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The Economy of God and the Politics of the Devil

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The Politics of (Dis)continuity, Beijing, 29.11-1.12.2017

Er ist schon lang in’s Fabelbuch geschrieben,
Alllein die Menschen sind nicht besser dran,
Den Bösen sind sie los, die Bösen sind geblieben

Goethe, Faust 1, Hexenküche
2507-2509

Abstract

Discontinuations and continuations are phenomena depending on the progression of time. Western conceptions of linear, eschatological time stems from the Jewish-Christian religious tradition. In this paper, we trace the theological underpinnings of discontinuities from its theological origins as acts of evil, incorporated by the devil, who by his interventions postpone the future to the future. The modern form of tourism spanning the globe is tested as an example of both the power and the limits of Luhmannian systems theory, as tourism is a synchronous development emerging throughout the world, and yet the mode of observation of systems theory is tested for its observational limitations by its heavy reliance on concepts from the Jewish-Christian tradition, doctrines and philosophy.

Although secularization made the differentiation of functional systems possible as the main form of societal organization for Modernity, the devilish concept of discontinuations continues to form the basic understanding of western perceptions of limitations and finiteness of social systems, minds and bodies alike. Systems theory is shown to inherit specific temporal paradoxes from the theological tradition of the limit of Gods eternal economy of grace by the actions of the fallen angel Lucifer, the Christian devil. In conclusion, the paper discusses how the ancient distinction between the Christian God and the Devil still shows its presence in the basic concept of Luhmannian systems theory, and how it in turn influences how systems theory observes the politics of (dis-)continuity.
Western society has a long and at times violent history of civilizations bygone and yet not forgotten. They have all left their marks on the evolution of the competing and succeeding civilizations up till present times. Their heritage is the foundation, on which our current society revolves. The foundations are fare more than mere residues of a common language in ancient, pre-historic times. The cities of the Mediterranean world raise new buildings on pillars of sedimented culture, ranging from broken pottery and golden bracelets to clay tablets and foundations of city structures long bygone. The cultures of the Mediterranean world left us with magnificent statues, holy temples and bold constructions such as the pyramids in Egypt, now re-entering modern society as streams of tourism and centers of tourist attraction. For the goal of this paper, the tourist of late modernity serves as an example for the formal argument of the grace of systems theory and the limitations imposed by its inherent design adhering to ancient Mediterranean concepts of time, creation, agency, distinction and broken continuations.

Tourism is not a new phenomenon at all, but it carries a fascinating structure of time and place. Tourism de-couples the original experience by creating a decoupled position of observation. Tourists wish for authenticity, to »just belong« or »just be«, what they are not: participants. He is, to connect with action- and role theory, a limited case of the distinction between the observer and the participant (Schlegel), who transforms his own agency from primary participation of the local presence, to actions toward gaining access to the mystical presence of the observed site or happening.

In the first part of this paper, we delve into tourism as an example of observation present throughout the globalized world. The tourist in our perspective is not only an activity of leisure and expense, involving transportation, but a highly differentiated form of organizing and observing the globalized world of today. Tourism thus serves as an example of the analytical power of Luhmannian theory of observations and as the stepping stone into the main argument.

In the second part of this paper, we delve into the question of beginning as creation of systems. The beginning is not the beginning, as beginnings are temporal forms of continuations between something before and something after. By observing the distinction before/after, we discern the first formal identity between the Luhmannian systems theory and the mosaic-christian doctrine of creation.

In the third part of this paper, we continue to elaborate on selected concepts as historical emanations from the christian-jewish, or as Luhmann himself encapsulates it: die alteuropäische Semantik, that is: the semantics of the old Europe.

In the fourth and final part of this paper, we come full circle from tourism via God to Luhmann and the Christian Devil, which as an observational device, acts as the paradox (or parasite) on the distinction between system and environment, between Creation and createdness. In a paradoxical way, he is the first “tourist” of creation, as he belongs and yet is expelled and defeated by history in the Christian doctrinal thinking.

The tourist of our time, wherever he or she goes, carry the important skill of de-coupling, yet bridging
and invisibilizing the distinction at the same time: »I was there«, though not part of it. A tourist may ride a camel to the Pyramids in Egypt or visit the destroyed temple of Amun Ra, birthplace of monotheism, but he is not a local camel rider nor an ancient Egyptian priest. A tourist may dive in the waters near Carthage on the northern African Coast or in the shallow waters of Side in Lebanon to see the Phoenician shipwrecks littered with amphora of olive oil and wine, envisioning the ancient ships ferrying their language written in the first alphabet between the ports of Mediterranean city states. Even though he sees the ships, he is no ancient seaman nor merchant even though he may enjoy virgin olive oil for his salad from olives grown in the same soil as those harvested and supplied to markets by Phoenician merchants. A tourist may visit the ancient city of Babylon in modern day Iraq to see the remains of the great city, that brought forth the legal code known as the code of Hammurabi, named after the emperor Hammurabi, though a tourist would be well advised to visit the probably less dangerous place Louvre in Paris, where the most renowned version of the code of Hammurabi is exhibited. Even though he sees the legal code, he is not bound by it, which also may be appreciated by the tourist, as the punishments are far more severe than the penal codes of western states in the 21st century usually define. The tourist thus may find comfort in his distance from observations. The tourist, then, creates a void between his present time as presence and the presence of what or who is observed, be it simultaneously or a time long gone by, as in the three examples given. This distinction of presences is of utmost importance to the form of the tourist. If it collapses, the tourist becomes part of the action, fx. in the example of a terrorist attack in the subway in London or Tokyo, a volcanic disruption or an earthquake. When those situations occur, both natives, ruins, buildings and tourists experience their exposure, their merging of horizons as »victims« or »participants« of the spectacle.

The temporal distinction of the present presence of the tourist and the present presence of what is observed - or, as American tourists say, is »toured«, is supported by the distinction of home and not-being-home. Not-being-home in the form of the tourist is the willed, temporal dis-location of presence from home. Home does not constitute a certain geo-spatial location, but as the marker of not-belonging or dis-continuation of presence at a certain location, such as the ruins of ancient Babylon. The form of tourism is fixed in application for tourist visa for most countries throughout the world by limitations of time for presence, registry of movements and application of the national legal codes to the tourist. Yet, there are places, where tourism is not permitted and the form breaks down. Two special cases arise when dealing with tourism. Those are the re-entry of tourism into itself and the prohibition or non-availability of the position of the tourist-observer.

