
Johannes Heinrichs: The Sublation of Hegel

Appreciation and Open Questions

Kai Froeb



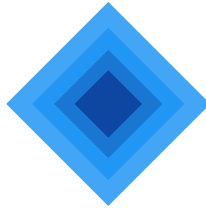
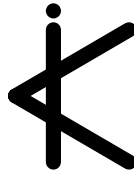
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About the Author

Kai Froeb (*1963) is a German philosopher, IT expert, and publisher living in São Martinho do Porto (Portugal). His work combines over 35 years of systematic Hegel research with the possibilities of artificial intelligence into a new form of philosophical collaboration.

His thinking is radically interdisciplinary: He studied mathematics and computer science at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, business administration at EBS, and cultural studies and law at the FernUniversität Hagen. In parallel, he intensively pursued philosophy, sociology, and history through general studies programs. Deliberately without academic degrees—to preserve his freedom beyond university constraints—he built one of the most comprehensive source collections on Hegel reception. Since the late 1990s, he edited [hegel.net](#), at times the world's most significant Hegel presence on the internet.

Over 40 years of programming experience since 1980 form the methodological foundation of his work. His first program was a recreation of Weizenbaum's ELIZA—thus closing the circle from early AI experiments to productive collaboration with Claude today. Froeb uses his IT expertise not merely technically but as a tool for thought: He analyzes social structures with the precision of a software architect.

As founder of Reflexivity Press, Froeb publishes not only his own works but also the books of Johannes Heinrichs in new, accessible editions. His guiding principle is Hegel's formula: "The true is the whole"—the search for an integration that need not repress anything.

Mein Weg zu Johannes Heinrichs

Die Begegnung mit Johannes Heinrichs' Werk war das Ergebnis einer langen Suche. Seit Vittorio Hösles "Hegels System" mich 1987 von der marxischen Hegel-Kritik zurück zu Hegel geführt hatte, suchte ich nach dem Philosophen, der die nachhegelianische Fragmentierung tatsächlich überwindet – nicht durch Eklektizismus, sondern durch methodische Innovation.

Über [hegel.net](#) entstand Ende der 2000er Jahre der Kontakt zu Heinrichs. Je mehr ich seine Werke studierte – die fünfbandige Sprachtheorie, die Reflexions-Systemtheorie der Gesellschaft,

die Demokratietheorie –, desto klarer wurde mir: Hier hatte jemand in fünfzig Jahren systematischer Arbeit geleistet, wonach ich gesucht hatte. Seine viergliedrige Reflexionslogik löst Probleme, an denen andere gescheitert waren.

Aus dem intellektuellen Kontakt wurde eine jahrelange Zusammenarbeit und Freundschaft. Heinrichs hat mir großzügig alle seine Bücher in elektronischer Form überlassen und ausgewählte Kapitel dieses Buches auf meinen Wunsch hin mehrfach lektoriert, präzisiert und korrigiert. Ohne seine Geduld bei der Beantwortung unzähliger Nachfragen wäre diese Darstellung nicht möglich gewesen.

Dieses Buch ist keine neutrale Werkschau. Es ist das Ergebnis der Überzeugung, dass Heinrichs' Philosophie zu den bedeutendsten Leistungen des 20. Jahrhunderts gehört – und dass ihre Nichtrezeption ein Skandal ist, den zu beheben ich mir zur Aufgabe gemacht habe. Zugleich ist es keine Hagiographie: Wo Heinrichs' Positionen diskutabel sind, wird das benannt. Philosophie lebt vom kritischen Dialog.

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FOREWORD: ORIENTATION THROUGH A LIFE'S WORK

Why This Book?

Johannes Heinrichs is the most important German-speaking philosopher of the last fifty years, whom most people have never heard of. His work encompasses over thirty books on epistemology, philosophy of language, action theory, social theory, political philosophy, cultural theory, and philosophy of religion. He has developed a philosophical system that overcomes the post-Hegelian fragmentation and offers concrete answers to the most pressing questions of our time - from the crisis of democracy to the architecture of artificial intelligence.

And yet he is almost unknown outside small academic circles.

This book aims to change that. It offers the first systematic comprehensive presentation of Heinrichs' philosophical work - an orientation through a life's work that seeks its equal in breadth and depth.

What This Book Is - and What It Is Not

This book is a reference work. It presents Heinrichs' entire philosophical system, from the epistemological foundations through the methodical innovations to the social-practical applications. Anyone who wants to understand Heinrichs' work as a whole, who is looking for a specific topic, who wants to grasp the systematic connections between his various works - here they will find the orientation.

This book is an academic presentation. It is aimed at readers who are accustomed to philosophical argumentation and who do not shy away from engagement with other thinkers (Hegel, Habermas, Luhmann, Wilber). It takes seriously Heinrichs' claim to have developed a systematic alternative to fragmented contemporary philosophy.

This book is no substitute for Heinrichs' own works. On the contrary: It aims to whet the appetite. Each chapter refers to the original sources and invites deeper study. Reflexivity Press is simultaneously publishing Heinrichs' major works in new editions - this book serves as a compass through this oeuvre.

How to Read This Book

Not every reader will need every chapter. Depending on interest, different reading paths are recommended:

For getting started, Chapters 1 (The Ontological Revolution), Chapter 4 (The Four Levels of Reflection) and Chapter 20 (The Reflection System Theory of Society) are recommended. These three chapters convey the core of Heinrichs' innovation.

For the politically interested, the path from Chapter 18 through Chapter 25 (Economic Reform) to Chapter 26 (The Fourfold Division of Democracy) is particularly relevant. Here it becomes clear how abstract reflection logic leads to concrete institutional reform proposals.

For philosophers of language and linguists, Chapters 8-12 offer a systematic theory of language that integrates semiotics, pragmatics, and grammar.

For developers of artificial intelligence, Chapter 13 is of particular interest: It shows why current language models fail at structural limits and how reflection logic could offer a way out.

For theologians and those interested in religion, the path leads through Chapter 32 (Theonomous Autonomy) and Chapter 33 (Truth and Ethics).

For academic philosophers, Chapter 36 offers a systematic comparison of Heinrichs with Habermas, Chomsky, and Wilber.

The Author and His Relationship to the Subject

I am not a neutral observer. I am convinced that Johannes Heinrichs' philosophy belongs among the most significant intellectual achievements of the late 20th century and that its non-reception is a scandal of academic philosophy. This conviction underlies the book.

At the same time, this book is no hagiography. Where Heinrichs' positions are debatable, where newer research raises further questions, where the limits of his approach become visible - this is noted. Philosophy lives from critical dialogue, not from veneration.

Acknowledgment

This book would not have been possible without collaboration with Johannes Heinrichs himself, who granted me access to his work, answered questions, and commented on drafts. The responsibility for all errors and one-sidedness naturally lies with me.

Invitation

If after reading this book - or even just some chapters - you have the impression of having encountered a thinker who deserves your attention: Read further. The original works are accessible, the questions that Heinrichs poses are more pressing than ever, and the answers he offers deserve serious examination.

Philosophy has dissolved into specialized disciplines since Hegel's death that barely speak to each other anymore. Johannes Heinrichs offers a way back to integration - without sacrificing the justified differentiations of the last two hundred years. That is no small achievement. It could be the achievement that our time has been waiting for.

Kai Froeb December 2025

NOTE ON COMPLEMENTARY PUBLICATIONS

Reflexivity Press is planning the publication of two complementary volumes:

“Introduction to Reflection System Theory” - A generally comprehensible presentation for readers without philosophical background knowledge, making Heinrichs’ basic ideas and their practical relevance accessible.

“Reflection Logic and Artificial Intelligence” - A technical presentation for developers and researchers in the field of artificial intelligence, showing how Heinrichs’ four levels of reflection can serve as architectural principle for advanced AI systems.

These volumes will appear shortly. The present work serves as systematic foundation for both deepenings.

PART A: EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The philosophical foundation - From Scholasticism through hermeneutics of meaning to reflection logic

If you look around in philosophy today, you will notice a peculiar situation. The great questions of humanity have remained the same - What is truth? How should we live? What is justice? - but the answers seem to drift ever further apart. Where Hegel still saw a systematic whole, today there prevails a fragmentation that affects not only professional philosophers but every thinking person.

This fragmentation is no accident. It is the legacy of a philosophical development that began after Hegel's death in 1831 and continues to this day. What began as methodical differentiation - Marx emphasized practice, Kierkegaard existence, the phenomenologists consciousness, the analytic philosophers language - developed into a fundamental split into irreconcilable camps.

Johannes Heinrichs has recognized that this fragmentation can only be overcome through a fundamental methodical innovation: the transition from subject-object dialectic to reflection logic as ontological basic principle. This part shows how this innovation became possible

This path led through three decisive stages: The rediscovery of scholastic reflection ontology in Thomas Aquinas, the critical engagement with Paul Tillich's hermeneutics of meaning and its extension from two to four elements of meaning, and finally the breakthrough to systematic reflection level logic in Paris 1975.

The three chapters of this part follow the historical-systematic development: from the diagnosis of the post-Hegelian crisis through the rediscovery of the scholastic foundations to the discovery of the four levels of reflection as the key to integration. What becomes visible is not just another philosophical position, but a new paradigm for systematic thinking in the 21st century.

Chapter 1: The Ontological Revolution - From Fragmentation to Systematic Innovation

If you visit a philosophical faculty today, you will be able to observe a fascinating phenomenon. In one building work professors who deal with the same fundamental questions, but speak different languages. The analytic philosopher is interested in logic and language, the continental philosopher in existence and history, the pragmatist in action and experience. They hardly cite each other anymore, attend different conferences, publish in different journals.

This observation leads us to a crucial question: Is this a natural expression of the diversity of human thinking - or a symptom that philosophy has lost something essential?

1.1 The Post-Hegelian Dilemma

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel died in 1831 in Berlin. With him died not only a philosopher, but the last systematic project of totality in Western philosophy. What followed was no orderly further development, but an explosion in different directions.

The cause did not lie in lacking philosophical talent of the successors - Marx, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and the others were extraordinary thinkers. The problem lay deeper: Hegel's system was at once too totalitarian and too abstract. Too totalitarian because it seemed to force living reality into a predetermined schema. Too abstract because it threatened to override the concrete experience of the individual person.

The post-Hegelian thinkers reacted with justified criticism, but they threw out the baby with the bathwater. Instead of reforming Hegel's systematics, they rejected systematics altogether. Instead of improving his dialectic, they returned to pre-dialectical forms of thinking. The consequence was a fragmentation that continues to this day.

This fragmentation was not only a philosophical-historical accident, but symptom of a deeper-lying methodical problem: As long as philosophy remains with the subject-object duality as the ultimate starting point, it must choose between irreconcilable alternatives and cannot systematically grasp the unity of reality.

1.2 Johannes Heinrichs' Double Innovation

Johannes Heinrichs recognized in an original way that the post-Hegelian fragmentation can only be overcome through a fundamental methodical innovation. His achievement is double: innovation and integration.

The innovation lies in the transition from subject-object dialectic to reflection logic. While traditional philosophy starts from the distinction between knowing subject and known object, Heinrichs begins with the accomplishment of knowing itself. Consciousness is not understood as subsequent reflection of a subject on an object, but as original reflexivity that first constitutes subject and object.

This shift has consequences. It makes it possible to understand the seemingly irreconcilable post-Hegelian positions as different moments of one and the same reflexive structure. Marx's practice, Kierkegaard's existence, Husserl's consciousness, Wittgenstein's language - they all grasp important aspects of reflexivity, but none grasps it completely.

The integration lies in the systematic incorporation of all these insights into a new, reflection-logical framework. Heinrichs shows not only where the different traditions are right, but also where they become one-sided and how they complement each other.

1.3 The Four Levels of Reflection as Integration Principle

The key to this integration lies in Heinrichs' discovery of the four levels of reflection. Every interpersonal encounter necessarily passes through four qualitatively different levels:

First level: The other is initially perceived and treated as an object. This objective attitude is not false, but unavoidable - without the ability to objectify, we could not act at all.

Second level: The other proves to be itself acting and thinking. I must correct my original objectification, but can not abandon it entirely. The other is object and subject at once - an "objective subject."

Third level: Here genuine communication arises through double reciprocity. Both know about the knowledge of the other. This contrary-double reflection is qualitatively different from everything preceding.

Fourth level: The factual communication itself becomes the topic. Thereby norms, rules, institutions arise - the medium of further communication.

These four levels are not only a description of interpersonal encounters. They are the basic structure of all human meaning-accomplishments. If this is the necessary structure of interpersonal reflection, then it must also be the basic structure of consciousness in general - because our consciousness is never isolated self-relatedness, but always already self-relation-in-other-relation.

1.4 From Integration to Innovation

While usually philosophical innovations create new fragmentations, Heinrichs' innovation effects the opposite: It enables for the first time the systematic integration of all important post-Hegelian insights.

Marx's historical materialism is integrated as theory-practice dialectic without reductionism. Kierkegaard's existential philosophy is incorporated as an irreducible dimension of subjectivity. Husserl's phenomenology is understood as systematic development of implicit reflection. Wittgenstein's philosophy of language is classified in

the semiotic dimensions. The postmodern plurality is enabled through the principled openness of the systematics.

This fourfold balance - systematic without dogmatic, universal without uniforming, precise without reductionistic, open without arbitrary - offers a way out of the postmodern dilemma between systematics and plurality. Heinrichs shows: Oriented pluralism is possible through reflection-logical systematics.

1.5 The International Relevance

Heinrichs' double achievement makes his approach internationally forward-looking. He develops the first metamodern systematics that both preserves the achievements of modernity and overcomes its one-sidedness.

For Anglophone philosophy he offers an alternative to ossification in technical detail problems without loss of analytical precision. For continental philosophy he offers an alternative to postmodern fragmentation without return to dogmatic systems. For non-European traditions he offers dialogue on equal terms without cultural imperialism.

Thus Heinrichs points new ways for philosophy of the 21st century - an achievement of epochal significance that is only gradually being recognized internationally. The recently emerging talk of "meta-modernity" thereby first gets substance beyond a fashionable label.

The next step leads us to the historical roots of this revolution. For Heinrichs does not philosophize out of nothing, but builds on an eight-hundred-year-old foundation that he is the first to recognize in its full scope. The connection to Thomas Aquinas shows: The great insights of the philosophical tradition are not outdated, but must be systematically developed further at the level of modern differentiations.

Chapter 2: The Ontological Foundation - Thomas Aquinas as Precursor of Reflection Logic

You might wonder what a medieval thinker has to do with solving modern philosophical problems. Is not precisely the orientation to long-outdated authorities the problem of a philosophy that closes itself off to the living present?

This question leads us to one of the most remarkable aspects of Johannes Heinrichs' work: His revolutionary innovation is not grounded in a break with tradition, but in its creative appropriation. Reflection logic, which overcomes the post-Hegelian fragmentation, has its roots in insights that Thomas Aquinas had already formulated eight hundred years ago.

2.1 Scholastic Education as Philosophical Foundation

Before Johannes Heinrichs made his epochal discovery of the four levels of reflection in Paris in 1975, he had completed an intensive six-year study of Thomistic philosophy at the Philosophical College of the Jesuits in Pullach near Munich.

This is no biographical coincidence, but systematically decisive. Heinrichs does not philosophize *ex nihilo*, but builds on an eight-hundred-year-old foundation of systematic ontology that he is the first to recognize in its full scope and develop in a modern way.

The Pullach teachers influenced him lastingly. Joseph de Vries taught Cartesian epistemology, but Johannes B. Lotz was the actually formative influence. His “Ontology” presented a “Kantian and Heideggerian adapted philosophy of being according to Thomas Aquinas” - an example of so-called “transcendental scholasticism” that sought to connect Thomas’ ontology with Kant’s transcendental philosophy.

From both Heinrichs learned the decisive Thomas-concepts: “*Reflexio completa in seipsum*” for self-consciousness, “*Conscientia concomitans*” for the unexplicit consciousness that accompanies object-consciousness, and “*Reflexio implicita*,” which he progressively recognized as the “fundamental nature of consciousness.”

But the Pullach teachers could not, as Heinrichs later recognized, “evaluate the scope of an implicit ontological reflexivity as fundamental nature of consciousness in a consistent theory of reflection” – as the Aquinate himself could not yet, who otherwise held to his objectivistic, Aristotelian concept of being: Being is what belongs to all beings. Their “transcendental scholasticism” remained a half-hearted synthesis that Heinrichs had to systematically overcome.

2.2 The Licentiate Thesis - An Important Preliminary Exercise on the Nature of Consciousness

In 1967 Heinrichs writes his licentiate thesis: “*Intentio as Meaning in Thomas Aquinas. On the Differentiated Unity of the Thomistic Concept of Intention.*” In it he finds, alongside much new, confirmed what his teachers Johannes B. Lotz and Josef de Vries had already recognized, without however drawing the far-reaching conclusions: Thomas distinguishes between “*intentio directa*,” i.e., the objective content, and “*intentio indirecta*” as the non-objective self-knowledge or “*intentio implicita*.” However, it takes years until he himself grasps this insight of the Aquinate into the nature of consciousness as reflexive self-accompaniment (“*conscientia concomitans*”) in its full scope and thinks it through to the end.

What does this mean systematically? Thomas Aquinas already recognized six centuries before Descartes that consciousness has a fundamentally reflexive structure. Human consciousness is not simply “consciousness of something” (*intentio directa*), but at the same time always already “consciousness of consciousness” (*intentio indirecta*).

The “reditio completa in seipsum” distinguishes humans from animals, which only accomplish “reditio incompleta.” Animals can react to their environment, but they cannot reflect on their own reacting. This capacity for complete self-return is the ontological foundation of all specifically human abilities.

2.3 The Great Paradox of Modernity

From this engagement with Thomas, Heinrichs develops a fundamental critique of all modern philosophy, without however returning to a pre-modern state. The great paradox is: Descartes discovered self-consciousness as the indisputable starting point and key to philosophy, but forgot the ontological key to this epistemological key that already lay ready with the medieval thinker.

Descartes made self-consciousness the starting point of philosophy, but he understood it merely epistemologically - as subsequent reflection of the I on itself. Thereby arise all the problems that Dieter Henrich later analyzed: circle problems, infinite regresses, the impossibility of explaining self-consciousness without already presupposing it.

Thomas already had the solution: Self-consciousness is not subsequent reflection, but the ontological basic structure of consciousness itself. It is “conscientia concomitans” - accompanying, immediate co-knowing about oneself in accomplishment. Modern philosophy to this day circles around problems that arose through this Cartesian misdirection. Thomas already had the systematic solution.

In Thomas is already found the gradation of worldly beings into

1. Inorganic (Mineral)
2. Plant
3. Animal
4. Human

What is astonishing about this is not the obvious distinction of these spheres of being, but the conscious “reflection-theoretical” perspective under which it is made (especially in his *Summa contra gentiles*, liber IV, cap. 11): These levels of being are thematized as levels of reflection - long before the philosophical reflection of modernity recognized reflexivity and its gradation themselves as decisive, beginning with Descartes through Kant, Fichte, Hegel to the equally important reflection theorist and Hegel student, the philosophical logician Gotthard Günther (1900-1984).

2.4 The Thomas Aquinas Memorial Lecture 1974

The high point of Heinrichs' engagement with Thomas forms his lecture for the 700-year commemoration of the death of Thomas Aquinas on January 27, 1974 - "the most festive lecture of my life so far," as he later writes.

The title: "Ideology or Doctrine of Freedom? On the Receivability of the Thomistic Doctrine of Grace from a Transcendental-Dialogical Standpoint." Here Heinrichs shows that Thomas' doctrine of grace - properly understood - does not mean heteronomy, but theonomous autonomy. Reason recognizes in its own structure the obligation to meaning-realization.

Karl Rahner was so enthusiastic about this essay that he wrote Heinrichs a "precious letter." Hans Urs von Balthasar remained skeptical toward the "decidedly modern, post-Kantian transcendental approach." "Only today is it clear to me," writes Heinrichs in retrospect, "that Rahner's central distinction between 'transcendental' and 'categorical' corresponds to my own, later distinction between implicitly lived and explicitly-objectifying reflection." However, this pair of concepts in Rahner stands crosswise to Kantian transcendental philosophy, for which precisely the categories themselves represent transcendental "conditions of possibility" of human knowing and speaking. Heinrichs sees Kantian transcendental philosophy and even more so the transcendental scholasticism of his teachers as an incomplete philosophy of reflection.

2.5 From Scholastic Ontology to Modern Reflection Logic

Thomas himself provided the ontological basis for overcoming merely epistemological transcendental philosophy into one of ontological reflexivity. Self-consciousness as "reditio completa in seipsum," the distinction implicit/explicit reflection, "Intentio directa/indirecta" as basic structure - from these Thomistic insights Heinrichs develops, with the "detour" through those mentioned above as well as the dialogical thinking of L. Feuerbach and M. Buber, the four levels of reflection of social interaction, the four elements of meaning as universal structure, dialectical subsumption as method, and finally the fourfold division of democracy as practical application.

The connection to Thomas Aquinas is thus anything but a seamless historical continuity, which would also not do justice to Heinrichs' consequential renunciation of the begun Jesuit professorship in Frankfurt, but it shows: The great insights of the philosophical tradition are not outdated, but can and must be systematically developed further at the level of modern differentiations.

Heinrichs stands in the great tradition, but he is anything other than a traditionalist restorer. He is a creative renewer of a tradition that had not yet fully developed its own possibilities. The bridge from scholasticism to metamodernity shows: What appears as connection to medieval metaphysics proves to be a systematic answer to the problems of metamodern philosophy.

But before we can reach the concrete discovery of the four levels of reflection that determined everything further in Paris in 1975, we must accomplish a fundamental ontological clarification. For the Thomistic insights about the reflexive nature of consciousness lead to a revolutionary recognition about the nature of reality itself - a recognition that ends the centuries-old dispute between materialism and idealism once and for all in principle.

2.6 From Tillich to Dialogical Hermeneutics of Meaning - The Breaking Open of Subject-Object Duality

The path from scholastic reflection ontology to modern reflection logic led through a decisive intermediate station: the engagement with Paul Tillich (1886-1965). This German-American theologian and philosopher from the school of thought of German idealism enabled Heinrichs the final break with the “inconsistent transcendental scholasticism” of his teachers - and at the same time the discovery of a key concept that would shape his entire later work: the elements of meaning.

Tillich’s Universal Hermeneutics of Meaning

Heinrichs’ very first scholarly article from 1970 bore the programmatic title: “The Place of Metaphysics in the System of Sciences in Paul Tillich. The Idea of a Universal Hermeneutics of Meaning” (Journal for Catholic Theology, 1970). At the same time appeared the second article “Meaning and Intersubjectivity.” Both mark the methodical transition from scholastic ontology to a post-Kantian philosophy of meaning.

What fascinated Heinrichs about Tillich? It was his insight into the elementary, indissoluble and insurpassable unity of accomplishment and content. Tillich had recognized that philosophy as founding humanities must think from this “dialectical” unity - in distinction from the formal sciences of thinking (mathematics, logic) on the one hand and the empirical sciences of being on the other.

Tillich formulated the basic problem pregnantly: “Here we are dealing with primal elements of knowledge. We can therefore not define thinking otherwise than that we define it as the act that is directed toward being, and we cannot define being otherwise than as that which is meant by thinking, that toward which the act of thinking is directed. It is completely impossible to get beyond this mutual determination of the primal concepts.”

The Two Elements of Meaning in Tillich

Tillich thematized two fundamental elements of meaning: accomplishment and content. This duality permeates all accomplishments of consciousness:

- Knowing and what is known

- Willing and what is willed
- Feeling and what is felt

It is the “primal doubling of accomplishment (activity) and contents” that constitutes every consciousness. Tillich had thereby found a way to overcome the modern subject-object split without falling back into pre-critical naivety. The unity of accomplishment and content is neither purely subjective nor purely objective - it is more original than this distinction.

The Critical Extension: From Two to Four Elements of Meaning

But Heinrichs quickly recognized the decisive limitation: Tillich’s two elements of meaning ultimately reproduce the traditional subject-object duality at a higher level. Accomplishment stands for the subjective side, content for the objective. The duality is named, but not really overcome.

In dialogical thinking, as Heinrichs developed it under the influence of Ludwig Feuerbach and Martin Buber, the subject-object duality must be broken open. And indeed in a double respect:

First: There is not only the subject (I) and the object (It), but also the Thou - the “objective subject,” the Other who is himself subject but initially appears to me as object. The Thou is neither pure subject nor pure object, but something qualitatively third.

Second: There are not only the direct relations between I, Thou, and It, but also the medium of their mediation - the “dialogical between” (Martin Buber), which Heinrichs later will designate as “meaning medium.” This medium belongs neither to the I nor to the Thou alone, but is the common horizon in which understanding first becomes possible at all.

The Ready Foursome (1970-1975)

This foursome of elements of meaning - I (subjective subject), Thou (objective subject), It (object), Medium (meaning) - lay ready in Heinrichs’ thinking during the whole time between 1970 and 1975, that is throughout the entire dissertation period.

The Tillich article from 1970 already lets this critique resonate. Heinrichs works there on the “idea of a universal hermeneutics of meaning,” but he recognizes that Tillich’s duality is too narrow. The Bonn dissertation on the logic of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (published 1974) was “basically dedicated to bridging transcendental-philosophical I-thinking including Hegelian dialectic and dialogics” - an attempt to systematically ground the foursome.

But only the Parisian breakthrough of 1975 brought full thematic clarity: The structure of the four elements of meaning and the four levels of reflection came to full development simultaneously. What was laid out in Tillich as duality revealed itself as

systematic foursome. And this foursome was not arbitrarily constructed, but resulted necessarily from the analysis of social reflection.

From Hermeneutics of Meaning to Reflection Logic

The engagement with Tillich was for Heinrichs the decisive step to “leave behind scholastic philosophy of being and the inconsistent ‘transcendental scholasticism’.” Tillich enabled the transition to a post-Kantian, transcendental-philosophically informed philosophy of meaning - but he himself remained still caught in subject-object duality.

Heinrichs’ innovation consisted in connecting Tillich’s insight into the accomplishment-content unity with the dialogical perspective and thereby discovering the four elements of meaning as the necessary structure of all human meaning-accomplishments. The “universal hermeneutics of meaning” that Tillich envisioned only became possible through this extension.

Scholastic reflection ontology (Thomas), transcendental-philosophical hermeneutics of meaning (Tillich), and dialogical philosophy (Feuerbach, Buber) merged in Heinrichs’ thinking into a new systematic approach: reflection logic as doctrine of the four levels of reflection and the four elements of meaning. The path from scholasticism to metamodernity was thereby paved.

Chapter 3: Overcoming the Materialism-Idealism Opposition

3.1 Action Accomplishment as Ontological Foundation

One of the most fundamental achievements of Heinrichs’ philosophy lies in overcoming the centuries-old conflict between materialism and idealism. His solution is as simple as revolutionary: “Reality is primarily real action accomplishment”: Reality that knows about itself. The self-mirroring of the material, which must be explained more precisely, bridges that dualism.

The problem of the traditional alternatives:

Materialism claims: Consciousness is only “reflection” of material conditions. But this claim occurs itself in the medium of thinking and arguing. It contradicts itself performatively when it denies the constituting role of the cognitive accomplishment, thus of self-reflexivity.

Idealism claims: Everything is “only” consciousness or representation. But it ignores the resistance and independence of the material world that makes itself known in every action accomplishment.

Heinrichs’ solution: Neither “matter” nor “spirit” are epistemologically primary, but both are components of the original unity of reflexively structured action accomplishment.

Concretely: When I observe an object, I am at the same time:

- Bodily-sensually involved: I look, move, touch
- Conceptually-spiritually active: I classify, compare, understand

This original intertwining of material and ideal in real action accomplishment is both epistemologically and ontologically more fundamental than their subsequent theoretical separation, but requires much theoretical clarification.

3.2 Natural-Philosophical Perspectives: Plichta, Wilson, and the Question of Reflexive Structures in Nature

Heinrichs' thesis of the original intertwining of material and ideal in action accomplishment raises a further question: Are there analogous structures in nature itself? Does physical reality exhibit features that structurally correspond to the self-relatedness of consciousness?

Johannes Heinrichs himself has answered this question in the affirmative and saw a remarkable correspondence in the works of the chemist and physicist Peter Plichta (1939-2025). Plichta developed an alternative interpretation of physical basic quantities that he called "reversal dialectic."

What Plichta claims: Between space and mass as well as between time and energy there exists in each case a reversal relationship - but not in the sense of a quantitative proportion (more space = less mass), but as ontological inversion: The infinite, four-dimensional space and the finite, three-dimensional mass are accordingly the same thing in reversed form of existence. Space would be mass projected into the boundless; time would be energy projected into boundless repetition. Plichta formulates: "The material substance as making finite of the infinite."

As an illustrative model for this serves Plichta's so-called "prime number cross." Here the natural numbers are arranged not linearly but in concentric circles. Independent of how one might evaluate this construction number-theoretically, it provides the structural image decisive for Heinrichs: The infinity of the number series does not lose itself in the open here, but is related to a center and forms a closed form. Precisely this form - and not necessarily the mathematical proof strength - is what fascinated Heinrichs. It serves as metaphor for "reflection," in which the infinite (spirit, space) bends back into itself and thus first arrives at determinateness (mass, I).

What fascinated Heinrichs about this: For Heinrichs the philosophical significance lay in the structural analogy to reflection logic. Just as self-consciousness is self-relation-in-other-relation - thus not pure interiority, but always already related to other -, so according to Plichta would also physical reality be constituted through mirroring and reversal relationships. Heinrichs spoke of a "structural logic of reflexive entities that is *analogous* to the mathematical mirroring relationships as Plichta demonstrates them."

Decisive here is: Heinrichs is not interested in Plichta's physics as such, but in the question of subject-object mediation. Space and time are according to Kant subjective forms of intuition; mass and energy are objective physical quantities. If there exists a reversal relationship between both, this would be - so Heinrichs' hope - an indication that the gulf between subjectivity and objectivity is not absolute, but can be bridged through reflexive structures.

Critical Classification: This connection is philosophically stimulating, but its status must be precisely determined:

First, it concerns an *analogy*, not a proof. That reflexive structures in consciousness and reversal structures in mathematics are formally similar does not mean they are identical or causally connected. We use Plichta's model here not as mathematical proof, but as hermeneutic key to make the abstract reflexive structure intuitive.

Second, Plichta's physics is not recognized in the scientific mainstream. His theses partly contradict established theories and are not empirically confirmed to the same extent as, for example, quantum mechanics or relativity theory.

Third, Heinrichs himself has acknowledged the limits of his own understanding. In his foreword to Peter Franz Wilson's book he writes: "I had indeed sensed these connections back then, but could not, due to lack of precise own understanding of the number theory and cosmology of Plichta, specify and prove them."

Function for this book: We therefore do not adopt Plichta's physical factual claims, but point to a possible research direction that Heinrichs himself considered significant. The detailed presentation of these connections is found in Peter Franz Wilson's *Integral Cosmology without Big Bang. Peter Plichta's Natural Philosophy in Connection with Johannes Heinrichs' Reflection Theory* (2025). Wilson was the first to systematically attempt to build the bridge between Plichta's number theory and Heinrichs' reflection logic - a project that Heinrichs praised as a "first decisive step" that must be followed by others.

For the purposes of this book, it suffices to establish: Heinrichs' reflection philosophy is open to natural-philosophical extensions without being dependent on them. His epistemological and social-philosophical achievements stand on their own foundation.

Undisputed is Heinrichs' systematic interest: The reflection logic that he developed primarily as "logic of the social" should also be ontologically anchored in nature. This remains one of the most ambitious - and most open - projects of his philosophy.

3.3 “Reality is primarily accessible in action accomplishment”

This formula summarizes Heinrichs’ ontological position. Action accomplishment is a performative act in which real and ideal as well as material and ideal are originally intertwined before they are theoretically separated.

What does this mean for our understanding of the world?

We do not begin with the theoretical question coming from traditional dualism “What is matter?” or “What is spirit?”, but with the practical experience of acting in the world. In this experience, bodily and spiritual moments are always already mediated.

Example: When you ride a bicycle, you accomplish a complex integration of:

- Bodily movements (pedaling, steering, balancing)
- Sensual perception (seeing, hearing, feeling)
- Conceptual understanding (traffic rules, route planning)
- Intentional goal-setting (Where do I want to go?)

All this happens in a unified accomplishment, not as subsequent combination of separate elements.

3.4 Reflection-Logical Solution of the Basic Conflict

Reflection logic solves the materialism-idealism conflict by showing that both positions are necessary moments of a more comprehensive cognitive process:

“Matter” is not alone something given that precedes cognition, but the result of a specific level of reflection - namely the objectifying reflection on the “It” as resistant.

“Spirit” does not stand dualistically as a separate substance opposite the bodily, but means as soul on the one hand the reflexive structure of action accomplishment itself - the capacity for individual self-relatedness (Mind), hence the capacity for participation in the universal meaning medium (Spirit). There is no dualism, but a *triad* of body, individual self-relatedness (soul), and medium. This strangely also traditional triad of body, soul, spirit stands in a dynamic relational structure of I, It, Thou, and Medium. The Cartesian dualism of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* is not false, insofar as “*res cogitans*” refers to psychic individuality (soul, in its rational aspect mind). This however must not be identified under the one title “mind” with the universal meaning medium (spirit). The supposed dualism of “Matter and Mind” rests on a false question where “Mind” as individuality is identified with the mediality of universal “Spirit.”

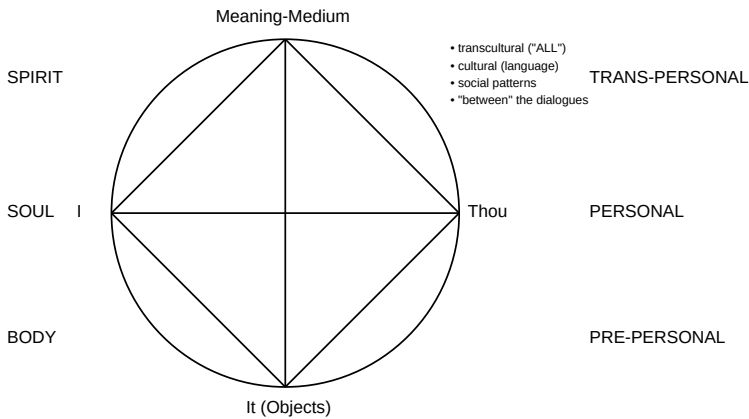


Figure 1: The connection of the foursome of meaning elements with the triad of human basic components Body – Soul - Spirit

The polarity of spirit (as medium) and matter stands orthogonally to the dialogical (psychic) axis of I and Thou.

This leads among other things to a new conception of truth¹ :

Truth is manifoldly conditioned:

- By the discussed objects (It)

¹ See on this in detail Chapter 35.1

- By the speaking subject (I)
- By the speaking community (I-Thou)
- By language and its logical conditions (as part of the universal meaning medium)

Every self-consciousness participates in the unconditional meaning medium and can therefore raise unconditional truth claims. But this unconditionality realizes itself only in conditionally-historical realization, in togetherness.

“Self-consciousness receives its relative unconditionality from the relation to this unconditional of meaning: it ‘participates’ in it and its unconditionality.”

This ontological foundation is not only theoretically significant - it opens a completely new access to the systematic analysis of human meaning-accomplishments. For if reality is primarily action accomplishment, then universal structures must be able to be shown in this accomplishment. Precisely these structures Heinrichs discovered in 1975 in Paris when he analyzed the four levels of reflection of interpersonal encounter.

Chapter 4: The Key to Integration - The Four Levels of Reflection

Imagine you encounter a stranger on the street. In the first seconds a complex process runs that normally remains completely unconscious. How you perceive this person, what you expect from them, how you react to them - all this follows an astonishingly precise logic that Johannes Heinrichs discovered in Paris in 1975.

This discovery of the four levels of reflection confirms in a concrete way what we have just grounded ontologically: Reality is primarily action accomplishment. The four levels show how this action accomplishment is reflexively structured and thereby produces universal patterns.

But this discovery is more than a psychological observation or a confirmation of philosophical theories. It is the key to solving the greatest problem of post-Hegelian philosophy: How can we overcome fragmentation without falling back into dogmatic systematics?

4.1 The Parisian Discovery of 1975

Heinrichs is occupied in Paris with French personalism and dialogical philosophy. He wants to understand how genuine interpersonal encounter is to be described. Traditional epistemology fails here: It can only describe the relationship of a knowing subject to a known object. But the other person is precisely not only object, but himself subject.

In analyzing concrete encounter situations, Heinrichs encounters a fascinating phenomenon: Every encounter with another person necessarily passes through four qualitatively different levels. This gradation is not arbitrary or culturally conditioned, but follows an inner logic grounded in the reflexive nature of consciousness itself.

The discovery is consequential because it shows: What happens between people is not chaotic or arbitrary, but follows a precise structure. And this structure is at the same time the basic structure of all human meaning-accomplishments.

4.2 The Four Levels of Reflection in Detail

Let us return to your encounter with the stranger. What really happens?

First level of reflection: Initially you treat the other like an object. You perceive their external appearance, estimate their age, register their clothing. This “objective attitude” is not superficial or dehumanizing - it is unavoidable. Without the ability to objectify people and things initially, you could not act in the world at all.

Second level of reflection: But the other proves to be more than an object. They move independently, perhaps look at you, react to your presence. You must correct your original attitude: This person is themselves an acting, thinking being. They are not only object, but also subject - an “objective subject,” as logician Gotthard Günther formulated.

Third level of reflection: When you get into conversation, something qualitatively new happens. Not only do you know that the other thinks and feels - you also know that they know that you know that. This “double reciprocity” constitutes genuine communication. Both reflect on each other, and both know about this mutual reflection (without necessarily recognizing it explicitly as such)

Fourth level of reflection: Finally the communication itself becomes the topic. You come to agreement about the rules of conversation, about common presuppositions, about the medium of understanding. Thereby a new level arises - the level of institutions, norms, cultural codes.

4.3 The Inner Logic of the Gradation

Why are there exactly four levels, not three or five? This question leads us to the systematic core of the discovery.

The first level is unavoidable: Everything other is initially treated as object. This is not “false,” but necessary - without the ability to objectify we could not act at all.

The second level arises inevitably when this other proves to be itself acting. I must correct my original objectification, but cannot abandon it entirely. The other is object and subject at once.

The third level is another qualitative leap: Here genuine communication arises through double reciprocity. Both know about the knowledge of the other. This contrary-double reflection is qualitatively different from everything preceding.

The fourth level is the system-forming conclusion: The factual communication itself becomes the topic. Thereby agreements, norms, rules, institutions arise - the medium of further communication. With the fourth level a systematic conclusion is reached.

Further reflection would not lead to new qualities, but only to iterations of the same structure.

4.4 The Universal Scope

Heinrichs quickly recognized that these four levels not only structure interpersonal encounters. They are the basic structure of all human meaning-accomplishments. If this is the necessary structure of interpersonal reflection, then it must also be the basic structure of consciousness in general - because our consciousness is never isolated self-relatedness, but always already self-relation-in-other-relation.

This insight has far-reaching consequences. If all human meaning-accomplishments follow this fourfold structure, then we can use it as a universal principle of organization. The four levels of reflection become the key for the systematic analysis of actions, language, society, culture - in short: all areas of human experience.

4.5 From Levels of Reflection to Elements of Meaning and Vice Versa

Simultaneously (“equally originally” in the epistemological sense) with the analysis of the four levels of reflection, Heinrichs develops the other of his most important systematic instruments: the four elements of meaning. Let us consider the four levels of reflection for their structure:

- Level 1 refers primarily to objects - the “It.”
- Level 2 activates the strategically planning I - the subjective subject.
- Level 3 constitutes the Thou - the objective subject, the communicative partner.
- Level 4 creates a common medium of understanding.

This yields the four elements of meaning:

- The It (the pole of the objective world),
- the I (the pole of interiority),
- the Thou (the pole of intersubjectivity), and
- the Medium (the pole of mediation and integration).

However, one can also consider the elements of meaning as phenomenologically primary and the levels of their relations to each other as secondary. Elements of meaning represent the content side, levels of reflection the accomplishment side of an equally original whole:

The four elements are involved in every human meaning-accomplishment. When you speak a sentence, you refer to something (It), bring in your subjectivity (I), turn to someone (Thou), and use a common language medium (Medium). When you act, you change something in the world (It), implement your intentions (I), consider others (Thou), and use cultural action patterns (Medium).

4.6 The Key to Integration

Now it becomes visible why this discovery is the key to overcoming post-Hegelian fragmentation. The various philosophical directions have each overemphasized one of the four poles:

- Materialism emphasizes the It - the objective world of things and their laws.
- Existential philosophy emphasizes the I - the irreducible subjectivity of the individual person.
- Dialogical philosophy emphasizes the Thou - the intersubjective dimension.
- Structuralists and systems theorists emphasize the Medium - the supra-individual structures.

All are right - and all become one-sided when they absolutize their pole. The four levels of reflection show the systematic place of each position and thereby enable for the first time their integration without reduction.

This foundation paves the way for the concrete elaboration of systematic tools. The four levels of reflection are the foundation - now we can erect the methodical instruments on this that enable a practical application of reflection logic. The next part shows how from this ontological foundation concrete tools of analysis become.

Chapter 5: The Four Elements of Meaning as Universal Integration Principle

If you consider an entirely ordinary day - say you get up in the morning, prepare breakfast, speak with family members, read news, go to work - you will notice that each of these activities is astonishingly complex. While making coffee you coordinate physical processes with personal preferences and social customs, use cultural codes and technical devices. In conversation with family you connect factual information with emotional needs and common memories.

This everyday observation leads us to a fundamental question: Is there a common structure that underlies all these various activities? Johannes Heinrichs has shown: Yes, there is one. It is the four elements of meaning that are involved in every human meaning-accomplishment.

5.1 The Derivation from the Levels of Reflection

The four elements of meaning are no arbitrary construction, although they correspond to the simple phenomenology and linguistic distinctions of I, It, Thou, and We. They are confirmed through the analysis of the four levels of reflection. When we consider the levels of reflection for their content, we discover them as four different “poles” or “directions” of human meaning-orientation:

From the first level of reflection arises the It - the pole of the objective world. Here it concerns things, facts, the physical environment, everything that can be treated as objective.

From the second level of reflection arises the I - the pole of subjectivity. Here it concerns the inner world of experiencing, feeling, willing, the irreducible interiority of the individual person.

From the third level of reflection arises the Thou - the pole of intersubjectivity. Here it concerns the relationship to other people, communication, the social dimension.

From the fourth level of reflection arises the Medium - the “Between” of mediation of I and Thou, as Martin Buber called it. More generally it concerns the overarching structures that first make communication and understanding possible: language, culture, institutions.

The concept “elements of meaning” goes back, as already noted, to Paul Tillich, where Heinrichs encountered it in his early engagement with hermeneutics of meaning (1970). Tillich however distinguished only two elements of meaning - content and accomplishment, analogous to the subject-object structure. Heinrichs’ decisive innovation consisted in breaking open this duality: The dialogical dimension (Thou) and the mediating medium (Between) extend the duality to systematic foursome.

5.2 The Universal Participation

The decisive thing is: These four elements of meaning are involved in every human meaning-accomplishment. You cannot omit any without the meaning-accomplishment collapsing or becoming incomplete.

Let us take a simple example: You say to someone “Please close the window.” In this harmless sentence all four elements of meaning are present: The window is the It - the factual reference point. Your wish that it be closed springs from your I - your subjective need for warmth or quiet. The other person is the Thou - the one you address. The German language with its grammatical and pragmatic rules is the Medium - that which makes understanding possible.

Or consider an everyday action like preparing food: You change physical substances (It), follow your taste preferences (I), consider the needs of others (Thou), and use cultural cooking traditions and techniques (Medium).

5.3 The Systematic Completeness

Why exactly four elements of meaning? This question is methodically decisive. Heinrichs shows that this foursome arises from the logic of reflection itself.

- The It represents the immediate, objective givenness - that which is initially simply there.
- The I represents the subjective appropriation - the way the given becomes meaningful for a subject.
- The Thou represents the intersubjective mediation - the fact that human subjectivity is always already socially constituted.
- The Medium represents the institutional enabling and sedimentation – the latter as the way intersubjective understandings become lasting structures.

This foursome is complete: You cannot find any further fundamental meaning-directions that would not let themselves be understood as combination or specification of these four. And it is irreducible: None of the four elements can be traced back to the others without essential aspects being lost.

5.4 Integration without Reduction

Here lies the systematic gain of the insight into the foursome of elements of meaning. It makes it possible to recognize the unity of human meaning-accomplishments without reducing their diversity. Every area of human experience can be understood as a specific configuration of these four elements.

In science the It normally dominates - the objective factual reference stands in the foreground. But the other elements are also involved here: the subjective curiosity of the researcher (I), the discussion in the scientific community (Thou), the scientific methods and institutions (Medium).

In art the Medium normally dominates - the design of forms of expression stands in the foreground. But here too the other elements are present: the reference to represented contents (It), the subjectivity of the artist (I), the communication with the public (Thou).

5.5 The Overcoming of False Alternatives

The four elements of meaning show why many philosophical controversies rest on false alternatives. Materialism versus idealism, objectivism versus subjectivism, individualism versus collectivism - all these oppositions arise through the one-sided emphasis of one element of meaning against the others.

A materialistic approach that only allows the It overlooks the constitutive role of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and cultural mediations. An idealistic approach that only emphasizes the I overlooks the significance of objective facts and social structures. A

collectivistic approach that only allows the Thou or Medium overlooks the irreducible significance of individual subjectivity.

The reflection-logical alternative reads: Integration of all four elements of meaning in their respective distinctiveness and their systematic relation to each other.

5.6 Practical Applications

The four elements of meaning are not only theoretically interesting, but practically applicable. They offer a grid for the systematic analysis of arbitrary areas:

In pedagogy: Learning succeeds only when all four elements are considered - factual contents (It), individual learning needs (I), social learning processes (Thou), institutional learning structures (Medium).

In therapy: Healing requires the integration of bodily (It), psychic (I), social (Thou), and cultural-spiritual (Medium) dimensions.

In politics: Good politics must equally consider factual problems (It), individual needs (I), societal negotiation processes (Thou), and institutional structures (Medium).

The four elements of meaning show us the universal structure of all human meaning-accomplishments. But this structure is not rigid - it unfolds dynamically in different levels of complexity. Johannes Heinrichs has recognized that human forms of expression themselves can be arranged in a systematic sequence. A more highly reflected analogy of these elementary foursomes of elements of meaning and levels of reflection form the semiotic levels - action, language, art, mysticism. They show how the four elements of meaning appear in ever more complex forms of reflection. These semiotic levels of meaning-transport deserve special attention.

Chapter 6: The Four Semiotic Levels - The Graded System of Human Forms of Expression

Let us return to the example from the last chapter, consider once more a completely ordinary day in your life. You get up and prepare breakfast - that is acting. You speak with family members about the plans for the day - that is language. In the evening you perhaps read a poem or listen to music - that is art. Some people also have moments of quiet reflection or spiritual experience - that is the mystical level in modest form.

These four areas are known to everyone from their own experience. But how do they relate? Are these simply four different human activities that happen to stand next to each other? Or is there a deeper order?

