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CRITICAL THEORY

AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Critical Theory is usually associated with an intellectual tra-
dition which emerged from the work of a group of social
philosophers who coalesced around the Institute for Social
Research, established in Frankfurt in 1923.* This tradition
is now considered to have two major branches: the first related
to the work of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert
Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Leo Lowenthal, and Walter Benjamin,
while the second pertains to the expansion of this original work
which has been proffered by Jürgen Habermas, Claus Offe,
Niklas Luhmann, Karl-Otto Apel, and others. It should be
immediately noted that Critical Theory does not form a unity,
for it does mean different things to both its early and current

* This paper is an outgrowth of a larger work which attempts to critique
modern humanistic management philosophy (as promulgated by Frederick Herzberg,
Abraham Maslow, and Douglas McGregor) in terms of the method offered by
Critical Theory. Subsequent to this critique, I proffer some new approaches to
understanding the social organization of the workplace, one of which is Critical
Theory.

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adherents. Without overstating the case, however, the common theme which unites these theorists is a dislike for the types of determinism which saw socialism arising automatically from either appropriate social conditions or at the behest of elite party members. In each case the belief was inadvertently advanced that people do not make their own history. In line with the work of Lukács and Korsch, these critical theorists wanted to develop a more vital Marxist theory, one which understands human *praxis* to be at the center of social development and, thus, human liberation.

This group of theorists (although not the only one) advanced particular changes in the epistemology-methodology and social ontology in the then prevailing deterministic trend in Marxist thinking. For example, these critical theorists rebelled against what is now referred to as economism, which had its most sophisticated application in Lenin's "copy theory" of knowledge. Accordingly, social knowledge is thought to reflect the objective (economic) conditions of a social order and this type of obtrusive knowledge is believed to dictate appropriate social action. Critical Theory, on the other hand, contends that social knowledge is a product of human action, and therefore social action cannot be comprehended to be merely a response to social (economic) conditions but more fundamentally represents the ability of individuals to transcend particular (oppressive) social conditions. For social change to be fomented, therefore, Critical Theory asserts that attention must be paid to how individuals construct their world in terms of human action, so that such action might be enlisted in order to overcome the restrictive economic conditions imposed, for example, by capitalism. These critical theorists believe that to merely reiterate (reflect) a set of oppressive economic conditions in no way guarantees that they will be overcome.

In line with this change in epistemology, Critical Theory also has a different view on the nature of Marx's methodology. When economism is thought to be the ground of all relevant social knowledge, Marx's dialectic methodology is thought to be a dogmatically held set of axioms which are believed to be applicable *sui generis* to any social setting, in order to understand how it is viewed by its members. Critical Theory asserts that

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this type of methodology is reductionistic in character and cannot provide the researcher with accurate insight into the self-understanding of a society's members. For Critical Theory the key feature of the dialectic is the self-reflection (and not the axiomatic explanation) which it should engender on the part of the researcher, so that the researcher might be able to overcome his or her own biases and grasp the social setting being investigated in its own terms. In point of fact, Critical Theory has even gone so far as to forge an alliance between dialectics and hermeneutics in order to promote the use of a methodology which it believes is better than axiomatic-dialectics for gathering social information. Critical Theory believes that only when the self-understanding of a society is captured can its potential for social action be comprehended.

As with its view of epistemological-methodological issues, Critical Theory also substantiates its social ontology on human action. Critical Theory does not believe that social action can be promoted if "society" is considered to be a force which, *à la* Durkheim, is held to dominate individual social actors. Likewise, it is not thought by Critical Theory that such metaphysical entities as the "state" or "party" can outline a rationally structured social order. In Hegelian fashion, Critical Theory contends that the individual and the social represent two distinct moments in one singular movement. Accordingly, the individual is not thought to be basically antagonistic to the social, and in need of guidance from a higher force such as the "party" or the "state" if social order is to be guaranteed. Instead, the individual is believed to be capable of establishing a social order on an inter-individual (inter-subjective) basis. This conception of social order represents Marx's view of society as embodying the individual's "species-being".

This idea of an inter-subjective basis of social order is articulated by the members of the first branch of Critical Theory primarily in Hegelian terms, which left it quite vague and difficult to operationalize in terms of developing actual social organizations. The second branch of Critical Theory, however, attempted to interpret these Hegelian themes in the light of recent philosophical advances (for example, in phenomenology and hermeneutics) and has formulated a theory of social organiza-

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tion which is substantiated on the basis of concrete human action and not abstract principles. This paper attempts to outline the characteristics of this theory of social organization.

