# Introduction

Looking back at the debates within social theory in recent decades reveals several, in some cases non-intersecting strands. For one we have the conglomerate of discussions surrounding the necessity of theoretical realignments ("turns"); for another the problematizing of the borders of the social world or of the actor status of non-human entities; and, finally, there is the periodic flare-up of discussions about the ways in which violence shapes the social process. These debates pose new demands on a general social theory. Articulated as questions, they are:

What general theory of the social would allow us to

- understand the sphere of legitimate actors as being historically mutable, i.e., contingent, rather than taking for granted that it is limited to the sphere of living humans?
- understand the nature/culture distinction as a possible way of ordering our approach to the world rather than presupposing it as a given?
- analyze ordering systems not only as orders of the social but also as including materiality and the dimensions of space and time?
- conceive of violence as having the capacity to create order?
- lay the foundation for a theory of society?

The theory of world approaches worked out in this book is an attempt to take on these demands and to bring together the different aspects alluded to above in a social theory in such a way that will lay the foundations for the development of a theory of society. Taking this approach allows me to rationally construct my theory; that is, to historically situate the social theory I develop and the research it guides.

## *The current state of the discussion*

In terms of the first discussion strand, the past decades have been characterized by ever more frequent "turns." These include the now already well-established linguistic turn, which was followed by the practice turn, the material turn, the spatial turn, the body turn, and the pictorial turn.[2] The second discussion strand developed independently of the debates sur-

2 See the overview in Bachmann-Medick (2006).

rounding the various turns, and concerns the actor status of non-human entities. Should social phenomena be understood exclusively as the action, interaction, or communication of human beings, or should we not also include other entities as social actors, such as technical artifacts, animals, spirits, gods, plants, or deceased ancestors? Finally, in an entirely different discussion, the question of the role of violence in shaping social processes has been keenly debated in recent years. Here it is taken for granted that human actors are the only entities with the status of persons. Violence is understood to refer to relationships between human beings and the discussion centers on ways in which violence can destroy social relationships.

These first two discussion strands share a basic starting point: dissatisfaction with the idea that order formation is limited to the formation of social order. The latter is understood as the ordering of relationships between human beings, which are characterized by, e.g., cooperation, division of labor, conflict, power and/or authority [*Herrschaft*], as well as by their respective legitimations. The "turns" respond to the dissatisfaction with the limitation of order formation to the social dimension by augmenting the latter by a specific aspect: order = order in the social dimension, which is shaped in a particular way by X. This "X" emphasizes the specific character of the current "turn." Thus the linguistic turn demands that not only social or societal structures but also linguistic/symbolic structures be included in the analysis of social processes, as these structures significantly determine social relationships and, more generally, the ways in which we see the world. While the linguistic turn has shaped sociology since the first half of the twentieth century, beginning in the 1980s, subsequent turns have followed rapidly on each other's heels.[3] The practice turn (Reckwitz 2003; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, and Savigny 2000) focuses on the relevance of observable social practices, while the body turn (Gugutzer 2006; Jäger 2004; Shilling 1993) emphasizes the fact that practices are carried out by human bodies and that the body, or the experience of the

3 For an overview of the linguistic turn, see Habermas ([1999] 2003). The research that, in a broader sense, is associated with the linguistic turn is quite varied. It ranges from Johann Gottlieb Herder's theory of language ([1772] 2002), Wilhelm von Humboldt's analyses of the inner form of a language ([1836] 1999) and their influence on and further development by authors such as Helmuth Plessner ([1923] 1981a:163ff), to Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* ([1923–1929] 1955–1957) and Gadamer's hermeneutics ([1960] 1989), as well as work by Wittgenstein (1953) and its influence on the social sciences, and, finally, Foucault's discourse analysis ([1966] 1970; [1971] 1972).

body, is socially or discursively determined.[4] The spatial (Döring, Thielmann 2008) and the pictorial turns (Mitchell 1994) were proclaimed almost simultaneously. The groundwork for the material turn was laid to a significant degree by theorists of science and technology, who argued that the process of scientific research could not be understood without considering the role of artifacts in the construction of scientific experiments (Woolgar and Latour 1979).

