The Status of the "Material" in Theories of Culture: From "Social Structure" to "Artefacts"

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In the past several decades, social theory has been transformed largely into cultural theory. In different theoretical branches, the social has been redefined as the cultural: Structuralism, semiotics and poststructuralism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, Wittgenstein's language-game philosophy and symbolic interactionism have, in diverse ways, furthered a perspective that understands the orderliness of the social world as a result of symbolic structures. In contrast to classical types of social theories such as naturalism, utilitarianism or the "homo sociologicus" of the norm-following actor, theories of culture can be defined as vocabularies that understand or explain human action and social order by establishing their basis in symbolic codes and schemes that regulate meaning. The classical dualisms of modern thought between "idealism" and "materialism", between the realm of the "ideal" and that of the "real", between the culture of the symbolic and the factualism of material objects (dualisms which surely are not identical) thus appear to have been resolved in favour of the former elements in these classical oppositions. Now it seems as if—to borrow Derrida's terminology (1967)—within the cultural/material distinction the material functions as the "supplément", as that element "added" to something already complete in itself: to culture.

However, this is the case only at first glance. Cultural theories have always taken considerable trouble to answer the question of where to place the material in relation to the symbolic. What is the status of the "material" dimension and how is it defined within the vocabularies of the theories of culture? It must be emphasized that the idea of "materiality" does not have a common meaning among theorists of culture, but that within these vocabularies it rather occupies the place of the "non-cultural", which is conceptualized in very diverse ways. We can learn a great deal about theories of culture by seeking to reconstruct the place where they localize these "non-cultural" elements which can be generally described as "material". And we can learn a great deal about the transformation the theories of culture have experienced, and can experience, by following the shifted place and significance the "material" adopts within them. I propose to

distinguish among three phases in the development of theories of culture that differ in their conceptualization of the material: 1) the sociology of knowledge as formulated by classical sociology in the work of Mannheim, Scheler and Durkheim; 2) "high modern" cultural theory as we find it in its different versions in structuralism and social phenomenology (two variations of "culturalist mentalism"), in poststructuralist and constructivist "textualism" and in Habermas's "intersubjectivism"; 3) contemporary practice theory formulated in a radical version concerning the status of "artefacts" in the work of Bruno Latour. Only in the third phase does it seem that cultural theory has reached a position capable of clarifying the relationship between the cultural and the material in a way that is neither "culturalist" nor "materalist". This ability is closely connected with the development of "theories of social practices" within the culturalist camp.

My argument will pursue the following line: 1) Classical sociology of knowledge understands the material as "*social structures*" that provide a foundation for orders of knowledge. This approach emerges as a culturalist-materialist "double". 2) We can understand the different branches of high-modern culturalism as a reaction against the insufficiencies of this vocabulary which stills seeks social foundations outside culture. High-modern culturalism redefines the material as "*objects of knowledge*" or "symbolic objects", as objects which become visible in the context of systems of meaning (categories, discourse, communicative action). In the field of cultural theories of the last decades, this conceptualization of the material has been the dominant one. 3) An instructive novel conceptualization of materiality within cultural theories is above all offered in the work of Bruno Latour (and in addition to certain other culturalist theorists of technology such as D. Haraway and F. Kittler). Bruno Latour's "symmetric anthropology" can be understood as a critique of a reduction of social order to dematerialized symbolic orders and of the material to objects of interpretation. It enables one to grasp the material not as a social structure or as symbolic objects, but as "*artefacts*", as "things" which are necessary components of social networks or "practices". Latour's sketchy approach, however, does not form an isolated position, but can be embedded within the broader and more systematic movement of revising cultural theory in the sense of a "theory of social practices", as developed in detail by Theodore Schatzki.

1. CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE: THE MATERIAL AS SOCIAL STRUCTURES

The classical sociology of knowledge, as we can find it in the work of Karl Mannheim and Max Scheler in the 1920s and 1930s and—in a different form— in Émile Durkheim's late work, occupies an ambivalent place in the landscape of modern social theory. The sociology of knowledge provides an early version of a theory of culture, and *avant la lettre* contributes to the "cultural turn" in social

theory. Simultaneously, it relativizes this culturalist position by combining its analysis of collective stocks of knowledge with a materialist argument which assumes that these symbolic structures "depend upon" social structures. In the sociology of knowledge, the place of the material is thus situated in social structures *outside* culture; the material turns out to be the secret cause and foundation of the cultural. Classical sociology of knowledge thus represents a sort of culturalist-materialist "double".[1] However, the precise status of this alleged causal "link" between social structure and knowledge turns out to be doubtful.

For most "classical" social theorists who preceded the sociologists of knowledge, the "social" was in no way identical with the "cultural". This holds (with the notable exception of Max Weber) for Karl Marx's historical materialism, as it does for the early Durkheim's theory of social evolution and social facts and Georg Simmel's "formal sociology" approach. Despite all the differences within these classical vocabularies the realm of "ideas", the plane of cultural definitions and interpretations becomes epiphenomenal; its analysis is not necessary in explaining action and social order. The causal conditions of human behaviour and action are rather situated on a different level: in the realm of pre-cultural "structures". It is contested among classical social theorists just how these social structures are to be conceptualized: as productive forces and consequence laws (Marx), as structures of social differentiation, social density and social facts (Durkheim), or as social "forms" in contrast to social "content" (Simmel). It remains largely uncontested, though, *that* the place of the social is social structure, and that social structure is a non-ideational sphere of regularities and patterns that exists and has causal effects independent of subjective or collective interpretations.[2]

Against this backdrop, it is clear how the sociology of knowledge combines "new" and "old" conceptual elements. It breaks with classical social theory by understanding symbolic orders not as an *epiphenomenon* but as a *necessary condition* of the orderliness of action. In this sense, we can read it as an early version of a theory of culture. At the same time, however, it takes over from its theoretical predecessors the definition of the material as a social structure that is situated beyond culture and that functions as the ultimate foundation of human action. Ergo, the sociology of knowledge is based on the idea of a "double-structure" forming the condition of action: The orderliness of action in social collectivities depends on a shared cultural structure of knowledge. This one, for its part, depends on an objective "social structure". Not social structure, but only the cultural structure of shared knowledge renders the structured nature of human action understandable—this is the culturalist argument in the sociology of knowledge. Yet "in the last instance" the cultural structure is determined by a material social structure—this is the materialist argument, which the sociologists of knowledge also support.