Usually Critical Theory is understood to be advancing an anti-organizational theoretical position.[1] Due to the fact that Critical Theory is erroneously thought to be a theory of negativity, and thus by nature anti-systemic, it is also presumed that Critical Theory can at best be considered to be a micro-theory, if it is thought to be a theory at all. Accordingly, Critical Theory is not thought to promulgate a theory of social organization and because of this is not thought to be capable of offering any positive view relative to future social planning. Critical Theory is most often thought to merely offer the field of sociology a technique for carrying out a critique of positivistic methodology, or possibly a methodology for analyzing in a critical manner the ideology which is associated with the late stages of capitalistic development. However, whether or not Critical Theory advances an inherently anti-organizational thesis is an altogether different question. If the reader looks closely at Critical Theory, he or she will find that it does not really critique the idea of organizational institutions *per se* but instead is attacking a world view which fosters the automatic reification of social organizations. Accordingly, in themselves organizations are not understood by Critical Theory to be bad or oppressive but are thought to attain that status when they are accorded a natural instead of a social ontological ground. Throughout Critical Theory there are themes which suggest that institutions or organizations must be approached with a new sensibility and not that they should be abandoned altogether. These new themes require, moreover, that institutions be understood to embody human rationality, instead of being comprehended to be the only force which can mold individual action into a rational form. Experientially embodied organizations are thought by Critical Theory to be truly human and not abstract reifications. A few of these themes will now be discussed, in order to illustrate how a variety of authors who are associated with Critical Theory have begun

[1] Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan, *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis*, London, Heinemann, 1979, pp. 310-325.

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to conceptualize the nature of the social organization.

The first theorist to be discussed is Jürgen Habermas. Throughout Habermas' work there is a major theme which begins to outline a renewed way to conceptualize the nature of the social organization. Specifically, Habermas has begun to ground social order on what he refers to as communicative competence.[2] What Habermas is suggesting with this idea is that social organizations can be conceived of as a body of socially competent communicators, instead of a set of structurally linked "members". In this case, social organization should come to be viewed, according to Habermas, to be a matrix of linguistic expectations, which can be adhered to or not by the language participants. Accordingly, the organization must be understood to be a linguistic community. Language, in this sense, is thought by Habermas to hold the key to establishing an organizational structure. Therefore, language is assumed by Habermas to literally outline the limits or legitimate boundary of a community and because of this simultaneously substantiates what is thought to be organizationally rational in a particular situation. Linguistic competence is thought to prescribe the experiential boundary of an organization and inadvertently establishes its systemic limits, or its ontological ground.

Obviously Habermas is not the first theorist to advance the idea that a social organization is really nothing more than a linguistic or symbolic system. For example, a classic definition of organizational communication is offered by Baird:

> "Communication is the process involving the transmission and reception of symbols eliciting meaning in the mind of the participants by making common their life experiences.[3]

As Baird suggests, this definition was inspired by the work of G.H. Mead, and could be used by practically anyone who would like to describe an organization in terms of its symbolic elements.

[2] Jürgen Habermas, "Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence", in *Recent Sociology*, No. 2., H-P Dreitzel, New York, The MacMillan Co., 1970, pp. 115-148.

[3] John E. Baird, *The Dynamics of Organizational Communication*, New York, Harper and Row, 1977, p. 6.

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Baird, however, extends this idea of the organization being a linguistic system in a direction that would not be acceptable to Critical Theory in general, and to Habermas in particular. Why is this the case?

The manner in which Baird, for example, develops his idea that the organization is an interlocking system of symbols is actually quite normative, and it is for this reason that Baird's classic definition of the organization as a linguistic system would be in conflict with Habermas' view of the nature of the social organization. In a truly traditional manner, Baird develops this method of symbolic exchange into the also classic input-output model of communication that was pioneered by Shannon and Weaver. Such a theoretical move has the following implications which would bring this model of communication into direct conflict with the communicative competence model advanced by Habermas. First, the input-output model assumes that all input has the status of a natural stimulus. Because of this, second, the symbolic *meaning* of such stimuli are not assessed as ontologically problematic by nature. Therefore, third, the output that is supposedly elicited by all input is presumed to be unmediated by an act of interpretation, and because of this all input and output is assumed to be connected in an isomorphic manner. The result of this, fourth, is that all communication is thought to involve merely the transmission of information, and not necessarily the simultaneous interpretation and, thus, creation of information. All symbolic communication, therefore, comes to be viewed as automatically normative and, thus, standardized. When this is the case successful communication is thought to be merely based on perceptual or linguistic acuity and not necessarily communicative competence, in the Habermasian sense. What this means is that the organization is also understood to be a logistical matrix of structurally competent actors, as opposed to being perceived to be a linguistically competent community.

