Social Norms

Heinrich Popitz

Individuals, groups, and societies have been known to make rather quick and radical shifts in social norms; making theft, insult, beating, torture, and (mass)-killing standard, or encouraged behavior, where previously considered unacceptable. In order for Holocaust and genocide scholars to appropriately research these changes, proper theories need to be developed on the emergence, stabilization, weakening, and changing of social norms.

Fortunately, a field of study exists that addresses these questions. Social theory deals with *action*, *social order*, and *social change*, and therefore, offers insightful explanatory models for such norm changes. Although social norms are addressed in genocide studies, social theory remains largely underrepresented in these discussions. The culture of a mainly English speaking and therefore, English publishing community, has led to a concentration on a limited number of conceptualizations. However, there are many contributions in other languages that represent a broad variety of epistemologies which can enrich the scholarship on mass violence. Specifically, in regard to social theory, Germany has a wealth of knowledge to contribute that goes further than many of the sources most often cited. In this very context, GSP is proud to present the German sociologist *Heinrich Popitz,* who has published not only on violence,[1] but who has also developed a theory dealing with the establishment, stabilization, crisis, and change of social norms. His writings are devoid of traditional sociological formations, making them easily accessible for academics from various backgrounds, much like the diverse disciplines within our genocide scholars community.

Heinrich Popitz defines norms as those expected forms of regular behaviour whose absence or violation causes social sanctions.[2] The repertoire ranges from disapproval over repressions, to discrimination and punishment. However, in complex societies, the extension of norms, or their violation, occurs on a regular basis. Individuals violate others expectations for various reasons. They might do so intentionally (knowingly and deliberately), the violation might be a side effect (not the goal of the action) or completely unintended (a simple action). It might be the consequence of creative processes (which could be done differently) or simply because of laziness and a lack of interest. People know of a norm when they expect sanctions as a result of its violation, or when they react to other people's violations with sanctions. In a simple case, a violation of a norm is followed by a negative reaction. As a consequence, the norm is kept intact and the social order in question is stabilized. Accordingly, not only the degree to which a norm is followed indicates its validity, but also the readiness to protect it. This is the key to the processes of change; norms subdue, lose their influence on actions, and the violation of those norms is sanctioned only hesitatingly, or eventually, not at all. Correspondingly, the expectation to be sanctioned is lowered, and thus the authority of the norm fades. Individuals in many cases do not know whether other members of the community obey these norms, which also contributes to their instability.[3] There are many reasons for the absence of sanctions. One is that the lacking disapproval of violations entails considerably fewer sanctions than does the violation of the norm itself. According to Popitz, there is a higher importance placed on the *actions* which take place, and the norm violations or lack of sanctioning violations due to laziness or disinterest are of a lesser importance. Norms are produced by actions, they are stabilized, questioned, and violated by them. In this sense, non-acting does not exist. Not to sanction the violation of a norm might lead to its continuation. Accordingly, the focus is not on the values that inform actions, but on the social relations within the norms, which function to inform the actions that are performatively negotiated.[4] Consequently, norms cannot be empirically recorded by people stating which norms are valid in their opinion. They can only be empirically recorded when actual actions are observed.

[1] Heinrich Popitz, *Phenomena of Power. Authority, Domination, and Violence* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2017) [2nd German extended Edition 1992].

[2] Also for the following: Heinrich Popitz, *Soziale Normen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006).

[3] Andreas Diekmann and Wojtek Przepiorka, Heiko Rauhut, "Die Präventivwirkung von Nichtwissen im Experiment," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 40, no. 1 (2011), 74-84.

[4] About norm transformation in the context of genocidal violence see Paul Morrow who, however, does not discuss the crucial role actions play in such processes: Paul Morrow, "The Thesis of Norm Transformation in the Theory of Mass Atrocity," *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 9, no. 1 (2015), 66-82, accessed July 24th, 2017, http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.9.1.1303.

