Social Constructionism, Logical Positivism, and the Story of Humiliation

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Abstract

This paper explores possible historical connections between the development of philosophical positions and changes in the character and extent of psychologically and sociologically embedded dynamics of humiliation within societies. Particular attention is paid to the philosophical perspectives adopted by logical positivism and social constructionism. The trajectory from logical positivism to social constructionism is inscribed within a historical unfolding of revolutions such as the Enlightenment that dethroned oppressive masters – within the realm of the nation as much as in the domain of epistemology – and that, finally, toppled hierarchy itself. The article proposes that historical uprisings against humiliation, carried out with passion, may explain much of current antagonisms between different epistemological schools.

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This paper explores possible historical connections between the development of philosophical positions and changes in the character and extent of psychologically and sociologically embedded dynamics of humiliation within societies. Particular attention is paid to the philosophical perspectives adopted by logical positivism and social constructionism.

The relationship between logical positivism and social constructionism at the turn of the millennium resembles that between two duellists, neither of which feels able to permit the other to survive and each of which seeks to humiliate the other. Advocates of social constructionism look down on those who 'believe' in logical positivism. The latter, in their turn, laugh about the 'absurdities' entailed in claims such as 'there is only one universal truth, namely that there is no universal truth.'[1] Post-modern relativists accuse their critics of being hopelessly outdated and are met by them with passionate attempts at counter-humiliation. Scholars feel obliged to mark their identity by confirming: 'I belong to the logical positivists,' or, 'I am – on the contrary – an adherent of the social constructionists.' To take just one example, feminist standpoint theory criticises logical positivism and claims that there is no 'neutral' perspective, that the individual perspective is necessarily influenced by the gender position of the individual concerned.

The paper draws upon insights developed during a research project on the notion of humiliation[2] currently being carried out at the University of Oslo.[3] Humiliation has not been

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[3] A series of papers has been written within this research project, see, for example, Lindner, 1999a; Lindner, 1999b; Lindner, 2000a, Lindner, 2000b; Lindner, 2000c; Lindner, 2000d; Lindner, 2000e; Lindner, 2000f; Lindner, 2000g; Lindner, 2000h; Lindner, 2000i; Lindner, 2000j; Lindner, 2000k; Lindner, 2000l; Lindner, 2000m; Lindner, 2000n; Lindner, 2000o; Lindner, 2000p; Lindner, 2000q; Lindner, 2000r; Lindner, 2001.

studied as widely and explicitly[4] as, for example, such topics as 'shame,' 'trauma,' or 'stress'[5] Studies of humiliation are few and are spread over very disparate thematic fields including international relations,[6] love, sex and social attractiveness,[7] depression,[8] society and identity formation,[9] sports,[10] serial murder,[11] war and violence.[12] Humiliation also figures in a few examples of studies focusing upon history, literature and film.[13]

However, significant work has been done by Thomas J. Scheff and Susanne M. Retzinger,[14] who extended their work from shame and rage to violence and Holocaust, and drew attention to the part played by 'humiliated fury' (Scheff, 1997, 11). James Gilligan, a psychiatrist, suggests that humiliation creates violence (Gilligan, 1996),In the field of psychology, Linda Hartling (Hartling & Luchetta, 1999) pioneered a quantitative questionnaire on humiliation (Humiliation Inventory).[15] Vogel and Lazare document 'unforgivable humiliation' as a core obstacle in the treatment of couples (Vogel & Lazare, 1990). Robert L. Hale addresses *The Role of Humiliation and Embarrassment in Serial Murder* (Hale, 1994).[16]

In *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence*,[17] William Ian Miller links humiliation to honour as understood in the Iliad or Icelandic sagas.

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[4] Some authors do not differentiate between humiliation and shame and use it exchangeably, for example Silvan S. Tomkins (1962–1992) whose work is carried further by Donald L. Nathanson who describes humiliation as a combination of three innate affects out of nine, namely as a combination of shame, disgust and dissmell (Nathanson told me that in a personal conversation, 1.10.1999. See Nathanson, 1992; Nathanson, 1987). Also Thomas J. Scheff started out with studying shame (Scheff, 1988; Scheff, in Kemper, 1990; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, Retzinger, & Gordon, 1992).

[5] These are covered by an uncountable number of publications. The following overview over the current state-of-the-art concerning the issue of humiliation is adapted from Lindner, 2000p.

[6] See, for example, Cviic, 1993; Luo, 1993; Midiohouan, 1991; Steinberg, 1991a; Steinberg, 1991b; Steinberg, 1996; Urban, in Prins, 1990.

[7] See, for example, Baumeister, 1986; Baumeister, 1997; Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993; Brossat, 1995; Gilbert, 1997; Proulx et al., 1994; Vogel & Lazare, 1990.

[8] See, for example, Brown, Harris, & Hepworth, 1995; Miller, 1988.

[9] See, for example, Ignatieff, 1997; Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000; Markus, Kitayama, & Heimann, in Higgins & Kruglanski, 1996; Silver et al., 1986; Wood et al., 1994.

[10] See, for example, Hardman et al., 1996.

[11] See, for example, Hale, 1994; Lehmann, 1995; Schlesinger, 1998.

[12] See, for example, Masson, 1996; Vachon, 1993; Znakov, 1989; Znakov, 1990.

[13] See, for example, Peters, 1993; Stadtwald, 1992; Toles, 1995; Zender, 1994.

[14] Scheff, 1988; Scheff, 1990; Scheff, in Kemper, 1990; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, 1997.

[15] A rating from 1 to 5 is employed for questions measuring 'being teased,' 'bullied,' 'scorned,' 'excluded,' 'laughed at,' 'put down,' 'ridiculed,' 'harassed,' 'discounted,' 'embarrassed,' 'cruelly criticized,' 'treated as invisible,' 'discounted as a person,' 'made to feel small or insignificant,' 'unfairly denied access to some activity, opportunity, or service,' 'called names or referred to in derogatory terms,' or viewed by others as 'inadequate,' or 'incompetent.'

[16] See also Lehmann, 1995; Schlesinger, 1998.

[17] The theme of this book is 'that we are more familiar with the culture of honor than we may like to admit. This familiarity partially explains why stories of revenge play so well, whether read as the Iliad,

Miller explains that these concepts are still very much alive today, despite a common assumption that they are no longer relevant. Cohen and Nisbett also examine an honour-based notion of humiliation (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). The honour to which Cohen and Nisbett refer also operates in the more traditional branches of the Mafia or, more generally, in blood feuds. The present author is familiar with such scenarios as a result of working for seven years as a psychological counsellor in Egypt.[18]

The following definition of humiliation, developed in the course of the field research, informs this paper: Humiliation is the 'enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honour or dignity. To be humiliated is to be placed, against your will and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you feel you should expect. Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations. It involves acts of force, including violent force. At its heart is the idea of pinning down, putting down or holding to the ground. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, made helpless' (Lindner, 2000a, 6).[19] Humiliation presents itself as a term that systematically connects many aspects of the human condition: it is inscribed within a societal process (and implies the existence of oppressive hierarchy); it is a process between people including a 'humiliator' and a 'victim' (and implies an interpersonal act), and, not least, it is an emotional state (and implies the occurrence of an experience and feeling).[20]

The paper is organised in two main parts. First the unfolding of the dynamics of humiliation in the course of human history is described, and its relation to pride, honour and dignity as anchored in human rights is discussed. In the second part the epistemological and

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an Icelandic saga, Hamlet, many novels, or seen as so many gangland, intergalactic, horror, or Clint Eastwood movies. Honor is not our official ideology, but its ethic survives in pockets of most all our lives. In some ethnic (sub)cultures it still is the official ideology, or at least so we are told about the cultures of some urban black males, Mafiosi, Chicano barrios, and so on. And even among the suburban middle class the honor ethic is lived in high school or in the competitive rat race of certain professional cultures' (Miller, 1993, 9).

[18] Within a blood feud culture it is honourable and perfectly legitimate to 'heal' humiliation by killing a targeted person. The opposite is true in a society where universal human rights are recognised; 'healing' humiliation means restoring the victim's dignity by empathic dialogue, sincere apology, and finally reconciliation.

[19] The theory of the humiliation process will be developed further in a book I am currently writing in collaboration with Dennis Smith. Smith is professor of sociology at Loughborough University (UK), see some of his publications: Smith, 1991; Smith, 1999; Smith, 2000b; Smith, 2000c; Smith, 2000a

[20] Humiliation is a macro-social process, an interpersonal mechanism, and an emotion experienced by individuals and groups. Common sense language uses the same word, namely 'humiliation,' for the act and the experience of humiliation. In order to make this article readable, it will largely follow this practice and expect the reader to discern from the context which kind of humiliation is meant at the given moment. See also Smith, 2000a, and Silver et al., 1986.

moral transition from pre-modernity to post-modernity is inscribed within the historical context presented in the earlier part of the paper.

From pride to honour and to human rights

According to the prevailing view among the 52 people interviewed in Northern Europe during the pilot study for the project here presented,[21] humiliation is any form of illegitimate 'putting down.' The description of the process of 'putting down' and its implications may be briefly elaborated so as to give an overall view of the history of humiliation and its relationship to the development of human history in general. This will provide an introduction to the basic orientation towards humiliation as a social process and a psychological condition that informs the present author's analysis.