When a communication system is conceived to be an input-output matrix, the organization is usually understood to consist of structural channels through which information is supposed to be transmitted.[4] These channels can be viewed as either

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 257-296.

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formal or informal. In either case, however, these channels are thought to be naturally or structurally disposed.[5] What this means is that informal networks are thought to reside in the organizational "space" that is not taken by the supposed formal channels, and in fact the formal channels actually serve to provide the linguistic boundaries for both the formal and informal networks. Accordingly, both the formal and informal channels are thought to be well circumscribed, and standard in nature. In this sense, the limits of linguistic competence are understood to exist *sui generis*. Therefore, communicative competence is usually evaluated relative to how well an organizational member can manipulate the communication network in an organization. Linguistic or symbolic competence, therefore, is measured primarily in terms of utility. Also, the competence of a linguistic transmission is thought to be a logistical issue and not an interpretative problem.[6]

Habermas, on the other hand, does not adhere to this traditional model for viewing the organization to be a symbolic system. This is the case because of the following implications of this model. First, this view of the organization understands language to be basically a system of signs. Therefore, second, the meaning of these signs is not thought to be socially or organizationally problematic. What this means, third, is that the organization comes to be perceived as naturally legitimized or, more appropriately, reified. And fourth, a member's communicative ability in an organization eventually comes to be evaluated relative to what Habermas refers to as instrumental and not social competence.

What Habermas does, instead, is to view the social organization to be a *constructed* system of social or linguistic competencies.[7] To make his point, Habermas compares himself to

[5] Jerry W. Koehler, Karl W.E. Anatol and Ronald L. Applbaum, *Organizational Communication: Behavioral Perspectives*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976, pp. 42-58.

[6] Aubrey C. Stanford, Gary T. Hunt and Hyler J. Bracey, *Communication Behavior in Organizations*, Columbus, Ohio, Charles E. Merrill Co., 1976, pp. 183-251.

[7] Jürgen Habermas, "Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence", *Recent Sociology*, 2, p. 130.

Chomsky on this issue of communicative competence. Whereas Chomsky understands linguistic competence to be synonymous with the ability to master a set of abstract linguistic methods, in a truly rationalistic or Platonic manner, Habermas comprehends linguistic competence to be the process of acquiring interpretational competence. In this sense, Habermas does not ground social or linguistic competence in either a set of naturally disposed linguistic signs, or on a set of *a priori* cognitive structures. For Habermas, instead, linguistic competence is grounded on a set of interpretative norms which emerge out of the universal dialogue which *can* be developed between individuals. What Habermas says is that rule construction does not progress in a monological but instead in a dialogical manner.[8] In this sense, linguistic norms are not understood by Habermas to be merely inculcated and subsequently manipulated, either successfully or unsuccessfully, as in the input-output model of organizational communication. Instead, linguistic universals are thought to emerge as a result of the consciously constituted speech program that is developed between members of a group. Habermas refers to these as cultural, as opposed to systemic or structural universals.

What makes Habermas different from the input-output theorists is that he does not view communication channels to be natural systems, to which can be attributed a *sui generis* status. Because of this, Habermas does not attempt to outline a theory of communication competence that is based primarily on the ability of an organization's members to comprehend the logistical exigencies of a linguistic system. Therefore, Habermas does not view the social organization to be autonomous in nature, but instead appraises it as being a cultural product which embodies a set of consciously constituted linguistic norms. Accordingly, linguistic competence is measured, for Habermas, culturally and not instrumentally.[9]

As Habermas goes on to state, social systems *are* networks of communicative action, all of which are constituted on a base of intersubjectivity. To Habermas, law and morality are established