Popitz illustrates how far actions can fundamentally change power relations and social orders.[5] He presents the example of a ship with a limited number of deck chairs and their distribution.[6] The chairs are used as they are required, and as the ways and times to use them differ, a casual arrangement develops. However, when new people arrive on board and others leave the ship, a minority – the new arrivals – change the accepted practice. These people reserve the unused deck chairs for each other. This action establishes a norm: it results in a mutual confirmation of claims. What is done, is considered acceptable because others do it too, and it is done for each other. This leads to multiple consequences. First, two groups are created: the privileged and the excluded. While the action of the first group generates an organizational structure, this is missing in the second group. The second group should organize itself, seek confrontation, and eventually defend its newly acclaimed right. Even if the confrontation resulted in victory, new social orders and social norms would have been established.

Christian Gudehus

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[5] Recently his use of example while theorizing has been discussed: Sina Farzin and Henning Laux, "Gründungszenen – Eröffnungszüge des Theoretisierens am Beispiel von Heinrich Popitz' Machtsoziologie," Zeitschrift für Soziologie 45, no. 4 (2016), 241-260.

[6] Popitz, *Phenomena*.

Heinrich Popitz

Social Norms*

Translation of Heinrich Popitz. Soziale Normen. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2006, 61-75. The original footnotes were only translated but not reformatted and therefore do not adhere to the journals style guidelines.

It is a simple, if not, even trivial, experience in daily life that social behavior is norm-bound. We regularly arrive at crossroads with a green or red traffic signal – in social situations that obviously have already been discovered, captured, preformed by others. We are not free to choose to ignore this preformedness; the fact that situations are already equipped with positively or negatively evaluated alternative solutions. If we take no heed of the green and red lights, our behavior will, nonetheless, be interpreted *by others as an answer* to these signals - even if it was not at all our intention that we should be asked a question. Therefore, we can state in a first approximation: The fact that behavior is norm-bound means that social situations are burdened with certain alternatives that seem to be based on agreements of some sort; agreements, of which it is not really known who exactly has reached them; agreements that we cannot dispose of merely by not accepting them case-by-case. They are somehow designed to endure in such a way that an individual cannot deliberately suspend them.

This peculiar phenomenon is the subject of the following considerations. I would like to try to point out the approach taken by sociological thought and some of the fundamental terms of sociological research by asking for features illustrating that social actions are norm-bound. Since these features can be traced in all cultures known to us, they may guide the analysis of fundamentally different social orders.[1]

The fact that humans cast their behavior in social terms, that they make themselves socially *liable*, is a highly peculiar achievement. Yet how exactly do we accomplish this achievement?

A first answer does not lead us very far but is a prerequisite for any further meaningful discussion of the question. We must remember that the way social life is shaped or formed is as little predetermined as is the way nature is shaped. Societisation (Vergesellschaftung) is always artificial.

Of course, many social behavioral imperatives and prohibitions are closely related to *biological conditions*, such as the difference between the sexes, birth, childhood, ageing, and death. However, the comparison of cultures illustrates that even these biological conditions are socially reshaped in different cultures in completely different ways. So, in every culture diverse modes of behavior are presented to men and women in some typical, frequently reoccurring situations. Consequently, the difference between the sexes is also somehow expressed by the formulation of social norms. If, however, the social norms attributed to women in the cultures known to us are compared with each other, it turns out that it is extremely difficult to find universally valid similarities, features "essential" to their modes of behavior. As regards the assessment of the respective appropriate behavior, the biological difference between the sexes is obviously nothing more than a starting point, a first approximation from which in each culture a specific set of features defining the "essential" differences between sexes develops. Each of these culture-specific variants seems to us, from the outside, to be more or less arbitrary – or, more precisely, artificial.

Likewise, the relation between birth, ageing, and death exhibits an almost boundless variability. Among the approaches to problems as vital as suicide, war, and the relation to the deceased, as far as I can see, no universal human stock can be determined that would express itself in socially binding modes of behavior in all cultures. The dealings with the deceased can be constitutive for the entire social order; obligations that shape the whole life can be attached to death – yet we may also attempt to socially ignore it.

