrates, however, the antinomic hurdles of theorising world politics.

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Three famous contributions to the discipline of International Relations have been read in the light of their theoretical foundations. We saw Morgenthau's political realism as an advancement of Freud's drive-theoretical model, we distilled the reflectivist account of Wendt's social constructivism through the lens of Luhmann's system-theoretical assumptions, and we elaborated Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's poststructuralist critiques against the background of Wittgenstein's language-theoretical descriptions. Reading those theoretical contributions from their foundations enabled us to carve out the fundamental directions of the arguments made by those International Relations theorists.

Once we framed those readings, two simple questions guided our further considerations. What if we saw the *theorist* herself as material or object of what she theorised about? And what if we regarded her *theory* as mere empirical feed about what she spoke of in a theorising way?

Viewed in this light, Morgenthau as a theorist would appear as a human being blinded by the universal drive for power. His theory of political realism would similarly present itself as a mere act of power, and its truth and validity would depend solely on the historical power structure at any given time. Roughly speaking, the most powerful can dictate what is true and valid.

Wendt, as a theorist, would be considered to be a social agent constitutively embedded within ›his‹ social structure, both blinded and guided by societal entanglement. His theory of social constructivism would then be regarded as a constructed truth itself—a contingent, ›appropriate‹ reflection of a particular social phenomenon. Hence, truth and objectivity are nothing else than transient statuses within societies.

Ashley, Walker, and Shapiro as critics would appear as speaking from a criticisable, discursively produced position. Their critiques would similarly appear to be discursive truths, and as texts which themselves can be deconstructed, critically analysed as naïve representations, or read as heterologues. Seen this way, meaning and truth manifest themselves as mere perspectives from different discursive positions.

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We then found that our guiding questions could not be answered decisively. If all those theorists were seen as their own objects of research, and if all their theoretical works appeared as their own empirical cases, undecidable positions arise. On the one hand, we found that those reflective approaches logically ›allowed‹ for their own self-application. As in any other case, they would contradict their own assumptions about how their world had been described. On the other hand, the self-application of theorist and theory to what they theorised about left us bewildered.

Can we meaningfully think about the political realist as a power-driven human, the social constructivist as a socially constituted agent, or the poststructuralist as a discursively produced subject? How are we supposed to think about the ›realism of political realism‹, the ›social construction of social constructivism‹, or the ›poststructuralist critique of poststructuralism‹? Whenever we pose such questions, we deploy the theorist or the theory *as* what is theorised about. In fact, these questions originally aimed at clarifying the positions and statuses of theorists and theories themselves to give insight into their self-understanding and self-conception. Unfortunately, we soon realised that giving a decisive answer to these questions is harder than getting a camel through the eye of a needle. Instead, we found ourselves entangled in unresolvable antinomies.

a) The Antinomy of Political Realism

In 1938, German psychologist Philipp Lersch published his work ›*The Structure of the Person*‹, in which he laid out the core ideas of the newly arising subdiscipline of ›characterology‹—a work which Nazi officials sympathised with. The scientific concept behind Lersch's approach was based on the normative ideal of a superordinate will scientifically elaborated through typological models, classificatory schemata, evaluating tests, or assessment practices in »an attempt to concentrate the diagnostic perception of psychologist on the will« (Geuter 1992: 104). The success of these pseudo-psychological theories was mainly due to the fact that

> »their concepts concurred with military ideals. Examples of this are the idea that strained muscles indicate will power […], or the concept that will and intellect dominate feelings and emotions in Lersch's personality model« (Ash, Woodward 1987: 177 f.).

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Political realism provides for an understanding of why Lersch's ›diagnostic perception on the will‹ was successful in the late 1930s. As Morgenthau (1972: 31) laid out, even »the scholar seeking knowledge seeks power«, and is thus, just like the Freudian subject, blinded and distorted by inner drives and needs. Lersch, although claiming his reputation as a renowned psychologist, was likewise driven. His scientific obsession with the exploration of the will would, thus, turn out rather as an individual scholar's act of power. He certainly improved his academic standing by scientifically observing what the Nazi government wished to be observed. However, this political-realist understanding of Lersch's ›diagnostic perception‹ holds a trap—as Morgenthau's theory itself is based on a scientific observation of the will for power.

The ontological antinomy of political realism illustrates the impossibility of Morgenthau as a power-driven human observer claiming that he objectively observes the human will for power. If Morgenthau *as* a human being is himself distorted by that universal condition of power-blindness, his observation cannot be assumed to be objective and rational in his own sense. It would, put differently, be no different from Lersch's observation. Curiously, this is exactly what Morgenthau states by claiming the *universal* drive for power; and therefore, his observation is objectively if and only if it is *not*—but blinded by his own drive for power.

