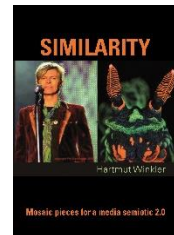


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11

Separating, Differentiating, Analyzing The Second Pole in the Field of Similarity is Difference

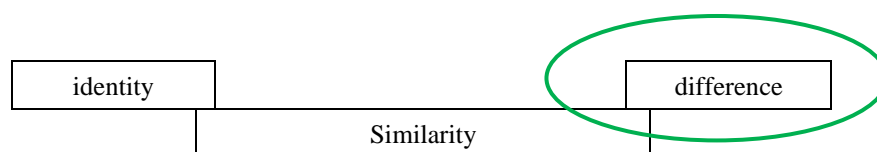
Somewhat ironically one would like to cite Heidegger:
 “The close relation of identity and difference will be shown in this publication
 to be that which gives us thought.”¹

1. Intro

Let's set out once more to explore the territory of similarity from a different angle. The previous chapter focused on *identity*. And specifically a pragmatically reduced concept of identity: My question was how we identify things, e.g., how we recognize a donkey as a donkey.

The result was that patterns or schemata are needed for this; asked where these come from, the answer was that schemata emerge in a kind of condensation: multiple repeated events pile up; schema formation extracts what is common (similar, ‘identical’) about them and establishes it as a schema or pattern.

And towards the end of my reflection, the question of *difference* arose, which is the counterpart of identity in the field of similarity.



In certain cases, I wrote, the pattern recognition runs into problems because the similarity becomes doubtful and more and more differences become apparent. This led to the hypothesis that perception² – if I choose this example once more – in these cases deflects to other, competing patterns: The perceived is identified with an alternative pattern which seems to fit better, which is thus *more similar* to the current perception. I now want to take up this question of difference and examine it in a slightly more systematic way.

¹ Heidegger, Martin: Identity and Difference. New York/Evanston/London: Harper & Row 1969, p. 21 [1957].

² Perception is the most vivid example of schema formation because it is here that one can most readily imagine the mechanisms. However, as the previous chapters have certainly made clear, schema formation is by no means a matter of perception alone.

2. If the Difference Prevails

My first suggestion was to distinguish between ‘And’ and ‘Or’: The cumulative formation of schemata follows a logic of ‘And’; the jump to a competing schema follows a logic of ‘Or.’

This, however, presupposes that the competing patterns to which the perception jumps already exist. And here now the question arises, no longer how patterns in general, but how *competing* patterns come about. Stratification and accumulation, the repeated finding of similarity, I think, can only make plausible the emergence of individual patterns. Is there a mechanism that, on a par with the cumulative ‘And,’ also explains the ‘Or’?

The first step is certainly the ‘No,’ the decision that similarity is not sufficient to identify the current perception with a certain pattern. With this ‘No’ the original pattern is put at a distance. For alternative patterns to come into play, however, it takes more. What is needed is the power of a *distinction* that has this ‘No’ as a condition, but which then certainly follows its own rules. So let us first summarize a few points about the problem of differentiation.

3. Differentiating

“Differentiation (distinctio, διάκρισις, διορισμός)”, says German Wikipedia, referring back to Eisler’s Dictionary of Philosophical Terms,

“is a basic activity of thinking. It exists in the ‘[...] active determination or clarification of differences, dissimilarities, othernesses.’ It is a prerequisite of classification and understanding. *The practice for differentiation is comparison.*”³

And Ritter adds:

“Differentiating [...] occurs both at the level of perception on observable objects and at the level of thinking on intentional objects. [...] The Latin term ‘distinctio’ gains terminological significance, serving as a counter term to both ‘identitas’ [!] and ‘confusio.’”⁴

Differentiation is therefore bound to comparison; and in order to be able to differentiate at all, *differences* must catch the eye:

“Difference does not indicate the dissimilarity [...] of a and b, but the viewpoint from which in another respect identical things are different from each other.”⁵

This leads back to the question of *features*, which I discussed in the seventh chapter; for as soon as perception compares, it cannot stay with the objects as a whole but must break them down into aspects or features. Some of these features will be similar, the same, or ‘identical,’ others will vary and thus be responsible for the difference.

