COMMUNICATING PARADIGMATIC INTELLECTUAL ORIENTATIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERSISTENT THEMES

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ABSTRACT

All humans have the capacity to live in organised societies and to communicate the basic patterns of such societies to forthcoming generations. If they are accompanied by persistent themes operative within intellectual traditions and passed on to subsequent intellectual trends, then the ongoing power of paradigmatic orientations is demonstrated. This article focuses on the historically mediated communication of two opposing but powerful paradigmatic views on the relation between human beings and human society. Atomistic or individualistic approaches will be contrasted with holistic or universalistic views. The historical connection will be traced as persistent themes present in the paradigmatic stance of Greek thinkers (such as Callicles, Protagoras, Plato and Aristotle), medieval intellectuals (Augustine and Thomas Aquinas), transitional figures (William of Ockham, Jean of Jandun and Marsilius of Padua), modern thinkers (Hobbes, Locke and Kant), the switch from Enlightenment rationalism and individualism to the irrationalistic individualism of early Romanticism, and the full-blown Romantic emphasis on an irrationalistic universalism (the transpersonal national spirit of each people, Volk – Von Schlegel, Herder, Hegel and Fichte). After considering the subsequent communication of some relevant turns during the 19th and 20th century, it will be briefly pointed out that human nature does not determine societal structures, just as little as one or another societal entity (the Volk, state or church) embraces individuals or the other societal collectivities and communities fully as integral parts. When persistent paradigmatic themes are communicated to later scholars (Holton) amidst changing historical contexts, the directing power of diverging basic motives and the inevitability of communicative historical continuity is amply demonstrated.

Keywords: communication, atomism/individualism, holism/universalism, nominalism, form-matter motive, nature-grace motive, nature-freedom motive, rationalism, irrationalism

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ORIENTATION

All humans have the capacity to live in organised societies and to communicate their basic patterns to forthcoming generations. If they are accompanied by an awareness of what is historically significant and what is historically insignificant, then this awareness of the historically significant materializes in various communicative forms. They are present in inscriptions, monuments, written historical accounts, and of course, intellectual traditions. All of these may serve as sources for the historian. The difference between what is historically significant and what is insignificant is made possible by the coherence between the cultural-historical aspect of formative control and the sign mode (the lingual aspect) of our human experiential world. These considerations are intimately connected to a widespread conviction, namely that communication involves a mastery of the relevant (verbal or a-verbal) signs used in the sharing of meanings.

Within prominent and dominant sociological orientations of the 20th century, meanings (alongside or embracing values and norms) are seen as constitutive for culture, whereas society is supposed to designate existing factual relationships and processes of human interaction. For example, when Sorokin juxtaposes society and culture he considers culture to be the totality of the meanings (values and norms) possessed by the interacting persons and the totality of the vehicles [signs] which objectify, socialise, and convey [communicate] these meanings (Sorokin 1962: 63). Parsons (1961: 34, in Calhoun 2007) also distinguishes the "social" system and the "cultural" system:

> The social-system focus is on the conditions involved in the interaction of actual human individuals who constitute concrete collectivities with determinate membership. The cultural-system focus, on the other hand, is on 'patterns' of meaning, e.g., of values, of norms, of organized knowledge and beliefs, of expressive 'form'.

While investigating the traces of communicating the ongoing struggle between individualism and universalism through generations of intellectual reflection, we will also highlight key elements of the effect it had on our understanding of the relation between individual human beings and human society. The history of this contest therefore embodies the way in which paradigms are communicated to later generations. But instead of searching for scientific revolutions (cf. Kuhn 1970), this article will focus on *the communication of persistent themes over generations* (cf. Holton 1974), in particular regarding what may be designated as individualistic and universalistic intellectual orientations.

Danie Goosen (2015: 7), the Chairperson of the FAK (Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurorganisasies – Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations), recently

quoted N.P. van Wyk Louw who warned against the extremes of "liberaal" and "nasionaal" (liberal and national). Implicit in these extremes is the split between individualism and universalism in the sense intended in this article. During the last decades of the apartheid era, the opposite poles of a universalistic and an individualistic orientation explored alternative strategies of persuasive political communication in asserting their respective political stances (cf. De Wet 2010 for an analysis of "Persuasion, the mass media and public opinion"). Elements within the National Party, and in particular the Conservative Party of Andries Treurnicht, advocated a universalistic "Volkstaat" idea. The aim of their political communication to the electorate was to convince them not to become a victim of the liberal democratic emphasis on individual freedom; an idea according to them rooted in an individualistic overestimation of individual autonomy at the cost of communal life. That this dilemma even permeates different understandings of ubuntu is discussed Keevy (2008).