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Furthermore, Morgenthau (1965 [1946]: 161) was convinced that scientific theories such as Lersch's characterology are always erected in accordance with actual power configurations, and that a scientific community's ›truth version‹ is dependent on societal and academic power distributions. The models and methods advocated by Lersch—classifications rather than explanations, normative and ideological concepts rather than objective frames, evaluations and assessments rather than humanistic approaches—were considered true and appropriate according to the ideology of the ruling government and the powerful Nazi movement at that time. Alternative perspectives were, as is known, silenced and defamed as untruths. Hence, the political realist regards both scientific theories and statements as partial truths. The most powerful can impose which theories, scientific truths, and methods are being held as assured and valid, and which scientific statements are silenced.

The semantical antinomy of political realism alludes to its impossible claim of the power-dependent status of scientific theories. However, if any truth is solely relational to power, then the truth of political realism itself must be considered true and relational to power as well—just like Lersch's absurd theory. It would then be undecidable if the theory is true *in general* or just in relation to the socio-political conditions of Morgenthau's time. Strangely enough, political realism would be an objective truth if and only if it were

not, but true relational to power in accordance to realism's claims. The question whether political realism is itself a partial or perspective truth dependent on power relations thus remains undecidable.

b) The Antinomy of Social Constructivism

After Gorbachev announced the programme of ›Perestroika‹ in 1985, various reformist economic theorists tried to think about the ongoing changes in the Soviet Union. Among them, Russian economist Leonid Abalkin began to analyse and reflect upon the predominant economic system two years later. Although he could be called an economic reformer, Abalkin was still a socialist at the time he reflected about the condition and constitution of the Soviet Union's market—and surely did not anticipate the political and social upheavals to come when he argued that

> »[t]he methods of socialist management, unlike the principles, are volatile and changeable. They cannot be uniform for various historical stages or for various conditions […]. The break with old methods of management and the transition to qualitatively new methods are […] an indispensable condition to mastering the very rich potential […] of the social system for the planned management of the economy« (Abalkin 1989 [1987]: 7).

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Social constructivists would understand Abalkin's scientific appeal of the ›changeable methods‹ as »constitutive theorizing, at the lay level« (Wendt 1999: 375). The second-order question he posed unveiled the blind spot of viewing the old socialist methods of management as *given*. As Wendt (1999: 375) would argue, Abalkin exercised »critical self-reflection or ›reflexivity‹« to realise that the view of reified, unchangeable socialist methods cannot be maintained at all ›historical stages or for various conditions‹. For Wendt, Abalkin's proposal of ›new methods‹ thereby contributed to the social construction of a new social kind as a novel path-dependent, contingent idea. However, Wendt's understanding of reflexivity as unveiling the blind spots behind the givenness or ›own authorship‹ of social kinds turns out to be problematic if we ask about his *own* blind spot.

The ontological antinomy of social constructivism alludes to the undecidability of Wendt's own observation as social constructivist. Wendt obviously reflected upon the old mainstream views and methods of observing world politics, and consequently unveiled the blind spots of neorealist and rationalist approaches such as their tendency to maintain the international system's structure as given. In the face of social change, the theorist himself is part of the constitution of social kinds. Hence, Wendt's own theoretical conception of reflecting on these mainstream theories feeds into the emerging social phenomenon named ›social constructivism‹—just the way Abalkin's observations became part of the social change within the Soviet Union. However, if Wendt's own authorship of the social kind he observes is constitutive of itself, his observation must be blinded accordingly. Peculiarly, Wendt's self-proclaimed mode of observation must be considered objective, if and only if it is *not*—but constituted by its own authorship.

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Abalkin's considerations on the old methods of socialist management would, from a social constructivist perspective, be seen as the emergence of social knowledge or social facts. Their truth depends solely on the shared beliefs held as »*inter*subjective phenomenon« (Wendt 1999: 160). Although the meaning of those old methods surely was considered true during the heyday of the Soviet Union, the intersubjective construction of the new methods' meaningfulness and appropriateness emerged as new social fact. However, for the social constructivist, this novel knowledge presented by Abalkin must *also* be considered a contingent truth. Its objectivity and validity is an intersubjective belief—or, in short, a social construction.

The semantical antinomy of social constructivism however illustrates the impossibility of stating that knowledge, facts, and truth are socially constructed. If social constructivism itself were a knowable fact, its truth must be contingent and constructed as well—similar to Abalkin's assumptions, which obviously were open to social change. What is considered a ›true fact‹ depends on the norms and ideas within a society, which can change and even be discarded whenever social change occurs. However, if truth and facticity are assumed to be contingent and socially constructed, the theory of social constructivism can be no exception. Oddly, if constructivism was itself constructed, then an ›objectively true‹ claim is made that *any* social kind is being constructed. Hence, constructivism must itself be seen as objective knowledge if and only if it was *not*, but socially constructed. The strange question of the status of Wendt's constructivism as either objective knowledge or intersubjective belief is therefore undecidable—just like the constructivist's core claim that »reality is socially constructed« (Wendt 1999: 238).

c) The Antinomy of Poststructuralism

In 1575, Henry III was crowned ruler of the kingdom of France, and shortly later began to pave the way for a centralised, absolutist form of government. One year later, state theorist Jean Bodin published his famous ›*Les six livres de la République*‹, in which he defined and described the notion of sovereignty—which later would become one of the most widely used notions in International Relations theory. For Bodin, it behooves the king to act as sovereign and retain the power to adopt decisions in the last resort. The sovereign can never be subject to the law, and is fundamentally different from ordinary people or citizens with limited sovereign prerogatives. Bodin (1992 [1576]: 5) argues that

> »[f]or the first is a prince, the other is a subject; the first is a lord, the other a servant; the first is a proprietor and in lawful possession of the sovereignty […], the other is neither its owner nor possessor, but merely holds in trust«.