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[1] I hereby present my unmodified inaugural lecture at the University of Basel, held at November 15, 1960. As the occasion implies, no prior sociological knowledge is necessary to understand the text. It was my aim, as is stated in the text, "to find, among the multitude of phenomena we consider natural in social life, some of those that actually are". The complementary notes add some further information.

The incest taboo seems to be closest to a universally valid norm. However, the incest taboo may also not only be *transgressed* (otherwise it would be a natural law, not a norm) but, since it is a normative behavioral requirement, it can also be *suspended*.[2]

Instead of demonstrating with many more examples, it is worth remembering just how old and venerable the recognition of the relativity of social behavioral imperatives is. Herodot relates the following anecdote:

> Darius, during his rule, called into his presence certain Greeks who were at hand, and asked – 'What he should pay them to eat the bodies of their fathers when they died?' To which they answered, that there was no sum that would tempt them to do such a thing. He then sent for certain Indians, of the race called Callatians, men who eat their fathers, and asked them, while the Greeks stood by, and knew by the help of an interpreter all that was said – 'What he should give them to burn the bodies of their fathers at their decease?' The Indians exclaimed aloud, and bade him forbear such language. Such is men's wont herein; and Pindar was right, in my judgment, when he said, 'Law is the king o'er all.'[3]

Why particular behavioral norms in a particular culture and under particular conditions are "the king o'er all" – is, of course, the topic of attempts of sociological explanations of all kinds. For a start, though, it may now be safely claimed that the search for features illustrating that social actions are norm-bound cannot be completed by seeking social norms whose *contentual determination* is universally valid.

We may describe this conditionality of culture and the "relativity" of social norms from two vantage points as the *social plasticity* of humans – their shapeability, their responsiveness to the most diverse concepts of order – and as their *social productivity*: The creative energy and fantasy with which humans design the orders of their social life, interpret biological facts, reshape conditions, and stylize themselves in their behavior. Both phenomena mutually challenge each other. The question posed by social plasticity is of a compulsory nature – a compulsion to *create*. And the answer that must be given is productive, not only in the sense that a choice is made within a given range of options, but more importantly, as a decision by which humans determine and shape themselves, by which they define themselves socially. This human determination of the self always is based on a *normative* decision: it is consequently, always imperative, a demand – or to put it differently, a hope.

However, at this point, an approach becomes visible, and though it seems to be of such a self-evident nature that it does not require further discussion, nonetheless some universally valid features illustrating that social actions are norm bound may deduced. It is a condition that is grounded beyond all culture-specific variations in the "fact society" itself: the human determination of the self as a social being mentioned above is inherently mutual – i.e., it is a *determination of each other*.

Social norms apparently restrict the arbitrariness in relationships between people. They ensure that people can relate to each other with some certainty and permanence. Yet this coordination would not be possible without our ability to predict the actions of the respective other in situations that recur frequently so that we can anticipate regularities.[4] The efficacy of the phenomenon that social actions are norm-bound may therewith be described as a kind of "construction" of regular and mutually predictable courses. It is exactly this mutual predictability, this co-operation with each other or plainly: this reciprocity that is subject to specific "principles of construction" and that

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[2] On the issue of the universality of the incest taboo see Murdock, Georg Peter, *Social Structure*, New York 1949, pp. 284 ff. Murdock reaches some remarkably clear and definite generalizations that, however, are based on a limited amount of data. Examples contradicting Murdock's theses can be found, for instance, in Thurnwald, Richard, Die menschliche Gesellschaft in ihren ethno-soziologischen Grundlagen, vol. II, Berlin/Leizig 1932, p. 162f.