Humiliation as 'illegitimate putting down' may be deconstructed in three parts, namely (a) putting down (abasement, subjugation, degradation), (b) human beings and nature, and (c) in the absence of legitimacy (entailing the violation of human dignity and/or environmental sustainability).

These three elements of humiliation did not come into existence simultaneously but sequentially. Table 1[22] indicates that the three elements of humiliation entered the cultural repertoire of human kind in three phases that coincided, approximately, with specific advances in technological and organisational capacity, and specific shifts in the balance of power between (a) humankind and nature and (b) between human groups.[23]

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[21] In an initial pilot study from 1997 to 1998 52 texts were collected from people chosen by chance from friends and colleagues. Everybody was asked about his/her understanding of the term humiliation. Some interviews were taped, some lasted for 10 minutes, others for two hours, some text fragments stem from letters or e-mails which the present author received long time after having opened the subject with a person, indicating that people were thinking about it for a long time, keeping the subject back in their heads and wrestling with it (see also Lindner, 1998, 3). Later on 216 qualitative interviews were carried out, from 1998 to 1999 in Africa (in Hargeisa, capital of 'Somaliland,' in Kigali and other places in Rwanda, in Bujumbura, capital of Burundi, in Nairobi in Kenya, and in Cairo in Egypt), and from 1997 to 2000 in Europe (in Oslo in Norway, in Germany, in Geneva, and in Brussels). The topic has been discussed (mostly via email) with more than 400 researchers working in related fields.
[22] Adapted from my manuscript 'Humiliation and the Human Condition: Mapping a Minefield' (Lindner, 2000d), forthcoming in October 2000 in 'Human Rights Review,' and from Lindner, 2000m.
[23] In 'What Every Negotiator Ought to Know: Understanding Humiliation' (Lindner, 2000a) this analysis is based on William Ury's anthropological work (Ury, 1999).

In hunter and gatherer societies, early intimations of the idea of 'putting down' or subjugation entered the cultural repertoire through small-scale tool making. Through the use of tools the idea of debasing, abasing, lowering, or degrading was 'invented.'[24] Nature and the abiotic world of material objects were opened up for human subjugation. This subjugation was still mild in its practical expression, however. Environmental degradation was not yet as wide-spread as later in human history. More importantly, this subjugation did not yet include human beings – hunter and gatherer societies were relatively egalitarian. However, the idea of 'putting down' was born and could be expanded.

During the next phase, that started with the advent of agriculture around 10,000 years ago,[25] the existence of a material surplus enabled hierarchical 'civilisations' to develop. In this way, the idea of subjugation was extended from nature to human beings. Some human beings instrumentalised others, using them as tools. Masters and underlings both regarded this order as highly legitimate, one ordained by divine authority. Sometimes underlings rebelled: not to dismantle hierarchy, but to replace the master. Thus the question of whether hierarchy was legitimate or not was not part of the cultural repertoire of this period (see Table 1). During the third phase, characterised by the current global information society and the advent of human rights, the idea has become widespread that subjugating human beings (and, within certain limits, the subjugation of nature) is illegitimate and morally wrong.

THE THREE ELEMENTS OF HUMILIATION

	Subjugating nature (since many thousands of years ago)	**and human beings** (since about ten thousand years ago)	**is illegitimate** (since very recently)
Phase 1	X		
Phase 2	X	X	
Phase 3	X	X	X

Table 1: The three elements of humiliation

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[24] Language, as well, could be seen as tool that subjugates nature.
[25] See, for example, Ury, 1999.

Pride and pristine equality[26]

Hunters and gatherers and, also, nomadic herdsmen such as in traditional Somali society do not have much experience of living in highly stratified hierarchical societies. On the contrary, they live in a condition of pristine equality, yet untouched by later developments of stratified social and societal orders. Most Somalis, for example, describe themselves as proud, free, and noble nomads.[27] The anthropologist William Ury was impressed by egalitarian structures of a similar kind, which entail decision making by consensus, when he studied the Bushmen in Africa and tribes in Malaysia (Ury, 1999).

Abdirazak A. Osman, a Somali intellectual and author,[28] wrote to the present author (personal communication, 5th October 1999, capitalisation in original) that 'Somalis are an extremely proud people. This had and has both positive and negative sides. During slavery and colonisation Somalis lost and gained a lot. Perhaps more than the rest of other Africans. Because of their pride they succeeded in holding onto their language, culture and religion, where virtually ALL the other black Africans "accepted" the languages and religions of the European masters. Somalia is the only black African nation-state whose national language is hers except for Ethiopia who was NEVER colonized... Being a nomad is being noble…A Somali wouldn't work as a garbage collector, gravedigger, brick layer, etc. even if he never learned to read. In fact I remember a doorman (my neighbour's house back in Somalia) who beat his employer who shouted at him in the middle of the night to open the door. Of course he lost his job and probably went to jail for it but he KEPT his dignity and pride: I work here, but I am NOT your slave!'

Proud and independent nomads are not humiliated, this is their message; their motto is: 'A man is killed, not humiliated.'

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[26] This section is adapted from Lindner, 2000a.

[27] For literature about Somalia, see Ahmed, 1995; Lewis & Mayall, 1995; Lewis, 1994a; Lewis, 1994b; Lewis, 1961. Although outcast groups, occupational specialists such as shoemakers or barbers, live among the 'noble' Somalis, they are not integrated into any hierarchical administration, but 'adopted' by the pastoralist group among which they live. Furthermore there is a 20% segment of farmers among the population of Somalia – also they live alongside with nomadic tribes, who have a tradition of raiding them, but not administrating them.

[28] See his book *In the Name of the Fathers* (Osman, 1996).

Honour humiliation

Honour humiliation is a core characteristic of hierarchical 'civilisations' as they were erected on the basis of the surplus created by agriculture. The Euphrates and the Nile were among the first to nurture such agriculture-based civilisations. In these civilisations the subjugation of nature through small-scale tool making was expanded to include another kind of subjugation, unfamiliar to former egalitarian hunter and gatherer societies, namely the subjugation of people through people: some human beings (the 'slaves' or 'underlings') were instrumentalised by others (the 'masters'). In a hierarchy everybody acquires a rank associated with the person's or group's 'honour.' This honour is usually defended against humiliation, in other words against honour humiliation.

Honour humiliation entails roughly four variants.[29] A 'master' employs a strategy of what might be called 'conquest humiliation' for subjugating formerly equal neighbours into inferiors. As soon as the hierarchy is in place, the 'master' uses 'reinforcement humiliation' to keep it in place. The latter may range from seating orders according to honour and rank, to bowing rules for inferiors in front of their superiors, but may also include brutal measures such as customary beatings or even killings to 'remind underlings of their place.' 'Relegation humiliation' is used to push an already low-ranking 'underling' even further down, and 'exclusion humiliation' means eliminating offending parties from the hierarchy altogether, in other words exiling or killing them. The Holocaust and genocide around the world are gruesome examples of the last-named form of humiliation.

The fieldwork in Rwanda 1999 brought the present author in contact with the long-standing hierarchical system in this region, a system that was reminiscent of pre-World War Germany. Both, Germany and Rwanda, were also scenes of brutal Holocausts. In Rwanda Tutsi and moderate Hutu were the object of an orchestrated campaign of genocide at the hands of extremist Hutu in 1994,[30] in Germany the Holocaust victims were Jews and other 'unwanted people.' The backdrop for such atrocities was in both cases a hierarchy thoroughly embedded in cultural and personal structures. To quote the words of a Hutu from the North of Burundi, now an international intellectual,[31] 'A son of a Tutsi got the conviction that he is born to rule, that he was above the servants, while a son of a Hutu learned to be convinced

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[29] See also Smith 2001

[30] See Des Forges & Human Rights Watch, 1999 (also on http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/); Destexhe, 1995; Gourevitch, 1998; Guichaoua, 1994; Kamuka, 1995; de Lame, 1997; Ngakoutou, 1994; O'Halloran, 1995; Prunier, 1995; Reyntjens, 1994; Scherrer, 1996; Rakiya, De Waal, & African Rights, 1995.

[31] He wishes to stay anonymous. The interview was carried out in December 1998.

that he was a servant, therefore he learned to be polite and humble, while a Tutsi was proud. A Tutsi learned that he could kill a Hutu at any time.' He added, 'The concept of humiliation is related to tradition and culture: Tutsi are convinced that they are "born to rule," they cannot imagine how they can survive without being in power.'

History shows that in hierarchical 'civilisations,' be it the Roman Empire or any other stratified order, the 'masters' or those 'born to rule' usually retain the pride of 'noble' and aristocratic warriors, in other words, they reserve a fair amount or pristine freedom for themselves, while prescribing strict and binding honour codes to their underlings; in other words, 'popes' did not necessarily abide by their own rules, but they imposed them with merciless rigidity onto those below..

Human-rights humiliation[32]

Underlings rose and, if they were victorious, their leaders enjoyed life as the new masters (a recent example being the socialist *apparatchik* elite in the Soviet bloc). Under such conditions, revolutions often meant no change for the better for the majority of underlings who were still expected to accept their abasement. However, the current spread of the ideal of human rights may be associated with a profoundly new and different kind of revolution, namely the continuous rise of underlings who do not allow masters to settle in their role.