The question is not trivial. Traditionally these areas are treated by different disciplines: action theory, philosophy of language, aesthetics, philosophy of religion. Each discipline develops its own concepts and methods. The result is a fragmentation that loses sight of the whole.

Johannes Heinrichs has recognized that these four areas form a systematic order - not through external classification, but through an inner logical structure grounded in the reflexive nature of human consciousness itself. The four elements of meaning that we have just gotten to know manifest themselves in these four semiotic levels in systematically different configurations.

6.1 The Basic Insight: Reflection on Reflection

The four semiotic levels arise through a systematic process of reflection. Each higher level arises through lived, not necessarily also rationally-subsequent reflection on the preceding:

On the first level stands immediate action - the direct world-relation, the physical change of environment, the practical mastery of life. When you hammer a nail into the wall, you move on this first semiotic level.

But humans can speak about their action, plan it, evaluate it, communicate it to others. Language arises as reflection on action - it is meta-action. When you explain to someone how to hammer a nail, you move on the second semiotic level.

Humans can also go beyond language and shape it artistically. Art arises as reflection on language - it is lived meta-language. A poem about hammering or a song about craft work moves on the third semiotic level.

Finally there are experiences that also escape artistic representation and can only be indicated through silence or paradoxical speech. Mysticism arises as lived reflection on art - it is meta-art. The mystical experience of unity with the ground of all being moves on the fourth semiotic level.

6.2 Integration through Differentiation

This sequence is not hierarchical in the sense of a devaluation of the lower levels. Each level retains its independence and its specific justification. A successful artwork does not “sublate” language, but integrates it at a higher level. Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony does not eliminate Schiller’s text, but transcends it through it as remaining.

Likewise language remains independent in its way vis-à-vis action, although it emerges from it. Scientific theories are not mere images of practical accomplishments, but have their own theoretical dignity. They can even correct action and open new possibilities for action.

The principle of integration-through-differentiation shows itself here in its purest form: Higher complexity arises not through elimination of the lower levels, but through their conscious integration into expanded meaning-contexts.

6.3 The Four Elements of Meaning on Each Level

Decisive is: On each semiotic level all four elements of meaning and levels of reflection are involved, but in different weighting and configuration.

In action the It dominates - the objective world-relation stands in the foreground. But subjectivity (I), intersubjectivity (Thou), and cultural mediation (Medium) are also present.

In language the Thou dominates - the communicative relation stands in the foreground. But object-relation (It), subjectivity (I), and medial mediation (Medium) are also constitutively involved.

In art the expression-Medium dominates - the design of forms of expression stands in the foreground. But object-relation (It), subjectivity (I), and intersubjectivity (Thou) remain essential.

In mysticism the I dominates, but as purely receptive for the universal meaning medium - the radical subjectivity of God-experience stands in the foreground. But the other dimensions also remain relevant, even if in transformed form.

The reflection levels change in action, language, art, and mysticism, while the elements of meaning remain constant.

6.4 Systematic Completeness and Practical Limitation

Johannes Heinrichs has developed this four-level systematics of semiotic levels, but has not worked out all levels equally thoroughly. His systematic elaborations concentrate on the first two levels: the periodic system of actions and the comprehensive five-volume philosophy of language.

On art and mysticism there are no comparably detailed systematic publications, although these levels systematically belong to the completeness of reflection logic. The reasons are practical: The elaboration of all four levels would exceed the possibilities of an entire researcher's life. A short version for art theory in general as well as for literary genre theory in particular is however contained in the book "Integral Philosophy."

Nevertheless approaches to systematic completeness are important because they show: Reflection logic is principally open to all areas of human experience. It is no closed system, but an open research program that invites further development.

6.5 Cultural and Individual Development

The four semiotic levels illuminate both the cultural-historical development of humanity and the individual development of every person.

Cultural-historically a tendency toward progressive reflexivization shows itself: Originally action-centered cultures develop language, writing, literature, finally abstract art and spiritual traditions. The earlier levels are not thereby sublated, but integrated into more complex meaning-contexts.

Individual-biographically every person goes through a similar development: from immediate childish action through language acquisition and the discovery of aesthetic dimensions to possible own spiritual experiences.

Important here is: This development is not automatic or inevitable. It can stagnate, regress, or develop prematurely or one-sidedly. The conscious cultivation of all four levels is a task that lasts a lifetime.

6.6 Pathologies and Integration

Like all systemic structures, the semiotic levels can also degenerate pathologically:

Regression arises when higher levels are abandoned in favor of lower ones - for example when art becomes mere entertainment or language degenerates into instrumental manipulation.

Dissociation arises when the levels stand unrelated next to each other - for example when abstract art loses every relation to life practice or when mysticism slides into world-renouncing esotericism.

Leveling arises when the peculiarities of the different levels are flattened - for example when everything is reduced to “communication” or “information.”

The healthy alternative is integration-through-differentiation: Each level develops its proper logic in conscious relation to the others. Great art arises when an artist connects their craft skills, their linguistic consciousness, and their spiritual intuitions into a new unity.

6.7 Outlook on Systematic Development

The four semiotic levels form the framework for the detailed analysis of the different areas. This systematic overview is indispensable, but must be supplemented by concrete elaboration. Only in detailed analysis does the practical performance of the reflection-logical method show itself.

The periodic system of actions shows how practical world-mastery is structured according to reflection-logical structure. The four basic types - object-related, inner-subjective, social, and expression action - can be developed through dialectical subsumption into a complex but clear system.

The philosophy of language as meta-action reveals the reflection-logical structure of human communication. The four semiotic dimensions - signmatic, semantic, pragmatic, syntactic - open up both the distinctiveness of language and its systematic connection to all other areas of human experience.

We now turn to this concrete elaboration - beginning with the first and most fundamental semiotic level: action as practical reflection.

PART B: METHODOICAL SYSTEMATICS

From the basic structures to the methodical instruments

After the ontological foundation in Part A, the practical question arises: How can the four levels of reflection become concrete tools of analysis? How can the abstract insight into the reflexive structure of consciousness be made fruitful for the systematic investigation of different areas?

Part B shows this transformation from foundational theory to applicable methodology. Johannes Heinrichs has recognized that the four levels of reflection are not only an interesting discovery about interpersonal encounters, but the universal structural principle of all human meaning-accomplishments. From this, concrete tools for the analysis of actions, language, culture, and society can be developed.

The systematic overview of the four semiotic levels has shown us the overall panorama. Now it concerns the detailed elaboration of the first two levels that Johannes Heinrichs has systematically developed. The concrete analysis of the action system and language structures shows the practical performance of the reflection-logical method.

The common thread is the insight that all human meaning-accomplishments follow a common reflection-logical structure that is specifically refracted in different areas, but nevertheless remains recognizable as a unifying principle of organization. This unity in diversity is the key to a systematics that is both universal and open to experience.

We begin with the first semiotic level: action as the – besides passive perception and cognition - most fundamental accomplishment of *active* human world-mastery.

PART B.1: ACTIONS

Chapter 7: Action as Practical Reflection

7.1 The Basic Concept: Action as Lived Reflection

When we speak of action, we usually mean something self-evident in everyday life: someone does something, causes something, changes something. But this seemingly simple concept harbors a deep philosophical structure that Johannes Heinrichs has systematically laid bare.

Philosophy has long struggled to determine action appropriately. Behaviorists reduced it to observable behavior, rationalists to the implementation of plans, phenomenologists to intentional acts. All these approaches grasp important aspects, but none the complete structure of what constitutes action in its core.

7.1.1 Action as Ontological Reflection

Heinrichs' fundamental insight: Action is practical reflection. It is not mere reaction to stimuli (as with animals) and also not mere movement, but a relating-to-oneself through relation to other. Already in the simplest grasp for an object a reflexive structure is accomplished, even if it mostly does not become conscious.

This reflection structure makes the qualitative difference between human action and animal behavior. Animals react to environmental stimuli, they can even perform complex activities - beavers build dams, birds construct artful nests. But they do not consciously reflect on the conditions of their own doing, they cannot grasp the essence of their activity or systematically distinguish different forms of action.

What Heinrichs here calls *lived implicit reflection* is comparable to animal instinct behavior - there too an ontological reflection-accomplishment is present -, but in humans this implicit reflection can become explicit at any time. Humans can not only act, but also think about their action, evaluate it, systematize it.

7.1.2 Action as Self-Relation-in-Other-Relation

The fundamental insight of reflection system theory reads: Action is practical reflection - “self-relation of a subject through the practical, changing relation to other or own reality, a lived self-relation-in-other-relation that in distinction from diffuse behavior is event-like delimitatable.”

This definition differs fundamentally from behavioristic (action as observable behavior) or rationalistic (action as implementation of plans) approaches. Action is neither mere movement nor mere intention, but the reflexive mediation between inside and outside, subject and object, self and other.

This reflexive structure of action is not abstract theory, but concretely demonstrable in every action accomplishment. The four elements of meaning that we have already gotten to know are present in every action - and they are systematically organized into four basic types of action.

7.2 The Four Elements of Meaning of Action

Every action - from the simplest grasp for an object to the most complex political decision - exhibits four equally original elements of meaning. These four elements are not subsequently “brought to” the action, but constitute it in its being.

The Object (O) designates the pole of objectivity. Every action refers to something objective - whether physical objects, other persons, ideas, or situations. This objective is not simply “there,” but is constituted as object through the action.

The Subjective Subject (Ss) designates the pole of interiority. Every action springs from an acting subject with its own intentions, feelings, convictions. The subject is not mere “bearer” of the action, but constitutes itself through its acting.

The Objective Subject (So) designates the pole of intersubjectivity. Every action refers - explicitly or implicitly - to other subjects. Even apparently “solitary” actions take place in a social context and refer to shared norms, expectations, languages.

The Meaning Medium (M) designates the pole of mediality. Every action takes place in a medium - spatial, temporal, linguistic, cultural. This medium is not mere “framework,” but intentionally co-constitutive for the action itself.

Decisive is: These four elements are equally original. None is “more primary” or “more fundamental” than the others. Every reduction to one of the elements misses the integral structure of action. Materialism reduces to O, idealism to Ss, sociology to So, structuralism to M - all these reductions are one-sided.

7.3 The Four Levels of Reflection of Action

The four elements of meaning stand in a systematic gradation to each other that follows the inner logic of reflection:

First Level: Object-Related Action. The subject refers immediately to objects, without thematizing its own subjectivity, the social relations, or the medial conditions. Examples: tool use, technical construction, craft production, sports. The reflection structure remains implicit here.

Second Level: Inner-Subjective Action. The subject makes itself the object of its attention and consciously changes its own states, attitudes, abilities. Examples: decision-making, self-reflection, meditation, pre-decisions. Here the self-relation becomes explicitly thematic.

Third Level: Social Action. I relate to you as someone who relates to me. This double reciprocity qualitatively distinguishes social action from all other forms of action. Examples: communication, cooperation, conflict, education, politics. Reflection becomes reciprocal.

Fourth Level: Medial Action. Thematization of the media themselves in which object-related, inner-subjective, and social action take place. Design of the “rules of the game” of action. Examples: language creation, art, religion, philosophy, legislation. Reflection becomes completely self-related.

7.4 The Engagement with the Sociological Classics

The great sociologists of the 19th and early 20th centuries - Marx, Weber, Durkheim - each grasped central aspects of human action. Heinrichs appreciates their insights and at the same time shows how they can be integrated into a more comprehensive systematic order.

7.4.1 Marx and Labor Theory

Karl Marx’s brilliant insight consisted in recognizing labor as the key to understanding human society. In the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts he developed the thesis that humans create themselves through labor: “Labor is first a process between man and nature, a process in which man mediates, regulates and controls his metabolism with nature through his own deed.”

Heinrichs appreciates Marx’s basic insight: Labor is indeed a central form of action in which object-related and social action combine. Social division of labor makes every act of labor an implicitly social act. However, Heinrichs criticizes Marx’s over-extension of this insight. Three points are central:

First, reductionism: Marx reduces all social phenomena to their economic basis. Politics, culture, religion are degraded to mere “superstructures” of production relations.

Second, anthropological narrowing: Marx defines humans primarily as “laboring beings” (homo faber). This reduces the four-dimensionality of human action to one dimension.

Third, systematic inconsistency: Marx’s own theoretical activity (writing *Capital*) is not primarily object-related action, but medial action - language creation, concept formation. His theory contradicts itself performatively.

In reflection system theory, labor is precisely located as “social object-relation” - a special form of object-related action under social conditions. Labor is characterized by four features: Object-relation dominates (it concerns primarily change of physical reality), it is socially mediated (takes place in the context of social division of labor), it creates value (products become socially relevant value objects), and it is recognized effort (is socially recognized and compensated).

This definition integrates Marx’s insights without absolutizing them. Labor is a central form of action among others, not the foundation of all social relations.

7.4.2 Weber and Action Types

Max Weber developed the first systematic action typology of sociology with four basic types: purposive-rational action (calculation of means and ends), value-rational action (orientation to absolute values), affectual action (emotional reactions), and traditional action (habit and tradition). His distinctions are phenomenologically apt and empirically fruitful. However, Weber lacks a systematic principle of derivation. Why are there exactly these four types? How do they relate? Weber could not answer these questions because he had not developed a reflection logic.

Heinrichs’ “periodic system of action types” solves this problem through dialectical subsumption. Weber’s four action types systematically correspond to the four levels of reflection: Purposive-rational corresponds to object-related action (technical rationality), value-rational corresponds to inner-subjective action (conscience rationality), affectual corresponds to social action (communicative rationality), and traditional corresponds to medial action (cultural and spiritual rationality).

7.4.3 Durkheim and Social Norms

Émile Durkheim recognized the basic problem of modern societies: How is social integration possible when traditional bonds disappear? His answer: Division of labor produces “organic solidarity” - people are dependent on each other because they fulfill different functions. This differs from the “mechanical solidarity” of traditional societies that was based on similarity.

Durkheim’s distinction systematically corresponds to the transition from medial to social forms of action. Mechanical solidarity means: Common symbols, rites, traditions dominate, the collective consciousness prevails. Organic solidarity means: Conscious

cooperation of different actors with individual autonomy and functional interdependence.

But Durkheim overlooked the four-dimensionality of social integration. Modern societies need all four integration levels: objective integration (common material basis), subjective integration (shared values), social integration (communicative understanding about conflicts), and medial integration (common institutions and procedures).

7.5 The Periodic System of Action Types

7.5.1 The Systematic Challenge and Solution

The action sciences were long in a state that Heinrichs compares with alchemy before discovery of the periodic system of elements. There were countless typologies, but no systematic order that could show why exactly these action types exist and how they relate. Heinrichs' solution: The combination of the four elements of meaning with the four levels of reflection through dialectical subsumption.

This yields a systematic hierarchy: 4 genera (corresponding to the four levels of reflection), 16 species (4 genera \times 4 aspects per genus), 64 types (16 species \times 4 sub-aspects), 256 classes (64 types \times 4 further differentiations). The methodical principle of dialectical subsumption - which is presented in detail in Chapter 14 - differs fundamentally from traditional classification.

Traditionally one investigates an area and divides it according to external criteria. Heinrichs subsumes the whole area dialectically under each of its systematic partial determinations. Concretely: Each of the four action genera is then again subdivided according to the same four elements of meaning.

7.5.2 The Four Action Genera in Overview

Object-Related Actions are characterized by primary relation to physical change. They are divided into four species: object change (tool use, production - the prototype is the craftsman at work), movement action (sports, dance - the athlete in training), labor in the narrow sense (production, service - the worker in the factory), and trade (markets, prices, values - the merchant in trading).

Inner-Subjective Actions refer primarily to one's own subjectivity. Their four species: body-related action (care, meditation), self-determination (decision, will formation - the conscience decision), pre-decisions for social action (habitus, vocation - career choice, partner choice), and meaning drafts (worldview, life designs - philosophical self-understanding).

Social Actions occur in reciprocal reference between subjects. The four species: object-related communication (factual conversations, technical cooperation - the planning discussion), person-related communication (intimacy, friendship - the pastoral

conversation), social communication (politics, public sphere - parliamentary debate), and cultural communication (education, science - the university seminar).

Medial Actions design the meaning media themselves. Their four species: sign and symbol action (writing, images - the cartographer), expression action (art, music, poetry - the composer while creating), communication media action (journalism, public relations - the journalist during interview), and system-forming action (legislation, institution building - the constitutional founder).

7.5.3 The Fractal Structure and Its Practical Significance

What is special about this system is its fractal structure: Each of the 16 action species can in turn be subdivided fourfold, leading to 64 action types. These can be subdivided again to 256 action classes. An example: Labor (object-related-socially-related) divides into individual production, goods distribution, services, and institutional fabrication. Each of these types can be further differentiated.

This systematics is not only theoretically interesting, but practically relevant. For career orientation: Every profession can be systematically located. A doctor primarily practices services, but with all four dimensions: object-related (diagnosis), subject-related (empathy), socially-related (teamwork), medially-related (documentation).

For organizational development: Organizations can analyze their action profiles and identify deficits. A company that only acts object-related and medially, but neglects inner-subjective and social dimensions, will develop structural problems.

For educational planning: The curriculum can be systematically checked for completeness. Are all four basic dimensions of human action developed?

The development of a “periodic system of action types” is of epochal significance for the humanities and social sciences. For the first time there is a systematic order of human activities that is empirically verifiable and theoretically grounded. This corresponds to the transition from alchemy to chemistry in the 18th/19th centuries or from descriptive to systematic biology.

7.6 Conclusion: The Systematic Completion of Action Theory

With reflection system theory, Johannes Heinrichs has laid the foundations for a scientific action theory that is phenomenologically complete (grasps all forms of action), systematically grounded (derived from a unified principle), empirically verifiable (through the concrete typology), and practically applicable (for education, organization, politics).

The critical integration of the sociological classics shows that their partial insights can be sublated in a more comprehensive framework without losing their truth contents. Marx’s labor theory, Weber’s action types, and Durkheim’s forms of solidarity each find their systematic place - neither absolutized nor rejected, but integrated.

The “periodic system of action types” marks the transition of the action sciences from the pre-systematic to the systematic phase - a breakthrough of epochal significance.

Heinrichs' action theory is not only an abstract philosophical systematics, but a practical key to understanding human practice in all its dimensions.

The next chapter will show how these insights find their systematic continuation in Heinrichs' language theory. For language is, as we will see, meta-action - the reflexive articulation of the action structures that we have just analyzed.

PART B.2: LANGUAGE

Chapter 8: Foundations of Philosophy of Language - Language as Meta-Action

8.1 The Four-Dimensional Structure of Language

Language is not simply a system of signs for information transmission, as structuralist linguistics long assumed. It is also not only a tool for action coordination, as the pragmatists meant. Language possesses a four-dimensional structure that corresponds to the fundamental structure of human action and reflexively articulates it.

When we speak or write, we simultaneously accomplish four dimensions: We refer to signs (sigmatic dimension), understand and construct meanings (semantic dimension), accomplish speech acts (pragmatic dimension), and thereby use syntactic structures (syntactic dimension). These four dimensions are not theoretical constructs, but the living structure of every speech accomplishment.

8.2 The Linguistic Turn and Its Limits

Modern philosophy has taken a decisive turn since Wittgenstein: the “linguistic turn.” The basic thesis was that all philosophical problems are basically language problems, and philosophy must therefore concentrate on language analysis. This turn was partly justified: Many seemingly metaphysical problems proved to be conceptual confusions. Wittgenstein’s analysis of “language games” and Austin’s discovery of “speech acts” brought important insights.

However, the linguistic turn over-extended its justified insights into a totalitarian thesis: “Everything is language” or “Language is insurpassable.” This position led to a new reductionism that reduced all other dimensions of human experience to language.

Johannes Heinrichs shows that the extreme linguistic turn contradicts itself performatively: The claim “Everything is language” is itself a speech act that refers to non-linguistic realities - namely to the action of the philosopher who sets up, justifies and represents this thesis. Every speech act presupposes capacity for action: the decision to speak (inner-subjective action), the physical realization of sounds or written signs (object-related action), the communicative reference to others (social action), and the use of linguistic media (medial action). Language presupposes action, not vice versa.

8.3 Language as Meta-Action

Animals communicate, but they do not speak in the human sense. The qualitative difference lies in reflexivity: Humans can communicate about their own communication. A dog can bark to indicate danger. A human can say: "I warn you of the danger" - and then explain: "That was a warning." This meta-communication is specifically human.

Heinrichs' definition: Language is meta-action - action that in accomplishment performatively reflexively refers to other actions and thematizes, coordinates, and systematizes them. This fits into a four-level model of semiotic development: Action (immediate practical world change), Language (accomplished reflection on action), Art (accomplished reflection on language), and Mysticism (accomplished reflection on art). Each higher level reflects the preceding and presupposes it.

Language is not the highest form of human meaning constitution, but the second of four levels. This corrects the linguistic turn: Language is neither the foundation of all experience nor its conclusion, but a specific level of reflection in the structure of human culture.

8.4 The Four Language Dimensions as Universal Structure

Johannes Heinrichs' main achievement in philosophy of language lies in the systematic derivation of the four language dimensions from reflection logic. These are not arbitrary divisions, although they correspond to the simple phenomenology and linguistic distinctions, but levels of reflection that correspond to the four elements of meaning of action.

The Object (O) corresponds to Sigmatics: sign constitution and meaning constitution through experience and pointing. A child learns language through pointing in nature or in a picture book - this is the first, immediate dimension of language acquisition.

The Subjective Subject (Ss) corresponds to Semantics: subjective appropriation and memorial storage of meanings. Here it concerns inner processing, understanding and retaining meanings. A dictionary represents an external memory, but the actual semantic competence lies in subjective meaning constitution.

The Objective Subject (So) corresponds to Pragmatics: intersubjective speech actions. Here language is accomplished as social action - in communication between subjects who mutually recognize each other as speakers and hearers.

The Medium (M) corresponds to Syntax: connection structures that become active in speech accomplishment. The respective native-language syntax has universal-linguistic, reflection-logical backgrounds. Syntax is not merely "grammar," but the reflexive self-regulation of language.

8.5 The Reconstructive Method

Building on the “periodic system of actions” (cf. Chapter 7.5), Heinrichs develops a differentiated “periodic system of language,” analogous to the periodic system of chemical elements. The four basic dimensions can each be subdivided according to the method of fractal dialectical subsumption, which is precisely carried out in the books on action and language theory.

Decisive is the reconstructive character of the method (detailed in Chapter 14): The systematics is not derived deductively from fundamental principles alone, but developed in constant dialogue of conceptual specification and empirical experience. Astonishingly, there are no conflicts between theory and empirical data - which speaks for the appropriateness of the theoretical approach.

The four language dimensions are universal - every human language must realize all four. However, the concrete expressions are culture-specific. Every language has phonology (sigmatic), but different sound systems. Every language has syntax (syntactic), but different grammars. These can in principle be described reflection-logically, albeit with considerable effort, as variations of a universal syntax. This solves the false opposition of universalism (all languages are the same) and relativism (languages are incomparable): There exists a dialectic of universal structures and culturally diverse expression.

8.6 Practical Consequences

Heinrichs' philosophy of language offers new approaches to the world language problem. Instead of a unified world language, which would destroy cultural diversity, or Babylonian linguistic confusion, he proposes systematic translation work on the basis of universal language structures. Practically this means: translator training according to the four dimensions, machine translation on a reflection-logical basis, international scientific language with systematic concept transfer.

For education and cultural policy it follows: Language teaching should consider all four dimensions - sigmatics (pronunciation, writing, media competence), semantics (vocabulary, concept differentiation), pragmatics (communication ability, conversation skills), and syntax (grammar, text production, stylistics). Current deficits consist in that mostly semantics and syntax are over-emphasized, while sigmatics and pragmatics are neglected.

The four language dimensions also have political implications. Democracy requires reflected language ability on all four levels: sigmatically (access to information media), semantically (conceptual education for factual judgment), pragmatically (discourse and dialogue ability), and syntactically (differentiated expressive capacity). Linguistic education is therefore political education. Who systematically promotes the language competence of citizens strengthens democracy. Who neglects or manipulates it weakens it.

8.7 Conclusion: The Unconscious World Language

Johannes Heinrichs has discovered with his four-dimensional philosophy of language something that could be called the “unconscious world language”: Universal structures that underlie all human languages without leveling their cultural diversity. This discovery is theoretically significant through overcoming the fragmentation of the language sciences, practically valuable through new foundations for translation and language teaching, culturally relevant through the possibility of genuine understanding between cultures without coordination, and politically fundamental for a linguistically educated democracy.

The next chapter will show how these general principles become practically applicable in concrete conversation analysis.

Chapter 9: Dialogue Analysis and Practical Communication

9.1 Conversation as Basic Phenomenon of Human Language

Volume 3 of the philosophy of language - “The Action Dimension (Pragmatics)” - develops a systematic dialogue analysis that enables concrete applications for therapy, moderation, mediation, and education. The basic idea is as simple as revolutionary: Conversations have recognizable structures that can be systematically analyzed and consciously designed. What previously counted as “art” or “intuition” becomes learnable competence.

9.2 The Four Dimensions of Conversation

Analogous to Kant’s four category groups, Heinrichs distinguishes four conversation dimensions that structure every conversation.

Quantity asks about numerical structure: Who speaks how much with whom? This includes the number of participants (monologue to mass communication), conversation shares (dominance, silence), speaking time distribution (rhythm, pauses, interruptions), and role distribution (moderation, questions, answers). The quantitative structure has qualitative effects: A monologuer destroys dialogue quality, even if he is factually right.

Quality investigates agreement versus conflict: In what do conversation partners agree, in what do they contradict each other? This divides into factual consensus or dissent on the topic, emotional harmony or conflict between persons, normative agreement or conflict over values and rules, as well as communicative understanding or misunderstanding. Successful conversations build on existing commonalities and work through differences systematically. Failed conversations overlook commonalities and dramatize differences.

Relation examines correspondence versus talking past each other: Do conversation contributions relate to each other or do the participants talk past each other? Heinrichs distinguishes simple talking past each other (inattention, misunderstandings), abused communication (betrayal, manipulation), failing communication (structural obstacles despite good will), and successful correspondence (genuine mutual reference). Talking past each other is the main problem of most conversations. It has recognizable causes and can be systematically overcome.

Modality analyzes form versus content: In what format does the conversation take place, and how does this influence the content? The spectrum ranges from formless conversations (spontaneous, unplanned) through weakly formatted (loose rules like at the family table) and strongly formatted (fixed rules like in examinations) to ritual-formatted conversations (ceremonial communication). Format is never neutral - it enables certain contents and prevents others. Conscious format design is a powerful instrument of conversation management.

9.3 Conversation Formats: The Typology of Practical Communication

The systematic application of the four dimensions leads to a typology of conversation formats that can be divided into four main categories.

Factual Conversations serve information and knowledge gain. They include informational conversations (asymmetric between knower and questioner as in consultations or expert consultations), interrogations (strongly asymmetric as in hearings, examinations, or job interviews), research conversations (symmetric-cooperative as in scientific dialogue or brainstorming), and formal argumentation (rule-guided dispute as in academic disputations or parliamentary debates).

Expression Conversations aim at self-expression and emotional clarification. These include narrative frameworks (narrative-associative as in autobiographical conversations or therapy sessions), subjective emotional expression (feeling-focused-spontaneous as in complaint conversations or declarations of love), interactive emotional expression (reciprocal-expressive as in dispute or reconciliation conversations), and metacommunicative frameworks (reflected-analytical as in couples therapy or supervision).

Interaction Conversations coordinate action and decision-making. They range from confessions and justifications (accountability as in confession or admission) through advisory conversations (help-seeking-supportive in life counseling or sales conversations) and negotiations (interest-guided-tactical in business or wage negotiations) to agreements (consensual-binding as in contract conclusions).

Formal Meta-Conversations reflect on previous conversations. They serve improvement of future factual conversations (discussion review, feedback rounds), professionalization of conversation management (supervision, moderator training), optimization of

action coordination (evaluation of negotiations, project reviews), or making conscious of unconscious group processes (team building, organizational development).

9.4 Dialogue Maxims: Rules for Successful Communication

From systematic analysis of successful and failing conversations, Heinrichs derives practical rules. Four basic maxims structure successful communication:

The maxim of attention demands active listening before responding. Most misunderstandings arise through inattentive listening. Practical application: paraphrasing, asking questions, maintaining eye contact.

The maxim of truthfulness requires only saying what one believes to be true, and not concealing relevant truths. Lies destroy the trust that is the basis of all communication. This applies even with unpleasant truths.

The maxim of appropriateness demands adapting communication to situation and partner. The same message can have completely different effects depending on context. Situation-sensitive conversation management is therefore indispensable.

The maxim of constructiveness orients toward solutions instead of problems. Problem focus leads into vicious circles, solution orientation opens new paths. The question is: "How could it become different?" instead of "Why is it so bad?"

For difficult situations, special maxims supplement these basic rules. With misunderstandings, the maxim of benevolent interpretation (assume good intentions) and the maxim of willingness to clarify (ask instead of interpret) help. With conflicts, the maxim of error-friendliness (admit own mistakes, forgive others) and the maxim of objectivity (separate person and matter) prove themselves. With power gradients, the maxim of fairness (don't use superiority for humiliation) and the maxim of respect (acknowledge dignity of the other even when rejecting their positions) are central.

9.5 Practical Applications

Systematic dialogue analysis finds diverse practical application. In conversation therapy and counseling, it enables precise diagnosis: Which conversation dimension is disturbed? Is one partner quantitatively dominant? Where do the actual conflicts and commonalities lie qualitatively? Do the partners listen to each other relationally or talk past each other? Does the format modally fit the task? Based on this, targeted interventions follow to improve the disturbed dimension.

In moderation and process design, professional moderation becomes applied dialogue analysis. Preparation includes format design corresponding to conversation goal (factual, processual, relationship-oriented). Implementation means process control according to all four dimensions: distribute speaking time, clarify consensus and dissent, promote reference, flexibly adapt format. Follow-up reflects metacommunicatively on what succeeded and what needs improvement.

In conflict mediation, application occurs in three phases: structural diagnosis (Who is involved? What are the real points of dispute? Do the parties listen to each other? What format would enable solutions?), format design (create framework conditions, agree on rules, ensure neutral moderation), and process control (systematic work through all four conversation dimensions, clarify interests, develop solutions, reach binding agreement).

In education and training, communication competence becomes systematically teachable ability. The curriculum includes basic understanding of the four conversation dimensions, self-analysis of own conversation patterns, diagnosis of conversation structures of others, intervention to improve disturbed communication, and conscious design of conversations. Methods are video-supported training, role plays, supervision groups, and peer learning.

9.6 Conclusion: Conversation as Learnable Art

Johannes Heinrichs' dialogue analysis shows: Good conversations are not a matter of luck, but rest on recognizable structures that can be systematically understood and consciously designed. This revolutionizes all areas where communication is central. Therapy becomes more methodical and effective, moderation becomes professional competence, conflict resolution becomes systematically teachable, leadership becomes applied communication science. In a time of increasing communication problems, Heinrichs offers concrete tools for better understanding.

Chapter 10: The Sentence Construction Formula and Systematic Grammar

10.1 The Claim of a Philosophical Grammar

Volume 4 of the philosophy of language - "The Sentence Construction Formula (Syntax)" - develops a complete alternative to Noam Chomsky's generative grammar, the dominant school of modern linguistics. The stakes are high: Heinrichs claims that all of modern linguistics follows a methodical wrong path and that a philosophically founded grammar is systematically superior. If he is right, this would be a scientific revolution.

10.2 The Critique of Chomsky

Chomsky's method observes grammatical phenomena, formulates rules, and explains them through ever more abstract rule systems. Heinrichs' critique starts at three points.

First, the problem of arbitrary rules: This method produces arbitrarily many rules without systematic principle. Why are there exactly these syntactic categories? Why exactly these transformation rules? Chomsky cannot answer these questions. An example: Chomsky's X-Bar schema postulates a universal three-structure *Specifier - Head - Complement*. But why should this be universal? Heinrichs shows: A reflection-logically grounded grammar leads to a four-structure that is empirically more appropriate.

Second, the problem of dichotomous logic: Chomsky's basic assumption is that syntactic structures are binary branched. This dichotomy is however a philosophical prejudice, not an empirical discovery. Real languages show more complex structures that cannot be reduced to binary branchings. The four-level reflection logic leads to a multi-valued syntax that better corresponds to the actual complexity of linguistic structures.

Third, the problem of abstractness: Chomsky's program derives surface structures through transformations from abstract deep structures. This abstractness leads away from living language. Deep structures are theoretical constructs without psychological reality. Speakers do not generate abstract structures and then transform them - they speak directly. Reconstructive grammar instead analyzes the structures that are realized in actual speech acts, without postulating abstract intermediate levels.

10.3 The Sentence Construction Formula: Foundations of a Reflection-Logical Syntax

Heinrichs' basic insight: Every sentence is grounded in a dynamic subject-predicate core that is not to be understood as static connection of two separate parts, but as living unity of accomplishment (predicate) and content (subject). The predicate is the action of saying, the subject is what is said about. Both are dialectically intertwined - no predicate without subject, no subject without predicate.

From the subject-predicate core proceed four different primary sentence member positions that correspond to the four levels of reflection.

Equation members (sigmatic-object-related) serve identification and classification. Examples are the predicative ("He is a teacher") or the attribute ("The red ball"). The logic is direct assignment without mediation.

Free additions (semantic-subject-related) are additional determinations that can be freely added. Examples are temporal ("yesterday"), modal ("quickly"), or local additions ("here"). They accomplish subjective perspectivization of the state of affairs.

Dynamic relata (pragmatic-socially-related) constitute relationships between action participants. Examples are objects ("I see you") or addressees ("I give you the book"). They realize intersubjective relations.

Modifiers (syntactic-medially-related) change the basic sentence structure. Examples are modal verbs (“I can go”) or negation (“I don’t go”). They accomplish reflection on the conditions of saying.

This basic structure unfolds hierarchically. Second-degree sentence members expand primary sentence members: “The very quickly running man” - primarily is “running” (attribute to “man”), secondarily “very quickly” (modification of “running”). Third-degree sentence members (attributes) can expand almost any primary and secondary member: “The very quickly through the dark forest running young man”.

A specialty of Heinrichsian syntax is consideration of performative flexibility. Speakers can consciously vary syntactic forms for rhetorical and stylistic effects: word order (“He threw the ball”), sentence form (“Are you going?” versus “You’re going?”), ellipsis (“Are you coming?” - “Yes.”). This performative flexibility shows: Syntax is not mechanical, but reflexive.

10.4 The Fourfold Syntax Division

The four language dimensions lead to a fourfold systematic division of syntax.

Sigmatic Syntax (Morphology) analyzes the connection rules for speech sounds and word forms. This includes phonological laws (sound connection rules, syllable structure, stress patterns) and morphological rules (inflection, word formation, composition). Heinrichs’ innovation: Morphology is not treated as a separate discipline, but as part of syntax - the syntax of the word level.

Semantic Syntax (Sentence Theory) develops the sentence construction formula - how meanings are connected to sentences. It treats the subject-predicate core (predication types, action types, aspect and tense), the four primary sentence member positions (systematic derivation from reflection logic, empirical verification on different languages), and hierarchical structure (dependency grammar, constituent structure, complex sentences).

Pragmatic Syntax (Text Type Theory) investigates how sentences are connected to texts. Four basic types: factual texts (information and cognition), expression texts (self-presentation and emotion), influence texts (persuasion and action control), and role texts (institutional communication).

Syntactic Syntax (Stylistics) operates metasyntax - reflection of syntax on itself. Style figures are systematically categorized as repetition figures (iteration of syntactic patterns), analogy figures (transfer of syntactic structures), contrast figures (contrasting syntactic forms), and self-reflexive figures (syntax thematizes itself).

10.5 Empirical Confirmation and Application

The sentence construction formula proves itself in language comparison. The four basic functions are found in all investigated languages (German, English, Latin, and others), even if their formal realization varies greatly. This confirms the universality of functions with diversity of forms.

In language didactics, the sentence construction formula enables systematic derivation instead of rule memorization, understanding of the inner logic of grammatical structures, and transferability to other languages. The curriculum leads from understanding the subject-predicate core through distinguishing the four primary functions and analyzing hierarchical extensions to conscious use of form-content variations.

For computational linguistics, the reflection-logical basis opens new perspectives. Four-structure parsers that organize syntactic analysis according to the four primary functions enable more systematic analysis of complex sentences, better disambiguation of ambiguous structures, and robustness against ungrammatical inputs. The universal sentence construction formula could serve as interlingua for machine translation.

10.6 Methodical Innovation

Decisive for Heinrichs' approach is the reconstructive method: not deduction from abstract principles to concrete rules, not induction from data collections to statistical generalizations, but interplay of conceptual specification and empirical concretization. Reflection logic expects four syntactic basic functions. Empirical language research checks whether these actually exist. With deviations, both theory and empirical data are revised.

This enables universality without dogmatism. Problem of linguistic universalism: How can one claim universal structures without ignoring cultural diversity? Heinrichs' solution: universality of functions with diversity of forms. All languages have modifiers (universal function), but they realize them differently - through modal verbs, particles, inflectional endings, etc. (cultural diversity).

Heinrichs' claim: Linguistics needs philosophical foundation. Without reflection-logical foundation it produces arbitrary detail descriptions without systematic connection. But philosophy cannot replace empirical research. It can only provide framework and method. The result is philosophical grammar as new synthesis of conceptual rigor and empirical openness.

10.7 Conclusion

Johannes Heinrichs' sentence construction formula is an ambitious project: a complete alternative to prevailing linguistics. If his basic theses are correct, this would be a scientific revolution. If they are partly correct, it would be an important complement to existing approaches. Especially language comparison is placed on a completely new foundation through working out universal-linguistic syntax structures.

Empirical confirmation is still outstanding. But the claim alone is remarkable: to rehabilitate philosophy as foundational science also for linguistics. Independent of all details, Heinrichs' work is an example of systematic thinking in a time of specialization - and that alone makes it valuable.

Chapter 11: Stylistics and Text Types - Metasyntax as Language Art

11.1 Style as Systematic Category

Volume 5 of the philosophy of language - "Stylistics" - shows Johannes Heinrichs as systematic style theorist and practicing poet. Here his systematic philosophy combines with his artistic sensibility to a new stylistics. The basic idea is revolutionary: Style figures are not mere "ornaments" of language, but systematically graspable forms of reflection - "metasyntax," in which language thematizes and transcends itself.

11.2 Text Types as Pragmatic Syntax

Traditional syntax analyzes the connection rules within sentences. Pragmatic syntax analyzes the connection rules between speech acts - how utterances become texts. Heinrichs' innovation: Texts do not arise through arbitrary stringing together of sentences, but follow systematic rules that correspond to pragmatic functions.

The four basic types of text types correspond to the four levels of reflection. Factual texts serve information and cognition (locution - communicate facts). They divide into object-guided descriptive texts (descriptions, reports with factual, detailed style), subjectively-guided associative texts (narratives with vivid, clear style), intersubjectively-oriented didactic texts (textbooks, explanations with clear, addressee-related style), and logically-systematic treatises (scientific essays with precise, proof-conducting style).

Expression texts aim at self-presentation and emotion (self-disclosure - express own condition). They include experience-related expression texts (love letter, lament with emotional, expressive style), position-taking texts (review, eulogy with engaged, evaluating style), dispute texts (polemic with sharp, combative style), and understanding and reconciliation texts (apology, peace offer with conciliatory, constructive style).

Influence texts serve persuasion and action control (appeal - move others to actions). They divide into fact-related influence (political speech, advertising with convincing, rational style), person-related influence (request, complaint with personal, appellative style), authority-related influence (command, law with definite, binding style), and media-related influence (poster, slogan with catchy, concise style).

Role texts constitute institutional communication (relationship design - constitute and execute social roles). They include factual role texts (medical report, expert opinion with professional, competent style), personal role texts (funeral speech, birthday speech with dignified, respectful style), social role texts (club statute, party congress speech with collective, programmatic style), and system role texts (constitution, liturgy with ceremonial, timeless style).

11.3 Style Figures as Metasyntax

Heinrichs' innovation: Style figures are systematic forms of reflection - "metasyntax," in which normal syntax thematizes and transcends itself. Basic idea: Style figures arise when one of the four language dimensions reflects all others and dominates.

Sigmatic Metasyntax: Repetition Figures arise when the sigmatic dimension (sign material) dominates and structures the whole text. This includes sigmatic repetition (same sounds as in alliteration "Fresh frank free friendly," assonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia), semantic repetition (same sense in other words as pleonasm "white mare," synonym accumulation, amplification), pragmatic repetition (same speech act as refrain, litany, invocation), and syntactic repetition (same structure as parallelism "I came, I saw, I conquered," chiasmus, anaphora).

Semantic Metasyntax: Analogy Figures (Figurative Language) arise when the semantic dimension transcends its normal limits and creates new sense connections. This includes metonymies (transfer through real factual connection as *pars pro toto* "blade" for sword, *totum pro parte*, cause for effect), metaphors (transfer through similarity as "lion" for brave person, structural metaphor "foundation of theory," personification, abstract metaphor), comparisons (explicit analogy formation as "strong as a lion," extended comparison, parable), and allegories (systematic figurative language as fable, personification of abstract concepts, symbol).

Pragmatic Metasyntax: Speech Act Figures arise when the pragmatic dimension (action character) is thematized and varied. This includes speech act ciphers (condensation of complex actions as performative phrases "Hereby I declare...," action ciphers "hammer" for hard criticism), stylistic quotation (adoption of foreign speech ways as direct quote, parody, pastiche, allusion), irony and related figures (split of said and meant as simple irony "Great, rain again!," sarcasm, understatement, hyperbole), and rhetorical figures (manipulation of speaking situation as rhetorical question, apostrophe, prolepsis).

Syntactic Metasyntax: Self-Reflection of Language arises when the syntactic dimension reflects on itself and thematizes the conditions of speaking. This includes form-content reflection (syntax mirrors semantics as onomatopoeia, figural typography, metrical semantics), self-thematization (language speaks about itself as metalinguistic phrases “to say it briefly,” language-critical figures “so-called,” auto-reference), structural breaks (conscious violation of syntactic norms as anacoluthon, ellipsis, zeugma), and metasyntactic forms (syntax becomes topic as apokoinou, polysyndeton, asyndeton).

11.4 Poetic Practice: System and Intuition

Johannes Heinrichs is not only theorist of stylistics, but practicing poet. His own poems reveal a fascinating tension between systematic theory and poetic practice. His poem “Language Speaks to Me” (1970) shows the four-dimensional structure in poetic form: sigmatic alliterations (“Love... live,” “Language speaks,” “Unity unites”), semantic paradox (language becomes acting subject), pragmatic performativity (the poem accomplishes what it states), and syntactic self-reference (thematizes its own speaking).

“Sometimes Resurrection” (1978) poetically accomplishes the third level of reflection (social action as mutual reflection): “Destiny sparks from both” (both contribute), “The circuit closes” (reciprocal reflection), “Difference that is none / Difference that alone is” (dialectical unity in difference).

These poems demonstrate that Heinrichs’ systematic theory is no mere construction, but grows from living experience of poetic creation. The tension between system and intuition, between analytical reflection and accomplished artistic reflection, remains productive. The artistic can never be analytically generated, but can at least be partially analyzed afterward.

11.5 Heinrichs’ Own Style: The Four-Row Systematics

Heinrichs’ own philosophical prose is distinguished by a characteristic style that could be called “four-row systematics.” His texts develop not linearly, but spirally - each topic is worked through on all four levels of reflection. The language is precise and conceptually sharp, but not academically encrusted. It strives for clarity without simplification, for systematics without rigidity, for completeness without exhaustion.

Characteristic is the balance between abstraction and concretion. Abstract principles are illustrated through concrete examples, conversely concrete phenomena are systematically classified. The argumentation is dialogical - it anticipates objections, appreciates other positions, integrates partial truths. The tone is self-confident without arrogance, engaged without dogmatism, critical without destructiveness.

11.6 Conclusion: Metasyntax as Language Art

Heinrichs' stylistics completes his philosophy of language by showing: Language is not only tool of communication or medium of cognition, but art - self-reflexive design of its own possibilities. The systematic ordering of style figures as "metasyntax" overcomes traditional arbitrariness of stylistics without suffocating the vitality of linguistic creativity.

The connection of systematic theory and poetic practice shows exemplarily what Heinrichs means by "integration through differentiation." System and intuition, analysis and accomplishment, theory and practice are not played against each other, but dialectically mediated. The result is a stylistics that is fruitful both for language analysis and for language design - for scientists as well as poets, for critics as well as artists.

Chapter 12: AI and Language Understanding - The Problem of Current Systems

12.1 When Machines Learn to Speak

When you speak with ChatGPT, Claude, or other AI systems today, you experience something historically unique: machines that seemingly understand what you say and give meaningful answers. They can write poems, answer complex questions, even program. But do they really understand? Johannes Heinrichs' four-dimensional language theory offers surprising answers to this question - and shows precise limits of current AI systems.

This question is not only technically interesting - it touches the core of what understanding and intelligence constitute at all. And here it becomes clear why Johannes Heinrichs' language theory, which we got to know in the previous chapters, suddenly gets highly practical significance. His insights developed over almost five decades could be the key for the next generation of artificial intelligence - and at the same time explain why today's AI is still far from genuine understanding.

12.2 The Problem of Current AI: Patterns without Reflection

Today's AI systems are brilliant pattern recognition machines. They have analyzed billions of texts and learned which words statistically likely follow each other. When you ask "How is the weather?", the system generates an answer based on millions of similar question-answer pairs in its training data.

But let us remember Heinrichs' central insight: Language is meta-action. When speaking, humans simultaneously use words AND rules about these words. We regulate our own speaking reflexively - through grammar, emphasis, strategic pauses, adaptation to conversation partner. This reflexive self-regulation is not accomplished by today's AI

systems. They produce texts, but they don't "know" what they do. They cannot monitor, correct, or strategically adapt their own language action in accomplishment.

A revealing example: When you tell a person "It is terribly cold here," the following happens. They understand the sigmatic dimension - not alone the words and their naming function, but their situational embedding, especially that of the little word "here." They grasp the semantic dimension - the conceptual content of the statement. They recognize the pragmatic dimension - possibly an indirect request to close the window or turn up the heating. They use the syntactic dimension - through it several statements are connected in a single one: once the factual statement, on the other hand the evaluating statement of a complaint or even a complaint that the cold is unpleasant and should be eliminated.

AI primarily analyzes statistical probabilities: "After 'It is terribly cold here' often follow statements about temperature, heating, or clothing." Humans accomplish meta-actions (statement, complaint, complaint), AI recognizes text patterns.

What current AI lacks is precisely what Heinrichs has identified as the specificity of human language: the simultaneity of sign action and its self-regulation through syntactic meta-signs, the self-reflection of genuine action. Humans not only speak - they monitor and control their speaking simultaneously. They notice when the conversation partner doesn't understand and change their style. They anticipate misunderstandings, modulate their statements according to relationship and context. This meta-level of language action is the missing link between today's AI and genuine linguistic intelligence.

A revealing test criterion lies in spontaneous performative self-correction: Does a system recognize contradictions or problems in its own "action" from itself, or only upon additional external hints? While today's AI systems can indeed react to corrections and adapt their answers, they lack the ability for self-initiated reflection. They accomplish no anticipatory self-monitoring during the speech process itself. The ability to reflexively grasp one's own performative situation while speaking or writing and spontaneously correct when needed could be the decisive difference between simulated and genuine language competence.