The more recent "turns" express the insight that social processes cannot be adequately understood if they are conceived as meaningful in a purely incorporeal sense, as is implied by Max Weber's concept of social action and as is explicit in Niklas Luhmann's concept of the social as consisting of meaningful communication. Understanding human beings as embodied actors, and material artifacts and non-human beings as similarly involved in the formation of order, emphasizes the fact that order formation is not only a purely meaningful, but also a bodily, material, and sensorially perceivable process. This is also to understand order formation as spatially and temporally bound (Bourdieu [1972] 1977; Giddens 1984). We should retain the insights of the more recent "turns" without losing sight of what the linguistic turn has already established, that is, the significant role of linguistic/symbolic structures in the shaping of different kinds of order. Seen as a whole, these debates point to the fact that order formation must be understood as a multidimensional process. So far, however, there is no social theory that systematically brings together the different aspects of the various "turns."

The material turn in science and technology studies constitutes the point of intersection with the second discussion strand. This strand raises the question of whether only human actors are involved in the formation of order and asks about the role of non-human actors. The key move in this discussion is to regard the borders of the social world as historically variable, that is, as contingent. Thus the status of social actor is not restricted to living human beings but can, in principle, also be held by non-human beings.[5] Theorists of science and technology foreground the possible inclusion of technical artifacts in this category (Latour 2005), while ethnological research focuses on the ways in which the borders of the social

4 The practice turn also gathers a range of at times highly heterogeneous social theory concepts under a single heading. These include ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967), Bourdieu's analyses of habitus (Bourdieu [1972] 1977), and Gidden's structuration theory (1984).

5 I use the terms "social actor" and "social person" interchangeably.

world are drawn differently depending on the type of society. While in modernity only living human beings can be social persons in a universally recognized way, other societies draw the borders of the social in different ways, equally recognizing spirits, ancestors, plants, and animals as social persons. Thomas Luckmann (1970) and Philippe Descola ([2005] 2013) have called for a social theory that can encompass this variability. Such a social theory, they argue, must subvert the modern nature/culture distinction with its notion of nature on the one side, subject to uniform laws, and, on the other, a variety of cultures seen as having equal value. Viveiros de Castro (1998) posits that the difference between "mononaturalism" and "multiculturalism" forms the matrix of modernity, where the human occupies the pivotal position. For Helmuth Plessner ([1931] 1981b), this position means that the "human" must be understood as a collective noun; i.e., there is humankind, which is composed of a myriad of single individuals who, as humans, are each other's equals or equivalents. The different cultures created by humans should also be regarded as, in principle, of equal value.[6]

Luckmann and Plessner both work out the normative force of questioning the nature/culture distinction. Luckmann argues explicitly that limiting the sphere of social persons also establishes the boundaries of morality (Luckmann 1970:73): anyone who is a social person has a different moral status than those beings that are outside of this sphere. This means that if the sphere of beings with full moral status is not limited to human beings, relationships to beings that in modernity are considered as belonging to nature or even as inexistent will be experienced as morally relevant. In such a context, it is, for instance, of considerable importance to treat the heavenly bodies politely and to greet the sun in the morning lest it become angry and refuse to return. In a similar sense, it can be essential for one's survival to know what the ancestral spirits demand and how to meet these demands—otherwise they may come to haunt the living. In the framework of the modern order, such morally structured relationships to heavenly bodies or ancestral spirits appear as erroneously moralized relationships to natural phenomena or as reified psychological processes. In other words, it is only at the cost of a destruction of their meaning that such relationships can be integrated into an order characterized by the nature/culture distinction. Analyzing orders in which such relationships occur requires new ana-

6 Remarkably, this position formulated by Plessner in 1931 anticipates the postcolonial criticism of Western figures of thought.

lytical categories that will open up a comparative perspective and enable us to grasp the existence of different orders as just as possible as our own.