[3] Herodot, *The Histories of Herodotus.* Book III, section 38. Edited by Blakeney, E. H.; quoted in the translation by George Rawlinson. London 1964, 229-230. Herodot obviously misunderstands the meaning of the nomos-concept in Pindar. – On the so called endocannibalism cf. Herodot, I, 216 and III, 99.

[4] The relevance of the predictability of social actions is especially emphasized by Geiger, Theodor, Vorstudien zu einer Soziologie des Rechts, in: Acta Jutlandica XIX, 2, Aarhus/Kopenhagen 1947, p. 14f., 57f.

consequently yields some partial answers to the question with which we set out: the question of how humans actually manage to bind their social actions to norms.

For reasons of clarity I would like to distinguish five such (partial) answers.

First. – "Nobody may hunt this animal" – "In this situation, you may enter your neighbor's house, but not in that situation" – "A child must go to bed early at night": These are formulated norms of different types. They have in common that they *standardize* actions and situations. Considered from the viewpoint of the child that has to go to bed at night, the situation today completely differs from that of yesterday or the day before yesterday. When considered from the parents' viewpoint, it is different than the child's; just as the observer's viewpoint is different than from the participants'. Yet, the marking of specific actions as "binding" presupposes that we have found criteria that render subjectively *different* actions and situations *to be the same or at least comparable*. These criteria represent a selection of specific features of actions and situations that must be learned by each following generation. Indeed, the feat of education does, after all, consist not least in the ability to bring to bear a certain repertoire of standardized situations against the backdrop of a wealth of subjective-individual situations experienced by the child.

So at this point it should be noted that *every* normative interpretation of actions and situations limits the social relevance of the individual's experiential sphere. (*Every* normative interpretation: accordingly not only those oriented towards legal statutes.) Norms *always* create an artificial level of communication between people at which not everything "counts" that we experience, feel, and believe to perceive.[5] No psychological or phenomenological or sociological theory of guilt can eliminate the possibility or, indeed, the probability of subjective injustices caused by this fundamental condition of the establishment of social norms: Social norms cannot be valid unless generally binding standardizations of actions and situations are recognized and asserted as valid – and, as we shall see, these standardizations are of a particular nature.

Second. – The sentence: "*Nobody* must hunt this animal" is a formulated norm that obviously addresses *all* members of a particular universe of well-ordered relationships. The sentence "A child must go to bed early at night" explicitly refers to some members, the children. Other norms are addressed specifically to the "fathers", "mothers", "medicine men", "master-workmen". Accordingly, social norms do not only include standardizations of situations and actions, but also of people. They are directed towards a certain person *insofar as* he is father, medicine man or citizen. Additionally, these standardizations do not only comprise the actual agents, but also all those that are "meant", that are affected by a particular action. The kind of behavior that is expected from a child also essentially depends on whether the action is related to his parents, or his playmates, or his teachers.

All of this seems to be natural to us. It is also natural to assume that social groups are not a clutter of uniform elements but an intrinsically differentiated fabric of rights and obligations. What we would like to assert, is merely a condition of this possibility: social norms can contribute to the determination of a *differentiation between various categories of people*, between different "social roles", to adopt Ralph Linton's term.[6] This differentiation is not arbitrary insofar as it is supposed to result in a structured coexistence. Rather, the separate social roles must mutually imply each other: The family father must fulfill certain duties that, for instance, relate to children, and in turn, he himself expects the corresponding reaction of the child to follow behavioral commands. Furthermore, the different obligations of *one* person, e.g. those of the father and husband, must (at least in principle) be compatible with each other. And finally, the special social norms must complement each other

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[5] The sameness or comparability of social situations accordingly is not, as is sometimes implied, a methodical fiction of sociologists who interpret social orders; but it is an effort of abstraction that must always be carried out when people make their action predictable in a binding manner. Social orders are founded on such efforts of abstraction.