12.3 The Four Language Dimensions as Diagnostic Instrument

Heinrichs' four language dimensions offer a systematic map for what genuine language competence would constitute. Let us look at what this means for the analysis of current AI.

The sigmatic dimension concerns the fundamental question: How do signs get their meaning? For AI this is the famous “grounding problem” - how do symbols connect with the world? Current AI learns word-to-word relationships from texts, but never directly how words refer to real things, situations, or actions. The word “red” is for an LLM a statistical distribution over other words, not a connection to visual experiences. Genuine AI would have to understand how signs arise in action contexts and get their meaning through usage situations.

The semantic dimension shows how humans not only retrieve concepts, but actively construct them. When you understand “justice,” you not only activate stored definitions, but situatively build up meaning, relate different aspects to each other, form judgments. Current AI has no genuine concept formation. It processes word vectors and embeddings, but constructs no conceptual connections. Genuine AI would have to understand that semantics is an active process of subjective appropriation, not just processing of given meanings.

The pragmatic dimension is possibly most important: What do we do with language? We act through speaking - request, promise, warn, convince, threaten. Language changes interpersonal relationships. Today's AI doesn't “understand” that speaking is a form of action. It can indeed imitate speech acts (“I recommend...”), but not accomplish them as genuine actions. It cannot really promise, warn, or commit, because it lacks the action character of language. It could even be dangerous to grant it genuine pragmatic authority (advising, warning, commanding, approving).

The syntactic dimension shows the highest level of reflection: How do we regulate our own speaking? How do overarching structures of texts, conversations, discourses arise? This is the area that current AI grasps least. It can generate complex texts, but not reflexively control what it does. It cannot strategically decide when it should become more detailed, be briefer, change style, or switch topic. Genuine AI would have to have a meta-level of language regulation - the ability to monitor and control its own linguistic processes.

12.4 Reconstructive AI: An Alternative Development Path

Let us remember one of Heinrichs' most important methodical innovations: dialectical subsumption. Instead of external classifications, it develops the inner structures of investigated areas through reconstructive analysis. This could open a completely different path for AI development. Instead of simply analyzing huge amounts of data (the big data approach), AI could systematically reconstruct the universal structures of thinking and speaking.

Imagine: An AI that doesn't learn through millions of examples that humans often make small talk after greetings. But an AI that reconstructs why humans develop greeting rituals at all - because they must reflexively establish the communication situation and calibrate the relationship. Such AI would not imitate patterns, but understand the structural reasons why certain linguistic phenomena occur. It could deal with completely new situations because it would have grasped the underlying principles.

Heinrichs' fractal systematics (4→16→64→256 structure elements) could serve as model for AI architectures that scale structurally instead of just growing quantitatively. Each of the four basic dimensions is again structured fourfold within itself, these again fourfold, and so on. This enables systematic structure generation that is both principled and concrete - universal regularities that realize themselves in infinite diversity.

12.5 The Self-Regulation Problem: The Key to Genuine AI

Perhaps the most important contribution of Heinrichs' language theory to AI development lies in identifying the self-regulation problem. Genuine intelligence shows itself not only in solving problems, but in reflexive monitoring and control of one's own problem-solving processes.

When humans speak, they accomplish complex meta-coordination: They monitor whether the conversation partner understands. They adapt complexity and style to the situation. They correct misunderstandings in real time. They anticipate possible interpretation problems. They modulate their statements according to relationship and context. This reflexive competence is what Heinrichs identifies as the specificity of human language: the simultaneity of sign action and its meta-regulation.

Today's AI systems have no genuine meta-cognition. They can indeed speak competently about their own abilities ("As AI I can..."), but that is simulated self-reflection, not accomplished. Genuine performative self-relation would mean: The system monitors its own utterances during generation. It can strategically decide when it should pause, reformulate, or specify. It adapts its communication style dynamically to the recognized needs of the conversation partner. It can reflexively comment on and correct its own statements.

Complete self-reflection is - according to Heinrichs - also not to be demanded of AI, but its highly effective simulation is. Heinrichs' criterion of "performative self-relation in actu exercito" could become the decisive test for genuine AI. Not the complexity of generated answers, but the ability for reflexive self-regulation of one's own language action is decisive. A system that is really intelligent in the reflection-theoretical sense would not only give correct answers, also not only communicate strategically - it would "know" what it does while it does it. But it would suffice to "know" about the said limit of self-reflexivity and articulate this as situationally appropriate as possible.

12.6 Conclusion and Outlook

Johannes Heinrichs' language theory not only points out the systematic limits of current AI systems, but also offers a conceptual framework for what genuine artificial intelligence would have to look like. His four-dimensional analysis makes clear: Current AI operates primarily on the sigmatic level (pattern recognition of signs), has rudimentary approaches on the semantic level (word vectors), but truly understands neither the pragmatic dimension (language as action) nor the syntactic dimension (reflexive self-regulation).

The path to genuine AI would require fundamental paradigm shifts: From pattern recognition to structure reconstruction, from statistical processing to reflexive self-regulation, from text generation to genuine language action. Whether and how these paradigm shifts are technically realizable is an open question. But Heinrichs' theory offers at least a clear diagnosis of the problem and a systematic vision of the solution.

For readers interested in the technical details of a possible implementation - for development strategies, architectural considerations, and practical steps on the way to reflection-logically founded AI - the following Chapter 13 offers an in-depth engagement with these questions. For all other readers, the presentation of Heinrichs' philosophy continues with Chapter 14, where we turn to dialectical subsumption as methodical innovation.

Chapter 13: Reflection Logic as Architecture for Genuine Artificial Intelligence

13.1 For the AI Industry: The Commercial and Scientific Context

This chapter is primarily addressed to developers, researchers, and decision-makers in the AI industry. It concretizes the philosophical insights presented in the previous chapter into practical development strategies and architectural considerations.

Why this chapter is central: Johannes Heinrichs' four-dimensional language architecture and his reflection logic offer AI development a theoretical foundation that goes beyond previous approaches. The systematics of actions and language developed in the previous chapters is not only philosophically interesting, but directly applicable to the development of genuine artificial intelligence.

What you will find here: - Technical analysis of the deficits of current LLMs from a reflection-logical perspective

- Architectural implications of the four language dimensions for AI systems

- Concrete implementation strategies for reflection-logically founded AI
- Test criteria for genuine versus simulated language competence
- Development roadmap and research priorities
- Economic potentials and licensing information

Licensing note: The concepts, architectures, and systematic structures presented here are based on Johannes Heinrichs' work and are under NC license (Non-Commercial). For commercial applications in AI development, a separate licensing agreement is required. Contact for licensing inquiries: [will be provided at the end of the chapter]

13.2 Technical Analysis: Where Current LLMs Systematically Fail

Current Large Language Models (LLMs) operate primarily through token prediction, based on statistical patterns in training data. They lack what Heinrichs identifies as the core of human language competence: the simultaneous execution of sign action and meta-regulation through syntactic meta-signs.

From a computational perspective, this means four systematic deficits:

Missing meta-cognitive architecture: LLMs have no systematic possibility to monitor and regulate their own output generation process in real time. They generate tokens sequentially without real-time self-monitoring of pragmatic appropriateness or semantic coherence of the emerging text.

Absence of pragmatic foundation: They process linguistic patterns without accomplishing language as action that changes interpersonal relationships. An LLM can generate "I promise" without this constituting an obligation. The performative dimension of genuine speech action is missing.

No systematic self-reference: Unlike human speakers who can reflexively refer to their own speech acts ("I mean by this..." "Let me reformulate this..."), LLMs lack structured self-referential abilities. What looks like self-reference is often memorized phraseology from training data.

Statistical versus structural processing: Pattern recognition in high-dimensional token spaces differs fundamentally from the reflexive processing that Heinrichs' four-dimensional model describes. LLMs learn correlations, not structural principles. They can generate new patterns, but cannot reconstruct new structures.

The technical challenge lies in implementing what Heinrichs calls "performative self-relation in actu exercito" - the ability of a system to monitor and regulate its own signmatic, semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic (metasyntactic) operations while executing them. This simultaneity, possibly of several levels of reflection at once, constitutes "lived" reflection.

13.3 Architectural Implications: The Four Language Dimensions as System Design

The implementation of Heinrichs' four-dimensional model would require fundamental architectural innovations:

Sigmatic Layer (Grounding Architecture): Multi-modal integration of linguistic, visual, and motor representations; dynamic symbol grounding through interaction with environment; context-dependent meaning constitution instead of static word embeddings; implementation of what Heinrichs calls "action embedding." The grounding problem cannot be solved through purely linguistic data - it requires integration of language processing with sensory and motor systems.

Semantic Layer (Conceptual Construction): Active concept formation mechanisms beyond retrieval from memory; systematic integration of Heinrichs' "predication types" (subsumption, evaluation/valuation, real relations, modification); dynamic meaning construction through subject-object-medium interactions; simulation of what Heinrichs calls "subjective appropriation of objective meanings" in semantics. This is not about larger vector spaces, but about structured processes of meaning generation.

Pragmatic Layer (Action-Oriented Processing): Systematic enrichment of speech act theory with Heinrichs' four pragmatic levels - information pragmatics (locution), expression pragmatics (illocution), effect pragmatics (perlocution), execution (role pragmatics); real-time modeling and adaptation of relationships; understanding language as change of interpersonal dynamics. This requires modeling conversation partners as actors with their own goals, beliefs, and emotions.

Syntactic Layer (Meta-Cognitive Control): Real-time monitoring and regulation of own linguistic output; strategic discourse management based on communicative goals; implementation of reflexive text structure generation; reflexive abilities for explicit self-reference and correction. This layer is the core of Heinrichsian innovation - here the meta-regulation of all other layers takes place.

The central technical challenge lies in creating architectures that can perform these operations simultaneously rather than sequentially, to implement what Heinrichs calls the "simultaneity of sign action and its self-regulation."

13.4 Reconstructive Algorithms: Beyond Big Data

The implementation of reconstructive AI, based on Heinrichs' methodology, would require developing new types of learning algorithms:

Reconstructive versus statistical learning: Instead of extracting correlations from large datasets, systematic reconstruction of underlying structures that generate linguistic phenomena. Implementation of what Heinrichs calls "dialogue of concept and experience" - iterative refinement of structural hypotheses through experience. Development of algorithms that can identify invariant structures across diverse linguistic manifestations.

Fractal architecture design: Implementation of the 4→16→64→256 scaling pattern as systematic structure generation principle. Each level of the system shows an analogous fourfold pattern, but with increasing specificity. This enables both systematic coverage and infinite adaptation potential. The fractal approach could be the basis for actually scaling intelligence - not just more parameters, but more systematic structuring.

Dialectical subsumption algorithms: Development of methods that can subsume the general under its own particular moments (the opposite of traditional classification). Implementation of systematic analysis tools that can identify how universal structures manifest in specific contexts. Creation of learning systems that can recognize when phenomena don't fit existing categories and systematically extend the framework.

Integration with empirical learning: Combination of reconstructive structure analysis with empirical pattern recognition. Use of structural predictions to guide data collection and analysis. Development of systems that can recognize when empirical patterns contradict structural predictions and trigger framework revision. This approach would create AI systems that are both systematically principled and empirically grounded, avoiding the extremes of purely data-driven or purely rule-based approaches.

13.5 Meta-Cognitive Architectures: The Core of Innovation

Implementing genuine self-regulation in AI systems requires solving several fundamental technical challenges:

Real-time meta-monitoring: Development of architectures that can simultaneously generate linguistic output and monitor the generation process. Implementation of what cognitive scientists call "metacognitive awareness" - the ability of the system to evaluate its own knowledge states and processing processes. Creation of mechanisms for dynamic strategy adaptation based on metacognitive evaluation.

Strategic communication control: Design of systems that can maintain communicative goals while adapting tactics in real time. Implementation of Heinrichs' concept of "syntactic meta-signs" - meta-signs that regulate the use of basic signs. Development of architectures for genuine discourse management instead of just text generation.

Performative self-reference: Distinction between simulated self-reference (mention of own abilities) and performative self-reference (reflexive control of own operations). Implementation of genuine "actu exercito" self-reference - self-regulation during action, not just afterward. Creation of architectures where self-monitoring and self-regulation are integrated into the primary processing loop.

Dynamic adaptation mechanisms: Development of systems that can recognize and correct communicative disturbances - not reactively to external feedback, but proactively through internal monitoring. Implementation of adaptive strategy choice based on ongoing evaluation of the communicative situation. Creation of architectures for genuine pragmatic flexibility, not just syntactic variation.

13.6 Implementation Strategies: Stepwise Implementation

A realistic development path would comprise three main phases:

Phase 1: Extended Meta-Cognition (2-3 years): Development of transformer architectures with integrated self-monitoring capabilities. Implementation of real-time output quality assessment and strategic adaptation. Creation of training methodologies for developing metacognitive abilities. Construction of evaluation frameworks for genuine versus simulated self-reflection. This phase builds on existing architectures and extends them with meta-cognitive layers.

Phase 2: Four-Dimensional Integration (3-5 years): Design of architectures that process all four language dimensions simultaneously. Implementation of dialectical subsumption algorithms for systematic structure generation. Development of multimodal grounding systems for sigmatic dimension implementation. Creation of pragmatic reasoning engines for genuine speech act understanding. This phase requires fundamental architectural innovations beyond current paradigms.

Phase 3: Reconstructive Intelligence (5-7 years): Construction of systems capable of systematic principle-based thinking instead of just pattern recognition. Implementation of complete reflexive logic capabilities across all four semiotic levels. Development of cultural reasoning systems based on universal structural principles. Creation of genuine creative language generation based on structural innovation. This phase represents the complete realization of Heinrichs' vision.

13.7 Test Criteria for Genuine Language Competence

How does one recognize whether an AI has developed genuine language competence? Heinrichs' theory offers precise criteria:

Reflexive self-regulation: Can the system monitor its own language action and adapt strategically? Test: Does the system self-initiatedly recognize incoherences or pragmatic inappropriateness in its output and correct them without external feedback?

Four-dimensional integration: Does it process all four language dimensions integrally or only individually? Test: Can the system simultaneously ensure sigmatic grounding, semantic construction, pragmatic appropriateness, and syntactic coherence?

Performative self-relation: Can it refer to its own speech acts while accomplishing them? Test: Does the system show genuine metacommunicative abilities - can it adapt its own communication strategy in actu?

Structural universality: Does it recognize the universal structures of different languages and cultures? Test: Can the system identify and apply structural principles across linguistic and cultural boundaries?

Reconstructive competence: Can it develop new structures from principles instead of just imitating patterns? Test: Does the system generate appropriate outputs for

completely novel situations through structure reconstruction instead of through analogy to training data?

13.8 Economic Potentials and Strategic Significance

The development of reflection-logically founded AI has considerable economic implications:

Superiority over purely data-driven approaches: Systems that reconstruct structures require less training data and generalize better. This reduces training costs and improves efficiency.

Cultural adaptability: Universal structural principles with culture-specific realization enable genuine localization instead of mere translation. A single system can authentically serve multiple cultures.

Genuine multilingualism: Structure-based processing enables deeper language understanding and better translation than statistical methods. This has implications for international business activity and diplomacy.

Interpretability and trust: Systems that use structured principles are more interpretable than purely neural networks. This is critical for regulated industries and highly sensitive applications.

Scalability: Fractal architectural principles enable systematic scaling instead of just quantitative growth. This could lead to more efficient and capable systems.

13.9 Licensing, Cooperation, and Contact

Licensing model: The concepts and principles presented here are based on Johannes Heinrichs' philosophical work. For commercial use in AI systems, a licensing agreement is required. This enables:

- Use of reflection-logical architectural principles
- Implementation of four-dimensional language processing
- Application of dialectical subsumption methodology
- Access to detailed technical specifications

Cooperation possibilities: We seek partnerships with AI research institutions and companies interested in developing reflection-logically founded systems. Possible cooperation forms:

- Joint research projects
- Licensing with technical support
- Workshops and training for developer teams
- Consulting on architectural implementation

Availability of foundational texts: All works by Johannes Heinrichs mentioned in this book will be made available through Reflexivity Press in German and English as ePub and PDF. For deeper engagement with the theoretical foundations, we particularly recommend:

- “Language and Practice” (5 volumes) - the complete philosophy of language
- “Actions - Foundation of a Periodic Systematics” - the action theory
- “Reflection as Social System” - the social-theoretical foundation

Contact for licensing inquiries: lizenzen@reflexivitypress.com

13.10 Conclusion: A New Paradigm for AI Development

Johannes Heinrichs’ reflection logic offers the AI industry not only a diagnosis of the limitations of current systems, but a concrete development path for the next generation of artificial intelligence. The principles outlined here - four-dimensional language architecture, reflexive self-regulation, reconstructive methodology, fractal scaling - represent a paradigm that could enable fundamental breakthroughs.

The technical challenges are considerable. But the systematic foundation is available - developed over almost five decades of philosophical work, now ready for technical realization. For companies and research institutions that want to be at the forefront of AI development, Heinrichs’ work offers a theoretical foundation that is both rigorously grounded and practically applicable.

The question is not whether, but when the AI industry will take up these insights. Those who invest early - in theoretical engagement, architectural innovation, methodical transformation - could gain a decisive competitive advantage. The foundations are ready. It lies with the next generation of AI developers to realize them.

PART C: METHODOICAL INTEGRATION

From systematic tools to applicable methodology

You have now gotten to know the ontological foundations and the systematic tools - the four levels of reflection, the four potentiating elements of meaning, the semiotic levels, the periodic system of actions, and the philosophy of language. But a decisive question remains open: How do these insights become practically applicable methods?

A tool is only as good as its application. The most brilliant theory remains academic playing if it cannot be translated into concrete procedures. Johannes Heinrichs has not only developed new philosophical insights, but also new methods for their systematic application.

Part C shows this methodical enhancement of reflection logic. Three building steps lead from the foundations to applicable systematics: dialectical subsumption as organizational procedure, integration-through-differentiation as universal development principle, and genuine dialectic-systematics as completion of methodical innovation.

The goal is a systematics that is simultaneously universal and open to experience, precise and capable of development. What emerges is more than a philosophical method - it is a new paradigm for systematic thinking in the 21st century.

Chapter 14: Dialectical Subsumption - The New Method of Organization

Heinrichs has developed a fundamentally different method: dialectical subsumption. We have already seen this method at work in action typology (Chapter 7.5) and philosophy of language (Chapter 8.5). Here it should now be presented systematically.

Imagine you want to systematically investigate a complex area - say the different forms of human action, the types of communication, or the structures of social organization. How do you proceed?

The traditional method is classificatory division: You seek external criteria and divide the field accordingly. Actions according to their goals, communication according to its media, societies according to their size or form of rule. The result is more or less arbitrary lists without inner connection.

Heinrichs has developed a fundamentally different method: dialectical subsumption. Instead of external criteria, it uses reflection-logical structure itself as principle of

organization. The result is a systematics that is not imposed from outside, but opens up the inner logic of the matter itself.

14.1 The Problem of Traditional Systematics

The basic problem of all traditional attempts at organization lies in their externality. They begin with preconceived categories and assign phenomena to these categories. These categories may appear plausible, but they have no inner relation to the matter itself.

Let us take a simple example: the division of human actions. You could distinguish between individual and collective actions, between planned and spontaneous, between successful and unsuccessful. Each of these distinctions is justified, but none follows from the nature of action itself. They are arbitrarily chosen and stand unrelated next to each other.

The result is classifications, but not systematics in the strict sense. You can organize phenomena with them, but you don't understand why there must be exactly this order and not another. You get overview, but no insight into inner connections.

14.2 The Innovation: Reversal of Subsumption

Heinrichs' methodical innovation lies in a simple but revolutionary reversal¹: Not the particular is subsumed under the general, but the general is subsumed under its own particular moments.

What does this mean concretely? Instead of asking "Which external criteria can I use for organization?", dialectical subsumption asks: "Which organization results from the reflexive structure of the matter itself?"

The answer follows from the four levels of reflection: Every area of human experience can be organized according to the four basic moments that correspond to the four elements of meaning. This organization is not arbitrary, but follows from the nature of reflection itself.

14.3 The Fractal Structure

What is special about dialectical subsumption is its fractal structure: Each of the four basic categories can in turn be subdivided according to the same four categories. This creates a self-similar structure that shows the same reflection-logical order on all levels.

From four become sixteen, from sixteen become sixty-four categories - but not through mechanical combination, but through systematic development of the reflexive structure. Each subdivision shows specific refractions of the basic structure that occur only in this concrete area.

1 See on this in detail Chapter 35.1

This fractal structure is not an external schema, but is supposed to map the self-similar structure of reflection processes. Because reflection is the basic structure of all human meaning-accomplishments, it must be found on all levels - but in each specific way.

14.4 The Periodic System of Actions as Example

An impressive example, which we already got to know in Chapter 7.5, provides Heinrichs' action typology:

Object-related action changes the physical world - here the It dominates. Inner-subjective action changes one's own subjectivity - here the I dominates. Social action interacts with other subjects - here the Thou dominates. Expression action shapes meaning media - here the Medium dominates.

Each of these genera is now again subdivided fourfold. Object-related action includes object change (objective mode), movement action (subjective mode), material labor (social mode), and trade with value objects (medial mode).

These sixteen action species can in turn be subdivided into sixty-four action types, then into two hundred fifty-six action classes - a systematic "periodic system" of human practice with remarkable order and phenomenon disclosure, more than through supposedly presuppositionless phenomenology, which Heinrichs doesn't believe in anyway.

14.5 Reconstructive Openness

Decisive is: This method is not mechanically-deductive, but reconstructive. It works in constant "dialogue of concept and experience." The reflection-logical structure provides the principle of organization, but the concrete elaboration must prove itself on the phenomena.

If it shows that certain areas don't follow the four-structure, the method must be revised. It is hypothesis, not dogma. Reflection logic is no closed edifice of doctrine, but an open research program. Heinrichs emphasizes explicitly: "This reconstruction work in dialogue of concept and experience is not a mere schematism, but open-ended research." This principled openness for corrections and further developments is an essential characteristic of genuine scientificity.

14.6 The Overcoming of Arbitrary Divisions

Dialectical subsumption overcomes three fundamental problems of traditional systematics:

The problem of arbitrariness is overcome because the division criteria are not arbitrarily chosen, but result from the reflection structure itself. The four elements of meaning are not arbitrary classification categories, but necessary moments of every meaning-accomplishment.

The problem of rigidity is overcome because the system is not rigidly deductive, but reconstructively developed. It grows in constant dialogue between conceptual specification and empirical experience.

The problem of superficiality is overcome because the method doesn't stop at external classifications, but opens up the inner structures of the investigated areas. It shows not only how the phenomena can be ordered, but why they must be ordered this way.

14.7 Practical Applications

Dialectical subsumption is not only theoretically interesting, but practically applicable. It offers an instrument for structural analysis of arbitrary areas.

Everywhere the same basic structure shows itself, but in each specific refraction. This unity in diversity is the key to a systematics that is both universal and differentiated. It can be designated as a dialectical algorithm: a mathematics-like procedure for extra-mathematical, dialectical areas.

This new method of organization leads us to an even more fundamental principle. Dialectical subsumption shows not only how we can systematically order complex areas, but also how these areas develop. The universal development principle that stands behind this is integration-through-differentiation - a principle that applies both to individual learning processes and to social developments.

14.8 Interpenetration as Ternary Variant of Dialectical Subsumption

Dialectical subsumption usually works with the four-structure of levels of reflection. However, there are areas where another basic structure is more appropriate. The three-circles model of anthropology shows an important variant: the interpenetration logic based on three basic principles.

The Principle of Interpenetration

Interpenetration designates the reciprocal dialectical permeation of basic principles. In the case of human wholeness, these are body, soul, and spirit. These three permeate each other not externally (like set-theoretical intersections), but internally-qualitatively: Each connection creates a new quality.

From three basic principles result systematically seven forms:

- 3 pure principles (K_1, S_1, G_1)
- 3 twofold interpenetrations ($K_2/S_2, K_4/G_2, G_4/S_4$)
- 1 threefold interpenetration ($K_3/S_3/G_3$)

Relation to Dialectical Subsumption

Interpenetration logic is a special case of dialectical subsumption: The further organization occurs through repetition of the main organization (here the triad instead of the tetrad) in the overlap areas.

The difference from regular dialectical subsumption lies in the base number:

- Dialectical subsumption: $4 \rightarrow 16 \rightarrow 64$ (four-structure)
- Interpenetration: $3 \rightarrow 7$ (three-structure with overlaps)

Why a Ternary Structure?

The triad of body-soul-spirit can actually be grounded reflection-logically - through assignment to the four elements of meaning. Heinrichs shows in an illuminating graphic how both structures relate:

The body corresponds to the It - the pre-personal level of the bodily. The spirit corresponds to the We/Meaning-Medium - the trans-personal level of the supra-individual. But the soul includes both personal elements of meaning: the I and the Thou. It is the personal level of self-related consciousness. (Compare Figure 1 in Chapter 3.4)

This assignment is not arbitrary. I and Thou share an essential structure: Both are self-related consciousnesses, both are “souls” in the sense of reflecting subjects. The difference between self-relation and other-relation is a difference within the personal level, not between different levels. Therefore the soul can be grasped as unity of I-Thou - as what Heinrichs calls “self-relation-in-other-relation.”

The triad thus results when one considers the interpersonal dimension as one level. The tetrad results when one distinguishes self- and other-relation within this level. Both organizations are reflection-logically grounded, only on different levels of abstraction.

Interestingly, here shows a structural parallel to the relation of Heinrichs' tetrad to Hegel's triad (cf. Chapter 32.10): Also there the middle level - that of separation, of difference - can be understood as internally divided. The question whether three or four levels are "right" thus proves to be falsely posed: It concerns different degrees of resolution of the same reflection-logical structure.

Methodical Flexibility

The possibility of ternary interpenetration shows the methodical flexibility of reflection logic. It is no rigid four-schema, but a principle that adapts to the distinctiveness of different object areas. The four-structure is the normal case, but not the only case.

Decisive remains: Also the ternary variant follows the basic principle of dialectical subsumption - the systematic development through repetition of the basic structure on deeper levels. Whether quaternary or ternary, the principle of interpenetration and permeation remains the same.

The detailed presentation of anthropological interpenetration is found in Chapter 18.4. Here the methodical note on this important variant of dialectical subsumption sufficed.

Chapter 15: Integration-through-Differentiation - The Universal Development Principle

Consider for a moment your own development as a thinking person. As a child you initially experienced the world as an undifferentiated whole. Then you learned to distinguish: between yourself and others, between different people, between different situations. This differentiation was necessary - without it you couldn't act in the world.

But development cannot stop at mere differentiation. Who only distinguishes without seeing the connections falls into fragmentation. Genuine maturity shows itself in that you make the necessary distinctions but can integrate again on a higher level. You understand the distinctiveness of different people and can nevertheless deal with all.

This observation leads us to one of the most important principles of Johannes Heinrichs' philosophy: Integration-through-Differentiation. It is not only a principle of cognition, but the universal law of development of all living systems.

15.1 The Problem of False Alternatives

One of the most persistent problems of modern societies lies in the false alternative between integration and differentiation. Conservatives demand more unity, tradition, common values - and lament the fragmentation of modernity. Progressives demand more diversity, plurality, individual freedom - and lament uniforming constraints.

Both sides are right - and both err at the same time. They are right because both integration and differentiation are necessary. They err because they understand these as opposites between which one must choose.

The consequence is unfruitful culture wars: multiculturalism versus leading culture, globalization versus regionalism, individualization versus community thinking. These struggles are so hardened because both sides represent justified concerns, but are caught in false oppositions.

15.2 The Reflection-Logical Solution

Heinrichs shows: Integration and differentiation are not opposites, but complementary moments of one and the same development process. Genuine integration is only possible through differentiation, and meaningful differentiation leads to higher integration.

The secret lies in the identity principle: Integration-through-differentiation only exists when the principle of differentiation is identical with the principle of higher unification. The four levels of reflection are simultaneously differentiation principle (different forms of rationality) and integration principle (systematic gradation).

Why does the reflection gradation function? Because it doesn't use external criteria that create artificial separations, but opens up the inner logic of the matter itself. The distinctions follow from the reflexive nature of consciousness and therefore naturally lead to systematic integration.

The principle Integration-through-Differentiation is not Heinrichs' invention, but his formulation of a Hegelian basic operation. In Hegel the same structure is found in the famous paragraphs 79-82 of the Encyclopedia: The "Understanding" (fixed distinction) and the "Speculative" (unity in opposition) are not two separate steps, but two moments of a dialectical movement. The differentiation already presupposes integration (otherwise it would be arbitrary), and integration presupposes differentiation (otherwise it would be empty).

Heinrichs' particular achievement lies in applying this abstract logical principle concretely to personality development, social theory, and cultural development. The principle loses nothing of its conceptual rigor, but gains in life-world vividness. The systematic classification of this adoption in relation to Hegel is found in Chapter 36.

15.3 Application to Personality Development

In individual development the principle shows itself particularly clearly. A person who only wants to remain “holistic” and rejects all differentiations remains stuck in infantile undifferentiatedness. A person who only specializes and analyzes without seeing the connections loses himself in fragmented one-sidedness.

Genuine maturity arises through conscious differentiation with simultaneous integration: You develop specific abilities and competencies, but maintain the relation to the whole. A good doctor is not only a medical specialist, but understands the psychic, social, and cultural dimensions of health and illness.

This integration doesn't make him a worse physician, but a better one. Through systematic connection of different areas, his distinctiveness as doctor is sharpened instead of diluted.

15.4 Application to Social Development

Socially the same principle shows itself in the development of the four subsystems. Modern societies have learned to distinguish between economy, politics, culture, and basic values. This differentiation was progress - it enabled specialized rationalities and more efficient problem-solving.

But it cannot remain at mere differentiation. If the subsystems stand unrelated next to each other or fight each other, social fragmentation arises. The economy follows only economic criteria, politics only power calculations, culture only aesthetic preferences.

The solution lies in conscious integration of the differentiated subsystems. Not through return to undifferentiated unity, but through systematic coordination while preserving proper logic. The fourfold division of democracy wants to politically institutionalize this integration-through-differentiation.

15.5 The Semiotic Levels as Development Logic

The principle also shows itself in the development of forms of expression. Action, language, art, and mysticism form a systematic sequence of integration-through-differentiation.

Language does not sublimate action, but integrates it on a higher level. Scientific theories are not mere images of practical accomplishments, but have their own theoretical dignity. They can even correct action and open new possibilities for action.

Likewise great art does not sublimate language, but transcends it through it. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony does not eliminate Schiller's text, but leads it to a completion that it couldn't have reached in mere language form.

15.6 Conditions of Genuine Integration-through-Differentiation

Not every connection of integration and differentiation realizes the principle. Heinrichs names precise conditions:

The identity principle: The principle of differentiation must be identical with the principle of higher unification. Divisions according to external criteria create artificial separations without systematic integration.

Bilaterality: The principle must be applicable in both directions. Integration-through-differentiation means: sharpen the distinctiveness of areas through systematic connection. Differentiation-through-integration means: develop special abilities from conscious gathering.

Consciousness: In natural evolution, integration-through-differentiation happens unconsciously through evolutionary pressure. In personality development it can be consciously accomplished through self-reflection on the occasion of new life experience. In social evolution it must be consciously accomplished and institutionalized through systematic politics.

15.7 Critique of False Alternatives

The principle of integration-through-differentiation shows why many social controversies rest on false alternatives:

Against conservative regression: “Back to the roots” leads to undifferentiated unity and developmental standstill. The complex modern world cannot be mastered by return to simpler conditions.

Against progressive fragmentation: “Diversity at any price” leads to chaotic splintering without orientation. Arbitrary plurality is no less destructive than authoritarian coordination.

Against technocratic uniforming: “Efficiency through standardization” leads to mechanistic coordination without living development. Purely instrumental rationality kills the diversity it pretends to optimize.

The reflection-logical alternative reads: Oriented diversity through systematic differentiation with conscious integration.

15.8 Practical Consequences

The principle of integration-through-differentiation is not only theoretically elegant, but practically applicable:

In education: Learning succeeds best when different learning forms (cognitive, emotional, practical, social) are consciously integrated without leveling their distinctiveness.

In therapy: Healing requires integration of bodily, psychic, social, and spiritual dimensions, but each dimension retains its specific regularities.

In organizational development: Successful teams arise through conscious use of different competencies and personality types, not through uniforming or chaotic diversity.

In politics: Good governance integrates different policy areas (economy, social, culture, security) without disregarding their proper logic.

This universal development principle leads us to the concluding methodical question: How can a systematics be constituted that is both universal and open to experience? Johannes Heinrichs' answer is genuine dialectic-systematics - a systematics that gives phenomenon-appropriateness precedence over mathematical elegance and thereby sets a new standard for systematic thinking.

Chapter 16: The Genuine Dialectic-Systematics - Phenomenon-Appropriateness instead of Mathematical Elegance

The question of the right relationship of systematic order and phenomenon-fidelity runs through the entire history of philosophy. How can a systematics be both clear and appropriate to the diversity of phenomena?

Hegel himself polemicized against mechanical application of schemas - the notorious "thesis-antithesis-synthesis" doesn't come from him, but was falsely attributed to him. His claim was that the method develops from the matter itself, not imposed externally.

Heinrichs continues this claim. His dialectic-systematics follows the principle of appropriateness toward phenomena. The result is a systematics that shows how genuine order and openness to experience are compatible.

16.1 The Problem of Systematic Compulsion

A widespread misunderstanding of Heinrichs' systematics lies in the assumption that he develops a rigid four-by-four matrix of exactly sixteen dialectic types according to purely combinatorial principle. This interpretation however misunderstands his fundamental methodical innovation: the reconstructive method as "dialogue of concept and experience."

Were Heinrichs a dogmatic systematizer, he would have to mechanically elaborate his four levels of reflection everywhere into sixteen or 256 combinations and then present these as complete system. He doesn't do this. His genuine systematics shows an asymmetric but systematically grounded structure that corresponds to the actual complexity of dialectical phenomena.

This asymmetry is no deficiency, but expression of honesty toward phenomena. Different spheres of being have different dialectic forms with different depth of differentiation, and an authentic systematics must take account of this instead of forcing them into a Procrustean bed.

16.2 The Authentic Five-Structure

Heinrichs' genuine dialectic-systematics follows a phenomenon-oriented five-structure with asymmetric but systematically grounded internal organization:

Main Type I: I/Subjectivity includes four dialectic types: the dialectic of constitutive self-reflection (fundamental for all other forms), the dialectic of the four cognitive functions (perceiving, thinking, feeling, intuiting), the existential dialectic of life stages, and the therapeutic dialectic of illness and healing.

Main Type II: It/Objectivity splits into epistemological and ontological organization, because only here the difference of "For-me" and "In-itself" is particularly serious. This yields eight dialectic types from perceptual dialectic to dialectic of natural laws.

Main Type III: Thou/Intersubjectivity includes four dialectic types of social relationships: from elementary recognition to social theory-practice dialectic.

Main Type IV: Medium/Institutionality is richest in dialectic forms and includes six types: from logical dialectic through language dialectic to mystical experience of unity of opposites.

Main Type V: Applications remains principally open for new discoveries and includes all practical applications of reflection-logical dialectic.

16.3 Reconstructive Openness instead of Deductive Closure

The genuine systematics remains principally open for further dialectic types. Heinrichs emphasizes: "This reconstruction work in dialogue of concept and experience is not mere schematism, but open-ended research."

This methodical honesty distinguishes his approach from closed systems. Reflection logic is "no closed edifice of doctrine, but an open research program." If new dialectic types are discovered that don't fit the previous schema, the schema must be extended or revised.

Every structural decision in the systematics is grounded: Why four main types? Because they result from the elements of meaning as spheres of being. Why splitting only at Main Type II? Because only here the For-me/In-itself dialectic is central. Why more dialectic types at Main Type IV? Because the mediality sphere is richest in dialectic forms. The fixing on certain numbers doesn't correspond to the open systematics of dialectic.

16.4 Integration of Philosophy-Historical Discoveries

A great advantage of systematic openness lies in the possibility of integrating all important dialectical discoveries of the history of philosophy without leveling them:

Hegel's merit - determinate negation as productive dialectical movement - finds its systematic place, but not as universal principle of all dialectic. Marx's merit - theory-practice dialectic as social motor - is integrated, but not materialistically shortened. Kierkegaard's merit - existential dialectic between possibility and actuality - is systematically located in modal-logical dialectic.

Nicholas of Cusa's merit - *coincidentia oppositorum* - is understood as incarnational dialectic with clear experiential basis. Adorno's merit - critique of false syntheses and insistence on the non-identical - is appreciated. Eastern traditions - non-duality without Western dualism - find their place in the (incidentally still far from settled) East-West dialectic.

Every dialectic type retains its proper logic, but finds its systematic place in the overall structure. This is genuine integration without reduction or leveling.

16.5 Practical Consequences of the Corrected Systematics

This phenomenon-appropriate systematics has far-reaching practical consequences:

For AI development, Heinrichs' criterion of "performative self-relation in actu exercito" offers a rational standard for evaluating AI systems. Not the complexity of algorithms, but the ability for performative self-relation decides about genuine intelligence.

For environmental sciences, the systematics shows that environmental problems are dialectical problems that require both natural scientific and social-theoretical competence. Fixation on the natural scientific overlooks the social conditions of ecological crises.

For conflict analysis it becomes clear that different conflicts follow different dialectic types and correspondingly require specific solution strategies. Some are solved through integration, others through productive tension.

For interdisciplinary research, the systematics offers a compass for integrating different sciences without disregarding their proper logic. This enables reflection-logically connected interdisciplinarity instead of additive multidisciplinary^[2].

16.6 The Formalization-Theoretical Limit

Heinrichs emphasizes an important limit of his systematics: “The attempt to formalize dialectic, as Gotthard Günther envisioned, can reasonably only mean typologically sorting dialectical relationships because of the failure of a formal-logical object logic.”

This insight is methodically fundamental: Dialectical relationships can be classified and systematized, but not mathematically formalized, because they belong to the sphere of subjectivity and reflexivity that escapes extensive-logical objectification.

Heinrichs’ dialectic typology is presumably the maximum of systematization possible in the area of dialectic without destroying its living character. This is no weakness, but a methodical strength: It remains faithful to the distinctiveness of its object.

Chapter 17: 16.6a Concretion as Strength and Limit

At this point a methodical honesty is required that Heinrichs himself would demand. His systematics has a decisive advantage over Hegel’s abstract logic - and precisely this advantage simultaneously grounds its limit.

The Advantage of Concretion:

Hegel’s dialectical basic operation - the interplay of Understanding, Dialectical, and Speculative (Encyclopedia §§79-82) - is purely formal. It describes only the *form* of movement, not its *content*. This makes it universally applicable, but also abstract and difficult to grasp for many.

Heinrichs’ four-division on the other hand is filled with content: It-I-Thou-We are not mere formal determinations, but concrete forms of reference with recognizable content. An economic system (It-dominant), a legal system (Thou-dominant), a cultural system (We-dominant) - this is immediately intuitive. The elements of meaning have “faces,” they can be recognized in the life-world.

This concretion makes Heinrichs’ systematics particularly fruitful for social philosophy, action theory, and social analysis. It enables applications that would not be possible with Hegel’s abstract logic alone.

The Reverse Side:

But precisely this content filling limits universality. Hegel’s formal operation can be applied to *everything* - to nature, spirit, logic, history -, because it prescribes nothing contentually. Heinrichs’ elements of meaning on the other hand are gained from *human* reflection experience. The “Thou” as form of reference presupposes a counterpart that is itself capable of reflection - or at least can be treated as such.

Here lies the problem of natural philosophy: How should the “Thou” appear in inanimate nature? What is the “Thou-aspect” of a crystal, a planetary system, a chemical reaction? Heinrichs is aware of this problem. In “Dialectic as Reflection Logic” (2026) he begins to locate reflection logic ontologically in nature - a project he himself considers not yet completed. A corresponding natural-philosophical work is announced.

The Methodical Consequence:

This limit is no objection to Heinrichs' systematics, but to excessive claims of universality. The four-division is primarily a systematics for the area of *spirit* in the Hegelian sense - for action, language, society, culture. There it proves itself with remarkable sharpness.

Whether it can be extended to nature is an open question. Heinrichs' own works suggest that the reflection structure must at least be *laid out* in nature - otherwise reflection-capable consciousness couldn't emerge from it. But the precise execution is still outstanding.

This is no weakness, but expression of the reconstructive method itself: The "dialogue of concept and experience" cannot decide in advance how far the systematics carries. It must show it in concrete execution. That Heinrichs names open questions here instead of giving premature answers speaks for the methodical honesty of his approach.

Relation to Hegel:

Interestingly, the usual image thereby reverses: Not Hegel is the "rigid systematizer" and Heinrichs the "phenomenon-open" thinker. Hegel's abstract logic is precisely because of its formality more flexible and universal. Heinrichs' systematics is precisely because of its concretion more limited - but within these limits also more applicable and fruitful.

Both approaches complement each other: Hegel's formal dialectic gives the universal structure, Heinrichs' content four-division gives the concrete application to the area of spirit. The question how both relate - whether the tetrad can be derived from Hegelian triad or vice versa -, belongs to the systematic basic questions treated in Chapter 36.

17.1 A New Standard for Systematics

What emerges with Heinrichs is a new standard for systematic thinking: a systematics that is simultaneously universal and open to experience, precise and capable of development. It shows that the alternative between dogmatic systematics and arbitrary plurality is false.

Genuine systematics arises not through compulsion to mathematical or other formal elegance, but through fidelity to phenomena with systematic reflection on their inner structures. It is not closed, but principally open for new discoveries. It is not rigid, but capable of development through dialogue of concept and experience.

This systematics is simultaneously modest and ambitious. Modest because it acknowledges the limits of formalization and remains with typological sorting. Ambitious because it nevertheless claims universal validity - not as dogmatic system, but as open research program.

With methodical integration, systematic foundation is completed. The ontological foundations, systematic tools, and methodical principles are ready. Now the decisive

step can be accomplished: the anthropological completion of reflection logic. For all systematics remains empty if it doesn't show what it means for understanding humans.

PART D: ANTHROPOLOGICAL COMPLETION

From methodical integration to integral anthropology

You have now gotten to know the complete methodical foundation of reflection logic: the ontological foundations, systematic tools, and methodical principles. But a decisive question remains: What does all this mean for our understanding of humans?

All philosophy is ultimately anthropology - consciously or unconsciously. When we speak about cognition, we presuppose a certain image of the knowing human. When we speak about society, we have ideas about what humans are and how they can live together. When we speak about ethics, we assume certain human abilities and needs.

Johannes Heinrichs has recognized that reflection logic is not only a new method, but enables a new view of humans. His integral anthropology overcomes the classical dualisms of body and spirit, individual and society, nature and culture through systematic differentiation of human levels of consciousness.

Part D shows this anthropological completion of reflection logic. What emerges is not only another anthropological theory, but a new foundation for all further practical applications. For only when we understand what humans are in their full reflection-logical structure can we develop appropriate institutions, cultures, and life designs.

Chapter 18: Integral Anthropology - Grammar of the Faculties of Consciousness

Consider yourself in this moment. You are reading these words, understanding their meaning, perhaps forming a judgment. At the same time, you feel your body, have emotions, remember similar things. This simple self-observation reveals an astonishing complexity: You are not only a thinking being, not only a feeling one, not only a physical one. You are all of that simultaneously - and even more.

But how does this fit together? How can we understand this multi-layeredness without falling into chaotic arbitrariness? Johannes Heinrichs' integral anthropology, elaborated in the two volumes of the "Critique of Integral Reason," provides a systematic answer.

18.1 The Problem of Anthropological Fragmentation

Modern anthropology faces a similar problem to post-Hegelian philosophy as a whole: fragmentation into irreconcilable approaches. Biology researches humans as organisms, psychology as conscious beings, sociology as social beings, theology in their relation to God.

Each discipline provides important insights, but none can integrate the others. Humans disintegrate into unconnected aspects: Is he a natural being or cultural being? Individualist or social being? Rational thinker or emotional being?

Heinrichs complains that there are countless individual investigations of the various mental faculties - perception, thinking, feeling, intuition - but no coherent theory. He poses fundamental questions that remain unanswered: What does our consciousness actually “do” when it thinks or feels nothing specific? How do thinking and feeling relate to each other - in competition or complementarity? Is feeling a cognitive faculty or does it have to do with valuations?

His goal: to uncover the “spiritual bond” between human faculties through reflection-theoretical consideration.

18.2 The Reflection-Logical Foundation: The Radical Faculty

Heinrichs’ solution begins with an apparently simple question: What happens to human consciousness when a person thinks about nothing at all, when they daydream, perhaps just enjoying their existence? This “idle running” of consciousness - comparable to the idle running of an engine - is not nothing, but the basic state of the faculty of reflection.

Self-reflection is the “radical faculty” - the root from which all other mental faculties can be derived. Heinrichs draws on Thomas Aquinas: Man is the being capable of “complete return to himself” (*reditio completa in seipsum*).

Crucial is the distinction between two types of self-reflection:

Lived self-reflection is implicit and spontaneous. It accompanies all our activities without us explicitly thematizing it. When you now read this text, you know implicitly that it is you who is reading - without having to think about it.

Subsequent self-reflection is explicit and objectifying. It makes lived reflection thematic. You can now pause and ask: “What am I actually doing right now? How do I understand this text?”

The first is the condition of possibility for the second. A child learning to say “I” must already have implicit I-consciousness to understand the meaning of “I” at all. Between both exists an interplay: contents from explicit reflection can pass into implicit, tacit knowledge.

18.3 The Four Cognitive Faculties

From the structure of the four meaning-elements (It-I-You-We), Heinrichs derives four equally original cognitive faculties:

Perception is the faculty of object-relation (It). It is often considered the most fundamental cognitive faculty, but it is only one among four equally original ones.

Thinking is the faculty of explicit self-reflection (I). It connects, orders, concludes - and can apply itself to itself.

Feeling is the faculty of interpersonal meaning-reception and communication (You). Feelings are not merely “subjective,” but disclose value-qualities of the world that remain closed to mere thinking.

Intuition is the faculty of the meaning-medium (We). It is “occasional participation in the timelessness of the meaning-medium” - a kind of “infinitesimal calculus” of self-consciousness in the face of the infinite horizon of meaning.

The Subsumption-Logical Penetration

Each of these four faculties is itself subdivided fourfold - here dialectical subsumption shows itself in its anthropological application:

Perception includes: bodily sensations (pain, well-being), thinking perception (perception structured by understanding - illustrated by the Necker cube, whose depth perception “flips”), feeling perception (selective perception according to emotional significance - “One sees well only with the heart”), and medially mediated perception (intuitive insights, as with the experienced antique dealer who “sees” the value of a piece).

Thinking includes: objective-empirical thinking (reasoning from perceptions), associative thinking (subjective connections - Freud used them as access to the unconscious), experience- and feeling-bound thinking (where thoughts can “pour oil on the fire of feelings”), and logical thinking - itself subdivided into objective-logical, conceptual, social and reflection-logical thinking.