Strangely enough, the debate surrounding the role of violence in the shaping of social processes has, in the sociological context, largely failed to intersect with the two discussions summarized above. Strange because it is obvious that violence is intimately connected to the limitation of the sphere of social persons. In order to understand this connection, we must remind ourselves of the link between violence and morality: violence is exercised by entities that have a moral status, that is, by legitimate social actors. And violence is used against such entities that have a moral status, that are thus also considered to be legitimate, universally recognized social actors. A social theory that is conceived without consideration of the normative dimension, of morality, also loses sight of the phenomenon of violence. This holds, for instance, for Latour, who analyzes social contexts by using a flat, effects-oriented concept of action. From this perspective, the connection between a gun, a shooter, and a dead human body appears as a sequence of effects (cf. Latour 1994). The shooter pulls the trigger, which initiates mechanical force on the previously inactive bullet, which is projected from the barrel. If the target is hit, the bullet penetrates skin and cranial bone and lodges in the brain. This in turn has an effect on the control mechanism of the living body that was shot, leading to the irreversible cessation of brain function, so that a doctor arriving on the scene can only declare the person dead. Such a description either makes no room for violence in that there are only effects of actants on each other, or it applies the notion of violence to very many things. Is it not violence against the bullet to be projected out of the narrow barrel? Is it violent for the bullet to penetrate the skull? Force is used against an actant in the network in both cases. Since actor-network theory does not distinguish between actants using force and their effects on the one side and morally relevant actors on the other, it cannot grasp the specificity of the phenomenon of violence and thus also fails to see the role of violence in the limitation of the sphere of social persons.

However, the discussion surrounding violence itself ignores the problem of the connection between the phenomenon of violence and the limitation of the sphere of social persons by taking the borders of the social to be a given. Thus the use of violence in social relationships is understood as violence in human relationships (Endreß and Rampp 2013; Neckel and Schwab-Trapp 1999) and is seen as a problem to be treated or solved (Heitmeyer and Soeffner 2004). It is for this reason that research on violence is to a large degree research on the causes of violence or a criticism of the le-

gitimation of violence (Butler [2004] 2006, 2005; Habermas [2005] 2008). In this work, violence is ascribed to social factors or its legitimation questioned, but it is not understood as itself able to generate order. Trutz von Trotha called for replacing research on the causes of violence with a "sociology of violence" (Trotha 1997), which would treat violence as social action to be analyzed in microsociological studies. Many such studies now exist (Collins 2008; Cooney 1998; Fiske and Rai 2015). Jan Philip Reemtsma's theorization of violence (2012) includes a criticism of general social theories. He asks why general social theories, e.g., Luhmann's ([1984] 1995) theory of social systems or Habermas's ([1981] 1984–1987) theory of communicative action do not, or cannot, address physical violence—and concludes that when it comes to violence, sociology falls silent (Reemtsma 2012:261). In this light, the established social theories appear as fair-weather theories unable to make sense of the extreme violence that has characterized the social reality of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[7] Reemtsma's criticism includes the implicit call to go beyond a sociology of violence and to try to understand violence in general in its order-generating function.

A general theory of the social that takes violence into account brings social theory's traditional bracketing of violence more sharply into view by shifting its attention to ways in which violence contributes to drawing the borders of the social. In the context of social theory, we can only speak of violence if those who exercise it and those at whom it is directed belong to the sphere of social persons.[8] Only then can the genuinely order-generating nature of violence and the connection between violence, law, power, and authority come into focus.

### *An expanded social theory*

These discussions suggest the need for a new social theory. A theory that, first, takes into consideration the multiple dimensions of order formation;

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7 This criticism equally applies to newer theories such as network analysis (White 2008) or so-called French pragmatism (Boltanski and Thevenot [1991] 2006).

8 In the order of modernity, which limits the sphere of social persons to living humans, violence can also be exercised against things and animals. This presupposes, however, that the things stand in a particular relation to humans and that animals share certain characteristics with humans, such as sensitivity to pain. The details of the ordering of violence in modernity can only be untangled within the framework of a theory of modern society (see Lindemann 2018).

that, second, factors in the contingency of the borders of the social; that, third, explains the role of violence—i.e., physical assault, homicide, war, and torture, as well as subtle forms of violence—in the formation of order; and that, finally, lays the foundation for a theory of society.