The prohibition case is visible for the Muslim pilgrimage to the holy site Ka'abah in Mecca. Under strict supervision by the Sauds, only Muslims performing the Hajj are allowed to enter the most holy center as part of their pilgrimage. If a non-muslim would shroud himself in the cloth of the pilgrims and partake in the rituals of Hajj, it would be hypocrisy and, if discovered, be judged accordingly. Participation, thus, demands certain criteria fulfilled, and in the case of the pilgrimage to Mekka, include the requirement of believing in Muhammad as the messenger of God.

The re-entry case is visible, when tourist observe themselves as tourists, they mobilize capacity for internal differentiation of tourism. Tourist wishing for authenticity, travel to sites promising authenticity and non-disturbed nature and society - usually at a price premium. Tourists on the other hand follow other tourists to »famous places«, aggregating immense economic and cultural power to
cities and sites. Not only do aggregations give way for specialized institutionalization of tourism, it also gives rise to questions of taste and priority. European tourists in the 80ies and 90ies would not tour cities with large cameras hanging in front of them, as the camera dangling identified them as Japanese tourists, giving rise to distinctions such as »non-Japanese« tourists.

in places overcrowded with tourists such as the Spanish-Catalonian City of Barcelona in southern Europe, tourism endangers the position of those presences observed - the participation criteria. During the summer of 2017, as a consequence of a steep increase of tourist to the city of Barcelona, large protests formed in the street in opposition to tourists »taking over« the city from the inhabitants, that is, those who participate in daily life. The argument brought forward decried, how Barcelona is on the brink of being converted into another Disneyland - a city only for tourists meeting tourists, collectively participating in observing the city. This, in consequence, forces upon those living in Barcelona on a daily basis the worldview of tourism: Barcelona as a not-home, as a place of limited stay and touristic observation, rather than a place for life and participation in work, education, religion, law and art. Everyday life turns into a large theater and the inhabitants into actors - turning authenticity to artificiality.

In the Mediterranean World of Europe, the highly differentiated form of tourism stems from at least three sources. Those are the stories told by merchant travelers, the experiences from religious pilgrimage and the maps and published journals navigational and scientific expedition. The first development was the mass circulation of printed books with maps, images and descriptions of countries and lifes far beyond the local horizon; the next development was the circulation of bodies with the purpose of observing and experiencing foreign lands and cultures, and, notwithstanding, with the political aim of enlarging political and economic power from Europe by means of trade networks and colonizations. A sharp distinction must be drawn between the rise of tourism, that is, experience for the sake of experience, and traveling in general. The traveling salesman by himself was by no means a tourist. His presence as foreigner with fascinating stories and sought-after commodities pointed outwards of the closed communities of medieval and early modern Europe. The stories added value and exclusivity to the effects put up for sale.

The pilgrims of the 10th to the 15th century AD travelled not only to the holy land of Israel with its main city of Jerusalem, but to various holy destinations throughout Europe and in lesser degree - the Russian steppes and western Asia (today’s Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Turkey and Greece. Supported by a common concept of faith and organized through orthodox, Syriac or Latin churches and monasteries, pilgrims wandered to shrines of religious importance and places of (former) miracles. Pilgrimage was a regarded an obligation for both laymen and the nobility if in any way possible. Pilgrimage was considered both a corporeal and spiritual travel toward an (inner) holier place, though which the pilgrim experienced a closer connectedness to the Christian God and showed his true faith in Christianity. In the year 1511 AD, the reformer Martin Luther on arrival in Rome, the seat of the papacy, was disgusted by the emerging tourism, just thinly shrouded in the cloak of faithful pilgrimage. In one of his last writings, he reacted to the monetarization and splendor-spending papacy and openly condemned it as faithless life and the pope himself as the »hellish Father« (Luther 1545). In the same century, the discovery of Northern and Southern continent of America enlarged the dimensions of the known world to Mediterranean minds, and new maps and reports of foreign lands circulated (Dreyer-Eimbcke 2007, Black 2010). Not only did colonization and later empire-building demand
high-level changes to politics and government practice and organization (Eliot 2006), but a massive growth of shipping in a ever more global network of interconnected locations from the Philippines and the Chinese ports of Shanghai and Canton to Indian, African and American trading opportunities and centers of power (Black 2001, North 2016).

First and foremost, the genre of travel reports was shaped by the stories of the Venetian traveler and merchant Marco Polo. According to the common trait of the various early manuscripts circulating, Marco Polo travelled along the Silk Road to China and arrived back in Venice in 1299 AD. The stories shaped the western understanding of Indian and especially Chinese culture. The travels of Marco Polo formed the distinction marked by Pope Urban II, when he called for the first crusade as the obligation of every man in Christianity, a collective marker of Europe as a set of independent and warring kingdoms and princes, but bound together by (Latin!) Christian Doctrine and values, in opposition to the eastern, orthodox church of Constantinople and the lost Roman areas of northern Africa and southern Spain. As such, the Travels of Marco Polo marked the outside of the inside of Mediterranean Europe: what one could experience, if one would take upon oneself the dangers of travel to the east. In the stratified society of the medieval age, the stories of traveling merchants and salesmen marked the not-home as places where one should not be. The distinction was yet to be inverted by the emergence of tourism.

The ›true stories‹ from far abroad entered the literary genre of fiction with the publication of Robinson Crusoe by a British publisher. It gained immediate success and has been published continuously since then in numerous editions. The Philosopher Rousseau in his philosophy of education in »Émile, ou De l’éducation« from 1762, considered Robinson Crusoe as the only legitimate book of fiction legitimate for educating students under the age of 12. The figure of the remote and stranded person, able to engage and disengage from society, also influenced his view on the relation of individual and society in his famous »Du Contrat Social ou Principes du droit politique«, published the same year as his Émile.

