CORPORATE ROKOKO

AND THE END OF THE CIVIC PROJECT

EXCERPT:

THE MAKING OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND POLITICAL CLUBS
Discussion between Professor Jürgen Fohrmann,
Dr Erhard Schüttpelz and Stephan Dillemuth

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JF: Professor Jürgen Fohrmann[1]
ES: Dr Erhard Schüttpelz[2]
SD: Stephan Dillemuth

SD: I'm interested in a particular aspect of the formation of a civic public. This is the founding of those structures and forms of communication which could be described as condensation points of political consciousness.

They include political clubs and associations, secret societies and lodges, political parties, trade unions, worker and student leagues, brotherhoods, student fraternities, gymnastics clubs, anarchist circles and many more. Then there are also the artistic, religious and scientific connections, which should not concern us here unless they played a vital role in changing state structures.

I'd like to describe a curve, from the dissolution of a system revolving round a single point, namely the absolute representative of God on earth, via the civic democratic developments of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, through to the present day. We are now in a transitional phase on the threshold of Corporate Rokoko, where a global court revolves around a virtual monetary unit.

SECRECY VERSUS THE PUBLIC: CIVIC DISOBEDIENCE IN ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

SD: In the old absolutism, state power devolved on one place and one person. Absolute sovereignty of the one was then supposed to become the sovereignty of all individuals. What were the decisive processes which enabled citizens to take political power and decision-making processes into their own hands and then, ideally, share them out among all?

JF: We have to look at the various centers which fed the emancipation processes of the 18th century: One was the rationality of the town. This had always been a center of civic activities with its town clerks, chroniclers etc. Then there were the universities, also laws unto themselves, from which an emancipation movement developed. Only then came what may actually be called, in the sense of Habermas[3] and others, a genuine civic public: the salons, clubs and lodges, everything that became virulent in the 18th century.

These are the three large areas which operate with the concept of public. They represent a unique mixture of special rights, as well as a larger accessible public.

SD: The '*standing, writing army of overburdened state servants, corn clerks, office workers of all departments and all the crustaceans stacked together in the crab-pot of state bureaucracy*'[4] were the first to try their hand at clandestine resistance?

JF: A public does not exist in a vacuum. Moreover, it has to do with the ordinary necessities pertaining to the formation of the state.

The chancellery is one of the first structures in which regulation begins to be a matter of course. This not only means dealing with the arcane, a secret which the ruler needs to administer. It is also regulation in the sense of a governmental public, intent on communication.

SD: So disobedience, civic courage and unauthorized assumption of authority within the administration were important factors?

JF: Such a chancellery was a pivot of communication – and already completely functional, i.e. independent of the ruler. These areas developed their own rationality which little by little transcended their actual allotted function.

SD: But that was only one strand.

JF: The other was erudition, which was gradually spreading, the '*Res Publica Litteraria*' which at its core always addressed a whole public. For there is an imperative in erudition that says, '*learning is really for everybody, and whoever is not educated is not part of humanity.*' The opposite concept is barbarism. That is, there is always an extensive public which is being addressed even if as a rule it does not function as one...

For the learned of course tried to hold on to their special rights, not allowing any others. Thus there was always this dichotomy between a movement towards openness and a tendency to exclude.

ES: From the 18th century onwards this can also be seen as a tactical move. The secret alliances and lodges which were preparing an openness and a public, had in fact to remain hidden from the state power of the king and the nobility. All through the struggle against those possessing power, the model of secrecy and monopolization of discourse can be seen, right up to the self-torturing '*K groups*'[5] which were also concerned to expose secrets and at the same time hold on to them.

JF: The civic public which was establishing itself claimed to be universal, wishing to embrace everything. On the other hand, it was very concerned not to allow everything its validity. I believe these were two movements which always belonged together. It is a kind of enlightened speech which does not want to retreat behind its own enlightenment.



CIVIC AND ARISTOCRATIC COMMUNICATION

SD: When did people start feeling the need to determine affairs of the state together, discard the monarch and rule themselves as a common subject? Which organizational structures paved the way for the French Revolution?

JF: Like Koselleck,[6] I see civic society as emerging out of freemasonry. Lessing formulated the idea, and Koselleck places it at the center of his theories.

ES: Freemasonry is only one example, a pseudonym for all kinds of universalist trends within and around freemasonry.

JF: ...the making of literary culture, the organization of reading circles by readers themselves, republican clubs, debating clubs, all sorts of things. All that dates from the middle of the 18th century.

There were of course precursors, but the great take-off took place parallel with the development of the Reader. In other words, to the extent to which society was placing far more stress on self-education and on the opportunity for everybody to communicate, so types of organization were forming where communication could take place. Methodically speaking, this presupposes the ability to acquire information oneself, and handle it. It also presupposes the possibility of exchanging such information in a circle where one is not immediately put down, but where there is a form of real exchange. In this way subjects are set free to become what might be described as subjects capable of communication in a universalist society.

And since one cannot communicate hierarchically when everybody is a Reader, there are relatively swift political consequences from this practice. It is here that I see preliminary elements that helped to prepare for the French Revolution. As an after-effect of that revolution, say, within the framework of Jacobin clubs, there are very determined endeavors to use this politically.