We can find a classical formulation of the culturalist-materialist "double" of the sociology of knowledge in Karl Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie* (1929). Comparable though not identical versions appear in Max Scheler's *Die Wissensformen und*

die Gesellschaft (1925) and in Émile Durkheim's *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912). Mannheim reverses the classical anti-culturalism of 19th-century social theory by shifting the meaning and status of the concepts of "ideology" and of "knowledge". In the classical theories of ideology as they dominated 19th-century social thought, ideology was understood as "distorted knowledge", as delimited from "true", i.e. proper knowledge. Classical analyses of ideology then are based upon the traditional philosophical distinction between knowledge and "mere" belief (whose objective truth cannot be demonstrated). The sociology of knowledge carries out a shift in the meaning and status of the concepts of ideology and knowledge, enabling the latter to become leading ideas of cultural theory: Mannheim pursues the project of a "totalization" of the concept of ideology that now embraces the whole of forms of knowledge as they are shared by different social groups. Hence, he uncouples the concept of ideology from the question of truth or error and rejects the distinction between knowledge and belief. There is no universal social-scientific catalogue of criteria left to judge whether some forms of knowledge of certain social groups are invalid or "distorted"—rather, every form of knowledge seems to exist in relation to a specific social group and can raise its truth-claim only relative to this community of knowledge. (see Mannheim 1929: 49–94) Knowledge in its cultural contextuality is now regarded as a *collective and constitutive background* of patterns of action. Mannheim here leans on Husserl's phenomenological idea that human action takes place before the "background" of a meaningful horizon that enables the agent to ascribe particular meanings to particular objects—the way of acting, then, depends on how meanings have been ascribed. This background is necessarily collective, not purely individual. Mannheim labels this background "Denkstil" (thought style) or "Aspektstruktur des Bewußtseins" (aspect structure of consciousness), while Durkheim talks about "systems of thought" or "collective ideas".

The transformation of the concepts of ideology and knowledge enables the specifically culturalist outlook of the sociology of knowledge. The sociology of knowledge is culturalist insofar as it explains patterns of action in social collectivities by having recourse to the shared "thought style", to the "collective representations" of a social group. However, Mannheim's sociology of knowledge—like those versions of Scheler and late Durkheim—proceeds from the assumption that for a *sociological* explanation of human behaviour such a culturalist pattern of explanation remains insufficient. The sociological explanation must search for a *foundation* of cultural structures of knowledge in social structures that are themselves not ideational but material. Implicit in this line of argument is the idea that the specifically "social" foundation of human action cannot be cultural: the social is not the cultural but rather the material situated on the plane of "social structures". But what are social structures? And what is their "material" content? Mannheim (1929: 229–244) charges a number of different concepts with the task of paraphrasing these social structures: they embrace "conditions of being" (Seinslage), "conditions of structure" (Strukturlage) or "factors of being" (Seinsfaktoren)[3].

Max Scheler (1925: 21ff) prefers to use the term "real factors" ("Realfaktoren"), distinguished from "ideal factors" ("Idealfaktoren"), to designate the non-ideal "basis" of culture. Émile Durkheim in his late work (1912: 13, 17, 21, 26) applies a terminology of "collective realities", "social conditions", the "social origin of categories" and the "nature of things" to describe the social basis of collective representations (particularly of religious representations).

Why do sociologists of knowledge search for a basis of culture outside culture, in the "material world"? It seems that their fear of "relativism" provides the reason. In the moment the sociology of knowledge treats collective knowledge not as an epiphenomenon but as a necessary condition of patterns of action, it must on a first level concede that all schemes of knowledge are "equal", even if the beliefs they back contradict one another. When the beliefs are "true" from the point of view of the respective agents, they have effects on their actions. Yet such a radically contextualist statement leaves the sociologists of knowledge—Mannheim and Durkheim alike—uncomfortable. From their perspective, a sociological explanation must reinterpret the seemingly "arbitrary" and *contingent* schemes of knowledge as *necessary* phenomena on a more basic level—as necessary products of certain social structures. In order to prevent the cultural knowledge of a collectivity from appearing as an entirely contingent phenomenon—which could in principle always be otherwise—the sociology of knowledge realizes an escape. The emergence of a certain cultural knowledge in a collectivity requires itself an explanation—one that makes it possible to derive the form of knowledge from the form of a more basic plane of phenomena: the pre-cultural plane of social structures.[4]

What, however, is the exact logical status of the relations between collective knowledge and "social structure"? In the sociology of knowledge, the sphere of the action-directing stocks of knowledge and the sphere of the more basic "social conditions" and "real factors" are conceptualized as two distinct realms or levels. Here we can find three different versions of how the logical relation between these two realms is conceptualized: as a relation of "*causality*"; as a relation of "*reflection*"; or as a relation of "*social constitution*". Correspondingly, the idea of a non-cultural social structure differs. In the three cases, different problems of conceptualization arise.

The first possibility of how to understand the link between social structure and culture/knowledge can be found in parts of Mannheim and Scheler. Here, the "conditions of structure" are presented as a *cause* for the emergence and reproduction of the respective "thought styles" that consequently appear as "effects" of their social basis. The relation between the structures of being and knowledge is not only one of "correlation" but also one of "determination".[5] The method of "relating" culture and structure, then, turns out to be a method of "explaining" the existence of a form of knowledge from the structural conditions of its emergence—structural conditions of a social class, a generation, an intellectual school, etc. (Mannheim 1929: 265). It is difficult to find a precise definition of "structural

conditions" in this sense in the sociology of knowledge; though it does seem that Mannheim identifies them in part with a certain distribution of "resources", for instance between social classes. Then, the members of such a class, generation, intellectual school etc., pursue interests which result *from* this structural condition and which result *in* a certain world-view. This version of the sociology of knowledge obviously remains closely related to a classical pattern of "basis" and "superstructure".

In Durkheim's version of a sociology of knowledge, we encounter a second variant of the link between social structure and culture. Here, the relation in question is one of epistemological *reflection*. The categories a social group develops to classify social or natural phenomena—for instance concepts of time, space, causality etc.—are not arbitrary inventions; they do not "construct" a symbolic world as a fiction that has nothing to do with the "real" social and natural world. On the contrary, in the epistemological sense they "correspond to" the structures of the real, natural and social, world. In this sense, the collective classifications of knowledge reflect not only social structures but also natural structures; they reflect the "nature of things". (Durkheim 1912: 23–28) If in the first version the relation between structure and culture resembles the classical link between basis and superstructure, then the second version implies similarities with the epistemological relation between subject and object. The role of the classical subject is now replaced by the symbolic categories of a social collectivity, while the role of the classical object is occupied not only by natural, but also by social structures. At any rate, the sociology of knowledge of the second version presupposes a primacy of the "object", of the structures of the real world that "manifest themselves in" social categories.