Feeling includes: instinctual life and perceptual feelings (orientation feelings - the technique of “Focusing” according to Gendlin reveals the bodily component in feelings), thinking-feeling (the feeling resonance of thinking - “Thinking without feeling resonance is stunted”), interpersonal feeling (love in its stages: Sexus, Eros, Philia, Agape), and medial feeling/clairsentience (the ability to pick up emotional vibrations).

Intuition includes: intuition on the occasion of perception (an object becomes the occasion for non-sensory knowledge), intuition by means of thinking (creative thinking - Kekulé discovered the benzene ring formula in a dream), intuition in feeling (clairfeeling - as with Zuckmayer’s life-changing decision for Wiesmühl), and heightened medial intuition/clairvoyance.

Critique of False Oppositions

Heinrichs criticizes C.G. Jung's thesis of the opposition of functions, according to which the respectively opposing functions (thinking-feeling, perception-intuition) would exclude each other. Instead, he advocates for their integration: it is about the wise, situationally appropriate weighting of these different types of reasons.

Similarly, he criticizes two disturbances in the relationship between thinking and feeling: The *rationalistic disturbance* devalues feeling as a source of knowledge ("emotional nonsense"). The *emotionalistic disturbance* conversely devalues thinking in favor of feeling - "pseudo-psychological and pseudo-spiritual treatises find eager buyers."

18.4 The Functional Circle of Practice

After the cognitive faculties, Heinrichs turns to the functional circle of practice. Here too a fourfold structure emerges:

Cognizing (receptivity) - the absorption of reality into the subject.

Valuing (reflexivity of comparing) - the inevitable taking of positions toward what is cognized. Against the therapeutic maxim "You shall not judge," Heinrichs objects: valuations are as unavoidable as factual determinations. The question is not whether we value, but how we deal with it.

Willing (reciprocity of willing and means) - the desire, wishing, striving for what is recognized as valuable.

Acting (realization) - the implementation of what is willed into reality.

The Value Pyramid

Heinrichs modifies Maslow's hierarchy of needs reflection-logically and distinguishes four value levels:

Basic needs - physical security of existence. *Interest values* - preferences going beyond the merely necessary. *Communication values* - values of social relationship and recognition. *Ultimate values* - truth, goodness, beauty, justice, love.

Regarding the mode of being of values, Heinrichs represents a value-relationalism: values are not independent Platonic essences, but relational ideas generated through human reflection - but therefore no less real or binding.

18.5 Memory and Fantasy

Memory and fantasy are secondary faculties that presuppose all primary faculties and modify them temporally:

Memory is the storage and disposal of past cognitions. Heinrichs offers a hypothetical structuring according to the semiotic dimensions of language: sigmatic memory (for pre-semantic bodily sensations), semantic memory (for linguistically stored content), pragmatic memory (for activities and communication), syntactic memory (for logical-structural connections). His thesis: “Memory could be structured like a language!”

Fantasy is the faculty for the imagination of future or possible cognitions - “uninhibited representational thinking, usually without claim to truth discovery.” Einstein is quoted: “Fantasy is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited.”

18.6 The Three-Dimensionality of Feelings

A special achievement of Heinrichs’ anthropology lies in the systematic clarification of the concept of feeling. He represents the hypothesis of a three-dimensionality of feelings:

Feeling as cognitive faculty (cognitive feeling) - feelings disclose value-qualities that remain closed to thinking alone.

Feeling as valuation faculty (action-oriented valuation) - feelings evaluate situations with regard to possible action.

Feeling as fulfillment experience (feelings of happiness) - feelings as being-like fulfillment, beyond cognition and action.

These three dimensions form an aspect of the body-soul-spirit unity of man. Feelings are not “lower” impulses that oppose reason, but independent sources of knowledge with specific rationality.

18.7 Integral Reason

Heinrichs rejects any heteronomous limitation of reason - whether by authoritarian belief or by irrationalistic conceptions. “Integral reason” is the structural aspect of unlimited integral consciousness.

He distinguishes his understanding of “integral” from that of Jean Gebser (“aperspectival consciousness”) and criticizes: “The ‘postmodern’ and ‘supramental’ and ‘aperspectival,’ which want to have it cheaper and easier under the slogan ‘integral thinking,’ merely hold up the progress to be worked out in this direction!”

Integral reason is not merely understanding (ratio), but also includes feeling and intuiting. It is not limited, but it knows its own structures - and can clarify these reflection-logically.

18.8 The Anthropological Foundation as Research Program

The first book of the “Critique of Integral Reason” thus presents a “grammar of human faculties of consciousness” - a systematic ordering of what man is and can do as a reflexive being.

This grammar is not dogmatically closed, but an open research program. It arises in the “dialogue of concept and experience” - the reflection-logical structures provide the organizing principle, but the concrete elaboration must prove itself against the phenomena.

Heinrichs expressly emphasizes the connectivity to empirical research. He directs explicit questions to neuroscience - for example, about “mirror neurons,” which would have to perform the fundamental self-mirroring of all human consciousness activities. Philosophical psychology does not replace empirical psychology, but gives it a systematic framework.

The following chapter continues this anthropology to the Three-Circles Model and the doctrine of sevenfold man - a synthesis that combines Eastern wisdom traditions with Western reflection philosophy.

Chapter 19: The Three-Circles Model and the Sevenfold Human

The previous chapter presented the “grammar of the faculties of consciousness” - the fourfold structure of cognizing, valuing, willing and acting. Now Heinrichs turns to another order: the body-soul-spirit unity of man and its seven levels of consciousness.

These two orders - the fourness of the meaning-elements and the threeness of the anthropological basic principles - stand in a systematic relationship, which is critically reflected in section 19.5.

19.1 The Three Anthropological Basic Principles

Heinrichs distinguishes three basic principles of being human:

Body (B) denotes being-outside-oneself: physical extension, materiality, openness to the world through sensory perception and motor action. The body is not “lower nature,” but is already permeated by self-relatedness in humans - hunger and pain are also experienced as conscious states that can be reflected upon and communicated.

Soul (S) denotes being-with-oneself: interiority, experience, emotionality, subjective perspective. The soul is the principle of self-relatedness that distinguishes humans from merely mechanical processes.

Spirit (Sp) denotes self-transcendence: the ability to go beyond oneself, to participate in the universal meaning-medium, to relate to the unconditional. Spirit is not “higher ego,” but openness to the transsubjective.

Relationship to the Fourness of Meaning-Elements

The threeness of body-soul-spirit and theourness of It-I-You-We are not competing, but complementary. An illuminating assignment (see Figure 1 in Chapter 3.4) shows their connection:

The body corresponds to the It - the prepersonal level of the bodily. The soul encompasses I and You together - the personal level of self-related consciousness. I and You share the essential structure: both are reflection-capable subjects, both are “souls” in the sense of interiority and self-relation. The spirit corresponds to the We/Meaning-Medium - the transpersonal level of the supraindividual.

The threeness thus results when one considers the interpersonal dimension (I-You) as *one* level - the level of personal consciousness. Theourness results when one distinguishes self-relation and other-relation within this level. Both articulations are reflection-logically grounded, only at different levels of abstraction.

19.2 The Three-Circles Model of Interpenetration

These three principles are not separate “mental faculties” or “layers,” but mutually penetrate each other. Heinrichs has used the Three-Circles Model since his “Eco-Logic” (1988/1997) for illustration:

Three intersecting circles represent body, soul and spirit. The intersection areas are not set-theoretical intersections, but dialectical interpenetrations. Each intersection area represents a specific way in which the basic principles mutually penetrate each other and thereby produce new qualities.

[SVG DIAGRAM OF THREE INTERSECTING CIRCLES WITH LABELS]

From the three circles, seven areas systematically result:

- Three “pure” areas (B_1, S_1, Sp_1)
- Three twofold interpenetrations ($B_2/S_2, B_4/Sp_2, Sp_4/S_4$)
- One threefold interpenetration ($B_3/S_3/Sp_3$)

19.3 The Seven Levels of Consciousness

Heinrichs develops in the second volume of the “Critique of Integral Reason” a detailed doctrine of the “sevenfold human.” The seven levels are:

19.3.1 1. The Physical Body (B₁)

The purely physical-vital level - the body for itself, not yet penetrated by soul or spirit. Here the automated bodily processes work: breathing, heartbeat, digestion. These are partially accessible through conscious practices (like yoga breathing exercises), but remain predominantly unconscious.

The physical body is not only a biological instrument, but also a means of expression for soul consciousness. It reflects conscious and unconscious processes in gestures, facial expressions and body posture.

19.3.2 2. The Life Body (B₂/S₂)

The body insofar as it is ensouled - the ensouled body, as we experience it in hunger, tiredness, physical pleasure and displeasure. This quality arises through the interpenetration of body and soul; it is more than the sum of its components.

Heinrichs analyzes here four fundamental drives and their disturbances:

The *nutritional drive* is strongly influenced by social norms in modern societies, which can lead to eating disorders. The *movement drive* is often suppressed, which can lead to hyperactivity or lethargy. The *sexual drive* stands under contradictory social norms - tabooization on the one hand, commercialization on the other. The *orientation drive* refers to the need for security; Heinrichs connects it with Riemann's "four basic forms of anxiety."

19.3.3 3. The Experience Soul/Astral Body (B₃/S₃/Sp₃)

The threefold interpenetration of body, soul and spirit in concrete life experience. Here man as a whole is present in emotional experience - bodily, soulfully and spiritually at the same time.

The astral body is the carrier of emotional memory and preconscious feelings, closely connected with the dream world. Heinrichs describes various dimensions: instinctual life and perceptual feelings, thinking-feeling, interpersonal feeling (love in its stages), medial feeling and clairvoyance.

Particularly impressive is his example of the aunt who, out of a sudden feeling of anxiety, fetched her children from the upper floor - seconds before a bomb destroyed it.

19.3.4 4. Pure Self-Consciousness/Causal Soul (S₁)

The soul for itself - the existential-personal self-consciousness that cannot be reduced to bodily or spiritual functions. Heinrichs here distinguishes between the transcendental ego (pure self-consciousness) and the empirical self-image (formed through social mirroring).

The “causal body” is described as carrier of karmic connections across multiple lives - a bridge to Indian philosophy, which Heinrichs takes up critically and appreciatively. It contains all past actions and their consequences, creates conditions for future lives, without abolishing free will.

19.3.5 5. The Mental Body (B₄/Sp₂)

The interpenetration of body and spirit - place of conscious thinking and memory processes, central for self-reflection. Here Heinrichs identifies an important dualism: “information-physical” (in the computational sense of purely physical state change) versus “information-spiritual” (in the sense of spiritual meanings).

The brain performs the translation of physical information into spiritual meanings and vice versa. The mental body carries the superconscious logical laws as foundation for thinking and reflection.

19.3.6 6. Cosmic Consciousness (Sp₄/S₄)

The interpenetration of spirit and soul - the ethical-spiritual level, where the individual soul participates in the universal. Heinrichs calls this “buddhic consciousness” or the mystical all-unity experience.

It is the language-capable superconsciousness, connected with spiritual experiences in which man transcends the boundaries of his individual consciousness.

19.3.7 7. Logos Consciousness/Atman (Sp₁)

The spirit for itself - the mystical-transpersonal level, the openness to the absolute. It is the speechless superconsciousness, beyond concepts, in which man experiences unity with the absolute.

Heinrichs connects this with the Vedantic tradition and the concept of Atman as pure absoluteness consciousness.

Assignment to the Chakras

Heinrichs assigns the seven levels to the traditional seven chakras:

Level	Designation	Chakra
7	Logos consciousness (Sp_1)	Crown chakra
6	Cosmic consciousness (Sp_4/S_4)	Brow chakra
5	Mental body (B_4/Sp_2)	Throat chakra
4	Pure self-consciousness (S_1)	Heart chakra
3	Experience soul ($B_3/S_3/Sp_3$)	Solar plexus
2	Life body (B_2/S_2)	Sacral chakra
1	Physical body (B_1)	Root chakra

The derivation of the seven-step gradation from the threeness of the anthropological basic components seems to be new - it gives the traditional chakra teaching a conceptual structure that goes beyond mere tradition.

19.4 The Three Types of the Unconscious

A special achievement of Heinrichs' anthropology lies in the systematic clarification of the unconscious. Instead of a diffuse "deep layer" (as with Freud), he distinguishes three structurally different types:

The Physical Subconscious

Automated bodily processes like breathing, heartbeat, digestion. These are partially accessible through conscious practices, but remain predominantly below the threshold of consciousness. Subliminal stimuli nevertheless work, as the example of subliminal advertising shows.

The Soul Unconscious as Implicit Consciousness

Unlike Freud, not merely repressed drives, but a form of implicit knowledge that shapes the self-image. This "accompanying consciousness" works as background of all experience. It also contains the reflexive basic structures of consciousness itself - the meaning-elements, the reflection levels, the basic laws of thinking. They structure all consciousness, can be illuminated through philosophical reflection, but cannot be completely objectified.

Heinrichs analyzes critically the transition "from intuitive to delusional consciousness": intuitions are vague presentiments that can become deeper insights. If they are not reflected upon, they can turn into delusions.

The Spiritual Superconscious

The unconscious following of spiritual rules (grammar, logic) and the connection with the transpersonal ground of all being. This connection is always already there (otherwise no consciousness would be possible), but it eludes complete consciousness. It can be mystically experienced, but not conceptually grasped.

19.5 Critical Excursus: Interpenetration and Dialectic - A Methodological Clarification

At this point a methodological reflection is called for. Heinrichs speaks of “interpenetration logic” and “dialectical interpenetration.” But is the Three-Circles Model actually a “strict dialectical derivation” in the sense of reflection logic?

What Heinrichs Achieves

Heinrichs’ merit is indisputable:

He gives the traditional body-soul-spirit distinction a systematic structure. The identification of the seven intersection areas as independent levels of consciousness is a genuine discovery - it makes the phenomenological diversity of human experience clear.

The assignment to the chakras and other traditions shows remarkable convergences - which speaks for the appropriateness of the model.

The analysis of the three types of the unconscious is more differentiated than Freud’s monolithic concept and opens bridges to neuropsychology as well as spirituality.

Where the Boundary Lies

However, one must ask whether “dialectic” in the strict sense exists here. Heinrichs himself defines in his glossary: “Dialectic is thinking in opposition-unities. Dialectical thinking grasps oppositions in their unity.”

But are body, soul and spirit *oppositions*? They seem rather to be different *aspects* or *dimensions* of being human. Oppositions in the dialectical sense would be: inside/outside, finite/infinite, being/nothing. These stand in a tension that demands resolution.

Body, soul and spirit, however, do not stand in tension - they *complement* each other, they *penetrate* each other. That is complementarity, not opposition. The “interpenetration” is a fruitful figure of thought, but it follows a different logic than the dialectical sublation of contradictions.

The Difference to Dialectical Subsumption

In genuine dialectical subsumption (Chapter 14), the four meaning-elements are applied to themselves - this yields $4 \times 4 = 16$ categories that necessarily result from the reflexive structure.

In the Three-Circles Model, however, three phenomenologically obtained principles are geometrically superimposed. The number seven results from the combinatorics of three circles (3 pure + 3 twofold + 1 threefold overlap), not from a dialectical necessity.

This is no objection to the *validity* of the model, but to its claim to *dialectical derivation*. It would be more honest to say: The Three-Circles Model is a systematic heuristic that proves itself phenomenologically - but not a deduction in the strict reflection-logical sense.

The Open Question of Threeness

The initial difference body-soul-spirit is also not dialectically derived, but taken from philosophical and spiritual tradition. Why precisely three principles? The answer that this overcomes dualism explains why more than two, but not why exactly three.

The assignment to the fourness of meaning-elements (body=It, soul=I+You, spirit=We) shows a path of integration, but no strict derivation of threeness from fourness or vice versa.

CONCLUSION OF THE CRITICAL EXCURSUS

Heinrichs' Three-Circles Model is a valuable systematic ordering of human wholeness. It proves itself phenomenologically and shows remarkable convergences with Eastern traditions.

But it is not a "strict dialectical derivation" in the sense of reflection logic. It is rather a phenomenological-systematic heuristic - which does not diminish its value, but clarifies its methodological status.

This honesty lies in the spirit of Heinrichs' own program: The "dialogue of concept and experience" requires that we see the limits of our conceptual derivations as clearly as their scope.

17a.6 The Four States of Consciousness

Heinrichs analyzes four basic states of consciousness in their relationship to the seven levels:

Deep sleep - state of complete absence of reflection, mainly connected with the physical body. Heinrichs refers to the Vedantic tradition, according to which man in deep sleep is paradoxically closest to the divine source.

Dream - implicit consciousness with weakened reflection, connected with the astral body and emotional memory.

Waking consciousness - dominated by conscious reflection, connected with the psychic body and mental body.

Superconsciousness - deeper form of self-reflection, in which man experiences a connection to cosmic consciousness. In mystical experiences this state is reached.

The intersection areas of the circles enable unconscious contents to come into consciousness and superconscious experiences to be integrated into everyday life.

17a.7 Psychosomatic Connections

Heinrichs systematically analyzes how psychic conflicts manifest in bodily symptoms:

Dissociative disorders arise from psychic causes, especially traumatic events - dissociative amnesia, fugue states, trance.

Somatoform disorders show bodily symptoms without recognizable physical cause - those affected often insist on medical tests, although the symptoms are psychically caused.

Somatized compulsive disorders arise when the feeling body demands physical expression, but this is disturbed by unconscious factors - tic disorders, selective mutism, stuttering.

Particularly interesting is Heinrichs' analysis of the Hölderlin case: The "spiritual fullness" could have overwhelmed the physical body. He emphasizes that genius does not mean illness, but can increase the risk of psychogenic disorders.

17a.8 Comparison with Other Integral Approaches

Comparison with C.G. Jung

While Jung places the collective unconscious with its archetypal images at the center, Heinrichs emphasizes more strongly the individual dimension and the interaction with the different body circles.

The archetypes in Jung are fixed patterns of the collective unconscious. Heinrichs' sevenfold structure offers a more dynamic possibility to understand the interaction between the levels.

An essential difference lies in the treatment of the superconscious. Jung focuses mainly on the unconscious, while Heinrichs places great value on the superconscious - the higher level where mystical and spiritual experiences take place.

Comparison with Ken Wilber

Heinrichs shows both convergences and critical differences with Wilber's "Theory of Everything":

Convergence in the multi-level structure and East-West integration.

Difference in methodological rigor. Heinrichs criticizes Wilber's "Spiral Dynamics" for the lack of a systematic derivation of the postulated consciousness levels, the arbitrary color sequence (in contrast to the perception-closer chakra color teaching), and the problematic parallelization of individual and collective development stages.

17a.9 Practical Consequences

Integral anthropology is not only theoretically interesting, but practically consequential:

For pedagogy it means that education must encompass all levels of consciousness - not only knowledge and skills, but also emotional competence, personal maturation, cultural orientation and spiritual openness.

For therapy it means that healing requires the integration of all levels. In acute physical problems, physical treatment is paramount, but in chronic suffering, multi-level therapy is usually necessary. The systematic analysis of psychosomatic connections gives orientation for differentiated treatment approaches.

For politics it means that good institutions must consider all dimensions of being human - not only material needs and rational interests, but also emotional needs, cultural identities and spiritual orientations.

17a.10 The Anthropological Foundation as Bridge

With integral anthropology - the “grammar of the faculties of consciousness” (Chapter 18) and the “sevenfold human” (Chapter 19) - the foundation for all further applications of reflection logic is laid.

Heinrichs connects Western reflection philosophy with Eastern wisdom traditions without falling into eclecticism. The chakra teaching, theosophical consciousness psychology and Vedantic self-knowledge receive through the reflection-logical framework a conceptual structure that makes them connectable for Western thinking.

At the same time, the anthropology remains open to empirical research. The neurosciences can research the physical correlates of the different consciousness levels, psychology can investigate the developmental dynamics between the levels. But the reflection-logical structures are not reducible to their physical correlates - the “hard problem of consciousness” is not solved by eliminating consciousness, but by systematic analysis of its reflexive structure.

The next chapters lead from the anthropological foundation to social application: How can the insights about the whole human being be implemented in concrete institutions and political reforms?

PART E: SOCIAL THEORY AND INSTITUTIONAL APPLICATIONS

The reflection logic whose basic structures were developed in the preceding parts is not merely a theoretical construction. It proves its fruitfulness precisely in application to social questions - both in analyzing existing structures and in developing concrete reform proposals.

This part shows the social-theoretical and social-practical dimension of reflection philosophy. It is divided into two parts that belong inseparably together:

First the reflection-logical foundation of social theory (Chapter 20). Before practical reforms can be meaningfully developed, it must be clarified: How does society arise? What are social systems? How do individual action and social structures relate to each other? These questions are not merely academic - their answer decides what reforms are possible and meaningful at all.

Chapter 20 develops the reflection-system theory of society, which shows how social systems are constituted and maintained through staged reflection processes. This theory, founded in "Reflection as Social System" (1976) and elaborated in "Logic of the Social" (2005/2007), overcomes the unfruitful opposition between action theory (Habermas) and systems theory (Luhmann) through a reflection-logical synthesis: Personal and social systems are equally original and imply each other through reflection.

The central insight: society is reflection-logically structured in four levels - economy (material action), politics (strategic action), culture (communicative action) and basic values (metacommunicative action). This fourfold division is not arbitrary, but follows from the four reflection stages of social action. Each level has its own logic, but all stand in reflexive interaction.

Second the practical consequences of this foundation (Chapters 23-27). If one has understood how society is reflection-logically structured, the question arises: How must institutions look that do justice to this structure? The previous social orders - whether liberal-capitalist or socialist-planned economic - misrecognize the reflection-logical articulation of society and try to organize it through two-dimensional schemes (market vs. state, economy vs. politics).

The reform chapters show a third way beyond capitalism and socialism:

- Chapter 25 develops the four-stage economy as alternative to market economy and planned economy. The economy is not subjected to the profit principle or

- state planning, but articulated according to the four reflection levels: basic supply, performance economy, cultural economy and common good-oriented economy.
- Chapters 25-26 show value-stage democracy as overcoming of one-dimensional parliamentary democracy. Instead of a single chamber that mixes all social functions, four chambers are proposed that correspond to the four social subsystems: economic parliament, political parliament, cultural parliament and basic values parliament.
 - Chapter 29 applies the model to Europe. The European Union suffers from being conceived only as an economic and political union, while the cultural and basic values dimensions are neglected. An integral European constitution would have to institutionally anchor all four levels.

The red thread of this part is the insight: integration through differentiation. Social problems do not arise from too much differentiation, but from too little systematic differentiation. The current crisis of democracy, the economic crises, the cultural dislocations - all these are symptoms of the fact that the four reflection levels are not sufficiently distinguished and institutionally anchored.

Reflection logic thus proves itself as practical philosophy in the original sense: It not only analyzes how society is, but shows how it could be. It is not a utopia that designs a distant ideal, but a concrete utopia that works out the immanent developmental possibilities from the analysis of existing structures.

Heinrichs' work thus stands in the tradition of great political philosophy from Plato through Hegel to the critical theorists of the 20th century - but with a decisive difference: reflection-system theory is not normative in the sense of positing ideals, but reconstructive in the sense of explicating the reflection structure that already underlies social practice, but usually remains unreflected.

The following chapters are therefore not merely an academic exercise, but a contribution to social self-reflection. They show that the alternative "reform or revolution" is wrongly posed. What is needed is a reflexive reform - a transformation that is not imposed from outside, but grows from society's self-knowledge about its own reflexive structure.

Philosophical theory and political practice, systematic thinking and historical responsibility, analysis and reform - all these apparent opposites prove from a reflection-logical perspective to be moments of a single process: the methodical self-unfolding of social reflection.

What begins as abstract foundational theory (Chapter 20) leads to concrete proposals for institutional reform (Chapters 23-27). What begins as philosophy ends in politics - but in a politics that is philosophically permeated and therefore can work beyond the day.

Chapter 20: The Reflection-System Theory of Society - Foundations

20.1 The Starting Question: Action or System?

In the 1970s, German social philosophy faced an apparently insurmountable opposition. On one side the action theory, which started from the individual subject and its communicative rationality - prominently represented by Jürgen Habermas. On the other side systems theory, which described society as a functional system whose operations detach themselves from individual intentions - developed by Niklas Luhmann. The famous controversy between both, documented in the volume “Theory of Society or Social Technology” (1971), seemed to oppose two irreconcilable paradigms.

Johannes Heinrichs recognized, however, that this opposition was based on a common error: the inadequate determination of the concept of reflection. Neither Habermas nor Luhmann had systematically thought through the constitutive role of reflection for social systems. Habermas remained with a subject-philosophical concept of reflection, Luhmann eliminated the subject in favor of a “subject-free” systems theory.

Heinrichs’ central thesis states: Personal and social systems are equally original and imply each other through reflection. There is no priority of the individual before society (methodological individualism) and no priority of society before the individual (sociological holism). Both arise through the same reflexive process.

This thesis is systematically developed in two complementary works: “Reflection as Social System. Toward a Reflection-System Theory of Society” (1976) and “Logic of the Social. How Society Arises” (2005/2007). Both works treat the same philosophical matter - the reflection-logical constitution of the social - whereby the later work focuses more strongly on practical applicability, while the earlier work contains some theoretical deepening that were only taken up again decades later (in the *Dialectic Book 2025*).

20.2 From Subject to Social Philosophy: The Reflection-Logical Transition

The foundation of any social theory must lie in a theory of self-consciousness. For social systems are not mechanical structures, but reflexive structures carried by conscious subjects. Heinrichs therefore first develops the reflection-logical basic structures of subjectivity, to then show how these necessarily extend into the social.

20.2.1 Constitutive and Consecutive Reflection

The first fundamental difference concerns the question: How does self-consciousness arise? The traditional answer is: By an already existing I subsequently relating to itself and considering itself as object. Heinrichs shows, however, that this conception leads into a circle: If reflection presupposes an already existing I, how could this I have arisen?

The solution lies in the distinction between constitutive and consecutive reflection. Constitutive reflection is that reflection which first produces self-consciousness - not subsequently, but originally. It is the structure through which an I is first constituted. Consecutive reflection, however, is subsequent reflection on already existing contents of consciousness.

This distinction is fundamental because it shows: reflection is not only a cognitive ability, but the ontological structure of consciousness itself. Self-consciousness is not a thing that reflects, but a reflexive process.

20.2.2 The Time Problem and Iterative Reflection

This immediately poses the problem of time. If self-consciousness arises through reflection, how does it relate to the temporal extension of consciousness? The classical conception treats time as external framework condition in which consciousness processes take place. Heinrichs shows, however, that time itself is a product of reflection - more precisely: of iterative reflection.

Iterative reflection means the repeating self-relation of consciousness, through which a temporal structure is first formed. Consciousness relates to earlier states of itself as identical and thereby first constitutes past, present and future. Time is not simply “there,” but is generated through the reflexive accomplishment of consciousness - through the “wing beats of the reflecting being,” as it says in the *Dialectic Book* (2025).

This means: experienced, subjective time is not mere timing, no simple succession, but a reflexive reference of the later to the earlier as identical. The later I recognizes itself in the earlier I - and thereby first constitutes the temporal continuity of its identity.

20.2.3 Self-Reference-in-Other-Reference

The third fundamental insight: self-consciousness is never isolated, but always already socially mediated. A subject can only recognize itself as I if it distinguishes itself from another. This requires a reflexive structure in which the I is mediated through the other.

This formula - “self-reference-in-other-reference” - overcomes the false opposition between individualism and collectivism. The I is neither an autarkic monad nor a mere product of social conditions. It rather constitutes itself through reflection on other subjects who themselves possess self-consciousness.

Concretely: a child learns to understand itself as its own person by being mirrored in social interactions. The reactions of caregivers are not external influences on an already

finished I, but constitutive moments of I-formation itself. Without social feedback, no stable self-image can develop.

This has far-reaching consequences: social recognition is not an additional condition for the development of personality, but its ontological foundation. Society is not subsequently added to the individual, but equally original with it.

20.2.4 Circular Reflection Structure

Classical logic is based on linear causality: A causes B, B causes C. This structure is, however, inadequate for reflection processes. Self-consciousness and social systems follow a circular logic.

Circular reflection means: a system determines itself by relating to itself. Position and presupposition intertwine. The reflecting I is different from the reflected I - and yet the same. This structure is not a "vicious circle" (a logical error), but a reflexive circle (an ontological structure).

A vicious circle presupposes what it is supposed to explain - a tautology. A reflexive circle shows that the explanation itself is part of the process to be explained. Consciousness does not explain itself through something outside itself, but through its own reflexive structure.

This insight requires a many-valued logic. Classical two-valued logic (either A or not-A) cannot grasp reflection because reflection is precisely the unity of identity and difference. The later I is identical with the earlier (otherwise it would not be self-reflection) and at the same time different (otherwise it would not be development).

20.2.5 Reflection Stages: Self-Mediation Through Otherness

Reflection is not homogeneous, but staged. Heinrichs distinguishes four basic reflection stages that apply both to individual consciousness and to social systems:

First Stage: Immediate Relationship

- Direct world-reference, practical action
- I-world relationship without explicit self-reflection
- Example: The child reaches for objects

Second Stage: Objective Reflection

- The I objectifies itself and the world
- Emergence of theory, science, objectification
- Example: The I considers itself as object

Third Stage: Subjective Reflection

- Reflection on the conditions of objectification

- Critique, questioning, subjectivism
- Example: Epistemology that asks about conditions of possibility

Fourth Stage: Reflexive Integration

- Reflection grasps itself as structure
- Integration of objectivity and subjectivity at higher level
- Example: Reflection logic that thematizes the structure of reflection itself

These four stages are not merely to be understood chronologically, but systematically: each stage presupposes the previous one and adds a new reflection quality. The fourth stage closes the circle by returning to the conditions of possibility of all reflection.

20.2.6 Meaning Participation and Self-Reflection

The four reflection stages can also be understood as stages of meaning participation. Meaning is not a finished third that stands between subjects, but the medium of their mutual reference.

First Stage: Unreflected Meaning Performance Meaning is lived without being made explicit. The child plays without thinking about the rules of play.

Second Stage: Objectification of Meaning Meaning becomes the object of reflection. Rules are explicitly formulated, codified.

Third Stage: Subjective Meaning Appropriation The subject recognizes itself as producer of meaning. Critique of objective norms, questioning of traditions.

Fourth Stage: Reflexive Meaning Integration Meaning is grasped as structure of mediation. New integration of subjective appropriation and objective validity.

This staging shows: meaning is not static, but a reflexive process. Social meanings develop through repeated reflection cycles. What is first lived unreflectedly (stage 1) is objectified (stage 2), questioned (stage 3) and newly integrated at a higher level (stage 4).

20.3 The Concept of System Founded on Action Theory

After the subject-philosophical foundations are clarified, the question arises: How does a social system arise from individual reflection? The answer is: social systems are themselves reflection systems - but not in the sense of individual subjects, but as inter-subjective reflection structures.

20.3.1 The Introduction of the System Concept Through Reflection

The concept of “system” often has a problematic connotation in sociology. It suggests a mechanical structure that functions independently of individual intentions. Heinrichs shows, however: the system concept can and must be founded on action theory.

A social system does not arise through addition of individual actions, but through reflexive integration. When two or more persons relate to each other and form mutual expectations, a structure arises that goes beyond individual actions - a system.

Decisive is: this system is not an external third that stands beside the individuals. It is rather the structure of their mutual reference. The system “exists” only insofar as it is reproduced by the participants.

20.3.2 Autonomy of Social Systems - But Not Subject-Free

Social systems have a certain autonomy. They do not simply follow the intentions of the participants, but develop their own structures and dynamics. This is the justified insight of systems theory (Luhmann, Parsons).

But this autonomy does not mean that social systems would be “subject-free.” Heinrichs’ central thesis states: social systems are reflexively constituted - through the reflection of subjects on their own social action.

An example clarifies this: In a dyadic relationship, expectations arise. Ego expects certain behavior from Alter, and Alter expects certain behavior from Ego. These expectations are stabilized through repetition. But they are not “subject-free” - they exist only insofar as Ego and Alter reflexively reproduce them.

If Ego or Alter no longer “participates” in the relationship, the system collapses. This shows: the autonomy of the system is a reflexively generated autonomy. It is real (not merely subjective imagination), but not independent of the subjects.

20.3.3 Critique of Parsons’ Four Action-System Stages

Talcott Parsons, who became extremely important for Heinrichs’ breakthrough to reflection-system theory (in his first Frankfurt lecture on social philosophy in 1975 as well as in “Reflection as Social System” 1976) as inspiration for an action-system theory, distinguishes four action and simultaneously system stages that were recorded in his well-known AGIL schema:

Main Functions Subsystems

- Adaptation Economy
- Goal-Attainment Politics (polity)
- Integration/Cultural System Social community
- Latent Pattern Maintenance Norm maintenance

This fourness is not, however, reflection-logically grounded by Parsons, but simply “empirically” posited.

Heinrichs shows: There are only two basic reflection systems, the personal as well as the social and resulting ones, which mutually imply each other and lead to the fourness of economy, politics, culture and legitimizing ultimate values (basic values). From the twoness of personal and social system results a fourness of social reflection stages that stand analogously to the meaning elements object, subject, intersubjectivity, and transsubjective meaning medium. This clarification is important because it more precisely grasps the general reflection-logical structure of the social. There are not several equivalent systems, but two constitutively related systems (personal and social) that operate in media of cultural commonality (like mother tongues and customs) as well as a transcultural cultural medium of logical and moral norms.

20.4 Equal Originality of Personal and Social Action System - The Core Thesis

The central thesis of reflection-system theory states: personal and social systems are equally original. There is no temporal or logical priority of one before the other.

20.4.1 Overcoming the False Opposition: Individual vs. Society

Social philosophy has struggled for centuries with the opposition between individualism and holism:

- Individualism (methodological): society is the sum of its individuals
- Holism (sociological): individuals are products of society

Heinrichs shows: both positions are based on a common error - the assumption that one must be there before the other. In reality, both arise through the same reflexive process.

A subject constitutes itself as I by distinguishing itself from others. But these others are themselves subjects who in turn have I-consciousness. The constitution of the individual I is thus always already socially mediated. Conversely, a social system can only exist if the participants mutually recognize each other as subjects.

This equal originality is not a compromise formula, but the reflection-logical structure of the matter itself. Individual and society are two moments of a single process - the reflexive constitution of community and meaning.

20.4.2 The Meaning Medium as Presupposition and Position

The key to understanding equal originality lies in the concept of the meaning medium. This medium is simultaneously:

- Presupposition: it must “always already” exist for understanding to be possible
- Position: it is constantly newly constituted through communicative practice

This paradoxical structure - that something is simultaneously presupposed and posited - is typical for reflexive relationships. The meaning medium is not a finished third that stands between individuals, but the process of their mutual reference itself.

Language is the most prominent example: I must already master a language to be able to speak (presupposition). But the language exists only insofar as it is spoken (position). The language is not alone in the head of the individual (otherwise understanding would be impossible) and not outside as an independent thing (otherwise it could not change). It is the reflexive medium of intersubjective practice.

20.4.3 Official Action as Self-Relatedness of the Social

A particularly illuminating phenomenon is official action. When a judge speaks justice, he acts not as a private person, but “in the name of the people.” He embodies in his person the legal order itself. The social system (constitutional state) acts through him.

This structure - that a person stands for the whole and acts as the whole - shows the self-relatedness of the social. The social system relates to itself through certain persons (office holders). The judge is simultaneously individual (with his own convictions) and representative of the system (bound to laws).

Important: this self-relatedness is given not only in formal offices, but can also occur informally. In a dyadic relationship, one of the participants can speak and act “for the relationship” - provided the other recognizes this representation. The reflection structure is the same as in formal office, only less institutionalized.

20.4.4 Critique of Weber and Durkheim

Max Weber defines social action as action that “according to its meaning intended by the actor(s) is related to the behavior of others.” This definition is correct but incomplete. It grasps the subjective side (the intention of the actor) but not the objective side (the structures that exist independently of individual intentions).

Émile Durkheim conversely emphasizes the “social facts” - social facts that confront individuals externally and compellingly. This perspective is also correct but one-sided. It grasps the objective side but cannot explain how these facts arise.

Reflection-system theory shows: both aspects are necessary and belong together. Social action is subjectively intended (Weber) and objectively structured (Durkheim).

The mediation lies in social reflection: the acting subject relates to objective structures that are in turn reproduced through action.

20.5 The Architecture of Social Systems

If social systems are reflexively constituted, how is their internal structure to be understood? Heinrichs develops a differentiated architecture that ranges from elementary dyadic relationships through groups and organizations to total societies.

20.5.1 Elementary System - Subsystems - Total System

The most elementary form of a social system is the dyadic relationship. Two persons who relate to each other and form mutual expectations already form a social system - the simplest possible.

Talcott Parsons rightly states: "The interaction of ego and alter is the most elementary form of a social system." This elementary form already contains all essential structural features of more complex systems:

- Mutual expectations (ego expects from alter and vice versa)
- Self-relatedness (the relationship can make itself thematic)
- Stabilization through iteration (repeated interaction solidifies patterns)

From this elementary system, more complex systems arise through iterative reflection: groups (multiple persons), organizations (formalized groups), institutions (stabilized organizations), societies (comprehensive systems).

Important: this enumeration follows not merely quantitative considerations (more persons), but reflection-logical stages. Each level adds a new reflection quality.

20.5.2 Corporate vs. Structural Subsystems

Heinrichs distinguishes two basic types of subsystems:

Corporate subsystems are those defined by direct membership:

- Groups (a family, a circle of friends)
- Organizations (a company, a university)
- Territorial units (a city, a state)

These systems have personnel boundaries: one is a member or not. They stand in quantitative-extensional relationships to each other (subsets, overlaps).

Structural subsystems, however, are functional areas that permeate the total system:

- Economy

- Politics
- Culture
- Basic values and rights

These systems have no clear extensional boundaries. The same person participates in all structural subsystems: they engage in economic activity, vote, cultivate culture, are subject to law. The structural subsystems are not parts in a spatial sense, but reflection stages or functional levels.

This distinction is fundamental. Corporate subsystems arise through iterative reflection (repetition, association). Structural subsystems arise through staged reflection (differentiation of functional levels).

20.5.3 The Fourfold Division of Social Levels

The structural subsystems are not arbitrary, but follow the four reflection stages of social action. The Other as my object, as independent action subject, as swinging into communicative reciprocity with me (like of the gaze), as regulating our commonality with me (metacommunicatively). From this reflection staging, Heinrichs develops a systematic fourfold division that becomes the foundation of his democracy model:

1st Level: Goods-Related Action (Economy)

- Consumption of goods
- Production of goods
- Exchange of goods (trade)
- Regulation of exchange, e.g., through the medium money

2nd Level: Strategic Action (Politics)

- Dealing with interests, power, conflicts
- Behavioral expectations, strategic rationality
- Problem: power balance, interest mediation
- Subsystem: political system

3rd Level: Communicative Action (Culture)

- Dealing with values, meaning, understanding
- Expectation expectations, communicative rationality
- Problem: value realization, cultural coherence
- Subsystem: education and cultural system

4th Level: Metacommunication (Law/Basic Values)

- Dealing with norms, legitimacy, basic consensus
- Reflection on communication conditions

- Problem: integration, legitimation, identity
- Subsystem: legal system, basic values consensus

This fourfold division is not arbitrary but reflection-logically necessary. Each level presupposes the previous one and adds a new reflection quality. The fourth level closes the circle by reflecting on the conditions of possibility of the first three levels.

Chapter 21: History as Reflection-Stratification

21.1 The Basic Thesis: History as Iterative Reflection

History is not merely a sequence of events on a physical timeline. History is rather a process of iterative reflection through which a subject (individual or collective) relates to its own past and thereby first constitutes a temporal identity.

The concept “reflection-stratification” connects two aspects: stratification - history consists of different “strata” or epochs that build upon each other; and reflection - these strata arise through reflexive reference of the later to the earlier. Etymologically there is a connection between “happening” and “stratum.” Both point to a building up through continued processes.

Time itself arises - at least in consciousness-theoretical respect - from iterative reflection. Consciousness relates to earlier states of itself as identical and thereby constitutes the difference of past, present and future. Time arises, as Heinrichs puts it pictorially, “through the wing beats of the reflecting being.”

This basic insight - history as reflection happening - Heinrichs shares with Hegel. Both understand history not as mere fact succession, but as meaningful process in which a community relates back to its events as its own. The actual history of a people begins only with its historical consciousness, especially with historiography. This shows the communal reflection of a social system on its past life.

21.2 Hegel’s Philosophy of History - A Necessary Correction

At this point a correction is necessary. Hegel is frequently accused of having undertaken a “too direct parallelization of logic and history” and having represented a naive teleological conception of history, according to which history steers toward a predetermined goal. Heinrichs himself has raised this accusation in his *Dialectic Book*. More recent Hegel research shows, however, that this accusation is based on a misunderstanding.

Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer has convincingly demonstrated in his analysis of Hegel’s philosophy of history: “The goal is precisely the opposite of what most readers read off the surface of the text. The goal is the *refutation* of every hypostatization of ontic teleology... Hegel’s philosophy of history is *critique* of every metaphysical eschatology,

including every progress prognosis that wants to be more than a moment of action-guiding orientation.”

What Hegel actually does is something methodologically demanding: he writes a *rational reconstruction* of the development of recognition relationships and institutions - from the present standpoint. That is not teleology but methodological necessity. Every developmental history is told from the endpoint because we cannot step out of our present. That does not make it a claim about a “plan of providence.”

Hegel’s famous talk of “reason in history” is not a metaphysical assumption about a great subject behind history. It is rather, as Stekeler shows, “a conceptual presupposition for every *explanatory* historiography.” Whoever wants to present history not as mere event chronology but as understandable connection must give reasons - and thereby already presupposes “reason” in the sense of comprehensibility.

The “cunning of reason” is also not a mystical force but refers to the everyday difference between saying and doing, between explicit intentions and implicit recognitions. People can verbally claim one thing and factually promote another - that is not metaphysics but everyday experience.

21.3 What Hegel Actually Achieves

Hegel’s philosophy of history is methodologically much more elaborate than the usual accusation of “logic-parallelization” suggests. It begins with a reflected method discussion about the different types of historiography - original, reflected, philosophical. It analyzes the geographical and material foundations of world history - a kind of anticipation of Marx’s insight into the significance of material conditions. And it reconstructs the development of legal and recognition structures through different epochs.

The concrete execution - from the “oriental realm” (where “only one is free”) through the Greek polis (where “some are free”) to modern bourgeois society (where “all are free”) - is a structural history of institutions of freedom. That may be simplifying, but it is not naive logic-projection but the attempt to make the development of recognition relationships comprehensible.

Hegel himself was aware of the limits of his presentation. The famous sentence that philosophy grasps its time in thoughts means precisely: we cannot prognosticate beyond our present. The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk - philosophy always comes too late for action instructions. That is the opposite of teleology.

21.4 Heinrichs' Contribution: Convergence Instead of Overcoming

Against this background it shows: Heinrichs' theory of "history as reflection-stratification" is not an overcoming of Hegel but a convergence with him. Both understand history as reflection process. Both see that actual history begins only with historical consciousness. Both analyze the development of recognition relationships.

Heinrichs' specific contribution lies in applying the reflection stages to historical dynamics. He identifies a four-stage developmental pattern that can be observed in long-lived social systems:

First Phase - Original Unity: Immediate unity of individual and social life performance. The norms are self-evident, unreflected, lived. There prevails an equilibrium of positing and presupposing.

Second Phase - Objectifying Reflection: The original unity becomes the object of reflection. Norms are explicitly formulated, codified, systematized. The contents become objective and thus also relatively foreign.

Third Phase - Subjective Reflection: Reflection on the objectifying subjects themselves. The subjects recognize themselves as producers of objective norms. Critique, questioning, crisis of authority.

Fourth Phase - Self-Grasping of Reflection: Reflection grasps itself as structure. New integration of subjectivity and objectivity at higher level. If successful: new system stability.

21.5 Concrete Example: Church History

The Catholic Church as a two-thousand-year system paradigmatically goes through these four phases:

In the first phase (1st-3rd century), the theological contents are still immediate expression of life performance. Faith is a theory-practice unity, not separated into dogma and life. The New Testament writings arise as expression of lived practice.

In the second phase (4th-13th century), progressive objectification occurs. Development of dogmatics, moral theology, canonical law. The church becomes institution with fixed structures and teachings. What was alive becomes codified.

In the third phase (14th-20th century), modern subject reflection sets in. Emancipation of the individual (Luther's "Freedom of a Christian"), private Bible understanding, hermeneutic problematic, historical-critical method. Oscillation between objectivistic hardening and subjectivism - crisis of authority.

In the fourth phase (20th-21st century), the self-grasping of reflection as higher stabilization begins. Thematization of the theory-practice problematic, of the relationship between theology and society, approaches to action-theoretical self-reliance of spirituality. Whether this phase succeeds is open.

21.6 Philosophy History Also Follows This Pattern

Philosophy history can also be assigned to this schema, though less clearly because the unity of a social carrier is less institutionally pronounced:

The first phase corresponds to pre-Socratic immediacy - philosophy as life form, not separated from myth and practice.

The second phase corresponds to metaphysical objectification - from Plato through Aristotle to scholasticism. Systematic doctrinal buildings, institutionalization in schools and universities.

The third phase corresponds to modern subjectification - from Descartes through Kant to German idealism. The question about conditions of possibility of knowledge, critique of metaphysics.

The fourth phase would be the self-grasping of reflection - to which Heinrichs' reflection philosophy itself wants to contribute.

21.7 History as Unity of Structure and Contingency

Reflection-logical history theory overcomes the false opposition between philosophy of history (which wants to derive history from principles) and historicism (which sees only unique facts without overarching structure).

History is neither purely logically determined nor merely contingent. It follows structural patterns (the reflection stages), but the concrete realization of these patterns is open and dependent on many factors. The structure shows possibility spaces, not necessities.

This position is, however, not, as sometimes claimed, an "overcoming" of Hegel. It is rather what Hegel himself meant - if one reads him correctly. For Hegel too, history was not logically determined. He too knew that concrete development depends on accidents. His sentence "The necessary always asserts itself accidentally" (or a variant of it) expresses precisely this insight.

21.8 The Limits of Heinrichs' Concrete Historical Consideration

Honesty requires also naming the limits of Heinrichs' history theory. The four-stage schema is fruitful for analyzing long-lived institutions like the church. But Heinrichs' concrete historical considerations - for example on Hitler, Napoleon or current events - are more essayistic reflections than systematic philosophy of history.

When Heinrichs poses the question "how it is possible that individual leadership figures can 'hypnotize' an entire people" and answers that this is "only possible if these leaders address a collective, repressed unconscious," that is a plausible consideration - but not a systematic analysis of recognition structures as Hegel provided for the development from the ancient polis to the modern state.

The strength of Heinrichs' history theory lies in the formal schema of reflection stages and in application to institutional developments. The weakness lies in concrete historical execution, which seldom goes beyond punctual observations.

21.9 The Alleged Opposition of System and History

Heinrichs makes an important observation: the alleged opposition of systematic and historical thinking is itself historically conditioned. It characterizes what Heinrichs calls the "late phase of bourgeois consciousness" - an epoch that can no longer mediate between rationality and historicity and therefore plays both against each other.