SD: To what extent did civic communication oppose that of the court? In both cases there were tea-parties and tête-à-têtes.

JF: Communication at court is quite different in nature, we can see that from the novel Dangerous Liaisons. Here there is a very forced field of observation: everyone is trying to work to their own advantage through mutual and careful observation of others. Success in conversation and the chance to participate in it in a particular place of course structures the hierarchy at court. This finds expression in communication and is based among other things on skill in communicating: the aim is to achieve distinction.

On the other hand the court allows no form of specialization. At court one must be in a position to prove one's sophistication by being able to discourse effortlessly on all manner of topics. There is an easy change of subjects, nothing is fixed.

FUNCTIONAL DIFFERENTIATION VERSUS ETHICS: THE PATCHWORK OF SPECIALISTS IN CAHOOTS

SD: It was probably inevitable that the arts and sciences should specialize at court, as it was only there that they were given their own space for purposes of artistry and entertainment. The court's ignorance of these specializations was of course derided by those involved, which naturally aroused the curiosity of the bourgeoisie.

JF: I would put that differently, taking Goethe's[7] Tasso[8] as my example. In the old model, the monarch not only represents all positions in society but also tries to turn everything which constitutes this society to his own advantage. Now with Tasso and his antagonist Antonio, two system references oppose each other which can no longer be connected to the world at court. The first, Tasso, tries as an artist to judge the world solely according to aesthetic principles: 'Is this beautiful or is it not beautiful?' – that is the decisive question. The other, Antonio, is a politician and says: 'Is this useful or not useful for achieving my political goals?'

Both stances are completely anti-aristocratic. One is already a modern politics, and the other is a modern aesthetic approach to the world. To use Luhmann's[9] words: both indicate a society which is functionally differentiated in that it is subdivided into quite discrete functional areas which no longer mirror each other in any way. The idea of the court, on the other hand, was that all functional areas could again be represented in that one point, the pinnacle, the monarch.

ES: Seen from the court's point of view these two characters are figures of disloyalty. Artists no longer need to be loyal to any particular persons or values, nor, in that sense, do politicians, because they have to utilize everything strategically. That is, the citizen would see the court as completely artificial, false and dissimulated, and the court would see all these civic figures as simply disloyal and of course brutish, philistine etc.

JF: Since the 19th century we have been able to observe closely how the respective forms of coherence in these different systems develop. The Art system develops, and the Politics system develops. But they are not split off from each other, for 'social semantics' will only tolerate such drifting apart up to a certain point. It develops an instrument, its own discourse perhaps, which attempts to, in the end, bring everything back together. And that, as I see it for the 19th century, is ethics.

Ethics has always been used as an argument against differentiation. Schiller[10] started off the idea that art should again be seen as useful because it is there for the education of human beings. Politics should of course also be orientated towards the best, 'Summum Bonum'.

The whole of literary theory, in Young Hegelianism[11] etc., is pledged in this way to moralize art. Any politician who does not join in with this is seen as weak and characterless etc., and art which does not adhere to it is too sensuous and obscene and only full of self-interest. These were the two charges leveled at the political movement 'Junges Deutschland'.[12]

ES: And under the protection of these arguments the old hierarchies, which have now become quite different ones, are then partly shunted back into place, for example that hierarchy between men and women.

JF: And the divide opens between, on the one hand, an art system that since Early Romanticism has been repeatedly revolutionizing itself and which has no interest in being thus straitjacketed into a universal mode, and on the other, a pretension to ethics and morality which transports a totally philistine understanding of art.



HIERARCHY, ANTI-HIERARCHY. ELITISM. ENLIGHTENED SPEECH ETC.

SD: Within a civic public, the intellectual and artistic elite is always conceived as an enemy when it is attempting to bring about change in politics and art. For the artists and intellectuals, however, this will to change is a life concept, used to define their own sovereignty. In fact this almost always means acting in opposition to the decisions of the majority.

JF: The validity of opinions is now no longer dependent upon birth. This is the crucial difference in the claim to universality which was developed in the 18th century and which is closely related to the agenda of erudition and the academy. Whereas before one could state: 'Everything I say has to do with the fact that I was born an aristocrat, that is what makes it valid', now the civic project was: 'Behind all differences of class there is the universal concept of man'. Suddenly one could speak in the name of mankind.

ES: This claim to humanity in the most universal sense was, unlike 'humanitas', totally opposed to the hierarchies of the time and of course to the existence of hierarchies in general.

JF: Yes – that was one trend.

ES: As a political party or as the avant-garde, one must immediately monopolize speech in a pretension to speak for others. We have here again the dialectic of secrecy and openness. But the concern was of course foremost anti- hierarchical, Leninist partially, too.

SD: ...?

ES: In my opinion there was a certain German Leninism in the 18th century, the peripheral as opposed to the otherwise central nations. The claim to universality in regard to mankind promised that this anti-hierarchical aspect here, or in Russia or America, might work.

JF: That of course could not assert itself with this enlightened gesture although it was repeatedly attempted. In the lodges, for example, lots were drawn anew each time to determine the seating arrangement. Not even there should a fixed order become established. The idea behind this is a society of equals, isonomy.