Satellite television and the Internet mean that local evidence of conflict, cruelty and abuse perpetrated by oppressive regimes have a better chance than ever before to become visible to global audiences; oppression is more difficult to perpetrate for long periods without being observed by third parties.[33] Arjun Appadurai, in his book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, explains how the global movement of media technologies reaches into every aspect of individual lives and how this, together with the unprecedented mass migration of peoples across the world, defines 'the core of the link between globalization and the modern' (Appadurai, 1996, 4). The human rights movement, conceptualised here as continuous revolution, cannot be 'finished off' by 'masters' as easily as revolutions in former times. On the contrary, it is slowly gaining ground. Just recently the international human rights movement succeeded in drawing increased attention to the economic, social and cultural rights that are part of the parcel of human rights, supplementing

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[32] This section is adapted from Lindner, 2000m.
[33] See, for example, Pavri, 1997; Watkins & Winters, 1997.

the attention which political and civil rights have already received during the past decades, for example by such organisations as Amnesty International.[34]

Today's knowledge revolution[35] intensifies the push for continuous fluidity and change. It makes rigid servility dysfunctional, since knowledge, particularly if linked to motivation and creativity,[36] thrives not on subdued mental forces but on people who have a sense of unchained competence and self-possession.[37] Motivation and creativity are preconditions for the creation of innovative new products, services and strategies in a globally competitive market place. Patronage from a 'master,' even if yearned for by a 'slave,' is outdated. Even people who would like to keep enjoying the 'protection' entailed in 'slavery' are no longer encouraged to do so. Hence the bitter lament of many inhabitants of the ex-DDR: 'We were prisoners in the DDR, yes, we did not have much, yes, but we had a securely planned life, we did not have to worry! Now risk awaits us everywhere and we have to make decisions all the time!'[38]

Aside from its dysfunctionality, wherever creativity is sought as a resource, humiliation has also come to be regarded as immoral. Honour humiliation is opposed in any human rights context on the grounds that it undermines human rights. It is no longer seen as

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[34] See for example the Human Rights Internet (HRI) on www.hri.ca. The main findings during the fieldwork in Africa was the astonishingly high amount of hope that human rights inspire among the less privileged in the world, a hope, that, if disappointed, presents itself in the form of bitterness, a bitterness which betrays precisely how much hope had been invested. This bitterness is akin to the impatience of human rights campaigners in the West – also this impatience betrays the very ideals' existence. While every human rights advocate would agree that growing bitterness and impatience are discouraging signs of the rising importance of human rights, there are also encouraging signs: a state that abuses human rights cannot anymore trust that its sovereignty will prevent inference from the global level; for example, dictators from around the world observe with special attention how Chile's General Augusto Pinochet was apprehended in London; the adoption of the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court on 17th July 1998 represented a historic breakthrough for international criminal justice; the recent campaign against personal landmines or WTO protests may be taken as other examples.

[35] See, for example, Ury, 1999; see also the work on the information age by Manuel Castells, 1996; Castells, 1997a; Castells, 1997b.

[36] 'We must stimulate creativity within our organization and in external research institutions, across traditional organisational barriers and traditional scientific disciplines, to enhance both conceptual and technological innovation.' These are the words of Egil Myklebust, leading Norsk Hydro, one of the largest Norwegian corporations (Myklebust, 1999, 6). See for the *Social Psychology of Creativity* Teresa Amabile, 1983 and Amabile, 1996.

[37] 'Social structures in the past have developed along lines of control of material or human resources, since in order to belong to the Jet Set one needed to be able to afford first-class airfare to far-off locations. But in cyberspace, the ends of the earth are only milliseconds away: social status depends on one's ability to outshine the information flood generated by competition among millions of websites. Never in history has the value of creativity and intelligence been so great (McKee, 1997, 2).

[38] Personal account from a DDR citizen to the author, 1995. See also the wide attention that the term 'risk society' attracts (Beck, 1987; Beck, 1992; Beck, 2000).

'normal' to regard some people as 'sub-human' (at the bottom of social hierarchies) while others are 'super-human' (at the top). The notion of universal human rights spreads the revolutionary idea that the powerful should respect the weak. It dignifies everybody's hopes, wishes and personal sensitivities.[39] Figure 1 and Table 2 summarise this transformation of attitudes and show how achievement of a 'line of equality' is the ultimate objective of the human rights revolution, not merely the replacement of the old master by a new one within a structure that remains hierarchical.

THE TRANSITION FROM HIERARCHY TO EQUALITY

Master   Top of hierarchy

Line of equality

Underling   Bottom of hierarchy
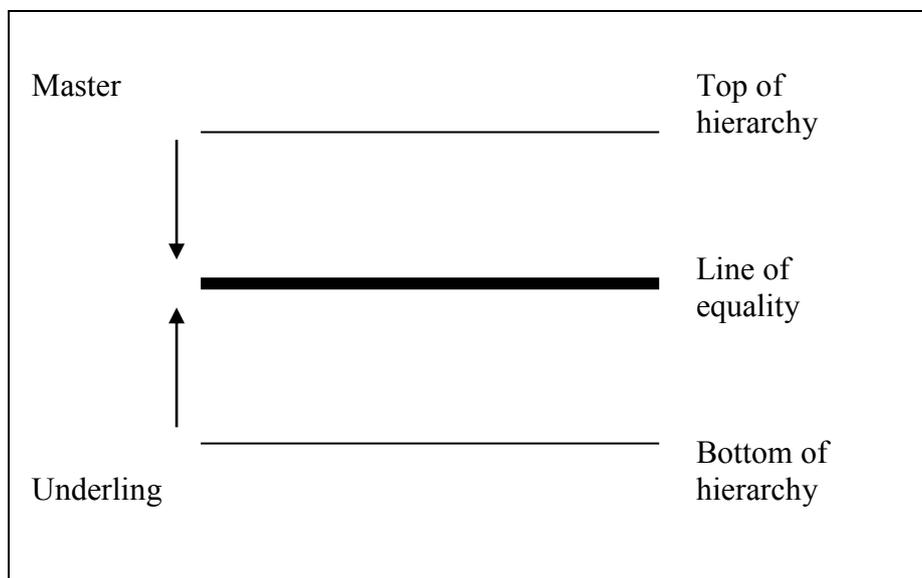
Figure 1: The transition from hierarchy to equality

Table 2 illustrates how the old order of legitimate humiliation is diametrically opposed by the new order of illegitimate humiliation. The two orders are in direct contradiction to each other. While in former times, for example, 'breaking the will of the child' was seen as 'good for the child,'[40] and husbands around the world were encouraged to beat their wives because 'this would be good for them,' such practices are slowly receding. Rape within marriage or honour-killings,[41] until recently accepted as a 'private matter,' are increasingly viewed as violation of a new public ethos, human rights. The human rights revolution means nothing less than the humbling of former masters so that they accept with a new humility their

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[39] See for example Bauman, 1993; Ignatieff, 1997; Weiner, 1998.
[40] See, for example, Miller, 1983.
[41] See for example the Human Rights Internet (HRI) on www.hri.ca.

position at the level of equality, and the lifting up of former underlings to a new dignity at the same level of equality; it means the eradication of both the top and the bottom of hierarchy, the annihilation of the notion that there are lesser human beings and higher human beings.

HONOUR AND DIGNITY: TWO MODALITIES OF HUMILIATION

'Honour humiliation' in hierarchical agrarian and industrial societies: Human beings are subjugated and turned into tools within an imposed hierarchy. Humiliation is a 'normal' device of hierarchy-building, meaning that honour is attacked, defended, won and lost within a social hierarchy of dominant and subordinate groups, and this is accepted as legitimate.
'Human-rights humiliation' in today's global and egalitarian knowledge society: The subjugation of human beings, including their use as tools or their destruction, is morally condemned. Human-rights humiliation can be defined as the 'illegitimate' violation of human rights and the infliction of moral and emotional injury. There is a deep link between dignity and human rights insofar as humiliation attacks a person's core dignity as a human being, and inflicts very deep emotional wounds.

Table 2: Honour and dignity: two modalities of humiliation

To summarise, the process of human rights ideals permeating all societal relations – firstly as hope and only much later in practice – is a three-fold interconnected development: it is (1) a societal trend, (2) a functional requirement, and (3) a moral ought. It is a trend that we can observe locally and globally (in spite of transition problems), it is also a requirement for the success of relations between equals in general and for corporate success in particular (since human nature indicates that the human psyche releases its resources efficiently only under conditions where motivation and creativity can thrive), and it is a moral norm that is expressed by human rights codes.

However, human rights are not easy to put in practice as, just to give one example, the increasingly large gap between the rich and the poor both globally and locally demonstrates.[42] Furthermore, traditional hierarchical societies or organisations are difficult to supersede. They are, for example, usually much more clearly structured than modern teams. Wherever old-fashioned hierarchy is the dominant organisational form, leaders are the sole source of goals

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[42] Economic rights are as much part of human rights as, for example, political rights.

and strategies and discontent in the lower ranks, if aired, is suppressed or regulated by top-down decisions (see also Geert Hofstede's notion of high power distance[43]).[44] This changes radically as soon as hierarchies begin to fragment or decompose and *Creative Networks* (Smith, 2000a) replace them (entailing low power distance).