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

From their inception in Greek culture, theoretical attempts to understand the nature of human beings and their relation to human societies opted for two remarkable opposing perspectives which actually communicated a paradigmatic legacy continued in the millennia of reflection regarding meaningful human functioning within society. It stands to reason that all human societies are structured on the basis of multiple individuals, embracing them in diverse ways in their social interaction. The classical problem investigated in this article concerns the question how two particular (opposing) views of the relationship between individuals and societal structures were transmitted or communicated up to the present day of reflection on human society. Within modern sociological literature we meet this legacy in the opposition of action and order. It is also designated as individualism (atomism) and universalism (holism), where we can describe the former as the attempt to explain society and societal institutions purely in terms of the interaction between communicating individuals, while the latter attempts to surrender all societal actions, entities and communicative processes to one all-encompassing societal totality or whole.

The scope of our investigation will incorporate significant historical contours of the way in which this was communicated within the intellectual legacy of the West. We intend to show that the reception of the struggle between individualism and universalism represents a lasting paradigmatic clash which permeated the way in which theoretical contemplation was communicated to the entire history of Western thought.

EARLY GREEK VIEWS

Callicles, an early 5th century thinker who adhered to an atomistic view, admires the tyrant who from nature supposedly derives the right of the strongest. The tyrant alone is entitled to have rights – all the citizens are deprived of any rights and subject to the arbitrariness of the tyrant. In his view a switch is made from equality to the unrestrained rule by a single person. This transition does not lead to the temple of justice, but to the stronghold of the tyrant and an evil natural law through which a former slave may reveal itself as ruler – and suddenly the law of nature will shine in its splendour (Von Hippel 1955: 107-108). The atomism of Callicles is nominalistic[1] because it adheres to the arbitrariness of the powerful tyrant.

Essential elements of this view was communicated to the Sophists, particularly Protagoras, who further explored this nominalistic orientation in connection with an understanding of the nature of a human person and its place within society. His view of the human person is directed by the matter motive of Greek culture, that is, by the motive of the ever-flowing formless stream of life. Protagoras views human subjectivity as constantly changing, which entails that it cannot be grasped in any fixed form or measure – every individual is his or her own measure. This is known as his homo mensura rule: The human being is the measure of all things (πάντων εἶναι χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον) (A Fragment 19: 34-35; Diels & Kranz 1960-II: 259). Aristotle refers to what Protagoras said in his Metaphysics: "The saying of Protagoras is like the views we have mentioned; he said that man is the measure of all things" (Metaph. 1062b12-13; Aristotle 2001: 858).

What Protagoras holds in this regard should not be confused with the modern (post-Renaissance) idea of human autonomy. This appears from the fact that only the polis, as bearer of the Greek motive of form, measure and harmony, through education and obedience to positive laws, can furnish the human being with a cultural garb. This highlights the primacy of the form motive in the thought of Protagoras. However, owing to his nominalistic-individualistic starting point, Protagoras does not acknowledge any intrinsic boundaries for the competence of the state (even morality and religion are viewed as products of the existence of the state). As a result of disseminating his godless views, he was sentenced to death (Von Hippel 1955: 104).

PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

These pre-Platonic thinkers, through their writings (to us only accessible in *Fragments*) communicated to Plato the problem of individual and society who then responded in a *universalistic* way, for according to him the city-state (*polis*) is the all-encompassing whole of society. For Socrates the "justness" of laws depends upon knowledge of an ontic world order[2].

In his youth dialogues, Plato was strongly influenced by Socrates, evinced in an increasing quest to understand the place of humans within the cosmos. Socrates deepened this Greek quest for he wanted to know who he was: was he related to the many-headed animal TIPON (the mythological symbol of the flowing stream of life without any set limit or form), or did he share in a more measured and simple divine nature (the prominence of the form motive in Greek thought)?