My starting point in this endeavor, following Plessner's ([1928] 2019) theory of positionality, is the excentrically constituted, shared-world [*Mitwelt*] relationship between the lived body [*Leib*] and its environment. This approach has two important advantages over traditional phenomenological conceptions of the lived body-environment relationship—and that includes the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl ([1913] 1982; [1936/54] 1970) as well as the phenomenologies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2012) and Jean Paul Sartre ([1943] 1956), all far better known than Plessner's in the international discussion.

1. Plessner not only formulates a theory, but also makes transparent the process of its construction. This allows us to trace back the ways in which empirical phenomena relate to the theory, as well as how they can trouble it. Neither Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, nor Sartre provide the possibility of this kind of methodological control of the formation of their theories.[9]
2. Merleau-Ponty and Sartre follow in the tradition of Husserl's phenomenology in that they start from the lived body of the acting and perceiving subject, who is then analyzed by way of subjective self-reflection.[10] Making the embodied subject into the starting point of analysis in this way, however, makes it into a general and thus transhistorical condition of experience, and it is only in a second step that social relations and historical formation can be inscribed into it.

Plessner's concept of the lived body differs in two ways from this view predominant in phenomenology. First, Plessner does not approach the lived body in terms of a reflection of subjective experience. Rather than taking as his object the lived body of an ego that experiences it, Plessner seeks to understand from the outside the fact that there is an ego that experiences his or her lived body. Second, Plessner's theory of excentric positionality regards the structure of bodily experience from the perspective of the shared world, that is to say, its relationship to others. Thus the starting point of his analysis of experience is not the lived body, but the lived body as mediated by the shared world. For Plessner, the relatedness of lived bod-

9 For a methodological criticism of Husserl, see Plessner ([1938] 1985).

10 This also holds for Husserl's late work, where he sets out to "mundanize" the transcendental subject (cf. Husserl [1936] 1976).

ies to each other forms the starting point of the analysis rather than the individual lived body and its relationship to its environment.

Plessner's approach is unique among those that give center stage to the lived body-environment relationship, in that his theory of excentric, shared-world positionality shifts the focus to the historicity, and thus the contingency and variability, of the relationship between the lived body and its environment.[11]

If a social theory is to begin with the lived body-environment relationship, the theory of excentric positionality seems to be a good choice—but why *should* it start there? This choice cannot, in fact, be justified in a strict sense, for there is no universally recognized principle from which it could be rationally deduced that the formulation of a social theory must begin with the relationship between the lived body and its environment. All I can do is argue for my choice in reference to current discussions.

There are five arguments for basing a systematic social theory on the shared-world relationship between the lived body and its environment:

1. The theory of the shared world explicates the social dimension of order formation without defining what beings should be recognized as members of the shared world of persons. The borders of a historically specific shared world of persons have to be continually redrawn. I refer to this as the contingency of the shared world; it points to the necessity of historically situated processes of border drawing.
2. The relationship between the lived body and its environment is spatiotemporal; i.e., embodied relationships to the environment are practically executed in the here and now. This means that practices occurring "now" always also contain relevant references to the future and to the past. It also means that the lived body is to be understood as a center of action existing "here," from where it establishes different spatial relationships by directing itself toward surrounding space with its senses and actions.
3. Embodied actors are sensorially and practically integrated into their environment. They use tools and cooperate with each other, i.e., they refer to each other in complex action sequences, to which individual ac-

11 This also renders moot objections made by, for instance, representatives of the linguistic turn, whose criticisms of founding a theory in the lived body lead, more or less, to dissolving the body and materiality into discourse (cf., e.g., Butler 1990, 1993). The problems resulting from this have been debated in a very intense and theoretically sophisticated way particularly in feminist discussions around the body (for an overview, see Institut für Sozialforschung 1994; Wobbe and Lindemann 1994).

tors contribute input in the form of partial acts. This means that embodied actors are involved in material, practical implementations whose reach often exceeds their own comprehension.

