

Sociality as the Human Condition

Anthropology in Economic, Philosophical and
Theological Perspective

By

Rebekka A. Klein

Translated by

Martina Sitling



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2011

CONTENTS

Volume Foreword	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
Introduction	1
1 Phenomenological Criticism of Science	1
2 The Primacy of Philosophical Anthropology	3
3 Natural Foundation of Anthropology in Current Economics	10
4 The Relational Approach to Anthropology in Social Philosophy	15
5 The Double Description of Anthropology in Theology ...	20
Chapter One Anthropology as a Representation of Humanity	27
6 Interdisciplinary Anthropology	27
7 Anthropology and Sociality in the Individual Disciplines	29
7.1 Theological Figures of Thought on Nature and Humanity	30
7.1.1 The Difference between ‘ <i>Natura Lapsa</i> ’ and ‘ <i>Oeconomia Naturae</i> ’	32
7.1.2 Isomorphism of Nature, Humanity and Society?	34
7.2 Basic Anthropological Paradigms of Experimental Economics	35
7.2.1 Human vs. Rational Behavior	36
7.2.2 Human vs. Animal Behavior	38
7.3 Philosophical Points of Entry in Anthropology	42
7.3.1 Anthropology as Human Self-Inquiry	42
7.3.2 Alternatives: The Dualism and Monism of Anthropology	48
8 Anthropological Key Differences	50
8.1 Heidegger: Humanity as the Truth of Being	52
8.2 Agamben: The Dissolution of the Animal Construct	56

8.3	Adorno: Dehumanization through Society	63
8.4	Conclusion	66
9	The Human Condition as a Concrete Condition of Existence	67
9.1	Barthes: The Human Condition as Myth	68
9.2	Arendt: Loss of the Social ‘Human Condition’? ...	70
10	Plessner: Humanity and Bodily Existence	77
10.1	The Broken Relation to the World	81
10.2	From the Shared World (‘Mitwelt’) to Interpersonal Relations	83
10.3	Conclusion	87
11	Concreteness, Objectivity and Phenomenal Excess	89
Chapter Two The Conflict between Egoism and Altruism		91
12	Possibilities and Limitations of an Empirical Anthropology	91
13	The Economic Modeling of Human Social Behavior	94
13.1	The Methodological Paradigm Shifts of Experimental Economics	97
13.2	Skepticism about the Homo Oeconomicus	101
13.3	Backgrounds to the Critical Assessment of the Homo Oeconomicus Model	104
14	The Methodology of Experimental Economics	109
14.1	Translatability of Laboratory and Experiential World	111
14.1.1	Empirical Explanation and Methodological Object Constitution in Experiments	111
14.1.2	The Validity of Experimental Findings Outside of the Laboratory	114
14.2	Construction Principles of Economic Laboratory Experiments	117
14.2.1	The Experiment as a Strategic Course of Action	118
14.2.2	The Experiment as Selective Replication of Reality	119
14.2.3	Game Theory and Hypothesis Formation in the Behavioral Experiment	123
15	The Modeling of Social Preferences	129
15.1	What are Preferences?	129

15.2	The Ultimatum Game and Inequity Aversion of Social Agents	132
16	Norms for Cooperative Behavior	136
16.1	Sanctions in Public Goods Games	136
16.2	Social Norms as a Second-Order Public Good? ...	140
17	From 'Homo Reciprocans' to 'Homo Altruisticus'	148
17.1	Negative Reciprocity: Ultimatum Game	150
17.2	Positive Reciprocity: Trust Game	150
17.3	Pure Altruism: Dictator Game	152
17.4	Strong Reciprocity: Altruistic Punishment and Rewarding	154
18	The Utility Expectation of Altruistic Agents	157
18.1	Psychological, Biological, and Moral Altruism ...	158
18.2	Personal Satisfaction in Altruistic Punishment ...	161
19	Affective Empathy: The Significance of Social Emotions	167
20	The Phenomenal Excess of Social Interaction	171
21	Conclusion	173
21.1	Critique	173
21.2	Theses	178
21.3	On the Sense and Nonsense of Talking about Altruism	184
Chapter Three	Difference in the Interpersonal Relation	187
22	Three Constellations of the Interpersonal Relation	187
23	Human Nature and its Function for the Legitimation of Political Order	189
23.1	The Separation of Politics and Nature in the Model of Societal Order	191
23.2	The Genesis of Order from Contingence	195
24	Antagonism: The Irreducibility of Difference	198
24.1	Laclau and Mouffe: Antagonism and Democracy	199
24.2	Critical Assessment of the Liberal, Deliberative Model of Society	204
25	Recognition: The Pacification of Difference	206
25.1	Recognition: Normative Demand or Real-Life Practice?	208
25.2	Post-Hegelian Perspectives on Recognition	210

25.2.1	Honneth: Recognition and Its Negative Forms	210
25.2.2	Taylor: Recognition and the Risk of Homogenizing Difference	214
25.2.3	García Düttmann: A Critical Assessment of Restorative Recognition	217
25.3	Ricœur's Concept of Mutual Symbolic Recognition	221
25.3.1	The Critique of Reciprocity	222
25.3.2	The Critique of Equal Recognition	223
25.3.3	Symbolic Recognition	224
25.3.4	States of Peace: Recognition and Religious Agape	225
26	Alterity: Difference as the Source of Responsibility	227
26.1	Levinas' Ethical Reconception of Humanity	229
26.2	The Impossibility of Social Inhumanity	232
26.3	The Relationship to the Other as the Third and the Standards of Justice	235
26.4	Beyond the Symmetry of Egalitarian Relationships	237
26.5	God's Invisibility	238
27	Conclusion	241
Chapter Four Humanity and Inhumanity in the Love of Neighbor		
28	Theological Reservations against an Immanence of the Social	245
29	Biblical Usage and Hermeneutical Function of the Word 'Neighbor'	252
29.1	The Biblical Contexts of Caring for the Other Human Being	254
29.2	Who is my Neighbor – the Wrong Question?	256
29.3	Terminological Delineations	258
29.4	Hermeneutical Analysis of the Word 'Neighbor'	259
29.5	Proximity and Distance in the Love of Neighbor	260
30	Social Criticism Instead of Morality	263
31	Meisinger: Anthropological Awareness of Difference	267

32	Kierkegaard: Humanity as the Phenomenal Excess of God's Love	271
32.1	Kierkegaard's Method of Analysis	271
32.2	The Negative Definition of the Neighbor	273
32.3	Self-Love and the Deficiencies of Interpersonal Love	279
33	Beyond Kierkegaard: The Love of Neighbor and Inhumanity	283
33.1	Adorno: The Dead Neighbor	284
33.2	Žižek, Santner, Reinhard: The Neighbor as a Figure of Inhumanity	287
34	Humanity and Inhumanity as Reflected by Mercy	291
34.1	Lack of Consequences and Resources	291
34.2	Lack of Expectations	293
34.3	Unpredictability: The Phenomenal Abundance of Practicing Mercy	295
34.4	Inhuman Mercilessness	297
35	Conclusion	299
	Final Thoughts	303
36	Multiperspectivity Instead of Transdisciplinarity	303
37	Result of this Study	305
	Bibliography	309
	Index of Names	321
	Index of Subjects	323