And more than that, one can push the difference to the point where the features that create the difference function disjunctively:

³ Wikipedia (Germ.): Unterscheidung. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unterscheidung>, 13. 3. 20 (transl. and emphasis. H. W.).

⁴ Ritter, Joachim (ed.): Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie: Unterscheiden. Vol. 11, Darmstadt: WBG 2001, p. 308 (transl. and emphasis. H. W.).

⁵ Ritter: Unterschied, op. cit., p. 310 (transl. H. W.).

“The difference is the quality which divides two subclasses of objects by being attached to everything that falls under ‘a’ and denied to everything that falls under ‘b.’”⁶

Here, the distinguishing feature acts binary, like a toggle switch. In any case, however, it is a matter of *contrast*. Differences make it possible to *take things apart*.

But at this point, have we not moved too far away from the question of similarity? Is not similarity, as Kimmich says, the realm of the ‘vague,’⁷ of the precisely not reliably distinguishable, not distinguished? Closer to the aforementioned ‘confusio’ than to neat distinctions? We shall see. And my suggestion is to stay a little longer with the problem of distinction for the time being.

4. Language as a Machine of Distinction

One medium that organizes itself – first and foremost – by way of contrasts is language. “It is [...] a fact”, Lyons writes in his *Semantics*,

“that binary opposition is one of the most important principles governing the structure of languages.”⁸ “[D]ictionaries will classify as antonyms pairs of lexemes [words] which [...] are related in a variety of ways (‘high’/‘low’, ‘buy’/‘sell’, ‘male’/‘female’, ‘arrive’/‘depart’, ‘left’/‘right’, ‘front’/‘back’, etc.). What all these examples have in common [...] is their dependence upon dichotomization.”⁹

Structural semantics, in particular, has placed this aspect at the center of its conception of language. And Lyons adds:

“We can leave to others to enquire whether the tendency to think in opposites, to categorize experience in terms of binary contrasts, is a universal human tendency which is but secondarily reflected in language or whether it is the pre-existence of a large number of opposed pairs of lexemes in our native language which causes us to dichotomize, or polarize, our judgements and experiences.”¹⁰

Language, in this view, is an *analytical medium*; a medium that allows or suggests making distinctions. The structure of vocabulary retains a whole system of pre-articulated distinctions and, stably conventionalized, makes them available for further use.

5. Luhmann

Niklas Luhmann has also dealt with the problem of differentiation. And he insists that differentiating always means *drawing boundaries*. “In all of his more recent publications,” Reese-Schäfer reports,

“Luhmann starts from George Spencer Brown’s operational logic, which begins with the instruction: ‘Draw a distinction!’ We cannot make a designation without making a

⁶ Ibid., p. 311 (transl. H. W.); Ritter refers to a historical definition from the Scholastic period.

⁷ I have already cited this book several times: Kimmich, Dorothee: *Ins Ungefähre. Ähnlichkeit und Moderne*. Paderborn: Konstanz UP 2017.

⁸ Lyons, John: *Semantics*. Vol. 1, Cambridge: UP 1977, p. 271.

⁹ Ibid. (add. H. W.).