Finally, there is a third version in which sociologists of knowledge seek to grasp the relation between social structure and knowledge. It can be labelled the model of social constitution, which we come across again in the work of Mannheim. In part, Mannheim's argument of the "Seinsverbundenheit" of knowledge does not mean that the realm of the cultural is "conditioned" by a realm of the social as the non-cultural, but rather that the stocks of knowledge are socialized and transmitted in social processes, i.e. in processes of social interaction within groups. An agent does not learn his thought style in an individual confrontation with a certain world of objects and events, but by being socialized into a certain thought style which is defined as "true" and "normal" within a group, a social class or generation; knowledge is thus a product of a "social constitution", of social conventions.[6] These social processes in which agents develop their "forms of thinking" embrace not only processes of "taking over" categories from others, but also processes of delimiting oneself from the thought styles of certain others (e.g. in intellectual competition). At any rate, the third version of the conceptualization of the relationship between social structure and culture modifies the meaning of "social structure" to a considerable degree (and in secret). "Social structure" loses its status as a distinct non-cultural and material realm, appearing instead to be a set of intersubjective processes in which collective

knowledge is acquired. Thus "social structures" are converted from non-cultural patterns to rules of knowledge-acquisition.

All three versions of linking social structure and culture raise their specific conceptual problems. The proposal that the relationship should be regarded as a causal link, collective knowledge treated as an "effect" and the non-cultural social structures as a "cause" leads to the question of which understandable *mechanism* is to connect cause and effect. After all, the sociology of knowledge assumes not only a descriptive "*correlation*" between the observability of certain forms of know-ledge and the existence of certain social classes or other groups and their non-cultural resources; more than that, it assumes an *explanatory logic* between social structure and culture. To assume an explanatory logic one requires a mechanism that elucidates why A "engenders" B.[7] Chronic difficulties, however, remain when it comes to finding a "meaningful", understandable "mechanism" mediating between a non-cultural and a cultural realm. When the social structure of a group is identified with its resources, and thus its status in a given society (this already presupposes a precise definition of social structure), it seems hardly possible to explain why a certain material structure would "cause" a certain way of interpreting the world and exclude other world-views.

Mannheim himself concedes that the classical notion of "interest" does not promise any satisfactory solution here (1925: 375–387): Certain resources, a specific social living condition or status do not "engender" any "corresponding" interest. Rather, which "interests" a social group pursues depends on how it *defines* its interest, a definition rooted in the cultural realm of world-views and know-ledge itself.[8] To interpret the link between social structure and culture as a relation of epistemological "reflection", as in the second variant, amounts to a compar-able issue of how to maintain the alleged primacy of the "real" towards the "ideal". When the sociology of knowledge contends that the "nature of things"—including "social things/facts"—"manifests itself" in the way these things are interpreted and "experienced" in the collective categories of a group, it does not deal with the "underdetermination of (everyday) theories by facts".[9] How is it possible for a group to approach the "real" structures of the natural and social world when there are always potentially several ways of making sense of experi-ences, ways that are "empirically equivalent" and that cannot be situated in a relation of "correspondence" to social and natural reality? Again, the sociology of knowledge does not suggest a mechanism according to which the "nature of things" is supposed to "manifest itself" in the interpretation *of* the nature of things.

The third variant of conceptualizing the relation between social structure and culture, the pattern of "social constitution" as it is suggested partly by Mannheim, is not entangled in the problem of finding an understandable mechanism be-tween the two realms. After all, here the sociology of knowledge *dissolves* the strict separation between two ontological spheres and "dematerializes" the status of social structures. That cultural knowledge is socially constituted now means noth-ing more than the presupposition that the sharedness of knowledge is a result of

social conventions and interactions that enable a collective socialization of meaning patterns. In this way, the sociology of knowledge dissolves its explanatory claim, its claim to explain culture by having recourse to the more stable ground of social structure. Instead, it now only spells out what has already been implied in its basic culturalist position: Thought styles are not individual, but in different social groups collectively shared; to have been shared, they obviously must have been "socialized" within the group. Consequently, as soon as the sociology of knowledge formulates a tenable relation "between" culture and social structure, the distinction between the two realms collapses and it must give up its explanatory claim of a "Seinsverbundenheit" of culture. Instead of a materialist-culturalist double, in this third version the sociology of knowledge changes into a version of pure culturalism: there is no distinct place left for the materiality of structures outside culture. The social cannot be found in the alleged solidity of a pre-cultural sphere, but in the collectivity of symbolic orders themselves. Thus, the sociology of knowledge itself provides the transition to a second outlook on the material which cultural theories can offer: here the material is presented not as pre-cultural social structures, but as carriers of cultural symbols.

2. MENTALIST, TEXTUALIST AND INTERSUBJECTIVIST CULTURALISM: THE MATERIAL AS A WORLD OF OBJECTS OF KNOWLEDGE

The classical sociology of knowledge is conceptually instructive because it finds itself situated at an intersection of the materialist theories that preceded it and the culturalist approaches which followed. The "cultural turn" in social theory that has been taking place since the late 1960s, however, is hardly based upon the sociology of knowledge. Rather, contemporary theories of culture are products of schools of thought in 20th-century social philosophy that demarcate a sharp break with all connotations of traditional schemes of "basis and super-structure". Above all, structuralism, semiotics and poststructuralism, phenomenology and hermeneutics, Wittgenstein's philosophy of language-games and symbolic interactionism provide different backgrounds for contemporary theories of culture. Despite all the profound differences in their conceptualization of the social and of meaning, most of these cultural theorists share an overarching position vis-à-vis the status of the material world: The material world now no longer adopts the status of a structural cause or condition of culture; instead, material entities appear as objects that gain a symbolic quality within classification systems, discourses or language-based interaction. The material world *exists* only insofar as it becomes an object of interpretation within collective meaning structures. There are no material entities as such, but only systems of distinctions that define certain "material objects" in a certain form and delimit them from other (material or non-material) objects. Material entities exist as carriers of meaning, as "*objects of knowledge*".

It maybe astonishing to realize that in spite of the significant differences and controversies characterizing the field of contemporary cultural theories, almost all of them are based upon a tacit agreement as to the status of the material as symbolic objects. Contemporary cultural theories ascribe no independent explanatory force to a sphere of material entities. Rather, they unequivocally formulate a logic of explanation that regards the structurality of human actions as resulting from collective symbolic orders—these collective symbolic orders now are *themselves* the last "foundation" of the social world and cannot be derived from any more basic "material" or "social" plane. For the new cultural theories, influenced by structuralism, semiotics, phenomenology, hermeneutics, language-game philosophy or symbolic interactionism, the social is not separate from the cultural but largely *is* the cultural, i.e. it is identical with symbolic orders. We find different forms of this understanding of material entities as cultural symbols in four versions of contemporary cultural theory that differ according to the status ascribed to "symbolic orders": in objectivist and subjectivist mentalism, in textualism and in intersubjectivism.