Plato's greatest dialogue, *Politeia* (*The Republic*), represents the apex of the first phase of his theory of ideas. The important issue for us is that he designed his ideal state in accordance with his universalistic view of the nature of human beings. In *Politeia* he expands his anthropological conceptions by dividing the soul into three parts – the rational (*logistikon*), the spirited (*thumoeides*), and the appetitive (*epithumètikon*). This tripartite understanding of the soul is then transposed to the state (cf. *Politeia* 436 ff.). It is accomplished by incorporating in his view the first three cardinal virtues distinguished by him. Wisdom (*sophia*) is the virtue of the rational part of the soul, courage (*andreia*) is the virtue of the spirited part, while temperance as virtue represents (guided by the rule of the rational part) the union of the *thumoeides* and the *epithumètikon*. Justice is a general virtue which embraces the former three and therefore holds for the ideal state as a whole (cf. *Politeia* 433A-C). Justice prohibits the transgression of the legal domain of the different parts of the soul, therefore it commands avoiding any legal excess – and this also applies to the three estates within the state (cf. *Politeia* 443 ff.).

For Plato the nature of the human being therefore serves as the foundation for and basis of his ideal state – a view communicated to his brilliant pupil, Aristotle. Aristotle is famous for incorporating the platonic legacy within his view of the human being as a zoon politikon (ζῷον πολιτικόν). Normally this expression is rendered as the view that the human being is a political animal. Alternatively one can refer to a being within the communal life of the city-state, or to a social-political being. The state as the perfection and goal of what is human essentially is also a rational-moral totality[3]. Aristotle holds that the human being "is by nature a political animal" (Politica 1253a2; Aristotle 2001: 1129).

Aristotle's view of reality embodies a dual teleological order. Matter as principle of potentiality acquires its first form in living entities. Natural entities through a form-giving activity are directed towards a goal or telos. The form of a lower level is matter for a higher level: a living entity becomes matter for animal life, while an animal becomes matter for human beings. Becoming embodies a transition from potential being to actual being and this teleological order prompted Aristotle to distinguish between a vegetative soul (anima vegetativa), an animal soul (anima sensitiva), and a human soul (anima rationalis)[4].

The relationships between men and women, as well as those between master and slave, give rise to the household. A number of households constitute a village and when "several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence … for the sake of a good life" (Aristotle 2001: 1128-1129). The power capable to take the individual from desire to the good is the state. The social drive of humans is therefore realised in a hierarchy stretching from the household, as the germ-cell of society, via the village community up to the polis as the highest whole preceding and encompassing all other communities as mere parts. Within the polis the perfection of human life is given at once. Communities aim at some good, but "the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good" (Aristotle 2001: 1127). Within his teleological understanding of reality Aristotle concludes: "Therefore the state, according to its nature, is prior to the family and the individual, since the whole must precede the part" (Politica 1253a19-20; Aristotle 2001: 1129).

Clearly, the development of Greek political thought is co-constituted by transmitting and communicating the preceding and ongoing struggle with the extremes of an individualistic and a universalistic view.

WHAT WAS CONVEYED TO MEDIEVAL THINKERS?

While Augustine developed his view of the city of God and the earthly city under the influence of Platonism and neo-Platonism, Thomas Aquinas continued Aristotle's view by accommodating it to the biblical perspective[5].

However, this attempt resulted in a double-layered view of human society. In following Aristotle he first of all continues the view of the state as the perfect society (societas perfecta). But then he adds the qualification that it pertains to temporal life (nature) only, with its natural political community leading its citizens to their highest temporal perfection, namely moral goodness. Finally he positions the church as a supra-natural institute of grace on top of the state, destined to ensure eternal bliss for its members (ad finem beatitudinis aeterna) (Summa Theologica I, II, 91,4; cf. Von Hippel 1955: 313). The hierarchical structure of this new basic motive of nature and grace is strikingly captured in an often quoted statement of Thomas Aquinas, showing that nature was turned into the portal of grace: "grace does not abolish nature, but perfects it" (gratia naturam non tollit, sed perficit – cf. Von Hippel 1955: 309).

The nature-grace split, resulting in this peculiar understanding of the relationship between state and church, finds its foundation in the view Thomas Aquinas has of human nature, of the human person as a rational-ethical being. He continued

the influential Aristotelian view on matter and form communicated to him via Arabic source and the Roman Catholic medieval Church Orders (where matter is potentiality and form actuality – De Anima 412a10; Aristotle 2001: 555). When human nature acquires its complete development within the highest natural community, the state, which is based upon the rational disposition of humans towards the good, it obtains moral perfection. Thomas Aquinas elaborates on this Aristotelian conception by viewing the relationship between state and church analogous to that of matter and form: the state with its moral perfection serves as matter for the supranatural form of the church. Dooyeweerd (2012: 131) writes:

> As the 'perfect community' of the supranatural realm, the church served as the higher 'form' with natural society as its 'matter'. Natural society, climaxed in the state, was related to the supranatural Christian society of the church as the material body was related to the rational soul. *Unintentionally, then, the Greco-Roman conception of the totalitarian state was transferred to the Roman Catholic institutional church*. Roman Catholicism heralded the church as the total, all-embracing community of Christian life.