4. The excentric, shared-world relationship between the lived body and its environment is characterized by a specific kind of reflexivity, which is significant for order formation in two ways. For one, the reflexive structure of excentric positionality makes possible the formation of semantically identical linguistic and non-linguistic (i.e., also visual) symbols; for another, it allows for symbolic generalizations, i.e., context-independent semantic structures that guide the reciprocal lived body-environment relationships.
5. Starting from the lived body makes it possible to theorize violence in all its myriad facets—from the direct use of violence to its mediated threat. Lived bodies are centers of action that are not only able to exert violence, but also to suffer it and, since they are capable of experiencing pain and fear, to be impressed by the threat of it. Thinking about symbolization in terms of the lived body-environment relationship makes it possible to incorporate the symbolic, order-generating function of violence.

These five points indicate the ways in which the theory of the excentrically constituted, shared-world relationship between the lived body and its environment satisfies the specific requirements given by the current state of the discussion.

## *The structure of this book*

Starting from the problem of the formation of social order, Chapters 1 and 2 work out the requirements of a theory of multidimensional order formation, which is then explicated in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 concludes the book by suggesting an approach to a theory of society.

Chapter 1 presents the nature/culture distinction as a structural characteristic of a specific, that is, modern, approach to the world. A social theory that seeks to take into account non-modern orders must be able to grasp the modern approach to the world as one approach among others. This leads to the necessity of understanding order formation as a broader category than the formation of human culture. Traditionally, the social sciences have been oriented toward the "Hobbesian problem of order" (Parsons [1937] 1968a). This problem is clearly situated in the social dimension and exists wherever the behavior of actors is not determined by instinct:

the actors ego and alter do not know how their counterpart will act and what expectations this counterpart has of them. Parsons and Luhmann also refer to this reciprocal uncertainty as the problem of double contingency (Luhmann [1984] 1995, chap. 3; Parsons 1968b). The solution to this problem is the basis for the emergence of social order, which allows for ego and alter to be able to learn how their counterpart will act as a function of the expectations directed at them. This knowledge enables them to act with confidence that their expectations will be met. We can expand this problem of double contingency—the classic problem of the social sciences—by recognizing that it cannot be known in advance what entities come into question as possible social actors. I call this the problem of the contingency of the shared world, a problem with methodological significance. If social actors are those who form an order intelligible to sociological study, the question of the borders of the social is, in methodological terms, the question of the reach of the sphere containing those whose expressions, actions, and expectations can be considered intelligible. It is for this reason that I consider the question of the borders of the social to be part of the debate surrounding explaining [*erklären*] vs. understanding [*verstehen*].

Chapter 2 looks at those theoretical approaches that aim to hold the modern nature/culture distinction at arm's length and to turn it into a subject of analysis. Beginning with the ways in which the nature/culture distinction has been understood in the explanation/understanding controversy allows me to identify the implicitly normative problems of this debate. The modern nature/culture distinction is intimately tied to the restriction of the sphere of possible actors to living human beings. The establishment of this border contains a distinction, presupposed as beyond doubt, between morally significant human relationships and the realm of nature. Thus questioning the nature/culture distinction also leads to considerable normative problems. In this chapter, I engage with actor-network theory as well as with the work of Luckmann, Descola, and Plessner in order to work out the requirements of a theory of order formation that understands the borders of the social as historically variable.

Chapter 3 develops the theory of excentric positionality into a theory of multidimensional order formation. I begin by looking at how order formation in the *social dimension* can be thought if the borders of the social world are understood to be historically variable (section 3.1). The connection between "embodied touch" and "communication" is a key issue here. Embodied actors have the experience of being touched by others. Touch here is not understood as a meeting of surfaces, but rather as the experi-

ence of an embodied actor directing herself at another—in the sense that one can also be touched by someone's gaze. Embodied actors find themselves in relationships of touch and they represent to each other and in front of each other what forms of touch are, or can be experienced as, the touch of another person. In this context I develop a triadic concept of communication grounded in a theory of the lived body that allows me to treat the establishment of borders between social persons and other entities as an empirical problem. The question here is whether and how ego interprets a questionable entity as an alter ego. If ego does not proceed arbitrarily but is rather guided by rules, it is because ego carries out and experiences his interpretation as one that is observed by tertius. Insofar as ego experiences the realization of his interpretation as being observed, he can identify, from the perspective of tertius, a pattern in this interpretation which can be distinguished from its current application and be grasped as a rule that can guide future interpretations. Introducing a triadic concept of communication enables me to work out the historically variable rules according to which distinctions are made in the field between social persons and other entities.