[6] Linton, R., The Study of Man. New York 1936. New vantage points are developed by: Dahrendorf, Ralf, *Homo Sociologicus. Ein Versuch zur Geschichte, Bedeutung und Kritik der Kategorie der sozialen Rolle*, Köln/Opladen 1959. See there for further literature. [There seems to be a journal article with the same title that was translated into English: Homo Sociologicus, An Essay on the History, Meaning and Critique of the Category of Social Role, in: *Kolner Zeitschrift fur Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 1958, Vol.10 (2), pp. 178-208. The second part with the same title was published in issue 3, pp. 345-378.]

in such a way that they result in a viable whole, a "working" fabric of diverse performances. This mutual implication, i.e. specific quality of social norms to be attuned to and to complement each other – results in the norm structures of different social units: for instance, of a school class in contrast to a club, an industrial firm in contrast to a family, the patriarchal extended family in contrast to the urban nuclear family.

We have currently achieved arguably the highest degree of rationalization of these distributions and combinations of behavioral imperatives in modern bureaucracy – at least as regards their aspiration, their "design".[7] Yet, the particularly elaborated bureaucratic systematization of competences is also based on principles that can be found in their fundamental form in every place where people attempt to organize their coexistence. We can always observe a kind of "labor division" of behavioral imperatives and prohibitions that can be described for each case as a particular fabric of social roles.

Third. – We have talked about norm structures – a fabric of interrelated social roles – that distinguish social units (groups, collectives). Everyday experience tells us that an individual is a member of various social units, a bearer of various social roles.[8] This diversity of memberships often is interpreted as a specifically modern phenomenon: as a consequence of modern pluralism, the separation between private and public sphere, the "decay of institutions", or other afflictions which the critic of the present day likes to invoke for himself and his contemporaries. However, it is by no means a particularly modern phenomenon. Instead we can dare to formulate the following, empirically verifiable thesis: Every human – with the exception of the very small child that completely merges in its family and, of course, with the exception of hermitism and the like – *every human being in every culture that we know is a member of various social units*. Even in Australian Aboriginal clan cultures in which the local unit is in accord with the extended family, at least relationships with relatives are realized that extend to other local units. Accordingly, here – in the extreme case – we can also distinguish *at least* two social units that the individual is obliged to – even if the nuclear family is not perceived as a separate functional unit.

The conventional notion that perceives the individual as the opposite of "society" is accordingly misleading. Every individual is always – if just for once we use the expression – a member of *various* societies. Wherever people design structures of coexistence, the result is a multitude of overlapping and intersecting social units – an ever-recurring formative principle of societization (Vergesellschaftung). It seems to me, that the question as to why this is so has not been answered satisfactorily so far if, indeed, it has not even been sufficiently unambiguously formulated.

I must restrict myself to pointing out merely *one* consequence. The multiplicity of intersecting and overlapping obligations means that the *possibility of a norm conflict* is in principle inherent to a *structure of social arrangements*. Indeed, a "value crisis" is not necessary to evoke situations for individuals and groups that confront them with different expectations depending on the different interpretations of members of particular groups. We can observe a latent competition of interests between social units in all cultures – including those that we usually regard as particularly homogenous.

Yet, maybe the degree of non-homogeneity of the various social obligations correlates with the degree to which a person is aware of him- or herself as existing individually. Maybe the latent competition and possibilities of conflict of the individually intersecting norm structures have to manifest themselves before we can reflect our social ties as a dimension of human life and gain the distance necessary to develop a specifically individual reflection on ourselves. This would imply a

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[7] On this issue compare Merton, Robert K., Bureaucratic Structure and Personality, in: Social Theory and Social Structure, Glencoe ²1957, p. 211 f.