In the views of Thomas Aquinas one finds a continuation of the Aristotelian scheme of a whole and its parts because the state encompasses all the natural communities, but then it is subordinated to the overarching power (competence) of the church.

The problem is that whenever a temporal issue displays a connection with the salvation of the soul, it does need interference by the church. The situation becomes truly problematic when it is realised that only the church has the divine mission to guide a person in matters pertaining to heaven. While having the competence to determine the scope of its own jurisdiction, the church actually has competence over its own competence, which is seen as typical of true sovereignty, but which in fact is an internal contradictory construction (similar to a history of history).

In spite of the shift between ultimate basic motives (such as from the Greek form-matter motive to the medieval nature-grace motive, or even the motive of nature (natural science ideal) and freedom (personality ideal) of modern post-Renaissance thought the paradigmatic power of the opposition between individualism and universalism continued to communicate its hold on societal reflection.

THE SHIFT FROM UNIVERSALISM TO INDIVIDUALISM

The transition from the Greek Medieval era to the modern era was initiated with the rise and development of the nominalistic movement. It gave birth to the individualistic stance of William of Ockham, Jean of Jandun, and Marisilius of Padua. The Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition did not give priority to the individual

because it proceeded, as noted above, from the nature of humans as "political animals" which could reach their moral fulfilment only within the state as the encompassing whole of society (and in the thought of Thomas Aquinas the church institute was superimposed upon the portal of the state, destined to assure eternal bliss for its members).

It is remarkable that although the nominalistic movement of the late medieval period caused a shift from the dominant universalistic view of society to an individualistic conception, this change did not succeed in transcending the inherent totalitarian view of the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of society. When Marsilius of Padua and Jean of Jandun published their *Defensor Pacis* (*In Defense of Peace*) in 1326, they still located all legal competencies within the state. This caused Von Hippel to point out that when the worldly power in this way absorbs also the spiritual competencies in the modern sense, it becomes a *total* state, that is to say, the political sphere becomes the sole power over all areas of life[6]. Yet it caused the disintegration of the medieval hierarchical universalistic scheme of a whole with its dependent parts, which is now replaced by the ideal of an autonomous (rational-ethical) individual.

This transition culminates in the rise of theories of the (hypothetical) social contract and the idea of popular sovereignty, based upon the new motive of logical creation[7]. In the development of modern philosophy, human rationality understandably assumes a central position. The modern rationalistic orientation, commencing with Descartes, reached its apex in the thought of Immanuel Kant who elevates human understanding to the level of the a priori formal law-giver of nature[8]. Locke anticipates this view in his own way where he equates reason with the law of nature: "The state of Nature has a law of Nature to govern it, which obliges everyone, and reason, which is that law …" (Locke 1966: 119).

Moreover, Kant's elevation of human understanding is embedded in the ultimate tension between nature (causality) and freedom which resulted in his acceptance of two separate lawgivers, understanding and reason. He declares that it is impossible to bridge the large gap between the domains of nature and freedom, between appearances and what is supra-sensory in the subject[9]. But whereas Kant still continues with the individualistic contract theory, the freedom idealism that was about to emerge also embodied two historically significant shifts in respect of the appreciation of the individual and society.

In spite of an undeniable continuity present in the paradigmatic orientations of individualism and universalism communicated through subsequent intellectual legacies, the effect of the ultimate basic motives (form-matter – nature-grace and nature-freedom) furnished the struggle between these two opposing paradigms with different accents.

FROM RATIONALISTIC INDIVIDUALISM TO IRRATIONALISTIC UNIVERSALISM

The 18th century was dominated by conceptual rationalism and on this basis it was permeated by the ideal of progress. Early Romanticism transformed this epistemic ideal of Enlightenment by exploring the idea of a *genius*, such as Napoleon, whose uniqueness cannot be subjected to the same yardstick as the everyday person. This switch from universality to what is individual and unique transformed the previous rationalistic and individualistic orientation into an irrationalistic individualism which does not accept any universal norms. Only what is rooted in the individual as a law unto itself is acceptable. Law thus became a mere reflex of the unique subjectivity of the individual. This unbridled irrationalism entailed anarchistic consequences, such as are evident in Friedrich von Schlegel's romance *Lucinde* (1799), in which he praises spontaneous "free love" apart from the civil legal bond of marriage, merely reflecting the harmonious union of the sensuous nature and spiritual freedom of man and woman. These implications had to be curtailed.

