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The Facticity of Practices and the Factuality of Human Agency
(Outline of a Hermeneutic Theory of Practices)

Abstract: The hermeneutic theory of social practices treats the relations between the subjectivity involved in collective agency and the trans-subjectivity of concerted practices in terms of interpretive circularity. The paper argues that the conceptualization of a kind of such circularity operating within properly arranged social practices helps one to find a way out of the depressing dilemma between agency and structure. Actions and activities – as they are situated in and entangled with inter-related practices – neither causally determine nor impose norms on the ways in which practices are interrelated in their performances. An autonomous ensemble of social practices projects its being upon a horizon of possibilities which agents choose in accordance with their desires, plans, intentions, projects, moods, ambitions, presuppositions, prejudices, background and tacit knowledge. In the hermeneutic theory of practices, there is an important caesura that takes place in the passage from what human agency strongly determines to the authenticity manifested by the modes of being-in-concerted-social-practices.

Keywords: ensembles of concerted practices, cultural forms of life, hermeneutic circularity, trans-subjectivity, endogenous reflexivity of practices

1. Personal and Social Practices

Any particular social practice is a repeated network of collective actions, organized around shared patterns, norms, and rules. The single social practice is determined by joint agency, and furnished in accordance with joint intentions. Even in the case of a practice devised and performed by an individual actor – and, in addition, not expressing an explicit we-attitude – it is not a personal habit but a social unit, granted that its normative design and performance presuppose a social partner implicitly present in the network of actions and rule-following activity. However, this picture becomes drastically changed when at stake is not an isolated, singular practice. An interrelatedness of social practices is no longer to be comprehended as continuous with repeatable collective actions and determined by joint agency. "Something astonishing happens" when an ensemble of concerted practices comes

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to the fore, and this happening cannot be accounted for – so a basic argument of this paper goes – in terms of the approaches searching for a mediation between structure and agency. The reducibility to actions/activities is tenable for any isolated social practice, but not for an ensemble of concerted practices. The non-derivability of such an ensemble from routine actions and goal-orientated activities should have profound implications for practice theory. The crucial turning point – supposedly legitimizing the autonomy of this theory – takes place not in the passage from actions guided by strongly personal intentions to actions/activities of group agents relying on collectively accepted conceptual presuppositions, but in the passage from what human agency strongly determines to the authenticity manifested by the modes of being-in-concerted-social-practices.

The guiding motif of this paper is that interrelated practices constitute something essentially different from inter-subjectively coordinated activities performed for identifiable reasons. An interrelatedness of practices "generates" its independence from constituent actions and activities. For several reasons that will be spelled out in the remainder, to conceive of a field of concerted practices as a field of purposeful skilled activities is ontologically wrong. Insisting on practices' independence, however, is not to be misunderstood as an attempt at attaining a "stratified" essentialist ontology of human behavior. It would not be correct to say that aptly organized orders of practices create the social-practical being as a special stratum of human existence that persists along with several other strata, like the "stratum of emergent personal properties and powers, which include the human capacity for innovative action." (Archer 2010, 123) The rationale for insisting that interrelated social practices are capable to generate their irreducibility to the constituents of any particular practice is not to be sought in a presupposed – or a specially unfolded – stratification of human existence. The argument for the independence draws strongly on the "ontological authenticity" of what becomes disclosed, constituted, and articulated within and through a *properly arranged* interrelatedness of practices. The most evident example for such authenticity is a clearly delineated domain of discursive processes, techniques of symbolization, and material artifacts that embodies an autonomous cultural form of life.

Before embarking on a discussion of what "properly arranged" means, some preliminary distinctions are to be introduced and elucidated. I start with the distinction between personal and social practices. Using a combination of dried herbs and Indian spices in preparing a dish made of teeny tiny potatoes, brown rice, and organic aubergines is a particular culinary practice that is clearly delineated, and can be algorithmically executed. It consists of coordinated actions, organized around a pattern (recipe), inspired by the motive for having a tasty food, and determined by the intention of consuming ecologically sound food products. (One can say that it

belongs to "sound food hygiene practices".) But is this a personal or a social practice? Let me place the question in a broader context.

When, for instance, Elizabeth Shove (2015, 35) reaches the conclusion that the scenarios for the future carbon intensity of energy supply as they are organized around, in particular, the sector of heating and cooling do not allow one to "distinguish between specific visions of the various practices that are lumped together", she obviously refers to strongly social practices. (It is another question that personal motivations of practitioners play a decisive role in Shove's context of discussion.) This is not the case with my example. The practice I cited might be designed only to fit my individual taste, and to serve my personal form of life. It gains its alleged strongly personal character by the fact that the recipe is not taken from a cooking book or directly imported from a certain culinary tradition. Moreover, I am supposedly the only consumer of the outcome of the practice's performance. There is no "collective intention" or "we-attitude" behind this performance. But even under these circumstances my strongly individual recipe and way of preparing the dish have come into being through modifications of (and deviations from) established culinary practices. Thus, my personal practice of preparing food presupposes a large portion of social experience. What I am trying to say is that there is no definite criterion for demarcating between personal and social practices since the distinction is always relative and contextually dependent, whereby all personal practices – no matter of how idiosyncratic they may be – turns out to be, in a sense, social ones. No doubt, however, a concept of strongly personal practices is completely justified in disciplines such as developmental psychology.