In the first and second cases, i.e. the two opposed versions of mentalism, the sphere of symbolic orders is situated in mind, in mental qualities which are interpreted either as unconscious codes or acts of consciousness. Structuralism and social phenomenology present themselves as paradigmatic representatives of these two branches. In the third case, in the framework of textualism, symbolic orders are understood as discourses or "texts" outside mind; here, certain versions of poststructuralism and hermeneutics can be situated. Finally, "intersubjectivism"—paradigmatically represented by the work of Habermas—interprets social interactions and their linguistic basis as a "place" of symbolic orders.[10] All approaches, however, contain traces of a post-Kantian dualism of subject and object—"only" that the *subject* is partly replaced by different "figures", such as discourse or communicative action, which take over the status of the subject. This does not, however, concern the status of the *objects*—understood as objects of knowledge, of interpretation or of semiosis.

One of the roots and present branches of contemporary cultural theory that leaves behind the division between culture and social structure is structuralism as it was classically formulated by de Saussure and applied to the social sciences by Lévi-Strauss in a paradigmatic form. For structuralism, the place of symbolic orders is within the cognitive unconscious of mind. The plane of the social is identical with the plane of collective mental qualities. These "systems of classification", "schemes" or "codes" determine what can ever become an "object" within language and action. In classical structuralism (unlike poststructuralism) the systems of signs, understood as systems of pairs of signifier and signified, are purely *mental* structures. It is thereby only consistent that Lévi-Strauss deals with "material phenomena" by analyzing systems of classification, as in *La pensée sauvage* (1962), or myths, as in *Mythologies* (1964ff), by thus examining a symbolic and cognitive "logic" within systems of distinctions. "Totems"—Lévi-Strauss's

classical example from the former work—are reconstructed as a result of specific systems of classifications in which distinctions from the realm of culture and (cultural) distinctions from the realm of nature are tied to one another. In a certain way one can interpret Lévi-Strauss's structuralism as a theoretical heir of late-Durkheim's strategy of analyzing "collective representations", but largely without pursuing the project of explaining them by deriving them from a pre-cultural social structure.[11]

Within the culturalist camp, social phenomenology represents—in certain aspects—an antipode to structuralism. Social phenomenology, stemming from Husserl and paradigmatically expressed in the work of Schütz, rejects the structuralist attempt to reconstruct meaning structures from an "objective perspective" that passes over acts of consciousness. On the contrary, it situates meaning in the "subjective perspective", in the way a consciousness ascribes meanings to objects. Mental acts of consciousness stand in a relation of "intentionality" to the objects of the world: they refer to them, and by referring to them render them meaningful. These "objects" to which consciousness refers can be human agents, non-living objects or abstract entities. What matters are the meaningful systems of typification employed by consciousness to arrange these objects in a certain way and make them appear "real" to the subject. In Schütz's *Strukturen der Lebenswelt* (1975: 62–87, 224–290), material objects, then, are largely interpreted as products of systems of typification that arrange these objects according to the Kantian schemes of space and time. Although social phenomenology and structuralism conceptualize "mind" and "mental categories" in conflicting ways, they both share a mentalist vocabulary that presupposes mental categories as the "inner" source of social order. The subjectivist mentalism of social phenomenology and the objectivist mentalism of structuralism both imply a direct Kantian heritage which in the case of structuralism is hinted at by Lévi-Strauss (1963) and which in the case of phenomenology is explicit in Husserl (1956: 93–113). In this way both structuralism and phenomenology are based on Kant's asymmetric distinction between subject and object: irrespective of a real world of things *an sich*, the mental acts and structures "constitute" their world of objects according to specific schemes.

While structuralism and social phenomenology directly follow the classical Kantian idea of a "knowing subject" and of "objects to to be known by the subject" in two variations—though without the concept of a "transcendental" subject in the strict sense—the theoretical movements within contemporary culturalism that can be labelled "textualism" and "intersubjectivism" stand in opposition to Kantian philosophy of the subject—but only upon first consideration. The movement towards "textualism" criticizes any attempt to localize symbolic orders in mental structures, but situates them instead on the plane of discourses, extra-mental symbols or texts. Michel Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge", Clifford Geertz's treatment of "culture as text" and Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems as environment-observing systems represent different forms of culturalist textualism. Despite profound differences between Foucault's

poststructuralism, Geertz's symbolistic hermeneutics and Luhmann's theory of communication, all these approaches share the position of locating symbolic orders not in mind, but on the level of extra-mental signs—be they linguistic or non-linguistic.

This conceptual shift from "mental categories" to textual or discursive codes, however, does not lead to a fundamental revision of the status of material entities. The role of the subject—structuralist or phenomenological—is replaced by discourse, symbols or communication (in the sense of Luhmann) but the material objects continue to appear as products of symbolic orders, as objects of knowledge. Thus, in Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (1966) the objects of scientific studies are interpreted as contingent results of historical knowledge codes. In Geertz's anthropological "thick descriptions", material entities and events such as cockfights, funerals or acts of winking gain their cultural relevance from their symbolic value, by "standing for" more or less abstract phenomena: social conflicts, religious values or a social relation (Geertz 1973). In Luhmann's analyses of the "binary codes" and "semantics" employed in social systems, "objects" appear as constructions of system-specific "distinctions": Non-communicative and non-mental entities form organic and psychic systems in the "environment" of the social (and the psychic), which are interpreted by social (and psychic) systems in a specific way. (Luhmann 1984, 1990)[12]

If for the different branches of textualism social order is a result of sign-systems, then for intersubjectivism it is a result of symbolic interactions between agents. Culturalist intersubjectivism is paradigmatically formulated in Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action. From this point of view, symbolic orders take on the role of a structure of shared propositions and pragmatic rules of language use, which provide a background for the interactions between subjects. Building on Popper's distinction between three "worlds", i.e. three ontological realms, Habermas categorizes the plane of the material as "world one", separate from the world two of the mental acts of subjects and the world three of socially shared semantic propositions: In their "objectively shared" semantic propositions, agents make statements about the "world one" of material entities. These appear as an object of knowledge, as something "we talk about" in our symbolic-linguistic interactions. (Habermas 1981, I: 114–151)

Both textualism and intersubjectivism keep their distance from mentalist theories of the subject and from a neo-Kantian localization of symbolic and thus social order in mind. The role of mind is replaced by that of discourse/texts/symbols or by that of symbolic interactions respectively. However, the status of the subject-object-distinction as a whole, understood in an abstract sense, is not concerned with this conceptual modification that refers to the "subject-pole". Just as in the classical Kantian distinction, the material world is interpreted as a matrix of "phenomena" that achieve their meaning through symbolic schemes, here through world-constructing codes or semantic propositions. In the four different branches of high-modern cultural theory, in structuralist and

phenomenological mentalism, in textualism and in intersubjectivism, the material world thus appears as the plane of objects to be known or to be observed, to be talked about or to be interpreted, each time constructed by cultural codes.