To escape from these unfortunate consequences yet another turn emerged – the individual is now embedded within the encompassing whole of a supra-individual folk community with its own "Volksgeist" or "Nationalgeist" (national spirit). Already in 1776 Jacob Bülau saw the Volksgeist as the totality of all the particular characteristics distinguishing one Volk from another one. In the following year Johann Gottfried Herder appreciated every Volk as its own original image (Urbild; Archetype). In his Fragments on Recent German Literature (1767-1768) he states that the peoples (Volken) of Germany did not allow themselves to lose their nobility through a fusion with other peoples, for it is a unique, unadulterated and original nation which is its own Urbild. As an equivalent for Volksgeist, Herder frequently employs the term "Nationalgeist" (national spirit) as well as the expression "Seele des Volks" (The soul of a people) (cf. Kluckhohn 1934: 27).

In the seventh of his famous "Reden an die deutsche Nation" (Addresses to the German Nation), Johann Gottlieb Fichte emphatically writes: "In the earlier Addresses it has been shown and in the history it demonstrated that the basic features of the Germans as Urvolk as such grant them the right to call themselves the people par excellence, in opposition to other fragmented tribes, as the word Deutsch (German) in the authentic meaning of the word, also captures what has just been said"[10].

In his writing on "Elemente der Staatskunst" (Elements on the Art of Politics) Adam Müller (1931; 1936) probes a definition of Volk which practically embraces society in its totality, ultimately focused on the core of the state, namely the "Regent-Family" (ruling family) (Kluckhohn 1934: 77-78). Müller no longer accepts a natural condition preceding the civil legal order and he cannot imagine human existence outside the family and the state: "A human being cannot be

contemplated outside the state."[11] Yet in a series of lectures presented in Berlin in 1810, Müller looks for the conditions underlying a truly Prussian "Nationalgeistes" (national spirit). He finds them in the conservation, purification and revival of the old nobility which forms the condition for the structuration of an estate-constitution (ständischen Verfassung) within the Prussian monarchy[12].

The fusion of the idea of the *Volk* with that of the *State* soon explicitly manifested itself in its totalitarian character in the thought of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He identifies the *Volk* with the state which is the *Geist* (Spirit) in its substantial rationality and immediate reality and therefore the *absolute power on earth* ("daher die absolute Macht auf Erden"); for this reason a state displays towards other states sovereign independence[13].

MISPLACED USE OF THE TERM 'ORGANIC'

During these developments the term "organic" acquired a particular emphasis within this new ideology of community. Replacing the abstract individualism of Enlightenment, this ideology now opts for the concrete communal connection of people deriving their individual character from the equally individual nature of the *Volk*. What do exist are Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Dutchmen, but not the indistinguishable individuals of humanistic natural law (contract theory) and that of the French Revolution. The spirit of a people not only determines its individuality but also serves as the source of that which ensures its difference from other peoples – each transpersonal *Volk* is still – in an irrationalistic fashion – a law unto itself. This autonomous freedom impregnates its own unique character upon law, art, economics, social practices, moral standards, and even on culture as such.

The wholly individual character or spirit of a people is also the free and autonomous source of its culture, state, legal system, art, social customs, and moral standards. In other words, moral rules and positive laws valid for societal relationships are the autonomous products of the spirit of an individual people and therefore cannot serve as the normative standards for other peoples possessing a different individual character or disposition. Dooyeweerd (2012: 179-180) provides an apt summary of this new (universalistic) ideology of community:

> A new ideology of community was the immediate result of this change. Romanticism replaced the gospel of the autonomous and nondescript individual with the gospel of the autonomous and individual community. Both Romanticism and all of post-Kantian 'freedom idealism' clung to the idea of a 'community of humankind' of which all other communities are individual parts. This idea constituted Romanticism's 'idea of humanity' or, in Goethe's words, respect for whatever 'bears the human

> countenance' (was Menschenantlitz trägt). But the community of humankind remained an eternal, supratemporal ideal which manifests itself in temporal society only in individual, national communities.

In Greek and Medieval philosophy, society derived its characteristics from human nature, from the rational-moral nature of humans obtaining their (form-)perfection in the state or the church as *societas perfecta* (perfect society), that is, to which the individual belongs as part of a larger whole[14].