Since the advent of low-cost travel opportunities since the 60ies, literary and cinematic stories of fictitious places have gained importance for tourism. In the case of the worldwide success of the Series »Game of Thrones«, based on a series of books by George R.R. Martin, the locations for filming have become important attractions for tourism. The main city of »Game of Thrones« is the fictitious city »Kings Landing«, which is mainly filmed on location in the rennaissance city Dubrovnik at the Adriatic Coast near Greece. Game-of-Thrones tourism has become an important marketing factor and attracts tourists eager to experience the fictitious city of Kings Landing by a visit to the real city of Dubrovnik with tours and exhibitions of filming sets. Dubrovnik has become the closest thing to experience, what participation (life) in medieval Kings Landing would have been.¹

The evolution of modern tourism from the preceding forms is not only an offspring from the development of the evolving networks of trade or transportation. It stems from multiple sources from religious doctrine, the advent of scientific and literary genres, politics and migration, to which law, art and even warfare adapted.

The tourist of today is a strict mode of behavior and observation, decoupled and thus free to engage in limited couplings in his vicinity as the decoupled observer participating in what he cannot

participate in: localized presence. A tourist is, ad definitionem, expected to move on and continue his touring. This contract is broken, when tourists decide to settle, violating the distinction: home/not-home, or to die, violating the distinction between observer and participant, has he removes himself of the position of observer and ceases to move on. He may, of course, be moved by others for burial at a place other than his place of visit, his »not-home«. Otherwise, his final resting place would make it his »home«, again breaking the form of the tourist.

The distinction between home and not-home helps discerning touristic communication from other social forms such as economic transactions or what is true or false in a scientific sense. As a heuristic device for selection and categorization, we must enhance upon the distinction for tourism to be able to self-determine its own boundaries. Such an enhancement must not be a mere scientific way of reasoning, decoupled from the tourism itself. If a sharper device of boundary decisions is in use, fx. do discern it from science, economy, religion or economy, it must be present, that is: omni-present in touristic communication itself. This device is the re-entered distinction of home and not-home into itself. For most unexperienced children going on vacation, the parental use of »home« is puzzling. When at the beach someone present expresses »let's go home«, the listener must rely on further clues or continuation of the communication, if he is to judge, if the expression »home« refers to the place they stay during this visit, or a return to their hometown, effectively ending the vacation. Tourism thus defines a »home«, that is: the temporal place of residence, while being a tourist« on the not-home side of the distinction. Being not-home, the tourist defines a temporal home, that interconnects with the ability to experience experiences of others.

In the case of Barcelona, the residents of Barcelona oppose their being home being temporalized as homes for a limited duration, infusing location with temporal distinctions of limitation and non-duration of authentic presence.

To complete our vue of the emergence of the modern tourist as a prologue to the main argument, we need one last step. Tourism continues not because of object behavior - those participating in local presence, past or present at locations, but as a consequence of tourism communicating with tourism. This seemingly tautological argument is de-tautologized by the infusion of the distinction between alter ego and ego. (Luhmann 1997: 336) Touristic communication is not about »the world« but about experiences (of the world and other tourists) by tourism. Touristic communication may be attributed to multiple sources, such as family members or friends acting tourists, guidebooks, by hotels or museums, experience parks or travel agencies. Those communications, if observed by others and deemed relevant, preserve and disseminate representations of earlier experiences or potentially future experiences for those present to experience, what otherwise would not be experienced. Tourism thrives by experiencing experiences and reflecting on better or worse past of future experiences. In this, they equal the medium for (scientific) truth, communicating about the truthfulness or falseness of scientific true knowledge. The »tertium non datur«, defines a position of the observer and with exact observations, »everything else being equal«, any scientific observer should be able to re-produce the argument and arrive at the exact same result, which then is deemed true, until falsified by integration of some excluded observation or limits in theorizing. The similarity is striking, yet the difference evident. Whereas truth facilitates discussion and argument regardless of location and distance, tourism

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2 dead tourists have the habit of traveling onboard flights in the cargo area far more often than you expect - they are usually neatly stored in flight containers together with the luggage of those alive onboard the plane.
is strictly related to relocation at certain times, locations and organizational modes for re-experience. A certain guide, specific hotels and seasonal differences in climate or amount of other tourists present are important factors for individual re-experience. Scientific communication puts emphasis in self-referentiality, that is: building on earlier publications and experiments, whereas tourism puts emphasis on external referentiality - situational capacity for re-experiencing experiences of participatory communications.

If tourism is to be considered a function system of society on par with religion, science, education, politics, art, war, law and economy, the main and foremost important criteria is the identification of the code of the system. The mode of a functional system is not only a distinction between A and not-A, nor is it enough for it to re-enter itself, as shown in the case of Home/Not-Home. The primary code serves the distinguishing of own operations of the system from those observed in the environment. It does, in other words, generate the capacity for self-reference for every operation in the system. If Home/Not-Home in its re-entered form serves as a code for tourism, then every operation must fit within this code. Gotthard Günter in his logic marks the inside of the code as its designation value, whereas the outside is marked as the reflection value. Reflection value. For Luhmann, the designation value is the value of preference, securing the continuation of operations - the foundation of existence. »To operate is to exist« (Luhmann 1996: 39), and, as systems generate their own environment as a duplication of itself by means of discerning between self-referentiality and operations ascribed to the environment, then »the environment is operative« (Luhmann 1996: 41) as a product of the operations of the function system.

Reflection values are implied, when the continuation of tourism is challenged or discontinued, as in the case of the end of a vacation, when the bags are unpacked, and the everyday life has returned. The touristic reflection communication (being »home«) kicks in, eager to attract attention and discussion of new opportunities an execution of not-home communications by going on vacation, either as a short excursion while on science conferences or on charter holidays to large, fenced areas of tourism. What professor has not battled the challenge of attraction to visit places of limited scientific relevance while at a conference or seminar abroad, arguing with scientific relevance, yet reproducing the practices of tourism such as dining in neat places, visiting museums and exhibitions and staying at hotels filled with tourists? (Luhmann 1997: 359ff). The author has been unable to locate a systematic analysis of tourism in regard to its qualities of a function system³.