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 134.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

on an intersubjective mode of socially grounded linguistic action. Language through its essential forcefulness outlines a system of demarcations which become known as social and, thus, institutional. These institutional or organizational boundaries can exert pressure on linguistic performances, so as to assess which are acceptable and which are not, yet the boundaries which theoretically exert such pressure cannot be thought to exist in an ontologically *sui generis* manner, but instead can only be understood to be culturally substantiated. A social institution, for Habermas, is not grounded on a system of signs but rather on an ability to comprehend the linguistic significance of certain acts.[10] According to Habermas, therefore, social institutions are substantiated by linguistic interpretation and not merely technical competence. A collective identity is not, in terms of Habermas, assumed to be the result of the imposition of a structural boundary but, in opposition to this is thought to be substantiated through the development and maintenance of a common linguistic community which is interpretatively grounded. Intersubjective validity, therefore, serves as the ground of Habermas' understanding of the social organization and not merely structural compatability. As Habermas says, the social system is actually a systemically ordered "lifeworld".[11]

Whereas it is possible to interpret Habermas as merely advancing a consensus theory of collective communication, Apel makes a theoretical move which renders it impossible for his work to be interpreted in that manner. This is not to suggest that Habermas did not recognize that a theoretical gambit similar to that made by Apel should be made. In fact, Habermas noticed the need to ground his theory transcendentally; however, he felt that the transcendental tradition contained just too many historical prejudices for him to advance a transcendental thesis. Nevertheless, Apel grounded the thrust of his notion of the linguistic community on a transcendental base, thus insuring that his theory could not be interpreted as a consensus theory of linguistic assimilation.

In Habermas' work it is possible for the reader to understand

[10] Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Boston, Beacon Press. 1979, p. 98; p. 104.
[11] Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1974, p. 4.

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the normative social order as arising from a synthesis of perception, which can be collectively engendered. Apel recognizes this possible error and therefore goes on to state that social meaning is secured through a communicative synthesis of interpretation.[12] This theoretical move on the part of Apel insures that language must always be understood as establishing its own ground of epistemology and ontology. Language can never, therefore, be understood to be a sign which "points to" something, as in a consensus model, in order to render manifest what the system in question is supposed to be indicating. For Apel, language is the region of the transcendental and because of this outlines its own conditions of facticity. In a word, to paraphrase a statement made truly popular by Wittgenstein, anything that is not linguistic cannot be talked about according to Apel's view of language. Therefore, all facticity is understood by Apel to emerge out of language, and is not merely identified through the efforts of language.

What Apel then goes on to say is that normative social order actually represents a transcendental semiotic.[13] What Appel is attemping to accomplish through this theoretical move is as follows: he is trying to illustrate that all sign systems do not in themselves have a substantive existence, but that they can only be provided such a status through a fundamentally reflective act on the part of consciousness. As a result of this reflective act a specific rendition of a symbolic order can be momentarily distanced from consciousness, thus opening the possibility for it to be treated as an institutional form. All of social ethics for Apel, then, is literally meta-ethics, in that it is talk about, or a recollection of, what was previously constituted in a transcendental manner. Again to use a phrase made popular by Wittgenstein, social institutions for Apel assume the form of a "linguistic game", which is able to be systematically distanced from consciousness so that it can come to be undestood to be trans-individual but not ahistorical in nature.

The general upshot of this theoretical move on the part of Apel is that social order must come to be understood to be what he

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[12] Karl-Otto Apel, *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 138.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

refers to as a normative hermeneutic.[14] This is not to suggest that hermeneutics is grounded in terms of a set of *a priori* derived standards,but that it is based on interpretative standards that are mutually adjusted so that they eventually attain the status of a *sensus communis*, but not a *causa sui*. In this sense, everyday language cannot be reduced to a common ground but instead can come to be regulated in a common manner. What Apel is suggesting here is that all social commonality is not only intersubjective in nature but is additionally transcendentally intersubjective. This idea, of course, is suggested by Habermas' recourse to the "life-world" as the ground of his communication theory but is made much more explicit in the work of Apel. Habermas talks about the social world being substantiated by a universal pragmatic, while Apel refers to the ethical order as grounded in a transcendental pragmatic. What Apel does in this semantic shift is to guarantee that language cannot be understood to be referential in nature but instead must be comprehended to be basically constitutive. In this sense, all social organization for Apel is based on the transcendental pre-condition of objective knowledge, a momentary manifestation of which becomes reflectively distanced from its conscious, intentional base in order to be provided a trans-individual or institutional status.