A class of practices characterized by a special amalgam of personal and social components pose severe challenges to the conceptualization of the personal way of being in social practices: Foucault's "technologies of the Self" refer to personal practices – or "practices of self-culture" – that through their performances express their social nature. They are practices permitting "individuals to effect by their own means … a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." (Foucault 1988, 17) He makes clear that the (somatic and mental) states which the individual tries to attend through his personal technologies are projected as trans-personal possibilities by these very technologies. A case in point are the practices of sexual abstinence as a part of a broader repertoire of practices of a certain kind of asceticism. The behavior characterized by sexual abstinence appears in a broad range of cultural-historical contexts. In the context of Christian asceticism, for instance, it can serve as a (strongly personal) means for *imitatio Christi* and recovering the efficacy which God has printed on the soul and which the body has tarnished. The way in which the practices of sexual

abstinence are situated in a certain form of life (such as the monastic *angelikos bios*) is open to possibilities whose actualization specifies the social relevance of these practices: For instance, weakening of the bodily passions and enhancing the body's resistance to "sinful practices" in order to suppress destructive desires promote a new kind of sociality and communal life. Thus, following his celebrated axiom that as soon as there is a talk of sex at stake are issues of power, Foucault is able to study the socially relevant disciplinary effects of the practices of abstinence as they take place in forms of life ranging from Late Antiquity to the early modern times. The amalgam of personal and social components in the "technologies of the Self" concerns the ecstatic unity of practitioners' (individual and collective) subjectivity and practices' trans-subjectivity. The topic of this unity occupies a central place in the present paper.

2. The Reducibility of an Isolated Practice and the Irreducibility of a Practice Integrated with an Ensemble of Configured Practices

Pragmatically, there is room for making a distinction between explicit and implicit social practices – the latter being presupposed in the performances of the former. Discriminating between these two kinds has some relevance to the discussion of the irreducibility of practice theory to action theory. An explicit social practice – identified as having the status of a separate item – is a recurrent network of collective actions, temporally and spatially organized around shared patterns. A philosophically more elaborated definition is provided by Joseph Rouse (1996, 134) who argues that a singular social practice – always simultaneously material and discursive – is a pattern of ongoing engagement with the world, provided that this pattern does not exist per se but persists through practice's repetition or continuation. (However, it remains an open question whether there are purely conceptual social practices, i.e. practices deprived of a material dimension. Think, for instance, of the collectively organized thought experiments as a practice in scientific inquiry.) The distinction between explicit and implicit practices has a pragmatic and conventional character, since it is based on the observation that under given circumstances certain practices can be made explicit. Yet one can make a social practice explicit only against the background of indefinite number of presupposed practices. Moreover, making a particular practice explicit does not amount to disentangling it from the configurations in which it takes place. The explicit status of a practice goes together with unveiling a number of (actual and possible) contexts with which it is entangled.

In sticking to Rouse's cited view, a practice is made explicit when one is able to envision the minimal field of its circulation[1]. It is my contention that the unity of explicit and implicit practices – as implied by the contextual

entanglement of what is made explicit with what is presupposed – plays a crucial role in any conceptualization of social practices that is based on hermeneutic arguments. (The predicate "implicit" in this formulation refers to practices' mode of being, and should not be confused with the cognitivist connotations of Michael Polanyi's "implicit knowledge".)

To reiterate, any one practice is analytically completely reducible to actions/activities, granted that it is regarded in isolation from the contexts in which it is configured with other social practices. One can find a variety of formulations in social theory concerning the groundedness of social practices in collective actions. Thus, any single social practice is a socially recognized bundle of activities, "done on the basis of what members learn from others, and capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly." (Barnes 2001, 27) In trying to avoid both a nominalist elimination and an uncritical reification of practices as particular entities within the scope of social theory, Barry Barnes treats them as those routine social activities which cease to be routine at individual level. A social practice – considered beyond any kind of reification – exists through displaying emergent properties on the level of recurrent collective activity. In combining collective know-how and "procedural memory" with individual skills to participate in collective performances, a practice is the outcome of hybridizing social routine with individual qualities. Approaches that lend more weight to the concepts of habituation, learning, and socialization as well as to several concepts of social psychology look for accounts of social practices in terms of habituated actions and activities, granted that what becomes habituated takes the form of Bourdieu's "durable and transposable dispositions". On another formulation gaining currency in both organizational studies and science studies, the organization of a social practice and the governing of its constituent actions done by particular individuals coincide. It is the apparent congruence between organized agential behavior and governed actions that enables one to argue that performing repeatedly collective actions for a shared social reason is a social practice. And perhaps the most succinct formulation: Acting on a we-attitude forms a social practice. (Tuomela 2002, 92) By implication, an established social practice takes the form of a repeated collective action performed for a socially significant reason. It is my contention that all these formulations retain their validity, if the claim of reducibility to actions/activities is restricted to any particular social practice that is not made explicit in the sense indicated above – being explicit by becoming entangled with a variety of contexts – but is treated in isolation.

Let me now turn to the very difference between a single social practice and an assembly of interrelated practices. Any single practice confers a stylistic specificity to the network of actions involved in it, but does not constitute an autonomous unit that in its mode of operation gains independence from the course determined by the agency of the respective social

behavior. To perform such a practice requires skilled comportment, implicit and/or explicit norms for activities' coordination, and rules that can be instructive for the agents. Performing a practice is manifested as a habitual behavior based on agents' capability to learn and internalize cultural patterns and models, granted that the actions composing the practice satisfy Searle's criterion – a movement is to be counted as an action if it is caused by an intention in action[2]. In other words, performing a practice presupposes the well-known scheme of internalizing behavioral models through (more or less) institutionally organized processes of learning and externalizing "cognitive content" in social-symbolic interactions. As I will argue, this – still dualist – scheme may have a restricted validity in some disciplines, but it is completely irrelevant when one confronts the task of conceptualizing the being-in-social-practices. With regard to this task – so the argument goes – the internalizing-externalizing schematism must be replaced by a conceptuality assuming an "ecstatic unity" of practitioners and practices. The hermeneutic theory of practices should step-by-step substitute the vocabulary of learning, internalizing norms, participating in normative orders by performing social roles, habituation, and externalizing cognitive models for a vocabulary that enables one to spell out the being-in-social-practices in hermeneutic terms.