The current task faced in many parts of the global community is how to engineer the transition to Creative Networks at all organisational levels and in all relevant relationships. This is a struggle to be found within all kinds of organisations, within both the public and private sectors of society (including institutions such as the corporate sector, or marriage, or child rearing). It is to be expected, as with all transitions, that the initial phase of such a process of change will be fraught with problems. Frustrations from past humiliations, for example, will linger on and seek outlets, meeting leaders who still lack the communication skills with which to handle the problem in a respectful and egalitarian manner.

Formerly unfamiliar questions arise, such as: what does equality mean? Does it mean that everybody can do what she wants? How are rules legitimised? Who has authority? What is right or wrong? John Rawls in his renowned book *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 1971) discusses such issues, as does Avishai Margalit in his book *The Decent Society* (Margalit, 1996). In an essay entitled 'On Humiliation,' Frederic Schick introduces *The Decent Society* (Schick, 1997, 131, italics in original) with the following words: 'A good society is a *decent* society, and a society that is decent is one whose institutions don't humiliate people… Many people must have thought it, but no philosopher ever proposed it. Philosophers speak of justice instead, a very different ideal.' Donald C. Klein writes in his article 'Humiliation Dynamic: An Overview' (Klein, 1991, 93): 'The Humiliation Dynamic is a powerful factor in human affairs that has, for a variety of reasons, been overlooked by students of individual and collective behaviour. It is a pervasive and all too often destructive influence in the behavior of individuals, groups, organizations, and nations.'[45]

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[43] See, for example, Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 1989. Power distance is 'the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept that power is distributed unequally' (Hofstede & Bond, 1984, 419). Hofstede carried out research on IBM employees around the world and found that there are countries where subordinates follow their superiors' orders rather blindly, where organisations are centralised, with many levels within the hierarchy, and where employees on the lower levels tend to have low levels of professional qualification – these are the countries with a high power distance, for example Mexico, South Korea, or India. Countries with low power distance have rather decentralised organisational structures and flat hierarchies, and highly qualified employees are to be found at any level of the hierarchy (for example USA, or Scandinavia).

[44] This paragraph is adapted from Lindner, 2000m.

[45] The *Journal of Primary Prevention* pioneered work on humiliation in 1991 (Klein, 1991), and 1992 (Barrett & Brooks, 1992; Smith, 1992). In 1997 the journal *Social Research* devoted a special issue to the topic of humiliation, stimulated by *The Decent Society* by Avishai Margalit, 1996. Related to

The rule of human rights, or justice, or decency, may have to be understood not as a steady state or fixed condition but as a never-ending struggle. In order to prevail, this struggle has to be continued by whoever feels that these principles are violated. Maintaining the rule of human rights depends upon continually guarding the empty throne of the absolute king against all those people who would like to seize it. The most difficult task for guardians is to convince others that they are but guardians and not hypocritical usurpers of the throne themselves. Asian values, for example, are depicted as opposing Western human rights values on the grounds that the latter are nothing more than yet another form of imperial domination, nothing more than a deceitful attempt by the West to usurp the throne.[46]

How is the development of the epistemological stances of logical positivism and social constructionism related to the historic development just described? The next section of this paper presents a possible answer to that question.

From pre-modernism to modernism and post-modernism

As is well understood, modernist thought has roots in the Enlightenment (the rise of human thought from the 'dark' or 'medieval' ages), characterised by new methods of logic (Descartes, Locke, Kant), empiricism (Bacon) and, the emerging scientific method (Newton). The Enlightenment was a revolution, an uprising of individual rationality against 'all forms of totalitarianism – royal and religious' (Gergen, 2000a, 2). Kenneth Gergen describes how the

Margalit's approach is literature in philosophy on 'the politics of recognition,' claiming that people who are not recognized suffer humiliation and that this leads to violence (see also Honneth, 1997 on related themes). Max Scheler set out these issues in his classic book *Ressentiment* (Scheler, 1961).

[46] Mohamad Mahathir, the Malaysian Prime Minister, is one of the advocators of this view. One of the most salient arguments in this line is the criticism that human rights conditionality puts poor countries at a disadvantage and is hypocritically meant to protect Western business interests. See for a deeper discussion, for example Donald J. Puchala's talk on *The Ethics of Globalism*: 'A current version of the contest between moral relativism and moral universalism is being played out in the human rights forums of the United Nations. It generated great heat at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993, where representatives of a number of African, Asian, and some Middle Eastern governments directly challenged the universality of the tenets of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These dissenters argued that the world organization's human rights regime is not universal because moral universality is impossible in a culturally diverse world. The Declaration, they claimed, is Western in philosophical content, and enforcing it in their countries constitutes outside interference. For their part, Western governments stood steadfastly behind moral universalism. They attributed unsavory political motives to their non-Western detractors and argued that what was true and universal when the Declaration was signed in 1948 remained true and universal in 1993. U.S. Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, told delegates at the Vienna Conference that "we cannot let cultural relativism become the last refuge of repression."' (Puchala, 1995, 4). The Bangkok Declaration of April 1993 saw governments from Asia and the Pacific agree that human rights are to be considered in a context

rebels defended their uprising: 'As it was argued, within each individual lies a bounded and sacred principality, a domain governed by the individual's own capacities for careful observation and rational deliberation. It is only my thought itself, proposed Descartes, that provides a certain foundation for all else' (2).

This revolution is related in key respects to the historical development of humiliation that has just been outlined. In the previous part of the paper, it was argued that within hierarchical civilisations underlings sometimes rebelled, although their intention was, typically, not to dismantle hierarchy as such, but rather to replace the master. In a sense, this is precisely what happened during the Enlightenment. In place of royal absolutism or religious totalitarianism, reason was made into the master. Or, in other words, the rebels claimed that reason gave them the justification to rebel, and they no longer regarded God as highest authority. In order to undermine the oppressive rulers of their time (who, in their view, instrumentalised God and used the deity to justify their actions the rebels used reason as their instrument and justification. They did not, however – and this is a major point – dismantle hierarchy. Instead, they implemented an alternative masterly discourse, the discourse of reason presented as the highest justification. They relegated divinity to the lower ranks, below reason..

Ironically, becoming a master is not entirely pleasant for a rebel. Initially, it brings an upsurge of pristine pride as the victor nakedly confronts an anarchic world, a feeling of joyful jubilation because of the ex-underling's newly won freedom. However, this is swiftly followed by a feeling of fear-filled bereavement, filled with regret for the soothing layers of protection that the old master used to provide. That was part of the 'old' package: being dominated by others meant suffering humiliating wounds but it also meant receiving the master's protection (especially against other potential masters). Humbleness brought not just humiliation but also security. Hegel deplores the loneliness of the new self and 'the tragic fate that befalls certainty of self which aims at being absolute, at being self-sufficient' (Hegel, 2000, 166). He exclaims, 'It is consciousness of the loss of everything of significance in this certainty of itself, and of the loss even of this knowledge or certainty of self – the loss of substance as well as of self; it is the bitter pain which finds expression in the cruel words, "God is dead."'

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that takes account of 'the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds' (8).

Logical positivism and the struggle of masters within a hierarchical order

The first logical positivists confronted the most absolute argument that can be imagined, namely that God was higher than them. How could they succeed in toppling God? We may assume that they had to struggle hard when trying to replace totalitarian sovereigns who justified their absolute dominance by allying with an absolute God. Faced with a humble populace and an arrogant master, would these rebels have been well-advised to say aloud: 'Oh, everything is relative, we do not know anything really. Perhaps absolute rulers are right to oppress their people. Perhaps God ordains all that – or perhaps not. Who knows? Everybody has his or her perspective, everything is relative …' The result would have been a clear-cut outcome: no revolution, no Enlightenment revolution would have happened.

The claim of absoluteness, based on God, cannot be uprooted with soft relativism; it can only be uprooted with the same absoluteness. The Church called such the Enlightenment revolutionaries heretics, and this was, undoubtedly, correct. Logical positivists implemented a hierarchy of reason that undermined the old order. Heresy means that the pristine primordial pride of God is being humiliated, and with it the whole intricate structure of honourable ranks that derive their legitimacy from a supreme God. Heresy, as understood from the perspective of an absolute church rule, is thus the utmost humiliation, attempted by evil or ignorant rebels against God.

It was, perhaps, the success of technology that seduced absolute rulers to abandon God as the highest authority and side with reason. In this way 'divinely ordained' rulers were lured into their own demise. While the traditional status symbols of God's 'chosen ones' were gold and spices, technological advances due to science (the application of reason) brought new status symbols. As more and more rulers succumbed to the temptation of building their authority upon the demonstrable power capacity that flowed from their 'modern' technology, so they unwittingly undermined their own supreme divine legitimacy. Figure 2 illustrates how the position of the master formerly occupied by the absolute ruler who based his reign on divine ordination, was filled by former underlings who called upon reason to provide an even more absolute justification.