The dark side of the tourist is the refugee; touristic distinctions are inverted, not in a causal arrangement, where the advent of tourism created refugees and migration crisis, but as the inversion of the code: being not-home is the basic mode of operation, whereas »home« is the reflection value, discussion on lost and regained »homes«. Refugee communication is not eager for experiencing the experiences of others, but rather operate to avoid experiences of sorrow and loss, danger and crisis, and connect in networks to reduce the uncertainty of unwanted futures.

II

When did the first tourist emerge? The question raises two intertwined problems and those force us into the epistemological question of existence, that is, of operativity (Luhmann 1986: 39).

³ http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-52715204.html
The first problem is a problem of definition and therefore, of qualitative criteria for discerning the first tourist and the first touristic communication from the rest of society. Was someone sent on a political mission to Damascus in modern day Syria, whence from the sky a lightning struck him to the ground and blinded him, while a voice forced upon him a new kind of self-description as a future tourist, changing his political mission to one of tourism? Maybe it was far less dramatic, and a traveling merchant took joy of good company, so he sat down and wrote a commercial pamphlet for a new kind of experience? Or, just maybe, the stories and tales by seamen about the beautiful women and strange creatures across the ocean led a young boy in a British port onboard a ship - hiring for the adventure, not sustaining a living? Or, it could also be the clerics and noblemen touring Europe for the sake of education and salvation, leaving the shroud of sincerity behind and enjoying wine and women, arts and libraries. With the integration of the observer into theory of social phenomena during the 20th century (von Foerster 1973), the perspective changes from a struggle of ontological criteria for identification of tourism to a relation between observers and what is being observed. Our position changes from observations of first order to observations of other observers observing. Science in acceptance of the multiplication of observers cannot generate any empirical knowledge of how the world »truly« is. It is relegated to a position, where it generates knowledge on how others - and itself - observes the world in which the observers operate. In our case of the first tourist, multiple observers may argue with different selection and identification criteria. When those observers merge their observations inside a common code of selection of reflection, their horizons merge by interlocking their operations as continuations of a common coding. This merging of observational standpoints inside a common code is identified as a system, operating as intertwined networks of relations inside a common code, defining the inside and outside of the system through selection of self-reference (Luhmann 1984: 22ff). No observations happen without observers, and observers observing more than once generate continuity of existence (that is = operativity) by means of self-description of identity, that is: non-difference as observer. With the inclusion of multiple, stabilized observers into our understanding of society og social sciences, we have removed the capacity to identify exactly when the initial spark kicked off the flames of tourism, now circling the world on airplanes and by train, car, horseback and foot. Instead, we have gained the ability to observe, how tourism creates its own identity and describes its historical origins by means inside the binary code of the semantic codes of re-experience of experience and not-home-ness. The beginning of tourism is the void, the empty spot unobservable, but existent as the condition of continuation and tourism. If it hadn’t started, it would not have continued and would have not capacity for discontinuation.

The intertwined problem is the chronological dilemma. If time is perceived not only as a ordering of before/after, but as linear time with a first start and a possible end, then before/after positions are

4 This is an allegorical reference to the creation of St. Paul according to the Christian New Testament, (Acts 9:3-9, Acts 9:13-19)

5 In German, the distinction between World and environment stems from a different philosophical base. The environment is the »Umwelt«, the world-around a given identity, whereas world translates to Welt. Debating nomenclature of the distinction System/Environment, he could have opted for Inwelt/Umwelt. This would have brought him closer to the Heideggerian tradition of in-der-Welt-sein, which on the other hand would have shrouded the ability to generate theory in spite of Heideggerian concepts circling the postwar German universities. »Inwelt« - the in-the-world poses the question of what identity is in-the world, defining itself with this quality of being in (and not out of!) the world
themselves related to each other by ordering of befores, that are after other befores, and so forth. If one drinks two glasses of delicious wine, then one (W₁) is before the other (W₂). This is true of the two wines as a distinction in time solely as identities. If we add the wines as distinctions of full and empty glass, then the filled first glass of wine (W₁f) is before the empty first glass of wine (W₁e), and the same goes for the second glass of wine (W₂f, W₂e). On a list, W₁f, W₁e and W₂f all come before W₂e, whereas a lightened mind follows after W₂e. The linearity of time follows the form of a fundamental infinite list between two positions of time, one after another (T₁, T₂). The form of the infinite list as a linearity between T₁ and T₂ lies at the core of all counting of years. Christian tradition divides the calendric time into times Before Christ (BC) and after the birth of Christ - based on medieval Latin as Anno Domini (AD), in the year XX’XX of the Lord. The BC/AD calendar was introduced in the 6th century AD⁶. The innovation of a generalized position of ultimate time (the birth of Christ) and placing everything else in relation to the Timestamp of the Birth of Christ (T₀c). A calendar is a device for observing time progression as before/after (Benz 1932), even generating reflexivity on its own behalf: is the timestamp (T₀c) set correctly according to sources? Those questions do not impede the use of linear time in the format BC/AD. Yet it illustrates the improbability and artificiality, that is, dependent on reproductions of redundant observations of BC/AD-calendric time, for time to be observable.

If we for time being accept, that there was a time before the emergence of tourism and there is, evidently, at time after the first tourism emerged, in which we are still present, and the beginning itself is shrouded in mystery, a void of observer-dependent darkness, then our observation is still a valid argument of the emergence of tourism as a system.

We solve the problem of the beginning of tourism not by historiographic methods of chronological ordering of empirical findings with the use of linear time, but by ordering the advent of tourism with a time before and a time after. For any object of observation, this is a viable solution, except for the beginning of the beginning.

For empirical research in social phenomena, the argument is of limited relevance. For choice of method and theory in observation of phenomena on either micro-, meso-, or macro-level, it is of huge importance to know of the design features of a given theory, be it a grand theory, a supertheory with an autologic component (Luhmann 1997: 16) or low level theorizing.

The beginning of the beginning is a quite specific case. For example, a text can never refer to itself, without even having started. In the western conception of linear time, the beginning must have begun, otherwise no list could be devised for progression of time, structured by calendars. A beginning is always a transition from was-not to is; from before to after. »As I am putting down these words on an empty page I have begun to write a sentence that, when it is finished, will be the beginning of a chapter on certain problems of Beginning« (Voegelin 2000: 27) In art, as well as religion, this transition is usually named creation. What is then created, that is after creation, is not only created, but in the succession of time, present at existent, at least until the end begins, where after the end has ended and a »after« emerges, when existence is not. Neither creation nor existence carry any substantiality or ontological reality other than being the two sides of a distinction, that exclude one another as a device.