The advantages and merits of these radically culturalist approaches are beyond all doubt: Unlike the classical sociology of knowledge and the materialist approaches, they drop the idea of a sphere of the "pre-discursive" and its alleged founding function, having already collapsed in the sociology of knowledge. Instead, the culturalists demonstrate how not only social and cultural entities but also "material" entitites gain their meaning and significance only in certain systems of differences or interpretative schemes which define them in contingent ways. However, the question arises which "costs" high-modern cultural theories bring about. The main problem of these approaches seems to consist in a suspiciously traditional conceptualization of materiality as objects of knowledge. The idea that material things exist for us only within contingent systems of difference, interpretative schemes etc. is here linked to the seemingly taken-for-granted idea that these material things have primarily the status of objects which are observed and interpreted. The issue is, however, whether such a classical subject-object-conceptualization gives just due to the significance which material artefacts bear in the social world.

Above all three conceptual simplifications, which are linked to one another, can be the prize: *human action* is reduced to "intersubjective" interactions between subjects or to actions which make use of or are products of symbolic orders; *social orderliness* is understood as an exclusive result of individual-transcending symbolic orders (languages, discourses etc.); *social change* in history is identical with a change of cultural codes. The question is whether an alternative vocabulary can be developed which remains within the field of cultural theory and thus retains its insights, while still being able to conceptualize materiality in a less intellectualist way than as objects of knowledge: to regard human activities "with things" not as an epiphenomenon in relation to acitivities with subjects or abstract entitites; to regard social orderliness also as a product of socially stabilized artefacts; and, finally, to regard social change in connection which changes of artefacts (without falling back into a "materialist" theory). Already in the field of the "high-modernist" theories of culture there have been tendencies to go beyond a model of material entitites as symbolic objects and to allude to the "constitutive" role of artefacts in the social world. In *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*, Schütz and Luckmann in part begin to give their social phenomenology a "pragmatist" turn by pointing out the "recipe knowledge" needed to handle artefacts in everyday life (1975: 139ff). Moving in a different direction, in his "genealogical" works Foucault begins to study those subject-forming institutional practices which are not exclusively "discursive", but which make use of novel artefacts (architecture in prisons, biotechnological developments in "bio-power" etc.; Foucault 1975, 1976). However, we can find an unequivocal attempt to formulate an alternative conceptualization of material objects within cultural theory in the work of Bruno Latour.

3. SYMMETRIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND PRACTICE THEORY: THE MATERIAL AS "ARTEFACTS" AND AS INTEGRAL COMPONENTS OF PRACTICES

Cultural theory *does* have an alternative to "culturalism" and its understanding of "materiality" as "objects of knowledge", without having to fall back into the materialist-idealist double of the sociology of knowledge. This is Bruno Latour's basic assumption. We can understand his works as pleading for such a "third" alternative (mainly in Latour 1991). Latour, however, is not the only author who tries to reconceptualize the social significance of objects as artefacts. There are Friedrich Kittler's (1985) and Mark Poster's (1995) approaches to a history of symbolic orders as history of technical media of communication, Andrew Pickering's (1995) science studies, Donna Haraway's (1991) approach to "cyborgs" and their force to transform late-modern society, and in a certain way Gilles Deleuze's (1980) concepts of the organization of space by means of territorialization and deterritorialization could already be mentioned here.

Bruno Latour's argumentation is at first highly indebted to the sociology and anthropology of science as it spread in the 1970s in the wake of Kuhn's culturalist perspective on "normal science" and of ethnomethodology. These "science studies"—above all in the context of the Edinburgh School—appear at first as paradigmatic examples of the cultural turn and its basic assumption that material "facts" cannot exercise any independent causal influence on the social world, but that on the contrary, these "facts" are products of certain cultural codes and social practices (for instance in the scientific laboratory). Indeed, the anti-naturalist merits of this culturalist outlook on scientific practice remain valuable also for Latour. Yet this cannot be the last word. The seeming radicalism of a culturalist perspective lessens when one recognizes that contemporary culturalism turns out to be one more version of the problematic "modernist constitution", i.e. a modernist way of thinking that tends toward a "purification" of culture from nature (including both the organic and the physical world) and of nature from culture. This semantic and practical purification contradicts and at the same time enables the fact that in particular modern times are witnessing an unprecedented expansion of hybrids, "quasi-objects" (Serres), non-human creatures that are neither pure nature nor cultural projections, but indispensable (by now, innumerable) components of social "networks" or "practices".

The significance of these quasi-objects—from the ozone hole to HIV, from computers to genes—has been systematically misunderstood by the dominating conceptual dualism of nature and culture/society and by the at first glance contradictory, but in fact comparable strategies of "naturalization", "socialization" and "discursivation" in philosophy and the social sciences. However, Latour's approach to what he calls a "symmetric anthropology" provides more than an attempt to offer a novel and more adequate perspective on the innumerable phenomena of modern science and technology and their social effects. More generally, it can be understood as an effort to work out a new ("non-modernist")

vocabulary to grasp the "link" between the cultural and the material beyond the idea of a "constitution" in one way or the other. To achieve this aim, Latour insists, the material world must be seen neither as a basic structure at the foundation of any culture and knowledge, nor as a matrix of symbolic objects on the screen of the respective culture. Rather, it should be understood as "artefacts" or "things" that necessarily participate in social practices just as human beings do. To be sure, these things are "interpreted" by the human agents in certain ways, but at the same time they are applied, used, and must be handled within in their materiality. As things, they are not arbitrarily interchangable.

Latour takes some pains to demonstrate the different intellectual strategies modern thought has conceived to create two different "chambers", one of a social and cultural world, i.e. a realm of human subjects, and one of a material world, i.e. a realm of non-human objects, as it is recognized in natural laws by modern natural science. Above all, three conceptual strategies have hitherto dominated the scene of philosophy and the social sciences (Latour 1991: chap. 2). The first pattern is an explicit dualism between nature and culture, between subjects and objects as two realms existing independently of one another or even in a relationship of "incommensurability". This point of view sees "things" as elements of nature existing entirely separate from social relations. The second pattern—according to Latour, particularly widespread in the social sciences— amounts to a relation of mutual constitution of culture/society and nature: Some elements of nature—those seen as "hard" and insurmountable "structures"—are interpreted as a causal foundation of culture; simultaneously, certain other aspects of the material world have effects "only" in the form of cultural interpretations. The third pattern carries out a resolute "discursivation" of the material world. This strategy can amount either to a radical "cultural relativism" that assumes that every culture disposes of its own "picture" of nature, or to a particularist universalism that assumes that though every culture fabricates its view of nature, some views (normally those fabricated by Western science) are "more adequate" than others. At any rate, the material entities do not appear as things to be handled, but as objects to be interpreted.