Enlightenment also has to do with the ability to set a colon. An enlightener is someone situated in front of, or on the left side of the colon, then comes the colon,[13] and then the statement. The addressee is all the way over on the other side. An essential constituent of enlightened speech is that I only exist on the left-hand side of the statement, of the colon, where I can say 'WHAT EXISTS: EXISTS'. This relation cannot be reversed.

In its first phase, enlightenment is dogmatic, one can clearly see this in the 18th century. The enlightener who speaks does not want the addressees themselves to become enlighteners, who in turn enlighten others. This type of dialectic is indeed thematized in the second phase, but that is actually no longer enlightenment. It leads to other forms. The structures of sociability in Early Romanticism attempt to perform exactly this interplay, that is, no longer allowing a fixed position or a fundamental asymmetry.

ES: Be on both sides of the colon, and if possible at the same time!

JF: Yes, that's the basic idea behind it and it leads to an ironic method.

But the elitist aspect can only be seen at all when the enlightened speech position can itself be observed, when it can be clearly discerned that it is always the same one telling us from the left-hand side of the colon what the world is like. The accusation of being elitist is made the very moment the relationship of communication can be perceived as being cemented.

ES: This often results in the claim that it can only be a select number of persons who are capable of setting the colon in such a way, namely the geniuses.

JF: Karl Philipp Moritz[14] introduces this in quite an interesting way. In his opinion it is not about advancing the whole of society. It would, moreover, suffice if nature showed in only a few individual human beings what it was capable of, with the simultaneous awareness of 'perceiving the whole as a shipwreck and using this as an opportunity to acquire the right of salvage'. That is of course an absolutely radical statement for the 18th century. First of all dismissing the teleologically- oriented process of everything improving from day by day, and secondly saying that we are no longer interested in this kind of teleology, because it is totally sufficient when special individuals...now this almost sounds like George[15] or Gundolf[16]...

ES: ...yes, it's an artist's justification...

JF: ...when special individuals try to demonstrate in nature and as an expression of nature what nature in its perfection is actually capable of, while at the same time acting so anarchic...whatever anarchic means...anyhow, trying to collect whatever serves their purposes... or as Moritz calls it, acquiring the right of salvage.

FROM THE STREETS TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE LONG WAY BACK AGAIN. THE UNIVERSITY AS A REVOLUTIONARY INSTRUMENT

SD: Let's return again to the 'anarchist' appropriation of governmental power: Why did the civic clubs become so radical in the process of detaching themselves from the court, where did the flame come from that ultimately ignited the French Revolution and the overthrow?

JF: In Germany this took place in a very reserved manner...extremely reserved, except for the occurrences in Mainz.[17] I see the actual revolutionary element not in the political formations but in an altered concept of sociability. A

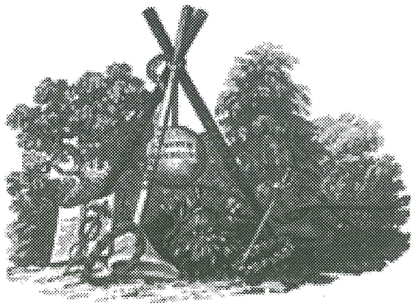
society adjusting to communication combined with the notion of Romantic sociability which makes communication a precondition for individuation. This can only perhaps be formulated in such a complicated way.

In other words, I can only develop myself when communicating with interested and competent people. I must therefore create an institution enabling this. This institution is first of all the social circle, then the university. I must also create a new space at the university in which communication can take place, and that is the seminar, which did not exist in such a form beforehand.

The university was invented, according to a theory of Wehler,[18] as a revolutionary instrument of a (bureaucratic) intelligentsia to effect a forceful thrust of modernization in this society. Taking a look at the foundation files of the Berlin University, for example, one understands that the idea of a comprehensive form of communication, including the reciprocal exchange of the roles of student and teacher, was indeed grasped as a model for revolutionizing society. I would place the concept of revolution more in these microstructures than in political demonstrations of will.

ES: Which would explain, in regard to Germany, the fact that at the same time a lot of people such as Hegel, Fichte[19] and others who took sides with the French Revolution then turned to this Prussian model. In regard to France, one of course must speak about the middle of the 18th century and its structures of sociability, as well as the transmissions between aristocracy and bourgeoisie which triggered the French Revolution in the first place. The revolution was not carried out by peasants from the provinces but by the higher tiers of society themselves. This was made possible by an altered, more comprehensive communication structure which then made this claim for the whole of society and simply did away with the remains of absolutism. Looking at England, one must again speak differently, as a revolution was never experienced there. But there was a quite similar transmission between aristocracy and bourgeoisie, and due to the resulting altered structure of sociability in the 18th century a degree of freedom was achieved which did not exist in such a form in Germany.

SD: Changing structures of sociability everywhere. Germany is lagging behind, and as the possibility of a radical political revolution appears to be non-existent, hopes are placed on a free, supposedly revolutionary university education.



'BURSCHENSCHAFTEN' (STUDENT FRATERNITIES)[20] AND A NEW NATIONALISM

SD: Was that the point at which most of the tiny revolutionary student circles, such as the society for human rights around Büchner[21] and Weidig,[22] drifted off into totally different directions and later advocated opposing positions? I have in mind the 'Burschenschaft' model with its increasing nationalism, whilst Büchner himself sought for possibilities to thematize political conflicts in his art.