[8] Unfortunately, as yet no unified terminology and classification of social forms has been established. I use here "social unit" as an umbrella term for social groups and collectives. – In this context, I would like to avoid the usually employed features of the term such as "we-awareness", "sense of solidarity" and others. I believe it is enough to identify social units as a fabric of interrelated social roles. Hereby the linking element – the differentiation between "inside" and "outside" is sufficiently indicated. And not only because of the mutual interrelatedness of social roles. What is more, each social role inherently contains a "membership hypotheses" that connects "members" in contrast to "non-members" and that is a prerequisite for legitimizing the formulation of particular rights and duties. (The membership of a state, the membership of a nuclear family is implied in the formulation of the social role "citizen".)

mediated relation between the growing awareness of individuality and that formative principle of societization (Vergesellschaftung) we have described as a fundamental multiplicity of social units.

Fourth. – So far, we have pointed out that social norms standardize actions and situations; that norm structures develop that connect the members of a social unit with a specific network of relationships (of rights and obligations); and that the individual as a member of various social units always is an intersection of various norm structures. The remaining question to ask is how the "existence" of norms can actually be recognized. If the concept of social norms in the context of sociology should be meaningful, empirical reference points of the *validity* of norms must be detectable. I have postponed posing the question so far because it leads us to a further, fourth phenomenon that is better explained at this point in the argument.

Obviously, the validity of norms cannot simply be equated with the anticipated regularity of all types of behavior. There are many anticipated regularities – e.g. the custom to have lunch at a specific time of the day – that by no means have the character of obligations. It would be no problem at all to do it differently. We would like to speak of a norm only when the deviation from such anticipated regularities causes *sanctions* against the deviator such as demonstrative disapprovals, repressions, discriminations, or punishments. In these cases, the deviating actions of an individual or a number of individuals *are followed by further actions* of different people that relate to these deviations in a particular manner.

The line between a custom and a social norm – for instance a (binding) custom – can, only then be definitely drawn when precedents exist. Not only for a sociologist, but also for the agent himself, especially for foreigners, the question of whether a generally usual behavior is binding or not may be kept in suspense: at least for as long as no deviation and reaction to it can be observed.

Yet who are these "others" who, as we have just insinuated, carry out sanctions? Can we simply say: those who are immediately affected by a deviant action that damages them, disadvantages them? This would be comparatively unequivocal but all too simplifying. For then we would have to interpret *every* act of private revenge as an execution of a sanction against a norm violator. Who a norm violator is would be determined in every case by the one whom, for some reason, plots revenge.

Consequently, we cannot dispense with the notorious third party. Let us adopt Theodor Geiger's term "group public"[9] (Gruppenöffentlichkeit). For as long as someone damaged by deviant behavior *has to rely on himself,* his reaction is as much a private issue as is the deviant behavior itself. Only the support of the others, the group public, transforms the reaction so that it achieves the quality of a sanction. The first traces of such support become apparent when the group public *ostentatiously disapproves* of the deviant behavior while approving the affected person's act of revenge that deviates from usual behavior, i.e. that is justified only because it is a reaction to a suffered injustice. Ethnographic materials, but also daily observations, tell us that there are numerous transitions from the demonstrative disapproval to the physical *participation* of the group public in the sanction (for instance in the shape of social boycott) and from here on again to the complete execution of the sanction by the group public. The latter case usually presupposes the existence of certain authorities that represent the group public (the "leader" in playgroups, the family father, certain superiors, the "opinion leaders", etc.). We talk of legal norms when such authorities develop into a central instance that protects a specifiable number of social norms by virtue of its *sole* power to sanction.

In our context, though, the focus is not on the delineation of this special case of social norms, the legal norms. (Of course, on the terminological level, the "threshold value" can be set earlier or later). What is important to us, though, is the insight that it is *empirically demonstrable* that social behavior is bound by norms existing without or beyond legal norms.

The decision on which kind of behavior is considered normative is not necessarily based on a verbal agreement; consequently, social norms cannot be identified by opinion polls. The sociological criteria reside solely in the participants' actions. If anticipated regularities of social behavior are interpreted normatively, they can only be deduced from the reactions of the respective

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[9] Geiger, Vorstudien, p. 33. Preliminary studies for a sociology of law.