Tentatively, the difference between a single practice and an ensemble of concerted practices is not only an analytical distinction, but a difference that effectively contributes to the autonomy at issue: An interrelatedness of social practices is autonomous only through its difference – in the mode of being – with each particular practice involved in it. Furthermore, the conception I am going to spell out rests on the assumption that this difference is always contextually manifested, and does not have the character of a postulated demarcation. Unlike the way of making a contextual difference, drawing a firm demarcation line takes for granted that what becomes demarcated is merely present out-there. However, as it will be shown, the factual presence achieved through procedures of objectification is not on a par with the way of being of social practices[3]. This is why the difference between a single (isolated) practice and a practice entangled with an ensemble of configured practices is always a contextual (and non-dichotomous) difference. The actions and activities composing any one practice remain contextually entangled with various (changing) configurations within the whole interrelatedness to which the practice belongs. Moreover, any particular social practice – regardless of how essential is the role played by individual and collective agency in its designing – is generated with the assistance of other practices. Once becoming a clearly shaped practice, it takes place in a continuous stream of configured practices.

The observation that any practice presupposes this stream is also a good reason for arguing that the difference between singular practices (treated in

isolation) and continuously changing configurations of practices does not amount to a conventional and/or methodological difference. The way in which the stream is presupposed has much to do with the autonomous way of being of interrelated practices. No doubt, social practices change "when new elements (of meaning, materiality, and competence) are introduced or when existing elements are combined in new ways." (Shove, Pantzar, Watson 2012, 120) But both the introduction of new elements and the combinations of existing ones are "events" in the stream of practices. This provides a preliminary rationale for prioritizing the streaming continuity over the discrete elements. How to conceptualize this stream – without losing sight of how the non-dichotomous ontological difference contextually operates – is the central question that hermeneutic practice theory should address[4].

A further disclaimer should be stressed at this point: It is not the (joint) agency that defines the difference in question. Any one social practice is (analytically) fully reducible to its constituents, but when involved in the stream of configured practices it undergoes constant re-contextualization that changes the meaning assigned to it by its correlations with other practices. Thus, it would be incorrect to say that any one practice is totally determined by the agency operating in its network of actions and activities. But it would also be incorrect to claim that the properly arranged assembly of practices is completely freed from the power of agency. Although the assembly's arrangement (especially the changing configurations of practices) remain underdetermined by the behavioral agency, the latter still works within this agency. In stating this, I would like to underline once more that the non-dichotomous (and ever contextualized) difference between the network of actions/activities composing any one practice and the ensemble of configured practices is not a special case of the traditional structure-agency dichotomy. In the perspective of this difference, any particular social practice is distinguished by a dual ontological status: On the one hand, the practice – as enclosed in its own network of actions/activities – is entirely conceivable in terms of a factually present manifestation of human agency, and on the other, the practice – as contextualized by a configuration of practices related with it – exists within the open horizon of possible changes of this configuration that would lead to the practice's re-contextualization. (This horizon "belongs" to the practice's way of being and cannot be conceptualized as a factual presence.)

The non-dichotomous difference I am discussing is a difference within the relations of mutual interpretation between "the particulars" and "the whole". A practice that takes place in an arranged interrelatedness of practices becomes specified by the latter in a manner that allows the practice to specify its relational position in every configuration in which it takes place. For the sake of illustration, I will cite the way in which properly configured

artistic practices express stylistic specificity, provided that an artistic practice is a social practice when it brings to the fore joint motives of a group subscribing to a style and its aesthetic manifesto. Such a practice – no matter how authentic and unique it might be – is unavoidably enmeshed with practices manifesting artistic peculiarities. To concretize this illustration, the practice of dispensing with modelling light and shadow within colors as a means for dispensing with the "illusion of space" (George Braque) was typical for several avant-garde artists at the *Fin de siècle* who otherwise were committed to essentially different aesthetic worldviews. More specifically, this practice was applied in works of painters like Paul Sérusier, Maurice de Vlaminck, Raoul Dufy, and George Rouault. But in styles like early fauvism and postimpressionism it was only vaguely related with the styles' core artistic practices.

The performance of the artistic practice of dispensing with modelling light and shadow within colors challenged the use of established color techniques. But it gained the status of a core feature of a new style when this performance was integrated in a configuration with practices such as the reduction of complex spatial structures to a geometric form approximating a cube, the minimal combination of colors in order to avoid the distraction of the emotions evoked by the abundance of color, the aggregation of geometric forms rhythmically in an extremely shallow space, the accentuation of the geometric shapes underlying the concrete subject matter, the decomposition of images into a series of interlocking planes, and the polymorphic portraying with shifts in perspective. The advent of (early, Analytical) Cubism was precisely distinguished by this configuration. When Picasso proclaimed that Cubism has tangible goals, he referred to the possibilities of artistic expressivity engendered by the way in which the practice of dispensing with the illusion of depth was specified by the practices expressing the "Cubist thought". The specification of the artistic practice by the configuration in which it takes place is not to be detached from the way in which it contributes to the specification of a style as expressed by concerted practices. It is this mutual reinforcement between a single practice and a stylistic configuration that is built upon the model of interpretive circularity.

3. Disclosing Cultural Forms of Life
   within Properly Arranged Social Practices

As already stressed, only a *properly arranged* assembly of social practices are capable to disclose and articulate something that is distinguished by ontological authenticity. Accentuating on the "proper arrangement" entails that the conception I am going to outline is not interested in each and every interrelatedness of social practices. The most ensembles of interrelated practices – even when they persist for long periods of time – have ad hoc

character, and do not disclose and constitute culturally unique events, discursive orders, or symbolic realities within human existence. In many cases sets of randomly related practices are artificially maintained for dubious political reasons. Think, for instance, on the "implantation" of ceremonial practices in the routine everydayness of societies with totalitarian political regimes. When "hybridized" with professional, pedagogical, administrative and other initiatives, these ceremonial practices serve various functions: They indoctrinate the young generation, periodically emphasize the "unlimited power" of the political authority, support the insinuating feeling of practitioners' historical mission, and so on. An alternative example – this time referring to allegedly non-totalitarian societies – is the artificial maintenance of a non-authentic (and "irrational" in the sense of critical theory) constellation of commercial and political practices that in combination with mass information campaigns produces a favorable milieu for various sorts of manipulation that contribute to the practitioners' existence in the form of "one-dimensional man". Maintaining such a constellation in which the hybridization of political and commercial practices leads to "practices of commodification" is effective in keeping alive the lifestyle of consumerism, but it cannot disclose and articulate an authentic form of life.