To summarise: the totalitarian ruler (together with God) was abased to the second rank; underlings who derived their legitimacy from reason took the place of the master; hierarchy stayed in place. It was still possible, however, to believe in God. Yet, there was only one image of God left that fitted into the new order, namely a God who legitimised this order and agreed to His own demise. God was called upon to provide a secondary support function. Rational man now sat upon the throne. God was re-designed as a Being whose will

was that human kind should excel in conquering the world through its own devices. The result was a strong ideological edifice for science, the state and business. Whether it was a question of conquering the American West or affronting some other 'new horizon,' human success and God's grace were seen as identical.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT: REASON REPLACES GOD AS MASTER

Master ————————————— Top of hierarchy

↕ Totalitarian ruler and God
Underlings and 'Reason'

↓

━━━━━━━━━━━━━ Line of equality

↑

Underling ————————————— Bottom of hierarchy
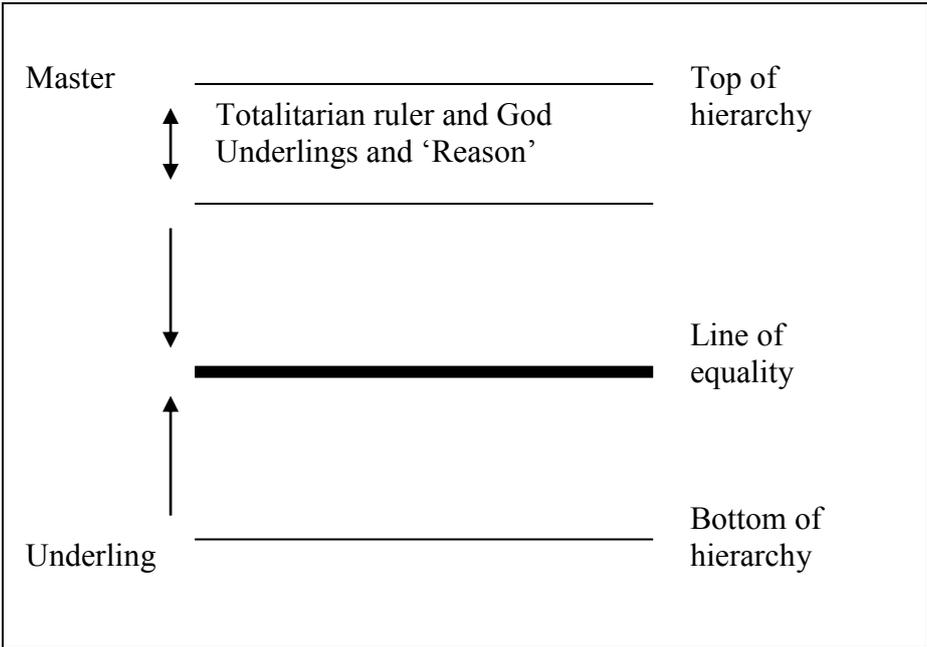
Figure 2: The enlightenment: Reason replaces God as master

Logical positivism and the demise of hierarchy

The Enlightenment rebels who displaced God and despotic rulers at the head of the social hierarchy faced another challenge as soon as the proponents of reason extended their arguments beyond the claim that reason is superior to faith. In particular, 'danger' lurked when the claim was made that all human beings are equal in their capacity to engage in rational activity. This claim entailed the seeds for a second revolution that undermined the victors of the earlier revolution. The first revolution toppled the absolutist master, the second revolution set out to topple hierarchy itself – and the roots for this second revolution were planted by the first. The experts had to yield to the common man (and, in turn the common man had also to make room on equal terms for his female equivalent). As Moscovici puts it,

'…at the beginning, people took an interest in the biases of social knowledge and compared "experts" with "novices", leaning on the distinction between "truth" and "mere opinion". Now, the notion of collective and social representations presupposes that all people are "rational", that they are rational because they are social, and so on' (Moscovici, 1997, 2).

Just as logical positivism was associated with the first revolution, so social constructionism is allied with the second. As Gergen explains, social constructionist scholarship is 'emancipatory' as well as 'expository' (Gergen, 2000a, 7), which is radical talk. Gergen writes about constructionist reflections, 'In their emancipatory function, they single out various aspects of the taken-for-granted world – the existence of a "cold war" or a "space race," the distinction between genders, the existence of mental illness or addiction, for example – and attempt to demonstrate their socially constructed character. They attempt to show, in Bateson's terms, that "the map is not the territory," and thereby free us from the grip of traditional intelligibilities; they invite alternative formulations, the creation of new and different realities.'

The revolutionary taste of social constructionism becomes even more apparent in Gergen's comment that 'Various research strategies may … be used to give voice to otherwise marginalized, misunderstood, or deprivileged groups. Thus far, the scholars have occupied themselves primarily with exploring the ways in which various voices are silenced' (Gergen, 2000a, 10[47]). In 'The Place of the Psyche in a Constructed World' Gergen, 2000b, heightens the tone (2): '…the problem of professional psychology does not lie in its discursive commitments per se, but in its claims to objective grounding for such commitments. Truth claims, it is reasoned, operate to silence competing voices; the discourse of objectivity and political totalitarianism are allied. The constructionist critic thus functions to unmask the literary and rhetorical strategies responsible for the sensibility (objectivity, intelligibility, felicity) of propositions about the mental world.' This is the voice of oppressed underlings, and their ambitious advocates.

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[47] Gergen presents more details: 'For example, Calas and Smirchich (1991) have used feminist deconstructive strategies to expose rhetorical and cultural means by which the concept of leadership has been maintained as a "seductive game." Martin (1990) has looked at the suppression of gender conflicts in organizations, showing how organizational efforts to "help women" have often suppressed gender conflict and reified false dichotomies between public and private realms of endeavor. Mumby and Putnam (1992) have demonstrated the androcentric assumptions underlying Simon's concept of "bounded rationality." And Nkomo (1992) has analyzed how the organizational concept of race is embedded in a Eurocentric view of the world, and should be re-visioned. While this form of analysis is essential to a postmodern organizational science, innovative practices or methodologies are also required to bring forth the marginalized voices in the organization. Practices must be developed that

Commenting on this revolution or 'paradigms debate'[48] Michael Quinn Patton, 1990 warns evaluators of research projects that it is as hot-blooded as any former revolution. Masters do not like to be dethroned: 'The debate is rooted in philosophical differences about the nature of reality…The point here is to alert evaluators to the intensity of the debate. It is important to be aware that *both scientists and non-scientists often hold strong opinions about what constitutes credible evidence*. Given the potentially controversial nature of methods decisions, evaluation researchers interested in using qualitative methods need to be prepared to explain and defend the value and appropriateness of qualitative approaches' (Patton, 1990, 477-8, italicisation in original).

Patton describes one of the 'enemies' of this latest revolution as being the blind idolisation of 'pure reason' in the form of the quasi-religious veneration of numbers. 'It is … helpful to understand the special seductiveness of numbers in modern society. Numbers convey a sense of precision and accuracy even if the measurements that yielded the numbers are relatively unreliable, invalid, and meaningless. The point, however, is not to be antinumbers. The point is to be *promeaningfulness*. Thus, by knowing the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative data, the evaluator can help stakeholders focus on really important questions rather than, as sometimes happens, focusing primarily on how to generate numbers' (479).

These are quotations from the thick of battle. Toppling the old master is the name of the game, and, even more, toppling hierarchy itself. However, great suspicion among underlings concerning whoever occupies the position of the master is to be expected. Too often in history the master has merely been replaced by a new master, and hierarchy has survived. Toppling hierarchy means turning the palace of the king into a museum and not letting anybody occupy it.

Kenneth Gergen has taken up the role of the guardian of the palace. His function is to inform everybody that the palace has indeed been turned into a museum. He fights off anybody who wants to sneak into it and usurp the former master's position. And there are many co-rebels he suspects of wishing to do precisely that: constructivism, for example, and social constructivism. He reminds potential usurpers that the palace should be kept empty and

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enable the unspoken positions to be expressed and circulated, and to enter actively into decision making processes' (Gergen, 2000a, 10).

[48] The term 'paradigm' is closely connected with the name of Thomas S. Kuhn, 1962, philosopher of science, and his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Patton refers to, among others, Patton, 1986; Fetterman, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Reichardt & Cook, in Cook & Reichardt, 1979; Rist, 1977.

people should deliberate among themselves without any master interfering: '…the chief focus of interest for the constructionist is micro-social process. The constructionist rejects the dualistic premises that give rise to "the problem of mental functioning." The site of explanation for human action moves to the relational sphere' (Gergen, 1994, 69).

The constructivist opponent (or, more politely, rivals) include, for example Jean Piaget's constructivist approach that describes stages of cognitive development,[49] George Kelly's constructive alternativism,[50] that focuses on how the 'individual privately construes, cognizes, or interprets the world,' as well as the radical constructivism of Ernst von Glasersfeld[51] who claims that 'Knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communication, but is actively built up by the cognizing subject' (Glasersfeld, 1988, 83). Gergen wishes his own constructionism also to be differentiated from 'social constructivist' approaches that privilege the social over the personal, such as the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz[52], George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism,[53] and Vygotsky's school.[54]

Gergen explains (68) that in contrast to these approaches 'From a constructionist perspective neither "mind" nor "world" is granted ontological status, thus removing the very grounding assumptions of constructivism.' He writes: 'Nor do extreme forms of constructivism, which would reduce the world to mental construction, become a satisfying replacement. For the constructionist, terms for both world and mind are constituents of discursive practices; they are integers within language and thus themselves socially contested and negotiated… …the constructivist view remains lodged within the tradition of Western individualism. It traces knowledge claims primarily to intrinsic processes within the individual. But social constructionism traces the sources of human action to relationships and the very understanding of "individual functioning" to communal interchange.'