Poststructuralist critics would refuse to take Bodin's description as set in stone, but rather interpret his work as a naïve representation within the discourse of society and government at that time. For them, Bodin reproduced a dominant conception of the subject during the early modern period rather than reflecting a societal law or regularity. Hence, the notion of sovereignty is interpreted as a practice of reifying the modern subject as a subordinated, powerless corpus under the reign of a god-like absolutist. To critically elaborate the discursively produced subject, poststructuralists such as Ashley and Walker (1990b: 367) would »speak from the margins«. They take a critical position ›outside the discourse‹ to reflect upon dominant notions and textual materials through which the subject's identity formation is reproduced historically. However, the poststructuralist's own position *as* subject turns dubious when critically examined through the poststructuralist lens.

The ontological antinomy of poststructuralism reflects the impossibility of the critical voices' own theoretical positioning. They claim to unveil discursively reproduced conceptions of subjectivity within societal fabrics, and hence critically comprehend, deconstruct, and analyse the ideas of modernity from their boundaries as when Bodin's concept of sovereignty created and ›made‹ reality. However, their *own* position must be considered to be reproduced in the same way—for instance, within the ›academic discourse of poststructuralism‹. Hence, they would have to critically investigate this boundary position by the same means, or otherwise, their contribution would be no different from Bodin's uncritical representation. If we now ask about the criticisability of this alternative position, the same critical stance of observation would be required, leading to a strange infinite regress of critical examinations and new boundaries over and over again. Hence, the poststructuralist's position can only be critical, only if it is *not* critical towards itself—but works as a naïve representation of the observed discourses.

From a poststructuralist view, Bodin's masterpiece would appear as unreflected textual material, as a mere document reproducing the historical and socio-political realities of that time. It cannot be appraised as a scientific work picturing ›true‹ insights or general laws. As Shapiro (1989b: 11) would put it, Bodin's work is rather one of many »reality-making scripts«. Consequently, the meaning of the word ›sovereignty‹ is not fixed within Bodin's text, but has and still will change in the course of time. Even our current use of the word in the discipline of International Relations is both open to change and ›reality-reproducing‹, just as various authors have already

> »changed the reality associated with ›sovereignty‹ […]. The foregoing project shows how the creative and transforming function of the extremely powerful word ›sovereignty‹ is continuous and continuing, changing in its nature and effects of time« (Beaulac 2003: 27).

The semantical antinomy of poststructuralism however draws on the impossibility to speak about discursive truths and meanings in the poststructuralist jargon. If textual materials such as Bodin's work are seen as discursively produced, naïve representations which create reality rather than picture it, the poststructuralism's own critical text appears to be caught between two stools. It cannot be a simple representation of a discourse, but it also cannot be a performative, reality-making script. So what is the difference between Bodin's and the poststructuralist's critical text? This question seems impossible to answer. If poststructuralists hold that truth and meaning are mere functions of a discourse, their own critical proclamations *about* truth and meaning likewise appear fluent, indeterminate, and performative. Hence, poststructuralism can herald only the general truth of ›discursive truths‹, if it can *not*—but admit its own discursive ephemerality.

1.2 God's Eye and Impossible Ladders

We observed a strange pattern in the theoretical works we read. In most conceptions, both theorist and theory were illogically heaved onto a higher level, from which the empirical world could be theorised. Ontological hierarchies in the style of Russell were to take up a position as a quasi-independent, objective theorist, whereas semantical hierarchies in the style of Tarski created a similar status of the theory itself. However, both forms of hierarchical solutions were doomed to failure. Either the hierarchy required for an infinite regress or an impossible position of a ›God's Eye View‹. Hence, none of these theorists and theories could climb up the hierarchical ladder to this god-like view.

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Not all of the antinomies we unveiled in the works of political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism are surprising discoveries. These antinomic tensions have—sometimes more, sometimes less—partly been recognised in the form of paradoxes, inconsistencies, or simply been expressed as critiques. Some authors such as Wittgenstein, Luhmann, or a few poststructuralist thinkers were aware of these tensions in a way, others remained silent or simply overlooked them. Some thinkers were inclined to condone these unresolvable contradictions, others attempted to whitewash them or, to use Luhmann's (1988: 35) peculiar term, tried to ›deparadoxify‹ them.