INTRODUCTION

1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL CRITICISM OF SCIENCE

Since antiquity, sociality has been considered a basic condition of human existence. Aristotle already spoke of the human being as a *zoon politikon*, and Seneca used the term *homo sociale*. But what do we presently understand by sociality? Has our idea of human beings as naturally social creatures changed since then? Alongside the classical disciplines of anthropology (philosophy, theology, pedagogy), sociality is now also the subject of scientific examination in the natural and social sciences (sociobiology, neuroscience, economics). Within the framework of these approaches, traditional anthropological questions and concepts are being reconstructed and remodeled using new methods. Here, classical questions of anthropology, such as whether human beings are capable of acting altruistically or whether they possess natural empathy, are subjected to new ways of finding answers. Thus, in order to characterize and describe the sociality of human beings according to the current state of research, we must clarify what contribution the studies of natural and social sciences can make to the discourse of the social nature of human beings in philosophy and theology. To that end, this book will examine current studies on human cooperative behavior from the discipline of economics along with thoughts on the nature of conflict in interpersonal relations from social philosophy and theology.

The *methodological aim* of this study is to initiate a discourse between three different social-anthropological descriptions of human beings. These descriptions, however, are not evaluated from the perspective of a superordinated approach. Instead, they will be subject to phenomenological criticism. Phenomenology conceives of anthropological concepts as different *ways of describing* an object. Phenomenological criticism is based on the intuition that the unique characteristics of an object of description show themselves precisely in the object's appearance, in its phenomenality to the observer. This applies to experiences in the lifeworld [*Lebenswelt*] as well as to the scientific analysis of an object. As a phenomenon, therefore, an object can never be described independently of the modality of its observation or description. Consequently, there can also be no perspective-free representation of the

object in a phenomenological analysis that reduces the various aspects of its appearance to a single, supposedly more objective or more fundamental view. The multitude of appearances of an object is resistant to further analysis and cannot be resolved by interdisciplinary discourse or otherwise. Rather, it is the basic phenomenological task of an interdisciplinary study to bring its individual perspectives to a point where they acknowledge that their representations are limited, and that they need to be supplemented with other perspectives regarding the phenomenality of their object. The object always appears *as* something *to* someone. Thus, phenomenological criticism is called for wherever this intentional structure is methodologically neglected or ignored in the representation of an object. This phenomenological criticism has to demonstrate the extent to which there is a phenomenal excess regarding the object that cannot be recovered by an objectifying comprehension, but that must be maintained in a hermeneutically sensitive description of its mode of appearance.

As most phenomena, the sociality of human beings is different from its empirical or theoretical comprehension. Thus, it has to be conceived as a phenomenological starting point of anthropological description. To mark the difference between the phenomenon of human sociality and the scientific attempts to describe, comprehend and explain this phenomenon, the study will refer to the phenomenological given as ‘interpersonal sociality.’ The latter shows itself in human interaction as an interpersonal sphere, a range of proximity and distance between human beings. From an empirical perspective, it can be detected in those modes of behavior in which human beings affect each other through gestures, looks, words or silence and thereby make themselves aware of the presence and needs of the other. This range of interpersonal interaction with one another will represent the phenomenological starting point of this interdisciplinary study of social anthropology.

Furthermore, this study aims to demonstrate an excess of the phenomenon of sociality vis-à-vis its thematizations with regard to the difference between humanity and inhumanity. Hence, the phenomenological analysis is not only meant to reveal the limitations of anthropological descriptions and to prevent an inappropriate reduction of its perspectivity; it also pursues a *factual concern*. It seeks to be a reminder of the fact that invoking a natural sociality of human beings must not be blind to the phenomenon of social inhumanity, which makes the coexistence of human beings impossible at times: The

span of human social behavior ranges from the violent annihilation of others to taking responsibility for their vulnerability. Therefore, the sociality of human beings should not be appropriated as a foundation of morals and political order, but treated as a twofold phenomenon. The fundamental argument of the social anthropology developed in this book is therefore: the social humanity of human beings includes an excess of inhumanity, and thus must always be discussed in such a way that the anthropological description shows an awareness of its dark side, and does not remain indifferent to the phenomenon of the inhuman.

2 THE PRIMACY OF PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The first chapter of this study will clarify what characterizes the social humanity of human beings, and the extent to which it can be examined hermeneutically and phenomenologically. To this end, it will primarily be guided by the questions of philosophical anthropology, because its ideas, concepts and theories also determine the formation of hypotheses and the interpretation of research results in the empirical sciences. The possibility of developing an interdisciplinary anthropological examination based on the natural and social sciences can therefore be refuted on the following grounds. First, the formulation of research questions in empirical anthropology presupposes philosophical terminology, both in the establishment of initial hypotheses and later in the interpretation of empirical data. The premises contained in this terminology, however, should already be reflected upon when choosing the research question, and not simply adopted as is often done in empirical research. Second, the approach of empirical anthropology does not provide enough leeway to be sufficiently clear about the preconditions of a question and its implied normative preliminary decisions about the presentation of the object. This, however, is of crucial importance, especially when it comes to the study of human beings and their humanity. Therefore, this study describes human beings not with the help of empirical methods (by asking ‘What is a human being?’), but by initiating a philosophical human self-inquiry and asking ‘What is human about human beings and their sociality?’ If the question about human beings is understood as a philosophical question, various differentiations of anthropological cogitation about human beings can be established.

The first problem arising here for an interdisciplinary study pertains to the fact that many ideas about human beings in philosophical anthropology are traditionally determined by essentialism. They are meant to determine the essence or nature of human beings. Also in this tradition, formulas like the *animal rationale* attempt to identify the essence of being human with an attribute of human nature – rationality, faculty of speech or free will. However, the distinction between human and non-human underlying these anthropological determinations can also be understood and applied in an analytical manner. In order to shed light on this complex, the first chapter will highlight various key differences of anthropology with which humanity can be conceptualized.

Ever since the time of antiquity, a characteristic of thought about humanity was that it was defined by separating human from extra-human entities (divine or animal). From this differentiation developed the classical concept of human beings, which described them as an *animal rationale*, a being that, in contrast to animals, had the capabilities of reason and language. The human attributes of reason and language, and later of personality and freedom, formed the rationale for the superiority of human beings to all things animalistic and barbaric, i.e., to the irrational. Here, the definition of human nature more and more took on the function of the rational self-assertion of human beings in opposition to that which could be defined as opposed to their human nature, and could thus be contrasted with their own lives as ‘non-human.’