Gergen concludes (69): 'Constructionist arguments generally militate against fixed and final formulations, even those of their own making.' It is clear that Gergen is fighting to

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[49] Piaget, 1955.
[50] Kelly, 1955.
[51] Glasersfeld, 1988; Glasersfeld, 1995.
[52] Schutz, 1967; Schutz, 1970; Schutz & Luckmann, 1989.
[53] Mead, 1934.
[54] Gergen explains that Schutz links action to concepts such as 'cognitive setting,' 'subjectivity,' 'attention,' 'reasons,' and 'goals,' that Mead and other symbolic interactionists focus on 'symbolisation,' 'consciousness,' 'conceptualisation,' and 'self-concept,' while Vygotsky addresses mental processes such as 'abstraction,' 'generalization,' 'volition,' 'association,' 'attention,' 'representation,' 'judgment.' Gergen states that, in contrast to constructionism these theorists 'objectified a specifically mental world' (Gergen, 1994, 68).

dethrone hierarchy altogether, that he is calling for the overthrow of any master-underling discourse within which such constructs as 'mind' or 'world' are granted authoritative status and awarded a privileged position within a hierarchy of concepts

The work of Jan Smedslund is relevant to this heated debate. He was one of the first to warn psychologists against trying to appear 'scientific' by mistaking 'scientifically looking' methods for sound science in places where core rules are blatantly apparent and studying 'infinite objects' would be silly. He writes: 'The finding that all bachelors are in fact unmarried males cannot be said to be empirical.' Smedslund warns that a lot of psychological research is as pointless as trying to make surveys in order to find out 'whether bachelors really are all males' (Smedslund, 1988, 4). This, Smedslund states, would be an inexcusable waste of time and resources, and in addition a basic confusion of "the *ontological* status" (4, italics in original) of psychology's research object.

'Objectivity' is a hotly disputed field within this debate. The ideal of 'objectivity' promises the possibility of a world untouched by human subjectivity. In former times God was expected to talk to kings and priests. In the world of the Enlightenment, Nature, the 'untouched world,' was expected to talk to the 'objective' researcher. The latter was supposed to secure this 'objectivity' by 'listening' to the voice of the 'untouched world' with the help of 'scientific methods,' and then to describe this untouched world as it 'was,' 'uncontaminated' by subjectivity. Egon G. Guba[55] tells the story of the discourse within which objectivity figures centrally: 'Objectivity assumes a single reality to which the story or evaluation must be isomorphic; it is in this sense a one-perspective criterion. It assumes that an agent can deal with an objective (or another person) in a non-reactive and non-interactive way. It is an absolute criterion way' (Guba, in Smith, 1981, 76).

According to Patton, 'Social scientists are exhorted to eschew subjectivity and make sure that their work is "objective." The conventional means for controlling subjectivity and maintaining objectivity are the methods of quantitative social science: distance from the setting and people being studied, formal operationalism and quantitative measurement; manipulation of isolated variables, and experimental designs. Yet, the ways in which measures are constructed in psychological tests, questionnaires, cost-benefit indicators, and routine management information systems are no less open to the intrusion of the evaluator's biases than making observations in the field or asking questions in interviews. Numbers do not protect against bias; they merely disguise it' (Patton, 1990, 479-480). Patton draws on

Michael Scriven's[56] discussion of objectivity and subjectivity in educational research, praising it as a major 'contribution in the struggle to detach the notions of objectivity and subjectivity from their traditionally narrow associations with quantitative and qualitative methodology, respectively' (Patton, 480).

Scriven emphasises the importance of being factual about observations rather than being distant from the phenomenon being studied, and this is because distance does not guarantee objectivity; it merely guarantees distance. The same writer shows that the achievement of objectivity has become identified (or confused) with the achievement of consensual validation by multiple observers. As Thomas S. Kuhn's work on scientific revolutions and paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1962) shows that there have been 'many instances in which the majority of scientists (or other people) were factually wrong, while one dissenting observer actually described things as they really were' (Patton 1990, 480).

Far from being pale academic discussions, these topics are hot, as revolutions usually are. Social constructionism is a watchdog that tries to keep the palace at the top of the old hierarchy uninhabited, and such a task is not attempted without triggering heated encounters. Gergen, 1995, writes (9). 'Constructionist therapists David Epston in New Zealand and Carl Tomm in Canada, among others, have developed an extensive mode of exploring others within – and most especially, those others with whom one is in conflict. My experience with this language took place at the beginning of a three-day conference, in which the organizers arranged a confrontation pitting radical constructivism (as represented by Ernst von Glasersfeld) against social constructionism (which I was to profess). The subsequent critiques were unsparing, the defenses unyielding, and as the audience was drawn into the debate polarization rapidly took place. Voices became agitated, critique turned ad hominem, anger and alienation mounted. As the moderator called a halt to the proceedings, I began to see the three days before me as an eternity.'

The watchdogs of the empty palace themselves do not escape criticism. Here is a typical rebuttal: 'While we welcome Gergen's (1997) comments, we dispute a number of his criticisms. First, actor-network theory (ANT) does not reduce persons to autonoma. Rather, its prime aim is to account for the emergence of persons within a network. Similarly, ANT does not draw back from attributing responsibility; rather, it examines how the responsibility of actors (whether they be 'bad' decision-makers or 'entrepreneurial' scientists) is established.

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[55] See, for example, Guba, 1978; Guba, in Smith, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, in Fetterman, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985.
[56] See, for example, Scriven, in Tyler, Gagne, & Scriven, 1967, and Scriven, in Thomas, 1972.

Next, contrary to Gergen's view of institutional pressures as 'occupational hazards', we reassert the importance of seeing these as partially constitutive of academic (postmodern psychological) activity. Finally, while we agree with Gergen that all academic 'tellings' privilege some form of ontology, we argue that this does not warrant an exclusively cultural ontology' (Michael & Kendall, 1997, Abstract).

Other scholars are not so sure whether Gergen, the custodian of the palace museum, is not usurping power himself. Serge Moscovici,[57] founder of social representations theory, for example, most bitterly deplores the fact that he is not quoted by, for example, Gergen. One way to characterise his view is that he thinks that Gergen guards the empty castle with as much arrogance as was displayed by any former master who ruled from within the castle. Moscovici writes in an open email on the Internet (1ff): 'Deriabin wonders why social constructionism and social representations do not get close to one another. I wonder why Gergen, Ibanez, Potter and others attack us wherever they can… Gergen mentions political divergences. I thought he took the word political in earnest, but he means academic politics. I taught in the USA for several years and it seems to me I did not do anything to create some "complicity" with the "establishment". I did not even try to propagate the theory of social representations, as I was aware of the numerous obstacles… For me, a theory exists only insofar as it fosters a practice of discovery, of facing social problems, and gives some meaning to our lives. Is his intellectual community broader than mine? I am not sure of that for many reasons, including political ones. But this judgement of broadness is also part of this tone of self-righteousness, superiority, that he assumes towards me and my work. It is very self-serving.'

Moscovici goes on: 'I have had, for a long time, an explanation of this which has nothing to do with science, only with the power that is today concentrated in one part of the world, one language and institutions of diffusion of knowledge. In this respect, what to Gergen appears as "owning the territory" to me appears as "owning independence or freedom", the right to think and write in a world of diverse people, diverse culture, diverse ideas and especially diverse social problems. And this diversity IS reflected among the people interested in social representations. Since the only condition for a dialogue is respect, scholarship, and no relinquishing this or that. Besides the constructionist idea is in many respects an old one for us.'

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[57] See, for example, Graumann & Moscovici, 1986; Moscovici, 1976; Moscovici, in Lindzey & Aronson, 1985; Moscovici, 1998; Moscovici & Markov, 1998.

Feelings fly high among rebels: Moscovici mentions Marcel Mauss,[58] who said that 'taboos are made to be violated' and goes on to comment: 'I think I have violated a taboo in my work about social representations, by often giving them the form of essays, speculations. I have attempted always to lean on, yet avoiding to imitate the argumentative rigor of standard scientific exposition. The comparative looseness of logical texture gives the possibility of experimental reflections, which is more designed to explore than to assertively conclude. Of course this leaves oneself vulnerable to criticism. In fact, I wanted to leave my work open to discussion and invite the contributions of others. I have been wrong and right. I have been wrong, because critics have had it good and everyone feels entitled to teach me a lesson, to tell what I must do or not do. And I have been right, because the theory has greatly benefited from the discussion and contribution of others. Whether one likes it or not, the theory of social representations has been here for over thirty years and the number of those who took interest in and contributed to it has kept growing. The theory has not become an institution or a thing, it is still a theory in the making' (Moscovici, 1997, 6).

Towards the end of what Moscovici calls his 'long rambling on Internet' and 'a cathartic experience,' he makes very clear that revolutions are fought by people, not by theories: 'The catchword, "everything goes", has become something of a fashion and may foster the illusion that severing the ties with constraints and method is easy. But somewhere in their minds the people who say this, and those who hear it, know that it is merely wishful thinking. Probably because their own experience has been that of publishing a paper in one of our professional journals, being accepted to deliver a speech, finding academic work, and so on. All of this usually requires resorting to strategies or influence, and once things come to this, we are talking about an obviously political problem. In fact, looking back on history from this point of view, scientists are not different from other human beings. Leaning toward one group means ignoring another one, giving rise to a condition of reciprocal neglect. So scientific dialogue is difficult because it entails a social recognition instead of the existing miscognition. I hope that, one day, a much needed dialogue theory – Markova is working on one – will turn its attention to this phenomenon of contemporary scientific life, with some practical results.'[59] Clearly, Moscovici feels painfully excluded from an elite rebel group he thinks should regard him as a member. He questions the right of this rebel group to monopolise the position of guardians and exclude him.