We however noticed a strange pattern of how antinomies either led to the drawing of impossible inferences or the attempt to ›escape‹ from their destructive force. In both cases, theorists and theories appeared to presume an ontological or semantical *hierarchy*, which amounted to an infinite regress or an impossible *›God's Eye View‹*. Whereas hierarchies often took the form of Russell's ontological or Tarski's semantical arrangements, the divine view reflected an unreal position or status of the theorist or theory to describe the hierarchy as such. Finally, the theorising about an infinite hierarchy could often be justified by assuming a ›God's Eye View‹ outside this very hierarchy; and, *vice versa*, this view was sometimes held from the impossible peak of an infinite hierarchy above the theorised world.

Morgenthau, just like Freud, implicitly suggests a hierarchical level of a ›God's Eye View‹ from which the political theorist observes the world of power-driven humans without being affected by those power struggles. In the same way, Freud as observer appeared to be detached from the subconscious distortions of the human psyche, but at the hierarchical end of a ›pure self-analysis‹[123]. Both Morgenthau's and Freud's theory therefore appeared not as documents or textual manifestations of their authors' own drive nature, but as objective truth expressed from a ›God's Eye View‹ overcoming the human's blinding power drives. Who, if not a god-like, undriven, and unblinded being could detach himself from those universal driving forces constitutive for any human, and finally act as Morgenthau's (1965 [1946]: 220) »more-than-scientific man«[124]?

Wendt, who developed a thin version of Luhmann's constructivism, also escaped to a hierarchical ›God's Eye View‹ to observe the world's constructed reality *without* being part of this construction. Luhmann himself thought that at least *one* ontological-materialist claim could prevent the theorist from blundering into the trap of being blindly entangled in the creation of constructions—namely, by making the existential statement that there *really* are systems.[125] Wendt borrowed this argument more obviously by referring not only to a ›rump materialist‹ claim, but also to the sphere of positivism and scientific realism. From this hierarchical level of factual and solid knowledge, he pretended to immerse himself in the world of social constructions without becoming himself blinded or constituted by that constructive circle.[126] However, both Luhmann's existential claim and Wendt's metatheoretical scaffold appear as rather helpless statements made form a ›God's Eye View‹ and as an impossible stance to save oneself from the slings of becoming constituted and being swept into the maelstrom of construction.

Ashley's, Walker's, and Shapiro's poststructuralist critiques were plagued by the same difficulties Wittgenstein was faced with. To formulate his ›Tractatus‹, he instructed the reader to climb up his famous ladder[127] to then see the nonsensical character of his words from a hierarchical view above. This position however was as impossible to take, as accepting the meta-text of the ›Philosophical Investigations‹ led to its self-refutation. Most poststructuralists saw themselves in a similar position—either as uncriticisable, marginal positioning ›at the boundaries‹ or by presenting the poststructuralist critique as meta-text written from outside the discourse. All these impossible positions rather reminded us of the ›God's Eye View‹ as someone speaking *about* the world of discursive reproductions from *above* this very world without being touched by the incessant mechanisms of the discourse. Likewise, the poststructuralist's claim about fluent

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123 According to Freud's postulates, every psychoanalyst had to undergo a self-analysis conducted by another analyst to get insight into her own unobservable, subconscious drives. Otherwise, the analyst would be blinded by her own drives. However, this requirement of analytical supervision turned out to be impossible. If any human being is misguided by his subconscious drives, then who could be the ›first‹ psychoanalyst healed from this blindness? Any analyst has to be analysed by a supervising analyst, who again has to be analysed by another supervising analyst, and so forth. We thus find Freud as ›inventor‹ of the psychoanalyst method to be imagined as standing at an impossible peak of this infinite hierarchy of analysts.

124 As the drive for power blinds reason and rationality, a self-observation of these impulses is impossible—just like Freud's subconscious drives. But who could then be the ›first‹ political realist *not* being blinded by his own drive for power, and then act as an unblinded observer *of* the human drive for power? Similar to Freud, the strange ›more-than-scientific man‹ appears as an observer from a hierarchical level ›above‹ the world of driven, biased humans.

125 Luhmann tried to solve the dilemma of co-constitution by arguing that self-referent systems observe themselves through a higher-ordered observation which unveils the observation's own constitutive blind spot. As this hierarchical chain of observations would either be endless or result in the paradoxical assumption of a re-entry, he argued that systems would ›deparadoxify‹ such problems. He therefore suddenly breaks with his radical constructivist conviction and climbs up to the level of materialism and biologist facts to underlie the Archimedean point of ontologically existent system with the capacity to deparadoxify.

126 Wendt had otherwise to assume an endless chain of higher-order observations unveiling the blind spot of the next lower level observation. This problem alludes to the constructivist dilemma that someone's own authorship within the construction of social kinds is only knowable through reflection; however, this reflection is again adhered by a new blind spot.