Just like its classical counterpart, the Christian definition of human beings took this relationship to the extra-human as its starting point. In Christian occidental culture, therefore, the human attributes of human nature were interpreted as reflections of the divine in human beings. Humanity was attributed to human beings insofar as the creative power of their reason and the freedom to develop their existence in the world characterized them as similar to God in the eyes of other creatures. Accordingly, language, freedom and reason formed the educational ideal of modern humanism in the 18th and 19th century (Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottfried Herder), which was based on Christian principles.¹

¹ See Pannenberg 2004, 60–74.

The separating distinction of human/extra-human (animal, God) and the juxtaposing distinction of human/non-human (*animal rationale*) determined the anthropological contemplation about human beings in cultural history. As a consequence, another anthropological difference was neglected that only entered the awareness of philosophical and cultural discourse through the 20th century crimes against humanity as the dark side of human reason and rationality.² The awareness of the *inhumanity of human beings*, of their aggression and violent behavior toward the other that defies control by morals or reason led to a shift in thinking about the human capability to be or to become human(e). Of course, traces of this shift can be found in earlier thought, for example in the *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes and his depiction of human hostility in the state of nature. But a philosophical awareness of those phenomena in which humanity is not simply perverted into its opposite (namely, inhumanity), but rather co-exists with it in the locus of the human being, has only been formed by historical experiences that clearly showed the possibilities of human *dehumanization*. The inhuman, even though it could formally be cast as the negation of human humanity, is nevertheless also ‘witnessed’ in the locus of the human being (e.g. in the case of the so-called *Muselmann*, the ‘living dead’ of the Nazi concentration camps)³ and thus from a phenomenological perspective is not negating, but *indifferent* to the humanity postulated at the locus of the human being. Therefore, with regard to the social humanity of human beings, there has been discussion about a ‘paradox of indifference’ in human social life (Giorgio Agamben,⁴ Slavoj Žižek,⁵ Judith Butler⁶ etc.) which should be overcome by an ethics of non-indifference to the humanity of the other (Emmanuel Levinas).⁷ The term ‘non-indifference’ contains a double negation of

² The book “Dialektik der Aufklärung” (“Dialectic of Enlightenment”, first published 1947) by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno can be cited as a document of this growing awareness of inhumanity as an ‘Other’ of reason (see Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). On the use of the category in postmodern philosophy, also see Lyotard 1991.

³ See Santner 2005, 100; Žižek 2005, 160–161.

⁴ See Agamben 2003b.

⁵ See Žižek 2005.

⁶ See Butler 2003.

⁷ Of course, these authors do not share the same understanding of the paradox of indifference which is at work in human social life. In fact, they criticize each other for their misunderstandings of the differentiation human/inhuman. Furthermore, they do not agree on the point that Levinasian ethics might be the solution of this issue.

humanity here which allows approaching the difference of humanity and inhumanity without neglecting the dangers of its possible indifference.⁸ Thus, it is only where the inhuman can be addressed in the description of the human that the difference of humanity and inhumanity is maintained.

The second problem of an interdisciplinary study of various anthropological approaches concerns their understanding of human corporality. This book holds the view that this is not to be understood as an exclusively biological category. Where it is utilized for a naturalistic rationale of human sociality and morals, the awareness of its human phenomenality is in danger of being lost.⁹ As a reaction to the possible reduction of human 'nature' to biology, representatives of 20th century 'philosophical anthropology' in Germany (Max Scheler, Helmuth Plessner, Arnold Gehlen) have presented concepts that take human beings seriously in their status as a biological creature *without* reducing their existence to a purely animal life.¹⁰ They tried to base their understanding of the human capacity for consciousness and reflexivity in the conduct of life, on fundamental biological principles of life, thus refraining from excluding biological life from the description of human nature.¹¹ Consequently, they also gave up on the attempt to determine an unchangeable and universal human 'nature' and instead conceived of human beings as visible creatures situated in the world

⁸ A different understanding of the term 'non-indifference' is proposed by Slavoj Žižek who refers to the Kantian distinction of negative and indefinite judgment and applies it to the differentiation of human/inhuman: "He is not human' means simply that he is external to humanity, animal or divine, namely, that he is neither simply human nor simply inhuman, but marked by a terrifying excess which, although it negates what we understand as 'humanity', is inherent to being-human." (Žižek 2005, 159–160).

⁹ See Arlt 2001, 200: "Anthropology would not be a philosophical endeavor if it did not ask about the 'humanity' of human beings that apparently is not identical with the form brought forth by nature, the natural morphology (walking upright, sophisticated language, invention and use of tools)." (transl. M.S.).

¹⁰ For this classification of the concept of philosophical anthropology in the 20th century, see Arlt 2001, 66–179.

¹¹ A different position is put forth by Christian Illies in his "Philosophische Anthropologie im biologischen Zeitalter." For him, the concepts of philosophical anthropology are mainly "attempts to take a part of the human being out of the brackets of scientific explainability" (Illies 2006, 19 [transl. M.S.]). However, he fails to see that the attempt to forego severing human 'life' and 'existence' is above all an integrative concept of anthropology. The *primary* interest of Scheler, Plessner and Gehlen thus was not to remove human beings from a biological context, but to *combine* the representation of human existence with an understanding of the biological foundations of life.

whose bodily existence is *dependent* on natural as well as cultural environments of their existence. They described human existence neither as being determined by a timeless core or essence, nor as being determined by a specific set of naturalistic characteristics. Instead, they conceived of human existence as the interplay of innate abilities and acquired characteristics that are cultivated through living life as ‘a human among humans.’

Entirely in keeping with this approach of philosophical anthropology focused on the concrete existence and corporality of human beings, and linked to it by her vehement rejection of a biological or social determination of the range of freedom in human life, Hannah Arendt has argued against ignoring the connection between human existence and the (natural) conditions of life on earth.¹² She, too, is not interested in determining the essential character of human beings, but focuses her description of human beings on what she calls the *human condition*, the basic condition of human life on earth.¹³ Arendt understands the *human condition* as a description of the *practical* circumstances under which human life on this earth exists. Therefore, it is not to be understood as a *conditio sine qua non* (logical condition), but in the sense of a *conditio per quam* (practical condition).¹⁴ For Arendt, the crucial practical condition of human existence is the social form of human life: human beings do not live as solipsistic individuals, but together with other people; and thus, they have to face the *plurality*¹⁵ and heterogeneity of human interaction. For Arendt, this plurality is expressed in *the difference between one human being and another*. This difference plays such a significant role because it brings out the uniqueness of a human counterpart in the social relationship. According to Arendt, this is what characterizes humanity. Thus, humanity for Arendt is not to be identified with the principle of ‘humanness’ in the

¹² With her phenomenology of the three human activities, ‘labor’, ‘work’ and ‘action’, Arendt attempts to maintain the tension between nature and culture, between biological labor and cultural-artificial work. All three of these human activities are rooted in the duality of natality and mortality, of birth and death, and thus cannot be separated from the natural conditions of life (see Arendt 1958, 8–9).