JF: When talking about the student-fraternity model one must keep in mind that there are quite different, usually doubly- coded forms. Democratic and anti-feudal on the one hand, hopelessly nationalistic and reactionary on the other. When it comes to establishing hierarchies, the national movement is of course up front.

The student-fraternity movement itself is a formation stemming from the old 'Landsmannschaften' which were regarded as 'Nationes': students coming from the same region joined together and helped each other out.

Their political impetus is originally to be seen in the context of the Wars of Liberation. That led to moments of abstruse one-sidedness, like in the case of the persistent revolutionary Harro Harring[23] who ended his life standing on the market place in Husum and stabbing a knife in his heart, still wearing black armor, dressed up as a member of a student fraternity...

ES: And beforehand he fought for the revolutions in Denmark, Poland, Greece and at all fronts concerned with national liberation.

JF: Then we have the revolutionary clubs that already play an important role in the early socialist movement. This is the actual hour of birth of the socialist movement from which Marx and others then emerged.

And parallel to this there's the formation of a civic culture of clubs. This was extremely important for stabilizing this awful 19th century because it organized the entire society...via grotesque artifacts, songbooks, club fanaticism – it can't be pictured horrible enough.

ES: The aristocracy and monarchy were not interested in forming a nation-state – that is the axiom. In the forming phase of nation-states in all of these countries at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century the egalitarian aspect was per se something anti-aristocratic.

JF: In an attempt to describe nineteenth-century society, one finds on the one hand a still totally segmented society, but on the other hand the claim is made that, despite this segmentation, this society constitutes one nation. Both run parallel and seem to get along for a relatively long period of time.

It is basically the old anthropological argumentation. When Arndt[24] proclaims that the nation is the community of inflamed hearts, it is quite simple: no matter if aristocrat or bourgeois, the main thing is that one

has the same inflamed heart. This then ties a whole nation together. The broad range of organizational forms in the 19th century which constitutes the interior structure should then ultimately be brought together to form one great nation.

SD: We did, however, forget one thing which came before this: the allegedly so apolitical Romanticism.

THE COMMUNICATION MODEL OF ROMANTICISM

ES: That may very well be the decisive chapter.

JF: Romanticism has to do with precisely this model of sociability, but it is not only the concept of sociability that is to then support the university. The strict Early-Romantic project consists in a communication model outlined by Friedrich Schlegel,[25] in Conversation on Poetry for example: love needs love as approval. That is why we emerge from the depths of our inner-self to find ourselves again in the inner-self of another human. He states: there is the operation of reciprocal communication and beyond reciprocal communication lies death.

That is a totally emphatic concept which presupposes the possibility of symmetrical communication in which asymmetrical communication situations can be translated into symmetrical ones. Or, to put it differently, that the communication situation itself can be kept symmetrical even if asymmetries exist.

This is then elaborated by Schleiermacher[26] in his theory of social behavior as the perfect theory for the Romantic social circle - with the huge claim that this is what constitutes the world.

It is therefore a unique coincidence that a certain epistemology, understood as reciprocal learning, should simultaneously be an organizing principle of society, or at least of a smaller circle. As a concept this cannot be thought of radically enough. Unfortunately, it only lasted for a short period of time and then drifted off into other forms, like Catholicism, nation etc., which all contain concepts of communication as well, but no such symmetrical ones.

ES: Why couldn't this be maintained?

JF: Schlegel tried to describe this in his Lucinde.[27] But... I have to start again because it is really complicated to describe: The presupposition is that communication does not always only thematize communication itself, i.e. that communication, in its urge to say 'this is the right model', does not only say the same thing again and again and thus become tautological. And the mistake, if I may say so, the mistake Schlegel made in Lucinde and other texts is to force Romantic communication into a tautology. In other words, one must possess procedures that put into practice – and not only describe in a self-referential way – Romantic communication.

ES: This is also the reason why Schlegel and Novalis[28] in the first years used up an incredible amount of topics.

JF: Yes, they used all these topics and in the end they always came upon the same idea.

Another reason why this might not have worked is that the project was still oriented towards the philosophy of identity. One could, however, use the notion of difference as a guiding concept and envision a project that does not presuppose the fact that, in the end, identity will be the result, and that everything will lead to the One, but that conceives the opposite and aims at preventing or delaying this result.

SD: This could perhaps also be described by saying that the concept of idealism imploded because it remained too immanent. There were then attempts to develop various other structures out of the ruins of these forms of communication, structures that increasingly referred to the outside world. But these were then more or less bureaucratic constructions such as social clubs and associations, early forms of political parties that organized themselves around specific contents and sought to gain political influence, or that on the other hand affirmed existing conditions.

JF: However, many of these clubs also imploded because starting at a certain point all they did was celebrate their existence as a club. This can be compared to the concept of love that only celebrates itself as a concept of love. The problem is: if people share a common interest in each other, then there must be a sufficient difference so that something can be learnt from one another. On the other hand, there must be enough in common to secure the basis for communication. The model of Romantic communication later imploded because the relationship of tension could no longer be sustained.