In relation to these conceptual purifications, Latour presents an alternative vocabulary which, however, appears in his works only in outline. The central concept of this alternative outlook is that of a "network" or a "practice" and of a "nature/culture" (Latour 1991: chaps 3, 4). Neither the material world nor a social world of meanings or power relations, can be taken for granted as a seemingly certain point of departure. Instead of following anthropology or culturalist sociology in distinguishing different "cultures" and their forms of interpretation, one should distinguish between different "natures/cultures": Social networks or practices in their historical variability consist not only of human beings and their "intersubjective" relationships, but also simultaneously of non-human "actants", things that are necessary and are so-to-speak "equal" components of a social practice. In the presence of the explosion of technical artefacts

in contemporary societies, it becomes more and more difficult to follow the modernist constitution and to overlook this constitutive status of things for social practices.

Yet this is already valid for so-called "pre-modern" societies (a notion Latour seeks to avoid), which only possessed considerably smaller numbers of socially relevant things. "Things" thus have the status of "hybrids": On the one hand, they are definitively not a physical world as such, within practices they are socially and culturally interpreted and handled. On the other hand, these quasi-objects are definitively more than the content of cultural "representations": they are used and have effects in their materiality. Without the specific materiality of a vacuum pump the respective scientific practice would not be possible—the vacuum pump cannot simply be replaced by some other arbitrary "symbolic object" to which the same "meaning" is then ascribed. Hence, the social scientist cannot confine himself to the analysis of "cultures" (and in fact, at least the anthropologist who was concerned with pre-modern societies has never taken this limitation seriously). Rather, networks of human beings, of non-human creatures and their regulated relationships to one another, form historically specific "natures/cultures".

For Latour this rehabilitation of the material world in the form of artefacts, integrated in social practices, amounts to a novel concept of the "collectivity" and to a dissolution of the micro/macro-distinction notorious in modern social theory. Classically, social theory has confidently defined the "collective" as relationships between human beings, between subjects, thus to found it in a constellation of "intersubjectivity". The paradigmatic situation of "sociality", then, used to be that of a face-to-face-interaction between two or more agents. The traditional critique reproached this sociological interactionism for ignoring those "social structures" that exist beyond the particular context in which the interaction takes place. But what are these social entities crossing different contexts and leading to a transcontextual social order? For Latour, referring to "symbols" or meaning structures alone cannot offer a satisfactory answer to this question. Indeed, when comparing human societies to simian societies, the particularity of the former consists in the fact that they are more than just an agglomeration of social interactions under the condition of copresence. Rather, the stability of "human" social orders beyond particular contexts of action can be properly understood only when one regards practices not merely as constellations of intersubjectivity, but also as constellations of "interobjectivity" (Latour 1996): "By dislocating interaction so as to associate ourselves with non-humans, we can endure beyond the present, in a matter other than our body, and we can interact at a distance. . . . The old difference of levels comes merely from overlooking the material connections that permit one place to be linked to others and from belief in purely face-to-face interactions." (1996: 239f) For Latour, the distinction between micro-interactions and macro-structures thus dissolves itself: What we can find is nothing more nor less than the "flat" level of social practices. Yet, in these practices, material things are routinely drawn upon and applied by different

agents in different situations. The objects handled again and again endure, thus making social reproduction beyond temporal and spatial limits possible.

Bruno Latour does not, however, present his new outlook on the status of material objects in the form of an elaborated social theory and his approach contains a number of conceptual ambiguities, among which the alleged status of objects as "actants" in their own right is one of the most problematic and contested (cf. the critiques in Collins/Yearley 1992, Gingras 1995, Bloor 1999). Instead of formulating a "Latourian" social theory—a project which should be seen with some scepticism, as his vocabulary is fixed on the nature/culture problem and merely touches upon many other significant social-theoretical issues (body/mind, understanding, social institutions etc.)—it seems more fruitful to instrumentalize Latour's ideas and to situate him in the broad stream of recent cultural theories which can be described as "theories of social practices". Here we encounter an interesting constellation: Systematic conceptualizations of a practice theory—as we can find it in different versions in certain works of Anthony Giddens (1984), Pierre Bourdieu (1972) and Laurent Thévenot (2002), in sketchier versions in ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967) or the work of Judith Butler (1990), and in a social-philosophical form in Theodor Schatzki's *Social Practices* (1996)—have carried out the shift from "subjects" and "texts" to "social practices" in a more complex way than Latour, but they have not or only to a limited degree rethought the status of material objects. Yet the idea of "practice theory" is not only compatible with, but *demands* such a rethinking. Conversely, Latour's sketchy outline of a reconceptualization of the dualism between the cultural and the material becomes more comprehensive—and is reread in a more "anthropocentric" way, as Latour probably would prefer it—once it is embedded in the broader theoretical frame of a "theory of social practices". Latour's leading concept of social "networks" of "practices" consisting of both human and non-human creatures and their relationships can be reformulated when linked to "praxeological" thinking. The central issue then is that certain things or artefacts provide more than just objects of knowledge, but necessary, irreplacable components of certain social practices, that their social significance does not only consist in their being "interpreted" in certain ways, but also in their being "handled" in certain ways and in being constitutive, effective elements of social practices.

Apart from textualism in poststructuralism, radical hermeneutics and the constructivism of social systems, and apart from intersubjectivism in the form of Habermas, practice theories provide an alternative attempt within contemporary cultural theory to overcome the model of the subject or mind as locus of the social and of knowledge. Whereas textualism and intersubjectivism both turn out to be secret allies of mentalism as far as their implicit subject-object dualism is concerned, this is not the case for practice theory. But what is "practice theory"?[13] It is a tautology to state that for practice theory the place of the social is neither in the mind nor discourses nor symbolic interactions, but in "social practices". What is a "social practice"? In *Social Practices. A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity*

and the Social (1996), Theodore Schatzki develops a detailed account of the philo-sophically sophisticated ideas of a theory of social practices, which in its system-atic character surpasses the accounts of the other relevant authors. This approach is based to considerable degree on elements of Wittgenstein's analysis of language-games and of Heidegger's analysis of "Dasein". A central problem of social theory has hitherto consisted in its reification of the subject and of (collective) human mind as its point of departure for social analysis. According to Schatzki, how-ever, the proper site of the social is not collective mind but social practices.