¹³ See *ibid.*, 9–10: “To avoid misunderstanding: the human condition is not the same as human nature, and the sum total of human activities and capabilities which correspond to the human condition does not constitute anything like human nature.”

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 8: “Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.” (also see *ibid.*, 176).

person of the other in a Kantian sense. On the contrary, this principle obscures the fact that the concrete human being is *human* precisely in that he or she is different from every other human being, that he or she is *unique*. Based on her observation of the irreducible plurality of human life on earth, Arendt criticizes the concept of sociality which is given in the social sciences. She holds the view that the modern definition of human beings as social creatures fails to take into account what she calls ‘human plurality and uniqueness,’ which is lost in the process. She criticizes the Latin concept of the *homo sociale* because it conceives of human beings as individuals in society and thus levels the difference between human social and political life. In modernity, sociality and political actions are treated as synonyms. Arendt has drawn attention to this especially in her book “The Human Condition” (1958). Here, she argues that the description of a human being as *homo sociale*, which was first used by Seneca, represents a momentous shift from the Greek to the Roman world view that is based on a mistranslation of the term *zoon politikon*.¹⁶

According to the Greek world view, the humanity of human beings is expressed precisely not in sociality, which also occurs in animals, but in their ability to act politically in the public domain of the *polis*, an ability that separates them from animals. Thus, the political occupies a space outside of the social. What is genuinely ‘human’ is not sociality, but the *bios politikos* of human beings:

It is not that Plato or Aristotle was ignorant of, or unconcerned with, the fact that man cannot live outside the company of men, but they did not count this condition among the specifically human characteristics; on the contrary, it was something human life had in common with animal life, and for this reason alone it could not be fundamentally human. [...] According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different from but stands in direct opposition to that natural association whose center is the home (*oikia*) and the family.¹⁷

In order to provide a rationale for her critique of human sociality, Arendt works with the antique juxtaposition of *polis* and *oikia*, which differentiates between the sphere of living in which human beings primarily are occupied with providing for their livelihood and the sphere

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, 23.28.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

of living in which their unique otherness, their ‘alteritas,’ reveals itself in their actions and communications with their peers.¹⁸

Arendt’s line of argument carries certainly not a historic, but rather a systematic truth. If one takes this truth seriously, her statement can be interpreted as a claim that the description of the human being as *homo sociale* fails to live up to the human condition characterized by human plurality and uniqueness. This claim is justified with the argument that the human being as *homo sociale* is ultimately reducible to the *animal sociale*. The economical and biological way of life of human beings cannot be separated from that of animals. As such, however, it opposes that which Greek philosophy has determined to be the human attribute of life. In Arendt’s interpretation, this is the human ability to speak and to act (*zoon politikon*). A humanity defined in this way is therefore no longer taken into account in the concept of *homo sociale* and must, according to Arendt, even be placed in direct opposition to it.

Arendt’s argumentation, which reaches back toward the anthropological ideal of Greek philosophy, is underpinned by Heidegger’s famous demand, formulated in his “Humanismusbrief,”¹⁹ that human beings no longer be defined by differentiating them from animals, but instead through a description of their ‘being-in-the-world.’ Arendt applies this demand to the description of human sociality and criticizes its inherent reduction of the interpersonal *difference between one human being and another*. On the other hand, however, her argumentation also draws attention to the fact that sociality (and not politics, law and ethics) is often seen as an anthropological category that best describes the continuity of human life with animal life. In the biological-evolutionary description of human beings, which seeks not to comprehend the human essence or ‘nature’, but the particularity of the human species in its continuity to animal life, sociality therefore becomes a favorite *topos* in the description of human beings. With its help, the analogy of human and animal life can be cast into profile.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 176.

¹⁹ Heidegger 2004a, 313–364.

3 NATURAL FOUNDATION OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN CURRENT ECONOMICS

As a representative for such a biological-evolutionary explanation of human sociality, the experimental approach for studying human social behavior in current economics will be analyzed in the second chapter. From the 1970s and 1980s onwards, economists have increasingly endeavored to test basic theoretical premises and models of human social behavior in experiments.²⁰ In their efforts, they have also made use of theoretical questions that had originated in sociology or social psychology, but had so far not been subjected to experimental study.²¹ As a consequence, the approach of experimental economics has been developed into a transdisciplinary approach. Together with psychologists, biologists, neuroscientists and ethnologists, the economists started to develop experimental designs in order to study the foundations of human social behavior within a transdisciplinary framework.²² Their question about the ‘nature’ of human beings, i.e., about those variables of social interaction that are true of human behavior in

²⁰ The emergence of experimental economics as a research approach in economics since the 1960s has been extensively presented in the introduction to the “Handbook of Experimental Economics” (Kagel and Roth 1995, 3–109). The principal representatives of experimental economics since the 1960s were Vernon L. Smith and Daniel Kahnemann (Nobel Prize 2002). Heinz Sauermann, Reinhard Selten, Reinhard Tietz and Otwin Becker were some of the eminent scholars of experimental economics in Germany (see Sauermann 1967).

²¹ In his current paper “Aktuelle Probleme der empirischen Sozialforschung”, Andreas Diekmann calls it a “paradox” (Diekmann 2004, 19), that, for example, sociology leaves the experimental examination of norms and sanctions completely to economics, a field where social norms and sanctions have only played a minor role in theory formation until very recently.

²² The publication “Foundations of Human Sociality” (Henrich et al. 2004) may be referred to as an example at this point. The book, which was jointly published by economists, anthropologists and ethnologists, documents the researchers’ eleven-year-long effort to find empirical proof for their hypothesis of a universal human nature as the basis for the manifold social forms of human interaction. By developing a transdisciplinary design for behavioral experiments, they established a basis for testing this hypothesis of a foundation for behavior that is shared by all human beings, not only in Western countries but also in fifteen non-Western small-scale societies. The results of the global study confirmed the hypothesis that economic theory, with its exclusive focus on rational self-interest, indeed cannot adequately describe the actual diversity of social behavior. At the same time, however, it also became obvious that there are significantly more variations of behavior within groups and between groups than previously assumed. One single model of social behavior is not sufficient to explain the culture-specific and ethnographic diversity of human behavioral patterns.

general, has with time increasingly become a question about the biological foundation of human behavior.