But when the interrelatedness reveals and produces "ontological authenticity", then there is a "phenomenon that has to be saved", i.e. to become a subject of theoretical conceptualization predicated on the irreducibility of social practices to actions and activities. In this account what needs conceptualization in theoretical terms is the phenomena manifesting the capability of a specifically arranged complex to disclose, in particular, an authentic form of life. For instance, the ensemble of exegetical, ritual, organizational (inter-denominational), conversational, and dietary practices characterize the confessional ethos of a religious form of life. This ethos sanctions the righteous (individual and collective) behavior of those who are committed to the form of life. But succumbing to the normative force of the confessional ethos does not automatically provide a guarantee for a righteous behavior and life. The members of the community are obliged to constantly give evidence – through their individual and communal agential behavior – of their true faith in God which coincides with having a righteous life union with God. They can only do this by routinizing configurations of the aforementioned practices, making them routine everydayness of their lives. The everydayness of a religious form of life is assigned with the special task of bringing the doctrinally postulated "Sacred Reality" – understood as both the moral-social order ideally sanctioned by God, and the imagery of an ideal reality through which the religious human being has to make sense of what takes place in her/his way of being – in the most intimate spheres of personal and communal life.

The everydayness of recurrent practices should transfer the "Sacred Reality" (along with its transcendent authority) into the moral behavior of those committed to the form of life. What is most remote from the prosaic (mundane) affairs of daily life should become "most immanent" part of this life. The faith in salvation as this faith is maintained and propagated by the properly configured practices enables the maintenance and propagation of the transcendent authority in the diversity of daily life's contexts. This authority becomes ubiquitous in all personal and communal affairs. However, the transference of the "Sacred Reality" through (properly configured) everyday practices – or the task of bringing God's kingdom on earth – is a never-ending task. Nonetheless, only by engaging this task, one is able to become committed to the orders of the transcendent authority, and to integrate these orders in her personal life as it is morally characterized by a free will (and corresponding responsibility) and the voice of conscience. Succumbing to the normative force of a confessional ethos amounts to internalizing the (doctrinally and exegetically defined) transcendent authority as the voice of conscience. This can only happen within the routine everydayness of properly configured practices whereby the "Sacred Reality" agreeable to God (or God's kingdom) becomes progressively actualized in the life-form's everydayness.

The way in which practices are configured to maintain the religious form of life reflects the imperative of transferring the transcendent authority in the everyday life. Configured practices become reflexively resilient in their arrangements and rearrangements for the sake of keeping alive the form of life. They accomplish the transference independently of the changes of agential behavior. In this account, transference is the meaningful articulation of the religious form of life. However, reaching this conclusion does not imply that the properly arranged practices are a (meta-human) agent. Practices that disclose and constitute a form of life do not rest on a separate agency operating along with the joint agency of the community's members committed to this form of life. In particular, configured practices do not manifest agency that can be described in terms of purposive-inferential patterns. Their possible and actual configurations do not express a range of teleological scenarios for agential behavior. The interrelatedness of these practices rather *fore-structures* the members' agential behavior. It opens a horizon within which this behavior is meaningful – a behavior that by being succumbed to the ethos's normative force serves the task of transference. With regards to this independence, the never-ending transference can be addressed as having its own phenomenality, typically illustrated by the manifestations of practices' endogenous reflexivity. At issue in the hermeneutic theory of practices should be that phenomenality which manifests the irreducibility of practices.

Differentiating between an ad hoc assemblage of practices and an ensemble of concerted practices that discloses an authentic form of life is not always an easy task. Thus, to adduce another example, there are many arbitrary and idiosyncratic combinations of practices of preparing and consuming vegetarian meals. Some of them reflect medical diets, some others manifest aspects of ethno-cultural traditions. Yet certain configurations of such practices enmeshed with several other lifestyle practices may disclose an authentic form of life, if the whole ensemble of practices supports and activates moral obligations and duties that, in their turn, become coupled, in particular, with political practices and policies of defending animal rights and avoiding any kind of animal exploitation, deep-ecological environmental initiatives, and social practices that promise to reverse climate change by breaking with the paradigm of "sustainable growth". However, what would warrant the authenticity of the disclosed form of life is not only the routinization of all concerted practices. The way in which the changing configurations of practices involved in the whole ensemble become a routine everydayness should engender at the same time a genuine ethos (along with the correspondent habitus) of the practitioners situated in this everydayness.

This ethos should be crafted not only within an appropriate restrictive moral code (enhancing the non-authoritarian kinds of positive liberty), but it also has to keep alive practitioners' belief that the (pathological) status quo can radically be overcome in favor of a completely different situation guided by the values and tenets of deep ecology and degrowth (as alternative to dangerous strategy of "sustainable growth"). This desired and expected situation has the character of a "transcendent entity" in whose achievability those committed to the life-form's ethos believe. It is this belief that should incrementally transform – within the routine everydayness – the "transcendent entity" into entities that are ready-to-hand within the configured practices. The belief might rest on the imagery of a certain global utopic vision about the planetary ecosystem that goes far beyond the instrumental-utilitarian anthropocentric environmentalism. But much more important for the vitality of the form of life turn out to be more local "iconoclastic utopias" – utopias eschewing blueprints and breaking with visions and images, but adequately responding to expectations arising out of particular situations and contexts. (Jacoby 2005) These utopias are operative and instrumental in the contexts of everyday life. They "translate" the global utopia's "visualizing-visionary" imagery into contextually relevant sensibility characterized by (what Russell Jacoby calls) "visual asceticism", and referring to entities and processes that are ready-to-hand within the life-form's configurations of practices. (The lack of visualizability enhances the sensibility about what has to come.) Only "the initiated" – the member of a community committed to the form of life – could understand the meanings articulated in contexts imbued with utopic expectations. In this case, the "translation" of the global

imagery into contextually relevant utopic expectations has the character of a never-ending task.