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[58] Mauss, 1950; Mauss, 1967.
[59] See, for example, Markova, 2000; Markova, 1999.

Abandoning hierarchy is difficult, and, the most difficult part is for the guardians to justify their opinion that keeping the palace empty is the right strategy. Where do the guardians of the palace-museum find their justification for believing that the palace should stay empty? Relativism, or the liberation of all people, if taken to its extreme, also allows for the stance that subjugation is 'good for you;' in other words, if 'anything goes,' why should not dictatorship return? As Puchala puts it, 'Relativism is itself immoral because, in the name of community standards, non-interference, political correctness, or the like, it leads to the condoning of principles and practices that are widely distasteful' (Puchala, 1995, 9).

It should be added that the status of morals and ethics may be perceived as just as much embroiled as epistemology in the revolutions discussed here. It is not self-evident, for example, that human rights – specifically rights that entitle every human being to equal personal dignity – are in fact justifiable. As already seen, it is not difficult to argue that they represent nothing but Western imperialism. When colonisers first 'discovered' the rest of the world, they imposed their hierarchical worldviews upon the people they encountered there. Different populations were subjected to the judgement of these Western intruders about whether they were superior or inferior, more or less civilized, more or less advanced, and of course, more or less eligible to govern themselves. Twentieth-century anthropology corrected all of this by showing that different peoples lived in different ways according to different standards, and cultural evolution yielded countless variations, most of which were well adapted to the environments within which they flourished. Passing judgment in terms of assumed advancement or retardation was, therefore, invidious. Cultures should be compared, the anthropologists said. They should not be evaluated according to outside standards' (Puchala, 1995, 8).

However, do today's subscribers to relativism[60] really conclude that 'anything goes'? In fact, only a few moral relativists go so far as to advocate the extreme position that whatever is, is right. Relativism usually stops short of the subjectivist position that states that, in the absence of grounded criteria, every individual may determine what is right or wrong, good or bad, for him or herself and opponents without universal principles try to persuade one another to accept one's own preferences, in line with what Alasdair MacIntyre calls 'emotivism.'[61]

Puchala presents four arguments indicating the unsustainability of relativism (9): 'First, relativism tends to confuse empirical facts of differences in moral codes with

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[60] See, for example, Philippa Foot, in Krausz & Meiland, 1982, and her chapter 'Moral Relativism' in *Relativism: Cognitive and Moral* edited by M. Krausz and Jack W. Meiland; see also Foot, 1978, Meiland, 1980.

philosophical justification for differences. Simply because there are differences does not mean that all the alternatives are right or acceptable; Second, the justification for relativism itself has to be philosophically located beyond relativism. That is, moral relativism can only be right if we all accept the universality of dictums such as mutual tolerance and non-interference in one anothers' affairs; Third and at a more practical level, even the relativists balk in the face of the morally atrocious--human sacrifice, ritualistic mutilation, slavery, genocide, apartheid, concentration camps, gulags, and gas chambers. To explain why such atrocious behavior is immoral invariably requires reaching for universals, and when presented with such behavior most relativists accordingly reach out.' Fourthly, as suggested above, moral relativism may cover up for repression.

Puchala deplores the fact that 'Unfortunately, there is very little moral philosophy written into the documents that constitute the framework for the United Nations human rights regime, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two international covenants respectively pertaining to civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights. Through phrases such as "inalienable rights," the texts of these documents reflect a smattering of natural law thinking carried over from medieval Thomism or from 18th century enlightenment rationalism. There is also a dash of 19th century utilitarian utterance in cautionings that to ignore human rights is to invite either barbarism or social upheaval. Or perhaps this is the influence of 20th century pragmatism? Underlying these UN documents is an ethos of moral universalism, which peeks out in references to the "common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations," and to the "highest aspiration of common people." But nowhere in any of the documents does one find any explanation of why the human rights discussed are, in fact, human rights; and, more to the point, why they should be accepted as universal' (Puchala, 1995, 6).

This leads to two questions that will be discussed in the final section: is social constructivism really altogether in opposition to logical positivism?, and, which universals are the basis of the new social and moral order?

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[61] See, for example, MacIntyre, 1966; MacIntyre, 1984, or Lemos, 2000.

Concluding remarks

Is social constructionism really altogether different from logical positivism?

Moscovici affirms that he himself has long been part of the constructionist camp, that he is, in fact, part of the rebel group and urges some of his rebel friends to abandon their superior posture towards him. 'I would recall certain dates. Simply to state that my interest for this notion precedes the existence of this trend in social psychology. And has nothing to do with a negotiation of academic politics with a new establishment. Here are two dates: If you open Israel and Tajfel's books about the crisis in social psychology, you can see I am among those who took a constructionist stance; In 1978, van Foerster and Varela organized a closed seminar in San Francisco, maybe the first one with the theme, "The construction of reality". There some thirty researchers, among which were Bateson, Maturana, Watzlavic, Goffman, etc., discussed the idea that knowledge is constructed, not found. I was one of the very few Europeans invited by the organizers whom I did not know. Probably because they were aware of the stance I had taken in my writings.'[62]

Moscovici analyses social constructionism as follows (it is not clear whether Moscovici uses 'he' for referring to social constructionism or to its founder): 'In my opinion, what constructionism rejects is easier to understand than what he proposes. Social constructionism presents itself in association with the linguistic turning-point as a new beginning. It claims to be as radical as everyone does today, just as Internet is presented as an upheaval in civilization, and so on. But calling one-self a radical does not make one be such, this is obvious. Among what one considers symptomatic of radicalism, the clearest is the rejection of positivism, empiricism, etc. The problem is that the more one looks at the arguments, the less sure this is. Personally, I find he has quite a lot of elements in common with positivism' (Moscovici, 1997, 3).[63] Moscovici concludes that 'the tendency to think of

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[62] Moscovici looks back in history and mentions the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico. As a philosophy of learning, constructivism can be traced at least to the eighteenth century and the work of Vico. He postulated that humans can clearly understand only what they have themselves constructed. These ideas were built on by, for example, Jean Piaget and John Dewey. Moscovici also mentions Marx, 'according to whom we know society because we made it' (3). Furthermore Moscovici mentions Heisenberg, 'whose principle of indeterminacy teaches us that the knowledge of natural phenomena depends on the observer' (3). Thirdly, he points at phenomeology, 'Heider included, or natural thought, are socially "made", just as the mental categories that render them possible' (3); see, for example, Heider, 1958).

[63] Moscovici expands on this point, 'logical empiricism grants the same exclusive prominence to language; knowledge, one says, is a form of redescription…; there is no "truth": hence a theory is not "truer" than another and choosing one is a matter of power. Yet, Poincare made the same point in several books of his. He used to say that one theory is not truer than another, that one does not choose

truth as something that does not exist and ultimately as something that must not exist is a phenomena of the modern age' (3) and adds that this tendency first appeared in 19th century positivism.

Moscovici clearly identifies logical positivism itself as the dethroner of hierarchy, something that occurred 'at the same time as the tendency to believe in the end of ideology or the end of metaphysics from which we should free ourselves' (3). However, apparently, the desire to be protected/oppressed by masterly metaphysical discourses is increasingly diminishing today. Today's revolutionaries seem indeed to desire to destroy the hierarchies that provide this protection/oppression. Or, perhaps it is only the balance between protection and oppression that is being viewed in a new light today. Perhaps underlings have been provided with more opportunities to voice their sufferings than before.

Moscovici suggests that the social constructionist rebels against hierarchy may very well be new players on the scene of history, but that they, although they may not want to admit it, use old methods. He suggests that social constructionism is nothing more than an outgrowth of logical positivism and not, as it is claims, the bearer of a total paradigm shift. As he puts it, 'constructionism epistemologically assimilates many things that it rejects.' Moscovici ends by saying that it would be a mistake to suspect that people like him, who talk about the king's palace, have failed to understand that it is 'really' a museum. In fact, as he puts it, '… the social representation of knowledge retains "truth" and "falseness", for instance as basic cultural categories, just as the social representation of religion retains the categories of "sacred" and "profane"' (3).

Moscovici squarely accuses social constructionism of behaving like a master since 'somewhere it seems to be understood that constructionism is true, right, and the other points of view are false, wrong. Otherwise one would not grasp wherefrom he draws the certitude of being "radical", being in the right, while the others are not "radical" and, on top of that, are wrong… To my mind, social constructionism intends to be a meta-theory telling us what is, or what should be, "good science", and criticising what is, or should be, "bad science". That is a worthy endeavour, like that of the thinkers who want to teach us what is, or must be, a "good society", or that of literary critics who want to teach us what is, or should be, "good literature"' (3).

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a theory because it is truer but because it is useful. And he was not the only one to say so. Mach's relativism is grounded on the idea that there are no foundations, nothing "absolute". This prompted Einstein to say that Mach's relativism is good for destroying but not for constructing' (Moscovici, 1997, 3).