A research group at the University of Zurich has recently endeavored to demonstrate, with the help of a natural-science-based research program (“Foundations of Human Social Behavior”),²³ that especially the setting of social norms and rules of behavior in human interaction cannot be explained without exploring the basic biological configuration of human beings. The efforts of these Zurich researchers (among them Ernst Fehr, Urs Fischbacher, Michael Kosfeld, Tania Singer and Markus Heinrichs) are part of a bigger movement toward naturalist explanatory approaches in the human and social sciences.²⁴ Additionally, they represent an expansion of the experimental approach within the field of economics.²⁵ In order to clarify the character of this expansion of the experimental method, the second chapter will first turn to the philosophy of science to categorize and reconstruct the experimental approach within economic studies, thereby also taking a look at the synthesis of economics with social neuroscience (neuroeconomics). The critical analysis will show that the experimental method of economics with its modeling of social interaction processes consciously ignores the agents’ intentions and motives, as well as their intersubjective communicative and expressive behavior, in order to draw a consequentialist picture of their behavior. It does not determine individual

²³ Further information on the academic research program “Foundations of Human Social Behavior” at the Institute for Empirical Research in Economics at the University of Zurich can be found on the following web site: <http://www.socialbehavior.uzh.ch> (last viewed 09/12/2008).

²⁴ On the complex of problems regarding ‘social science’ and ‘natural science’ see the contributions in the second part of the publication “Gesellschaft denken. Eine erkenntnistheoretische Standortbestimmung der Sozialwissenschaften” by Leonhard Bauer and Klaus Hamberger (Bauer and Hamberger 2002, 79–173). Here, the integration of natural science methods into the treatment of social science problems is discussed as the predominant mindset (next to formal model analysis) of the social sciences in the 21st century.

²⁵ See the account of the ‘early history’ of experimental economics by Alvin E. Roth (Roth 1993): The first experiments on individual human decision-making behavior were conducted as early as the 1930s and 1940s by L.L. Thurstone, Stephen W. Rousseas and Albert G. Hart. The first experiments on social interaction between human beings followed in the 1950s and 1960s (Melvin Drescher, Meril Flood, Edward H. Chamberlin) after the publication of the first fundamental description of game theory by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944 (see the authoritative second edition: Neumann and Morgenstern ²1947). Roth sees a connection between the two events (see Roth 1993, 199).

behavioral intentions, but the agents' preferences, which are measurable in behavior on the basis of the goods chosen by the agents. At the same time, however, its modeling of preferences does provide a method of describing precisely the actual social behavior of human beings and shows that this behavior cannot satisfactorily be explained with the model of the *homo oeconomicus*. The modeling of prosocial and altruistic behavior in experimental economic research thus makes a crucial contribution to reforming the idea of human beings in the economic sciences, which is based on an egotistical self-interest maximizer. Thus, the second chapter will introduce the findings of experimental economics on the inequity aversion and fairness preference of economic agents, as well as on the formation and sanctioning of social norms and the altruistic punishment of norm violators.

However, the approach of experimental economic research has also provided impulses for the study of human sociality that reach far beyond their own discipline. For example, it presents a solution to the free-rider problem (the 'tragedy of the commons'), which is a central topic of the social sciences: the factors that are responsible for a permanent solution of the conflict between egoistic and altruistic individuals can be isolated in a behavioral experiment with a punishment option. Likewise, the question of whether purely altruistic behavior exists in human beings can be answered in the framework of experimental modelings: it can be observed that social agents sanction the compliance with and enforcement of social norms even if it comes at personal cost. The neuroeconomic studies also offer an explanation for this behavioral pattern: altruistic individuals are hedonistically motivated; they find satisfaction in their decision to punish antisocial behavior.

Looking at the modelings of experimental economics and neuroeconomics, it becomes obvious that they establish a view of human sociality that does not turn a blind eye toward its dark side, the pure egoism of human beings, and yet shows ways of overcoming it. Thus, these studies represent the basic concern of this book, which seeks to describe sociality not only based on a positive anthropology, but also by taking into account the possibility of lapses and errors in the social behavior of human beings. In addition, the experimental studies model a social anthropology that ties in with the debate about the nature and sociality of human beings in political philosophy and social philosophy. The biologically oriented research program of neuroeconomics is looking for a foundation of social order in human biology. But from the

perspective of a methodological concept rooted in natural and social science, it recasts fundamental questions of political and social theory that (in different form) have already been playing an important role in the philosophical justification of the modern state. With the dawn of modernity, the social order of society could no longer be legitimized by referring to a higher authority (God, nature, tradition), as it had been in pre-modern societies. The problem arose of how to prove its legitimacy without taking recourse to the 'ultimate' foundations of faith and knowledge. From the 17th century onward, the normative question about the legitimacy of the social order of human societies has therefore been answered with references to human 'nature.' The 'nature' of human beings represented universal anthropological constants by which the politically shapeable area of human life could be delineated and understood. Consequently, human nature was regarded as *a priori*, something that preceded the formation of social order. In this manner, an existing social order could be justified by referring to a universal anthropology, a practice that, for example, made the establishment of a state power monopoly in the 17th century seem necessary and plausible. The anthropological rationale for social order that emerged in the 17th century can also be found in the Zurich research program "Foundations of Human Social Behavior." Here, too, the subject of 'human nature and sociality' is matter-of-factly interpreted through establishing an empirical model of the connection between (biological) human nature and social order.

But this naturalization of human sociality is also fraught with problems. One problem that arises regarding the interdisciplinary discourse with neuroeconomics is the Zurich behavioral researchers' claim of providing a universal account with their research projects on human sociality. They view their field itself as a new empirical foundational anthropology that can demonstrate that all human social orders – whether they are political, religious, ethical or legal – can be traced back to their biological foundations. The programmatic title of the research program in Zurich "Foundations of Human Social Behavior" is aimed exclusively at the biological foundations of human behavior and, in the actual implementation of the experiments, exclusively at human neurobiology.²⁶ Within the boundaries of such a narrow research

²⁶ Here, the neuroeconomic behavioral experiments in Zurich are linked with a more recent development in neuroscience that increasingly concerns itself with

perspective, the neuroeconomists make unusually expansive explanatory claims. Through their modeling of biological determinants of human behavior, they attempt to give recommendations and prognoses for the political and economic control of human behavior. Thus, they describe the transition from nature to society no longer as the justifiable establishment of political power, but as a natural evolutionary development of society from human biology.

The problem of this naturalistic approach becomes manifest in the anthropological rationale of neuroeconomics. In its description of human nature, neuroeconomics invokes an analogy between human and animal behavior. This analogy is empirically implemented by modeling human biology and behavior in an experimental design that is geared toward gaining insight into cause-and-effect relationships. By adding the referential point of animal behavior to their experimental modelings, these experiments liken the human being to the animal to the point of near indistinguishability. Consequently, neuroeconomics conceives of human beings as creatures that merely 'behave' in reaction to stimuli in a specific behavioral environment. Human sociality is also studied with this explanatory approach. From a neuroeconomic viewpoint, human social behavior is always related to neural processes through which a social stimulus from the environment – e.g. the behavior of a fellow human – is 'evaluated' in the brain and linked to a behavioral motivation. The basic premise of neuroeconomic behavioral research – that human behavior is conditioned by external stimuli and coordinated by neurobiological processes in the very same manner as animal behavior – does not exclude the possibility that there are specific cultural incentives for human behavior that go beyond physical stimuli. But at the same time, this basic premise states that cultural incentives must be studied within a biological-behavioral-scientific approach in a way that renders their function completely analogous to the physical stimuli. In the logic of this research perspective, the interplay of cultural incentives with the motivational systems of human biology is also subject to evolutionary mechanisms and thus is by no means exempt from the regularities and principles of biological life.

researching the 'social brain' (so-called social neuroscience). See for further information the reviews of Matthew Lieberman and Ralph Adolphs (Lieberman 2007; Adolphs 2003).