¹⁰ Ibid.

distinction. In order to observe anything at all, the system needs a boundary across which it can observe. One must therefore draw a boundary line.”¹¹

The point is that Luhmann includes the position of the observer. Whereas one would commonly assume that the person making the distinction stands outside (or above?) that decision, Luhmann separates inside and outside, locating the observer on this side of the drawn boundary. “It is a defining point of distinction that one cannot be on both sides at once.”¹² “One can clarify this,” Luhmann writes,

“with the help of the concept of form on which George Spencer Brown bases his ‘Laws of Form.’ According to this, forms are no longer to be seen as (more or less beautiful) shapes, but as boundary lines, as markers of a difference, which forces one to clarify which side one designates, that is: on which side of the form one is located and where one has to start accordingly for further operations. The other side of the borderline (of the ‘form’) is given at the same time. Each side of the form is the other side of the other side. No side is something by itself.”¹³ “Observation can observe other things, but not its own distinction. This is its blind spot.”¹⁴

This is, even if I will not really use it hereafter, an important consideration. And secondly, it is important that Luhmann emphasizes that distinctions always have an operative character, are always bound to time, are always practice.¹⁵

6. Analysis

Distinctions have – the keyword has already been mentioned in connection with language – to do with the different cultural techniques of *analysis*.

“An analysis (from Greek ἀνάλυσις [...] ‘dissolution’) is a systematic investigation in which the object of study is broken down into its constituents (elements).”¹⁶

This definition assumes that it is always already certain what these constituents or elements actually are. Therefore, the verb is more interesting at first: To analyze things means to determine such constituents and elements in the first place and then to clarify how they relate to each other and to the original ‘whole.’ Seen in this way, analysis means to *take things apart*. This applies to the activity of the mind, insofar as one would first think of mental operations when thinking of ‘analysis;’ at the same time, however, it seems important to me that analysis also has a media-practical side.¹⁷

¹¹ Reese-Schäfer, Walter: Luhmann zur Einführung. Hamburg: Junius 1992, p. 71 (transl. H. W.). In my consideration of the context, the drawing of boundaries has already appeared once. There, it was about the border that encloses the object and separates it from its surrounding space, as well as about the technique of drawing that particularly emphasizes this border as an ‘outline’ (cf. chap. 5, section 6).

¹² Reese-Schäfer, op. cit. (transl. H. W.).

¹³ Luhmann, Niklas: Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft. Vol. 1. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1997, p. 60 (transl. H. W.).

¹⁴ Reese-Schäfer, op. cit. p. 71 (transl. H. W.).

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 71-75.

¹⁶ Wikipedia (Germ.): Analyse, <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analyse>, 1. 3. 20 (transl. H. W.).

¹⁷ ...and that is the main reason why I called it a cultural technique.

7. Diagrammatics

Thus, to choose one example, recent research on *diagrammatics* has shown that in many cases, one needs a *flat surface* to be able to take things apart.¹⁸ In the case of diagrams, this is particularly pronounced; “diagrams are visual representations that show relations or ratios.”¹⁹

Diagrams are a peculiar hybrid of image and writing;²⁰ they operate, say Bauer/Ernst, “at the interface of perception and imagination, of sensuality and reason.”²¹ But in order for diagrams to reveal relationships, they must first break down their object into its individual aspects:

“This assumption may be based on the meaning of the Greek syllable ‘dia.’ It can be translated as ‘apart,’ ‘through,’ and ‘between’; sometimes its meaning corresponds to the prefix ‘zer-,’ as in the German verb ‘zerlegen.’ Diagrams break down a context into its parts, thereby exposing the structure of that context to the observer.”²²

And this directs the attention to the media-technological means by which this breaking apart takes place. Diagrams make use of two-dimensional surfaces;²³ and even more clearly than writing, which lines up its characters in rows and – at least in principle strictly linear – uses only one spatial axis.

In diagrams, more often than in pictures, for example, individual elements or objects are juxtaposed on the white of the background; an aspect that Krämer, Mersch, or Dirmoser understand as ‘interspatiality’:²⁴

“Diagrammatic structures make use of ‘interspatialities,’ as spatiality in general denotes their basic principle.”²⁵

¹⁸ Krämer, Sybille: Die Schrift als Hybrid aus Sprache und Bild. Thesen über die Schriftbildlichkeit unter Berücksichtigung von Diagrammatik und Kartographie. In: Hoffmann, Thorsten; Rippl, Gabriele (eds.): Bilder. Ein (neues) Leitmedium? Göttingen: Wallstein 2006, pp. 79-92.