"others", the group public (Gruppenöffentlichkeit) and, maybe, by its authorities and instances.[10] It is decisive whether certain modes of behavior are protected against obvious deviations – and, *indeed, protected not only by those who might be immediately damaged*. Correspondingly, the *degree of the validity* of social norms not only depends on their observance but also (equally) on the degree of readiness to execute the corresponding protective measures; on the degree of readiness to assert the claim of the permanent obligation against the breach of norms. Accordingly, not only a kind of action that asserts the statement: "This has been valid and is valid today" but also a reaction that implies: "This should also be valid in the future" realizes that social actions are bound by norms.

Everything we have pointed out on the issue of normative behavior and norm structures so far must therefore be considered as a *doubled obligation*. Every social obligation of a person is matched by the protective functions of others. These protective functions are also linked up with the differentiation of social roles and with specific membership expectancies. The ways in which we meet them, in which we carry out sanctions, contributes as much to the maintenance of norm structures as to their alteration.

Why also to their alteration? So far, we have merely ascertained that the emergence of social norms can be recognized by the execution of sanctions: a well-established type of behavior that is expected as usual becomes a norm postulated to be binding as soon as a deviation causes sanctions. A corresponding process may likewise be observed when a normative claim disappears: Deviations are – at first hesitatingly – tolerated, then more and more rarely provoke sanctions, until they – after a transitory phase of uncertainty –are eventually accepted. (Vivid examples for this process of the "acceptance" of hitherto normatively bound modes of behavior are provided by the so-called emancipation movements such as the emancipation of women, certain social classes, ethnic groups and peoples.)

Variations in the execution of sanctions can, therefore, serve as a seismograph enabling us to deduce changes in norm structures. However, this does not exhaust the relevance of the phenomenon. The execution of sanctions not only illustrates changes, it is itself the most precarious, delicate part of the normative system of actions. This is predominantly the case because it is usually also a normative obligation, although to a lower degree. The primary breach of law generally is condemned more strongly than the violation of the corresponding duty to report it, the immoral behavior more strongly than the lack of indignation. This lack of reaction *may,* of course, in turn also become subject to sanctions. However, somewhat simplified it seems appropriate to claim that the degree to which such secondary or tertiary reactions are binding will successively decrease. Although the abandonment of sanctions also contributes as much to the change of norm structures as does the primary breach of norms, it is usually less dangerous, more convenient, and often less visible. Consequently, the decrease of the validity of a norm becomes obvious when the majority of the people involved fail to react to the transgression, i.e. they act by doing nothing at all. At this point, for instance, the strategy to establish tyrannical regimes is (consciously or unconsciously) employed. The majority of the citizens, at first, are not led to breach primary norms, but are demoralized because the attempt is made to prevent it from executing sanctions against a breach of norms – i.e. to break it of the habit to react at all. The process of demoralization, at first, is only aimed at the readiness to counter the breach of a norm with the assessment of the continuing validity of this norm. The readiness for *action* is prepared by the abandonment of the *reaction*. This is what calling the execution of sanctions the most labile, vulnerable part of the normative system of actions means.

Fifth. – Social norms can be handed on from one generation to the next. Every education has the aim to hand on certain contents of norms. Often, this is accomplished very poorly. However,

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[10] The analyses of reactions to breaches of norms (and also in a broader sense: the prevention of breaches of norms) arrange themselves around the keyword "social control". An important contribution to the theory of social control is provided by Homans, Georg Caspar, The Human Group, New York, 1950: "The separate controls are nothing more than the old relations of mutual dependence taken differentially," p. 301. The German translation adds that specific controls are defined by the relations that exist between a person's noncompliance with a norm and the various consequences this noncompliance entails (J. H.).

that it *can* be accomplished at all and probably never *completely* fails is a condition of the possibility of any continuity of social forms of life and behavioral norms.

Once more, let us ask: *why* can this be accomplished? Once more the answer is commonplace. Yet, this is exactly the issue: to find, among the multitude of phenomena we consider natural in social life, some of those that actually are. So how can education reach the goal to hand on social norms?