This naturalistic interpretation of human social behavior cannot be maintained in the framework of an interdisciplinary study that seeks to investigate the *phenomenon* of human sociality. Therefore, the second chapter ends with a phenomenological criticism of the (neuro-) economic experiments, exploring the ways in which they fail to fulfill their own claim of presenting a better description of human sociality based on transdisciplinary integration.

4 THE RELATIONAL APPROACH TO ANTHROPOLOGY IN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

The third chapter starts with Thomas Hobbes' provocative thesis that human beings are unsocial by nature and that their behavior is governed by radical egoism.²⁷ Hobbes' description of human nature has challenged modern social anthropology. At least since his doctrine of the natural state, the statement that human beings are social creatures that naturally turn to others and care for their well-being has been in need of empirical and philosophical justification. Based on Hobbes' rejection of the Aristotelian view that the sociality of human beings is an integral part of their nature, the third chapter provides an overview of various anthropological approaches in current social philosophy and ethics. Here, just like in the studies of experimental economics, human sociality in both its positive and negative form is used as a basis for the analysis of societal interaction processes. In the tradition of the English philosophers of state (Thomas Hobbes, Anthony Shaftesbury, John Locke), these theories of social philosophy attempt to describe the possibilities and limits of human society-formation based on an optimistic or pessimistic assessment of the basic anthropological situation.

This approach can indeed be compared to that of experimental economics, whose modeling of egoistic and altruistic agents gives both positive and negative connotations to the anthropological preconditions of social interaction. However, its approach differs from the perspective of social philosophy in that it tries to comprehend the characteristic of conflict in social interactions through the 'coexistence' of egoistic and altruistic behavior in one and the same context

²⁷ See Hobbes 2002.

of interaction, thus basing itself on both a positive and a negative anthropology. In contrast, the theories of social philosophy show a twofold view of sociality only in their plurality. This means that in order to be able to even begin discussing a similar constellation like in the chapter about social research in the economic sciences, several theories and approaches of social philosophy must be presented and analyzed. It is also important to take into account the fact that the theories of social philosophy apply entirely different methods in describing human sociality. The potential in social philosophy for reflection that goes beyond the empirical studies shows itself where a phenomenological description of the interpersonal encounter begins *before* the state of ordered interaction. In such a phenomenological description, the social dynamics of the interpersonal encounter is not simply reduced to the *juxtaposition* of behavioral types (altruists, egoists) as in empirical studies; instead, the *difference of one from the other* is revealed as the ground for the negative and positive social consequences of the interpersonal encounter.

A move toward relational anthropology can thereby be observed in the more recent debates of social philosophy. Unlike in current economics, the description of sociality is not based on the individual and his preferences, but on a phenomenological analysis of the basic structure of the interpersonal relation: In its relational gestalt, human existence represents the starting point for analyzing the social interactional structure of society. Thus, the dissociation from the methodological individualism of the social sciences first of all implies a phenomenology of human sociality which makes the inner dynamic of the interpersonal relation structure the indicator for the potential for conflict in societal interactions. From the perspective of the philosophical theories analyzed in this book, this relationship structure is predominantly characterized by the plurality and heterogeneity of that which is human. Conceptually, this circumstance is taken into account in that the social relationship is considered to be preceded by an irreducible difference. Describing this difference, and thus becoming aware of aspects of alterity in the processes of societal interaction, then, is what characterizes the humanity of human interaction.

Based on this observation regarding the method of social philosophy, the third chapter discusses the extent to which the structure of differentiation in the social relationship can be the starting point for three very different descriptions of human sociality. The simple emphasis of interpersonal difference does not therefore indicate a determination

of the form that difference can take in the individual philosophical concepts of human society. Social philosophy, which was only established as an autonomous philosophical discipline in the 19th and 20th century, considers human society to be the basic model of social order. It uses the term 'society' as an umbrella term for human coexistence in legal, political, economic, religious and cultural constellations. In engaging with its object, social philosophy can take on a descriptive-analytical as well as a normative-critical function. When it proceeds in a descriptive-analytical way, it examines the individual societal spheres of the social, exposing the conflicts between their respective logics and the human way of life. In contrast, when it proceeds in a critical manner, it posits the normative standard of the successful life and on that basis diagnoses the limitations and deformations under which human beings must live in society. The two approaches are not to be understood as alternatives, but as complementary to each other. This book introduces three different approaches from social philosophy and compares them in regard to their profiling of the interpersonal difference: post-Marxist discourse theory, the critical social theory of recognition, and the social-phenomenological theory of alterity.

(i) The first theoretical approach takes up Thomas Hobbes' description of the human social relationship as antagonistic. The impact of antagonism, however, is not limited to the natural state, but is also of central importance in the theory of the formation of human society. In the radical-democratic theory of society²⁸ developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the interpersonal difference is expressed in the fundamentally irreconcilable confrontation and antagonism of human beings that can only temporarily be channeled into hegemonic power options in the framework of societal interactions. Here, interpersonal difference is interpreted as an inextricable antagonism of societal agents and groups, and is made the starting point for a critique of the liberal, deliberative model of society that assumes the possibility of peaceful coexistence in a rational community engaged in discourse. The radical-democratic theory of society strongly rejects the 'rational idealization' of the liberal model, invoking the genuinely political character of the social relationship: this is considered to be the origin of an irreducible difference and the locus of a fundamentally inextricable antagonism of political positions. The function of this basic

²⁸ See Laclau and Mouffe 2001.

antagonistic pattern of the social relationship consists in revealing the contingency of hegemonic acts of power in the political discourse, and making sure that none of these acts of power can attain unlimited and permanent dominance. Therefore, the antagonistic social relationship is considered to be constitutive of the plurality of political options in a democratic society.