NOTES

1. Jürgen Fohrmann, German professor of German (Bonn after 1990), professional Germanist of German Studies (Bielefeld in the 1980s)

2. Erhard Schüttpelz, born in 1961, amateur musician and amateur scholar, Cologne and other places, present whereabouts unknown.

3. Jürgen Habermas, born 1929, second-generation member of the Frankfurt School. He devoted his life's work to defending and reclaiming the project of enlightenment critique, or what he calls the 'philosophical discourse of modernity'.

   In his early work, such as Knowledge and Human Interests (1968), he adopted a Kantian and Marxist-inflected approach, seeking to reconstruct the genealogy of the modern natural and human sciences by inquiring back into their social, historical, and epistemological conditions of emergence.

   In his later (post-1970) work he adopts a different perspective, a theory of 'communicative action' derived largely from speech-act philosophy.

   One reason for this turn toward language is his conviction that the project of modernity had run into criticism through its over-reliance on a subject-centered epistemological paradigm. His aim is to reformulate that project in a theory committed to values of truth, critique, and rational consensus, pinning its faith to the regulative precept of an 'ideal speech-situation'.

   In the 1980's he intervened in the so-called Historikerstreit - the debate about right-wing revisionist accounts (Nolte et al.) of National Socialism being a reaction to Bolshevism, equating both in the notion of totalitarianism and thus relativizing the Holocaust.

   In his later years, Habermas ranked as a state philosopher for the Social Democratic/Green Party coalition government, e.g. advocating the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. Three weeks later, however, he changed his mind in regard to the bombardment, because it wasn't 'expedient'.

   He might have remembered 'that an indestructible moment of communicative rationality is anchored in the social form of human life.'

4. From: 'Life of Quintus Fixlein' by Jean Paul, 1763-1825. His eccentric and discursive novels, full of humour, sentiment and irony, were among the most widely read books in the early 19th Century. In 'Life of Quintus Fixlein' he opposes both 'poetic nihilists' such as Goethe and Schiller and 'poetic materialists': The true poet maintains the middle course between these two extremes, 'clothing Nature in ideal infinity'. His theoretical works are wayward and discursive like novels. The qualities of variability and discontinuity later became reasons for his decline. The sentiment, the humour, the irony and the verbal arabesques, which at first delighted, seemed too deeply steeped in self-indulgence. Nevertheless, many of his works have by their deep humanity escaped the oblivion into which the others have fallen. Like the various 'Siebenkäs' revivals have proved more recently, the combination of contrasting facets, which defy classification into any distinct literary school or political cause, de serves our greater appreciation.

5. Small communist parties in Germany mostly founded in the early 1970s.

6. Reinhart Koselleck, German historian, University of Bielefeld 1970s- 90s. Widely known and acclaimed for his research in 'historical semantics', i.e. a history of historical keywords (e.g. 'people', 'nation', 'revolution' etc.), also known for his temporalization of 'temporalization'. 'Modernity' in Koselleck's vision of history began around 1750, in the so-called 'Sattelzeit' ('saddle time', the period flanking the French Revolution by 50 years), letting temporalization 'mount the horse'. Koselleck, the keyword reader, (each of the books in his library from his time as a student onwards contained a keyword index), once surprised his critics with a social history of Prussia; he spent some of his boring academic meetings drawing cartoons of colleagues (a catalogue was published). His epitaph reads:

   R.K.
   Let me quote again the last keyword of history
   The research I could not finish in
   Time.

7. GOETHE (1749-1832), German national hero and writer. See Cultural Trademarks

8. Torquato Tasso' , 1890, written by Goethe, the cultural trademark.

9. Niklas Luhmann, PhD in 1966, German sociologist at the University of Bielefeld, still haunting the place with his 'research project: theory of society, period: 30 years, costs: none'. Luhmann started as an administrator and developed the only social theory and cybernetic epistemology that came to terms both with the good old Federal Republic of Germany (understood functionally) as well as with the not-so-happy future past and globalization (read in a dysfunctional way). Terminology slightly shifting all the time, stable frame of mind, sitting in the sun for hours reading and writing his famous index cards. In the early 1970s most leftist thinkers dismissed him as a system-supporting technocrat, but in the '80s and '90s nearly all of his former opponents acknowledged at least some of the advantages of Luhmann's approach (even some leftist activists of 1999: „fight the system, and let Luhmann tell you what the system is'). Incidentally, in the 1990s most leftist '60s thinkers (Bourdieu, Habermas, Castoriadis etc.) had become system (i.e. nation-state, social welfare, social democracy) supporters themselves, and Luhmann's approach by then seemed more subversive because less sentimental - Luhmann himself still being as system-supporting and open to change as in 1969. In retrospect, of course, any of these positions and shifts seems as absurd as any other, because like all classical sociology (Durkheim, Weber, Parsons etc.) the theory seems most of all - another mirage - to project a utopian image of the values and pursuits of its time

and society. The epitaph on Luhmann's tombstone quotes Brecht (of all people):

N.L.
A Theory of Society (1969-1999)
Proposals is what he made.
Incessantly.