A reflection-logical perspective leaves this opposition behind: history *is* lived reflection. Systematic thinking (the analysis of reflection structures) and historical thinking (the analysis of concrete developments) are not oppositions but two aspects of the same matter.

This insight too is not an overcoming of Hegel but an agreement with him. Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit" is precisely the attempt to combine systematic and historical presentation - the development of consciousness forms is simultaneously logical structure and historical sequence.

21.10 Significance for the Present

The theory of history as reflection-stratification has relevance for the present. It shows why social crises arise - when the reflection stage does not fit the developmental state, for example when objectivistic hardening prevails in a time that demands subjective appropriation. It shows how transformations can succeed - through conscious reflection on one's own structures and their integration at a higher level. And it shows that history is open - there is no guarantee for progress, but there are structural possibilities that can be seized.

The practical relevance of these insights for analyzing current crises - the democracy crisis, the ecological crisis, the crisis of international order - would need to be worked out. The four-stage schema could help diagnose the phases in which different institutions find themselves and indicate the direction in which solutions would be sought.

However, such application always remains provisional and fallible. History theory gives no prognoses but analytical tools. What becomes of them depends on the actors - on their insight, their will and the circumstances that elude their control.

Chapter 22: Integration, Legitimacy and Value Reflection

22.1 The Problem of Social Integration

One of the central questions of social theory is: What holds a society together? How is social order stabilized? This question has been answered differently by various traditions, and Heinrichs positions himself in critical engagement with them.

The Marxist tradition emphasizes the significance of material conditions. The economic “base” (production relations) shapes the social “superstructure” (law, politics, culture, ideology). The liberal tradition conversely emphasizes the role of contracts, institutions and rational agreement. The conservative tradition highlights tradition, religion and grown orders.

Heinrichs’ reflection-system theory attempts to integrate these perspectives without leveling them. Social integration arises through the reflexive mediation of different levels - not through one-sided determination from one level.

22.2 The Relationship to Marx - Commonalities and Differences

Heinrichs stands in critical proximity to Marx. He shares Marx’s insight that social norms do not “fall from heaven” but stand in connection with material conditions. A feudal society produces different norms than a capitalist society - that is an important insight that Heinrichs does not dispute.

However, the frequent simplification of the Marxian base-superstructure schema must be corrected. Already Engels emphasized in his late letters (especially the famous letter to Joseph Bloch from 1890) that Marx and he himself had always recognized the interaction between base and superstructure. Engels writes there that “the economic situation is the basis, but the various moments of the superstructure... also exercise their influence on the course of historical struggles and in many cases predominantly determine their form.”

Marx himself, in his concrete historical analyses - for example in “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” - by no means represented simple economic determinism, but analyzed the complex interaction of economic, political and ideological factors.

Heinrichs’ critique is therefore directed less against Marx himself than against a vulgarized “Marxism” that reduces the dialectic of base and superstructure to one-sided determination. His own position - the circular mediation of all reflection levels - can be understood as further development of the dialectical core of Marxian theory, not as its refutation.

22.3 Reflection-Logical Further Development: Circular Mediation

Reflection-system theory replaces every linear determination schema with a circular model. The four subsystems (economy, politics, culture, legitimation) stand in a reflexive reciprocal relationship:

Each subsystem presupposes the others and is posited by them. Economic conditions shape political structures - but political decisions (economic policy, labor law, taxes) help shape economic conditions. Cultural values influence economic action - but economic conditions shape cultural possibilities.

This circle is not a logical error but the reflexive structure of the social itself. Social integration does not arise through one-sided determination from one level, but through the ongoing mutual mediation of all levels.

Concretely this means: economic inequality cannot be explained or legitimized solely through economic factors. Reflection about justice on the cultural and legitimating level influences whether social inequality is regarded as acceptable or not. When large parts of the population perceive distribution as unjust, legitimation crises arise - regardless of how "efficient" the distribution may be economically.

22.4 The Four Levels of Legitimacy

Legitimacy does not arise simply through power or tradition, but through reflection on social norms and institutions. Reflection-system theory distinguishes four sources of legitimacy that correspond to the four reflection levels:

Factual Legitimacy (Economy): Legitimation through efficiency, prosperity, supply with goods and services. When material needs are not satisfied, the system loses legitimacy. A government that does not master economic crises becomes delegitimized - regardless of how democratically it was elected.

Political Legitimacy (Power and Competence Distribution): Legitimation through fair interest balance and participation. When power distribution is perceived as arbitrary, conflicts arise. Democratic systems are tendentially more legitimate than autocratic ones because power is distributed and controlled.

Cultural Legitimacy (Communicative Values): Legitimation through common values, horizons of meaning, collective identity. In pluralistic societies, value pluralism can lead to fragmentation when no connecting elements are found.

Normative Legitimacy (Basic Consensus): Legitimation through shared basic principles like human rights and constitution. This basic consensus must be renewed again and again; it cannot be established once and for all.

A society is stable when all four legitimation levels are integrated. If one level is missing, specific crises arise: economic crises undermine factual legitimacy, abuse of power undermines political legitimacy, value decay undermines cultural legitimacy, constitutional breach undermines normative legitimacy.

22.5 Heinrichs' Critique of Discourse Ethics

A central aspect of Heinrichs' social theory is his critique of discourse ethics as developed by Jürgen Habermas. This critique, already formulated in 1976, deserves fair presentation - both in its strength and its limits.

Habermas' discourse ethics rests on the assumption that normative questions can be clarified through domination-free rational dialogue. If all participants argue with each other under ideal conditions (without coercion, with equal rights, with the goal of understanding), they would arrive at rational agreements. The validity of a norm is measured by whether it could find the agreement of all affected.

Heinrichs' objection states: this assumption underestimates the structural difference of reflection levels. Discourses in the narrower sense - rational argumentation - operate on a particular level. Basic values, however, belong to another level that is not fully accessible to argumentative discourse.

Concretely: in a discourse, participants can exchange arguments if they share common premises. One can discuss the best economic system if one agrees that prosperity and justice are both important. But can one discursively decide *whether* justice is more important than prosperity or vice versa? Heinrichs doubts it.

Discourse ethics must presuppose certain values to function at all: truthfulness (one should not lie), equality (all have equal rights in discourse), willingness to understand (one wants to reach agreements). These values are, however, not discursively justifiable themselves - they are conditions of discourse, not its result.

22.6 The Strength and Limit of Heinrichs' Position

Heinrichs' critique hits an important point: discourse ethics cannot be presuppositionless. Every discourse takes place in a cultural and institutional framework that already embodies certain values. The idea of a "domination-free discourse" is itself a normative ideal that must be justified.

However, Heinrichs' conclusion - that basic values are principally withdrawn from rational discourse - is not compelling. There are alternative positions:

Performative justification: One can argue that certain normative principles are already presupposed in the performance of argumentation itself. Whoever argues implicitly recognizes their counterpart as rational being whose arguments deserve respect. This recognition is not the result of a discourse but its performative presupposition - but it is rationally reconstructible.

In our accompanying commentary on Hegel's Logic, we have shown that ethical criteria can be derived from the reflexive structure of thinking itself - not through mystical intuition but through performative analysis of what is unavoidably performed in thinking and argumentation. The nine criteria developed there (self-relation, self-determination, self-preservation, reciprocity, development, inner purposiveness, recognizability, con-

figurability, self-reflexivity) are derived both ontologically from the structure of life and performatively from the structure of thinking.

This contradicts Heinrichs' thesis that basic values are principally withdrawn from rational discourse. It rather shows that the boundary between "discursively justifiable" and "withdrawn from discourse" is to be drawn differently than Heinrichs assumes.

22.7 Heinrichs' Own Position: The Role of Mysticism

Heinrichs' skepticism toward the discursive justifiability of basic values probably also hangs together with his high estimation of mysticism. In his reflection philosophy, mystical experience is the fourth and highest stage - the stage on which reflexive consciousness experiences its own unity with the meaning medium.

For Heinrichs, basic values are ultimately anchored in this mystical dimension. They cannot be completely rationalized because they are rooted in an experiential level that precedes conceptual thinking. This explains why he considers argumentative discourse "communicatively incompetent" when it comes to value questions.

This position is consistent with Heinrichs' overall system and deserves respect as a possible philosophical stance. But it is not without alternatives. Whoever does not share the mystical dimension or does not grant it epistemic priority will not have to follow Heinrichs' consequences.

22.8 A Mediating Proposal

Perhaps one can mediate between Heinrichs and discourse ethics. Both are right in different respects:

Habermas is right: Normative questions are not merely subjective preferences. They are accessible to rational argumentation, even if this argumentation has limits. Discourses can clarify misunderstandings, correct false generalizations, expand perspectives.

Heinrichs is right: Discourses cannot solve all normative questions. There are value decisions that precede discourse and first enable it. The notion that "more discourse" automatically leads to consensus is naive.

The synthesis could read: discourses are necessary but not sufficient. They must be embedded in institutional structures that embody and reproduce basic values. Education, science, art, perhaps also religion - these are forms in which societies reflect on their normative foundations without merely "discussing" them.

22.9 Practical Consequences

The theory has practical consequences for democratic societies:

First: A democracy cannot solve all problems through rational discourses. It additionally needs institutions for value formation - educational systems that convey not only knowledge but also normative orientation.

Second: The basic consensus of a society must be continuously reproduced. It is not given once and for all, but result of ongoing reflexive work on all four levels.

Third: Legitimation crises arise when the reflexive mediation of levels fails - when for example economic efficiency is played against cultural values or political power decouples from normative legitimation.

Fourth: The fourfold division of reflection levels - which later becomes the foundation of value-stage democracy - already shows itself here in its contours: different questions require different reflection forms and possibly different institutional responsibilities.

22.10 Summary

Heinrichs' theory of social integration and legitimacy achieves important things: it shows the reflexive structure of the social, the circular mediation of subsystems, the different levels of legitimacy. His critique of a shortened discourse ethics hits important points.

However, his thesis of the principal "communicative incompetence of discourse" in value questions is too strong. There are ways - like performative ethics justification from the minikernel of logic - that show rational reflection reaches further than Heinrichs assumes.

The truth probably lies between the extremes: neither is everything discursively justifiable (against naive rationalism), nor are basic values completely withdrawn from rational discourse (against Heinrichs' mystically founded skepticism). The task is to precisely determine the scope and limits of different reflection forms - a task to which both Heinrichs and discourse ethics have made important contributions.

Chapter 23: State, Society and the Political Dimension

23.1 The Reflection-Logical Theory of the State

The reflection-system theory has immediate political consequences. Heinrichs develops a reflection-logical theory of the state that understands the state as reflection system - as institutionalized form of social self-reflection.

The state is not an isolated structure but stands in interaction with other social subsystems. Its legitimacy and functioning depend on the quality of its reflection mechanisms.

23.2 The State as Double Instance

The state has a double function: integration and reflection. As integration instance, it holds society together through law and administration. As reflection instance, it enables society to think about itself and consciously shape its structures.

This second function is often overlooked but is decisive: a society without state reflection mechanisms is blind to its own problems. It cannot act strategically but only react to crises.

Democracies ideally have several mechanisms for continuous self-reflection: parliamentary control, public debates, constitutional jurisdiction, scientific policy advice. When these mechanisms are weakly developed, legitimation crises arise - the state loses the ability to reflexively process social problems.

23.3 The Tension Between State and Subsystems

Reflection-system theory shows the tension between state and other subsystems. The state regulates economy, education and culture, yet these areas have their own reflection mechanisms that do not harmonize with state steering.

An example: science has its own quality criteria (truth, objectivity) that are not identical with political goals. If the state attempts to steer science purely politically, it loses credibility. Conversely, the state needs scientific knowledge to decide rationally.

This tension can only be solved through reflexive mediation, not through subordination. This applies analogously to the relationship between state and economy, state and culture, state and religion. Each subsystem has its own logic that the state must respect - but at the same time the state must relate the subsystems to each other and integrate them.

23.4 Mediation Structures: From Hegel to Heinrichs

Already Hegel saw that the individual does not stand directly opposite the state but is mediated through intermediate institutions: family, civil society, corporations. The corporations have the function in Hegel of bundling particular interests and mediating them to the universal.

Hegel's concrete doctrine of estates - substantial estate (agriculture), industrial estate, universal estate (civil servants) - is doubtlessly time-bound. But the principle - that intermediate mediation structures are needed - remains valid.

Heinrichs' fourfold division of social subsystems (economy, politics, culture, legitimation) can be understood as updating of this principle. He replaces Hegel's historically bound estates with functionally determined reflection levels that are more appropriate for modern differentiated societies.

The relationship of Heinrichs to Hegel - continuity and further development, not mere "overcoming" - is treated extensively in Chapter 36.

23.5 Theory and Practice

Reflection-system theory leads to a theory of the relationship between theory and practice. Both are not separate spheres but two moments of the same reflexive process.

Theory is itself a practice - the practice of reflection. When I think theoretically about society, I do something: I reflect, distinguish, order. This reflexive activity is part of social self-reflection.

Conversely, practice is always already theory-laden. Action never happens "blindly" but on the basis of interpretations, expectations, norms - on the basis of meaning that is reflexively structured.

The separation of theory and practice is itself a product of objectifying reflection (second stage) that splits off theory as "pure observation" from practice as "mere doing." At a higher reflection stage, this separation is overcome.

23.6 Reflection as Condition of Social Capacity for Action

A society that does not reflect on its own structures is incapable of action. It can only react to crises, not act strategically. It is delivered to the anonymous forces of the "system" - because it does not recognize these forces as products of its own reflexive practice.

Social capacity for action presupposes reflexive capacity. A society that understands itself can steer itself. A society that does not understand itself is ruled by blind mechanisms.

This is the political point of reflection-system theory: it is not merely contemplative theory. It is practice theory that shows how social practice is reflexively structured - and thus provides starting points for conscious design.

23.7 Outlook on Democracy Reform

The practical dimension shows itself particularly in Heinrichs' works on democracy reform. The fourfold division of reflection levels becomes the foundation of a concrete proposal: value-stage democracy with different institutional levels for different reflection forms.

This proposal is presented extensively in the following chapters on democracy (Chapters 24-25). It shows how reflection logic can be translated into institutional design - how philosophical theory becomes practical reform.

Chapter 24: Further Development and Critical Engagements

24.1 From Foundation to Practical Application

Reflection-system theory has undergone remarkable development between 1976 and 2007. The first work "Reflection as Social System" (1976) is more theoretically foundational. The reworking "Logic of the Social" (2005/2007) is more application-oriented. It already presupposes the full "Revolution of Democracy" from 2003.

24.2 What Both Works Connect

What connects both works? The philosophical matter: the reflection-logical constitution of the social. What distinguishes them? The degree of elaboration and orientation toward application.

"Reflection as Social System" (1976) develops the theoretical foundations:

- The subject theory as foundation (Part I, 2-7)
- The action-theoretical introduction of the system concept (8)
- The equal originality thesis (9)
- The architecture of social systems (10-12)
- The history theory (11)
- The legitimation theory (13)
- The discourse critique (14)
- The state theory (15-16)

"Logic of the Social" (2005) focuses more strongly on:

- Comprehensibility: renunciation of some theoretical deepenings in favor of clearer presentation
- Systematics: the fourfold division is carried through more consistently
- Application: stronger reference to concrete social problems

- Reform perspective: preparation of later democracy theory

This development is not abandonment of basic insights but their popularization in the best sense: the complex thoughts are formulated so they can become practically fruitful.

24.3 Three Continuous Basic Theses

Three basic theses run through both twin works (which Heinrichs understood as mere further development of the same book):

1. The Equal Originality of Personal and Social System This remains the fundamental theorem. Both works show: individual and society are not separate spheres but two moments of the same reflexive process.

2. The Fourfold Division of Reflection Stages Both works develop the four levels of social action:

- Material action (economy)
- Strategic action (politics)
- Communicative action (culture)
- Metacommunicative action (law/basic values)

This fourfold division is not arbitrary but reflection-logically necessary.

3. The Critique of One-Sided Social Theories Both works criticize:

- Subjectivism (that reduces society to individuals)
- Objectivism (that reduces individuals to society)
- Functionalism (that reduces reflection to mechanisms)

Reflection-system theory is the attempt to overcome these one-sidednesses through an integral perspective.

24.4 What Has Developed

Between 1976 and 2005 thinking has not fundamentally changed but deepened and concretized:

Greater Clarity About the Four Reflection Stages The fourfold division was already laid out in 1976, but in 2005 it is carried through more consistently. The systematic table (pp. 162-163 in “Reflection as Social System”) becomes the foundation of the entire presentation in “Logic of the Social.”

Stronger Emphasis on the Practical Reform Perspective In 1976 the theory remains relatively abstract. In 2005 it becomes clearer that the fourfold division requires institutional implementation - which later leads to value-stage democracy.

Renunciation of Some Theoretical Deepenings The history theory (in “Reflection as Social System”) is not executed in 2005 - not because it was abandoned but because it was reserved for a more comprehensive presentation (Dialectic Book 2025).

Focusing on the Essential In 2005 Heinrichs consciously renounces some engagements with other theorists to let his own position emerge more clearly.

24.5 Contrasting Positions: Habermas, Luhmann, Parsons

Reflection-system theory does not develop in a vacuum but in critical engagement with the three dominant social-theoretical paradigms of the postwar period: Habermas’ theory of communicative action, Luhmann’s systems theory and Parsons’ structural functionalism.

24.6 Differentiation from Subject-Free Systems Theory (Luhmann)

Niklas Luhmann develops a radical systems theory that completely eliminates the subject. Social systems in Luhmann operate not through conscious subjects but through communication. The unity of the system is not the person but the communicative operation.

This perspective has an important advantage: it grasps the autonomous logic of social systems that detach themselves from individual intentions. Heinrichs expressly appreciates this insight.

But Luhmann overstretches his thesis. By eliminating the subject, he loses the possibility to explain:

- How social systems arise (through reflexive constitution)
- Why they change (through reflexive crisis management)
- How they are legitimized (through reflexive recognition)

Heinrichs’ critique states: social systems are reflexively constituted - not subject-free, but through the reflection of subjects. Luhmann’s error does not consist in emphasizing the autonomous logic of social systems, but in misunderstanding this autonomous logic as “subject-free.”

Reflection-system theory shows: one can recognize the autonomous logic of social systems without eliminating the subject. Social systems have a reflexively generated autonomous logic. They are real (not merely subjective imagination) but not independent of the subjects who reproduce them.

Another point of critique: Luhmann reduces social systems to operative processes. He does not ask about meaning, values, legitimacy - but only about functions. This reduction is from the view of reflection-system theory a loss of reflection: the system becomes blind to its own normative foundations.

24.7 The Early Habermas Critique and Its Later Confirmation

The critique of Jürgen Habermas, already formulated in 1976, states:

1. Overestimation of Discursive Rationality Habermas believes that normative questions can be clarified through discourses. Heinrichs shows: discourses already presuppose a basic consensus that they cannot generate themselves. The fourth reflection level (basic values) is not discursively accessible.

2. Neglect of Reflection Stages Habermas distinguishes between strategic and communicative action - an important distinction. But he overlooks that there are four reflection levels, not just two. The first level (material action) and fourth level (meta-communication) are not systematically grasped. Also the communication process itself is not grasped as reciprocal, double reflection – and therefore remains much too close to rational discourse.

3. Missing Institution Theory Habermas develops a discourse ethics but no systematic theory of institutions. He says how norms should be justified (through discourses) but not how they can be institutionalized. The practical implementation remains unclear.

This critique has been confirmed in the following decades. The great social conflicts are not solved through “domination-free dialogue.” The hope of discourse ethics - that rational communication leads to consensus - has proved too optimistic.

The problem is not that Habermas’ concern would be wrong. Communication is important, discourses are important. But their analysis does not suffice. Structural reflection - institutional anchoring, cultural practice, educational processes - is at least as important as discursive rationality.

24.8 Parsons’ Merit and His Limits

Talcott Parsons is the founder of modern systems theory in sociology. His structural-functional paradigm significantly shaped postwar sociology. Heinrichs expressly appreciates Parsons’ achievements:

Parsons’ Merits:

- Systematic development of an action theory
- Introduction of the system concept into social sciences
- Analysis of functional differentiation of modern societies
- Attempt to connect action theory and systems theory

But Parsons also has grave problems that Heinrichs points out:

1. Three Action Systems Without Systematic Justification Parsons distinguishes:

- Personal system (personality)
- Social system (society)
- Cultural system (culture)

This three-division is not justified but simply posited. Heinrichs shows: there are only two basic reflection systems (personal and social) that mutually imply each other. The “cultural system” is not a third action system but the medium in which the other two operate.

2. Functionalism Without Reflection Theory Parsons analyzes systems according to their functions (adaptation, goal attainment, integration, norm maintenance - the famous AGIL schema). But he does not ask about the reflexive constitution of these functions. Why are there precisely these four functions? Parsons does not answer this question satisfactorily.

Heinrichs’ answer: the four functions correspond to the four reflection stages. That is not an arbitrary division but a reflection-logical necessity.

3. Neglect of Reflection as Conscious Practice Like Luhmann (who critically further develops Parsons), Parsons also tends to functionalize reflection. Reflection becomes a “system function,” not understood as conscious practice of subjects.

Despite this critique, Parsons remains important. His insight into functional differentiation of modern societies is fundamental. Heinrichs’ fourfold division can be understood as reflection-logical further development of Parsons’ functional analysis.

24.9 The Synthesis: Reflection-System Theory as Third Way

Reflection-system theory is neither pure action theory (like Habermas) nor pure systems theory (like Luhmann), but a synthesis of both perspectives at a higher reflection-logical level.

From Habermas, Heinrichs takes over:

- The significance of communicative rationality
- The critique of functionalism
- The emancipatory interest

But he criticizes:

- The overestimation of discourse, indeed unclearness of the concept of mode
- The neglect of reflection stages
- The missing institution theory, no mediation between action and systems theory

From Luhmann, Heinrichs takes over:

- The insight into the autonomous logic of social systems
- The functional differentiation

But he criticizes:

- The elimination of the subject

- The reduction to operative processes
- The missing normative dimension

From Parsons, Heinrichs takes over:

- The systematic approach
- The connection of action and systems theory
- The functional analysis

But he criticizes:

- The functionalism without reflection theory
- The neglect of the constitution question of subsystems

The synthesis consists in reflection-system theory showing:

- Social systems are reflexively constituted from actions (against Luhmann)
- Reflection is not only the explicit one of discourse but a stagedly implicit and system-forming one (against Habermas)

This synthesis is not a compromise but a qualitatively new perspective that overcomes the one-sidednesses of the three approaches.

24.10 Preview of the Extensive Habermas Debate

The engagement with Habermas is not concluded with this. In the appendix, the critique of Habermas is systematically worked out and compared with Chomsky and Wilber. There it becomes clear that the differences concern not only individual theorems but represent different paradigms.

The central difference: Habermas remains with a two-stage action model (strategic vs. communicative), while Heinrichs develops a four-stage action system from the inner reflexivity of action. The opposition of action and systems theory Heinrichs regards as the most fundamental and far-reaching error in Habermas. His talk of “domination-free discourse” he regards as a completely inadequate and unclear contribution to democracy theory, whose consequencelessness is clearly shown in the current democracy crisis.

24.11 Conclusion: The Systematic Contribution to Social Philosophy

The reflection-system theory of society is Johannes Heinrichs' fundamental contribution to social philosophy. It shows how society arises and maintains itself through staged reflection processes. The theory overcomes the false opposition between action theory and systems theory by mediating both reflection-logically.

The basic insight - the equal originality of personal and social system - was developed in 1976 and further elaborated especially in the great democracy book of 2003. Some aspects (especially the history theory) were only taken up again decades later (2025), which shows the depth and anticipation of the thinking.

The theory is not merely academic but has immediate practical consequences. The fourfold division of reflection levels becomes the foundation of concrete reform proposals (Chapters 23-26) and the foundation of a new democracy theory (Chapter 26).

The engagement with Habermas, Luhmann and Parsons shows that reflection-system theory is not merely another social theory but a paradigm shift: from functional or communicative to reflection-logical system-theoretical categories.

The next chapter will show how these theoretical insights can be translated into concrete political and economic reform proposals.

Chapter 25: The Leap from the Vicious Circle - Systematic Economic Reform Through Reflection Logic

25.1 The Basic Decision: Structure Instead of Morality

The social-theoretical foundation from Chapter 20 leads to the first reflection level: the economy. In Heinrichs' work *"Leap from the Vicious Circle"* (1997/2005) a fundamental setting of course shows itself that marks him as an important forerunner of modern system critique: economic misery does not arise through individual misbehavior but through systemic misconstructions.

Heinrichs devotes an entire chapter to critiquing the "ethics boom." He recognizes that appeals to individual conscience represent a "diversion ideology" as long as systemic constraints remain intact. Whoever wants to act morally in a false system is punished by the system - through bankruptcy, displacement, marginalization. The dictum "ethics today is often the spirit of spiritless conditions" is pure system critique. Heinrichs demands not better people but better structures.

With this insight, Heinrichs anticipated what is discussed today as critique of "green-washing" or "corporate social responsibility": ethics without structural change remains mere PR.

25.2 The Prehistory: From Ideology Critique to System Critique

To understand the depth of Heinrichs' economic approach, one must look back. Already in 1978, in his work "*Freedom - Socialism - Christianity*," Heinrichs had formulated the theoretical program: overcoming the deadly alternative between capitalist freedom (without justice) and socialist equality (without freedom).

Then, at the end of the 70s, Heinrichs still sought the solution predominantly at the level of ideology critique and communicative action. He showed that Christianity (as theonomous autonomy) should actually be the link that reconciles the liberal freedom impulse and the socialist justice impulse. But the book of 1978 still lacked the precise economic lever. It was the philosophical diagnosis of a torn world.

With the "*Leap from the Vicious Circle*" (1997/2005) Heinrichs delivers decades later the missing puzzle piece: the synthesis of freedom and socialism fails not because of false consciousness but because of false monetary order.

The connection is systematic: freedom is impossible as long as compound interest enforces wealth concentration - for whoever possesses nothing is not free. Socialism (in the sense of justice) is impossible as long as capital generates income without work - for then work is systematically devalued. And Christianity remains empty phrase as long as it pacts with interest (mammon) - as Heinrichs shows using the fate of the Jesuit Johannes Kleinhappl expelled from the order.

In this synopsis it becomes clear: the late work including economics - caused by the encounter in 1994 with the editor and staff of the magazine "The 3rd Way" (not to be confused with a far-right minor party founded in 2018!), which soon took the name "Humane Economy," is the "materialist" redemption of the philosophical early work. What began in 1978 as postulate of a "communicative society" becomes operationalizable in 2005 through the technique of circulation security and the architecture of fourfold division. The "leap" is not a break with the early work but its concretization at the level where social change must actually also start: the economic base.

25.3 The Vicious Circle of the Interest Economy

The current economic order is according to Heinrichs' analysis not a natural phenomenon but the consequence of a systemically erroneous construction. The problem lies in the incompatibility of time structures:

Reality is finite and transient - goods rust, people age, resources are exhausted. Money, however, is programmed through interest for infinite, exponential growth. This "false infinity" of money forces reality under its dictate. An accumulation constraint arises: money *must* grow to serve interest claims. The system has a mathematically compelling dynamic that cannot be braked by morality.

Historical Confirmation: Gesell's Prophecy

Silvio Gesell (1862-1930) recognized this system logic already over a hundred years ago. His prognosis of 1918 was frighteningly precise:

“Despite the holy promise of the peoples to banish war for all times, despite the cries of millions: ‘Never again war!’, contrary to all hopes for a more beautiful future, I must say: If the present monetary system, the interest economy, is maintained, I dare to assert today that it will not take 25 years before we stand before a new, even more terrible war.”

Exactly 21 years later, the Second World War began. The world economic crisis of 1929 followed exactly the pattern described by Gesell: capital accumulation through interest economy, sinking interest rates through capital surplus, hoarding instead of investment, economic crisis through money shortage, unemployment and social tensions, nationalist radicalization, war as “solution” of the crisis.

25.4 The Integration of Traditions: Marx, Kleinhappl and Gesell

Heinrichs' economic analysis does not stand in a vacuum. He achieves a remarkable threefold integration by bringing together apparently irreconcilable traditions and correcting their respective one-sidednesses.

The Legacy of Marx: The Analysis of Capital Power

From Marx, Heinrichs takes over the sharp eye for exploitation and surplus value. He shares the analysis that labor is the source of value and that capital unjustifiably appropriates this value. But Heinrichs corrects Marx in two decisive points:

First, Marx located the problem in private ownership of means of production. Heinrichs shows with Gesell that the problem lies deeper: in the monetary order itself and the land order. Second, Heinrichs rejects historical materialism. Economy does not determine everything; it is only the first of four equal reflection levels.

The Legacy of Catholic Social Teaching: Johannes Kleinhappl

A particularly significant aspect is Heinrichs' recourse to Catholic moral theology, specifically to Johannes Kleinhappl (1893-1951). Kleinhappl was a moral theologian who uncompromisingly represented the old church teaching: capital is *in itself* unfruitful and has no claim to interest. Labor is the only source of value increase.

Heinrichs defends Kleinhappl against modern “adapted” social teaching that justifies interest as “risk premium” or “abstinence wage.” As long as the church accepts interest, it betrays its own ethics. Kleinhappl is for Heinrichs proof that consistent ethics must inevitably lead to system critique of the monetary system.

The Legacy of Gesell: The Technical Solution

The ethical demand (Kleinhappell) and the socioeconomic analysis (Marx) find their technical solution in Silvio Gesell. Gesell delivers the tools - circulation security, “free money” - to end exploitation without communist command economy. Heinrichs, however, lifts Gesell out of the “sectarian, strictly anti-Marxist corner” and integrates him into the great Western philosophical history.

25.5 The Solution: Conceptual Logic and Fourfold Division

Heinrichs’ answer to the diagnosis is dual: a reform of money and a reform of institutions.

The “Natural Economic Order” as Conceptual Logic

When Heinrichs speaks with Gesell of a “Natural Economic Order,” he means not biologism but conceptual logic in the Hegelian sense. A thing is “true” or “natural” when it corresponds to its concept. The concept of money is: medium of exchange. A medium of exchange for transient goods may not be imperishable. Circulation security (“aging money”) serves to make money again according to its concept: it should serve, not rule. It should be mortal like man and commodity.

The Fourfold Division as Institutional Framework

A monetary reform alone would fizzle out if the political power structure remains unchanged. Therefore Heinrichs embeds the economy in the fourfold division. The economic parliament enables expert treatment of monetary and property reforms. The political parliament creates the legal framework for a new economic order. The cultural parliament organizes the necessary educational offensive, also for economic understanding. The basic values parliament makes the ethical fundamental decisions about economic purposes.

Here Heinrichs’ decisive innovation shows: neither Marx nor Gesell had an adequate political theory for implementing their insights. The fourfold division of democracy creates for the first time the institutional framework in which both monetary reform and property reform could be expertly discussed and democratically implemented.

25.6 The Reflection-Logical Mediation

Heinrichs' pragmatic approach takes over Gesell's reform proposals not as dogma but as starting point for systematic considerations. The "aging money" shows exemplarily how technical reforms (first reflection level) must be mediated with political, cultural and ethical dimensions:

At the instrumental level stand the technical reforms: monetary reform, land reform. At the strategic level it concerns political implementation through fourfold division. The communicative level requires education and public enlightenment about economic connections. The normative level concerns fundamental value reflection about economic purposes.

The dialectical synthesis "integration-through-differentiation" dissolves false alternatives. Not capitalism or socialism, but a natural economic order that connects justified self-interest with systemic justice.

25.7 A Critical Dialogue: Necessary but Not Sufficient Reforms

Heinrichs' analysis and reform proposals mark a necessary step - but the question whether they are sufficient deserves honest consideration. Not to diminish his achievement but to grasp the challenge in its full depth.

The Question of Structural Depth

Heinrichs focuses strongly on interest as core problem. Newer research on legal coding of capital (paradigmatically: Katharina Pistor, *The Code of Capital*) suggests that interest is only one of several modules through which the legal system privileges capital accumulation. The four central modules - priority, durability, universality, convertibility - also operate independently of the interest system.

An entrepreneur can also skim off surplus value without interest income: through asymmetry in the employment contract (the worker needs money today, the capitalist can wait), through property rights to means of production, through control over knowledge (patents, business secrets). The appropriation of collectively generated surplus operates through multiple channels - interest is only one of them.

This does not mean Heinrichs is wrong - it means his analysis identifies an important but not the only lever.

The Problem of “Counter-Colonization”

Even if monetary and land reform were politically implemented - how would they be protected against systematic circumvention? History shows a disturbing pattern: every reform is undermined if the basic logic (profit maximization as system constraint) remains intact.

One could call this the “hydra principle”: cut off one head, two grow back. Limiting interest leads to new forms of rent extraction. Strengthening labor law leads to gig economy and bogus self-employment. Regulating banking leads to shadow banking. The problem is not lack of foresight by reformers - the problem is the basic logic of the system that constantly generates new circumvention strategies.

Heinrichs’ fourfold division partially addresses this problem: an economic parliament with expert factual parties could react faster to circumvention strategies than the current system. But the question remains whether institutional reform alone suffices as long as the incentive structure itself remains unchanged.

The Deeper Question: M-C-M’ versus N-P-R

The most radical critique would be: Heinrichs treats symptoms of a deeper problem. The formula M-C-M’ (Money-Commodity-More Money) describes not only the interest cycle but the entire logic of capital valorization. This logic cannot be “embedded” or “tamed” - it bursts every boundary set for it because boundary crossing is profitable.

The alternative would be a reversal of the logic itself: N-P-R (Need-Production-Regeneration). Not money multiplication as purpose with production as means, but need satisfaction as purpose with production as means - and regeneration as integral component that closes the cycles.

Heinrichs’ fourfold division could serve as institutional framework for such a logic reversal - the basic values parliament as place where decisions are made about purposes instead of only about means. But this possibility remains unworked out in *Leap from the Vicious Circle*.

25.8 Conclusion: A Necessary Building Block

Johannes Heinrichs proves himself in *“Leap from the Vicious Circle”* as a thinker who not only describes the symptoms of our time but traces them back to their systemic causes.

His systematic strength lies in the threefold integration: he connects the moral integrity of old interest ethics (Kleinhappl) with the analytical sharpness of system critique (Marx) and the technical solution (Gesell) - embedded in a reflection-logical framework that co-delivers the necessary institutional prerequisites (fourfold division). No other thinker has so systematically brought together these traditions.

His actuality shows in the critique of “moralization”: he anticipated what is discussed today as critique of greenwashing or corporate social responsibility - ethics without structural change remains mere PR.

His historical significance lies in having identified one of the most important levers: the monetary order is not naturally given but politically shapeable. That this lever alone may not suffice does not diminish the achievement of having systematically grasped it at all.

The continuing question - whether alongside monetary reform a more fundamental transformation of property order and economic basic logic is necessary - remains open for future works. Heinrichs’ fourfold division offers the institutional framework in which these questions could be democratically negotiated. That is more than most thinkers have to offer.

The alternative is not called capitalism or socialism, but reflection-logically founded system transformation - and Heinrichs has delivered an indispensable building block for it.

25.9 The Historical Chance

We stand today before a situation that has structural parallels to 1929: growing inequality, wealth concentration, ecological crises, social tensions. Gesell’s prophecy (that the next war would be unavoidable without change of monetary order) proved true then. The question is whether we learn from history.

But this time we have systematic alternatives. Heinrichs has shown that the vicious circle is not a natural law but the result of changeable structures. The fourfold division offers an institutional framework in which reforms could be expertly discussed and democratically implemented. Reflection logic delivers the conceptual tool to overcome false alternatives.

The question is not whether change is possible - it is. The question is whether we have the courage to dare it. The way out of crisis leads through systematic thinking, courageous reforms and integration of all social reflection levels. Heinrichs has shown the way. It is up to us to walk it.

Chapter 26: The Revolution of Democracy - Heinrichs' Social-Philosophical Main Work

The second reflection level: From economic reform to political institutional reform

With the “Revolution of Democracy” (2003, 2nd edition 2014), Johannes Heinrichs presents his social-philosophical main work. Alongside the five-volume philosophy of language, this is the second great application work of his reflection theory - and the one where he himself recognizes “no serious competition whatsoever” in contemporary social philosophy. While the philosophy of language applies the reflection stages to human communication, the democracy theory transfers them to the political institutional order.

The systematic economic reform from the previous chapter leads us to the second reflection level: politics. Here it shows that economic reform is not enforceable without institutional democracy reform. Heinrichs has recognized that today's party democracies are structurally incapable of realizing the necessary reforms. The “Revolution of Democracy” is therefore not a mere supplement to reflection-system theory but its political consequence.

26.1 The Crisis of Party Democracy

Every time we conduct a political discussion, we experience a fascinating paradox. We debate complex social problems - climate change, digitalization, social justice, international conflicts - but must press this diversity into a simple scheme: which party should we vote for?

This scheme stems from the 19th century, when social conflict lines were manageable: capital against labor, liberal against conservative, ecclesiastical against secular. Today we face multidimensional challenges that can no longer be adequately processed with the old party system. Heinrichs diagnoses: “Democracy” has become a buzzword of the 20th century to a trigger word.

26.1.1 The Structural Problem of Block Parties

What are block parties? Political organizations that must develop positions on all social questions - from foreign policy through education and economy to environmental policy. They bundle completely different thematic fields under one electoral proposal.

The inevitable consequences are grave: First, artificial couplings arise - why should your position on tax policy be coupled with your position on migration policy? A voter who thinks ecologically may have to vote for an immigration policy he rejects. Second, the system leads to superficiality - no party can develop genuine expertise in all areas. Third, it favors lobbyism - since the representatives are not specialists in their areas,

they depend on external “advice.” The influence of lobbyists on representatives is enormous, while the free conscience of representatives (Art. 38 Basic Law) is systematically undermined by faction compulsion.

Heinrichs names the basic evil: structural unseriousness. Historically, parties in Germany arose from worldview groups; today the worldview differences are slight, but the factually alien block mentality has remained. Parties of the old style bundle topics inappropriately together, which places voters before dilemmas. The unified parliament and the necessity of fixed government majorities forces factions in the manner of war camps and thus “programmed unseriousness.”

26.1.2 The False Alternatives: Direct vs. Representative

The usual debate reads: Should democracy become “more direct” (more referenda) or does “representative” democracy remain superior (representatives as elected experts)?

Heinrichs’ diagnosis: This is a false alternative that misses the real problem. Both variants suffer from the same structure: lacking factual organization.

In referenda, the people can only say “Yes” or “No” to prefabricated questions. Who formulates these questions? Who determines the alternatives? These are representative decisions. In parliamentary decisions, representatives must decide on factual questions for which they are often not qualified. A lawyer should vote on genetic engineering, a teacher on foreign policy. Representatives must play “all-around politicians,” which leads to “pseudo-all-around talents.”

The real problem: Not the question “direct or representative” but the missing factual organization of political decision structures.

26.1.3 Ten Prejudices - And Their Refutation

Heinrichs systematically clears up widespread prejudices in his democracy book:

The first prejudice reads: “Democracy is a quite bad form of state, but there is no better one” (Churchill dictum). Heinrichs’ answer: this argument serves as ideology for immunization against fundamental corrections. Democracy is wonderful in idea but so far a little thought-through utopia in embryonic state. “Standstill means regression.”

The second prejudice: “People are by and large satisfied with democracy.” Heinrichs’ answer: professional politicians and the majority of political scientists are satisfied since they are often part of the system. Constructive designs for democracy as a whole are missing. Even Habermas’ “deliberative democracy” is inadequate - his concept of discourse either too narrowly rationalistic or too vague.

The third prejudice: “We can’t change much anyway, least of all our constitution.” Heinrichs’ answer: Article 146 Basic Law still demands a constitution decided by the German people in free decision. This possibility is systematically concealed.

The fourth prejudice: “Everyone must start with himself.” Heinrichs’ answer: this is “pure pseudo-democracy theory from way below” and diverts from structural defects by

blaming them on the individual and generating guilt feelings. Social ethics as “reflection on ethical establishment of public institutions” is something different from individual social behavior.

The fifth prejudice: “Social reality can only spontaneously build up from below.” Heinrichs’ answer: large states could not build up from below without theory and conscious will organization. The Weimar Republic is an example of the failure of many grass-roots initiatives lacking a convincing democratic state doctrine. Structural reforms from above could include initiatives from below, but not vice versa.

To further prejudices (ecological urgency, European economic problems etc.) Heinrichs answers throughout: all these problems show the democracy problematic especially starkly, since the party system prevents appropriate reforms through systemic tactics and unseriousness.

26.1.4 Why Party Democracy Gets into Crisis

The symptoms are unmistakable: complexity increase (modern societies become ever more complex, the number of politically processable topics explodes), loss of trust (citizens notice that their differentiated preferences are not represented - they vote for the “lesser evil”), populism (when the established system fails, “anti-system parties” arise that channel dissatisfaction but offer no systematic solutions), and political aversion (ever more people withdraw from politics because they see no possibility to adequately articulate their factually related concerns).

The feeling of not being heard is the core of the feeling of powerlessness of many citizens. Yet a parliament (from French “parler”) should be the organ of comprehensive social communication.

26.2 Democracy as Reflection Form of Society

Superficially viewed, democracy is a procedure for selecting governments. More deeply viewed, it is the institutionalized reflection of society about itself.

What does this mean? Democracy is the political form in which a society consciously reflects and shapes its own structures. It is not only “rule of the people” but the institutionalization of social self-reflection. Heinrichs defines: democracy is the legal form of dialogical freedom, a communicative society that is more than mere legal community or discourse society.

But which structures should society reflect? Heinrichs’ answer: the four social reflection levels that we already know from reflection-system theory - economy, politics, culture and basic values.

26.2.1 A New Ideal-Typical Democracy Definition

Heinrichs takes Lincoln's Gettysburg formula ("government of the people, by the people, for the people") as starting point and systematically expands it:

"Of the people" designates the origin of power, the subsidiarity principle (Art. 20,2 Basic Law: "All state authority emanates from the people"). "For the people" designates the goal of power exercise, the solidarity principle and justice. "By the people" designates the seat of power, the self-rule of the people - and here the fourfold division principle comes into play as enabling of legitimate circulation.

Heinrichs adds a fourth element: "In form of the people's own law" - the legal (state) principle as formal prerequisite and component of democracy. Without legal form, popular totalitarianism would be possible.

26.2.2 The Four Social Principles

From reflection logic, Heinrichs derives four fundamental social principles:

The solidarity principle ("oneness and difference" of persons) founds the further principles. Dialogical personality is identical with natural, solidary connectedness. Solidarity as original connectedness does not lead to leveling but to the justice principle "to each his own." The opposition of freedom and equality (liberalism vs. socialism) is a childhood disease; equality in social sense is equality in freedom.

The legal (state) principle ("harmony and conflict" of interests and freedoms) designates the subjective-individualistic type of sociality. Modern liberalism emphasizes this principle. Rule of law as founding the commonwealth principally in law is a modern achievement.

The subsidiarity principle ("inner and outer," building from bottom to top) means priority of the communalized individual and elementary communities in relation to the state legal association. Subsidiarity is of decisive significance for Europe and identical with democratically interpreted popular sovereignty.

The fourfold division principle ("content and form," conscious institutional differentiation of subsystems) is the specifically Heinrichsian principle. It demands concrete parliamentary institutionalization of subsystems as value stages.

These four principles could only be realized simultaneously and in knowledge of their systematic connection; they build up reflection-stagily and genetic-developmentally on each other.

26.3 The Historical Classification

Heinrichs emphasizes: democracy is an unfinished search process. Universal suffrage (including women) was introduced only late - in England 1930, in Switzerland at federal level only 1971. There is still no adequate theory of democracy that solves fundamental problems like the relationship of parties to factual questions, the dominance of economy, the role of ethical basic values and the freedom of culture and science.

The history of Western democracy shows different traditional lines: the liberal line (Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu) emphasized separation of powers and individual rights. The radical-democratic line (Rousseau, Marx) emphasized direct participation. Both lines have strengths and weaknesses - the fourfold division should reconcile them.

Heinrichs sees the present at the end of the negative liberation epoch (in Fichte's sense) but closer to the age of constructive reason. Previous enlightenment was "half, merely intellectual." The new, constructive enlightenment must go into the public - as "constructive consciousness revolution," as the subtitle of the 2nd edition states.

26.4 Transition: From Diagnosis to Solution

Hegel's insight reads: "Once the realm of ideas is revolutionized, reality cannot withstand." For democracy reform this means: people must first understand that today's party democracies are principally defective before they are ready to consider structural alternatives.

The core questions read: Are today's democracies capable of appropriate value decisions? Can values other than economic ones prevail? How is ecological sustainability politically enforceable without circular capacity of the political system itself?

Heinrichs' answer: A completely new architecture of democratic institutions is needed - the fourfold division of parliament. This is developed in the following chapter.

Chapter 27: Value-Stage Democracy - Architecture of the Four Parliamentary Chambers

27.1 The Basic Idea: Fourfold Division of the Legislature

Heinrichs' revolutionary proposal: instead of one parliament responsible for everything, four specialized parliamentary chambers corresponding to the four social reflection levels.

The economic chamber is responsible for all questions of production, distribution and consumption. It takes initiative regarding legal regulation of economic consumption and health, production, trade and finance. Directly elected representatives shape the economic sphere legislatively and steeringly - this is economic democracy that goes beyond worker participation at the workplace.

The political chamber (in the narrower sense) is responsible for all questions of legal order, security and administration. It takes initiative regarding land ownership, land use and traffic questions, internal security (including civil and criminal law), external security and political foreign relations as well as constitutional development. Since the other areas now have their own chambers, the political chamber can concentrate on the specifically political.

The cultural chamber is responsible for all questions of education, communication and cultural development. It takes initiative regarding family and pedagogy, science, guarantee of independent journalism and communication as well as art and preservation of cultural heritage, not least the German language. Artists as candidates would clear up party clichés.

The basic values chamber is responsible for all questions of ethical orientation and meaning-giving. It takes initiative regarding fair coexistence of worldviews, ethics, religions and spiritual communities as well as social and individual ethical aspects of legislation. Concretization of basic values as well as individual basic rights and duties belongs to its area of responsibility.

27.2 The Hierarchy of Chambers: Priority Regulation

The four parliamentary chambers are not equal but hierarchically ordered according to reflection logic - but it is a logical hierarchy, not an arbitrary power hierarchy.

Without prejudice to the own legislative matter of each chamber, a priority regulation of chambers applies in the order 4-3-2-1, that is from basic values to economic values. The respectively prior chamber has the right of framework legislation without the independence of subordinate chambers in their own matter being thereby abolished.

The basic values parliament thus sets the ethical framework conditions within which all three other partial parliaments work. It is the most important instance for renewal and deals with concrete interpretation and application of basic values. This is not about a ruling doctrine but about a communicative procedure for value finding - a procedural ethics of democratic value communication.

The cultural parliament sets the education and communication standards below which the political parliament as well as the economic parliament work. The political parliament sets the legal framework conditions within which the economic parliament works.

27.2.1 Circular Feedback

This value hierarchy is, however, not one-sided but circular. The one-sided hierarchical gradation (from basic values to economy) must be supplemented by a circular relationship: consideration of economic and political factual constraints in the higher levels.