Puchala summarises the historical battlefield of epistemology in one single paragraph: 'Enlightenment thinking …has been thoroughly undermined. There have been the onslaughts of modernism, which besmirched the model of man as a rational being, and postmodernism, which has eliminated the notion of truth and deconstructed the Enlightenment into an ideological campaign to institutionalize bourgeois values. Enlightenment affirmations have also been assaulted by Nietzschean claims that morality is but a hypocritical covering over of a will-to-power that is really at the basis of human motivation. Meanwhile, the Frankfurt School, in its pre- as well as post-World War II incarnation, weighed in with the observation that applications of reason in 20th century human affairs have as often perpetrated evil as they have promoted good. Meanwhile, the immutable Newtonian universe was confused by Einstein's relativity and then replaced by Heisenberg's indeterminate and infinitely mutable quantum cosmos. Cultural anthropology during the early decades of our century also served up much to show that truths were anything but self-evident to non-Westerners' (Puchala, 1995, 7).

Where do we stand today? Smedslund warns that it does not require research to find that 'all bachelors are males;' likewise it would be absurd to try to measure on which trees Flintstone types or microscopes grow. These worlds are touched by the human hand, even made by it – and they may be made in different ways in different cultures. This is the plight of social science. However, Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy destroyed also the last hope that an untouched world could talk to anyone, at least the natural scientist.

To conclude this section the question may be asked whether all good logical positivists are not, at some point, compelled to understand that the perspective of the researcher must be included within the overall research endeavour, that the world can never be understood as untouched by human beings. How could anybody ever believe that research is, somehow, floating in the air, that it is not always an attempt to answer specific questions posed by particular researchers. The revolutionary approach of social constructionism may be described as a further phase in the progressive disillusionment of logical positivists who have given up their earlier attempts to be the servants of authoritative grand narratives. No less than political dictators, the 'masters' of logical positivism had to acquiesce in their own dethronement.

Another factor that may have characterised this historical change, is an increase of what the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess[64] calls the 'depth of intention,' or the 'depth of questioning,' together with increasing humility in face of this depth; 'our depth of intention

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[64] See, for example, Naess, in Linsky, 1952; Naess, 1953; Naess, 1958; Naess, in Wetlesen, 1978.

improves only slowly over years of study. There is an abyss of depth in everything fundamental' (Naess, in Wetlesen, 1978, 143).[65] Newly won humility would thus reconcile logical positivism with social constructionism. Words such as humility, humbleness, modesty, fairness, and decency, would be appropriate to describe the final stage of this revolution that has brought down not only the master, but also the hierarchical order.

Who rules, if not the palace?

There is a way out, says Patton, and draws upon Guba in advocating 'fairness.' Guba proposes that the requirement to be objective could be replaced by the requirement to be balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities. Guba enters 'fairness' as a substitute criterion and explains that in contrast to objectivity, fairness has these features (Guba, in Smith, 1981, 76-77): 'It assumes multiple realities or truths – hence a test of fairness is whether or not 'both' sides of the case are presented, and there may even be multiple sides. It is adversarial rather than one-perspective in nature. Rather than trying to hew the line with the truth, as the objective reporter does, the fair reporter seeks to present each side of the case in the manner of an advocate – as, for example, attorneys do in making a case in court. The presumption is that the public, like a jury, is more likely to reach an equitable decision after having heard each side presented with as much vigor and commitment as possible.'

A multitude of perspectives: this is reminiscent of the 'hermeneutic circle'[66] and 'reflective equilibrium.' Dagfinn Føllesdal,[67] Norwegian philosopher, explains 'circular

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[65] 'The extent to which a person discriminates along a chain of precizations (and, therefore, in a particular direction of interpretation) is a measure of their depth of intention, that is, the depth to which that person can claim to have understood the intended meaning of the expression' (Fox, 1992, 5).

[66] The idea of the 'hermeneutic circle' was introduced by Wilhem Dilthey (1833-1911), a philosopher and literary historian who is generally recognised as the 'father' of the modern hermeneutic enterprise in the social and human sciences. 'Dilthey argued that the human world was sufficiently different from the natural world that special methods were required for its study. Hermeneutics, the deliberate and systematic methodology of interpretation, was the approach Dilthey proposed for studying and understanding the human world' (Tappan, 2000, Abstract). Dilthey's intellectual biographer H. P. Rickman explains, 'We cannot pinpoint the precise meaning of a word unless we read it in its context, i.e. the sentence or paragraph in which it occurs. But how can we know what the sentence means unless we have first understood the individual words? Logically there is no escape from this absence of priority; in practice we solve the problem by a kind of mental shuttlecock movement' (Rickman, 1979, 130).

[67] See for his publications for example Føllesdal, in Robert Sokolowski, 1988, and Føllesdal, 1996a.

thinking,' or 'reflective equilibrium,' [68] as employed in Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 1971), and as defended, also, for example, by Nelson Goodman. Føllesdal points out that although Aristotle rejected 'circular thinking' as 'circular fallacy,' and that philosophy has been largely concerned with deduction, circular thinking has been 'en vogue' since the nineteen-fifties.

Føllesdal explains that the 'reflective equilibrium' has six features: it is 1) a method of justification, [69] 2) it emphasises coherence, 3) it entails total corrigibility, 4) it includes different fields of academia (not just mathematics), 5) it does not exclude pre-reflective intuitive acceptance, and 6) it draws on different sources of evidence.

The evidence that is found in any particular case often depends on what the researchers concerned are looking for. Puchala explains (10) that cultural anthropology, as long as it *searches* for differences between cultures will find such differences but that when it focuses on similarities, those are what it finds. Richard H. Beis, 1964, for example, identified twenty-two moral dictums that appear empirically to be transcultural, and which include: the prohibition of murder or maiming without justification; economic justice; reciprocity and restitution; provision for the poor and unfortunate; the right to own property; and priority for immaterial goods. Martha Nussbaum, [70] a neo-Aristotelian or neo-essentialist, belongs to the growing group of those who reassert moral universalism. She postulates that because we are human beings we are entitled to be allowed to flourish in our human way of life. Puchala concludes that, 'Not surprisingly perhaps, Nussbaum's list of requirements for human flourishing, and hence of our entitlements as human beings, closely approximates the contents of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, not only with respect to civil and political rights, but also with respect to economic, social, and cultural rights' (12).

To return briefly to Moscovici, he makes the following comment: 'I came to science, and became an active member of our community, because I believed that it can be what Avishai Margalit calls a "decent society"… Decency is a built-in limit of my ability to pursue a dialogue' (Moscovici, 1997, 7). Non-humiliating dialogue among equals, this is what Moscovici desires. The conclusion may be drawn that logical positivism was, sooner or later, bound to detect that human beings can never describe an 'untouched world' who talks to the researcher from kingly heights, that the old hope of reaching 'unambiguous truth' must be

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[68] Føllesdal, 1996b, in a presentation at Det Norske Vitenskaps-Akademi (Norwegian Academy of Science), 30th January 1996.

[69] Or at least a method to settle disagreement; this was the position to which Rawls later retreated, a move that is not shared by Føllesdal.

[70] See, for example, Nussbaum, 1988; Nussbaum, 1992; Nussbaum, in Schofield & Striker, 2000.

abandoned, and that – from the use of microscope for researching the micro-cosmos to the use of language for describing it – human touch is unavoidable. The electron is a wave or a corpuscle according to the experimenter's glasses. The context of research is as important as the research itself. In science, the palace has always been empty; it was wishful thinking to believe that there ever was a universal master able to validate human knowledge in a God-like way. There were only powerful groups of people who sought legitimacy for their own domination. Today those who have to cope with the disappointment entailed in the irreversible loss of a higher scientific legitimacy find themselves in a difficult situation. How are they to take the lead in managing an intellectual arena in which open, uninhibited and controversial discussion is enabled, a discussion that is essential for the functioning of an egalitarian and democratic society, be it in academia or polity? Tolerance has to be extended to everybody – except to those who want to topple democracy and instate dictatorship.

To conclude, rebels tear down palace walls, Kenneth Gergen and post-modernist relativism are just a few names and labels that represent heroic revolutions, however, it is another task to find ways to live together without a functioning palace. The question arises: who, if not the palace, defines and enforces the 'traffic rules' that make civilised and orderly social life possible? Perhaps the answer is that for people living together in a global egalitarian knowledge society, tolerance of a multitudes of perspectives, acquiescence in circular ways of coming to a consensus and agreement, human rights, humility, humbleness, modesty, fairness, and decency, would together represent the best hope for a system in which human lives may be lived in a peaceful and creative way. By contrast, the arrogance of masters and oppressive discourses represent the negation of those ambitions. The issue is not anymore to answer the question whether God exists or not, but to recognise that it would be arrogant and haughty for human beings to believe that they are able to 'decide' or 'prove' either possible answer. The only feasible way to secure the humility and prevent arrogance is to maintain the efforts to keep the palace as a museum. This paper argues that logical positivism, if stringently applied, should find itself extending into social constructionism rather than entering into conflict with it, and vice versa. This should be possible now that the heat of the last radical revolution is decreasing and hierarchical structures increasingly lose their fortress-like structures.

This article has outlined historical uprisings against humiliation, carried out with passion by their leaders, and proposes that much of the antagonisms between different epistemological schools may be explained by the heat of the battle in which players try to triumph over humiliating structures, both in the political and philosophical realm, and run the

risk to be misunderstood as usurpers of power instead of visionary revolutionaries. This article thus follows a deeply constructionist approach – presented in a way that, hopefully, logical positivists may very well feel able to subscribe to.

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