A social practice is a regular bodily activity held together by a socially stand-ardized way of understanding and knowing. A social practice of x-ing (cooking, excusing, researching, working, arguing etc.) is then "a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings" (Schatzki 1996: 89), "organized" by a socially typical "understanding of x-ing" above all including practical know-ledge (apart from norms and teleoaffective structures). Schatzki criticizes all attempts—for instance in Lyotard's work—to reduce social practices to discurs-ive practices. Practices are not only forms of "saying"—hitherto falsely privileged in social theory—but also forms of doings. Doings and sayings cannot be con-ceptualized as mental competences or as sequences of signs, but present them-selves first and foremost as certain regular bodily activities. To form a socially conventionalized "intelligible" practice, however, these bodily activities need to be "organized" by knowledge. This knowledge is necessarily expressed in bodily activities: "Mind . . . is the expressed of the body" (Schatzki 1996: 53). Mind cannot completely be excluded from social analysis, but it must be demystified: Regular bodily activities are necessarily accompanied by typical (mentally an-chored) forms of understanding and knowing (otherwise the body would not act regularly), but this understanding and knowing "exists" only insofar as it manifests itself in bodily behaviour. When we talk of "social fields" or "institutions", in the end we find nothing more than nexuses and sequences of social practices. The "symbolic orders' highlighted by cultural theorists, then, turn out to be forms of practical understanding which organize practices. For practice theory, the small-est unit of social analysis can definitively not be found in qualities of the "subject". But here the decentering of the subject is carried out in a form different from textualism or intersubjectivism. "Language" and "sign systems" as "supraindividual" or "intersubjective" entities are no longer the locus of the social; repetitive bodily activities, in which certain forms of understanding are expressed, take on this role.

Surprisingly, however, "things" are largely missing in Schatzki's practice theory. In only one passage does he mention that "places are anchored in objects which are combined into settings" (Schatzki 1996: 189). Thus, objects are presented here as symbolic markers which establish certain settings for certain practices. However, in accordance with the common culturalist marginalization of the practical relevance of things, this position does not take full advantage of the conceptual chances offered by practice theory.[14] If Schatzki emphasizes that practices are a nexus of "*doings* and sayings" and that they are not identical with

constellations of intersubjectivity, then these doings must almost necessarily be *doings with things*. It is possible that not all practices are doings with things, but most practices (including Schatzki's examples) are. Here we can integrate—at least to a certain extent—Latour's position in Schatzki's: not only human beings participate in practices, but also non-human artefacts form components of practices. The things handled in a social practice must be treated as necessary components for a practice to be "practiced". In fact, one can say that both the human bodies/minds and the artefacts provide "requirements" or components necessary to a practice. Certain things act, so to speak, as "resources" which enable and constrain the specificity of a practice.[15] Recent studies on communicative media, for instance—above all those by Friedrich Kittler—abound with examples of how communicative practices change with the development of new media in their technical materiality (writing, printing, audiovisual media, computer and Internet). These media are not mere instruments to "transmit" messages, but mould forms of perception and communication (see Kittler 1985, Gumbrecht 1988, and Benjamin as early as 1936). Social change is thus more than exclusively a change of cultural codes, but depends also on a change of technical media.

Yet technical equipment cannot determine certain activities in a strict causal way. In order to have effects, artefacts must be used; and to be used, they must be treated with understanding and within the parameters of cultural codes—they must become an integral part of a social practice. Thus, from the point of view of practice theory, the "relationship" between human agents and non-human things in the network of a practice is a relationship of practical understanding. Simultaneously, in such a relationship the artefacts do not allow any arbitrary practical use and understanding, they are not suitable for arbitrary practices. If Schatzki and practice theory emphasize that practices are organized by a certain way of understanding and knowing (primarily but not exclusively through practical know-how), and if practices are not only routinized forms of saying, but also routinized forms of doing, then the relationship between human agents and things to be handled presupposes a practical understanding. When human agents have developed certain forms of know-how concerning certain things, these things "materalize" or "incorporate" this knowledge *within the practice* (the latter restriction is important because "as such" and beyond complexes of practices things do not incorporate anything—at least from the point of view of a post-Wittgensteinian theory). Things are "materialized understanding", and only as materialized understanding can they act as resources. Practice theory in the most sophisticated version offered by Schatzki stresses the *bodily* basis of all practices on the part of human beings. In a very basic sense, all social practices are collective and routinized movements of bodies. Thus, bodies are the site of understanding, of "embodied understanding". Yet in order to avoid the anti-praxeological schism between the cultural and the material, it must be stressed that within practices not only *bodies* but also *artefacts* are sites of understanding, in the form of materialized understanding. Not only if the body/mind that

"incorporates" and "embodies" a certain understanding disappears does it become impossible for a social practice to be reproduced. If the things that incorporate a certain materialized understanding were to disappear (for instance certain communication media) or had *never* appeared, we would observe the same result: the impossibility of maintaining a certain social practice.

If we combine practice theory in the sense of Schatzki and Latour's approach to artefacts, social order does not appear as a product of "symbolic orders" in minds, discourses or interaction. Practice theory follows the other types of cultural theory in proceeding from the assumption that social order is formed in the crucible of cognitive-symbolic relations. Yet, these cognitive-symbolic relations can now be conceptualized as practical understanding that is—as Schatzki highlights—incorporated in active bodies and—as Latour stresses—simultaneously materialized in artefacts. The materiality of artefacts influences—but does not determine—which practical understanding and, consequently, which kinds of social practices are possible. In the form of things to be handled in the context of practices, the material world is more than a matrix of symbols, but less than a "basis" for a cultural "superstructure". Social order and reproduction can be adequately understood only when we realize their double localization: as understanding incorporated in human bodies and as understanding materialized in artefacts. Thus in relation to "high-modern" cultural theories, practice theories, which generally reconceptualize human action, social orderliness and social change, can reconceptualize these phenomena also in relation to things. *Social orderliness* is not localized in mental structures, discourses or intersubjectivity, but in the social practices for which human bodies/minds and artefacts form necessary components. Consequently, within the field of human *action*, actions between subjects lose their omnipotent status and actions between human agents and non-human artefacts are rehabilitated in their significance (cf. also Knorr-Cetina 1997). Finally, if *social change* is a change of complexes of social practices, it presupposes not only a transformation of cultural codes and of the bodies/minds of human subjects, but also a transformation of artefacts (a relationship which deserves closer study than can be offered here).