(ii) In the debate about a politics of recognition, in contrast, interpersonal difference is interpreted ethically. Its locus is in the individual's desire for social recognition. For in the wish to be recognized and accepted by others the fundamental moral constitution of the social agent reveals itself: he can achieve an identification with his own identity only insofar as his individual character is met with the affirmation and support of those with whom he interacts.²⁹ In the debate about a politics of recognition, interpersonal difference is therefore interpreted as the mutual dependence of individuals upon one another, and thus as the origin of natural human morality. The analysis of the human desire for recognition therefore also represents the starting point for the moral interpretation of the sense and purpose of societal conflicts. Accordingly, all of these conflicts are ultimately concerned with this very striving for recognition, which makes human beings moral subjects in the first place. Thus, the social conflicts themselves have a moral core. They can only be pacified with a politics of recognition that allows the agents to dissolve or quell these conflicts in a reciprocal and equitable relation of recognition. This point of view is primarily represented in the critical social theory of Axel Honneth³⁰ and the theory of multiculturalism developed by Charles Taylor.³¹ By interpreting the social relationship as an expression of a pacified conflict, both theoreticians follow in the footsteps of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's theory of recognition. Paul Ricœur,³² however, demonstrates the difference from a hermeneutical-phenomenological interpretation of the relation of recognition. He asks how the original asymmetry of the subjects can be preserved in recognition. Responding to the current French debate on the phenomenology of the gift and the practice of *agape* in Christian religion, he develops an understanding of recog-

²⁹ See Honneth 1996, 22.

³⁰ See Honneth 1996.

³¹ See Taylor 1994.

³² See Ricœur 2005.

dition that comprehends it not as a social-critical ideal, but as a lived and actualized gesture.

(iii) In the social-phenomenological theory of alterity developed by Emmanuel Levinas,³³ the sociality of the human being is also interpreted ethically. But Levinas attempts to step beyond the basic Hobbesian paradigm of antagonism in modern political anthropology in an entirely different way than the theories of recognition. He understands the interpersonal difference with its conflict potentials not as a transitional phase on the way to a reconciled and egalitarian societal order in which mutual relationships of recognition determine social togetherness and coexistence. Instead, he posits the difference and not the normative ideal of its reconciliation as the insurmountable starting point of describing the interpersonal relation. The *difference of one from the other* is not primarily a source of conflict, struggle and antagonism among human beings. Rather, it causes a transcendence of the other, an (intersubjective) withdrawal and elusiveness of the other that in turn calls the subject to responsibility. This discovery of an ethical dimension of meaning within the interpersonal encounter is the most significant insight into the social relationship that Levinas develops in the course of his social-phenomenological studies: the protagonists of the interpersonal encounter become indispensable to each other and aware of a non-negotiable responsibility of one for the other. But this concrete and unique relationship of responsibility is lost as soon as the interpersonal encounter is included in the immanence of social orders. Unlike the social theory of recognition, Levinas believes that the act of one person selflessly taking on responsibility for the other excludes a reciprocal or egalitarian relationship between them.³⁴ Instead, the social relationship to the other is interpreted as the site of an intensified relationship of difference, in which precisely this one-sided withdrawal of the other and the asynchronicity of the protagonists of the social relationship provokes the constitution of ethical subjectivity. However, Levinas' positive, ethical appraisal of the interpersonal difference comes at a price. He does not give adequate thought to the social ambivalence of this difference, its potential to lead one to become the enemy of the other *as well as* becoming responsible for the other. His thoughts thus remain indebted to a conception of social

³³ See Levinas 1979; 1981.

³⁴ See Levinas 1998, 82.

humanity that does not pay as much attention to its dark side – social inhumanity – as it does to the responsible approximation to the other which occurs in interpersonal difference. Therefore, Levinas' concept ultimately must be critically referred back to the possibility of a negative anthropology.

The considerations of the third chapter arrive at the following conclusion: If it cannot be made clear in the course of social-philosophical argument how the interpersonal difference is to be interpreted in the social relationship, then it is also impossible for social philosophy to give a definitive interpretation of human sociality or an unequivocal phenomenological description of the phenomenon of social humanity. Therefore, the study asks for a perspective of description that can improve our understanding of the ambiguity of interpersonal difference in distinct anthropological terms, and that can also explicitly differentiate it terminologically in its twofold consequence for social interaction. Only in this way can anthropological reflection prevent an indifference in the description of social humanity toward the phenomena of social inhumanity (violence, murder, war, disrespect etc.). The final thesis of this study, which shall be developed in the last chapter, is that theological anthropology, with its conception of God's neighbor unfolds an understanding of humanity that can live up to this demand.

5 THE DOUBLE DESCRIPTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN THEOLOGY

Within interdisciplinary discourse, theological anthropology is usually challenged like no other perspective of description to prove that its insights are compatible with the principles of empirical or philosophical anthropology, whose perspectives are thought of as neutral and universal. For this reason, many interdisciplinary anthropological studies in theology attempt to prove the particularity of theological anthropology on the basis of its compatibility with a general anthropology, and claim to justify the religious perspective on human beings in this way. In the context of this study, which seeks to offer a phenomenological criticism of *all* attempts to fundamentally describe human beings, the contribution of theology *cannot* be to construct a universal or general perspective on human beings. Rather, theological anthropology, just like its non-theological counterparts, must be aware of the difference between that which it describes as human sociality and that which can

be differentiated from its representations as the phenomenon of social humanity. Therefore, its contribution to interdisciplinary discourse is to be seen in the fact that it offers a representation of human sociality that is particularly aware of the perspectivity and the limits of representation of its object.

It will be my argument in chapter four that theological anthropology can demonstrate this by representing 'human sociality' always in terms of its difference to 'God's sociality' (love of neighbor). Here, the word 'God' is to be understood as an index of theological description indicating that the describer locates herself within a religious horizon of description and therefore is particularly aware of the *contingency* of her intentional approach to the object.³⁵ Thus, theological anthropology not only conforms to the limit of every representation of the phenomenon of sociality, but even makes this limit describable within its own perspective by employing the differentiation of God and the social world (indexical word 'God'). Therefore, its perspective of description is structurally characterized by a double asymmetry regarding its intentional object and the latter's phenomenal elusiveness: the word 'God' not only indicates the intentional elusiveness of the object for its describer (phenomenality of the object) but also the possibility of an elusiveness of the world's objects for human intentionality at all (contingency of the object). Thus, from a methodological standpoint, theology is not less but even more competent to engage in the interdisciplinary discourse on the phenomenon of human sociality than other perspectives, because it provides the discourse with a grammar and phenomenology of description that is sensitive to the phenomenal excess of an object's representation.

Based on this methodological approach, the fourth chapter develops an independent social-anthropological concept. It presupposes that the social is not purely immanent, since God is a partaker in the social field, as the neighbor of human beings. Here, the word 'neighbor' is to be understood as a hermeneutical category whose function for everyday social orientation is reinterpreted in the horizon of God's presence. In everyday speech, the 'neighbor' is a socially close person whose immediate familiarity constitutes the point of reference for the perception of other people. For the most part, this is a person whom

³⁵ See Dalferth 2003, 466–474, here 468.

we have a personal kind of relationship with (friendship, family, partnership). Their function is to organize the social sphere of proximity and distance for us through their presence. The neighbor's presence thus represents a yardstick for both social proximity and the distance between human beings. In the New Testament narratives about the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25–37) and the Last Judgment (Mt 25: 31–46), this function of the neighbor is reinterpreted. Because a stranger with whom no personal, ethical or religious ties exist experiences care, sympathy and help, the immanence of social orientation is transcended. Human community can now open up to outcasts or marginalized persons. They can be identified as neighbors of God, to whom God relates even where interpersonal relations are suspended or denied. Thus, the stories show that through God's devotion to human beings in Jesus Christ, a new form of humanity between human beings is (made) possible.