The radical shift to modernity, built upon the disintegrating effects of modern nominalism, theoretically eliminated these traditional hierarchical societal structures by dissolving them into the actions of supposedly autonomous individuals. Eventually the idea of popular sovereignty assumed a universalistic twist, particularly in the thought of Rousseau. In his thought, autonomous individuals enter into the social contract, but through the contract a collective moral body emerges, embracing every individual as an inseparable part of this new whole, the *general will*[15]. Soon this idea of an encompassing whole took on an organological shape manifesting itself in an overemphasis of the underlying *organic* nature of a people as a cultural community – and we have noted that the idea of a national spirit led to an identification of *Volk* and *State*. As the absolute power on earth (Hegel) the state with its communal spirit determines the nature of individuals who are mere parts of this encompassing organic whole.

It is still striking how effective the opposition between universalism and individualism is communicated in spite of the varying contexts within which it surfaced. This is also confirmed by the developments of the 19th century.

THE RESURFACING OF INDIVIDUALISM AND UNIVERSALISM DURING THE 19TH CENTURY

Yet, alongside these universalistic views, the late 18th and early 19th centuries continue to witness alternative individualistic theories of society. Jeremy Bentham, for example, explored an atomistic view of human nature by emphasizing the central position of pleasure and pain in human life: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do" (Bentham 1988: 1). This approach led to his famous utilistic (utilitarian) maxim: the greatest happiness of the greatest number (cf. Bentham 1776).

A clear split between an individualistic and a universalistic approach is found in the opposing views of Ferdinand Lassalle and Karl Marx. Lassalle's thought is still embedded in post-Kantian freedom idealism. In his two-volume work (1861),

Das System der erworbenen Rechte (System of Acquired Rights), he proceeds from the transpersonal mode of thinking of German philosophy to the historical school of law founded by Von Savigny. Faithful to this historicistic orientation, Lassalle views law as the communal consciousness of the entire nation (Volk): "the 'Volksgeest' and the general spirit control everything" (explained by Quack 1922: 233; also see the entire work of Schirokauer 1912). Where Lassalle pursued the national (Volks-) ideal, Marx totally rejected it because he turned away from the universalistic community ideology by making an appeal to the individual workers from all nationalities to unite. Marx holds that humans, within the societal production process, are determined by specific, necessary production relationships that are independent of their will and which reflect a particular level of development of their material productive forces. The totality of the production relationships form the economic structure of society, which is the real basis upon which a juridical and political superstructure (Überbau) is elevated. It conforms to specific societal forms of consciousness. The mode of production of material life determines the social, political and spiritual process of life as such (Marx 1859 – Vorwort)[16].

It is therefore not surprising that Marx writes the following in 1859 in the Foreword of his Critique of Political Economy: "It is not the consciousness of the human being which determines its being, but to the contrary it is its societal being that determines its consciousness" (Marx 1859 – Vorwort)[17].

While August Comte maintained the idea of an organic whole in his new science of sociology, his follower, Herbert Spencer, defends an individualistic orientation, showing that an organicistic mode of thinking could be either universalistic or individualistic. The totalitarian implications of Comte's universalistic organicism understandably are rejected by Spencer who opts for an atomistic emphasis. He explains his view as follows: "Its aim is not the increase of authoritative control over citizens, but the decrease of it. A more pronounced individualism, instead of a more pronounced nationalism, is its ideal" (Spencer 1968: 22).

Mediated by Ferdinand Tönnies's work, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), 20th century sociology inherited the dividing forces of individualistic and universalistic views of society, transmitted to sociologists in terms of the opposition of action and order. In the *action orientation* the nature of *being individual* is decisive and in the *order perspective* the nature of one or another *societal whole*, embracing all individuals as mere parts, assumes the determining role (cf. O'Neill 1973). Within the field of political theory we merely mention that the political philosophy of John Rawls exhibits the influence of conflicting views of society. On the one hand, he wants to maintain continuity with early modern atomistic (individualistic) theories of the social contract, evident in his construction of an a-historical, hypothetical "original position" covered by a "veil

of ignorance". On the other hand, he emphasises the (presupposed) basic structure of society as well as society as a social system. Here Rawls opts for a holistic (or universalistic) view. The effect of this ambiguity is that his understanding of state and society often exchange roles, for frequently society itself is depicted as being *democratic*. This levelling of structural differences results in the portrayal of citizenship as participating in *society* and no longer merely within the *state*[18]. The widespread contemporary practice of referring to *democratic societies* is therefore also frequently found in Rawls's thought[19].