- Krämer, Sybille: Operative Bildlichkeit. Von der ‘Grammatologie’ zu einer ‘Diagrammatologie’? Reflexionen über erkennendes ‚Sehen.’ In: Hessler, Martina; Mersch, Dieter (eds.): Logik des Bildlichen. Zur Kritik der ikonischen Vernunft. Bielefeld: Transcript 2009, pp. 94-121.

- Krämer, Sybille: Notationen, Schemata und Diagramme. Über ‚Räumlichkeit’ als Darstellungsprinzip. Sechs kommentierte Thesen. In: Brandstetter, Gabriele; Hoffmann, Frank; Maar, Kristen (eds.): Notationen und choreographisches Denken. Freiburg/Berlin/Vienna: Rombach 2010, pp. 29-45.

- Krämer, Sybille; Cancik-Kirschbaum, Eva; Totzke, Rainer (eds.): Schriftbildlichkeit: Wahrnehmbarkeit, Materialität und Operativität von Notationen. Berlin: Akademie 2012.

¹⁹ Bauer, Matthias; Ernst, Christoph: Diagrammatik. Einführung in ein kultur- und medienwissenschaftliches Forschungsfeld. Bielefeld: Transcript 2010, p. 9 (transl. H. W.).

²⁰ Ibid, p. 28.

²¹ Ibid, p. 10.

²² Ibid. (transl. H. W., emphasis in the original).

²³ Krämer highlights this aspect in particular in the concept of ‘Schriftbildlichkeit.’

²⁴ Krämer’s texts were cited in FN 18.

- “Furthermore, the structure of pictorial knowledge is characterized by a logic of contrasts, which is due to the ‘spatiality,’ the ‘interspatial’ constitution of visual media, as well as by a ‘topological differentiability’ which, as it were, provides the formatting of pictorial space.” (Heßler, Martina; Mersch, Dieter (eds.): Logik des Bildlichen. Zur Kritik der ikonischen Vernunft. Bielefeld: Transcript 2009, p. 12 (transl. H. W.).

- Dirmoser, Gerhard: Denkfiguren. Denkfiguren. Verwendung von Diagrammen in Wissenschaft und Kunst. http://gerhard_dirmoser.public1.linz.at/FU/Denkfiguren_Diagrammatik.pdf.

²⁵ Mersch, Dieter: Wissen in Bildern. Zur visuellen Epistemik in Naturwissenschaft und Mathematik. In: Hüppauf, Bernd; Weingart, Peter (eds.): Frosch und Frankenstein. Bilder als Medium der Popularisierung von Wissenschaft. Bielefeld: Transcript 2009, pp. 107-134, p. 121.

The white of the background is therefore already suitable for isolating and separating objects from each other.²⁶ In other cases, similar to tables, lines are drawn, thus marking explicit boundaries. In diagrams, one can observe how things are physically taken apart.

A second important aspect is that diagrams are *operative* writings.²⁷ With the isolation and the “visualization of elements and relations, certain possibilities of the reconfiguration of the object, circumstance, or event context are also suggested.”²⁸ Once they have been released, then, the objects can be brought into new relations – even on a trial basis; this ties in with theories that determine the media as a whole as a sphere of trial action.²⁹

And finally, this is the third aspect, Bauer/Ernst make clear that one can easily return from the materiality of diagrams to mental operations, insofar as “thinking – especially descriptive thinking, which takes place before the inner, mental eye – also proceeds diagrammatically.”³⁰

“What is emphasized above all is the possibility of using diagrammatic structures to make invisible relations ‘visible.’”³¹

The whole approach is designed to treat both sides – the mental and the media-material aspect – with equal attention. And the question of the relationship between the two is decided very plausibly in terms of an interaction:

“It should be borne in mind that within diagrammatics, the semiotic translation process between internal-mental operations and external-material structures (and vice versa), consequently between consciousness as well as cultural performances, constitutes one

²⁶ To a certain extent, this also applies to writing itself: “Does not writing, with its two-dimensionality and logic of gaps, already have an inherent diagrammatic trait?” (Schneider, Birgit; Ernst, Christoph; Wöpking, Jan (eds.): *Diagrammatik-Reader. Grundlegende Texte aus Theorie und Geschichte*; Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2016, p. 10).

²⁷ Krämer also coined the term operational writing;

- Krämer, Sybille: *Operative Schriften als Geistestechnik. Zur Vorgeschichte der Informatik*. In: Scheffe, Peter; Hastedt, Heiner; Dittrich, Yvonne (eds.): *Informatik und Philosophie*. Mannheim: BI-Wissenschaftsverlag 1993, pp. 69-84;

- Krämer, Sybille: *Kalküle als Repräsentationen. Zur Genese des operativen Symbolgebrauches in der Neuzeit*. In: Rheinberger, Hans-Jörg; Hagner, Michael; Währing-Schmidt, Bettina (eds.): *Räume des Wissens: Repräsentation, Codierung, Spur*. Berlin: Akademie 1997, pp. 112-122;

- Krämer, Sybille: *Operationsraum Schrift. Ein Perspektivwechsel im Schriftverständnis*. In: Grube, Gernot; Kogge, Werner; Krämer, Sybille (eds.): *Schrift. Kulturtechnik zwischen Auge, Hand und Maschine*. Munich: Fink 2005, pp. 13-32;

- Krämer, Sybille: *Zur Sichtbarkeit der Schrift oder: Die Visualisierung des Unsichtbaren in der operativen Schrift. Zehn Thesen*. In: Strätling, Susanne; Witte, Georg (eds.): *Die Sichtbarkeit der Schrift*. Munich: Fink 2005, pp. 75-84;

- Krämer, Sybille: *Operative Bildlichkeit. Von der ‘Grammatologie’ zu einer ‘Diagrammatologie’? Reflexionen über erkennendes Sehen*. In: Heßler, Martina; Mersch, Dieter (eds.): *Logik des Bildlichen. Zur Kritik der ikonischen Vernunft*. Bielefeld: Transcript 2009, pp. 94-123.

²⁸ Bauer/Ernst, *Diagrammatik*, op. cit., p. 24 (transl. H. W.).

²⁹ This is a thesis I have also repeatedly advocated (W., H.: *Diskursökonomie. Zur inneren Ökonomie der Medien*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2004, pp. 200, 220ff.; W., H.: *Prozessieren. Die dritte, vernachlässigte Medienfunktion*. Paderborn: Fink 2015, pp. 59, 129, 227, 246ff.);

Bauer/Ernst state: “Diagrammatics links the interplay of con- and reconfiguration with the concept of the thought experiment, the concept of heuristic fiction, the concept of modeling and simulation of facts or sequences of events, and with other procedures that mediate between theory and practice and establish a control loop of descriptive thinking and trial action, of design actions and cognitive processes, of acts of investigation and mediation.” (Bauer/Ernst, *Diagrammatik*, op. cit., p. 15 (transl. H. W.)).

³⁰ Ibid, p. 20 (transl. H. W.).

³¹ Ibid, p. 29 (transl. H. W.); the thesis that media have the property of translating abstract topologies into concrete ones goes back to Yuri M. Lotman.

of the central problems and explanatory goals.”³² “Diagrammatics, then, is a theory which helps to describe the exchange process between mental cognitive processes and external media, which include complex semiotic representational systems such as writing.”³³

For my question about the techniques of distinction, all of this is more than helpful.