This organizational or trans-individual status that is accorded a specific manifestation of a basically transcendental ground is what serves to set the boundary for a particular linguistic community. In the Kantian sense, a social organization for Apel is a limiting construct which has validity for a particular speech community and is therefore thought to be the ground of social regularity. This so-called fundamental social regulatory principle, however, is analogous to a cognitive category that is rendered general in its applicability (e.g., an "existential" in terms of Heidegger). This generality is understood by Apel to embody the essence of a social organization. What is being suggested here by Apel is that social organizations cannot ever be thought to be ontologically antagonistic to the intentionality of human consciousness, but that they can only attain a trans-individual status as a result of being reflectively

14 *Ibid.*, p. 248.

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distanced, as Ricoeur might say, from their primordial transcendental ground.

Another author who is associated with the tradition of Critical Theory has taken this transcendental thesis and has extended it somewhat to handle an organizational problem that is really only alluded to in the work of both Apel and Hamermas. This author is Niklas Luhmann, and the problem which he specifically addresses is the issue of organizational continuity.

Like Apel, Luhmann grounds social order transcendentally. He does this in terms of time, a notion that is central to the work of both Apel and Habermas but is not explicitly discussed in terms of organizational analysis.[15] Nevertheless, Luhmann recognizes the fact that the individual cannot be understood to be *in* time, for if that were the case the autonomous destiny that would be inadvertently allotted to time would preclude the possibility of the individual ever having a temporal understanding of social existence. This would be the case in that time would move itself, and the individual would literally be *in* every separate moment of time. The result of this is that temporal continuity on the social level of existence would be an impossibility. In order to avoid this problem, Luhmann recognizes that the individual upsurges *as* time, and because of this, time and the world are inextricably united as the dimensioning acts of world development. The individual and the world, as a unitary phenomenon, is understood by Luhmann to be temporally developed, instead of being brought to fruition through the *telos* that has traditionally been understood to be indigenous to time. The world, therefore, cannot be understood to be *in* time, and nor can time be grasped to be the backdrop of human development. It is with this understanding of time that Luhmann makes his transcendental move.

In terms of understanding the nature of the social organization this theoretical move has one major consequence. Specifically, the social organization cannot be understood to be materially or spiritually grounded, that is in terms of either natural law or a cultural *Zeitgeist* which is thought to legitimate the content of socially or culturally derived symbols. Instead, the social organization must, for Luhmann, be comprehended as

[15] Luhmann, Niklas, *Trust and Power*, New York, John Wiley, 1979, p. 11.

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being a temporal construction. What this means, in a manner similar to that suggested by Alfred Schutz, is that for Luhmann social meanings are temporal constructions that are thought to be collectively synchronized. In this sense, the social organization is thought to be a set of temporally constituted meanings which outline an accompanying web of temporal or social expectations. It is this temporal core, with its implied horizon of temporal implications, which constitutes for Luhmann the substance of a social organization.

What Luhmann has done with this theoretical move is to ground social order on a collectively validated temporal principle, which by definition must contain both content and form. This theoretical principle provides Luhmann with his transcendental grounding. With his stress on the temporal modality as grounding social order, Luhmann has simultaneously accomplished two tasks. First, he has brought attention to bear on the intratemporal synchronization of time that is required for any institution to have a momentary social presence. And second, he has also rendered manifest the idea that inter-temporal synchronization is necessary for an institution to have any continuity across time. What Luhmann has actually done is to illustrate the intersubjective temporal constitution of social institutions both in terms of maintaining any particular historical present and relative to insuring their presumed transtemporal dimension.

What Luhmann goes on to suggest is that each syncronized temporal or institutional present simultaneously outlines a temporal horizon of institutional possibilities which extend logically (i.e., experientially) from the temporal present.[16] In this sense, each temporal present is thought to outline a set of other or future social possibilities which comprise a range of options based on the institutional probabilities that are outlined in the present. For Luhmann, accordingly, social institutions are temporal constitutions that retain their social synchronization. The ability of individuals to act in concert and with some semblance of certainty is based on this idea of temporal synchronization. Without it, as Luhmann suggests, interpersonal trust, which is at the core of collective action, would be an impossibil-

16 *Ibid.* p. 13.

ity, in that individuals would be unable to predict how individuals will act across time. As Luhmann says, a future in the past actually outlines a future in the present which stipulates the trajectory of trans-temporal institutional continuity. Social complexity is thus reduced by this understanding of the temporal nature of social institutions and as a result of this reduction of social complexity, which, by the way, is supposed to be the job of institutionalization, a momentary boundary line outlining a range of social relevancies is maintained.