127 Wittgenstein's ladder was deployed as metaphor to show the dilemma of stating metalogical and metaphysical statements are nonsensical. To make such a statement, a position has to be taken from which we can speak *about* logics and *about* meta-concepts—and are forced to state a nonsensical metalogical and metaphysical proposition.

and changing meanings seemed to have been expressed from a ›safe‹ linguistic and semantic level where these meanings appeared as fixed and unchangeable.[128]

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There is one reason why these theorists often tend to speak from a higher ontological or semantical hierarchical level or a ›God's Eye View‹ being taken from above the observed world. As we found, these social theories were always prone to yield statements containing a recursive form. Either the theorist or the theory became part of what was theorised about as when a *human* theorist spoke about universal *human* drives, a *social* theorist about the construction of *social* agents, or a poststructuralist critique being expressed as *text* about the meaning of *texts*. In all these cases, we witnessed what Whitehead and Russell (1963 [1910]: 38) tried to disparage as »an illegitimate totality« and what Gödel called »arithmetisation« (Cooper 2004: 117)—namely, that a theorist or theory could be fed with itself as empirical food. By referring to some hierarchical level or a ›God's Eye View‹, this recursive form is attempted to be broken up. Theorist or theory are proclaimed as standing above what was said. Whether this position be concealed as metatheory, as second-order observation, as ontological Archimedean point, as a dissident voice from the boundaries or an analytical ladder, its necessity and purpose is always the same—to ›conserve‹ both theorist and theory from being recursively affected by what they say about the world. We saw these attempts fail, however, in the face of unresolvable contradictions.

Whereas Russell's ontological hierarchy was designed to prevent from totalising propositions, Tarski's semantical hierarchy aimed at avoiding the ›totality of all languages‹. The theoretical works we investigated turned out to be built on similar assumptions. Ontological hierarchies were to break up the totality of theorist and theorised, and instead presented the theorist as standing above the world she theorised about—for instance, as psychoanalyst above the analysand, as objective observation of blinded observations, as a ›more-than-scientific man‹ above power-driven humans, as a Tractarian proposition above the ›Tractatus‹, or as a boundary position ›up high‹ above all other discursive positions. Moreover, semantical hierarchies were erected to split the totality of theory and theorist, and instead carve out the theory as standing above the world it theorises about, as did the psychoanalysis of psychological episodes, as political-realist theory beyond all other knowledge claims, as the hierarchy of positivist or biologist facts and existential claims about a constructed world, or as meta-texts about discursively reproduced narratives. All these hierarchical settings required for a ›God's Eye View‹—or simply contradicted a theorist's or theory's own description of the theorised. They were, in Wittgenstein's words, »unspeakable and unthinkable things« (Chen 2011: 161).

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Theorists and theories were often heaved onto a higher hierarchical level whenever the attributes of what they theorised about—universal drives, social constructions, meaning representations—forbade a rational, objective, scientific or mind-independent way of theorising. These approaches were framed as critiques of rationalism, the rationality assumption, or simply ›Western rationalism‹. The drive for power blinded and distorted rational man, the social construction of politics forbid purely rationalist assumptions, and the discursive embeddedness of meaning and truth showed the inadequacies of Western rationalism. That is not to say that these theories did *not* contain rationalist elements, but that they created a *critical disposition* between a more or less rationalist side of objective, positivist knowledge, scientific methods, necessity and a mind-independent world, and—on the other side—a non-rationalist side of subjectivist, postpositivist knowledge, interpretative methods, contingency and a mind-dependent world. However, as we found, the

[128] For instance, Derrida's notion of ›différance‹, Foucault's genealogy, or the poststructuralists' instructions appeared as provisional meta-texts based on words which ›mean what they mean‹ as monologues—as otherwise, these texts would turn out as meaningless and incomprehensible.

created critical disposition led to antinomic statements which were either undecidable, required for an infinite ontological or semantical hierarchy, or implied an impossible ›God's Eye View‹. These findings reflected insurmountable hurdles for framing a consistent self-conception of the political-realist, social constructivist, or poststructuralist theorist and theory.

1.3 Synopsis

The theoretical works we read yielded serious antinomic statements, which violate Aristotle's fundamental laws of thought. As such, they remind us of the devastating effects of Russell's and Gödel's antinomy, which could not be solved by any hierarchical solution. This ›aporia of antinomies‹ could now be found within political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism through an analysis of their foundational ontological and semantical statements.

In this work, we attempted to answer the question whether political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism harboured antinomies. As a conclusion, we found both ontological and semantical antinomies in the works we investigated, and suggested an interpretation for how to understand these antinomic statements in a broader way. As philosophical dilemmas, they appeared as a theorist's precarious self-image and her theory's unclear self-conception. As such, we were left to conclude that all three schools of thought we read were founded on inconsistent and undecidable assumptions of both theorist and theory themselves.