In connection with the biblical testimony of love of God and neighbor, the fourth chapter therefore focuses on the question of the extent to which the discussion of the (other) human being as a neighbor of God suggests its own description of human sociality. Here, the analysis of Christian love put forth by the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard³⁶ can serve as a guide: He transfers the twofold Christian commandment to love God and one's neighbor into a social-critical phenomenology. Here, he relates the word 'love' not only to partnerships or friendships, but includes in it all forms of interpersonal relation. In this respect, Kierkegaard's concept is methodologically close to the theories of social philosophy discussed in the third chapter, and like them, it argues for a relational anthropology. Nevertheless, his phenomenology of Christian love also represents a decidedly theological description of human sociality. This is because it reflects the double perspective of theological anthropology that, unlike the theories of social philosophy, combines positive and negative anthropology.

With his negative description of interpersonal love, Kierkegaard lays the groundwork for a positive description of Christian love, which is capable of revealing the errors and deficiencies of interpersonal love. His description thereby represents the approach characteristic for theological anthropology, which describes the human being in its status as both sinner and saved. Christian love is described as a revision of the

³⁶ See Kierkegaard 1962.

old social relationship in the light of the new, whose distinctiveness is first realized with the perception of the fellow human as a neighbor of God. The phenomenality of Christian love is thus also expressed by God's invariable presence in interpersonal love. According to Kierkegaard, 'God' functions as the middle term of interpersonal relations of love.³⁷ His nearness and devotion to human beings, as this was actualized in the humanity displayed by Jesus, disrupts the social patterns of relationships and behavior, and realigns them. With his critical distinction between love of self and love of neighbor, Kierkegaard makes clear how this realignment takes place hermeneutically.³⁸

If we were to interpret this distinction in a consequentialist manner, as egoistic and altruistic behavior is distinguished in experimental economics, our interpretation would fall short. Rather than the sacrifice of personal gain, Kierkegaard asks about the selflessness and self-denial of neighborly love. Here, he is thinking of a profound human self-renunciation that goes beyond an externally effective self-sacrifice for the other. The self-renunciation which characterizes neighborly love, however, cannot always be immediately distinguished from selfish love by observing the social phenomena. Kierkegaard demonstrates that selfish love in caring for the other can take on such a subtle form that it appears to be identical with love of neighbor and is actually mistaken for it. Therefore, the phenomenon of love itself is ambiguous, and the impossibility of completely overcoming this ambiguity is what guides Kierkegaard's thoughts. He by no means assumes that the social relationship can be freed from the tension of this ambiguity through Christian love and thus does not offer any vision of replacing interpersonal love with Christian love. However, by placing interpersonal love into the horizon of Christian love, he shows that gaining a new perspective on the social phenomena is possible. This new perspective allows us to use these social phenomena critically to identify the distinction between self-love and love of neighbor. Kierkegaard's theological social anthropology is not a dualist concept that would merely juxtapose the positive and negative description of sociality. Instead, it relates the two concepts to each other in order to guide readers toward changing their behavior in a process of critical discernment. Therefore, Kierkegaard's analysis of Christian love does not

³⁷ See *ibid.*, 58.

³⁸ See Dalferth 2002.

propagate love of neighbor as an ethical ideal or normative demand. Instead, it uses a description of the deficiencies of interpersonal love to show the kind of life reality in which love of neighbor is possible at all. The description of love of neighbor is therefore always connected to a critical revision of those forms of interpersonal love that stand in tense opposition with the ethos of love of neighbor. In this way, his description of human sociality always remains concrete and related to the reality of human life.

The last part of the fourth chapter is devoted to the question of the extent to which Kierkegaard's theological description of human sociality takes up and realizes the initial factual concern of this study, namely, that the description of human sociality can never turn a blind eye to the phenomena of social inhumanity and thus must prevent a possible indifference to humanity and inhumanity. In connection with the reception of Kierkegaard in critical theory, the fourth chapter concludes with an investigation of whether the method of twofold anthropological description demonstrated by Kierkegaard can be interpreted in this vein. Based on Theodor W. Adorno's³⁹ critique of Kierkegaard, Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner and Kenneth Reinhard have attempted to interpret the Christian figure of the neighbor not in the horizon of a phenomenology of humanity, but as a figure of inhumanity.⁴⁰ In dealing with Kierkegaard's analyses of love, Adorno had pointed out that Kierkegaard stylizes love into a supramundane ideal. He accused Kierkegaard of presenting a description of the neighbor that empties the discussion of the neighbor of all empirical significance. Here, Adorno paid particular attention to Kierkegaard's praise of love for a dead person, which he describes as the litmus test for interpersonal love because it is not 'burdened' by any reciprocity between the lover and the loved.⁴¹ Adorno, however, sees this perspective as a basis for the surrender of the social reality of the life of human beings in Kierkegaard's work.

Žižek and his colleagues productively invert Adorno's critique, interpreting Kierkegaard's dissociation from the social reality of life as a negative phenomenology of human sociality. They show how Kierkegaard, in his analysis of Christian love, suspends the ethical interpretation

³⁹ See Adorno 1939/40; 2003.

⁴⁰ See Žižek et al. 2005.

⁴¹ See Kierkegaard 1962, 345–358.

of sociality as the way to a good life and righteous conduct, thus enabling a description of sociality that centers on its downside, inhumanity. Kierkegaard's idealization of love for a dead person thus is to be considered a symbol for the loss of the actual fellow human being in modern society. The neighbor denotes a social void within human society. He functions as a figure manifesting the ostracized, outcast and negated aspects of humanity in society. In this sense, the real presence of the neighbor is no longer comprehensible within the symbolic orders of the social. Here, unlike in Kierkegaard's theological interpretation, the figure of the neighbor does not show the new humanity in tension with the reality of sinful human existence. Instead, it points out an immanent limit of humanity at the site of the human being himself. Thus, it lets the two perspectives of human social life that Kierkegaard had distinguished phenomenologically coincide in the description of the phenomenon of social inhumanity. This new interpretation cannot be found in any theological exegesis of the Christian love commandment. Therefore, in conclusion, the chapter will take up the suggestion of asking about inhumanity as a phenomenal absence of interpersonal sociality and investigate whether the theological perspective, too, is prepared to describe inhumanity in the paradoxical manner of Žižek and his colleagues.

The concluding remarks summarize the results of the individual chapters with regard to the study's initial question. Again, it will be made clear why an interdisciplinary study must refrain from suspending the multiperspectivity of the anthropological descriptions of sociality; to do so would be to abandon the possibility of critical differentiation and the mutual correction of their knowledge claims that lies in the difference between the individual approaches of the disciplines.