⁶ Mark the convoluted naming of time. It was not conceived as a beginning (of a revolution, as in the case of post 1789, but a calendric perspective re-entering itself based on a universal, yet arbitrary temporal position on a line.

The written language, stored in texts, carry the inherent linearity of sequences of words. Luhmann was well aware of the limitations of linearity of both text and time concepts. In the early 1980ies, he integrated the concept of auto-poiesis, as one device with which to overcome limitations of linear, temporal causality. Autopoiesis »...means self-creation and consists of the Greek words autos (self) and poiein (produce, create)« (Maturana & Poerksen 2004: 97). In fact, Humberto Maturana in the beginning described the phenomenon of autopoiesis at »circular causality« (Maturana & Poerksen 2004: 92). The concept changed the concepts of social systems, and autopoiesis is a basic concept throughout Luhmann’s second major work Soziale Systeme, published in 1984 (Luhmann 1984, 1986).

The second important shift in regard to his theory of social systems was the recognition and incorporation of the theory of distinction and selection published by the late George Spencer-Brown in his work Laws of Form in 1969 and with subsequent new editions. Spencer-Brown develops a formal logic with just one axiom, divided into three parts: »we take for given the idea of distinction and the idea of indication, and that we cannot make an indication without drawing a distinction. We take, therefore, the form of distinction for the form« (Spencer-Brown 1994: 1) The distinction is drawn as a vertical line as the separator »|« with an added horizontal line attached to top left side of the separator: »¯¯¯|« to identify the marked site in contrast to the outside - the unmarked state. In adherence to the formal logic, our language of the distinction between creation and existence implies a list, separated by the operand AND, whereas it should be in the first step: creation IS NOT existence, and in the second step: creation OR existence, as the observer drawing the distinction, generates this two-sided form and selects, if he puts creation OR existence in the left side of the form as the marked side. We stick to the written language and leave the formal arguments to forms of distinction.

Our initial form now is drawn as:

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CREATION ¯¯¯| EXISTENCE
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In the theory of social systems defined by Luhmann, systems constitute the basic set of elements, that by relation define itself as a system compared to what it is not - the outside environment (Umwelt) (Baecker 2002: 83ff, Luhmann 1984: 59). »Boundaries are not parts - one could probably say; Partial areas of systems, while there also are inner areas of systems, that profit by not having contact with the environment. Rather, a social system is nothing else than the one side, the inner side, the operating side of the form SYSTEM, and with every operation of the system, the distinguishing System is reproduced as distinction of the environment. The autopoiesis of a [social or psychic] system is nothing else than the reproduction of that difference (Luhmann 1997: 315, italics by the author).

The form of the system according to Luhmann is drawn as:

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SYSTEM ¯¯¯| ENVIRONMENT
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Time re-enters our distinction, when the distinction is read with a marked and unmarked site. The
system gains primacy, with its operations continuously dividing itself apart from the environment. Luhmann has a trick up his sleeves. Instead of the solution of repetition such as the rose is a rose is a rose is a rose, marking its existence, or, with Abelard, mark the existing non-existence, yet sign-ability of a rose with the expression: »Nulla rosa est«, there is no rose. Luhmann defines identity by means of the operating distinction.

The paradox form of the system is drawn as:

\[ \text{SYSTEM} = \text{SYSTEM} \bigbar \mid \text{ENVIRONMENT} \]

As our tourist would not go to Nazareth nor Babylon, and could not find a hotel in the garden of Eden, he must turn to sources of their ancient Mediterranean written history and the circulation and reflection upon those basic premises once set up by writers and librarians of the Israeli tribes and church councils and theologians. We then are able as scientific observers to follow his footsteps to discern inherent correspondences between Luhmannian systems theory and what Luhmann calls »old European semantics«. Both the mosaic Torah and the Bible, the holy books for Jews and Christians, begin with the books of Genesis, of creation. The first sentence marks the beginning:

»In the beginning God created the Heaven, and the Earth« (Gen. 1:1).

The form of creation according to Genesis is drawn as the first, the primal distinction:

\[ \text{HEAVEN} \bigbar \mid \text{EARTH} \]

There is no mentioning of collusion, so Earth and Heaven are at this point purely divided. As God created the distinction between Heaven and Earth, and creation marks a distinction before/after, then God is placed on the same side as heaven.

The paradox form of Judaic-Mediterranean creation is drawn as:

\[ \text{GOD} = \text{HEAVEN} \bigbar \mid \text{EARTH} \]

From this paradox of beginning, everything else is a commentary or reflection. From verse 2, the paradox slowly unfolds.

»And the earth was without forme, and voyd, and darkenesse was vpon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God mooued vpon the face of the waters« (Gen. 1:2).

The earth was, without form, at nothing has of yet been »spoken« into it. The first crossing from

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Luhmann explicitly relates to semantics - concepts and meanings - and not social structure itself. If his theory is observed as a network of interwoven concepts of semantics, his wording is indeed not in line with earlier times. When we instead look at his structure, the formal argument behind the theory, we locate continuities and Eurocentric traditions. This, is our expectation, is the true blind spot of the Luhmannian systems theory.

All references to biblical texts are drawn from the authorized King James version of 1611, if not otherwise specified.
heaven to earth happens, while God confines him in heaven, his spirit »moved upon the face of the waters«. The spirit usually is thought of as immaterial or as air. Movement implies time, moving from A to B. Genesis describes the advent of time on earth; a time starting later than Heaven, as it was created (in the list!) before Earth. Later theologians will conceptualize heavens time as »time before time« and Roman Christian doctrine driven by St. Bernard in the middle ages converted this time before time, accepting the impossibility of measurement with earthly calendars, as Aeternitas - eternity, in distinction to tempus, our earthly time concept of before/after. In the next verse, God suddenly speaks. Language demands discernibility of letters and words. 