Against this background, the criterion for authenticity sounds as follows: When the disclosed form of life is capable in its everydayness to transform step-by-step the non-actually-present but potentially attainable entity – in whose existence practitioners (quasi-religiously) believe – into something meaningfully identifiable within the routinely repeatable configurations of practices, then the life-form is ontologically authentic. An authentic form of life is distinguished by the combination of (1) a belief in a transcendent reality that can be brought on the earth through day-to-day efforts that are shaped in a corresponding habitus[5]; (2) the everydayness of properly configured and recurrent practices in which the transcendent reality incrementally becomes something that is ready-to-hand; and (3) the life-form's ethos which excludes the control of any external moral or political authority. It is important to note that the ongoing transformation (or transference, or translation) of the transcendent reality as it is rooted in a (quasi-religious) belief does not take the form of a teleological process. An authentic form of life is disclosed and articulated within a hermeneutic circularity (composed by various interpretive circles) cannot be recast in terms of goal-oriented activities. Hermeneutic circularity can never be turned into teleology.

The authentic reality of social practices is due not to increasing complexity of goal-oriented actions and activities that hang together, but to the impossibility of approaching practices without taking into consideration the self-interpretive character of human existence. Accordingly, there is a shift in the methodological perspective of theorizing – a shift from explanatory to interpretive conceptualizing – that should correspond to the ontological requirement for the autonomy of practice theory. The analytic of the principal phenomena through which the character of human existence reveals itself is the theme of hermeneutic phenomenology. In stating this, I try to adduce a tentative evidence for grounding the theory of social practices upon existential analytic. The ontological autonomy of interrelated social practices might take various forms of empirical manifestation. The previous example was designed to show that intertwining practices may disclose, delineate and articulate the (material) domain of a cultural (vegan and deeply ecological) form of life. But the list of examples for what interrelated practices may disclose also includes: a cultural field of a "production of symbols" in Bourdieu's sense; an institutional framework already laid out by configured practices before a system of formal laws becomes established; a dispositif in Foucaultian sense, or more generally, configurations of discursive practices that enable the circulation of power; a reproducible local order (a "local life-world") as this is a subject of ethnomethodology; a system of conventions and customs that expresses a certain style of doing something (say, doing scientific research guided by a thought-style in Fleck's

sense); a "domain of the sacred life" and the corresponding ritualized comportment, etc.

4. Conceptualizing the Facticity of Social Practices

The hermeneutic theory of social practices should be developed as a theory with a constitutive conceptual apparatus, and not merely as a collection of notions that are flexible enough to be applied to the vast variety of case studies devoted to the constitutions of new domains, forms of life, regimes of powers, etc. within properly organized multitudes of practices. Accordingly, this theory should not be subordinated to cultural studies dealing with the dynamics of social practices circulating and "migrating" in cultural spaces. Seen in a historical perspective, cultural studies is guided by the pathos of anti-theory. The rebellious spirit of cultural studies tends to receive theorizing – that can be reconstructed in accordance with the philosophy of science's standards – as a gesture of justifying the (centrisms of) the dominant culture. The appeal to a critical theory in cultural studies masks in many cases an appeal to a destruction of theory as a self-sufficient cognitive body. Thus, for instance, this destruction is construed as a part of the struggle against androcentrism or western ethnocentrism. Arguing that theorizing the other is already an act of dominating the other was in the 1970s used as a principal argument against the construction of general theories in cultural anthropology. However, the destruction of the theory as a cognitive body – in favor of particular analyses that are resilient enough to capture heterogeneous contingencies of cultural life and to diagnose symptoms of new tendencies in this life – is often intertwined with the uncritical acceptance of essentialist notions of race, class, ethnicity, sex/gender, sexual orientation, nationality, cultural identity, cultural antagonism, violence, hegemony, etc.

It is my contention that the deconstruction of received essentialist concepts is a task that can only be accomplished within an appropriate theory. Briefly, deconstructing essentialism is a theoretical task, and cannot be addressed by an enterprise that tries to destruct the theory's cognitive autonomy. In this vein, the critical agenda of the hermeneutic theory of social practices cannot be achieved without having its methodological identity as a self-sufficient conceptual body.

To reach the status of a genuine theory, the hermeneutic theory of social practices has to conceptualize in its own terms the caesura taking place in the passage from the actions involved in any one practice to the interrelatedness of practices. In the same way in which the autonomy of properly arranged practices is not to be construed in terms of a linear increase of the complexity of the particular practices' constituents, it should not to be accounted in quasi-naturalistic terms of self-organizing complexes distinguished by "emergent properties". Making use of such terms would only

substitute one form of reductionism for another one. It is my contention that this form is illustrated by the attempts – typically undertaken by critical realists in social theory – to recast Bourdieu's concepts of social order and agential powers in terms of an "emergentist ontology". If the task of the theory of social practices consists in conceptualizing practices without treating them as a quasi-natural ("autopoietic") stratum, then the theory must not be predicated on procedures of objectification. The theory's structure has to involve a kind of radical reflexivity that would prevent one from making use of naturalist and objectivist assumptions in coming to grips with practices' authentic reality. However, radical reflexivity is a risky enterprise since it may call into question any conceptual assumptions in the process of theorizing. Finding a way out of the dilemma between proce-dural objectification and destructive-regressive reflexivity amounts to paving the path to the desired theory. The first step in that direction is to clarify the proper terms through which the aforementioned caesura can be captured.