Of course, when choosing as our point of departure practice theory in the sense of Schatzki and in the historical tradition of Wittgenstein's late and Heidegger's early social philosophy[16], while at the same time "integrating" Latour's ideas concerning the status of the material into this framework, we arrive at a version of practice theory which requires further elaboration. One of the major issues is to what extent such an "integration" and "instrumentalization" of Latour into practice theory is possible and to what extent there remain considerable theoretical differences between a practice theory which is modified along lines of a theory of artefacts on the one hand and Latour's "symmetric anthropology" on the other hand. It seems that post-Wittgensteinian theory of social practices has good reason to regard artefacts as necessary and influential components of social practices, while wishing to retain an "asymmetric" relation between them and

the human agents. When artefacts can only be effective within practices insofar as they are "handled" by human agents and when they are sites of "materialized understanding", then their status obviously cannot be completely "equal" with that of human agents and their embodied understanding. The distinction between such a position and Latour's pleading for a "symmetric anthropology" should not be blurred; rather, the debate whether within social practices there is or is not any substantial difference between human agents and non-human "actants" must continue.[17] In any case, such a debate would carry the conceptualization of the material considerably further than has been done by the sociology of knowledge and classical culturalism.

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NOTES

[1] I am adopting the metaphor of a "double" from Foucault who describes the paradoxical structure of Kant's philosophy of the subject as a "doublet empirico-transcendantal" (1966: 329).

[2] This identification of the social with social structures in the sense of regular, non-subjective patterns is today supported by authors such as Peter Blau and Jonathan Turner (cf. Turner 1987).

[3] To understand the term "being" in this context, one should be aware of the connotation of the German term "Sein". Obviously Mannheim here builds upon Marx's distinction between "Sein" and "Bewusstsein", i.e. being and consciousness. Thus here (unlike in Heidegger's terminology) the term "being" does not have any "existential" connotation. Consequently, it seems hardly justifiable to translate Mannheim's "Seinsverbundenheit" as "existential connectedness", as it is done in the English translation of *Ideologie und Utopie*.

[4] Mannheim describes his fear of relativism in detail. See Mannheim 1929: 38ff.

[5] For instance, see "zu zeigen, . . . daß diese . . . Seinsfaktoren . . . alles, was wir als Aspektstruktur einer Erkenntnis bezeichnen werden, entscheidend *bestimmen*." (Mannheim 1929: 230)

[6] For instance, see: "Auch wo es für das erlebende Subjekt den Anschein hat, als kämen seine "Einsichten", "Intentionen" "einfallsmäßig", sprunghaft und nur aus ihm, so stammen sie dennoch aus einer auch in ihm lebendigen . . . *kollektiven Grundintention*." (Mannheim 1984: 68)

[7] Using Max Weber, Mannheim himself points out that the sociological explanantion requires "causal adequacy" (Kausaladäquanz) between A and B, but also an "adequacy of meaning" (Sinnadäquanz) between these two elements (Mannheim 1984: 56–59).

[8] Very similar problems arise for Pierre Bourdieu, who in *La distinction* (1979) attempts to present the emergence of the cultural schemes of the habitus as en effect of a certain structure of "capital".

⁹ I borrow this phrase from W.V.O. Quine and his critique of empiricism (see Quine 1960: chapter II).

¹⁰ The fifth version of contemporary cultural theory, practice theory, provides the subject of part three of this article. For a more detailed comparison of the different branches of a theory of culture and a systematic reconstruction of their development, see Reckwitz 2000, 2002.

¹¹ However, the work of Lévi-Strauss contains some relics of the basis/superstructure-division (1962: 247, 263f). Here Lévi-Strauss tends to identify the cultural unconscious of mind with the neuronal structures of the brain.

¹² Luhmann's concept of environment-observing social systems is built in formal accordance with Husserl's concept of an intentional consciousness. Now social systems, i.e. sequences of communication, are said to observe (i.e. construct) their environment in the same way as Husserl's consciousnesses do.

¹³ As to "practice theory" in general and the transformation of contemporary theories of culture towards practice theory both in the context of structuralism and interpretative theories, see Reckwitz 2000, 2002.

¹⁴ Later on, Schatzki has developed an interest in artefacts, cf. Schatzki 2001. Moreover, Schatzki's new book, *The Site of the Social* to be published by Penn State Press in 2002, promises to focus on these questions.

¹⁵ Here it is possible to create a link with Anthony Giddens's version of practice theory, presented in the form of his "theory of structuration". In Giddens's conceptual framework "the material" appears as "resources", which are interpreted as necessary requirements for the existence of practices. These resources, however, are primarily understood as allocative or authoritative means of power, less as things/artefacts to be handled. (see Giddens 1984: 58–62) Nevertheless, it could be fruitful to create a connection between the concept of artefacts and that of resources.

¹⁶ It would be particularly interesting to read Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (1927) as an early attempt to formulate a practice theory that rehabilitates the status of "things" within these practices. It would then come as no surprise that Heidegger does not start his analysis of human practice by studying "intersubjectivity", but by having a closer look at the "interobjectivity" of human "Dasein" and of artefacts in the mode of "Zuhandenheit" (see Heidegger 1927: 63–76). Within the specific field of the philosophy of technics, Don Ihde in particular has followed a similar path (see Ihde 1979).

¹⁷ Many of the contributions in Schatzki/Knorr-Cetina/Savigny 2001 can be seen as starting points for such a debate.

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These cultural patterns are transmitted to individuals through social institutions such as family, educational institutions, religious institutions, social classes, languages, parents' attitudes, behavior, and reading. Another important component of any given culture is the material feature of society. It consists of all the tangible things that human beings make, use, and give value to the material component varies from culture to culture as the cognitive component. It is based on the technological state that society has achieved and understood, looking at society's artifacts. The artifacts include the type of housing where people live, the furniture they use, and other material goods they possess. Other social theorists, including functionalists such as the American sociologist Robert K. Merton, gave these "distributional" properties a more central place in their concepts of social structure. Both aspects of the social structure, the normative and the distributive aspect, are strongly interconnected, as may be inferred from the observation that members of different classes often have different and even conflicting norms and values. Social structure here refers to the ways people are interrelated or interdependent; culture refers to the ideas, knowledge, norms, customs, and capacities that they have learned and share as members of a society. Load Next Page. Inspire your inbox – Sign up for daily fun facts about this day in history, updates, and special offers. Cultural evolution theory holds that traits have a certain meaning in the context of evolutionary stages, and they look for relationships between material culture and social institutions and beliefs. These theorists classify cultures according to their relative degree of social complexity and employ several economic distinctions (foraging, hunting, farming, and industrial societies) or political distinctions (autonomous villages, chiefdoms, and states). Critics of this theory argue that the use of evolution as an explanatory metaphor is flawed, because it tends to assume a certain direction of