8. Tokens

A second example of a cultural technique of analysis that uses material, media-technical means is provided by the prehistory of writing. The archaeologist Schmandt-Basserat has described that thousands of small clay objects, so-called ‘tokens,’ have been found in Mesopotamia, whose function has been a mystery for a long time; and she has been able to prevail with the thesis that they were ‘counting stones’ which represented certain goods, livestock, merchandise, or levies.³⁴



The point of these tokens was that one could calculate with them; one could form quantities, add, subtract, or divide – and all of this actually with the hands (operatively); so even if one had no mathematical skills. To calculate with tokens means – even more clearly than in the case of diagrammatics – to put together or to take apart tangible signifiers on a table.³⁵

9. Articulation

I would like to add another media consideration to the sections on diagrammatics and tokens. In media theory, the term ‘*articulation*’ is discussed in various contexts, which – at least regarding one of its facets – also denotes a media technique of distinction, of separating, or taking apart. First, the concept of ‘articulation’ is associated with oral language:

“In the linguistic or phonetic sense, articulation (Latin *articulare* ‘to pronounce clearly’) refers to the realization of phonemes and words of human languages by the organs of articulation, i.e., the neuro-muscular process of speaking (in the case of spoken languages) or signing (with hands, in the case of sign languages). In the context of speech production in spoken languages, articulation is defined in a narrower sense as the speech

³² Bauer/Ernst, *Diagrammatik*, op. cit., p. 22 (transl. H. W.).

³³ *Ibid*, p. 36 (transl. H. W.).

³⁴ Schmandt-Basserat, Denise: *Before Writing. Vol. 1: From Counting to Cuneiform*. Austin: Univ. of Texas UP 1992; Fig.: © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Vorderasiatisches Museum, Foto: Olaf M. Teßmer; reprod. authorized.

³⁵ With the restriction, however, that when dealing with the counting stones, it is only about their number. In this respect, one can at best speak of an ‘analysis’ of mathematical relations or of quantity relations...

movements of the organs of articulation, as distinguished from respiration and phonation (vocalization).”³⁶

When we speak, we produce sounds with our vocal cords which we simultaneously structure. With the help of our organs of articulation (pharynx, oral cavity, tongue, teeth, lips), we give the continuous flow of air that we exhale a tonal *form*.

And for this, the consonants are especially important. While the vowels provide the necessary volume and ensure that the voice reaches the ear of the receiver, it is the consonants which structure the sound stream by inserting unvoiced sound events into it.³⁷ In the suddenness of the occlusives³⁸, this structuring power becomes particularly clear. Somewhat figuratively speaking, we ‘chew’ the sound stream of the voice when speaking.³⁹

Over time, the concept of articulation has been generalized; and Schwemmer, for example, extends it, starting from oral language, to the whole sphere of culture:

“We call the structuring of an utterance its articulation. Even if this term is usually reserved for and exemplified by linguistic utterances, I would also like to use it generally for other forms of utterance, such as pictorial or gestural utterance, and moreover for our actions in general.”⁴⁰

Other authors agree with him:

“It is not only speaking that makes people articulate beings. Articulation begins where people point at something and leads through the various expressions of feeling and thinking to the most complex cultural forms.”⁴¹

“The central aspect of articulation,” Jörisen writes,

“lies [...] in the symbolic conciseness that is achieved through articulation. The basic idea of Ernst Cassirer, to which Schwemmer refers, is that only in the articulated form of cultural expression one can speak of culture at all.”⁴²

³⁶ Wikipedia (German): Artikulation (Linguistik), [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artikulation_\(Linguistik\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artikulation_(Linguistik)) (transl. H. W.); Wikipedia cites: Pompino-Marschall, Bernd: Einführung in die Phonetik. Most introductions to phonetics curiously consider it superfluous to define the concept of articulation at all. They proceed straight to the rules and mechanisms of articulation.

³⁷ Voiced consonants like the ‘M’ represent, roughly speaking, a hybrid form....