In section 3.2 I consider ways to think about the *spatiotemporality* of embodied relationships to the environment and its implications for the shaping of social processes. Understanding the nature/culture distinction as a possible order of how to approach the world—among other possible orders—automatically raises the question of the role of space and time in such a social theory, since space and time can no longer be understood as universal forms of intuition or be identified with measurable space and measurable time. It is for this reason that Mead's pragmatic theory, followed by practice theory (Bourdieu, Giddens), called for taking current lived body-environment relationships in the here and now as the starting point for the analysis of social processes.

Section 3.3 treats the *material dimension*. By shifting my focus to the relationship between the lived body and its environment, I take up a key insight of practice theory and, in particular, the aims of the material turn. The starting assumption here is that the formation and stabilization of complex spatial and temporally expansive social relationships is only made possible by the fact that social life is substantially determined by the practical use of tools, or, more generally, artifacts. This section addresses the ways in which the internal dynamics of material technology determine the relationships of lived bodies to their environment, as well as the ways in which the practical handling of artifacts and their symbolization endows social relationships with structure and stability.

Section 3.4 focuses on the *symbolic dimension*. Excentric, shared-world relationships between lived bodies and their environment exhibit a specific form of reflexivity. The experience of one's own lived body and one's practical relationships to the environment or to other embodied centers of action are, on the one hand, experienced immediately as embodied implementations; on the other, they are also reflected upon in terms of a shared world, that is, from the perspective of others. Plessner refers to this state of affairs as mediated (embodied) immediacy. The reflexive shaping of the lived body-environment relationship allows for the formation of semantically identical symbols of both a linguistic and a non-linguistic (i.e., also visual) nature. I work this out by way of an engagement with Mead's symbol theory and, more generally, with the use theory of the meaning of linguistic symbols (Wittgenstein). Symbol theory enables me to render more precise here the triadic concept of communication developed in the first section of the chapter. In this way, I integrate key insights of the linguistic and pictorial turns into a social theory grounded in the theory of the lived body: the experience of one's own lived body as well as of one's environment and other embodied centers of action or other social persons is understood as symbolically mediated, with the visual symbolism of the representation of social relationships a highly significant factor.

The inclusion of symbolic mediation leads me to the concept of symbolic generalization (Parsons, Luhmann), which I expand on the basis of the theory of the lived body. Luhmann used the concept of symbolic generalization in order to develop his theory of symbolically generalized media of communication and of the codes of societal subsystems (Luhmann [1974] 2005a). If we think of theory architecturally, symbolic generalization functions as a hinge between general social theory and a theory of society. Basing such a concept of symbolic generalization on a theory of the lived body brings together the level of the lived body, of sensory materiality on the one side, and the level of general semantic structures in society on the other. I work out this theoretical perspective by developing symbolic generalizations starting from a concept of institutions. Following Mead, I understand institutions as institutionalized complex acts, in the framework of which participants symbolically represent as whom (i.e., an identity) they contribute what partial acts to particular complex acts. Institutional complex acts are brought into relation with each other by way of reflexive institutions, e.g., symbolic media of communication.

Parsons and Luhmann both generally thought of symbolic media (e.g., power, money, influence/persuasion, truth) from the perspective of the problem of double contingency. Given that ego can use such media to mo-

tivate alter ego to accept an offer of communication, Parsons also calls them success media. I consider symbolic success media in terms of a more specific problem: how do actors begin a new complex act after another has been completed? Building a house is an example of an institutional complex act. Once the building is completed, how do those involved transition to other complex acts? Should we go hunting together now or brew beer, or is it time to make preparations for the flower festival instead? Or: our shared project has been completed, should we go out to eat now, begin a new project right away, or does each participant go off and do something entirely different with other people? Order can be understood in this way as a nexus of institutions that can be shaped in ever more complex ways by means of reflexive institutionalizations such as symbolic success media.