Our argument began with the insight that antinomies violate Aristotle's laws of thought. Other than simple contradictions or paradoxes, they reflect an unresolvable tension of the most profound logical principles. As such, antinomies can cause the destruction of whole theoretical scaffolds, which we witnessed in our brief digression into a famous logical-mathematical debate. We saw how Russell's barber's antinomy and Gödel's insertion of the liar's antinomy shattered the foundations of prestigious theoretical programmes. We concluded from this debate that even promising hierarchical solutions in the style of Russell and Tarski to block the occurrence of antinomies were doomed to failure. They turned out to either violate their own rules or required for an impossible ›God's Eye View‹.

With these insights about the nature of antinomies, we prepared ourselves for the reading of our theoretical works as either ontological or semantical statements. After selecting three schools of thought in International Relations that allowed for reflexive, recursive inferences, we decided to read these opuses from their theoretical foundations to carve out their core assumption in a clearer light. We then followed a simple methodical path to read them as their own empirical feed. As statements, these theoretical works were plagued by an antinomic figure, which reflected unresolvable contradictions whenever theorist or theory were described *as* what was theorised about. Moreover, we found these schools of thought as presuming impossible ontological or semantical hierarchies similar to Russell's and Tarski's arrangements. Whenever a theorist implied a position ›above‹ her world, and whenever a theory presupposed a status above the theorised, these hierarchies were implicitly erected. However, these alleged solutions turned out to be harshly contradictory. Hence, we were left to conclude that the deplorable ›aporia of antinomies‹ posed not only a dilemma for logicians, but also for some theories in the field of International Relations.

2 ›The Truth of Politics‹

Instead of suggesting an impossible generalisation of our conclusion, we are left to relate our findings to another, well-known debate. For centuries, this dispute has been known as the ›relativism debate‹. Roughly speaking, absolutists think of an independent, objective reality ›out there‹, whereas relativists think that we make reality in our minds, by societal construction, or language:

> »Relativism is the position that there is no one correct view of things. Relativist argue that views vary among individual people and among cultures (›cultural relativism‹), and there is no reliable way of deciding who is right. This contrasts with absolutism, the view that there is an objectively right view […]. Ontological relativists hold that there is no external fact about what sorts of basic things exist: we decide how to categorize things, and what will count as basic […]. By contrast, absolutists hold that there is a basic substance which characterizes the unity of reality« (Shanker 1996: 376).

The antinomic tensions inherent in theorising about political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism might be read as representing the *relativist* side of the debate. These works' critiques of rationality and rationalism often goes hand in hand with the deployment of relativist tendencies within their theoretical scaffolds—either as the political realist's »partial nature of political truth« (Molloy 2006: 81), the social

constructivist's »contingent and partial interpretations of a complex world« (Price, Reus-Smith 1998: 272), or the poststructuralist's »local, historical, and partial knowledge« (Richardson 2004: 1198). What these theorists theorised about—universal drives, social constructions, or textual meanings—was given a relativist coat. In this sense, the arising of antinomies can also be understood as a consequence of these relativisms. Through the implied recursive form, these relativist elements could be referred back to their theorists and theories. Hence, we are faced with antinomies reflecting theorists and theories sawing off the bough on which they were sitting. They relativised themselves in a self-refuting way, their perspective turned out as impossible or blinded, they made an inexpressible statement, they proved their own untenability, or they simply presented themselves as untruths.

Our final considerations on relativising tendencies in the works of political realists, social constructivists, and poststructuralists should not be seen as a repetition of the century-old debate on relativism as such. This debate is well-known, and the position we have taken so far should be obvious. Our intention has been solely to show that the reading and interpretation of antinomies can also contribute to a deeper understanding of the philosophical great debates held among theorists and their critiques. Whenever we were faced with an antinomic statement, we found ourselves undecided and speechless. No decisive answer could be given, no unambiguous inference could be drawn. And although these insights might be unsatisfactory at first glance, they however reflect the factual theoretical *dilemma* in the clearest way possible. If we thus read the antinomies of political realism, social constructivism, and poststructuralism against the background of the relativism debate, this dilemma appears in a new light. The opposition between what we roughly denoted as ›critics of rationalism‹ and their adversaries resembles the notorious relativist-objectivist debate which, in different garments, emerged as infamous philosophical dilemmas for thousands of theorists in the humanities. The ›rationalist-reflexivist debate‹ that was held in International Relations would appear as an ›objectivist-relativist‹ one. Whereas rationalists saw the sphere of reason and rationality as given, foreclosed, and constant, reflectivists would maintain that this sphere is affected, open, and changeable—with harsh implications for the ontological and epistemological image of the world and its observer:

> »The hypothesis of philosophical absolutism is that there is an absolute existence independent of human knowledge leads to the assumption that the function of knowledge is merely to reflect, like a mirror, the objects existing in themselves; whereas relativistic epistemology […] interprets the process of cognition as the creation of its object. This view implies that the human subject of knowledge is—epistemologically—the creator of his world, a world which is constituted exclusively in and by his knowledge« (Kelsen 1948: 907).