³⁸ “Plosives [...] are the consonants in whose articulation the respiratory airflow is blocked. The instantaneous release of the blocked airflow creates a small ‘explosion’ that produces the sound. Thus, the naming is based on the mode of articulation. For example, closure occurs through contact of the lips (example: [p], [b]) or tongue with the place of articulation in the vocal tract (examples: [t], [d], [k], [g]).” (Wikipedia (German): Plosiv; <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plosiv>, transl. H. W.).

³⁹ At the same time, the theory emphasizes that the sound stream, physically speaking, remains continuous and that – again a case of pattern recognition – it is ultimately the listeners who break down the sound stream into words and sentences. Both assumptions do not contradict each other because the sound stream is certainly both: physically continuous and yet ‘articulated.’

⁴⁰ Schwemmer, Oswald: Kulturphilosophie. Eine medientheoretische Grundlegung. Munich: Fink 2005, p. 49 (transl. H. W.).

⁴¹ Publisher’s announcement for the volume: Roussel, Martin; Niklas, Stefan (eds.): Formen der Artikulation. Philosophische Beiträge zu einem kulturwissenschaftlichen Grundbegriff. Munich: Fink 2013, <https://brill.com/view/title/51438>, 30. 3. 20 (transl. H. W.).

⁴² Jörisen, Benjamin: Anthropologien der Medialität. In: Kulturelle Bildung online, 2013, <https://www.kubi-online.de/artikel/anthropologien-medialitaet>, 30. 3. 20 (transl. H. W.).

On the one hand, the concept of ‘articulation’ is now related to phenomena of culture in general, but on the other hand, one falls back on concepts such as ‘expression,’ ‘feeling,’ or ‘thinking,’⁴³ whereby articulation appears to be centered – possibly hastily – on the individual subject. It is all the more important that Schwemmer also provides more materialistic definitions of articulation; for example, when he establishes articulation above all as the *generation of form*:

“In order [...] to make further progress, we have to look at the side of structuring, which is inherent to the cultural phenomena themselves. Or, to put it differently: We have to see the cultural phenomena as structuring, as form-generating achievements. This is the decisive change of view that enables us to develop a cultural-theoretical perspective. It is a shift of focus from the ‘outside’ or the ‘surface’ of cultural phenomena *to their immanent structuring, to their self-structuring*. [...] The structuring of an utterance we call its articulation.”⁴⁴

And more clearly, insofar as Schlemmer, which is by no means common in philosophy, also wants to include considerations of *media*. “New and decisive in Schwemmer’s argumentation,” writes Jörissen,

“is the media-theoretical aspect: for cultural forms are medially situated. The ‘patterns of conciseness’ themselves [...] are subject to [...] medial structures as ‘forms of shaping’: there is no articulation outside of medial structural conditions. Every articulation, therefore, requires a medium, and medial form-generating possibilities are ‘constitutive for the inner structuring of articulation’; their analysis is therefore one of the ‘main tasks of any reflection on cultural theory.’ Media are thus *structural conditions of the possibility of articulation*.”⁴⁵

“Any articulation,” says Schwemmer himself,

“requires a medium. With this formula it is first indicated that every inner structure of an utterance can only be realized in a substance, in a material.”⁴⁶

Articulation, too, then – the keyword of structuring makes this clear – is a media technique of separating and differentiating. Articulation, too, divides things by taking them apart. And if we return to oral language, which has been mentioned at the beginning of the section, the spectacular thing is that this ‘taking apart’ is apparently also possible in the medium of the acoustic. The concept of articulation seems suitable to generalize and expand our notion of the analytical power of media.

10. Back to Schema Theory

My brief passage through diagrammatics, tokens, and articulation has made it clear that differentiation has a practical-operational, a media-technical side. This is certainly true more generally, insofar as the head is always interrelated with the eyes and hands; and moreover, practical operations have the advantage that they can be better observed as mental processes. With the aforementioned techniques in mind, it becomes clearer what differentiating is all about.