»And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.« (Gen. 1:3)

This verse destroys the neatly constructed distinction between Heaven and Earth. The spoken words of God in Heaven infuse distinctions onto the earth. The pureness of the distinction between God and the created Earth is pierced from Heaven towards Earth. The problem is solved not by adhering to one-sided permeability of the distinction, as in the later concept of causa secundi (secondary Godly interventions into human matters throughout the existence of mankind), but in remembrance of the paradoxical nature of the beginning. »only the one side of the form, that is, the designated side, can be used operationally. Using both sides at the same time would infringe upon the purpose of the distinction. It is not possible, it would result in a paradox since one would have to call at once what is different the same.« (Luhmann 1999: 18). Just as Systems continuously operate by drawing their distinction between system and environment, God continuously re-draws the distinction of God/Earth, defining what distinctions are present outside. For Luhmann, systems create their own environments and presuppose existing (material) environments. »whatever they use as identities and as differences is of their own makings«, and yet »[a]utopoietic systems, of course, exist within an environment. They cannot exist on their own. But there is no input and no output of unity.« (Luhmann 1986, cf. Luhmann 1984: 76)) Systems »konstituieren sich und sie erhalten sich durch Erzeugung und Erhaltung einer Differenz zur Umwelt (...) denn die Differenz ist Funktionsprämisse selbstreferentieller Operationen« (Luhmann 1984: 35)

Systems build up internal complexity to cope with the higher complexity in the (perceived, generated) environment, in which other systems occur. Luhmann defines this as »structural coupling« (1997: 1138), that drive the evolution of society as a social system. More on structural couplings and evolution later. The paradox of created, yet uncreated environments is sharpened, when we turn to the devil of the late medieval period. For now, it is sufficient to point to the German literary and scholar Goethe, who de-masked the devil as an observational device, exercising only those powers ascribed to him by a contract and yet the only bound part, as Dr. Faust at last breaks the contract by his will to redemption, or as the devil himself notes: »I am none of the great ones« (Goethe 1999: 64) and »Oh no! The power is weak, only the lust is great« (ibid: 88, translation by the author).

III

The observer is the last problem in creation, and the struggle for observational capacity of the

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9 a similar argument is put forth by Voegelin: » the story of the quest can be a true story only if the questioner participates existentially in the comprehending story told by the It through its creative epiphany of structure. Colloquially expressed: The story cannot begin unless it starts in the middle.« Voegelin 2000: 41)
distinction Heaven/Earth is the big question. Genesis (2:7-25) places the first man Adam on Earth as the prime human observer of the creation, but only after the act of creation of light, life and time had occurred.

For Luhmann, observers are always systems observing (Luhmann 1997), whereas Christian doctrine struggles with the placement of the observer. God must necessarily be an observer, but who else can observe independent of Godly transcendent powers? Are human observations of reality, that is, creation, determined beforehand or are there possibilities of observation and ignorance inherent in human nature as a consequence of human free will? The late philosopher Voegelin reflects on the Christian myth of creation and the possibilities of self-observation in his late work on the emergence of order: »Reality is a story spoken in the creative language of God; and in one of its figures, in man who is created in the image of God, reality responds to the mystery of the creative word with the truth of the creation story. Or inversely, from the human side, divine reality must be symbolized analogically as the creative word of God because the experience engenders for its expression the imaginative word of the cosmogonic myth. Reality is an act of divine mythopoesis that becomes luminous for its truth when it evokes the responsive myth from man's experience. This perfect correlation between the language of truth and the truth of language in reality ... is the distinguishing mark of the creation story« (Voegelin 2000: 18). Voegelin reflects the Miltonian fascination of the authorship of creation. His »creation stories are always mediated - by accounts and accounts of accounts - by Raphael, by Uriel, by angelic hymns, by the reconstructions of memory and by a theory that casts doubt on the ability of language to convey origins at all« (Schwartz 1988:1). Satan questions the sovereignty of the fatherly Monarchy in Heaven, as no observer observed the creation other than in effect, in consequence of creation.

who saw
When this creation was? rememberst thou
Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being?
We know no time when we were not as now;
Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
By our own quick´ning power
(Satan in: Milton, Paradise Lost, 1667: 5.855-61)

Milton solves the temporal issue of the beginning of time by the co-emergence of creation and authorship. If creation is a text, then creation has an author, but authorship constitutes itself by creating texts, in which the author has the authority. »in Miltons monist universe, Creation..., rather than a divine ousia or essence, operates as the primary identifier of the one and only true God. Everything in the epic hinges on acts of divine authorship because authorship established divinity« (Lehnhof 2004: 40). God as author (as the first person), God as creator (of things) and God as the beginning (of time) rupture simultaneously from the void of chaos.

In the language of systems theory, systems observe not only themselves as they discern their operations from the surrounding environment - they observe other systems too, even observing, how other systems observe the ones observing. The paradox hits back, when reincorporating the complexity of concurrent observations into the basic form of the system. Other systems in the environment are
environments - effects of observing systems reproductions. They are, in consequence, just projections of own operations into the distance of environments. On the other hand, they are sources of operations, with whom systems form couplings.

From a formal standpoint, it seems, a major difference between Luhmannian systems theory and the Christian Doctrine of Creation emerges: the localization and capacity for observation of the distinction between Heaven and Earth, that is, between system and environment\(^{10}\).

Some cursory examples suffice to show the variable nature of positions on creation and observation.

1) If God, Heaven and angels are completely unintelligible, then the Torah and Bible are texts of fiction, even though religion has an important moral impact (Kant, Bultmann)

2) Earth is a mere effect, a projection of God and heaven - a residue of Gods own existence. Are we, then, anything else than Gods willed self-observation? (Spinoza)

3) Earth is created autonomously, but with the Godly will looming over every operation for intervention into otherwise undisturbed continuation. (Luther, Augustine).

4) Earth is the mirror of Heaven, so observing the Earth is an indirect observation of God (Cusanus), but we cannot be sure of his intentions and will, and this in turn generates the freedom of human action (Erasmus, Bruno)

5) Earth is on its own. The Devil is dead (Schleiermacher) and God is proclaimed dead (Nietzsche). Only the Romanticist feeling of createdness is left, and when shed, empowers man to act on his own behalf, free from Christian morale.