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The *antinomy of political realism* drew on the problematic assumption of a political realist *as* a power-driven human and the theory of political realism *as* an historical testimony of a given power structure. If we ask about the power-drivenness of both theorist and theory, we struggled to find a consistent answer. How should we grasp a political-realist theorist who argues for a relativising conception not only of human nature in general, but also for herself? What can be said about a theory of political realism advocating a relativist idea not only of scientific theories in general, but also of itself? In both cases, the relativist element arouse from the assumption of a non-objective, irrational, and interpretative idea of human theorising as such. Hence, »Morgenthau's relativist […] conception of science« (Coffey 1977: 132) can be seen as cause for the relativist dilemma of political realism—a topic which Vibeke Tjalve (2008: 101 f.) touched upon[129]:

[129] Tjalve (2008: 10) discusses Morgenthau's positions against the background of the question of »the diachronic development of […] American intellectual history, with a more detailed synchronic study of how these two expressed themselves in Niebuhr and Morgenthau's immediate context«. Her remarks nevertheless can be understood as sketching the relativist challenges of political realism.

> »With this relativism, Morgenthau dimly perceived an emerging paradox. On the one hand, the relativist struggle against certainty appears to be the only tool for securing a space for individual self-assertion. On the other hand, relativism clearly carries its own peril: to relinquish the firm soil of certainty is possibly tantamount to unleashing an epistemological anarchy […]. At this point, however, Morgenthau remained unable to take a decisive stand […]. Unable to come to terms with this question, a diary entry from 1925 simply notes the following: ›Must still clarify my thinking about scepticism… and where I stand altogether before proceeding any further‹«.

The *antinomy of social constructivism* reflected the dilemma a constructivist theorist *as* a social agent and the constructivist theory *as* social knowledge is faced with. If we ask about the social construction of both theorist and theory, undecidable statements lay at hand. How should we think of a constructivist theorist who describes a relativising position not only of social agents in general, but also of her own? Which status should be accorded to a constructivist theory that assigns a relativist attribute not only to social knowledge and facts in general, but also to itself? In both cases, this relativist tendency became apparent due to the proclamation of the constructivist, intersubjective, mind-dependent concept of social theorising itself. André Kukla (2000: 134) nicely sketches the constructivist's relativist dilemma:

> »The root problem is that you can't simply say that relativism is true (or warranted), because relativism entails the principle that nothing is true (or warranted) *tout court*. Absolute relativism tries to cope with the problem by weakening the relativistic thesis—specifically by conceding that relativism allows that some things are true. Relativistic relativism tries to cope the problem by weakening the *epistemic status* of the thesis—specifically, by moving from ›relativism is true‹ to ›relativism is true relative to P‹. Both these strategies fail. Relativistic relativism fails because it's inexpressible; and absolute relativism fails because it isn't relativism any more—it's not even relativistic enough to be of any use to constructivists«.

The *antinomy of poststructuralism* alluded to the difficulty of presuming the poststructuralist critic *as* a discursive subject and the poststructuralist critique *as* discursive, deconstructable text. If we ask about the discursive constitution of both theorist and theory, we found ourselves left in confusion. How should we comprehend a poststructuralist theorist claiming a relativist conception of the subject in general, but also of herself? How should we truthfully accept a poststructuralist critique that, relativistically, devalues not only theoretical texts and meanings in general, but also itself? In both cases, the problematic relativist foundation furnished the idea of fluid meanings, heterological and non-objective truths, and the discursive framing of theorising as such. The well-known predicament that poststructuralism is caught in the relativist trap was famously brought forward by Christopher Norris (1993: 198 f.):

> »And indeed, for all its talk of self-reflexivity and textual *mise-en-abime*, post-structuralism is clearly caught on the horns of a relativist dilemma when advancing its more assertive claims as regards the obsolescence of truth-values, the demise of enlightened (›meta-narrative‹) discourse, the illusion of referentiality, etc. At the very least there is an element of self-disabling paradox—a performative contradiction—involved in these sweeping pronouncements that to the underline the veridical status of any such utterance, their own (presumably) included […]. In this sense one could argue that the new textualism is just an updated version of old relativism […] in order to make its otherwise familiar point«.

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Finally, the contiguity between our antinomic figure and the dilemma of relativism can be seen in a different light. Recall that our reading of theorist and theories aimed at carving out their underlying self-images and self-conceptions. We then found that, if we feed both theorist and theories with themselves as their own ›empirical feed‹, a dilemmatic relation between the disciplinary perspective and its theoretical reflection was yielded. If we saw the human world as psychoanalysts, the reflection of this disciplinary view became ›relativised‹ insofar as psychoanalysis itself turned out to be mere neurotic confession. If we think about the social world as a construction, the reflection of this disciplinary stance was likewise relativised

insofar as constructivism itself appears merely as a constructed ›knowledge claim‹. The same tale was told with regard to the political realist's world, or to Wittgenstein's view of language, or to the poststructuralist's sphere of discursive formations. The peculiar relation between the disciplinary orientation we choose and the reflection of this view seemed to be prone to antinomies. In each case, theorists and theories ›do something different‹ than what they tell us that theorist and theories do—and thereby relativise their own position and status.