In a manner similar to both Habermas and Apel it is this boundary of social relevancies, although temporally constituted in terms of Luhmann, which serves to establish the base of any social organization. In a manner similar to these other authors, Luhmann states that these temporal boundaries are intersubjectively negotiated and are established in terms of basic human interests.[17] Social organizations, therefore, consist for Luhmann of a set of intersubjectively established solutions to past concerns. These social concerns, moreover, outline a set of probabilities that are thought to be familiar to the social participants, which in effect significantly reduce the vast range of possible options that could be chosen in the future. It is this range of familiar temporal possibilities which is for Luhmann the basic structure of any social organization. As Luhmann goes on to say, these temporal possibilities are actually symbolic networks, each one of which carries with it an organizational or temporal horizon.[18]

What Luhmann has basically accomplished with his theorizing on the nature of the social organization is to introduce two notions that are merely presupposed in the writing of both Habermas and Apel. The first is that Luhmann attempts to illustrate how a supposed subjectively constituted institution can in fact have historical continuity, and, second, how this continuity is actually grounded on interpersonal trust which is substantiated through the intersubjective reduction of social possibilities. The limits of social or temporal possibility, therefore, provide the boundary that is presupposed by any institu-

17 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
18 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

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tion, at least for Luhmann. In a manner similar to Weber, for example, Luhmann understands social organizations to be patterns of "life opportunities". However, Luhmann does not view these opportunities to be constituted naturally, but instead transcendentally. What this means is that a social organization for Luhmann cannot be understood to be a natural construction but instead should be comprehended to be a set of temporal implications which are transcendentally constituted.

Another author who is currently writing about organizational life with a Critical Theory orientation is Claus Offe. This author does not posit in a straightforward manner an ontology of social organizations. Instead, Offe's theory of social organization is presupposed throughout his writing, and in fact his more empirical investigations actually serve to corroborate the theoretical work done by Apel, Habermas, and Luhmann.

What Offe's work suggests is that organizations can no longer be understood to be evolutionary in nature.[19] What this means is that, in a Parsonian sense, organizations cannot be understood to be hierarchically structured in an ontologically positive manner. Because of this, the structure of an organization cannot be viewed to be (1) grounded on a common organizational base, (2) structured and integrated in an organic manner, and, therefore, (3) oriented out of structural necessity toward a set of "common" organizational goals. What Offe's empirical investigations suggest is that today's workplace, for example, does not even remotely represent an organization in the traditional formal sense. He states this because of his belief that most organizations nowadays are what he refers to as task-discontinuous status organizations. What he means by this designation is that for all practical purposes individual organizational slots are not organized in an organic manner, that is in terms of structural or functional necessity.

What the modern organization represents to Offe is actually an assemblage of discrete organizational tasks. In this sense, there appears to be no real reason why certain organizational positions are understood, for example, to be organizationally superior or inferior to any other. Offe believes that in the

[19] Offe, Claus, *Industry and Inequality*, London, Edward Arnold, 1979, p. 25ff.

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past an organizational hierarchy was theoretically substantiated by some type of functional rationale, and because of this some logistical legitimation could be provided as to why a particular organizational role should be located in a specific structural position relative to other role slots. Because of the extreme specialization that is present in modern organizations, Offe believes that tasks are not really functionally but only operationally related to each other. In this sense, each component of an organization is treated as an autonomous entity, which is structurally related to other organizational elements only at the highest levels of abstraction. A real organization nowadays, at least to Offe, only exists on paper.

Such an abstract conception of the organization poses serious problems relative to maintaining the idea that an organization does in fact exist. Stated in terms that are used by both Habermas and Luhmann, how is an individual who is present in such an organization supposed to develop a collective identity, or a sense of organizational membership? How is the individual supposed to be motivated to perform organizational tasks, when in fact the logic of the organization is rendered totally obscure? What Offe in fact suggests is that this current state of organizational affairs basically challenges all former theories of social organization which were substantiated by the idea that structural imperatives served as the primordial force holding an organization together. Yet there still does exist a semblance of social continuity amid this current state of structural anarchy which exists in organizations, and Offe goes on to suggest, in a manner reminiscent of Apel, Habermas and Luhmann, how this apparent order is maintained.