Inheritance does not solve this problem. A "taking-over" of specific norms can apparently only succeed when the child not only follows the demands made on its behavior, but when it, indeed, *takes* them *over*, i.e. when it internalizes the claims that it is confronted with by the external world so that they become self-imposed claims. By no means does this imply a reflected moral philosophy. The "ought" can indeed remain bound to certain actions and certain situations. We also do not insinuate that the subjugation to social obligations can always be traced back to moral motives. Personal interests, the fear of sanctions, and the like will frequently play a part – if they are not decisive. Yet, apart from these considerations, it might be exactly the notion that a certain act or its neglect may be binding "in itself", and thus can become an individual's motive to act. And this notion of what in itself is binding is teachable and learnable. Only because of this does it make sense to say that humans are the creatures *able to ought to do* something.

It seems to me, that the most general, and at the same time, arguably the most important feature of this learnability of directives stating what ought to be done, is that we can *habitualize* obligations. Or, to express it in more illustrative terms: The directives stating what ought to be done can develop from impositions posed by the outside world to an "internalized natural requirement." Exactly this transformation makes it possible that we follow directives ordering us to do something without any deliberation – which is proven by everyday experience. Accordingly, to ask whether we can trace back every phenomenon illustrating that social actions are norm bound *either* to personal interests *or* to a conscious orientation toward norms – or to a mixture of both – would be wrong. And it is just as misleading to contrast social actions alternatively as habitual or norm bound. A habit, frequently is the result of having "learned what ought to be done". And contrariwise: That directives stating what ought to be done can be learned and, more importantly, habitualised, is expressed in the fact that such directives can be perceived as having been "already available", as being unproblematic, the self-evident option. They can become an answer that does not require a previous question.

At this point, I would like to stop and close with a general consideration on the type of question that I have tried to follow. In order to proceed, analogous investigations, especially into phenomena of superordination and subjugation as part of social coexistence, would be necessary, on influence, on power, on dominion and, eventually: on violence – the almost unfathomable phenomenon, which in extreme cases links the highest degree of reality in a vital-physical sense with the highest degree of abstraction in the social sense.

The question pursued here asks for the conditions of the possibility of human coexistence. Just how is, to put it in Durkheim's words, "the fact society" possible? How is it possible that humans can – with some certainty and continuity – become attuned to one another?

I consider this question to be answerable. And this is because people cannot *find common ground* if they do not initiate *a process of shaping this "common ground."*[11] The formative process of shaping the common ground enters, or better, permeates through stabilizations, shells, crystallizations, and institutionalizations. There are *conditions* influencing these processes of shaping the common ground, principles of constructions of the "shells" of human coexistence to whose determination we do (and have to) contribute to when we want to gain ground against the chaos caused by the absence of relationships. These conditions can be found – namely beyond the familiarities and trivialities of daily life that usually block our view of the inevitable in social life rather than sharpen it.

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[11] As is generally known, this is the fundamental ideal of Georg Simmel's sociology whose wording I would also like to adopt here; cf. Soziologie 4, Berlin 1958, S. 5. On the misunderstanding concerning the denigration of Simmel's achievements as specifically "formal" sociology, see: Tenbruck, Friedrich H.: Georg Simmel in: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie (Cologne Journal for Sociology and Social Psychology), X, 1958, p. 587– 614.

Human coexistence can certainly as much be described as an incomplete "integration" as an incomplete "disintegration." Our question, by no means implicitly presumes the existence of an "absolute order" that is as much a fiction as is the old formula of the war of all against all. It is, to point this out once more, aimed at those achievements of the social productivity of human beings that lift our coexistence one tick mark above the voluntary, accidental, or unpredictable. We cannot know where the limits of the ability of humans to define themselves in social terms are. I believe we can, however, on experiential grounds know which conditions must also be determined when humans "socially define" themselves.