Isabelle Thomas-Fogiel (2011) saw the strange relation between a disciplinary view on the world and its reflection in a slightly different way—but draws a similar conclusion. She argues that, under certain circumstances, a proposition made by a theorist from a particular disciplinary perspective harbours a contradiction that then leads to the self-refutation of the theorist's and theory's status:

> »[W]hen a historian, sociologist, or psychoanalyst asserts that ›every man's thinking is the reflection or the product of his social environment or of his contingent history‹, he is simultaneously and in the same respect saying that the proposition that he has uttered is the product of *his own* specific and contingent social environment. In doing so, he cannot avoid this dilemma: One the one hand, because he admits that his proposition is the expression of a contingent moment, he can no longer claim that it is universal […]. Or, on the other hand, he acknowledges that his proposition has exceptions, in particular at least that very proposition […]. However that may be, in both cases *his proposition is false because it fails to apply to itself*« (Thomas-Fogiel 2011: 145 f.).

Although Thomas-Fogiel maintains that disciplinary self-reference may lead to a *false* proposition—and not, as we argued, to an undecidable one—, she points to a similar dilemma. Whenever theorists hold that their disciplinary view stands ›above‹ the philosophical world of human images, rationality, or truth, the self-referent reflection of this view leads to a contradiction. Whereas we argued that both theorist and theory fatally become part of ›the theorised‹, she thinks of this dilemma as self-reference of philosophy and philosophy's content:

> »In other words, if philosophy's contents (its definition of self-consciousness, of science, truth, knowledge, the good, politics, law, etc.) sets self-referentiality aside, then that philosophy is condemned to fall into fundamental contradictions« (Thomas-Fogiel 2011: 137).

If ›philosophy's contents‹ are subordinated to the disciplinary foreign rule of, say, psychologism, political science, or sociology, any self-referential statement turns out contradictory. If a psychologist argues that psychological drives determine self-consciousness, if a political scientist holds that politics determines science, truth, or knowledge, or if a sociologist claims that society constitutes the good, politics, or the law, no consistent self-referential inferences can be drawn. They all would turn out contradictory and self-refuting. Thomas-Fogiel hence argues that these disciplines can not possibly act as the ›prerogative of interpretation‹—and thus, any psychologist theory of consciousness, any political theory of truth and meaning, or any sociologist theory of science and knowledge is doomed to failure. For Thomas-Fogiel (2011: 251), the ›holy‹ discipline of philosophy does not allow for any psychologisation, politisation, or sociologisation due to

> »the reflexive a priori‹, a principle of self-referentiality that makes it possible to show that philosophy is a distinct, first discipline«.

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Thomas-Fogiel's conclusion goes too far, as philosophy's content surely cannot be restricted in the way she argues. On the contrary, this restriction rather appears as an isolation or encapsulation of the philosophical world. As such, this world appears to be *independent* of the psychological, political, or sociological sphere—and hence represents itself in an almost objective, mind-independent, and positivist manner

shielded from ›the psyche‹, ›the political‹, and ›the sociological‹. A similar conclusion can nevertheless be drawn without sharing this view.

Recall the three schools of thought we investigated. They all tended to view a form of ›the political‹ as standing above the world they theorised about. The political realist held that the politicised drive for power determines reason and knowledge, the social constructivist argued that the politicised mechanism of societal construction constitutes reasoning and theories, and the poststructuralist maintained that political discourses produce rationality and factual truth. Hence, they all broke up the isolated sphere of an objective, mind-independent, and positivist world—and, by contrast, advocated a reflectivist and relativist view. Together with Thomas-Fogiel, we found that this view was entangled in severe antinomies caused by the principle of reflectivism and self-reference.

However, our conclusion is not that philosophy should claim its sole reign over the questions of this very world. We also refrain from advocating a rationalist view of objectivism, mind-independence, and positivism in any sense. We conclude solely that the schools of thought we investigated harbour unresolvable antinomies whenever we think about the theorist's and theory's own status, and that these strange contradictions arise from the tendency to relativise the rationalist's world. Finally, we are in need of a rationalist theme for just one purpose. Without rational thinking, we could not grasp ›antinomies‹ as unresolvable contradictions in the first place, and we would not realise that antinomies severely violate Aristotle's laws.

If we theorise about world politics, we often leave the terrain of the political sphere. The political scientist then infiltrates the terrain of reason, knowledge, or truth; she invades the field of human constitution, perception, or thinking; or she intrudes into the arena of language, meaning, and interpretation. This is no academic delict as such. But as soon as all these spheres are relativised by the dominance of ›the political‹, the whole undertaking may sometimes—but not always—get stuck in the dead end of an antinomy.

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We may understand the ›truth of politics‹ someday. For the ›politics of truth‹, this cannot be said.

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