Stated simply, what Offe suggests is that social organizations are ordered in terms of ideology. This type of ideology, moreover, cannot be understood to be grounded materially, or in a concrete symbolic manner, in that what Offe is saying is that no common material or structural ground can be assumed to exist and, thus, to reflect a universal type of ideology. Rather, Offe suggests that the type of ideology that is currently substantiating the limited organizational order which still does exist is motivational in character. The upshot of this understanding on the part of Offe is that this motivational ideology cannot be thought to be

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intrinsic to either the organization or the individual. What Offe suggests is that this type of motivationally inspired organizational order can only exist if the individual makes a normative commitment to a specific rendition of social order.[20] The general implication here is that, for example, work instructions must not pertain only to desired results but simultaneously must outline a necessary social structure to complement the goal of all instructions, including the motivational stimulus required to generate the interpersonal commitment that is imperative to achieve organizational production results.

What is being suggested here is that the work organization must come to be ordered in terms of extrafunctional factors. Offe even uses a term employed by Habermas to describe this new organizational affair. In a word, Offe states that pure instrumental reason can no longer be understood to be sufficient to order the modern organization. This new type of extrafunctional reason, moreover, cannot be understood to be substantiated by abstract social demands, in that this type of reason must be comprehended to be intrinsically and not extrinsically valuable, due to the fact that it requires a personal commitment for it to have any validity. What Offe goes on to say is that these extrafunctional norms can only emerge out of interpersonal dialogue, so that, in the Habermasian sense, each person will be "interested" enough to adhere to what is presumed to be the orientation of the organization.

In a manner similar to Apel, Habermas and Luhmann, although much more indirectly, Offe is saying that social organizations must come to be viewed as a system of motivational relevancies which are not necessarily structural in form. These motivational relevancies, for Offe, emerge out of intersubjective dialogue, and subsequently serve to outline the boundaries of acceptable or meaningful social or organizational action. For Offe, then, organizational reason cannot be understood to be merely instrumental in nature, but instead must be viewed as much more fundamental. Organizational reason must be understood to be grounded in commitment or "interest", to use a rationale that is also present in the work of Habermas. In sum, what Offe

20 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

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is stating is that social order does not necessarily have to be explained in terms of structural or integrational imperatives, for in fact he believes that none actually exist today. Ideology, moreover, cannot be assessed as merely reflecting some type of cultural imperative. For Offe, at least, the ideology that is grounding social life is at base existential in nature but is simultaneously social.

At this time Critical Theory is coming to have increasingly more impact on social philosophy in the United States. Yet the manner in which this approach to philosophizing has come to be interpreted has portrayed it as being somewhat less than rational. That is, Critical Theory is generally thought by most American readers to be pure negativity and therefore by nature not a very productive philosophy. Specifically, Critical Theory is most often not thought to advance a version of social life, simply due to the fact that it purports not to be a philosophical system. Because of this, the impact which Critical Theory is having on American social philosophy cannot be thought to be very constructive, at least in terms of the American penchant for philosophical system building.

It might be somewhat correct for the reader to believe that Critical Theory does not understand its charge to be that of easy system building, but the reader should not think that this type of philosophy directly plunges the social world into the depths of nihilism. Critical Theory does not outline a version of social life that could be easily reified by those system builders which Nietzsche so despised, but it does outline a tangible rendition of social order. The authors whose work is presented in this paper all attempt to suggest how a rationally-grounded social order might be conceived, that is, one that can be thought to be orderly without coming to be understood to be an obtrusive system. Of course, this rational type of social order is grounded on (1) intersubjectivity and (2) a negotiated normative order which is sedimented through collective "interest". In this sense, social order or organization for Critical Theory is not structurally grounded in a *sui generis* manner but instead is thought to emerge out of communicative dialogue and is presumed to be maintained through social action (*praxis*). Social order is certainly a part of the corpus of Critical Theory, but it cannot be

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understood to be naturally disposed, as is the case with most traditional social philosophies. What is suggested here, then, is that social philosophers in the United States should not automatically dismiss Critical Theory as being at worst obscurantist by nature, or merely a micro theory. Instead, these social philosophers should attempt to penetrate the social ontology which is promulgated by Critical Theory and begin to appreciate the implications of this philosophy relative to doing social analysis.

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