The formal analysis is a question of decoupling of arguments from their historical context and relations. The nearly three thousand years of reflection upon the limits and possibilities of observation of both the creator and his creation may still hold important clues to understand, how the concept of observation draws heavily on especially Christian scholastic and theological traditions.

The reformation in the 16\(^{th}\) century European Christianity gives us a clue of just how subtle, and yet important the distinction between God and the world is. In the Wycliffe translation of the new testament, preceeding both the reformation and the following St. James translation, the passage on creation in St. Pauls epistle to the Collosians is translated as:

“For in him all things be made” (Wycliffe, Coll. 1:16).

In contrast, the official St. James bible, a revised version of the latin Vulgata and correlated with the Septuagint, the ‘older’ Greek edition og the Bible, translated the passus as:

“For by him were all things created” (St. James, Coll. 1:16).

The distinction in him / by him does not remove the authorship, the auctor and auctorias of ancient Latin, but shows a change in conception of creation. With the emphasis on “in”, the creation is part of God, while the emphasis on “by” marks the distinction between the author and the text – between creator and creation. This paradox of in him / by him is a reflection on systems reference: if society and the world is created in God, then observations are part of the Godly nature, allured to have both

\(^{10}\) for the time being, we take Heaven/Earth as a variation of God/Creation, as it signifies the emerging form after the initial creation and expelling from the Garden of Eden
a will and a capacity for change. The Aristotelian notion of the eyesight as a beam of vision, instead of the receptive position of modern science, was prevalent as the main understanding of “seeing” in contrast to understanding, a position connected to the inner workings of the mind and soul. If humans were expelled (or even created) on the outside of God, then what is the linkage, the possibility of connectedness to the revealed God? The answer was the holy spirit, the third person of the holy trinity to show itself to humanity. By constructing a spirit of divine nature inside, people were made able to “observe”, if they wished to observe. The Latin quest for understanding by reading, praying and waiting for Godly revelations build on a tradition by the north-African theologians Origenes and later St. Augustine, codified in the works of De Trinitate and Confessiones in the 4th century AD. The solution was sought for in a distinct paradoxical language of the council of Calcedon, and has ever since generated new offsprings of concepts, trying to unite the “in God vs. by God” debate. Conceptually, they divided God and Creation as two sides of a distinction, which originates in God. From thereon, God is differentiated as the trinity of three persons of one essence, divided, yet one – separated yet every person is both the whole and the part. The Son, Jesus and Christ is then parted, yet one, spanning the primal distinction of creation between God and the created world of thingness. Anselm of Canterbury later elaborated the distinction with great detail in Cui Deus Homo in 1094-8. His form is a perfect elaboration of the paradox (Anselm of Canterbury 2008: 260ff). Seen from Creation of the sinned mankind,

The Saviour  =  JESUS (Man) |  CHRIST (God as Son)

From Gods view, it must necessarily be as part of God as unity, never to be thought as a succession, but as co-marking of both father and son.

GOD  =  FATHER  |  SON (As God)  |  Son (as son of Mary, theotokos)

For Anselm, the trinity posed a paradox nature and in principle not thinkable, except as a paradox as larger than the largest, you can think of (Anselm 2008: 5ff, Bromand & Kreis 2011: 62ff)). On the other hand, “it is impossible for God to be self-contradictory” (Anselm 2008: 311). The obsession with the double perspective of paradox in observation, yet impossibility of self-

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11 Thus, he enters in great detail in a formal analysis of the distinctions between the persons in the trinity: “Therefore, so in the case of God, although he is Father and Son and Holy Spirit, there is the Father of only the same Son and the Son of only the same Father and the Holy Spirit of only the same Father and Son. The Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit, the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. Indeed, since the Son is from the Father, and the Holy Spirit is from the Father, the one from whom someone is cannot be the one who is from him, nor can the one who is from someone be the one from whom he is, as I have already said. Therefore, the Father is not the Son or the Holy Spirit, nor are the Son and the Holy Spirit the Father. And so (to mention a different reason provisionally, since we have not yet shown that the Holy Spirit exists and proceeds from the Son) the Son is not the Holy Spirit, nor is the Holy Spirit the Son, since the Son has existence from the Father by generation, and the Holy Spirit has existence from the Father by procession and not by generation. Nor can the Son be his own Spirit, nor can the Holy Spirit be the one of whom he is the Spirit.” (Anselm 2008: 393f) and proceeds to an inquiry, “how the indivisible unity and the dissociable plurality in God are interrelated” (ibid.)
contradiction is either invisibilized by doctrine and liturgical structuring, by Dominican theology of the mystical unity of God in the late medieval scholasticism, excessive Franciscan driven form-theoretical argumentations from Anselm to Duns Scotus and Aquinas, running out of steam by the end of the 14th century and being superseded by the Reformation by Hus, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Melanchthon and others.

All of the sudden, this world became the center of distinction, separating good and evil, God and the Devil.

\[
\text{WORLD} = \text{GOOD (God)} \quad \vdash \quad \text{EVIL (devil)}
\]

The world, as being created, exists in time and is time-producing. The separation between good and evil thus is a question of temporality, where human actions and societal organizations struggle to remove evilness from the distinction itself. Christians were either free to act according to their own will, even if the will wills evil. This Erasmian argument was put forward in 1524 in a landmark publication “On the free will”\(^{12}\), and harshly rebutted by Luther in 1525 in his work “on the bondage of Will”.

Lutheran doctrine defines the world and creation not as the outside of a form, but as the distinction, with which God distinguished himself.

\[
\text{WORLD} = \text{GOD} \quad \vdash \quad \text{GOD}
\]

Every act and every will is reduced to an act of God’s own self-generation; theo-poiesis\(^ {13}\). For Luther, the world is both created and existing, yet there is no free will, as all, that is willed, is wanted as willed by God. “[W]eder ist kindisch noch bleibt in der bürgerlichen oder menschlichen Sphäre, was Gott wirkt, sondern es ist göttlich und übersteigt die menschliche Fassungskraft” (1525) And as God has foreknowledge, his will is majestic\(^ {14}\). In contrast, Erasmus placed God on the outside of the world by raising distinctions in the world from the status of effects (of Godly will) to emanations of human will and activity. This turn in conceptualizing heralds the inverting of creation and created. Suddenly, God is the eternal creator, created by forms of will in the creation\(^ {15}\). As a form, this equals first to:

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\(^{12}\) The free will itself has been a continuous topic in theological publications since Aquinas reckoned, how the free will is a byproduct of the Christian doctrine of creation, as Eve otherwise would not could have sinned in the Garden of Eden. The fall of man was described as a form in its simplest way: “she pluck’d, she ate” (Milton 1989: IX:781).