The underlying notion of the social system, understood in terms of the whole-parts relation, dictates an encompassing societal assignment of "rights and duties within the basic institutions of society". It is also consistent with an embracing understanding of citizenship exceeding the boundaries of the political community as such, for without hesitation Rawls speaks of citizenship within the basic structure of society: "This fundamental political relation of citizenship has two special features: first, it is a relation of citizens within the basic structure of society, a structure we enter only by birth and exit by death; and second, it is a relation of free and equal citizens who exercise ultimate political power as a collective body" (Rawls 2001: 577). The conception of the basic structure of society increasingly turns out to be an encompassing whole embracing its (subordinate) parts, manifest in its "political and social institutions". Seen from this vantage point, it should not be surprising that subordinate roles are assigned to specific institutions by the basic structure of society. For example, Rawls sets out to investigate "a particular political conception of justice" by "looking at the role that it assigns to the family in the basic structure of society" (Rawls 2001: 595). What is of particular significance here is that a "political conception of justice" assigns a role to the family in the basic structure. Rawls also (on the same page) straightforwardly asserts that the "family is part of the basic structure".

In our preceding analysis we consistently highlighted how the opposition of individualism and universalism was communicated to subsequent intellectual articulations of these two persistent paradigms. That these paradigms actually form an element of the quest for a basic denominator in terms of which reality could be understood was left out of the picture because it will require a different article to show how the tension present in these two theoretical orientations could be transcended[20]. Such an article should benefit from the insight obtained in the current analysis, namely that human nature does not determine societal structures, just as little as one or another societal entity (the *Volk*, state or church) embraces individuals or the other societal collectivities and communities as integral parts.

The one important insight gained from the two persistent themes communicated to us from Greek antiquity, namely individualism and universalism, is that no individual person is ever *fully* embraced by any societal entity. A human being may take on multiple social roles without ever being absorbed by any one of them.

Endnotes

[1] Nominalism acknowledges universality within the human intellect but denies it outside the mind.

[2] His life ended in a tragic way. He was accused of misleading the youth and as a result had to drink the poison goblet. When he was given the opportunity to escape, he did not want to take it in order to show that he was the best citizen of the Athenian democracy. At the same time he also wanted to show how *evil* the Athenian democracy had become – so bad that they did not even have a place for their *best citizen.*

[3] 'Der Staat als die Erfüllung und das Ziel des Menschlichen ist seinem Wesen nach auch ein vernünftig-moralisches Gesamt' (see Von Hippel 1955: 149).

[4] Through the observation of virtue, feelings of desire and aversion dominate the lower part of humans. The sum total of virtue is given in justice as directed towards other persons. In a more restricted sense, justice is directed as those goods that are destined to satisfy human needs (such as life, property and honour).

[5] In passing it should be pointed out that Jellinek remarks that after Constantine both the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire did not acknowledge an independent domain for the individual. To this he adds something else, namely that there is no period in the history of the West where the individual suffered more severely from oppression than during this era: "Niemals hat es in der Geschichte der Abendländischen Völker eine Epoche gegeben, in welcher das Individuum mehr zerdrückt worden wäre als in dieser" (Jellinek 1966: 316).

[6] "Wie aber so der weltliche Gewalt auch die geistliche Befugnisse zuwachsen, wird sie im modernen Sinne zum totalen Staat, d.h. der politische Bereich erlangt die Allzuständichkeit über alle Lebensgebiete" (Von Hippel 1955: 363).

[7] In his work *De Corpore* Thomas Hobbes portrays a thought experiment in which reality is theoretically broken down into a heap of chaos before it is rationally reconstructed from its simplest elements, which for Hobbes is found in the concept of a "moving body".

[8] Compare the following two statements of Kant: "Categories are concepts which prescribe laws a priori to appearances, and therefore to nature, the sum of all appearances" (1787-B: 163); "Understanding creates its laws (a priori) not out of nature, but prescribes them to nature" (1783, II:320; §36).

[9] "Der Verstand ist a priori gesetzgebend für die Natur als Objekt der Sinne, zu einem theoretischen Erkenntnis derselben in einer möglichen Erfahrung. Die Vernunft ist a priori gesetzgebend für die Freiheit und ihre eigene Kausalität , als das Übersinnliche in dem Subjekte, zu einem unbedingt-praktischen Erkenntnis. Das Gebiet des Naturbegriffs, unter der einen, und das des Freiheitsbegriffs, unter der anderen Gesetzgebung, sind gegen allen wechselseitigen Einfluß, den sie für sich (ein jedes nach seinen Grungesetzen) auf einander haben könnten, durch die große Kluft, welche

das Übersinnliche von den Erscheinungen trennt, gänzlich abgesondert" (Kant 1790: LIII-LIV; 1968: 270-271).