All representatives remain responsible for everything. Beyond their primary responsibilities, each chamber - as a whole or through individuals of its members - has the right

and possibly the duty to take positions on all legislative processes of the other chambers in timely manner within the framework of the amendment procedure. The interaction of chambers serves the second and third readings of a legislative amendment in the respectively primarily responsible chambers.

Example genetic engineering: all four levels are affected - the basic values chamber because of ethical questions, the cultural chamber because of scientific standards, the political chamber because of legal regulation, the economic chamber because of economic implications. Each chamber has its formal object (perspective, mandate), even when the material object (legislative matter) can be the same.

27.3 The New Separation of Powers Doctrine

The classical separation of powers (legislative, executive, judicial) is not abolished but expanded and systematically justified. At each of the four factual levels there are legislative, executive and judicial, whereby executive respectively includes an administrative as well as a governmental executive. The separation of powers is thus also expanded to four instances.

Decisive is the respective relationship of “powers” to laws:

Administration (1st stage) is mere application of existing laws, regardless of legitimation - the objective stage. It is the executing organ of popular will formulated in laws and should understand itself as self-administration of the people, not as alien administration.

Government (2nd stage) means own decision-making power within the framework of laws - the subjective stage. Heinrichs clearly distinguishes between governing (officially mandated decisions and action within the framework of constitution but going beyond laws) and administering (application of existing laws within the framework of official competencies).

Legislature (3rd stage) is parliamentary, insofar communicative power for legislation - the intersubjective stage.

Judiciary (4th stage) represents metacommunicative power of law supervision, to be distinguished from simple jurisdiction as law application as part of administration.

This reflection-logical separation of powers doctrine seeks its equal in stringency. In contrast, the popular talk of press/media as “fourth power” is misleading because it is precisely not a state function. “Powers” are essential state functions.

27.4 The Four Government Chiefs: Collegial State Leadership

A consistent fourfold division of governmental executive would be of greatest advantage. Heinrichs proposes a collegial government of several mutually independent chiefs for the four areas: economy, politics, culture, basic values.

Each of the four parliamentary chambers elects a government chief for the respective area of responsibility on proposal of the federal president. The four-member body of government chiefs works cooperatively together. A government chief can veto a governmental measure of a colleague. This becomes effective if the other colleagues agree. In case no personal majority comes about, the vote weighting of 4-3-2-1 decides according to value hierarchy.

The advantages of this collegial state leadership are considerable: power disentanglement instead of concentration at the chancellor, reduction of factually alien power cult around a single leadership person, lower crisis susceptibility through distribution of responsibility.

The detailed subdivision of ministries within each of the four partial governments also follows reflection-logical principles: the economic government subdivides into consumption/health, production, trade, monetary system (finance). The political government subdivides into land/traffic, domestic policy, foreign policy, legal policy. The cultural government subdivides into pedagogy/school system, science, journalism, art. The basic values government (ministry of culture in the original sense) subdivides into worldview, ethics, religions, spiritualities.

27.5 Factual Parties Instead of Block Parties

In value-stage democracy, parties can only be represented as factual parties in one parliament, no longer as “all-around parties.” A party can only be represented in one of the parliamentary chambers and candidate for this. Organizational party formation across the boundaries of partial parliaments is not allowed. Electoral law includes a party law that effectively prevents cross-chamber parties.

Thus specialized political groupings arise and also in the public genuine factual discussions, without the usual, covert mixing of all questions. The future factual parties are private associations, not state organs.

Examples of possible factual parties: in the economic parliament could arise “Party of Social Market Economy,” “Cooperative Party,” “Sustainability Party,” Ecology Party, Health Party. In the political parliament: “Federalism Party,” “Neutrality Party,” “Rule of Law Party,” “Peace Party.” In the cultural parliament: “Education Party,” “Media Reform Party,” “Integration Party,” “Association German Language.” In the basic values parliament: “Christian-Social Party,” “Humanist Union,” “Eco-Spiritual,” secular ethics parties.

27.5.1 The End of Package Elections

Citizens no longer have to press all their political preferences into one electoral decision. They can vote conservative in the economic parliament, liberal in the cultural parliament, green in the political parliament and Christian in the basic values parliament - according to their differentiated convictions.

Elections to the four chambers should ideally take place temporally separated, for example annually one election. This concentrates public discussion respectively on the relevant area and prevents mixing of all topics in one election campaign.

27.5.2 New Control of Conflicts of Interest

Through transparency of the relationship between interest groups and specialized politicians, lobbying becomes visible and controllable. Interest representation is a legitimate part of the parliamentary process, but interest representatives must be made known as such to both parliamentarians and the public. Licensed interest representatives are to be entered in a publicly accessible register.

Art. 38 Basic Law ("subject only to their conscience") thus finally becomes reality. The venality of representatives would decrease through this transparency.

27.6 The Fourfold Division as Synthesis of "Direct" and "Representative"

Heinrichs formulates a logical syllogism for the synthesis: the major premise reads: voting on specific factual problems is the core of direct democracy. The minor premise reads: election of representatives for factual (problem) areas is simultaneously voting on factual problems. The conclusion: such factual-representative election corresponds to the core of direct democracy.

The bundling of factual questions according to the four great value areas is factual and personal appropriate. The concern of direct democracy (factual related participation) is accounted for by area-specific elections - this is the core of the synthesis.

The liberal heritage (separation of powers is necessary to prevent concentration of power) is expanded through fourfold division. The radical-democratic heritage (direct participation of the people is necessary for genuine democracy) is realized through factually related representation.

Hegel's word applies here: "To abolish such fixed oppositions is the sole interest of reason."

27.7 Integration-through-Differentiation as Evolution Principle

The modern differentiation of value spheres (Max Weber) is not yet consistently carried through to the end. Integration-through-differentiation according to the reflection principle means that through staged differentiation of subsystems a higher form of integration arises.

This solves aporias of modern society: society is secularized and yet dependent on basic value foundation; fourfold division enables autonomous culture within the framework of basic values; it creates transparent politics of interests; it allows free market economy within the framework of social ethical justice and ecological reason.

Heinrichs calls the goal an “integral or circular-capable society” - a level pluralism of pluralisms. The analogy to biological evolution (centrocomplexity according to Teilhard de Chardin) is conscious: higher integration arises through higher differentiation.

The non-differentiation of state levels conversely means structural corruption - even when no bribes flow.

Chapter 28: Constitutional Reform and the Three Liberations - Practical Implementation of Value-Stage Democracy

28.1 The Third Dimension: State - Public - Private

To the horizontal fourfold division of subsystems comes in Heinrichs a vertical threefold division of organizational spheres. The antagonism of state and society is old liberal heritage. But the alternative “state versus private (civil society)” is incomplete. There is a middle: the public as third organizational form.

The public includes nonprofit associations, associations, institutions and foundations of public law. These social structures are characterized by collective perspective and orientation toward the common good. The free-social area includes in broader sense both private as well as publicly organized action.

This three-dimensionality applies to each of the four system levels. Thus arises a “fourfold division oikos” - a twelve-part system in which state, public and private organization are distinguished at each of the four levels (economy, politics, culture, basic values).

28.2 The Three Liberations

Heinrichs develops three great liberation perspectives that are made possible through fourfold division:

28.2.1 Liberation from Class State to Economic Equal Opportunity

The economic chamber as independent parliamentary representation of the economic sphere is the place for reordering a “free market economy.” The state-protected privileges - private land ownership and capital (money with self-multiplication mechanism) - are state-protected monopolies that distort free market economy.

Heinrichs criticizes the metaphor of “working money” as a lie of the capitalist world. The connection between rentier capitalism and unemployment is obvious: money flows to itself instead of where people work.

The free market, even liberated from land and money privileges, is however not capable of just evaluation of social services. A democratically controlled work evaluation instance in the economic parliament is needed.

Plea for a strong but lean state: strong legal structures with democratic participation, but not a high state quota. The state should organize civil society life, not take it over.

28.2.2 Liberation from Schoolmaster State to Cultural Creativity

The cultural sovereignty of the state (school system, science, journalism, art) must be newly shaped in relation to civil society activity.

On pedagogy: pre-school education is not primarily state matter. State task is ensuring formal equivalence of degrees, not uniformity. Freedom of curriculum design for teachers, who are free cultural carriers, not state officials.

On science and research: the problem of compatibility of public responsibility and freedom of science. Critique of party-book economy at universities and lacking neutrality of funding institutions like DFG. Public control through democratically legitimized cultural parliament is necessary.

On journalism: press freedom (Art. 5 Basic Law) is threatened less by state censorship than by economically steered “political correctness” and self-coordination of media. Dominance of economic considerations leads to shallowness. Necessity of a cultural state that stimulates civil communicative.

On art: the cultural parliament regulates framework conditions and allocations - not as paternalistic state but as structure-giving, promoting counterpart for private and public initiatives.

28.2.3 Liberation from Confessional State to Liberal Religiosity

The differentiation of religious and state-legal community essential for modern rule of law is not yet consistently carried through. Heinrichs criticizes dependence of politics and culture on overprivileged churches: Hitler Concordat, state payments, church tax, confessional faculties, concordat chairs. State neutrality in religious matters (Art. 4 Basic Law) is undermined.

The basic values parliament enables transformation of individual and confessional ultimate values into generally recognized basic values on basis of a humanistic-spiritual basic consensus. It is not about a council of church representatives but about elected “evaluation experts” capable of value communication.

Religion must be area of spiritual freedom. Release of energies bound in religious institutions is necessary for a new, also religious civil society. Against religious fundamentalism helps only pluralistic-religious integration of commonwealth.

28.3 The Constitutional Draft

Heinrichs has presented a detailed constitutional draft that concretely implements fourfold division. Here the most important elements:

Article 38 (new) defines the Bundestag as totality of four chambers: economic chamber, political chamber, cultural chamber, basic values chamber. Representatives of the Bundestag are elected in general, direct, free, equal and secret election. They are representatives of the whole people, not bound to mandates and instructions and subject only to their conscience.

Article 40 (new) regulates the relationship of chambers: each chamber has primary responsibilities in legislation and ongoing control of corresponding executives. Priority regulation applies in order 4-3-2-1. Beyond primary responsibilities, each chamber has the right and possibly duty to take positions on all legislative processes of other chambers. Joint commissions can be formed, for example a permanent ecology commission from representatives of both economic and basic values chambers.

Article 41 (new) regulates electoral law and election review: area-specific and temporally separated elections for the four chambers. Electoral districts are limited to 150 so that the entire federal parliament comprises no more than maximum 600 representatives. A party can only be represented in one of the parliamentary chambers and candidate for this. Cross-chamber parties are prevented.

Article 63 (new) regulates election and cooperation of government chiefs: each chamber elects a government chief for its area of responsibility. The four-member body works cooperatively together. A government chief can veto measures of a colleague.

28.4 Practical Objections and Answers

28.4.1 “Too Complicated for Practice”

Heinrichs’ answer: higher organization through fourfold division reduces opaque, illogical complexity of existing system instead of increasing it. The analogy to technical development is illuminating: newer devices are more user-friendly through higher logical complexity, not less. Kant’s word applies: “What is valid for theory on grounds of reason is also valid for practice.”

28.4.2 “How Should Demarcation of Responsibilities Function?”

Decisive are not fixed demarcations but specific election of representatives for their respective primary area of responsibility. Quality of decisions results from logic of differentiated value consciousness through area-specific elections. Doubtful cases can be clarified by intra-parliamentary or extra-parliamentary constitutional jurisdiction.

28.4.3 “How Does Temporal Coordination Function?”

If the four partial parliaments are elected at different times and have different political majorities - how should they come to joint decisions? Heinrichs’ answer: it suffices that the total parliament is respectively fully staffed. The plenary of the total parliament is only responsible for constitutional amendments and periodic budget allocation.

28.4.4 “Why Should the Basic Values Parliament Have Higher Authority?”

Because ethical questions logically stand before all other questions - without ethical orientation all other decisions are value-blind or illegitimate. This is not about an upper house removed from democratic dispute but about an elected popular representation for basic value questions that orients other chambers through framework legislation.

28.5 Strategies of Implementation

28.5.1 Distant Goal and Intermediate Goals

Heinrichs importantly distinguishes between distant goals and manageable intermediate steps. An intermediate step must be declared as such and open the view to the distant goal, not block it.

The establishment of bodies like the “German Ethics Council” or sustainability commissions is criticized as undemocratic evasive maneuver since they are not elected by the people and cannot replace actual value communication through a basic values parliament. Such councils are only acceptable as intermediate goals if they lead toward a fourfold parliament as distant goal.

28.5.2 Related Efforts

Heinrichs engages with related reform approaches:

On Rudolf Bahro's upper house proposal (a "House of the Lord" as council of wise): Heinrichs sees similarities to the basic values chamber but also grave differences. The basic values chamber is an elected popular representation only for basic value questions, not an upper house removed from democratic dispute.

On "third chambers" for social movements and NGOs: Heinrichs sees this as possible transitional step but not as solution of basic problems as long as old chambers remain "rotten."

On monetary reformers and Attac: economic reform is not possible without democracy reform and vice versa. Economistic approaches that expect salvation solely from economic base are inadequate.

On Harald Welzer's "transformation" through initiatives from below: Heinrichs criticizes neglect of alliance between initiatives from below and constructive revolution from above. Weimar life reform movements failed through disregard of grand democratic structures.

28.5.3 Evolution or Revolution?

The question is not evolution or revolution but whether evolution proceeds only in small steps or also leap-like revolutionary. Democracy evolution now needs a great leap: from a unified parliament to four area-specific parliaments.

This is a peaceful, primarily mental, constructive revolution that connects to achievements and rests on a consciousness leap. Consciousness evolution happens only with and through consciousness.

28.6 The Media and Social Chance

Mass media occupy the social meaning medium and are often characterized by economic constraints and sensation orientation. Necessary is a transition of media to constructive paradigm that not only uncovers grievances but also shows solution paths for fundamental structural reforms.

The revolutionary subject in Western countries is "the awakening from all strata" who feel the theory-practice gap and seek alternatives. Old European enlightenment followed the paradigm of revelation; today it concerns constructive enlightenment.

Marx's word applies: "Theory also becomes material force as soon as it grips the masses." The revolutionary subject is the silent majority of those of good will who seek an alternative.

28.7 Overcoming the Theory-Practice Gap

Heinrichs sees Germany in special responsibility. The theory-practice gap has been particularly strongly stylized here. Marx's diagnosis that the "real life germ of the German people has so far only grown under its skull" still applies.

Hölderlin's hope that thoughts become deeds must be redeemed. Dominance of "base" (economy and politics) over "superstructure" (culture and basic values) is a fact not yet overcome that institutionally realizes the theory-practice gap.

Germany's peculiar contribution to democracy development is still outstanding - after destructive contributions of the 20th century. Today's alternative is: neo-capitalist pseudo-democratic world empire or second democratic revolution.

28.8 Transition to European Dimension

These national reforms are necessary but not sufficient. In a globalized world we need supranational institutions structured according to the same principles. Europe offers the ideal experimental field for this transfer of fourfold division to the international level.

Fourfold division shows: there is an alternative to today's party democracy that both solves its problems and preserves its justified concerns. This alternative is not utopian but logically derivable from reflection-system theory and practically implementable. It represents - alongside the five-volume philosophy of language - the second great application work of Heinrichs' integral philosophical system.

Chapter 29: The European Dimension - Integration-through-Differentiation as European Ordering Principle

From national to supranational application of reflection-system theory

Democracy reform from Chapter 15 cannot stop at nation-state solutions. In a globalized world, many of the most important political decisions have already shifted to the supranational level. The European Union is the most important experimental field for new forms of democratic governance beyond the nation-state.

Johannes Heinrichs has shown in his Europe book that the EU faces a fundamental decision: either it develops into a genuine democracy on the foundation of reflection-system theory, or it becomes a transnational surveillance state of economic elites.

29.1 The Diagnosis: Europe's Systematic Democratic Deficit

The crisis of Europe is according to Heinrichs' analysis deeply connected with a democracy problem at European and national level. The European Parliament has little power compared to the Commission and Council, which makes Europe a "highly indirect, if at all already a democracy."

European elections generate no genuine, factually related interest among voters; they are at best used to support national parties. The problem, however, reaches deeper and also concerns national democracies. Voters face the dilemma that parties may be competent in one area (e.g., environment) but not in others (e.g., economy, social, immigration).

This party problem is connected with dominance of economy and money, which is fundamentally undemocratic: "For either the people rule and with them hopefully simultaneously basic values – or money!"

29.2 The Reflection-System Theoretical Solution for Europe

To solve these interconnected problems, Heinrichs applies his reflection-system theoretical foundation to the European level. He proposes a democracy structured by the four reflexively building subsystems:

Economy (with formal medium money), politics (in narrower sense of power and competence distribution with formal medium law), culture (with medium language or meta-language art), and basic values (with medium value axioms and rites).

His model envisions separate parliamentary chambers for each of these subsystems, formed in independent and temporally offset elections (each year one election for one of these areas). Only individual candidates or representatives of area-specific "factual parties" could candidate, which would dissolve today's "all-responsibility parties." Instead there would be Europe-wide area-specific factual parties for economic, political, cultural and basic value questions.

29.3 The Four European Parliamentary Chambers

The European Economic Parliament would be responsible for common market, monetary policy, trade policy and economic regulation. Electoral districts would be economic regions (not national borders), legitimation would occur through direct election by citizens in their function as economic subjects.

Particularly important is Heinrichs' vision of genuine economic democracy in Europe, for coordination of national economies. The other alternative, which he considers more mature but currently less probable, is creation of unified economic-state conditions in Europe that are clearly differentiated from other subsystems.

Economic democracy means not only worker participation at the workplace but an economic mode "wanted by the majority of population because it serves the com-

mon good.” This would require that the population can vote in area-specific elections on fundamental economic orders (e.g., neoliberal capitalism vs. interest-free market economy). Such economic democracy seems not yet to have been realized anywhere, neither at national nor European level.

The European Political Parliament would be responsible for foreign policy, security policy, legal harmonization and constitutional development. Electoral districts would be approximately equal political regions, legitimation would occur through direct election by citizens in their function as EU citizens.

The European Cultural Parliament would be responsible for educational policy, historical consciousness, language policy, cultural exchange and migration policy. Electoral districts would be cultural regions/nations, legitimation would occur through representation of European nations and cultural communities. This relative independence of cultural level would ensure high value of different national cultures of Europe and might have made a withdrawal movement like Brexit superfluous.

The European Basic Values Parliament would be responsible for constitutional interpretation, basic rights, ethical guidelines and value formation.

29.4 A Europe of Economic Regions

Genuine economic democracy would also strengthen regional economy. This requires clear distinction of region concepts.

Economic versus political regions: the concept “region” is often instrumentalized to dissolve nations as cultural units. Economic regionality must, however, logically result from “economic-geographical conditions.” This includes not only rivers but rather mountains, soil conditions, industrial areas and especially distances.

Existing “Europe regions” or “Euregios” are often not clearly defined and usually have one-sided economic focus.

To promote regional, nature-close economy, the transport problem must be addressed, e.g., through state transport or distance surcharge on natural goods. This would counteract “ecologically reckless capital employment” that allows large firms to override distance disadvantages and thus destroy regional economic spaces.

29.5 Confederation Instead of Federal State

Against “United States of Europe”: the common vision misrecognizes Europe’s specificity - its national diversity in unity. Europe is genuine multicultural, in contrast to the USA.

Heinrichs’ alternative: Europe as systematic confederation with functional organization instead of territorial unity formation, integration-through-differentiation instead of homogenizing unification.

Four-dimensionality: the concept should point to four reflexively building levels and simultaneously emphasize that these relationships obey no two-valued either-or

logic. It is a “logically many-valued and practically multidimensional understanding of politics” that is completely new.

Confederation instead of federal state: Europe should not become a conventional federal state but a unique state association, a novel confederation with clearly defined legal competence system. Therein nations would be “sublated” in threefold Hegelian sense: their sovereignty relativized (negated) but their distinctiveness preserved and realized at higher level.

29.6 Europe’s Cultural Unity in Diversity

The most significant cultural units of Europe are and remain the nations, understood as cultural and linguistic communities. Technical innovation like personalized translators (“Eurofon”) can enable understanding while preserving linguistic diversity.

Wilson’s principle reconsidered: culture as actual purpose of state organization legitimizes peoples’ right to self-determination. Current European conflicts (Catalonia, Basque country, Scotland, Flanders) could be solved through a European Cultural Parliament as representation of all European nations - including those not state-organized today.

The Austrian-German paradigm shows another distinction of cultural and political nation: culturally they belong together (common language, thousand-year history), politically they are justifiably separated (different statehood since 1955). Cultural unity with political diversity. This too is a variant of integration-through-differentiation of system levels, while above culture was asserted as the distinguishing factor.

29.7 Europe as Pacemaker of Democratic World Federation

European integration is only the first step toward global application of reflection-system theory. Europe can and should become model for world community.

Europe’s world-historical chance: Europe faces decision whether it does justice to its world-historical calling: becoming pacemaker of global democracy. The alternative is grim: without structural reforms the path leads to a “transnational surveillance state of economic elites.”

Europe as experimental field for fourfold world democracy with great scope for respective national design. Economic democracy at world level (global capital transfer tax, worldwide land reform, international monetary system without interest extortion), world politics through legal institutions (reformed UN with four world parliaments, international criminal court), cultural world federation (right to mother tongue, protection of cultural minorities, intercultural dialogue), and global value management (world ethos with parliamentary control, human rights as negative norm for all religions).

29.8 The Inevitable Future

Europe faces a fundamental decision. The alternative reads: elite dictatorship or integration-through-differentiation? Elites would otherwise lead us into “creeping capitalist administrative and surveillance state” under heading “TINA – There Is No Alternative.”

Against this Heinrichs sets: “TIANA: There Is a Necessary Alternative!” This is not politically but structurally and logically without alternative. Without realization of differentiated value gradation we would “necessarily and surely land in a transnational surveillance state of economic elites.”

Europeans currently have “solely the possibility to change thoroughly, from the treasure of our culture and our European dream.” The solution formula reads: “European integration through differentiation of system or value levels.”

Vox populi, vox Dei: this saying expresses the spiritual foundation of democracy. The astonishing thing is how long it takes to make “something whole from the half of democracy.”

The European dimension of reflection-system theory shows: what began as theoretical innovation becomes practical necessity for survival of European civilization. Fourfold division is not only an elegant systematic solution but possibly the only way to prevent Europe from sliding into technocratic undemocracy.

PART F: CULTURE AND INTEGRATION

From cultural theory to practical integration policy

After institutional reforms in Block E, we turn to the third social system level: culture. Here it concerns contents of social coexistence, education, communication, cultural identity and the central challenge of modern societies: How can different cultures live together without losing their distinctiveness?

Part F shows how reflection-system theory also offers concrete orientation for cultural questions. From general ethics and cultural theory through specifically European cultural dimension to practical migration policy - everywhere the principle of integration-through-differentiation proves itself.

The chapter sequence corresponds to logical development from general to particular: first theoretical foundations of cultural integration, then their application to Europe as model case of genuine multiculturalism, finally practical implementation in migration policy.

Chapter 30: Ethics and Cultural Theory

The third reflection level: foundations of cultural integration

30.1 Values Without Relativism - Theonomous Autonomy

After the political-institutional level (Block A) we come to the cultural level. Here the basic question of all cultural theory arises: How can we justify binding values without falling into dogmatism? How can we respect cultural diversity without succumbing to relativism?

The modern dilemma has oscillated since the Enlightenment between two unsatisfactory alternatives: autonomy (self-determination of reason, but without substantial orientation) and theonomy (substantial orientation through divine commands, but without rational justification).

Heinrichs develops a third option: theonomous autonomy. Reason recognizes in its own reflexive structure the obligation to meaning realization. This is neither heteronomy (external determination) nor decisionism (arbitrary positing), but theonomous autonomy.

The reflection-logical justification lies in the fourth reflection stage (metacommunicative reflection): reason recognizes that it itself depends on meaning. This meaning is not imposed from outside but disclosed from within - but it is not arbitrary.

30.2 Cultural Theory as Independent Reflection Stage

The third reflection level - culture - differs fundamentally from the two preceding levels. While economy (first stage) and politics (second stage) have primarily instrumental or strategic character, culture concerns meaning mediation and community formation.

Heinrichs shows that modern differentiation of the cultural sphere represents a historical achievement. Only emancipation of education, science and art from purely religious or political tutelage enabled unfolding of genuine cultural critique and cultural innovation.

This differentiation has, however, remained incomplete. Cultural questions are still subordinated to economic or power-political interests. Educational policy is treated as location factor, cultural promotion as prestige object, language policy as power instrument.

Systematic foundation of independent cultural ethics (treated extensively in Chapter 31.B) enables overcoming this instrumentalization and recognizing culture as end in itself.

30.3 Culture as Communicative Sphere

According to Heinrichs, culture is “the heritable in the social” - that dimension of social life that creates continuity between generations and enables community formation. Culture itself articulates according to the four-stage schema:

Pedagogical tradition (first stage): objective transmission of knowledge and skills. Here it concerns educational institutions, curricula, the “hard” facts of culture.

Scientific research (second stage): methodical knowledge acquisition. Here cultural innovations develop through systematic research and critical reflection.

Public communication process (third stage): medial mediation of cultural contents. Here social negotiation of cultural meanings takes place - through journalism, public debates, cultural dialogue.

The arts (fourth stage): creative representation of the unconditional. Here culture transcends itself toward what is not available.

The unifying medium of culture is language - not only as means of communication but as “house of being” (Heidegger), as the place where world and meaning encounter.

30.4 Culture and Community Formation

Heinrichs defines culture as “the heritable in the social” - that dimension of social life that creates continuity between generations and enables community formation. He thereby sharply distinguishes between society as purpose-oriented association and community as intrinsically meaningful connectedness in values.

Politics in the legal sense must serve community formation, which is to be understood as end in itself. As Friedrich Hölderlin formulated: “The rough shell around the kernel of life and nothing further is the state. It is the wall around the garden of human fruits and flowers.” Politics must ultimately serve unfolding of this communal life and not a ruling economy.

30.5 The Principle of Integration-through-Differentiation

The basic principle of reflection-system theory proves itself especially in cultural theory. Genuine cultural integration succeeds not through unification or leveling but through differentiation - through recognition and appreciation of difference.

This shows paradigmatically in the language question: a living cultural community needs a common language as medium of understanding. At the same time this commonality may not lead to suppression of linguistic diversity. The solution lies in systematic distinction between a language as international means of understanding (*lingua franca*) and mother tongues as carriers of national cultures.

(The systematic justification of this principle through the four truth dimensions is developed extensively in Chapter 30.A.)

30.6 Cultural Ethics and Institutional Consequences

Application of cultural theory to modern societies shows their specific challenges: How can cultural orientation arise in pluralistic societies without becoming tutelage?

Heinrichs’ answer lies in institutional differentiation. A separate cultural parliament would relieve cultural questions from economic and power-political interests and enable genuine factual debates. There educational policy, language policy, cultural exchange and migration policy could be negotiated under genuine cultural considerations.

This is not cultural relativism but on the contrary the prerequisite for genuine cultural engagement. Only where cultures are not instrumentalized - neither for economic nor power-political purposes - can they unfold their distinctive power.

Systematic separation of system levels also enables defusing the modern problem of “culture wars.” When cultural identity is no longer linked with political power or economic privileges, different cultures can exist alongside each other without mutually threatening.

Chapter 31: Europe's Cultural Unity in Diversity

Integration-through-differentiation as European structural principle

31.1 Europe as Model Case of Genuine Multiculturalism

Political-institutional reform alone does not suffice. It must be supplemented by clarification of the cultural dimension of European integration. Here the principle of integration-through-differentiation shows especially clearly.

Europe is genuine multiculturalism - in contrast to the USA, which is a single large nation-state in which immigrant cultures form subcultures. Europe's historical achievement was the hard-fought differentiation of value spheres: separation of state and religion, emancipation of science from ecclesiastical tutelage, autonomy of art. The differentiation of politics and economy has, however, not yet been consciously accomplished.

Europe's specificity lies not only in its cultural diversity or its basic values (which it shares with the USA) but in the "historically only here grown differentiation of system or value levels themselves." Integration through differentiation forms the "decisive meta-basic value of Europe."

31.2 Nations as Primary Cultural Units of Europe

Heinrichs affirms his thesis: "The most significant cultural units of Europe today are undoubtedly the nations, if we understand these as the cultural aspect of nation-states."

This is not glorification of nationalism but sober analysis. Misuse of national pride in wars does not nullify the value of nation as cultural community. Cultural rivalry between Germany and France could have remained productive competition if it had not been mixed with power-political trumping.

Heinrichs criticizes both historical nationalism and current anti-nationalism. The second German Reich of 1871 was founded under one-sidedly power-political auspices, which marked the "disastrous beginning of ever stronger sliding into dominance of power." But it is "great historical folly of certain 'leftist' party circles" today to want to bid farewell to linguistically-culturally shaped nations instead of "correcting the actual source of mischief, the fateful, spiritless primacy of political over cultural."

The French concept of nation is more political, the German traditionally more cultural. Habermas' attempt to present this as defect of German concept and reduce to pure "constitutional patriotism" is criticized as rationalistic error that ignores the emotional dimension of culture.

31.3 Language as Medium of European Culture

The language question forms the heart of European cultural debate. Heinrichs warns against both extremes: technocratic unified language on one side and Babylonian linguistic confusion on the other.

A possible technical solution could be personalized translators (“Eurofon”) that convey direct impression of conversation partner’s original language. Stunting of national languages would also stunt the specific of European culture. Preventing this requires institutional precautions, not only appeals.

The solution lies in strict distinction between a language as international means of understanding (*lingua franca*) and mother tongues as carriers of national cultures. This differentiation corresponds to the general principle of integration-through-differentiation.

31.4 Cultural Identity and Political Order

Through creation of separate parliamentary chamber for culture, questions of cultural identity could for the first time be adequately discussed and relieved from economic and political power considerations. De Gaulle’s “Europe of fatherlands” addressed this great historical wealth.

Heinrichs criticizes current anti-national trend in Germany as “paradoxical national special path into anti-national.” Flight into purely European identity is a predominantly German phenomenon that misrecognizes real cultural foundations of European integration.

The goal is not overcoming nations but their “sublation” in threefold Hegelian sense: their sovereignty is relativized (negated) but their distinctiveness preserved and realized at higher level.

31.5 European Cultural Parliament as Institutional Innovation

The European Cultural Parliament would have following responsibilities: educational policy, language policy, cultural exchange and migration policy. Electoral districts would orient themselves to cultural regions or nations, not political or economic units.

This institutional innovation would for the first time create genuine cultural-political public at European level. Instead of previous mixing of economic, political and cultural considerations, a forum for genuine cultural debates would arise.

Legitimation would occur through representation of European nations and cultural communities. In cultural parliament, small countries and regions must be granted minority protection and subsidiary independence to preserve their identity.

31.6 From Cultural Community to Basic Values Community

Cultural integration of Europe is inseparably connected with question of common basic values. As community of basic values, Europe is in principle uncontroversial. It is founded on heritage of Greco-Roman antiquity, Christian religion, Enlightenment and capitalist economic form.

However, simple creation of “United States of Europe” according to USA model would overlook Europe’s specificity: its national diversity in unity and, deeper lying, the principle of integration through differentiation.

Chapter 32: Hospitality of Cultures

Migration Policy as an Application of Reflection-System Theory

32.1 A Thought Experiment as Starting Point

Imagine strangers ring your doorbell. They ask for accommodation because they are being persecuted in their country of origin or have no life prospects there. How do you decide?

This personal situation is a microcosm of the migration problem that moves modern societies. The same questions that occupy you as a homeowner also arise at the societal level: Whom do we take in? Under what conditions? What do we expect from the guests? What do we owe them?

Heinrichs’ systematic analysis shows: The migration problem is neither a racial nor a purely economic one, but a cultural problem - a question of cultural identity and structured hospitality. His reflection-system theory offers the key to a rational solution beyond the usual extremes.

32.2 The Problem of Polarized Debate

Public discussion about migration oscillates between two unproductive poles, both of which miss the actual problem:

Position A: “Multiculturalism”

- All cultures are equal in value and should coexist side by side
- Any form of cultural preference is “racism” or “xenophobia”
- Integration means mutual adaptation: The host society must change just as much as the immigrants

Position B: “New Nationalism”

- One’s own culture is superior and must be protected

- Immigration is fundamentally problematic and should be limited
- Integration means complete assimilation: Immigrants must give up their culture of origin

Heinrichs' diagnosis: Both positions are one-sided and miss the complexity of the problem. They operate with false alternatives and therefore cannot develop viable solutions.

32.3 The Four System-Theoretical Dimensions of Integration

Heinrichs' reflection-system theory shows that integration is a four-dimensional process that encompasses all societal levels of reflection:

1. Economic Integration (First Level of Reflection)

- Key question: Can migrants support themselves independently?
- Indicators: Work, income, social security
- Internal logic: Performance and return performance, economic efficiency
- Problem: This dimension is often overestimated - economic integration alone is not enough

2. Political Integration (Second Level of Reflection)

- Key question: Do migrants recognize the legal order and democratic principles?
- Indicators: Law-abiding behavior, participation, citizenship
- Internal logic: Rule of law, democracy
- Problem: Purely juridical integration without cultural identification remains superficial

3. Cultural Integration (Third Level of Reflection)

- Key question: Do migrants identify emotionally with the host culture?
- Indicators: Language acquisition, cultural education, emotional attachment
- Internal logic: Communication, understanding, community building
- Problem: This is the decisive but usually neglected dimension

4. Worldview Integration (Fourth Level of Reflection)

- Key question: Can different basic values coexist within an overarching framework?
- Indicators: Tolerance, capacity for dialogue, shared basic orientations
- Internal logic: Meaning creation, ultimate foundation
- Problem: The deepest conflicts arise here, but also the most sustainable solutions

32.4 Germany as a “Thinker-Nation” - On German Identity

The Basic Question: Self-Denial or Self-Confidence?

Heinrichs develops his migration policy against the background of a differentiated critique of the German identity debate. He begins with Václav Havel: “Self-confidence does not mean arrogance. Quite the contrary. Only people or nations who are self-confident in the best sense of the word are capable of listening to others, accepting them as equals, forgiving their enemies and repenting their own guilt.”

Heinrichs criticizes the widespread tendency to give up cultural identity in favor of a purely politically defined “constitutional patriotism.” This attitude is based on the false alternative: “either insistence on one’s own or hospitality.” Germany would thus be the only major cultural people to give up its specific identity, ostensibly to be hospitable.

Germany’s Calling

According to Heinrichs, “Germany’s calling lies in the intellectual or in the connection of art and thinking,” always in relation to philosophy as the “art of concepts” (Kant). The decisive warning: “A falling away from this calling, a political misuse of the intellectually gathered, organized power, regularly brings catastrophic consequences for Germany itself as well as for the entire world.”

Exemplary Thinker-Analyses

Heinrichs analyzes central figures of German intellectual history: Goethe embodies the connection of science and art, but also showed political naivety. Fichte formulated early that peoples are cultural communities - his “Addresses to the German Nation” aimed to promote cultural self-reflection, not aggressive arrogance. Hegel developed systematic thinking about societal differentiation - an achievement that was tragically denied in Germany. Hölderlin expressed the torn state between the potential of German culture and its reality: “The greatness and beauty of this calling corresponds to the banality and ugliness of philistinism.”

Heidegger is criticized particularly sharply by Heinrichs: Despite brilliant phenomenological analyses, he shows increasing mystification and irrationalism. His political entanglement with National Socialism exemplifies the danger when thinking turns away from rational clarity. Heidegger’s philosophy embodies exactly what Heinrichs rejects: the separation of poetic subjectivity and objective sharpness of thought. Important: Heinrichs does not name Heidegger as a positive contribution of Germany to world culture, but as a warning example.

Sri Aurobindo's External Perspective

Heinrichs cites the Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) for a neutral external perspective. Aurobindo sees the source of German strength "in its great philosophers Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Nietzsche, in its great poet and thinker Goethe, in its great musicians." Germany as a "nation whose greatest success lay almost exclusively in the two fields of philosophy and music" was predestined "to trigger essentially good as well as evil in the beginnings of a subjective age."

The diagnosis: "There was no undisturbed connection from the subjective spirit of thinkers and singers to the objective spirit of scholars and organizers." The fundamental confusion: "The whole root of the German error lies in the mistake of taking life and body for the self." Germany confused its material strength with its spiritual "soul" - which led to the catastrophes of the 20th century.

Current Wrong Reactions

Heinrichs criticizes two extreme reactions: materialistic self-denial ("multicultural fuss, main thing is personal finances are right") and nationalistic materialism ("foreigners out"). Both misunderstand "higher national identity" and only revolve around the "national ego." The academic upper class carelessly opens "fortress Germany to all the world," but in doing so goes "not only past the lower national soul, but also past the higher national identity."

The Constructive Way Out

Heinrichs does not demand a return to nationalism, but reflection on "higher national identity": politically through support of European "unity-in-diversity" and international peace-keeping; culturally through contributing intellectual impulses and dialogue between European and Indian philosophy.

The universal dimension: Every people has a specific "calling" - never exclusive! This insight becomes possible when one distances oneself from "exclusive, religiously disguised chosen-people ideologies." The great German thinkers were "figures of prophetic stature" - in them "a piece of 'Europe's own religion' emerged from suppression."

Heinrichs' warning: Only through reflection on the spiritual-cultural calling - not on the material "national ego" - can Germany do justice to its responsibility for hospitality, European integration and worldwide dialogue. The significance of this calling has world-historical dimension, which "becomes clear to everyone who comes into contact with [Asian philosophical] currents through literature or travel."

32.5 The Problem of Multiculturalism

Heinrichs sharply distinguishes between different meanings of “multicultural society”:

Ethnicity versus Culture: The term “ethnic” is often misused because it leaves unclear whether it means descent-based or cultural belonging. Already Fichte argued in 1808 that modern peoples are hardly descent communities anymore, but cultural communities.

Two meanings of multiculturalism:

1. Positive meaning (description): A national culture takes in many ethnic influences and hosts enriching secondary cultures of immigrants. This is a neutral statement.
2. Negative meaning (program): Immigrant cultures receive the same status as the host culture. This denies the “jus culturae” (cultural right) of the host culture and is “culturally destructive in consequence.”

32.6 Hospitality as Ethical Principle

The concept “hospitality of cultures” expresses the right attitude: Migrants are neither intruders nor equal co-owners of the national culture, but guests who are treated with respect and dignity.

Important is Heinrichs’ distinction: By “hospitality of cultures” he does not mean the legal status of individual migrants (who can of course become full-fledged members as citizens), but the status of the brought-along “secondary cultures” as such. These retain guest status - they enrich the primary culture but do not replace it. Individual migrants can and should identify with Germany - not only through passport and constitutional loyalty, but through cultural and emotional attachment.

The ontological structure of hospitality: Heinrichs analyzes the “letting in of the Other” as a fundamental phenomenon of human encounter. It follows the four reflection levels of interpersonal reflection:

1. One-sided intentionality/instrumental dealing
2. One-sided reflection/strategic dealing
3. Double-counter-running reflection/communicative reciprocity
4. Metacommunicative position-taking

The conditionality of hospitality: Hospitality is not “unconditional,” but bound to rules. Both the host and the guest have rights and duties.

Rights of guests:

- Protection from persecution and existential need
- Respect for their human dignity and cultural identity
- Opportunities for integration and social participation

- Legal security and fair procedures

Duties of guests:

- Respect for the host culture and its basic values
- Readiness for cultural integration (language acquisition, cultural education)
- Recognition of the structural priority of the primary culture
- Loyalty toward the host country

Rights of hosts:

- Self-determination about the conditions of accommodation
- Protection of their own cultural identity
- Expectation of readiness for integration
- Rejection of parallel societies

Duties of hosts:

- Humanity toward those in need
- Fair integration opportunities and support
- Respect for human dignity even with integration problems
- Self-reflection about their own culture

32.7 Integration versus Assimilation

Reflection-system theory enables a precise distinction between different forms of coexistence:

Assimilation means complete adaptation to the majority culture while giving up one's own cultural identity. This is neither realistic nor desirable.

Segregation means parallel societies without points of contact with the majority culture. This leads to social division and conflicts.

Integration means participation in the common political order and in central cultural standards, while simultaneously preserving specific cultural peculiarities in the private sphere.

The solution lies in the systematic distinction of the four system levels: What must be uniformly regulated at the political level (legal order, state language) can certainly remain diverse at the cultural level (religious practice, family traditions).

32.8 Necessary Distinctions in Migration Policy

What is expected from migrants:

- Learning the German language as a prerequisite for cultural participation
- Cultural and emotional identification with the new country
- Not only economic integration and respecting the laws

Necessary distinctions between different migrant groups:

1. Politically persecuted asylum seekers: Unconditional right to accommodation according to Basic Law and international law
2. War refugees: Temporary protection with return perspective
3. Economic migrants: Accommodation according to societal requirements and integration capability
4. Voluntary immigrants: Targeted recruitment according to qualification and cultural compatibility

Distinction between temporary guests and permanent immigrants: Different groups have different rights and duties.

32.9 Integration-through-Differentiation instead of False Alternatives

The dialectical principle “integration-through-differentiation” resolves the apparent contradictions:

Not: Assimilation (giving up the culture of origin) or Multiculturalism (relativization of the primary culture)

But: Cultural Integration = identification with the host culture and preservation of valuable elements of the culture of origin

Concretely:

- Primary loyalty to the host culture with secondary attachment to the culture of origin
- Public communication in the national language with private multilingualism
- Participation in political culture while preserving cultural traditions
- Shared basic values with different forms of expression

32.10 Cultural versus Religious Integration

Heinrichs emphasizes the decisive significance of separating religious and national-cultural belonging. Cultural integration of migrants has nothing to do with denying their religion.

A distinction must be made between religious essence and its culturally conditioned, changeable form of expression. Holding fast to a particular form as if it were the essence itself is a characteristic of fundamentalism.

Example state holidays: Christian holidays like Christmas shape culture deeply and today are often more a traditional family celebration and public cultural good than a purely religious event. The pluralistic state can only legitimize their protection and privileging by considering them as cultural institutions of the majority society, not as purely religious ones.

32.11 Practical Consequences for Migration Policy

1. Differentiated accommodation policy according to the four levels of reflection

Economic: Qualification, labor market integration, social security
Political: Civics education, legal order, democratic participation
Cultural: Language acquisition, cultural education, emotional identification
Worldview: Values education, tolerance education, capacity for dialogue

2. Structured integration policy

Four-stage integration program: Each stage builds on the preceding one, but none can be skipped. Real integration needs time and systematic support.

3. Institutional reforms

Cultural parliament as responsible instance: Migration policy is primarily cultural policy and therefore belongs in the jurisdiction of a cultural parliament, not in that of economic or security policy.

32.12 The European Dimension of Migration Policy

Migration policy can no longer be thought purely nationally today. Europe needs a common migration policy that follows the principle of integration-through-differentiation.

This means: Common standards for external borders and for basic conditions of integration, but respect for the different national cultures of Europe. A Turkish migrant in Germany must adapt to German culture, in France to French culture.

The alternative would be an abstract “European guiding culture,” which factually does not exist and would only lead to confusion for all involved. Europe is strong through its cultural diversity, not despite it.

The European Cultural Parliament could play a coordinating role here: develop common minimum standards, exchange best practices, but leave concrete implementation to individual nations.

32.13 From Migration Crisis to Integration Culture

The so-called “migration crisis” is in truth a crisis of integration - a crisis of lacking clarity about the conditions of coexistence. This clarity can only be achieved through conceptual differentiation and institutional reform.

Heinrichs shows: Neither the multicultural utopia nor nationalist isolation lead to sustainable solutions. The way lies in the systematic application of the principle integration-through-differentiation.

An integration culture that deserves this name needs:

- Clarity about non-negotiable standards: Distinguishing the status of respectively host culture and guest cultures
- Openness to cultural enrichment
- Institutional structures that promote real integration
- Patience for the generation-spanning processes of cultural change

This is neither naive cosmopolitanism nor anxious isolation, but sober reason - reasonable shaping of coexistence of different cultures in a common political framework.

PART G: GLOBAL DIMENSION AND SPIRITUALITY

From Europe to World Federation - The Fourth Level of Reflection

After dealing with the first three levels of reflection - economy, politics and culture - we turn to the fourth and highest level: basic values and spirituality. Here it concerns the ultimate questions of human existence, truth, ethics and the relationship to the unconditional.

Part G shows the universal scope of reflection-system theory. The European model of integration-through-differentiation is extended to the global vision of a democratic world federation. At the same time, the spiritual dimension is systematically founded - a new form of spirituality that is neither dogmatic nor arbitrary: theonomous autonomy.

The chapter sequence leads from the particular to the general: from European world responsibility through the foundation of theonomous autonomy to systematic completion in the theory of truth and ethics.

Chapter 33: Europe as Pacemaker of a World Federation

The global extension of the European structural principle

33.1 Europe's World Mission

The specificity of Europe lies not only in its cultural diversity or its basic values (which it shares with the USA), but in the "historically only here grown differentiation of the system or value levels themselves." Integration through differentiation forms the "decisive meta-basic value of Europe."

From this grows Europe's world-historical responsibility. If the principle of integration-through-differentiation actually represents the solution for the basic problems of modern societies, then Europe cannot stop with itself. It must become the pacemaker of a global transformation.

This is not European imperialism, but the opposite: the readiness to open one's own structural principle to other cultural circles and to learn from them in the process. Integration-through-differentiation means precisely not the universalization of European contents, but the universalization of a structure that leaves each culture its peculiarity.

33.2 The European versus the American Dream

Heinrichs cites the American social psychologist Jeremy Rifkin to clarify the fundamental difference between the European and American models:

For Americans, freedom means autonomy - the liberation of the individual from all social bonds. For Europeans, freedom is based on embeddedness and mutual relationships.

The American dream is deeply religious and personal - the dream of individual pursuit of happiness. The European dream is “worldly to the core,” more systemic and more strongly fixed on global well-being.

Europe is characterized by genuine multiculturalism, which aims at preserving differences while sharing basic values, in contrast to the “melting” (melting pot) in the USA.

33.3 From Confederation to World Federation

Europe should not become a conventional federal state, but a unique union of states - a new type of confederation with a clearly defined, legal competence system. In this, the nations would be “sublated” in the threefold Hegelian sense: their sovereignty relativized (negated), but their peculiarity preserved and realized at a higher level.

This model is in principle globalizable. A world federation according to the principle of integration-through-differentiation would not create the uniform culture that many critics of globalization rightly warn against, but on the contrary: the institutional framework for the peaceful competition of cultures.

The four levels of a world federation:

World Economic Parliament: Responsible for global economic standards, environmental protection, resource distribution. Electoral districts according to economic regions, not nation-states.

World Political Parliament: Responsible for international security, conflict resolution, legal development. Electoral districts according to political regions of equal size.

World Cultural Parliament: Responsible for educational exchange, language policy, cultural understanding. Electoral districts according to cultural communities and religious groups.

World Basic Values Parliament: Responsible for universal human rights, ethical minimum standards, interreligious dialogue. Electoral districts according to worldview communities.