The caesura embraces a series of breaking points. To list them requires using terms whose meaning will be subsequently elucidated. The breaking points are: (a) between inter- and trans-subjectivity; (b) between normativity and pre-normativity (which is by no means to be equated with still-not-arti-culated-normativity); (c) between reflexivity of agents who organize their activities and the endogenous reflexivity of practices[6]; (d) between goal-oriented rationality and rationality as the phronēsis of practical intelligibility; (e) between the teleology of human activity and several kinds of interpretive circles that are the main topics in the hermeneutic theory of practices; (f) between temporal regimes of normatively organized human activities and "chronotopes" of arranged practices; and (g) between the discrete facts about actions and activities that become represented through the data mod-els of (deductive-explanatory) behaviorist and cognitivist theories, and the interpretive articulation of meaning as a continuous process taking place within interrelated practices, which cannot be represented by data models. These breaking points mark at the same time the lines in which one should quest for the distinctiveness of the hermeneutic theory of social practices. It is my contention that the contradistinction between intentional action based on epistemic representation and (what Hubert Dreyfus, Charles Taylor and others call) "absorbed coping" – a conception that places Heidegger's ap-proach to human behavior as deliberative circumspection within-the-world in empirically verifiable theoretical frameworks – is too narrow to account for the caesura mentioned.

There is an essential ambiguity involved in the above listed series of breaking points. If any pair of the series of oppositions from (a) to (g) presents a transition from one state of affairs to another (entirely different) one, then it is unclear what should be counted as initial state and what as final state of the transitions. Paradoxically enough, both possible answers

are correct: One can treat as initial states both the first and the second components of the pairs. Which answer would be preferred depends on the starting philosophical assumptions. I will use the term *facticity* for designating the reality of concerted social practices in which ontologically authentic forms of life become disclosed and meaningfully articulated, whereas the term *factuality* will be reserved for the discrete entities of human behavior that are directly observed and involved in the explananda of the deductive-explanatory (cognitivist and behaviorist) theories[7]. The distinction between factuality and facticity is a central one in hermeneutic phenomenology. The conceptualization of factuality should be accomplished by objectifying theories whose theoretical models must be interpretable by data models as ordered manifolds of discrete elements. Let us call this a strategy of *ontic* conceptualization. By contrast, the conceptualization of facticity requires an *ontological* strategy that consists in the interpretative analytic of those symptomatic events in the disclosure and meaningful articulation within concerted practices which seem to be bounded with transcendental conditions stipulating the way of being of what becomes disclosed and articulated.

Treating social practices as factuality unavoidably reduces them to normatively organized goal-oriented activities. In putting teleology first, one is able to demonstrate that temporality is a pervasive feature of human activity. (Schatzki 2010, 111) Yet in so doing, one still operates with a model based on the idealizations of objective time. To successfully address the intrinsic modes of temporalizing characterizing the agents' being-in-social-practices, it does not suffice to acknowledge that existential temporality occurs as unity of past, present, and future, and then – for the sake of a factual conceptualization of human activity – to schematize this unity in terms of teleological models of (procedurally objectified) time. The views of the "teleological temporality" adjust idealizations of objective time – like that of the succession of past, present and future events – to the needs of conceptualizing activities and practices as factuality. Even when the authors of these views correctly admit that all the structures constituted within human existence are modes of (what Heidegger calls) the "temporalizing of temporality", they fail to spell out these modes in terms of the ontological nexus of understanding-and-interpretation-within-practices as this nexus enables the articulation of meaning. The schematization of existential temporality as teleological time (timespace) of activity can only be accomplished at the price of ignoring the (hermeneutic-ontological) issues of the facticity of the articulation of meaning within practices – the articulation which by operating as temporalizing of temporality fore-structures the teleological (factual) organization of human activity. By contrast, any attempt to conceptualize the facticity of practices must take into consideration the intrinsic temporalization of projective future, selective past, and present-in-the-making which the continuous stream of configured practices produces. In

other words, one must take into consideration the kind of temporalizing that works within concerted practices, and cannot be redescribed by objectivist (physical-mathematical) models of time. Thus considered, the facticity of practices is fully amenable to empirical inquiry, but not by means of objectifying procedures.

Against the background of discriminating between these two strategies of conceptualization, one can differentiate between the ontic approach to social practices – an approach that inevitably would be committed to reductionism and essentialism – and the ontological approach which is at issue in this paper. When one is following the former approach, one gives priority to the first states of affairs (inter-subjectivity, normativity, actors' reflexivity, etc.) indicated in the list of turning points. Accordingly, one remains on the territory on which social practices are taken to be discrete entities and collections of such entities, granted that each practice has its own history and trajectory, and the history of a particular collection is merely a juxtaposition of the single practices' historical trajectories, each of them devised by "agential carriers". All changes within a collection of such discrete entities result from alternations of individual trajectories. (Ginev 2013, 20-28) Prioritizing the second states of affairs (trans-subjectivity, pre-normativity, practices' reflexivity, etc.) is the hallmark of the ontological approach and the hermeneutic theory of social practices. Thus, for instance, normativity (as norms enacted by directly observable rule-following acts) has "ontic primacy" over pre-normativity – as a feature brought into play by the capability of concerted practices to project their interrelatedness upon possibilities – when the goal of inquiry is to delineate that kind of joint agency which is the force behind certain collective-agential behavior, granted that this force is constrained and controlled by an imposed normative structure. By contrast, "ontological primacy" is to be assigned to the pre-normative fore-structuring of normative structures within the facticity of social practices, when in the focus of inquiry is the articulation of normativity within the hermeneutic circularity disclosing and constituting a form of life.