⁴³ “Expressive acts are about the articulation of something, be it a conviction, a mood, a desire, a representation, or any other kind of communication.” (Schwemmer, *Kulturphilosophie*, op. cit., p. 37 (transl. H. W.)).

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 49 (transl. and emph. H. W.).

⁴⁵ Jörissen, *Anthropologien der Medialität*, op. cit.; J. citing Schwemmer, op. cit. pp. 53, 55 (transl. and emph. H. W.).

⁴⁶ Schwemmer, op. cit. p. 53 (transl. H. W.).

But now I would like to return to my actual topic, schema theory. In the chapter on identity and identification, I have tried to show, with the help of relatively abstract models, how schemata and patterns emerge in cycles of condensation/stratification. So how does my consideration of separating and differentiating fit into this context?

My thesis is that there is a *systematic interaction* between identifying and differentiating. In the mechanism of schema formation/recognition, the two are intertwined. Perception – to use the example once more – constantly matches individual perceptions with patterns (experiences and expectations) that are the product of past perceptions; and it simultaneously produces these patterns by typifying and schematizing individual perceptions in a long chain of iterations.

Identity and difference (identifying and differentiating) are equally involved in this mechanism. Both take place at the same moment: *Only the interplay of identification and differentiation, attraction and repulsion, layering/cumulation and moving apart makes up the overall process.*

My idea is that of a double movement: Step by step, with each repetition, the schemata acquire ‘identity’ and stability; and at the same time, the differences that separate the schemata from each other are stylized and accentuated; *with each iteration, then, the schemata move apart.* In this way, in this double movement, the schemata gain form and contour.

However – this is my second point – identifying and separating/differentiating obviously have different roles in this process: Identity and identifying concern the individual schema (which acquires stability and ‘identity’ through stratification/cumulation), whereas difference, separating, and differentiating concern the relation of schemata to each other.

This would mean that both occupy a different space and have a different range: Identity/identification/stratification/cumulation act ‘locally,’ just at the location⁴⁷ of the pattern in question. Difference/differentiation/separation, on the other hand, organize the space that spans *between* schemata and patterns. The suggestion of the last chapter to distinguish between centripetal and centrifugal went in a similar direction;⁴⁸ and so did the idea that the mountains of the ‘Or’ divide things, while the valleys of the ‘And’ gather them.⁴⁹

But is this really the case? Are the different schemata really only separated from each other by differences (by repulsion)? Or are they not always also connected – however subliminally – by relations of similarity? And if this is so: Does this similarity not necessarily introduce a moment of identity into the relations as well?

My consideration of the ‘features’ of similarity⁵⁰ produced exactly this result: that the features provide a manifold overlapping and, in spite of all differences, entangle the schemata and patterns in an immensely manifold net of similarities. This net, like that of the differences, has its place in the space *between* the schemata.

For the time being, the fact remains that separating and differentiating are the other side (the complementary mechanism) of identifying. The fact that schema formation unfolds an *analytical power* and is able to separate things from each other constitutes – more conspicuously than its other, identificatory side – its cultural achievement. Analysis, ratio, and reason are closely connected; and all three depend on the techniques of dissecting the world.

The idea that difference and identity/identification form a common mechanism, however, means that both – necessarily – remain dependent on each other. And if this is so, then all the

⁴⁷ Elsewhere I warned against using topological metaphors to designate relations, which are ultimately *semantic*...

⁴⁸ Ch. 10, section 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., section 8.

⁵⁰ Ch. 7: Similar – in what way.

doubts formulated about 'identity' must ultimately also affect difference. A 'pure' difference, untouched by the problems of identity, does not exist; it is a purifying fantasy that has dominated theory formation for a while.

In any case, the leap from the individual schema to the relations which connect the schemata with each other is important. This point in particular will be the subject of my concluding chapter.

[...]