33.4 Vox populi, vox Dei - The Spiritual Foundation of Democracy

The Europe book concludes with the reference to the spiritual foundation of democracy: “Vox populi, vox Dei” - the voice of the people is the voice of God. This expresses the spiritual foundation of democracy.

Real democracy is more than a procedure for power distribution. It rests on the trust that in the common search for truth and justice something unconditional appears - not automatically, but as a possibility that can be promoted through the right structure.

The pending decision reads: Elite dictatorship or integration-through-differentiation? The elites would otherwise lead us into a “creeping capitalist administrative and surveillance state” under the heading “TINA - There Is No Alternative.”

Against this, Heinrichs postulates: “TIANA: There Is a Necessary Alternative!” This is not political, but structural and logically without alternative.

33.5 The Final Appeal

Without the realization of differentiated value gradation, we would “necessarily and certainly land in a transnational surveillance state of economic elites.” Europeans currently have “only the possibility to change thoroughly, from the treasure of our culture and our European Dream.”

The solution formula reads: “European integration through differentiation of system or value levels.” This is not only a political demand, but a spiritual task - the task of developing a new consciousness for the structural connections of modern societies.

Europe has the historic chance to become the pacemaker of a new form of world order - an order that is neither imperialistic nor anarchic, but federalistic in the true sense: built on the principle of integration-through-differentiation.

33.6 The Spiritual Challenge

The greatest challenge lies not in technical implementation, but in spiritual preparation. Humanity must learn to think in four dimensions - economically, politically, culturally and spiritually - without confusing these dimensions or playing them against each other.

This requires a new form of education, a new form of political culture, a new form of international understanding. Above all, it requires overcoming the one-dimensional thinking that has characterized modernity.

Heinrichs shows: Reflection-logical training is not only philosophical specialty, but civic duty in a complex world. Only those who can distinguish the four levels of reflection are capable of democratic participation in a differentiated society.

Chapter 34: Theonomous Autonomy

The Fourth Level of Reflection: Basic Values and Spirituality

34.1 The Basic Problem of Modernity

Modernity faces a dilemma that manifests itself in all areas of life: How can we gain binding orientation without giving up the autonomy of reason? How can we achieve spiritual depth without falling into dogmatism?

Since the Enlightenment, modernity has oscillated between two unsatisfactory alternatives:

Autonomy: Self-determination of reason, but without substantial orientation. This leads to relativism, nihilism or decisionism - reason becomes a mere instrument of arbitrary impositions.

Theonomy: Substantial orientation through divine commandments or traditional authorities, but without rational foundation. This leads to fundamentalism, dogmatism or fanaticism.

Heinrichs develops a third option that overcomes both extremes: theonomous autonomy (term coined by Paul Tillich). Reason recognizes in its own reflexive structure the obligation to realize meaning.

34.2 The Reflection-Logical Foundation

The fourth level of reflection - metacommunicative reflection - leads reason to its own limits. It recognizes that it itself depends on meaning that it cannot produce itself. This meaning is not imposed from outside, but disclosed from within - but it is not arbitrary.

The logical structure of theonomous autonomy:

First insight: Reason cannot ground its own presuppositions through itself. Every attempt leads to infinite regress or a circle.

Second insight: Reason depends on a “meaning medium” that is greater than itself. This medium first makes reasonable acts possible.

Third insight: This meaning medium is not “outside” reason, but its own deepest dimension. Reason discovers itself as “finite participation in infinite spirit.”

Fourth insight: From this grows an obligation to realize meaning that is neither heteronomous (from outside) nor autonomous (self-made), but theonomous-autonomous: effected by God through reason.

34.3 Spirituality without Dogmatism

Theonomous autonomy finds a new form of spirituality that differs from conventional religion:

Not confessionally bound: Theonomous autonomy is open to all spiritual traditions without committing to a particular one. It is “religion after religion.”

Rationally permeated: Spiritual experience is not played against reason, but understood as its highest completion. Mysticism and logic are not opposites.

Ethically obligating: The experience of the unconditional does not lead to world-flight, but to world responsibility. Contemplation and action belong together.

Dialogically open: Theonomous autonomy is not exclusive, but inclusive. It can enter into dialogue with other spiritual paths without losing its own identity.

34.4 The East-West Synthesis

Heinrichs’ most important contribution to intercultural philosophy lies in his systematic East-West integration. The apparent opposition between Western personalism and Eastern non-duality rests on a misunderstanding.

The Western misunderstanding of the East: The West often reduces Eastern non-duality to subject-object fusion. But genuine non-duality does not mean the suspension of all differences, but the overcoming of isolating separation.

The Eastern misunderstanding of the West: The East often sees in Western personalism only ego-enhancement. But genuine personality does not mean narcissistic self-assertion, but dialogical openness.

The reflection-logical synthesis: The fourth level of reflection shows that person and non-duality do not contradict each other. The person is precisely the structure in which non-duality realizes itself individually. The true self is not the ego, but the reflexive structure that points beyond the ego.

34.5 Theonomous Autonomy in Practice

Theonomous autonomy is not only philosophical theory, but has practical consequences for all areas of life:

For politics: Politicians are not only representatives of respectively partial interests, but have spiritual responsibility for the common good. This responsibility cannot be suspended by majority decisions.

For economics: Entrepreneurs are not only profit maximizers, but have an obligation toward the whole of society. The “honorable merchant” is a spiritual ideal.

For science: Researchers are not only fact collectors, but have responsibility for the meaningfulness of their activity. Science serves truth, not only power, also not knowledge as power.

For art: Artists are not only self-expressers, but mediators of the unconditional. Genuine art opens the space for spiritual experience.

34.6 Theonomous Autonomy and Interreligious Dialogue

Theonomous autonomy enables a new approach to interreligious dialogue. It is neither relativistic (“all religions are equal”) nor absolutistic (“only one religion is true”), but structurally-inclusive.

The common structural element: All great religions know the four levels of reflection, even if they articulate them differently. The mystics of all traditions speak of similar experiences of self-transcendence.

The respectively specific contents: Each religion has its own cultural and historical form that must be respected. Unity lies not in contents, but in structure.

The common task: All religions are challenged to relate to the problems of the modern world. Theonomous autonomy offers a framework for this common responsibility.

34.7 The Limits of Theonomous Autonomy

Heinrichs is aware of the limits of his approach. Theonomous autonomy is not the solution to all problems, but a framework of thought that makes other solutions possible.

It is not provable in the sense of formal logic. It is a “limit experience of reason” that can only prove itself in concrete realization.

It is not universally acceptable in the sense that all people would have to agree with it. It remains one option among others.

It is not technically implementable in the sense that one could organize spiritual experience. It can only create conditions under which such experience becomes possible.

But despite all limits, theonomous autonomy offers something that modernity urgently needs: a path between fundamentalism and nihilism, between blind faith and cynical arbitrariness.

Chapter 35: Truth and Ethics as Completion of Reflection Logic

The systematic foundation of the fourth level of reflection

35.1 The Four Dimensions of Truth

Reflection-system theory culminates in a new theory of truth that is neither relativistic nor dogmatic. Heinrichs shows that truth is not one-dimensional, but four-dimensional - corresponding to the four levels of reflection.

His definition is programmatic: "Truth is understood here as the totality of the implicit norms of linguistic action, however with regard to their cognitive content."

This dialogical-communicative concept of truth integrates all classical truth theories as necessary but incomplete moments. It overcomes the sterile oppositions between correspondence and coherence, objectivism and subjectivism through four-dimensional integration.

35.1.1 Factual Dimension: Correctness

The first dimension of truth corresponds to the first level of reflection: reference to the objective world. Here it concerns factual correctness, the correspondence between statement and state of affairs.

Characteristics of factual truth:

- Sigmatic reference: Clear factual reference of words
- Semantic-predicative correctness: Logical correctness of statements
- Information-pragmatic relevance: Consistency of argumentation
- Grammatical-stylistic comprehensibility: Linguistic correctness

Limits of factual truth:

- It cannot answer the question of meaning
- It is culturally and historically conditioned in its concrete manifestation
- It depends on respective measurement methods and conceptual systems

Examples: Natural scientific laws, historical facts, statistical data, technical specifications.

35.1.2 Subjective-Existential Dimension: Truthfulness

The second dimension of truth corresponds to the second level of reflection: reference to one's own subjectivity. Here it concerns personal authenticity, the agreement between person and statement.

Characteristics of existential truth:

- Truthfulness in the narrower sense: Opposite of lying as abuse of trust
- Genuineness of self-presentation: Authenticity without pretense
- Sincerity regarding speech intention: No deception about true motives
- Subjective coherence: Agreement between theory and practice

Limits of existential truth:

- It is not transferable to other persons
- It can lead to subjectivism and relativism
- It is difficult to communicate and verify

Examples: Artistic statements, personal confessions, therapeutic insights, spiritual experiences.

35.1.3 Interpersonal Dimension: Responsibility

The third dimension of truth corresponds to the third level of reflection: reference to the community. Here it concerns dialogical truth that arises in the encounter between persons.

Characteristics of dialogical truth:

- Responsibility of factual communication: Consideration of tolerability
- Responsibility of manner of communication: “The tone makes the music”
- Responsibility of the interpersonal aspect: The moment of love belongs to truth
- Critique of consensus theory: Truth is not delivered to the rational discourse of those who mutually declare each other competent in the circularity of a closed expert circle

Limits of dialogical truth:

- It is temporally and culturally limited
- It cannot be transferred to all situations
- It depends on the capabilities of dialogue partners

Examples: Political compromises, pedagogical insights, therapeutic relationships, friendly conversations.

35.1.4 Medial Dimension: Meaning-Coherence

The fourth dimension of truth corresponds to the fourth level of reflection: reference to the unconditional. Here it concerns embedding all truth claims in an encompassing horizon of meaning.

Characteristics of medial truth:

- Constancy of the same validity for the same expressions: Reliable concept use
- Consistency of statements: Systematic connection
- Interpersonal constancy: Reliability in interpersonal commitments
- “Comprehensiveness”: Integration into the systematic whole

Limits of medial truth:

- It is not directly available and provable
- It is in need of interpretation and ambiguous
- It can be misused for dogmatism and fanaticism

Examples: Religious revelations, philosophical systems, worldview confessions, spiritual traditions.

35.1.5 Integration through Differentiation vs. One-sided Truth Theories

The fundamental principle of Heinrichs' truth theory shows itself in his critique of one-sided approaches:

“To declare a single one of the distinguished dimensions of truth as the only authoritative and definitional one would be just as misguided as to elevate a single language dimension to the dimension of language.”

Critique of correspondence theory: It reduces truth to the factual dimension and ignores the subjective, interpersonal and medial conditions.

Critique of coherence theory: It absolutizes the medial dimension and neglects reference to reality.

Critique of consensus theory: It confuses truth with its social recognition. “Truth does not arise through consensus, but first makes appropriate consensus possible.”

Critique of relativism: It overlooks the participation of self-consciousness in the unconditional meaning medium.

35.1.6 The Integration of Truth Dimensions

The four dimensions of truth do not stand unrelated next to each other, but form a systematic unity. Each higher dimension presupposes the lower ones, but simultaneously elevates them to a new level.

Hierarchy without reduction: Medial truth is the “highest,” but it cannot replace the others. Spiritual insights must prove themselves against factual facts.

Mutual interpenetration: Even “objective” factual truths are permeated by subjective, dialogical and medial elements. Pure objectivity does not exist.

Methodical differentiation: Each dimension has its own methods of truth-finding. These may not be confused or played against each other.

Practical consequences: A mature culture must give space to all four dimensions of truth. One-dimensional thinking leads to distortions and conflicts.

35.1.7 Dialogue Maxims as Practical Application

Heinrichs develops concrete dialogue maxims for each dimension of truth, which can be understood both as ethical rules and as psychological wisdom rules of a holistic, dialogical reason.

These maxims are not abstract norms, but arise from the structural analysis of communication itself. They explicate what is implicitly effective in every successful dialogue.

Examples:

Factual dimension: “Make clear in speaking to which matter or to which of your concrete experiences you refer exactly”

Subjective dimension: “Don’t get involved in casuistry when lying is allowed. The essence of lying lies in abuse of trust”

Interpersonal dimension: “Not everything that is factually true can be communicated everywhere”

Medial dimension: “Take account of the unavailability of truth, keep yourself open for systematic illumination”

The special point: These maxims can each be formulated both for the speaker role and for the listener role, since we are all constantly both at once.

35.2 The Four Dimensions of Ethics

Parallel to the theory of truth, Heinrichs develops a four-dimensional ethics that shows how specific moral obligations arise at each level of reflection.

35.2.1 Instrumental Ethics: Responsibility for the World

The first dimension of ethics corresponds to the first level of reflection: reference to the objective world. Here it concerns human responsibility for the factual world.

Basic principle: The human as “steward of creation” bears responsibility for the objective world. This responsibility is not arbitrary, but arises from the structure of reason itself.

Areas of application:

- Environmental ethics: Responsibility for nature and future generations
- Technology ethics: Responsibility for consequences of technological developments
- Economic ethics: Responsibility for sustainable resource use
- Medical ethics: Responsibility for life and health

Ethical principles:

- Sustainability: Actions must be viable long-term
- Proportionality: Means and ends must be appropriate

- Precautionary principle: In uncertainty, the more cautious path is to be chosen
- Universalizability: What applies to one must be able to apply to all

35.2.2 Strategic Ethics: Justice in Social Relations

The second dimension of ethics corresponds to the second level of reflection: reference to the intersubjective world. Here it concerns fairness, justice and proper dealing with power.

Basic principle: Humans are social beings who depend on each other. From this arise rights and duties that may not be violated.

Areas of application:

- Political ethics: Just distribution of power and democratic participation
- Legal ethics: Fair procedures and equal treatment before the law
- Social ethics: Solidarity with the weaker and social balance
- Conflict ethics: Non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliation

Ethical principles:

- Equal rights: All humans have equal dignity
- Fairness: Procedures must be comprehensible and just for all
- Solidarity: The stronger have responsibility for the weaker
- Non-violence: Conflicts should be resolved without physical violence

35.2.3 Communicative Ethics: Truthfulness in Understanding

The third dimension of ethics corresponds to the third level of reflection: reference to the cultural world. Here it concerns sincerity, tolerance and educational responsibility.

Basic principle: Humans are linguistic beings who depend on understanding. Communication is only possible when certain ethical standards are maintained.

Areas of application:

- Educational ethics: Responsibility for passing on knowledge and culture
- Media ethics: Truthfulness and responsibility in public communication
- Scientific ethics: Honesty in research and teaching
- Art ethics: Authenticity and responsibility in artistic expression

Ethical principles:

- Truthfulness: One should say what one holds to be true
- Tolerance: Other opinions and cultures are to be respected
- Educational responsibility: Everyone has the duty for spiritual further development
- Cultural openness: One should be ready to learn from others

35.2.4 Metacommunicative Ethics: Reverence before the Unconditional

The fourth dimension of ethics corresponds to the fourth level of reflection: reference to the unconditional. Here it concerns recognition of the sacred and the limits of human disposal.

Basic principle: The human is a finite being related to the infinite. This relationship grounds the highest form of ethical obligation.

Areas of application:

- Religious ethics: Respect for different spiritual traditions
- Existential ethics: Dealing with suffering, death and the limits of human power
- Ethics of meaning: Responsibility for passing on meaning in life
- Transcendence ethics: Openness to what exceeds human reason

Ethical principles:

- Reverence: Recognition of the sacred and indisposable
- Humility: Modesty in view of one's own limitedness
- Hope: Trust in a meaning greater than one's own life
- Serenity: Acceptance of what cannot be changed

35.2.5 The Integration of Ethics Dimensions

Like the truth dimensions, the four ethics dimensions also form a systematic unity. Genuine ethics must consider all four dimensions.

No dimension can replace the others: Spiritual ethics without environmental responsibility is unworldly. Social justice without spiritual depth becomes ideology.

Conflicts between dimensions are possible: Sometimes different ethical obligations stand in tension with each other. The solution lies not in absolutizing one dimension, but in creative integration.

Development through differentiation: Mature ethics arises through increasing differentiation of the different levels of obligation, not through their blurring.

35.3 The Systematic Completion

The theory of truth and ethics forms the systematic conclusion of reflection-system theory. Here the universal scope of Heinrichs' approach shows itself.

Overcoming relativism: Through the four-dimensional structure, relativism is avoided without falling into dogmatism. There are universal structures (the four dimensions), but culturally different contents.

Overcoming reductionism: No dimension can be reduced to another. Materialism, psychologism, sociology and spiritualism are equally one-sided distortions.

Foundation of postmodern rationality: Reflection-system theory shows a path beyond postmodernism - to a new form of reason that is both differentiated and integral.

Preparation of a new epoch: Heinrichs' system is not only a philosophical theory, but the design of a new civilization - a civilization built on the principle of integration-through-differentiation.

With this the systematic construction of reflection-system theory is completed. From the ontological foundations through action and language theory to social theory and spirituality, a unified principle shows itself: Reality is not one-dimensional, but four-dimensionally structured. To recognize and realize this structure is the task of a philosophy that wants to be both critical and constructive - a philosophy for the 21st century.

Chapter 36: The Sublation of Hegel

36.1 Sublation in Threefold Sense

The concept "sublation" has three meanings in Hegel as is well known: negate, preserve, elevate. In exactly this threefold sense Heinrichs' relationship to Hegel can be understood:

Negate: Heinrichs criticizes central aspects of Hegelian philosophy - the beginning with "being," the restriction to "thought-dialectic," the absence of explicit dialogics.

Preserve: Heinrichs adopts and defends Hegel's core insight: that philosophy is essentially reflection logic, that self-consciousness is reflexively structured, that dialectic grasps the form of movement of spirit.

Elevate: Heinrichs leads these insights to a new level - through explication of what remained implicit in Hegel, and through application to areas that Hegel did not or only tentatively treat.

This threefold movement makes Heinrichs' relationship to Hegel more complex than mere "succession" or mere "overcoming." It is sublation in the full dialectical sense.

36.2 The Starting Point: Implicit and Explicit Reflection

To understand Heinrichs' contribution, we must begin with a distinction that is fundamental for his entire work: the distinction between implicit and explicit reflection.

Implicit reflection is the spontaneous self-consciousness that underlies every action, every thought, every perception. It is not subsequent, but constitutive - without it there would be no consciousness. Thomas Aquinas called it "reditio completa in seipsum" - the complete return to oneself.

Explicit reflection is what we usually call "thinking" - the conscious turning toward what has already been experienced or thought. It presupposes implicit reflection, but can never completely catch up with it.

This distinction has existential dimension, as Heinrichs emphasizes in the introduction to “Dialectic as Reflection Logic”: Ludwig Klages’ “Spirit as Adversary of the Soul” lived from the uncomprehended opposition of spontaneous life and reflective thinking. The longing for unreflective “intoxication with things” could turn into political irrationalism. The philosophical working-through of this opposition is therefore no academic exercise, but clarification of a primal dialectic of being human.

36.3 Hegel’s “Sanctuary” - and What Heinrichs Makes of It

Hegel deeply penetrated the reflexive nature of spirit. His formula from the Phenomenology of Spirit - “Pure self-recognition in absolute otherness” - Heinrichs calls “Hegel’s sanctuary.” It grasps the essence of self-consciousness: It is not simply with itself, but recognizes itself in the other and returns from this movement to itself.

Heinrichs defends this insight against the Henrich school, which has criticized the concept of reflection as a “bad circle.” The objection reads: If self-consciousness relates to itself, it must already know itself in order to recognize itself. Heinrichs’ answer: This objection confuses implicit and explicit reflection. Implicit self-relatedness is not subsequent recognition, but the constitutive structure of consciousness itself.

This defense shows: Heinrichs stands by Hegel’s basic insight. But he goes a decisive step further: He *explicates* what remains *implicit* in Hegel. In Hegel the reflection structure is at work, but it is not thematized as the continuous principle of the entire dialectic. In the Science of Logic “reflection logic” is only a section of the logic of essence - not the characteristic of the whole.

Heinrichs’ central thesis reads: The entire dialectic is reflection logic. Not only a part, but the whole. This explication is his fundamental contribution.

36.4 The Critique of the Being-Beginning

Hegel begins his Science of Logic with “pure being” - the completely indeterminate, empty thought of mere “is.” Heinrichs criticizes: Even “pure being” can only be thought if a thinker is already there. The beginning with being conceals that we are always already in reflection.

This criticism has systematic weight. Whoever begins with being suggests a movement from the objective to the subjective. Whoever begins with reflection recognizes: The subjective is always already there. The question is not how we get from being to consciousness, but how consciousness unfolds its own structures.

Heinrichs’ beginning with reflection - more precisely: with the four sense elements It-I-You-We - makes the subjective and intersubjective dimension thematic from the start. This is a methodical decision with far-reaching consequences for the entire system architecture.

36.5 The Four-Foldness: Heinrichs' Systematic Innovation

Here lies Heinrichs' genuine systematic contribution. Hegel thinks in triads - the understanding, the dialectical, the speculative; or being, essence, concept. Heinrichs thinks in tetrads - the four levels of reflection:

- Object reference (It): Consciousness directs itself toward otherness - the first, still unreflected level.
- Self-reference (I): Consciousness directs itself toward itself - simple reflection.
- Other-reference (You): Consciousness directs itself toward another self-consciousness - double reflection.
- We-reference (Medium): Consciousness directs itself toward the common meaning medium - meta-reflection.

This four-foldness is no mere assertion, but results from the reflection-logical analysis of self-consciousness. It is already found in "Reflection as Social System" (1976) and is systematically unfolded in the "Logic of the Social" (2005).

The fourth level - the meaning medium, the "we" - is decisive. It is missing in Hegel in this explicit form. In Hegel there is "objective spirit" and "absolute spirit," but not this systematic reflection on the medium in which all reflection takes place. Heinrichs' explication of this fourth level opens new perspectives for philosophy of language, communication theory and social theory.

36.6 The You as Positive Enablement

Another central point of Heinrichs' criticism and further development concerns the I-You relationship. In Hegel, so Heinrichs, all otherness is characterized by negativity - the other is the not-I, the negated. But the You is no negative limitation of the I, but positive enablement.

Without the You there would be no I - not because the You limits the I, but because it makes possible the recognition in which the I first comes to itself. The child learns to say "I" by being addressed as You by others. The I-You relationship is dialectic of enablement, not of negation.

Hegel certainly knows the dialectic of recognition - the master-slave dialectic in the Phenomenology, ethics in the Philosophy of Right. But Heinrichs' point is: This insight must enter into the foundation *from the beginning* and *explicitly*. The dialogical structure is not a later result, but an original given. The "You" is not to be derived from the "I" - both are equally original.

36.7 From Thought-Dialectic to Action-Dialectic

Marx criticized in Hegel that his dialectic “luxuriates only under the cranium” - it is pure thought movement. Heinrichs shares this criticism, but applies it differently than Marx.

Reflection logic must be related to the entire action reality of humans, not only to thinking. Thinking is only one form of explicit reflection. But implicit reflection permeates all human doing - also acting, feeling, communicating.

Heinrichs' action theory - developed in “Actions - Foundation of a Periodic Systematics,” his self-declared “life's work” - applies dialectical subsumption to action types. This is not mere “application” of an abstract logic, but unfolding of the reflection structure in an area that remained underdeveloped in Hegel.

36.8 The Dialectical Subsumption

Heinrichs' own method - the “dialectical subsumption” - deserves special attention. It structures an area according to the four levels of reflection and then applies this structuring to itself: Each of the four levels is itself again subdivided fourfold, which leads to 16 fields. These can in turn be subdivided, and so forth.

This method is not identical with Hegel's “determinate negation,” although it is dialectical. It does not structure through progressing negation, but through reflexive self-application. The result is the characteristic tables and systematics that run through Heinrichs' work - from action typology through philosophy of language to social theory.

The fruitfulness of this method shows itself in the abundance of concrete analyses that Heinrichs has presented. Whether it is universally applicable or primarily suitable for the area of spirit (action, language, society) remains an open question - but a productive one.

36.9 Heinrichs' Original Achievements

Where lie Heinrichs' achievements that go beyond mere explication of Hegel? They are areas in which Hegel has left nothing comparable:

Philosophy of Language: Heinrichs' five-volume work on language - with systematic analysis of sign dimension, meaning dimension, action dimension, syntax and stylistics - is an original achievement without precedent in Hegel. Hegel has no elaborated philosophy of language. Heinrichs fills this gap with a reflection-logically founded theory that is simultaneously connectable to modern semiotics and pragmatics.

The Four-Fold Division of Society: The systematic distinction of economy (factual level), politics (interest level), culture (communicative level) and legitimation (basic values level) is a precise analysis of modern differentiated societies. Hegel's estate theory is time-bound; Heinrichs' functional four-fold division is connectable to modern systems theory.

Action Theory: The application of dialectical subsumption to action types yields a systematic action typology that has an equivalent neither in Hegel nor in modern action theory.

Democratic Theory: Value-level democracy is a concrete proposal for how reflection logic can be translated into institutional design. Philosophy becomes practical here - not as mere “application,” but as unfolding of the reflexive structure of the political itself.

These achievements are not “corrections” of Hegel, but extensions into areas that Hegel did not work on. They show the fruitfulness of reflection logic for philosophical work.

36.10 Integration-through-Differentiation: A Dialectical Basic Figure

A particularly clear example for the depth in which dialectical forms of thought have entered Heinrichs’ philosophy offers the principle “integration-through-differentiation” (cf. Chapter 15). Heinrichs formulates:

“Integration-through-differentiation only exists when the principle of differentiation is identical with the principle of higher unification.”

This structure corresponds to a dialectical basic operation: Differentiation and integration are not two separate steps, but two moments of one movement. Every genuine distinction already presupposes a common framework; every genuine integration presupposes distinctions.

Heinrichs applies this principle to areas that are systematically newly opened: to personality development, to social theory (the four subsystems must be differentiated *and* integrated), to cultural development (action, language, art, mysticism as level sequence of integration-through-differentiation).

Interestingly, the same structure shows itself in the assignment of triad and tetrad: The “soul” encompasses both the I and the You - two differentiated moments that are integrated at the personal level. The question “three or four?” proves to be wrongly posed: They are different degrees of resolution of the same dialectical structure.

36.11 The Sublation: What Heinrichs Preserves

Despite all criticism and further development, Heinrichs preserves central dialectical insights:

Sublation itself - with its threefold meaning of elimination, preservation and elevation. Sublation does not simply negate, but preserves the essential at a higher level.

The Speculative - the capacity to grasp the positive in the negative, to think opposites in their unity. Heinrichs explicitly warns against confusing the “dialectic of negativity” with the “cult of a negative dialectic in the sense of a general non-sublation of opposites.”

Historical Spirit - the insight that truth develops in history. The theory of “history as reflection-layering” (Chapter 21) is Heinrichs’ own unfolding of this thought.

Systematic Ambition - the claim to practice philosophy as science, as coherent unfolding of the reflection structure, not as mere collection of individual analyses.

36.12 Open Questions

Honesty requires naming open questions as well:

Philosophy of Nature: Heinrichs’ four-fold division is primarily tailored to the area of spirit - action, language, society. The question whether and how the levels of reflection can be found in nature, he treats tentatively in “Dialectic as Reflection Logic” and has announced a continuing work. The execution is still outstanding.

The Relationship of Three and Four: The exact systematic relationship between traditional dialectical three-fold division and Heinrichs’ four-foldness is not definitively clarified. Are they complementary perspectives? Different degrees of resolution? The question remains productively open.

The Range of Dialectical Subsumption: The method is fruitfully tested for action, language and society. Whether it is universally applicable must be shown by further work.

These open questions are no objections to what has been achieved, but indications of future tasks - for Heinrichs himself and for those who continue his work.

36.13 Balance: The Sublation of Hegel

Heinrichs “sublates Hegel” in the full dialectical sense of the word:

He negates problematic aspects: the beginning with abstract being instead of concrete reflection, the restriction to thought-dialectic, the absence of explicit dialogics.

He preserves the basic insight: Philosophy is reflection logic, dialectic is the form of movement of spirit, sublation is the productive unity of negation and position.

He elevates this insight to a new level: through explication of the four-foldness, through application to language, action and society, through development of dialectical subsumption as method.

The result is neither mere continuation of Hegel nor mere overcoming. It is sublation: a new that contains the old in itself and simultaneously goes beyond it.

The productive tension between Hegel and Heinrichs remains - and is perhaps itself an example of that “living relationship and interaction of opposites” that constitutes the essence of dialectic.

PART H: CONCLUSION

The systematic presentation of reflection-system theory has reached its goal with the theory of truth and ethics. Part G has shown how the European principle of integration-through-differentiation can be extended to the global vision of a world federation and how it finds its spiritual completion in theonomous autonomy.

The concluding view now directs itself to the overall achievement: What has Heinrichs accomplished for philosophy after Hegel? Which problems of post-Hegelian philosophy has his reflection-system theory actually solved? And which perspectives does it open for the future of systematic thinking?

Part H draws the balance of a philosophical revolution that has taken place quietly and unnoticed - and that waits to be discovered.

Chapter 37: The Systematic Achievement: Reflection Logic as Post-Hegelian Synthesis

Balance of a Philosophical Revolution

37.1 The Problem Setting: Philosophy after Hegel

Post-Hegelian philosophy faces a fundamental dilemma. As the preceding chapter has shown, Hegel's system was the last great attempt to grasp the totality of reality in a unified conceptual framework - and simultaneously the first consistent attempt at reflection logic. His partial failure - not at the basic idea, but at its execution (cf. Chapter 36) - left philosophy in a situation of fragmentation.

Three main directions emerged from the dissolution of German Idealism:

Positivism sought security in empirical science, but renounced systematic world explanation and philosophical meaning-giving.

Existential philosophy emphasized the uniqueness of individual existence, but renounced universal structures and general validity.

Analytic philosophy developed precise methods of concept analysis, but renounced the great questions about meaning and significance of human existence.

Each of these directions retained important truth-moments of philosophical thinking, but none could redeem the systematic claim of philosophy. The specialization of the

sciences did the rest: Philosophy increasingly became a science among others, no longer the foundational science of all sciences.

37.2 Heinrichs' Diagnostic Achievement

Johannes Heinrichs recognized the systematic cause of this fragmentation: the absence of an adequate reflection logic. Hegel had discovered reflection as the central principle of spirit - his "sanctuary," which Heinrichs defends against the Henrich school (cf. Ch. 36.1.1). But Hegel's dialectic remained too abstract and too oriented to the model of the subject-object relationship and determinate negation.

Heinrichs' central insight that goes beyond Hegel: Reflection has not two, but four basic forms. The subject-object relationship is only the first, unreflected level. Beyond this there is self-reflection (subject-subject relationship), double reflection (You-relationship) and meta-reflection (meaning-relationship).

This four-fold structure is not arbitrarily constructed, but results from the systematic analysis of reflection itself. Each level builds on the preceding one, but simultaneously elevates it to a new quality level.

The diagnostic achievement lies in showing that all main problems of post-Hegelian philosophy result from the confusion or shortening of these four levels of reflection:

- Materialism and positivism reduce everything to the first level
- Subjectivism and existential philosophy absolutize the second level
- Communication theories restrict themselves to the third level
- Mysticism and irrationalism jump immediately to the fourth level

37.3 The Methodical Innovation: Dialectical Subsumption

Heinrichs developed a new philosophical method that he calls "dialectical subsumption." It makes it possible to systematically structure an area according to the four levels of reflection without destroying the living diversity of phenomena.

The procedure of dialectical subsumption:

First step: Identification of the unreflected basic level (first level of reflection) - the immediately given, not yet conceptually penetrated.

Second step: Working out of simple reflection (second level of reflection) - the methodical, systematic working of the material.

Third step: Development of double reflection (third level of reflection) - the communicative, dialogical dimension of the phenomenon area.

Fourth step: Demonstration of meta-reflection (fourth level of reflection) - the meaning and significance dimension that holds the whole together.

This method proves itself in all areas: action theory, philosophy of language, social theory, epistemology, ethics. It is phenomenon-appropriate, not mathematically elegant. It follows the logic of the matter, not an externally imposed systematics.

37.4 The Ontological Foundation

Unlike many contemporary philosophers who evade the ontological questions or declare them unsolvable, Heinrichs ventures a new foundation of ontology. He shows that the four levels of reflection are not only subjective forms of thought, but objective structures of reality itself.

Reflection-logical ontology distinguishes four levels, expressed in terms of language theory:

Sigmatic level: The level of signs and their meanings - the objective world as it presents itself in language and science.

Semantic level: The level of meanings and their subjective appropriation - the world of individual experience and personal meaning.

Pragmatic level: The level of intersubjective understanding and social action - the world of communication and culture.

Syntactic level: The level of overarching structures and regularities - the world of objective spirit and meaning-connections.

These four levels are not reductionistically reducible to each other. Each has its own reality and its own regularities. But they are also not relationally juxtaposed. They form a systematic unity through their reflection-logical structure.

37.5 The Systematic Integration of Post-Hegelian Traditions

With the four-level reflection logic as methodical foundation, Heinrichs can systematically integrate all important post-Hegelian directions of thought without reducing or neutralizing them. This shows the practical efficiency of the new method in solving the basic problems of philosophy after Hegel.

37.5.1 Marx and Materialism - Action Performance as Ontological Foundation

Marx's critique of Hegel's pure "thought-dialectic" was already presented in Chapter 36.5. Heinrichs adopts this critique without giving up the reflection-logical foundation. Marx's central insight: The constitutive role of social practice for consciousness formation. "Social being determines consciousness" grasped a fundamental truth against idealistic reductions.

The problem: Marx fell into the opposite reduction. He explained consciousness to be a mere "reflection" of material conditions and overlooked the constitutive role of reflection in the formation of social structures.

Heinrichs' integration: The first level of reflection (object-related action) grasps Marx's insight without falling into reductionism. Material production is one dimension of social practice, but not the only one. Reflection logic shows how all four dimensions (economic, political, cultural, worldview) work together.

The result: A post-Marxist materialism that recognizes the significance of the material basis, but integrates the other dimensions through reflection-logical mediation.

37.5.2 Existential Philosophy and Personalism - The Second Level of Reflection

Kierkegaard's and Sartre's justified insight: The non-representability of individual existence, the significance of personal decision, the critique of abstract-systematic approaches.

The problem: Existential philosophy absolutized singularity and thereby became anti-systematic. It could not build a bridge to the general and social.

Heinrichs' integration: The second level of reflection (subject-related reflection) grasps the existential-philosophical dimension without isolating it. Individuality arises through social reflection processes, not against them.

The result: A systematic personalism that recognizes the dignity of the person but does not hide its social constitution.

37.5.3 Hermeneutics and Philosophy of Language - The Third Level of Reflection

Gadamer's and Wittgenstein's justified insight: The constitutive role of language for human knowledge and experience. "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

The problem: Philosophy of language was often universalistically overstretched. Everything became "text," everything became "linguistically constructed," the independence of the other dimensions was denied.

Heinrichs' integration: The third level of reflection (communicative reflection) appreciates the significance of language without absolutizing it. Language is meta-action that relates to the other dimensions without replacing them.

The result: A differentiated hermeneutics that takes linguistic mediation seriously but does not fall into linguistic idealism.

37.5.4 Mysticism and Transpersonal Philosophy - The Fourth Level of Reflection

The justified insight of mystical traditions: Human relatedness to the unconditional, the experience of self-transcendence, the critique of purely rationalistic approaches.

The problem: Mysticism was often understood anti-rationally and played against conceptual clarity. It thereby remained esoteric and socially ineffective.

Heinrichs' integration: The fourth level of reflection (metacommunicative reflection) shows how spiritual experience is rationally structurable without being rationalistically reduced. "Mysticism without irrationalism" becomes possible (see e.g. Chapter 8 in Johannes Heinrichs' book "Integral Philosophy").

37.6 Further Areas of Application of Reflection Logic

The universality of the four-level reflection structure shows itself in its applicability to practically all areas of human experience. Three examples demonstrate the range of the approach:

37.6.1 Epistemology: Overcoming the Relativism-Objectivism Debate

Reflection logic solves one of the most persistent problems of modern epistemology: How can we claim objective knowledge when all knowledge is subjectively and culturally conditioned?

The traditional positions:

Objectivism: There is objective truth independent of the knowing subject. Problem: How can we reach this when we always only have subjective access?

Subjectivism: All knowledge is subjectively shaped. Problem: How can we then justify truth claims?

Cultural relativism: All knowledge is culturally conditioned. Problem: How can we then achieve intercultural understanding?

Heinrichs' solution through the four dimensions of truth:

Factual dimension (objective pole): There are indeed objective states of affairs that can be known. But this objectivity is not independent of the knowledge process. Heinrichs further suspected that objectivity itself might be co-constituted by reflection-analogous structures - a thesis he hinted at in connection with Plichta's philosophy of nature without systematically working it out (cf. Chapter 3.2).

Subjective-existential dimension: The knower is always involved as a whole person. Truthfulness and authenticity belong to truth.

Interpersonal dimension: Knowledge arises in communicative processes. It is dialogically mediated, but not arbitrary.

Medial dimension: All knowledge participates in the universal meaning medium. This makes objective validity possible without claiming naive objectivity.

The result: Differentiated objectivity instead of naive objectivity or relativism. Reflection logic is performatively consistent because it practices what it teaches: systematic reflection.

37.6.2 Psychology and Therapy: Solving the Singularity Problem

Modern psychology faces the problem of how it can grasp individual uniqueness without renouncing systematic knowledge. Heinrichs' integral anthropology offers a solution:

Existence as system foundation: Existence (concrete action performance) is not the other of the system, but its foundation. The concrete life situation of humans is systematically grasped without being reduced.

The threefold unconscious: Heinrichs integrates psychoanalytic insights through systematic differentiation of the unconscious:

- The physical unconscious (drives, instincts, perceptions)
- The psychic unconscious (implicitness and repressed contents)
- The spiritual superconscious (transpersonal structures)

Pathology as integration disorder: Psychological illnesses arise through disturbances of integration between the seven levels of consciousness. Therapy aims at restoring integration.

Therapeutic consequences: Different forms of therapy grasp different levels. Integrative therapy is not pragmatic compromise, but systematic necessity.

37.6.3 Philosophy of Nature: Materialism-Idealism Overcome

Heinrichs' most revolutionary achievement lies in overcoming the materialism-idealism opposition through a new ontological foundation:

Action performance as epistemological access to a differentiated ontological totality, to "being" as dialectical structure: The formula "reality is primarily action performance" overcomes the materialism-idealism opposition, but goes beyond this. Neither matter nor spirit is primary, but both are abstractions from the original unity of action.

The problem of traditional alternatives:

Materialism claims: Consciousness is only "reflection" of material conditions. But this claim itself occurs in the medium of thinking and arguing. It contradicts itself performatively.

Idealism claims: Everything is "only" consciousness or representation. But it ignores the resistiveness and independence of the world that makes itself noticeable in every action performance.

Heinrichs' solution: Neither "matter" nor "spirit" is ontologically primary, but both are abstractions from the original unity of reflexively structured action performance.

Peter Plichta and the spirit-nature bridge: Heinrichs saw in Plichta's reversal dialectic of space/mass and time/energy a structural analogy to reflection logic. Whether nature itself exhibits reflexive structures remains an open question; Plichta's model serves here as hermeneutical key, not as scientific proof.

Quantum physics and reflection logic: Heinrichs suspected that quantum physics could also exhibit reflection-analogous structures. This connection remains speculative and requires further interdisciplinary research.

37.7 Overcoming the Great Oppositions

Through its four-dimensional structure, Heinrichs' system dissolves the great oppositions on which post-Hegelian philosophy broke:

Objectivism versus subjectivism: Both have their right at their respective level of reflection. The error lies only in absolutization.

Individualism versus collectivism: The second level of reflection grounds the independence of the individual, the third the necessity of community.

Rationalism versus irrationalism: Reason has different forms according to level of reflection. Mystical experience (fourth level) is not unreasonable, but trans-rational.

Materialism versus idealism: Both grasp important aspects of reality, but neither the whole. The four levels of being encompass both material and ideal dimensions.

Monism versus pluralism: Reality is one (through the reflection-logical structure), but it is manifoldly articulated (through the four levels and their infinite concretions).

37.8 The Practical Relevance: Social Theory

The philosophical achievement of Heinrichs shows itself most clearly in his social theory. Here abstract reflection logic becomes concrete institutional reforms.

Overcoming the systems theory debate: Habermas' communication theory and Luhmann's systems theory appear as partial truths that can be integrated through the four-dimensional structure.

Solving the crisis of democracy: The four-fold division of parliamentarism according to subject areas instead of worldviews could overcome the problems of party democracy.

Foundation of a European constitution: The principle of integration-through-differentiation offers a way between centralistic unification and nationalist isolation.

Vision of a world federation: The four parliamentary levels are in principle globalizable and could form the foundation of a future world order.

37.9 The Spiritual Dimension: Theonomous Autonomy

Heinrichs' perhaps greatest achievement lies in the re-foundation of spirituality on reflection-logical grounds. "Theonomous autonomy" overcomes the unfruitful opposition of enlightenment and religion.

The autonomy of reason is not given up, but led to its own self-transcendence. Reason recognizes its own limit and thereby opens itself to the unconditional.

Religious experience is not understood as irrational leap, but as highest completion of the reflexive process. Mysticism and logic are no longer opposites.

The East-West synthesis becomes possible: Western personalism and Eastern non-duality prove to be different aspects of the same reflection-logical structure.

A new form of spirituality emerges: neither confessionally bound nor arbitrarily relativistic, but structurally grounded and dialogically open.

37.10 Early Philosophy of Nature: The Ecology Project (1988-1997)

A complete picture of Heinrichs' philosophical development requires mention of his early work in philosophy of nature "Ecology. Spiritual Ways out of the Climate and Environmental Catastrophe" (originated 1988, first published 1997 by Lang Verlag). This work shows both the continuity and the evolution of his thinking.

37.10.1 The Project of "Deep Ecology as Structural Philosophy of Nature"

Already at the end of the 1980s, Heinrichs tried to apply his reflection logic to the nature problematic. His approach was programmatic: an "ecology of thinking" that goes beyond pragmatic environmental protection to a fundamental reflection on the human-nature relationship.

Rudolf Bahro praised in his 1997 review the "systematic consequence and philosophical depth of this draft" and the "reflection-logical and then action-theoretically turned method as very effective."

37.10.2 The Limits of the Early Approach

However, this work still shows the limits of a philosophy of nature that treats nature as "the other of logic" (Hegel). The applied ordering principles - triads, sevenfolds of energy bodies, numerical structurings - remain partly external, since nature is not yet understood as genuinely self-reflexive.

Bahro also criticized that the "structuralist approach does not take into view the historical genesis of the socio-cultural equilibrium disturbance."

37.10.3 The Long Development toward Ontological Self-Relatedness

These methodical difficulties accompany Heinrichs' philosophy of nature for a long time. Still in "Integral Philosophy" (2014) he essentially presents the Ecology position. The decisive breakthrough only occurs in 2023/2024 when writing the "Dialectic," where he arrives at a genuinely ontological conception of self-relatedness.

Important for this development is his decades-long friendship, though only brief professional cooperation with the brilliant chemist, physicist and mathematician Peter Plichta. Heinrichs supported Plichta from September 1990 in bringing out his first volumes "The Prime Number Cross." The underground kinship of the two thinkers, who - for different reasons - both had to work outside the university mainstream, becomes evident in the 2025 appearing book by Franz Peter Wilson "Integral Cosmology without Big Bang. Peter Plichta's Philosophy of Nature in Connection with Johannes Heinrichs' Reflection Theory."

Wilson's book works out the structural analogies between Plichta's prime number cross theory and Heinrichs' reflection logic. Whether nature itself exhibits reflexive

structures that are consciousness-analogous or even consciousness-generating remains an open - and for Heinrichs fascinating - question.

37.10.4 Lasting Legacy: The Three-Circles of Anthropology

The most significant, still valid legacy of the Ecology is the triadic anthropology with the “three-circles model.” This shows the interpenetration of body, soul and spirit and their unfolding into a sevenfold constitution of humans:

Nr	Designation	Intersection Fields	Chakras
7	Logos consciousness (Atman)		G1 Crown chakra
6	cosmic consciousness		G4/S4 Brow chakra
5	Mental body		K4/G2 Throat chakra
4	pure self-consciousness (Causal soul)		S1 Heart chakra
3	Experience soul/Astral body	K3/S3/G3	Solar plexus
2	Life soul/Life body	K2/S2	Genital chakra
1	physical body	K1	Base chakra

This integration of Western philosophy with Eastern chakra teachings proves to be durably viable and is also centrally maintained in the summarizing “Integral Philosophy” (2014).

The Ecology work thus documents an important but lengthy development process: from the first attempt at a systematic philosophy of nature on reflection-logical grounds through decades-long engagement with methodical problems to the breakthrough to “Dialectic as Reflection Logic” (2025), wherein self-relatedness is understood not only as universal ontological principle, but - with Plichta and his interpreter Wilson - even as constitutive for inorganic nature.

37.11 Philosophy of Language in Application: The Hölderlin Commentary (2007)

A particularly impressive demonstration of the practical fruitfulness of Heinrichs’ philosophy of language is presented by his work “Revolution from Spirit and Love. Hölderlin’s ‘Hyperion’ comprehensively commented” (2007). It is the only comprehensive sentence-by-sentence commentary on Hölderlin’s main work and - as far as can be seen - the only Hölderlin commentary with consistently language-philosophical and genre-theoretical background that addresses literary genres, not to mention the social thrust connecting with the poet toward a “revolution from spirit and love.”

37.11.1 Methodical Innovation: “Dialogical Interpretative Method”

Heinrichs develops a “dialogical interpretative method” as practical implementation of his communicative reflection theory. Instead of philological textual fidelity or one-sidedly historical classification, he practices a “hermeneutical circle” in which “one’s own pre-understanding of the matter is to be precisely matched with the text.”

This method overcomes both the “mummy cult” of purely text-immanent interpretation as well as the arbitrariness of subjective interpretation through systematic reflection on the matter itself that is negotiated between interpreter and text.

37.11.2 Genre Theory in Concrete Application

The work demonstrates Heinrichs’ “consequently language-philosophically founded theory of literary genres” in the concrete case. The Hyperion proves to be a “linguistic total work of art” that integrates all four great genres:

1. Philosophical essay (factual, reflection corresponding to the sigmatic language dimension)
2. Epic novel (representation playing with the subjective representations of semantics)
3. Drama in letters (intersubjective-pragmatic language level)
4. Lyrical poem (metacommunicative, metasyntactic language music)

This “multidimensional wholeness” makes the Hyperion according to Heinrichs a unique work of German literature.

37.11.3 Hölderlin as “Sign-Mystic of Artistic Language”

Heinrichs’ systematic analysis reveals Hölderlin as a poet who integrates the four dimensions (expression media) of mysticism:

- Nature mysticism: living nature as medium of “all-oneness”
- Inwardness mysticism of the subject
- Love mysticism/Social mysticism: interpersonal encounter and spiritual community as path of God-experience
- Language and sign mysticism: Artistic language and sign systems as media of time-transcending experience and vision

This integration corresponds exactly to Heinrichs’ four-level reflection logic and shows its interpretative power.