It is the ontological approach to practices' facticity that reverses the order of things by attributing primacy to pre-normativity. Yet this reversal should not be trivialized as a replacement of one kind of deductive-explanatory construction of "saved phenomena" with another one. As already hinted at, a theory of the facticity of social practices cannot be developed as an explanatory theory. Consequently, pre-normativity as a dimension of facticity cannot be conceptualized as manifolds of theoretically laden facts. Pre-normativity manifests itself within a characteristic hermeneutic situation – a tendency of meaningful articulation of what is disclosed by concerted practices – and the only possible way of its conceptualization is

via interpretive means. (More generally, the facticity of meaningful articulation can only be thematized by means of interpretive theory.) Interpreting the tendencies of interpretive articulation of meanings within ensembles of practices should shift the attention from the procedural production of factuality organized in data models to the empirical manifestation of facticity as ongoing temporalization – contextual differentiations of projective future, selective past, and present-in-the-making through which meanings becomes articulated. This empirical manifestation takes the form of temporalized narratives that exist before any kind of narration takes place. (As already mentioned, Rouse uses the expression "narrative fields".) This is why the manifested facticity of concerted social practices acquires the character of *pre-narrativity*.

According to the thesis of the irreducibility of practice theory to action theory, it would not be correct to say that collectives of practitioners are – via their (a) collective subjectivity (that supposedly is a source of "collective causality"), or (b) joint plans, or (c) consensually accepted intersubjective normativity – creators and designers of practices. Social practices are generated within the trans-subjectivity of ever changing configurations of contextualizing and contextualized practices. Configurations of practices that are repeated recurrently in the everyday life constrain, regulate, and eventually coordinate agents' subjective choices, thereby forming trans-subjective tendencies of choosing possibilities. On the hermeneutic theory, the interrelatedness of practices appropriates the same possibilities upon which it projects its totality. Because both the projection upon – and the appropriation of – possibilities transcend agents' subjectivity, their unity has the character of *trans-subjectivity*. This trans-subjective status of the interrelated practices (as projecting and appropriating possibilities) corresponds to the agents' mode of being-in-practices. Agents are in ecstatic unity with both the configurations of social practices and the horizon of possibilities, whereby their activities are contextualized through the ways in which projected possibilities become appropriated. Agents are not passively embedded in what social practices constitute – forms of life, cultural spaces, traditions, styles, institutions, etc. Rather, they exist in the realities constituted by their practices through choosing and appropriating possibilities engendered by these practices, whereby every choice reveals and conceals the respective socio-cultural reality anew. In accordance with the ecstatic unity mentioned, the appropriated possibilities concern both the arrangements of practices and the agents' personal lives. This can be a unity with an artistic style, a historical tradition, a professional ethos, a ritualized way of being of a religious community, a paradigmatic style of doing research of a scientific community, or any other cultural form of life.

5. The Concept of Trans-Subjectivity

The concept of trans-subjectivity is of prime importance for the way in which the hermeneutic theory of social practices advocates the irreducibility thesis. In line with the discussion so far, trans-subjectivity is the dynamic unity of projection and appropriation of possibilities – a unity in which agential (individual and collective) subjectivity is situated by being in each particular context transcended by a horizon projected by a particular configuration of practices. Trans-subjectivity is the hermeneutic circularity in which the non-dichotomous ontological difference (between agential factuality and practices' facticity) resides. Tentatively, trans-subjectivity is distinguished by its own interpretive circles by being involved in co-interpretive relations with the agential subjectivity which contextually is entangled with it. Agential subjectivity entangled with trans-subjectivity is (what Heidegger's calls) "thrown projection". The kind of existential ontology which manages to link the thrown projection with finitude-temporality of the modes of being-in-the-world unveils essential features of trans-subjectivity, but it cannot directly be applied in the construction of the hermeneutic theory of practices. This theory opposes the very idea of schematizing the being-revealed-in-facticity in terms of "fundamental ontology", even when the latter proves to be quite successful in destructing the "metaphysics of presence".

In conceptualizing social practices with regard to the ontological difference between the factuality of actions/activities as they are determined by human agency, and the facticity of practices capable to disclose authentic forms of life, the hermeneutic theory admits that this difference exists only within – and through – the trans-subjective hermeneutic circularity inherent in practices' facticity. (To reiterate, the ontological difference is not simply between actions/activities and properly arranged practices, but between factual manifolds of human agency's outcomes and actions/activities entangled with configured practices.) There is no being that can be schematized in conceptually self-sufficient ontology when at issue is the ongoing contextualization of the ontological difference within the hermeneutic circularity. By the same token: *Trans-subjectivity in which agents' subjectivity is always entangled with takes place within the hermeneutic circularity, and has no independent existence apart from this circularity. Conceptualizing trans-subjectivity within the hermeneutic circularity excludes any threat of hypostatizing it.* Agential subjectivity exists through its choices of possibilities that invoke shifts in the in the trans-subjective horizon.

Moving from one configuration of practices to another also shifts the horizon of possibilities that are open to be appropriated. Since every configuration sets up a context of constituting meaning through actualizing a possibility, the process of re-contextualization – ensued by the changing

configurations – runs parallel with the horizon's shifts. With regard to that shifting, the possibilities are not "available once and for ever", but become contextually revealed and concealed. It is the horizon of possibilities that plays the role already indicated: *The interrelatedness of social practices projects its totality upon possibilities, thereby gaining its ontological status as a potentiality-for-being.* On a corollary to this statement: The interrelatedness of practices projects the totality of its possible configurations upon a contextually shifting horizon.

The changing configurations in the interrelatedness and the shifts in the horizon are mutually reinforcing events. The actualization of a possibility within a context of configured practices reveals new possibilities (along with precluding some of the existing), while the shift in the horizon provokes a new configuration. Accordingly, there is *ongoing interplay of practices and possibilities* that does not leave any room (within it) for practitioners' (personal and social) existence as a-temporalized presence unaffected by the shifting horizon: All entities, occurrences and processes involved in this interplay hinge on the horizon's shifts and the process of re-contextualization. Since there is a mutual dependence of the whole horizon of possibilities and the actualization of every particular possibility within a configuration of practices, the ongoing interplay of practices and possibilities is characterized by a continuous hermeneutic circularity as resulting from the synergy of the aforementioned interpretive circles. An interrelatedness of social practices exists through and within this circularity. By implication, what is disclosed and articulated within such an interrelatedness is predicated on being open to interpretive re-contextualization. The way in which the hermeneutic theory conceptualizes the circularity (and the ontological difference within it) brings into being the *caesura* between the objectified factuality of collective agency operating through agents' intentionality and normatively regulated actions, on the one hand, and the (pre-normative and pre-narrative) facticity of interplaying practices and possibilities.