10. Friedrich Schiller, 1759-1805, German writer & philosopher. See National Trademarks

11. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, philosopher,1770-1831, distinguishes between the subjective, objective and absolute spirit. The objective spirit, as opposed to the limited subjective spirit, represents the ethics of communities, from the small unit of the family to that of the state, and establishes the laws containing the highest forms of ethics. Above and beyond this, the absolute spirit permeates the three spheres of art, religion and philosophy. While the subjective and objective spheres of the spirit generate the forces of history, the absolute spirit induces, through its conciliatory and harmonic properties, a sense of purity and perfection. In this Hegel sees the goal of aesthetics in art.

12. 'Junges Deutschland' was an aesthetic and political movement in Germany (ca 1830-1849) after the Romantic period which used art, writing and journalism against the oppression and censorship of the Metternich era, turning away from Idealism and Romanticism towards political reform, religious tolerance and emancipation from accepted sexual morality. The bolder spirits emphasized that action, not theory was required. Supporters included Heine, Börne, Wienbarg, Mundt, Gutzkow, Freilingrath, Laube.

13. ENLIGHTENER : statement to addressee!

14. Karl Philipp Moritz, 1756-1793, little known, and still secretly important writer, (see Anton Reiser), poet and editor of a periodical on 'knowledge of the soul by experience' (Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde).

15. Stefan George, 1868-1933, endowed with ample means, he determined to devote himself to poetry and to cultivate beauty for its own sake. Influenced by Mallarmé he saw beauty in the sensual, especially aural presentation of a highly selective vocabulary in disciplined deliberate organization. Consciously writing for an elite he saw himself as an educator and leader in the renewal of a debased culture. He selected a circle of friends, or rather disciples, who shared his views and seconded his efforts to renew German civilization by creating disciplined poetic beauty. Later, the tone of his poetry passes to the prophetic, apocalyptic and monumental and evokes the vision of a new Germany, which was to be realization of Hellas (ancient Greece).

16. Friedrich Gundolf, 1880-1931, was a disciple of George. Editor of monumental monographs on Goethe and George, for some years after the 1914/18 war he enjoyed an almost pontifical authority.

17. During the French Revolution, Mainz was for a short time (1792-93) the center of a separatist movement under Georg Forster.

18. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, German historian, University of Bielefeld (again), worked - among other things - on the social history of the 19th century bourgeoisie and working-class and on Wilhelminian imperialism.

19. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 1762-1814, studied in Jena and became an enthusiastic student of Kant's philosophy. He devised a system on his own, based on Kant's thinking. He rejected Kant's 'thing-in-itself', and saw existence solely in terms of the self. For him only the EGO exists 'in-itself'. The world around it, comprehensively classified as the Non-Ego, is a creation of the EGO. Fichte preached moral virtues, especially patriotic ones. He seems to have been prepared to transfer the EGO to the German nation, which would represent the supreme incarnation of the moral deal. By 1805 a tendency towards mysticism had manifested itself in his thinking.

20. Burschenschaften: A term originally (1790) applied to the student body at a university. From 1814 it was applied to a student movement which grew out of the Wars of Liberation (Napoleonic Wars). The Burschenschaft was from the outset hostile to the reactionary policy pursued by many German heads of state and desired the political unity of Germany. The Burschenschaft was banned in 1819 and denounced as 'Demagogic Movement'. Local Burschenschaften continued to meet clandestinely in many places, and the trend of the movement became more radical. An attempted uprising led to a wave of arrests all over Germany. Tough students continued to be politically active in the 1840s, the Burschenschaft as such was quiescent, even though many of the politicians in the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848 were former members of a Burschenschaft. In the second half of the 19th century, it developed into a union of social clubs of nationalistic and latterly anti-Semitic character.

21. Georg Büchner, 1813-37, writer and poet. During his studies he became keenly interested in the ideas and activities of movements against authoritarian government and political oppression, which he pursued with vigor. He founded the 'Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte' in March 1834, which was modeled on the 'Société des Droits de'l Homme et du Citoyen' of 1830, and expressed his radical socialist ideas in the political pamphlet 'Der Hessische Landbote'. His aim at this stage was a Hessian peasants' revolt, because he was convinced that only the use of force would effect social justice and remedy the stressing conditions of the lower classes. The mainspring of his courageous but dangerous political activities was his deep sympathy with social misery. In an age of economic crises and reluctant constitutional and fiscal reforms, the peasants had reason to be particularly aggrieved at their lot.

22. Friedrich Ludwig Weidig, 1791-1837, schoolmaster and pastor, leader of the illegal Liberal Party in Hesse. He was the author of the clandestine

pamphlet 'Leuchter und Beleuchter für Hessen'. Early in 1834 Büchner joined his circle of conspirators. Both wrote and distributed the political pamphlet 'Der Hessische Landbote' (which failed to stimulate active resistance). In the course of his subversive activities his contacts to many revolutionary movements were noticed by the police and led to Weidig's arrest in 1834. Betrayed by one of his own ranks, Weidig was kept in prison without trial. He allegedly committed suicide in his cell in 1837. His poems were published posthumously in 1847.