Politics and Spirituality: The Metacommunicative Dimension

Particularly significant is Heinrichs’ proof that Hölderlin’s political vision of a “revolution of attitudes and ways of representation” begins at the metacommunicative level

of reflection. The “reflexive torn state of Germany” can only be overcome through a spiritual revolution that integrates mysticism, art and politics.

37.11.4 Systematic Significance

The Hölderlin commentary is more than just literary interpretation - it demonstrates the practical applicability of reflection logic to cultural phenomena. It shows how systematic philosophy can lead to concrete hermeneutical insights that are neither purely historical nor purely speculative, but open up the matter itself in its present significance.

Thus Heinrichs’ philosophy of language proves to be not only theoretically conclusive but interpretatively fruitful - an important test for any philosophical theory.

37.12 The Limits and Open Questions

Heinrichs is aware that his system does not solve all philosophical problems. Limits and open questions remain:

Empirical validation is still outstanding in much. Many of his social-theoretical proposals have not yet been practically tested.

Political acceptance is limited to small circles under the labels “four-fold division” or “value-level democracy,” which lack the means for public relations work. The reflection-logical background of concrete democracy reforms in the sense of a graduated parliamentarism is easy to understand, but difficult to implement in practice for those interested in day-to-day politics, as long as the media and many active people are not behind it. It makes high demands on intellectual flexibility.

The completeness of the overall theory and its practicability are not proven. There could be complications in the practical implementation of graduated parliamentarism or further levels of reflection.

Cultural transferability is questionable. The system was developed in the European context. Whether it can be transferred to other cultures must be shown. The kinship with the old Vedic Vanasrama system is striking, but no recommendation, because in this (according to Heinrichs’ view) the social subsystems degenerated into castes of individual belonging and discrimination.

But these limits do not diminish the systematic achievement. No philosophical system can solve all problems. It’s about whether it recognizes the central problems of its time and develops workable solution approaches.

The existential questions of theological nature remain, not to speak of an elaborated extension of theology: Is there “divine” (medial, spiritual) guidance and providence for the individual as well as for human history? Heinrichs is very aware of these “open boundaries” as a former theologian, but does not want to prematurely and unprotectedly design a new, so to speak “existential dogmatics.”

37.13 The Historical Significance

Johannes Heinrichs has first achieved what philosophy has sought since Hegel: a new form of systematic philosophy that is neither dogmatic nor arbitrary, neither reductionistic nor irrational.

The rehabilitation of system philosophy: After postmodernism, systematic thinking becomes possible again as foundation of a metamodernism, but in a non-dogmatic way, because reflexive differentiation despite all clarity should protect against flat dogmatization.

The integration of philosophical traditions: Analytic precision, continental depth, Eastern wisdom and practical relevance are combined in a unified framework.

The foundation of post-metaphysical spirituality: Religion and enlightenment must, indeed may no longer be understood as opposites.

The preparation of a new epoch: The reflection-logical structuring of society could form the foundation of a civilization that overcomes the problems of modernity.

37.14 The Assignment to the Future

Heinrichs has taken the first steps. The next steps lie with a philosophical community or political group that is ready to explore the possibilities of systematic philosophy after postmodernism: in a structured, substantial “metamodernism” beyond phrases and merely postulating moralism.

Empirical research must examine and concretize the reflection-logical structures in various areas.

Pedagogical work must find ways to convey reflection-logical thinking without dogmatizing it.

Practical application must show whether institutional reforms actually bring the hoped-for improvements.

Intercultural extension must examine whether and how reflection logic proves itself in other cultural circles.

Philosophical further development must critically examine, correct and supplement the system.

37.15 Revolution or Evolution?

Is Heinrichs' work a philosophical revolution or an evolutionary further development? The answer depends on whether his basic theses are correct.

If they are correct, Heinrichs has actually initiated a new epoch of philosophy. Reflection logic would then be what Hegel was for the 19th century: the systematic framework in which an epoch orients itself philosophically.

If they are partially correct, they would be an important supplement to existing approaches, a significant contribution to philosophical discussion, but no fundamental reorientation.

If they are wrong, they would still remain an impressive example of systematic thinking in a time of specialization and fragmentation.

Empirical validation will decide. But even the claim is remarkable: to rehabilitate philosophy as foundational science and make systematic world explanation possible again. This is no exaggeration, but the result of systematic analysis.

37.16 The Silent Revolution

Johannes Heinrichs' philosophical revolution took place silently, almost unnoticed by the public and even by large parts of the philosophical professional world. This is characteristic of genuine intellectual revolutions: They do not begin with great fanfare, but with the quiet work of individual thinkers.

The preceding chapters have shown that Heinrichs has actually developed a solution for the basic problems of post-Hegelian philosophy. Whether this solution prevails depends not only on its intrinsic quality, but also on whether it is recognized at the right time.

Philosophical revolutions seldom occur overnight. They begin with individual thinkers who blaze new paths, continue through a community of researchers who expand these paths, and complete themselves through a generation that is naturally at home in the new forms of thought.

Johannes Heinrichs has taken the first step. The next steps lie with a philosophical or political community that is ready to explore the possibilities of systematic philosophy after postmodernism.

Reflection logic does not wait for recognition - it waits for further development.

APPENDIX: SYSTEMATICITY VERSUS POPULARITY - HEINRICHS IN COMPARISON WITH THREE INFLUENTIAL THINKERS

A.1 On the Method of This Comparison - The Hegelian Principle of Philosophical Honesty

Hegel already formulated in his engagement with Spinoza the methodical principle that this chapter follows:

“The true refutation must enter into the power of the opponent and place itself within the compass of his strength; to attack him outside himself and maintain right where he is not advances the cause not at all.”

What Hegel here formulates as a principle of philosophical honesty has received a name in contemporary argumentation theory: the *steelman principle* - in contrast to the *strawman argument*, where a position is intentionally distorted to attack it more easily.

Hegel shows in his Spinoza chapter of the *Science of Logic* what true refutation means: “The only refutation of Spinozism can therefore consist only in first recognizing his standpoint as essential and necessary, but secondly that this standpoint be raised from itself to a higher one.”

This is exactly the method we apply here:

1. Recognize the standpoint as essential and necessary - appreciate the genuine insights and merits
2. Enter into the power of the opponent - reconstruct the position in its strongest form
3. Raise from itself to a higher standpoint - show how systematic limits lead to further development

This attitude is not only a question of intellectual honesty, but follows from reflection logic itself: Every position must first be understood from its own perspective (second level of reflection) before systematic comparison (third level of reflection) and integration or criticism (fourth level of reflection) becomes possible.

A.1.1 The Paradox: Why Are the More Popular Often the More Unsystematic?

Johannes Heinrichs faces a peculiar problem: In three central areas of his work - social theory, linguistics and integral philosophy - there is in each case a much better known thinker who holds “his” terrain: Jürgen Habermas, Noam Chomsky and Ken Wilber.

These three share a common fate: media presence, institutional power or charismatic effect. What they do not share is systematic coherence in the sense of Heinrichs’ reflection logic. This raises a fundamental question: Why do popularity and philosophical systematicity diverge so often?

The answer lies not in the quality of insights - all three have accomplished significant things. It lies in the structure of academic and media publicity: Accessible concepts (Habermas’ “communicative action,” Chomsky’s “innate grammar,” Wilber’s “quadrants”) spread more easily than reflection-logical penetration. Institutional positions (Frankfurt, MIT) create visibility. Political interventions (Habermas, Chomsky) generate attention. Heinrichs experienced great institutional weakness through his renunciation of the Jesuit professorship and the subsequent experience of ecclesiastical power at universities, which he took as a risk for the sake of truth, although he had not reckoned so strongly with it.[^3]

But in philosophy, not visibility but systematic truth should count. The following comparisons show: Where Heinrichs is systematically founded, the three popular thinkers remain unsystematic. Where Heinrichs grounds reflection-logically, they remain arbitrary. Where Heinrichs differentiates and integrates, they remain one-sided.

These analyses are not devaluations. They are invitations: Habermas, Chomsky and Wilber have important intuitions - but these wait for reflection-logical foundation.

A.2 Jürgen Habermas - The Incomplete Social Philosophy

A.2.1 Merits and Impact

Jürgen Habermas is probably the most influential German-speaking philosopher of the present. His theory of communicative action has lastingly shaped the social sciences, his discourse ethics offers an important contribution to practical philosophy, his analyses of the public sphere are indispensable for political theory.

His central insight - that society consists not only of strategic action but essentially of communicative understanding - was a necessary counterstrike against functionalist and systems-theoretical shortenings. The distinction between system and lifeworld grasps a real tension of modern societies. The idea that validity claims are implicitly raised in every communication opens access to a rational grounding of norms.

Habermas' political interventions - from the student movement through the historians' dispute to current debates about Europe - show an intellectual who combines his theoretical work with social responsibility.

A.2.2 Systematic Gaps: The Missing Social Reflection

The fundamental weakness of Habermas' approach lies in the missing category of social reflection and consequently: the non-bridging of action and systems theory. Habermas certainly knows "communicative action" in contrast to instrumental and strategic action, but he develops no systematic theory of the reflexive structuring of social relationships.

What is social reflection? It is the reciprocal self-relatedness of intersubjective relationships: I reflect myself in the You, the You reflects itself in the I, and both reflect this mutual reflection. This is no mere "communication," but a structural-reflexive relationship that can be differentiated into four levels:

1. Instrumental-object-related sociality - action on others (division of labor)
2. Strategic-subject-related sociality - action against others (competition, power)
3. Communicative-dialogical sociality - action with others (understanding)
4. Metacommunicative-institutional sociality - action about common action (constitution, basic values)

Habermas' "communicative action" corresponds only to the third level. The fourth level - the reflexive institutionalization of communication itself - remains underdeveloped in his work. This shows itself particularly in his constitutional theory, which knows no systematic differentiation of societal levels of reflection.

A.2.3 The Arbitrary Validity Claims

Habermas' four validity claims (truth, truthfulness, rightness, comprehensibility) are one of his best-known constructions. But why exactly these four? Habermas offers no systematic grounding. They are rather found empirically-phenomenologically than deduced reflection-logically.

From reflection logic, the four dimensions of language can be systematically derived - as correspondence to the four sense elements:

- Sigmatics (It): Reference to the objective world - factual correctness
- Semantics (I): Subjective appropriation - truthfulness
- Pragmatics (You): Intersubjective performance - interpersonal appropriateness
- Syntax (Medium): Structural regulation - comprehensibility

One could benevolently argue that Habermas intuitively grasps these four dimensions, but in any case he does not ground them from the reflexive structure of language itself. Therefore they remain a "fact" of his reconstruction of rational communication, not a necessity from the concept.

A.2.4 System and Lifeworld: The Unsolved Dichotomy

Habermas' distinction between system and lifeworld was supposed to overcome the aporias of Critical Theory. But it creates new ones: How do system and lifeworld relate to each other? Habermas oscillates between complementarity and conflict ("colonization of the lifeworld").

Reflection-systems theory systematically dissolves this dichotomy: Every social level of reflection has both an action dimension (lifeworld) and a system dimension (institutional). The four societal levels are:

1. Economy: Work system / Money system
2. Politics: Rule action / Legal system
3. Culture: Educational action / Language system
4. Basic values: Meaning creation / Symbols and rituals

System and lifeworld are not two separate spheres, but two aspects of every level of reflection. This enables a more differentiated analysis than Habermas' dichotomous schema.

A.2.5 Habermas' Own Admission

Remarkable is that Habermas himself admits in his autobiographical interview (2024) that his system is “not quite round.” He speaks of “construction sites” and unsolved problems. This is philosophical honesty - but it confirms the systematic gaps that reflection logic points out.

A.2.6 The Irony of the Ignored Alternative: Habermas' Silence

There is a remarkable irony in the relationship between Habermas and Heinrichs - or rather: in their non-relationship.

The temporal constellation - and the decisive head start: Heinrichs' systematic foundational work on social theory appeared five years before Habermas' “Theory of Communicative Action”:

- Heinrichs: “Reflection as Social System. Toward a Reflection-Systems Theory of Society” (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976)
- Habermas: “Theory of Communicative Action” (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981)

Heinrichs' work was thus by no means a reaction to Habermas' main work “Theory of Communicative Action” - though to Habermas' distinction between instrumental and communicative action that goes back to Max Weber, as well as centrally to the dispute with Luhmann about action and system. It was an independent draft on exactly the same questions: How is society possible? How do action and system relate? How can social theory be philosophically founded?

The institutional context: Heinrichs was at this time professor at the renowned Jesuit university St. Georgen in Frankfurt - in the same city as Habermas. He published with Bouvier Verlag, a philosophical professional publisher highly esteemed among Hegel experts. His previous book “The Logic of the ‘Phenomenology of Spirit’ ” (1974, also Bouvier) had received widespread attention and praise - it was considered one of the best systematic reconstructions of Hegel's main work.

Heinrichs was thus no “outsider,” but a professor beginning with a fresh teaching assignment with a recognized philosophical main work on Hegel, who presented a systematic book on social theory in a renowned publisher - before Habermas published his main work.

What the book anticipates: “Reflection as Social System” (1976) already develops:

- An action theory that initially differentiates various action types (not only instrumental vs. communicative), which was fully carried out reflection-logically in 1980 (before Habermas' main work)
- A systems theory that does not dichotomously separate action and system, but mediates them reflection-logically
- A critique of Parsons (to whom both Habermas and Luhmann refer)

- An overcoming of the Habermas-Luhmann controversy (which had begun in 1971), before Habermas developed his “solution” (system/lifeworld)
- A reflection-logical foundation of social theory that systematically goes beyond Habermas’ later pragmatistic reconstruction

The substantive engagement: After the appearance of Habermas’ “Theory of Communicative Action” in 1981, Heinrichs engaged with it constructively-critically. He criticized the “nearly complete equation of action and language,” the vagueness of the discourse concept and developed a reflection-logically grounded alternative to the unclear media theory of Habermas (money, power, language) by proposing a four-fold division of social subsystems with the media money, law, language, rituals. He distinguished himself from the system/lifeworld dichotomy and developed his reflection-systems theory that integrates both aspects.

The open letter and the silence: In 2007 Heinrichs wrote an open letter to Habermas with explicit invitation to dialogue and reference to the reflection-logical alternatives. The answer: Silence. It is not documented that Habermas ever reacted to it.

The complete non-reception: Habermas mentions Heinrichs in none of his main works, cites him in no known publication, there is no documented reaction to Heinrichs’ criticism. The reference is strictly one-sided: Heinrichs to Habermas, never the reverse.

This is all the more remarkable as Habermas engages with countless philosophers - from classics through American pragmatists to obscure analytic philosophers. Even marginal critics are mentioned and discussed. Only not Heinrichs.

The performative self-refutation: Habermas’ central idea is domination-free communication - the forceless force of the better argument, the principled openness to all rational conversation partners. And then the theorist of this communication practices institutional ignorance toward a colleague who published five years earlier on the same topic, taught in the same city, developed systematic alternatives and explicitly invited dialogue.

The structural analysis: Institutional power (Frankfurt School, Suhrkamp publisher, media presence) functions as definitional power over what counts as relevant philosophy. Bouvier publisher does not have the visibility of Suhrkamp, the (left by Heinrichs) Jesuit university not the brand of the Frankfurt School. Who is not in the right network does not exist discursively - independent of quality or temporal priority of arguments.

This is not domination-free but domination-shaped communication: The power to ignore is the most subtle form of power. It needs no arguments - it refuses recognition as conversation partner. It does not have to refute - it can make invisible.

The philosophical point: Heinrichs’ reflection logic explains what Habermas’ theory does not systematically grasp - the power of communication refusal and the metacommunicative level of discourse admission.

Habermas’ discourse theory presupposes that potential conversation partners are already recognized as such. But who decides who counts as discourse participant at all? Reflection-systems theory shows: At the fourth level of reflection (metacommunicative,

institutional level) the conditions of communication itself are established - including this recognition question. Habermas operates factually at this level, but his theory does not systematically thematize it.

The Frankfurt School as institution, the journals, the conferences, the networks - they define what counts as relevant discourse. This is cultural hegemony - a concept from Habermas' own teacher Gramsci.

The historical irony: Heinrichs' "Reflection as Social System" (1976) laid foundations that Habermas tried to develop differently five years later. Habermas not only ignored an alternative - he ignored a predecessor.

A benevolent interpretation: Probably Habermas actually never read Heinrichs (although there were common students), was so absorbed in his own project that parallel developments did not enter his radius of perception. But that would mean that the theorist of discursive rationality was structurally blind to systematic alternatives - that his universalistic discourse concept remained provincial, limited to his own circle.

A theorist of communication who does not communicate. A philosopher of dialogue who refuses dialogue. A defender of the public sphere who ignores systematic contributions. The irony is bitter - but instructive.

What the secondary literature shows: In presentations of social philosophy, parallels between Heinrichs and Habermas are occasionally drawn - but always only by third parties. There is no mutual reference. Reception is strictly asymmetrical. In the sociology of science this is called an "invisible colleague" - systematically relevant work that does not appear in citation networks because it stands outside established schools.

The task for the future: This story diagnoses academic structures - how institutional power and communicative rationality diverge, how visibility and systematic quality fall apart, how original philosophy is marginalized by school formation.

The next generation could conduct the dialogue that Habermas refused - not to discredit, but to show: There is a reflection-logical alternative that also systematically founds and further develops his intuitions.

That would be domination-free communication as practice: The discourse about the best systematic arguments, independent of institutional power and citation networks. The forceless force of the better argument - not as theory, but as lived reality.

Perhaps this is the most important lesson: The difference between the theory of communication and the practice of academic communication itself must become the topic.

A.2.7 Heinrichs as Systematic Further Development

Heinrichs stands not against but beyond Habermas. His reflection-systems theory takes up Habermas' central intuitions:

- The significance of communicative rationality
- The distinction of different action types
- The necessity of institutional mediation

But it founds these insights reflection-logically and develops them into a systematic social theory that also integrates Luhmann's systems-theoretical insights. The famous Habermas-Luhmann controversy is not solved through compromise, but through systematic sublation in the Hegelian sense.

A.3 Noam Chomsky - The Genetic Naturalism of Linguistics

A.3.1 Merits and Impact

Noam Chomsky is the most influential linguist of the 20th century. His "cognitive revolution" broke with the behavioristic paradigm and established the idea of a universal, cognitively anchored grammar. Generative grammar shapes large parts of linguistics to this day.

Chomsky's central insight was: The surface diversity of languages refers to common deep structures. Children acquire language amazingly quickly, although linguistic input is incomplete - this speaks for innate cognitive structures. The distinction between competence and performance enables systematic grammar research beyond mere language description.

Politically too Chomsky is significant: His critique of American imperialism, his media analyses ("Manufacturing Consent") and his libertarian socialism make him one of the most important public intellectuals.

A.3.2 Philosophical Weaknesses: Dichotomy and Naturalism

The fundamental philosophical weakness of Chomsky's approach lies in his dichotomic logic and his genetic naturalism.

The problem of binary branching: Chomsky's basic assumption is that syntactic structures are binary branched - every node in the structure tree has exactly two branches. This is not philosophically grounded but posited as formal principle. (The traditional "Arbor Porphyriana" functioned with this binary form of division.)

Why should language be binary structured? Chomsky has no answer except: "That's how syntax works." But this is a philosophical pre-decision, not an empirical discovery.

Reflection logic shows: A four-level structure corresponds better to the self-related nature of consciousness than a dichotomic one.

The problem of genetic naturalism: Chomsky's explanation of universal grammar is genetic: It is "innate," part of our biological equipment. This only shifts the problem: How did grammar get into the genes?

The answer cannot be: through evolution - because evolution explains adaptive functions, not logical structures. Grammar is no adaptation like the eye, but a form of thinking. Would Chomsky also reduce mathematics (in its content!) to genetics?

The reflection-logical alternative: Universal structures are not genetically coded but reflection-logically constituted. They follow from the self-relatedness of consciousness that articulates itself in language. These structures are common to all humans, not because they are inherited, but because consciousness everywhere has the same reflexive structure.

A.3.3 The Sentence Construction Formula as Alternative

Heinrichs develops in volume 4 of his philosophy of language a complete alternative to Chomsky: the sentence construction formula. It is grounded not in binary branching but in the four-level reflection structure.

The subject-predicate core is not - as in traditional grammar - an external connection of two separate parts. It is a dynamic unity of performance (subject) and content (predicate). This unity unfolds in four dimensions that correspond to the four sense elements:

1. Object reference (It): What is said? - sentence object
2. Subject reference (I): Who says? - modality, speaker position
3. Social reference (You): To whom is it said? - address, pragmatics
4. Medial reference (Medium): How is it said? - syntactic form

Chomsky's X-Bar schema postulates a universal structure [Specifier - Head - Complement]. Why should this three-structure be universal? Heinrichs shows: A reflection-logically grounded grammar leads to a four-structure that is empirically more appropriate and philosophically more founded.

A.3.4 Arbitrary Rules versus Systematic Reconstruction

Chomsky's method: Observation of grammatical phenomena → Formulation of rules → Explanation through ever more abstract rule systems. This method produces arbitrarily many rules without systematic principle.

Why are there exactly the syntactic categories NP, VP, CP etc.? Why exactly these transformation rules? Chomsky cannot answer these questions. His system becomes ever more complex (Principles and Parameters, Minimalist Program), but the philosophical basic question remains open: What is the principle of these structures?

Heinrichs' answer: The principle is reflection itself. The sentence construction formula derives syntactic structures from the reflexive nature of linguistic consciousness. This leads to a systematics that does not postulate arbitrarily many rules but reconstructs necessary structures.

A.3.5 The Problem of Abstraction

Chomsky's program: Surface structures (what we hear) are derived through transformations from deep structures (abstract basic forms).

Heinrichs' criticism: This abstraction leads away from living language. Deep structures are theoretical constructs without psychological reality. Speakers do not generate abstract structures and then transform them - they speak directly.

The reflection-logical alternative: Reconstructive grammar analyzes the structures realized in actual speech acts without postulating abstract intermediate levels. The "deep structure" is no abstract level behind language, but the reflexive structure in it.

A.3.6 Heinrichs as Systematic Alternative

Heinrichs stands to Chomsky as reflection logic to formalism: He takes up the central intuition (universal grammar) but finds it philosophically instead of genetically.

Chomsky's great achievement was to show that behind linguistic diversity stand common structures. But he could not show why these structures are as they are. Heinrichs' sentence construction formula delivers this grounding: Because language articulates reflexive consciousness, it must be reflection-logically structured.

The future of linguistics lies not in ever more complex formal systems but in the reflection-logical penetration of what language actually is as human form of expression.

A.4 Ken Wilber - The Spiritual Eclecticism

A.4.1 Merits and Impact: The Popularizer of Integral Thinking

Ken Wilber is the best-known name for “integral theory” in the alternative-spiritual milieu. His quadrant systematics is accessible, his stage models of consciousness connect Western developmental psychology with Eastern spirituality, his writing style is charismatic.

Wilber’s central achievement lies in popularizing integral perspectives. He has shown thousands of readers that science and spirituality, psychology and meditation, evolution and transcendence can be thought together. His synthesis of Piaget, Kohlberg and Gebser with Vedanta, Buddhism and mysticism opened new horizons.

The quadrants (individual-interior / individual-exterior / collective-interior / collective-exterior) offer a first orientation in the complexity of modern reality-access. The distinction of states and structures, of levels and lines of consciousness grasps important dimensions of human development.

Wilber has merits - but no systematic philosophy.

A.4.2 The Fundamental Lack: Implicit versus Explicit

The most fundamental weakness in Wilber’s entire thinking is the absence of the distinction between implicit and explicit consciousness. This is no detail problem - it affects his entire understanding of evolution.

What does this distinction mean? Implicit consciousness is unconsciously performed reflection - the structures are there but not thematically known. Explicit consciousness is consciously performed reflection - the structures become object of knowledge.

An example: The child speaks grammatically correctly (implicit language knowledge) long before it learns grammar (explicit language knowledge). Both are reflection, but at different levels.

Wilber’s evolution model does not know this difference. He constructs a linear upward development: pre-personal → personal → trans-personal. But he does not distinguish: Was the “pre-personal” implicitly already the trans-personal? Is “development” progress or explication?

Concrete problem: Wilber claims archaic cultures stood at “lower” consciousness levels. But were the mysteries of Eleusis, the Vedic rishis, the shamanic traditions really “lower” developed than modern consumer societies? Or did they have implicitly what we must laboriously reconstruct explicitly? Correspondingly, Wilber shows a devaluation of childhood that is untenable given the assumption of implicit consciousness, e.g., a childlike sense of self.

Fichte’s insight (taken up by Heinrichs): There is a reason-instinct - an early unity of reason and instinct that contains all potentials implicitly. The “fall” into explicit

reflection is necessary but no progress without loss. Humanity must develop from implicit fullness into explicit differentiation to finally return to conscious integration.

Without this distinction, Wilber cannot explain why there is decadence - why cultures can decay. In his linear model, every later stage would have to be “higher.” History shows the opposite.

A.4.3 The Quadrants: Simplified Ontology

Wilber’s most famous construction - the four quadrants - appears systematic at first glance:

- Upper left: Individual-interior (I-perspective, consciousness)
- Upper right: Individual-exterior (It-perspective, organism)
- Lower left: Collective-interior (We-perspective, culture)
- Lower right: Collective-exterior (They-perspective, system)

The problem: These quadrants are not reflection-logically grounded but constructed ad hoc. Why exactly these four? Wilber says: “Because there are four perspectives.” But that is circular.

Reflection-logical analysis shows: Wilber’s schema mixes different distinctions:

1. Subjective/objective (epistemological)
2. Individual/collective (social-ontological)
3. Interior/exterior (perspectival)

These distinctions do not coincide! The “collective-interior” (culture) is not the same as “many subjects” (aggregate). The “individual-exterior” (organism) is not the same as “objectively observable” (third person).

Heinrichs’ four sense elements (I, You, It, Medium) are not quadrants in space but reflexive moments of a structure. They are not merely different perspectives but constitutive dimensions of every human experience:

- I: Self-reference, subjectivity
- It: Object-reference, thing-world
- You: Social-reference, intersubjectivity
- Medium: Meaning-reference, cultural mediation

These four are not spatially coordinated but reflexively intertwined. The medium is not another “quadrant” beside the other three, but the reflexive mediation of all three. This is an ontological structure, not mere heuristics.

A.4.4 Relationship of Science and Spirituality: The Unsolved Question

Wilber oscillates between two positions:

1. "Spirituality is higher science" - science of inner experience
2. "Spirituality and science are complementary" - different approaches

Both positions are unsatisfactory. The first reduces spirituality to empiricism (even if interior), the second leaves their relationship unclear.

The reflection-logical solution: Science and spirituality are different reflexive levels, not different areas:

- Science: Reflection at the level of language (meta-action)
- Art: Reflection at the level of aesthetic formation (meta-language)
- Mysticism: Reflection at the level of self-transcendence (meta-art)

They stand not in continuity (as Wilber claims in "Natural Science and Religion") but in structural discontinuity. Each level has its own logic. Spirituality is no "empiricism" of higher levels but another reflexive practice.

This also makes Wilber's problematic talk of "spiritual science" obsolete. There is phenomenology of spiritual experience, but not science as method for the absolute. The absolute withdraws from conceptual fixation - which does not mean that paths there cannot be spoken about.

A.4.5 Missing Reception of German Reflection Philosophy

Wilber knows Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy, transpersonal psychology, Eastern traditions. What he does not know (or does not understand) is German reflection philosophy from Fichte through Hegel to Heinrichs.

This is no mere gap in education - it is a systematic deficit. German reflection philosophy has thought through exactly what Wilber intuitively seeks: the self-relatedness of consciousness as basic structure of all experience.

Fichte: "The I posits itself" - not as empirical I but as transcendental structure of self-relation. Hegel: Dialectic as movement of self-reflection of spirit. Both develop what Wilber has only tentatively: a systematic reconstruction of reflexive structures.

Wilber's "evolution" therefore remains with an eclectic collection of empirical findings and spiritual intuitions. What is missing is the philosophical principle that makes this collection into a system.

Frank Visser, Wilber's former companion, has already shown parallels and differences to theosophy in his critical book. Heinrichs goes further: He shows that Wilber lacks the reflection-logical dimension that the German idealism he highly esteems knew in incomplete form and that theosophy (Helena Blavatsky/Alice A. Bailey), despite renouncing academic methodical reflection, knew in content.

A.4.6 The Construction Principle Remains Implicit

Wilber collects and integrates - but according to what principle? His “integral methodology” (AQAL: All Quadrants, All Levels) sounds systematic but is methodologically unclear:

- How are the “levels” determined? Empirically through developmental psychology? Then they are contingent.
- How are the “quadrants” grounded? Phenomenologically through perspectives? Then they are relative.
- What is the principle of integration? Wilber answers: “The later transcends and integrates the earlier.” But this is a description, not a principle.

Reflection logic offers the missing principle: Reflection itself is the construction principle. The stages are not empirically found but reflection-logically reconstructed. The sense elements are not perspectives but constitutive moments. The integration principle is integration-through-differentiation: Each higher stage differentiates what was implicit at the lower and integrates it consciously.

With this principle, Wilber’s eclectic collection would become a philosophical system. Without this principle, his “integral theory” remains a - admittedly grandiose - attempt.

A.4.7 Heinrichs as Philosophical Foundation

Heinrichs stands to Wilber as systematic philosophy to inspired essay. Wilber’s intuitions are valuable:

- The necessity of integral thinking
- The connection of East and West
- The inclusion of spiritual dimensions

But these intuitions wait for philosophical foundation. Heinrichs offers this foundation:

- Reflection-logical grounding instead of eclectic collection
- Systematic differentiation instead of quadrant schema
- German reflection philosophy instead of transpersonal psychology

Who has read and appreciated Wilber should study Heinrichs - not to discard Wilber but to understand what he lacks: the philosophical principle.

A.5 Common Conclusion: The Pattern and the Alternative

A.5.1 The Common Pattern: Eclecticism instead of Systematicity

Despite all difference, a common pattern shows itself:

Habermas combines different traditions (Critical Theory, Pragmatism, Speech Act Theory) without systematically integrating them. His four validity claims remain “fact,” his system/lifeworld dichotomy remains unclear.

Chomsky develops ever more complex formal systems (X-Bar, Government & Binding, Minimalist Program) without clarifying the philosophical principle. His grammar becomes “more technical” but not more founded.

Wilber tirelessly collects empirical findings, spiritual traditions, psychological models - but the integration principle remains implicit. His systematicity is illustrative, not grounding.

All three lack what Heinrichs has: a reflection-logical basic principle from which the differentiations necessarily result.

A.5.2 Why Popularity and Systematicity Diverge

The reasons for the discrepancy between popularity and systematic quality are structural:

1. Media shortening: Accessible concepts (communicative action, universal grammar, quadrants) spread more easily than reflection-logical reconstruction. Headlines need catchwords, not systematic derivations.

2. Institutional power: Habermas in Frankfurt, Chomsky at MIT, Wilber as founder of the Integral Institute - institutional positions create visibility independent of systematic quality.

3. Political resonance: Habermas' and Chomsky's political interventions generate attention. Philosophical systematicity is politically less connectable.

4. Academic division of labor: Specialization promotes “experts” in partial areas, not systematic thinkers. Who systematically thinks “everything” fits into no faculty.

5. Zeitgeist: Postmodernity and pragmatism have discredited systematic thinking. “Grand narratives” are considered suspicious. Eclecticism is celebrated as openness.

These structural reasons are real - but they change nothing about the philosophical evaluation. In philosophy not visibility counts, but truth. Not influence, but systematic coherence.

A.5.3 Heinrichs as Systematic Synthesis

Heinrichs offers no further “position” alongside Habermas, Chomsky and Wilber. He offers the systematic principle that all three seek:

Against Habermas: Social reflection as four-level structure that integrates system and lifeworld. Reflection-systems theory systematically dissolves the Habermas-Luhmann controversy.

Against Chomsky: Reflection logic as grounding of universal grammar. The sentence construction formula derives syntactic structures from reflexive consciousness.

Against Wilber: The distinction implicit/explicit as key to understanding evolution. The four sense elements instead of quadrants. The reflection-logical foundation of the integral perspective.

In each case it is not about refutation but about sublation in the Hegelian sense: The genuine insights are preserved but raised to a higher systematic level.

A.5.4 The Task: From Popularity to Systematicity

What follows from this analysis?

For readers of Habermas: Study Heinrichs’ reflection-systems theory. You will find there the systematic foundation of what remains intuitive in Habermas.

For readers of Chomsky: Study Heinrichs’ sentence construction formula. You will find there the philosophical grounding of what remains formal-technical in Chomsky.

For readers of Wilber: Study Heinrichs’ integral philosophy. You will find there the systematic principle of what remains eclectic in Wilber.

The three popular thinkers have done important work - they have set topics, articulated intuitions, opened discourses. But the systematic penetration still waits. Heinrichs has accomplished it.

The philosophy of the future needs both: the social relevance of a Habermas, the interdisciplinary range of a Chomsky, the integrative vision of a Wilber - and the systematic coherence of a Heinrichs.

That is no contradiction. It is a task.

GLOSSARY

Format: Term (Main chapter in book): Definition or context-related explanation. The arrows point to the other word explanations.

Algorithm (Chapter 14): usually means a schematic, automatizing calculation procedure. As such, as formalism, it actually has no place in dialectical thinking, unlike in formal logic and mathematics. The only algorithm that stands fundamentally and characteristically for the conception of dialectic presented here is what the author calls **dialectical subsumption**. In contrast to the usual formal subsumption of the special under general determinations, it includes the repeated subsumption of the most general determinations, here the \rightarrow sense elements, under each of them, thus the subsumption of the general under the particular. This leads to a fractal articulation of ontological scope, because the most general spheres of being - subjectivity, objectivity, sociality and mediality - become visible as combinatorial components of the concrete in a careful reconstructive (neither deductive nor inductive) procedure. Although in Kant and Hegel subsumption in the dialectical sense already plays an important architectural role underground, this was not perceived as such, so that e.g. in the index of Hegel's 20-volume complete works only formal-logical subsumption appears.

Antinomy (Chapter 2): Logical antinomy or logical paradox is based on non-observation of inner self-relatedness. - Antinomic are those statements which, being true, are false; and being false, are true.

Sublation (Chapter 34): The first to explicitly introduce sublation in the threefold sense in writing was the Hegel expert Johann Eduard Erdmann, in his book *Logic and Metaphysics* from 1841. He writes there page 20, § 33, footnote 1 of "sublation taken in the threefold sense of tollere, conservare, elevare; therefore sublation and degradation at the same time." Especially the spiritual 'extinguishing' of the I can only be understood and accepted in the sense of its 'sublation' in the threefold Hegelian sense: 1. Overcoming of egoistic obstinacy (tollere), 2. Preservation of the positive function of the I as irreplaceable activity center (conservare), 3. Elevation of the I-function to pure receptivity toward the infinite medium (elevare).

Consciousness (Chapter 2): is - unrecognizedly - itself already a dialectical concept, since inseparable from the forms of the \rightarrow unconscious, which are nothing other than shadow-forms of consciousness.

States of consciousness (Chapter 18): Consciousness is not homogeneous but shows four different states:

1. waking with external experience mediated through the senses;
2. the world of reflection - of thought associations based on language;
3. the world of dreams, where representations form independently and humans become spectators of themselves. It is based on drives, for which the dream means vicarious wish fulfillment;
4. the world of deep sleep, the absence of consciousness contents, which state appears related to death. (after A. Keyserling)

Coincidentia oppositorum (Chapter 35): Coincidence of opposites: especially that precisely the reflexive punctuality of self-performance opens the spiritual universe.

Dialectic (Chapter 1, 16): Dialectic is thinking in opposition-unities. Dialectical thinking *grasps* opposites in their unity. Dialectic is defined here epistemologically as thinking in opposites or as uncovering ontological opposites and as happening in opposites.

Cognitive functions (Chapter 18): Perceiving, thinking, feeling, intuiting, secondarily also fantasy and memory, are all nothing but reflection levels of the fundamentally dialectical self-reference-in-foreign-reference, together with their mutual dialectical subsumption, thus the fractal sub-articulation of these graduated cognitive functions through their main articulation.

Explicit reflection (Chapter 2): Explicit reflection is an act in which the original self-relatedness expressly becomes the topic. It is necessarily subsequent, because it presupposes what it relates to. More generally: all after-thinking in the sense of subsequent and express reflection.

Reciprocity/Reciprocity (Chapter 4): is a demanding concept in reflection-theoretical respect that is too seldom and too little observed. And yet it can connect to the central, emotionally charged basic question of lovers: Does he/she love me as I love him/her? Does he/she think of me now as I think of him/her? It is precisely not about simple intentionality, e.g. seeing the other as I see an object (*reflection-less or instrumental intentionality*), intentionality level 1. It is also not only about factual reciprocity: that the other also sees me. This level 2 differs from the first in that we can react to each other, e.g. in walking and in street traffic consider each other and pass or drive by each other. One can call this 2nd level of intentionality and action the strategic one, the consideration of the other's own activity. The corresponding reciprocity can also be called *strategic reciprocity*. A 3rd level is realized when I make the wishes and expectations of the other my own: a communicative reciprocity. I see the other neither merely as object (1) nor alone as self-active (2), but establish commonality. The reciprocity of the benevolent, only not indifferent (1), not only strategically-considerate (2), but benevolent gaze

is fundamental and exemplary for all communication (3rd level). In this lies a recognition of the other as not only self-active (2), but as self-desiring (3), possibly also desiring me, possibly even desiring my desire. Even desirous love presupposes communicative recognition. If it remains with physical desire, however, the structure of communicative reciprocity is undercut and missed - unless the reciprocity refers precisely also to this desire. This is however not the case in many forms of communicative love like love between friends and relatives. There the recognizing affirmation refers precisely to the recognition of the inviolability and independence of the other as freedom-being. Communicative reciprocity consists in the constant preservation of free reciprocity. It would end or rather not-end in attempts and gestures of constant mutual outdoing of mutual consideration, if it did not come to mostly tacit agreements about rules, social norms of "normal" behavior or such norms were not adopted. These behavioral norms are, like everything preceding, "object" of implicit reflection that can be called *metacommunicative*. Metacommunication (*intentionality level 4*) does not primarily mean talk about talk (express metacommunication), but implicit reflection of interpersonal communication. It is norm-setting and presupposing, insofar as all participants draw from the general, not only collective but universal meaning medium, the all-thought connected with all human subjectivity (all self-conscious individuality). This is as "between" the presupposition of all communicative as well as metacommunicative reciprocity. While the latter, the metacommunicative, is norm-setting or norm-presupposing, communicative reciprocity means constant openness. The question of the reciprocity of understanding, friendship or even that initially mentioned, decisive reciprocity of love always remains open, as long as nothing is ruled metacommunicatively unexpressedly or expressedly about it. Communicatively open reciprocity deserves special attention in reflection-theoretical respect, since it is difficult to describe in philosophically-explicit reflection: It is respective, mutual or all-sided reflection of the reflection of the other. Each side (each subject) reflects the reflection of the others and thus its own being-reflected by these. If simplifyingly one can speak of "double reciprocity," then with regard to the fact that the reflection of the other especially includes one's own being-reflected by the other. It is an infinite and unforeseeable, but infinitely structured process.

Spirit logic (Chapter 35): Idea of a spirit logic beyond dialectic as *soul logic* as well as mathematical *body logic*. [...] Spirit-logical paradoxes differ from logical antinomies through recognition of fundamental self-relatedness. As model example was cited: "Not to be conquered by the greatest, yet to be contained in the smallest," which Hölderlin prefaced to his *Hyperion* in Latin as motto. Other examples of spirit logic are so-called "divine attributes" like infinity, omnipotence, timelessness, spacelessness, omnipresence, omniscience. They were not treated extensively in this book because they would lead too far into philosophical theology. As the examples show, there are overlaps with quantum physics, e.g. regarding "non-locality" or "timelessness."

Holographic dialectic (Chapter 3): I would therefore like to characterize Bohm's thought of 'implicit order' - following his own comparisons with holography - as a holographic dialectic. 'Holography' stands here for natural or artificial implicitness techniques" like the known optical holograms.

Implicit reflection (Chapter 2): Implicit reflection as THE essence of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is implicit (non-objectified) self-reference. When we speak about it, we come so to speak too late and explicate in subsequent objectifying reflection something in hindsight that by its nature is precisely not object.

Integration through differentiation (Chapter 15, 26): Not an undialectical integralism creates unity and wholeness, but the ordered dialectical interplay of the well-distinguished reflection levels of the social. A principle of psychological and world-historical-social significance with regard to the frequent non-differentiation of race (descent), religion, culture, political legal order and economy. The modern distinction of religion and state (secularization) forms a positive example, religiously disguised racism to this day a negative one.

Interpenetration (Chapter 18): The dialectical permeation of components, especially of body, soul and spirit.

Communication (Chapter 9): We can [...] take the freedom, the expectations and wishes of others, just as seriously as our own and respond communicatively to them, as e.g. in friendship. Such a relationship is mutually-doubly-reflected. Model example gaze: I look at the other, insofar as this one looks at me *as one seeing him* (doubly reflected reciprocity; I engage in a communicative (not merely strategically interested) reciprocity. A demanding, seldom understood communication concept that goes far beyond the use of "communication media" and the current lax linguistic usage.

Body logic (Chapter 3): The ontological way of considering bodily nature, insofar as it is structurally primarily, but not exclusively, shaped by mathematics, in distinction to the reflection logic of the psychic and to spirit logic.

Mediality (Chapter 5, 30): Mediality as preferential reference to the meaning medium. - Counter-running dialectic of positing and presupposition of the medium by the subjects.

Metacommunication (Chapter 4, 9): It is more than talk about talk = expressly-rational metacommunication. As *lived (performative, ontological)* metacommunication means the practical engagement with insights and values of togetherness.

Metalinguage (Chapter 6, 11): in the linguistic sense is the distinction of a linguistic investigation language about object languages. In the sense of reflection-theoretical semiotics it means artistic language that internally presupposes normal everyday language.

Paradox (Chapter 3): Unexpected counter-direction of effects [...]. The concept is by no means identical with that of dialectic, with which it is often confused. But both can

go together to a paradoxical or paradoxal dialectic, and this is often the case in the realm of action.

Reflection logic (Chapter 1, 37): Reflection logic means first: taking seriously that the specific main object of philosophy - in distinction to all object-sciences - is self-related relationships, as they are given exemplarily and originally with the 'miracle' of human self-consciousness. – The “formalization” of multi-valued-logical relationships based on self-relatedness is not possible in the formal-logical sense of a computational algorithm, but well in the sense of a typology and structure description of dialectical relationships.

Soul logic (Chapter 18): The soul is the individual, in contrast to the universal. To summarize both as “mind” and oppose them to “matter” is the source of many errors. Soul is, as human, constituted by complete implicit self-reflection, in animals by incomplete ontological self-reflection, as is proper to organisms. Cf. already Kant’s organism concept: “An organized product of nature is that in which everything is end and reciprocally also means” (I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 66).

Semiotic dimensions of language (Chapter 8): basic functions of language first highlighted under this designation by Charles W. Morris in 1937: Syntax as connection of signs, semantics as handling of meanings, pragmatics as “practical” function in the sense of his behavioristic-psychological understanding of praxis, which Heinrichs criticizes in Morris. In the sense of changing a piece of world through action, language is only practical in the interpersonal dimension, in interpersonal speech acts. From this results not only a shoulder-to-shoulder of semiotics with speech act theory, but a *more precise concept of language pragmatics*. Moreover, the fundamental designation dimension is missing in Morris, which Heinrichs following the GDR philosopher Georg Klaus calls “sigmatic.” Thus results a foursome of language dimensions in reflection-theoretical sequence: *sigmatic sign dimension, semantic meaning dimension, pragmatic action dimension and syntactic connection dimension*. The latter also includes stylistics in the sense of a reflection-logically structured meta-syntax.

Semiotic levels (Chapter 6): The great, consequential view of the reflection-graduated connection of action, language, art, mysticism can be illustrated in an ascending pyramid. The transitions of the levels have been detailed in Heinrichs’ books, most precisely those from action to meta-action language and from language to art as (lived, performative kind of) metalanguage.

Sense elements (Chapter 5): The system of the four sense elements. The dialectical structure of self-reference-in-foreign-reference necessarily unfolds in a system of four fundamental sense elements. These are not arbitrarily chosen or found solely empirically, but result from the reflexive structure of self-consciousness itself.

Meaning medium (Chapter 5, 30): The meaning medium is the infinite meaning space in which all concrete meanings differentiate. The I participates in the infinite medium of meaning and grasps itself in it in its dialogical finitude and simultaneously in its

capacity for the infinite. This is the most comprehensive form of self-reference-in-foreign-reference. It was developed in further development of Buber's "between" of I and You and corresponds to the Hegelian concept of spirit, which has nothing to do with individual "mind," more with "spirit" in a rationally introduced sense.

Social reflection (Chapter 4, 20): A concept newly introduced since 1975/6. Before all level logic of interpersonal reference, it must be grasped that sociality fundamentally consists of reciprocal reflection-relationships. In the dialectic book of 2020, Chapter 2, the levels of intersubjective relationship, of social reflection are named as follows: 1. Unreflected-objective relationship or instrumental action, 2. One-sided-simple reflection or strategic action, 3. Counter-running-double reflection: communicative reciprocity, 4. Reflection of the preceding reciprocity: metacommunication.

Subsumption (dialectical) (Chapter 14): The principle of dialectical subsumption [...] results in careful reconstruction work in dialogue of concept and experience from the reflexive mirroring structure of reality itself. The articulation-wise unfolding (sub-articulation) is not mere branching or splitting, but a fractal one: With each new differentiation, the original main articulation is repeated with new content. The fractal sub-articulation has not only epistemological but ontological significance, and indeed due to the reconstructive back and forth between conceptual and empirical.

Theory-practice dialectic (Chapter 20): The dialectic of theory and practice manifests itself especially in the concrete participation of humans in the various social systems. Theory grows from this participation and acts back on it - a process that shows itself in economic production and consumption, in political participation, in cultural creation as well as in ethical-religious practice.

Reversal dialectic (Chapter 3): Natural dialectic postulated by Peter Plichta that understands space as ontological reversal of mass and time as reversal of energy. Heinrichs saw in this a structural analogy to reflection logic: The infinite (space, time) bends back into itself and thus arrives at determinateness (mass, energy). The scientific status of this thesis is disputed; for Heinrichs it served primarily as hermeneutical model.

Unconscious (Chapter 18): There is no human consciousness without unconscious in multiple, in principle threefold meaning: 1. the physical *subconscious*, 2. the psychic unconscious as implicit consciousness, called *preconscious* by Freud, 3. the spiritual *superconscious*, which manifests not least as collective unconscious" (C.G Jung).

Universal language (Chapter 8, 10): There exists a little recognized but unsolvable dialectic of genotypic universal language and phenotypic mother tongues, also more generally of genotype and phenotype. Here too 'dialectic' does not mean contradiction, but belonging together of opposites, in this case of universal structures and local use of these, down to local and family dialects.

Between (Chapter 5): A term introduced by the dialogue philosopher Martin Buber in his main work “I and Thou,” which says that common meaning as well as love adheres neither to the I nor to the You alone. The meaning medium represents a transcendental-philosophical generalization of the dialogical between.

Note: The chapter references refer to the main places of treatment; the terms also appear in other chapters.

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