Notes

[1] Rouse speaks of "narrative fields of practices" – a concept that I will later discuss. In introducing this concept, he carefully tries to avoid (what he calls) "pragmatic foundationalism", i.e. the view ascribing original intentionality to skilled comportment organized within interrelated practices. In the same vein, Rouse criticizes Hubert Dreyfus' suggestion for treating social and linguistic practices differently. Practices are not "naturally" divided into species in accordance with the kind of the "original intentionality" which grounds them. Practices are contextually specified with regard to the local (material) settings in which they take place, and constantly open to re-specification through circulation in broader fields of practices. Thus, Rouse's conception implies that making a practice explicit requires describing it as taking place in a variety of local setting, and tracking of its characteristic trajectories in narrative fields of practices.

[2] I fully agree with the way in which Theodore Schatzki discriminates between actions and activities. For him, activity and action are related as event and accomplishment. Being inherently teleological, activity is an event of performing. What happens in such an event is action. It is activity that accomplishes action. In another formulation, "activity is the performance of action." (Schatzki 2010, xv) However, I disagree with Schatzki's claim that there is a strong similarity between his construal of the performances of actions and Heidegger's construal of "clearings" in their relation to humanity. They both share the feature – so Schatzki's argument goes – of befalling entities. In the case of "clearings, these entities are historical people or mortals. In the case of actions, these entities are the people performing them." (Schatzki 2010, 170) My argument against this claim is quite simple. Heidegger's "clearing" makes only sense against the background of the historicity of the ontological difference – the way in which the Being reveals itself in each historical epoch as a range of (accessible) beings. Without taking into account the "epochal history of Being" – and Schatzki for good reasons avoids to integrate it into his theory of human action – "clearing" can be used metaphorically, but not conceptually.

[3] This claim is a consequence from the thesis that the facticity of interrelated practices cannot be objectified as a theoretically laden factuality. The thesis will be discussed later.

[4] Elizabeth Shove, Mika Pantzar, and Matt Watson acknowledge the primacy of the stream of practices by observing that all elements of meaning, materiality, and competence are outcomes of practices-as-performances. What I cannot accept, however, is the way in which these authors place practices and elements on the same (ontological) level. Approaching social practices in this way is succumbed to what I elsewhere call a "paradigm of discreteness" – a paradigm that forecloses the conceptualization of practices' facticity. (Ginev 2013) In contrast to classical versions of practice theory – like those of Bourdieu and Giddens – Shove, Pantzar, and Watson pay little attention (if any) to reflexivity of practices. It is my contention that stressing the role of practices' own reflexivity is a sine qua non for demonstrating the irreducibility of practices to more elementary units of social life.

[5] With regard to the dual status of habitus – being promoted by human agency and its generative and unifying power, while remaining fore-structured by interrelated practices – one can reach the conclusion that habitus makes accessible to the agents the entities which they assume to exist beyond their actual reality. The agents' commitment to this assumption is a sine qua non for having authentic form of life. At the same time, "immanentizing" these entities in agents' everydayness is also an indispensable dimension of such a life-form. Believing in transcendent entities and immanentizing them through the performances of progressively routinized practices is a duality that has much to do with the dual status of habitus.

[6] The initial claim that only "properly arranged" practices are capable to disclose and articulate a domain of specific meanings stands and falls with the evidence which can be provided for practices' endogenous reflexivity. The thesis of irreducibility necessarily assumes that it is not human agency that is liable for the "proper arrangement". Evidence comes from various lines of research. With regard to the capability of concerted practices to constitute meaning, several ethnomethodologists show how the accountability of local social orders depends on the complementarity between actors' reflexivity and practices' reflexive self-regulation. Ethnographic descriptions of scientific work bring to light the ways in which the endogenous reflexivity of scientific practices enables the formation of contexts in which the meaningful articulation of a domain of inquiry takes place. In a similar vein, Bourdieu's "logic of practice" places emphasis upon the fact that what becomes meaningfully constituted in social contexts in which practitioners' skills and dispositions play essential role remains entangled with tendencies of practices' reflexive alignment with one another.

The logic of practices is the logic of the constitution of meaning within and through practices capable to reflexively contextualize what they constitute.

[7] All factuality is procedurally produced through practices of inquiry. (Ginev 2016) This thesis can be read in two ways. The first one proceeds in accordance with the well-known thesis of the theory-ladenness of what is counted as facts-providing-empirical-evidence. The production of objectified factuality is considered to be enclosed in the process of theory construction. In the analytical philosophy of science, the theory-ladenness of objectified factuality is a thesis that keeps its absolute validity for the deductive-explanatory theories. The factual basis of theorizing is not something initially given, but the outcome of theory construction. In the second reading, the theory construction is regarded not as a self-sufficient process. This kind of cognitive construction itself consists of particular practices (Rouse 2002, 263-300), and is embedded in various configurations of scientific practices. In this reading, all kinds of factuality are produced within the facticity of scientific inquiry in which domains of reality becomes disclosed to be factually articulated. Both readings share the view that factuality is constituted by the theoretically "saved phenomena". They differ, however, in the ways of envisioning the saving of phenomena. Following this line of reasoning, the explanatory theories of human behavior conceptualize (theoretically construct), as a rule, a factuality of normative functionality (i.e. data models about functionally related and normatively regulated observable activities).

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