23. Harro Harring, 1798-1870, a prolific writer, chiefly of political poetry, and a stormy petrel of 19th century demagogy, he traveled restlessly through Europe. Dramatist in Vienna, commissioner in a Russian guard stationed in Warsaw, repeatedly expelled as an agitator from various German states, from Switzerland, from Norway, and from Denmark. His points of rest were the USA and London, where he was a member of the European Democratic Central Committee.

24. Ernst Moritz Arndt, 1769-1860. His single-minded fanaticism and his energetic, direct prose style made him particularly apt for his role as an anti- French propagandist, praising military virtues, hatred of the French enemy, and death for the Fatherland. The undoubtedly sincere combination of religion and ruthless bellicosity made his writings the most effective patriotic poems of the War of Liberation (Napoleonic Wars).

25. Friedrich von Schlegel, 1772-1829, leading spirit of the new Romantic School. His creative works are eccentric and negligible, but his critical writings are brilliant, provocative and fertile. In 1808 he became a Roman Catholic and took service with the Austrian Government, spending much of his life in administration.

26. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, 1768-1834, ranks as the most important Protestant theologian of the Romantic movement. His sermons were esteemed for their sincerity and religious fervor as well as, at the time of national depression, for their patriotism.

27. Published in 1799, 'Lucinde' reflects on his love for Dorothea Veit, with whom he spent two years in Paris; he married her in 1804

28. NOVALIS, 1772-1801, was both by temperament and creative gifts the truest poet of the first Romantic School. In 1794 he met 12-year-old Sophie von Kühn, with whom he deeply fell in love. They were betrothed four months later, and in the same year Sophie developed pulmonary tuberculosis. During her illness, Novalis was working as an administrative assistant in the salt-mine offices of Weißenfels and in the stress of these months, which was augmented by the illness and the death of his brother, he underwent profound religious experience. The death of Sophie in March 1797 led to a crisis, a reckoning with death, which finds expression in the 'Hymnen an die Nacht'.

Excerpt: The making of the public sphere and political clubs — Discussion between Professor Jürgen Fohrmann, Dr Erhard Schüttpelz and Stephan Dillemuth (Part 1 and Notes) from *Corporate Rokoko and the End of the Civic Project* by Werner von Delmont. Reproduced for the exhibition *LE PARTI IMAGINAIRE* at GDL525. Typeset by Alex Walker. Gouden Leeuw 525, Amsterdam, 31/07/26

has the same inflamed heart. This then ties a whole nation together. The broad range of organizational forms in the 19th century which constitutes the interior structure should then ultimately be brought together to form one great nation.

SD: We did, however, forget one thing which came before this: the allegedly so apolitical Romanticism.

THE COMMUNICATION MODEL OF ROMANTICISM

ES: That may very well be the decisive chapter.

JF: Romanticism has to do with precisely this model of sociability, but it is not only the concept of sociability that is to then support the university. The strict Early-Romantic project consists in a communication model outlined by Friedrich Schlegel,[25] in Conversation on Poetry for example: love needs love as approval. That is why we emerge from the depths of our inner-self to find ourselves again in the inner-self of another human. He states: there is the operation of reciprocal communication and beyond reciprocal communication lies death.

That is a totally emphatic concept which presupposes the possibility of symmetrical communication in which asymmetrical communication situations can be translated into symmetrical ones. Or, to put it differently, that the communication situation itself can be kept symmetrical even if asymmetries exist.

This is then elaborated by Schleiermacher[26] in his theory of social behavior as the perfect theory for the Romantic social circle - with the huge claim that this is what constitutes the world.

It is therefore a unique coincidence that a certain epistemology, understood as reciprocal learning, should simultaneously be an organizing principle of society, or at least of a smaller circle. As a concept this cannot be thought of radically enough. Unfortunately, it only lasted for a short period of time and then drifted off into other forms, like Catholicism, nation etc., which all contain concepts of communication as well, but no such symmetrical ones.

ES: Why couldn't this be maintained?

JF: Schlegel tried to describe this in his Lucinde.[27] But... I have to start again because it is really complicated to describe: The presupposition is that communication does not always only thematize communication itself, i.e. that communication, in its urge to say 'this is the right model', does not only say the same thing again and again and thus become tautological. And the mistake, if I may say so, the mistake Schlegel made in Lucinde and other texts is to force Romantic communication into a tautology. In other words, one must possess procedures that put into practice – and not only describe in a self-referential way – Romantic communication.

ES: This is also the reason why Schlegel and Novalis[28] in the first years used up an incredible amount of topics.

JF: Yes, they used all these topics and in the end they always came upon the same idea.

Another reason why this might not have worked is that the project was still oriented towards the philosophy of identity. One could, however, use the notion of difference as a guiding concept and envision a project that does not presuppose the fact that, in the end, identity will be the result, and that everything will lead to the One, but that conceives the opposite and aims at preventing or delaying this result.

SD: This could perhaps also be described by saying that the concept of idealism imploded because it remained too immanent. There were then attempts to develop various other structures out of the ruins of these forms of communication, structures that increasingly referred to the outside world. But these were then more or less bureaucratic constructions such as social clubs and associations, early forms of political parties that organized themselves around specific contents and sought to gain political influence, or that on the other hand affirmed existing conditions.