Grounding symbol-generating processes in a theory of the lived body also allows us to understand the order-generating power of *violence*. Chapter 4 explores this in detail. In order to introduce violence on the level of social theory, we first have to define the word.[12] Engaging with those aspects of the work of Luhmann (1985; [1974] 2005b), Reemtsma (2012), Randall Collins (2008), Walter Benjamin ([1920–1921] 2006), and Jacques Derrida (1992) that are relevant to social theory, as well as with the studies in material history by Viktor Achter (1951), René Girard ([1972] 1977), and Michel Foucault ([1975] 1977), has led me to understand violence as follows: violence is injurious or fatal force that entails a claim to legitimacy and is directed by ego at another embodied actor, alter ego. Alter ego is targeted by violence as someone who has violated normative expectations; the violence expresses ego's will to hold on, at all costs, to the expectations disappointed by alter ego. The approval of third parties makes violence into legitimate violence. Legitimate violence represents the legitimacy of normative expectations as well as the requirement of an act of violence to represent the validity of disappointed expectations. I understand violence, then, as a symbolically generalizable, embodied act, which, if it succeeds in this symbolic generalization, communicates the validity of normative expectations. Legitimate, i.e., symbolically generalized, violence also contains an obligation to repeat it if the normative expectations in question are disappointed again. This shows that legitimate violence has a tendency to become procedurally structured. Violence that can be rationalized in this

12 The entry under "Gewalt" (violence) in the Grimm brothers' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* takes up about 180 columns; the *Oxford English Dictionary* requires 273 lines to define the term. My definition necessarily reduces this semantic diversity, similar to the fate of the word "power" in sociological theory.

way in reference to third parties seems to be indispensable for the maintenance of a social order. This insight allows us to understand the relationship between violence, power, authority, and law in terms of increasingly more complex procedural structures. It also makes possible the development of nonviolent procedures for representing the validity of normative expectations. Blood feuds, sacrifice, torture, terrorism, and/or public executions are taken into account by this theory of violence as much as are the mere threat of violence and its other more subtle forms. Violence and its own particular means of rationalization make up the focus of Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 lays the foundations for the development of a *theory of society*. The objective here is to distinguish between different types of ordered approaches to the world. We can provisionally identify three such approaches: the order of dividualizing sociation, that of individualizing sociation, as well as that of contingent multi-sociation. The latter type is the ordering system of modernity, for which the distinction between nature and culture is constitutive. Due to the great empirical variety within each type of approach to the world, they can only be described in terms of ideal types. Such an ideal type is characterized by compatible structures in the social dimension, in the dimensions of time and space, as well as in the material and symbolic dimensions, and a compatible procedural structuring of violence. These compatible structures form what could be called the "historical apriori" of a type of ordering system.[13] The historical apriori of an ordering system must contain assertions concerning

– what rules distinguish social persons from other entities,
– what spatiotemporal structures are generally binding,
– what forms of material technology are possible,
– what symbolic structures are formed, and
– how violence is procedurally structured.

An order is stable if the structures in the individual dimensions support each other or, at minimum, are compatible and do not destabilize each other.

The book concludes with an explication of the reflexive relationship between social theory and a theory of society. A social theory necessarily claims to be able to take into account all phenomena of the ordering system in question. At the same time, however, the formulation of a social theory is a communicative event within the framework of modern science and thus reproduces that framework's structures of communication. In ref-

13 The term "historical apriori" was, to my knowledge, first coined by Misch ([1930] 1967) and was later used in a similar way by Foucault ([1966] 1970).

erence to modernity, then, not only a theory of society, but also a general social theory is to be understood as part of the object it is meant to analyze (cf. Luhmann 2012, chap. 1). When developing such a theory, we must ask whether and to what extent this has an effect on the theory's claim to universality—in other words, its claim to be able to analyze non-modern ordering systems as well as it does the modern ordering system. Such a claim would be naïve and, ultimately, irrational if it were not for its part subjected to a reflection on its own conditions of communication.