[10] "Es sind in den vorigen Reden angegeben und in der Geschichte nachgewiesen die Grundzüge der Deutschen, als eines Urvolks und als eines solchen, das das Recht hat, sich das Volk schlechtweg im Gegensätze mit anderen von ihm abgerissenen Stämmen zu nennen, wie den auch das Wort Deutsch in seiner eigentlichen Wordbedeutung das soeben Gesagte bezeichnet" (Fichte 1908: 123).

[11] "Der Mensch ist nicht zu denken auszerhalb des Staats" (Müller 1931: 48 – original spelling). He also states: "All citizens of a state ought to be, as I have shown, representatives of the idea of the whole or of the immortal communal being"; ['Alle Bürger eines Staates sollen, wie ich gezeigt habe, Repräsentanten der Idee des Ganzen oder des unsterbliches Gemeinwesen sein' (Müller 1936: 177). Kosiek quotes Ludwig von Jahn saying that all the traditional hallmarks of a *Volk* (such as state membership, descent, language) do not constitute a *Volk* unless the spirit is added ['wenn die Seele dazu kommt'] (Kosiek 1975: 52).

[12] "Also ist die Konservation, Reinigung und Wiederbelebung des alten Adels die Bedingung zum Errichten einer ständischen Verfassung in der preußischen Monarchie und die Errichtung einer wahren ständischen Verfassung wieder die Bedingung eines wahren preußischen Nationalgeistes" (quoted by Strobel 2014).

[13] "Das Volk als Staat ist der Geist in seiner substantiellen Vernünftigkeit und unmittelbaren Wirklichkeit, daher die absolute Macht auf Erden; ein Staat ist folglich gegen den andern in souveräner Selbstständigkeit" (Hegel 1821, § 331; Hegel 1970: 486).

[14] Karl Marx aptly describes this situation: "The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole" (Marx 1973: 84).

[15] In Rousseau's thought the transition from individualism to universalism took place as soon as the contractual agreement is reached, for now he commences with a new universalistic conception which only accepts a whole fully encompassing the former individuals as indivisible parts ('partie indivisible du tout') of this new totality (the *volonté générale* – the general will – Rousseau 1975: 244).

[16] In der gesellschaftlichen Produktion ihres Lebens gehen die Menschen bestimmte, notwendige, von ihrem Willen unabhängige Verhältnisse ein, Produktionsverhältnisse, die einer bestimmten Entwicklungsstufe ihrer materiellen Produktivkräfte entsprechen. Die Gesamtheit dieser Produktionsverhältnisse bildet die ökonomische Struktur der Gesellschaft, die reale Basis, worauf sich ein juristischer und politischer Überbau erhebt und welcher bestimmte gesellschaftliche Bewußtseinsformen entsprechen. Die Produktionsweise des materiellen Lebens bedingt den sozialen, politischen und geistigen Lebensprozeß überhaupt.

[17] "Es ist nicht das Bewußtsein der Menschen, das ihr Sein, sondern umgekehrt ihr gesellschaftliches Sein, das ihr Bewußtsein bestimmt" (Marx 1859 – *Vorwort*).

[18] Rawls (1996: 30) refers to "a democratic society of free and equal citizens". He remarks: "… we must distinguish between particular agreements made and associations formed within this structure, and the initial agreement and membership in society as a citizen" (Rawls 1996: 275). In his work on the law of peoples, Rawls also speaks of "citizens of liberal societies" (Rawls 2002: 58).

[19] In *Political Liberalism*, this expression is found on pages: 10, 13, 15, 24-25, 30, 33, 36, 38, 40-43, 61, 65, 70, 79, 90, 95, 134, 136, 154, 175, 177, 198, 205-206, 214, 221, 223, 243, 292, 303, 307, 320, 335, 344, 346, 369, 376, 387, 390, 414, 418, 424, 432 (see also Rawls 1999: 249, 280, 320, 326, 335).

[20] What were historically communicated are two one-sided views that are even characterised by Jellinek as the expression of two opposing *life and world views* – "the individualistic-atomistic and the collectivistic-universalistic" (Jellinek 1966: 17).

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