JF: However, many of these clubs also imploded because starting at a certain point all they did was celebrate their existence as a club. This can be compared to the concept of love that only celebrates itself as a concept of love. The problem is: if people share a common interest in each other, then there must be a sufficient difference so that something can be learnt from one another. On the other hand, there must be enough in common to secure the basis for communication. The model of Romantic communication later imploded because the relationship of tension could no longer be sustained.

NOTES

1. Jürgen Fohrmann, German professor of German (Bonn after 1990), professional Germanist of German Studies (Bielefeld in the 1980s)

2. Erhard Schüttpelz, born in 1961, amateur musician and amateur scholar, Cologne and other places, present whereabouts unknown.

3. Jürgen Habermas, born 1929, second-generation member of the Frankfurt School. He devoted his life's work to defending and reclaiming the project of enlightenment critique, or what he calls the 'philosophical discourse of modernity'.

   In his early work, such as Knowledge and Human Interests (1968), he adopted a Kantian and Marxist-inflected approach, seeking to reconstruct the genealogy of the modern natural and human sciences by inquiring back into their social, historical, and epistemological conditions of emergence.

   In his later (post-1970) work he adopts a different perspective, a theory of 'communicative action' derived largely from speech-act philosophy.

   One reason for this turn toward language is his conviction that the project of modernity had run into criticism through its over-reliance on a subject-centered epistemological paradigm. His aim is to reformulate that project in a theory committed to values of truth, critique, and rational consensus, pinning its faith to the regulative precept of an 'ideal speech-situation'.

   In the 1980's he intervened in the so-called Historikerstreit - the debate about right-wing revisionist accounts (Nolte et al.) of National Socialism being a reaction to Bolshevism, equating both in the notion of totalitarianism and thus relativizing the Holocaust.

   In his later years, Habermas ranked as a state philosopher for the Social Democratic/Green Party coalition government, e.g. advocating the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. Three weeks later, however, he changed his mind in regard to the bombardment, because it wasn't 'expedient'.

   He might have remembered 'that an indestructible moment of communicative rationality is anchored in the social form of human life.'

4. From: 'Life of Quintus Fixlein' by Jean Paul, 1763-1825. His eccentric and discursive novels, full of humour, sentiment and irony, were among the most widely read books in the early 19th Century. In 'Life of Quintus Fixlein' he opposes both 'poetic nihilists' such as Goethe and Schiller and 'poetic materialists': The true poet maintains the middle course between these two extremes, 'clothing Nature in ideal infinity'. His theoretical works are wayward and discursive like novels. The qualities of variability and discontinuity later became reasons for his decline. The sentiment, the humour, the irony and the verbal arabesques, which at first delighted, seemed too deeply steeped in self-indulgence. Nevertheless, many of his works have by their deep humanity escaped the oblivion into which the others have fallen. Like the various 'Siebenkäs' revivals have proved more recently, the combination of contrasting facets, which defy classification into any distinct literary school or political cause, de serves our greater appreciation.

5. Small communist parties in Germany mostly founded in the early 1970s.

6. Reinhart Koselleck, German historian, University of Bielefeld 1970s- 90s. Widely known and acclaimed for his research in 'historical semantics', i.e. a history of historical keywords (e.g. 'people', 'nation', 'revolution' etc.), also known for his temporalization of 'temporalization'. 'Modernity' in Koselleck's vision of history began around 1750, in the so-called 'Sattelzeit' ('saddle time', the period flanking the French Revolution by 50 years), letting temporalization 'mount the horse'. Koselleck, the keyword reader, (each of the books in his library from his time as a student onwards contained a keyword index), once surprised his critics with a social history of Prussia; he spent some of his boring academic meetings drawing cartoons of colleagues (a catalogue was published). His epitaph reads:

   R.K.
   Let me quote again the last keyword of history
   The research I could not finish in
   Time.

7. GOETHE (1749-1832), German national hero and writer. See Cultural Trademarks

8. Torquato Tasso' , 1890, written by Goethe, the cultural trademark.

9. Niklas Luhmann, PhD in 1966, German sociologist at the University of Bielefeld, still haunting the place with his 'research project: theory of society, period: 30 years, costs: none'. Luhmann started as an administrator and developed the only social theory and cybernetic epistemology that came to terms both with the good old Federal Republic of Germany (understood functionally) as well as with the not-so-happy future past and globalization (read in a dysfunctional way). Terminology slightly shifting all the time, stable frame of mind, sitting in the sun for hours reading and writing his famous index cards. In the early 1970s most leftist thinkers dismissed him as a system-supporting technocrat, but in the '80s and '90s nearly all of his former opponents acknowledged at least some of the advantages of Luhmann's approach (even some leftist activists of 1999: „fight the system, and let Luhmann tell you what the system is'). Incidentally, in the 1990s most leftist '60s thinkers (Bourdieu, Habermas, Castoriadis etc.) had become system (i.e. nation-state, social welfare, social democracy) supporters themselves, and Luhmann's approach by then seemed more subversive because less sentimental - Luhmann himself still being as system-supporting and open to change as in 1969. In retrospect, of course, any of these positions and shifts seems as absurd as any other, because like all classical sociology (Durkheim, Weber, Parsons etc.) the theory seems most of all - another mirage - to project a utopian image of the values and pursuits of its time