\(^{13}\) The secular version is Schopenhauers philosophy of the will.

\(^{14}\) This quasi-deterministic concept of creation is the basic assumption of Spinoza in his Ethica (1677)

\(^{15}\) Duns Scotus prepared the logical elements by inventing “formal distinctions”, that have no re-presentations in creation per se. Their function is to enable the limited mind and sight of the human observer to grasp the beautitude of creation with less than perfect distinctions (substantial distinctions). As much as the formal distinctions freed the observer from arguments of correspondence in nominalism and substantialism, and en passant shed the shroud of Aristotelian teleological contingency, where everything created is bound to shift from potentiality to actuality, in favour of his new invention of Luhmannian contingency, where elements of creation can exist as contingent opportunities for selection, existing only in their nature of potentiality throughout time from creation till judgement day (Duns Scotus 1994: 29ff).
GOD = ¯¯¯| ¯¯¯| ¯¯¯| GOD

The empty brackets mark willed actions through time. This in consequence places worldly succession and relation of action elements as self-generating units.

HUMAN SOCIETY = WORLD ¯¯¯| GOD

We have shown, albeit spotty and incoherent, how Christian theology worked along the lines of systems theory. Maybe God read Luhmann and envisioned his creation of the World, Adam and Eva as a reproduction of modern systems theory. As the Christian God bears foreknowledge, this is not impossible. But, as society understands itself as a network of operations of communication, it seems unlikely, as long as modernity sticks to the linear progression of eschatological temporality as devised by the Julian and Gregorian calendars. By comparing the theological theories of creation with Luhmannian systems theory through the lense of Spencer-Brownian form-theory, a disturbing similarity emerges on the conceptual level on the relation between systems and environments or, as the theologians describe it: between Creation and the existing world in which we live.

There is a clear logic to the autopoietic axiom in both the concepts of God (Theopoiesis) and Systems (Autopoiesis). God is not something in itself, except possibly before creation, but is created as an aggregation of multiple paradoxes. Our mission has been to show, how theology struggled with its most basic premises of being the outside of the autopoietic continuity of Godly reproduction. God, is not only a transcendent, externalized page of the book of existence in an immanent world of operations, as the legacy from Erasmus through Spinoza to Kant and the Idealism of enlightenment and beyond.

God IS the unity of the distinction between God and the World, G = G/W, just as Luhmann defines systems as the unity of the distinction between the system and environment, S = S/E.

For Luhmann, the environment is the outside of the System as a negative definition. The definition marks the environment as the unmarked side of the system, as a correlate to systemic operations:

“The environment only receives its unity through the system and only relative to the system. The environment is characterized by open horizons, but not delineated by crossable boundaries. In itself, the environment is no system. Every system has a different environment, as every system only delineates itself from its own environment. Accordingly, there are not self-reflections, nor does it carry capacity for actions. The attribution of operations to the environment (“external attribution”) is for its part a strategy by the system. This doesn’t corroborate a dependency of the environment to the system, or that the system can dispose of it at will. Rather, the complexity of the system and the environment (…) excludes any form of dependency in one direction or the other” (Luhmann 1984: 76, translation by the author)\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{16}\) “Die Umwelt erhält ihre Einheit erst durch das System und nur relativ zum System. Sie ist ihrerseits durch offene Horizonte, nicht jedoch durch überschreitbare Grenzen umgrenzt; sie ist selbst also kein System. Sie ist für jedes System eine andere, da jedes System nur sich selbst aus seiner Umwelt ausnimmt. Entsprechend gibt es keine Selbstreflexionen und erst recht keine Handlungsfähigkeit der Umwelt. Die Zurechnung auf Umwelt..."
Defining systems as the sole source of operations forces Luhmann into an unresolved paradox. He hides the problem by a pragmatic argument of multiplication of systems and categorizing them with a typology and historical argumentation of existing systems – as they can be observed by sociological observations. After this assessment, his demands an autological component (Luhmann 1997: 16) from every theory; in his instance, to regard sociology as part of the scientific function system, discerning observations of society and generating false knowledge by sifting through existing, true knowledge in search for the most elaborate theory of society. In radical coherence to his own paradigm, “Every system has a different environment, as every system only delineates itself from its own environment.” (Luhmann 1984: 76), the multiplication of systems is taken for granted, yet is not possible in any other way as fiction by one system, understanding itself as system: the Luhmannian systems theoretical understanding of sociology and science in general.

“Action systems use time to enforce continuous self-dissolution; they enforce their continuous self-dissolution to provide self-renewal, as they secure selectivity of all self-renewal; and they use this selectivity to make self-renewal possible in an environment demanding continuous diverging conditions and requirements” (Luhmann 1984: 394, transl. by the author).

This quote brings us quite close to the God/World understanding of Cusanus, one of the few medieval theologians quoted throughout his euvre. Cusanus favors the understanding of a God far away, who’s actions and will is discernible in the spacculum livum – the mirror of life. The observing mind draws conclusions by inference and induction in indirect observation of the world to learn of Gods infinite grace and goodness. Cusanus is the key to understanding Luhmannian systems pragmatism. As environments are conceived as inobservable (just as God in the Christian theology), the system can only observe itself, inferring, that if it supposed other existing systems in its environment, and rearranges accordingly by projecting operations and structuring internal forms according to the presupposition of other systems existence, the system may gain certainty that other systems operate and observe accordingly – enforcing a mindset of double contingency on both own and the projected environmental systems, that are both unobservable in the environment (in itself) and yet a presupposed to exist, as the one system can continue to adhere to its structuring of the environment according to the expectation of being a system between many, yet different from the others.

IV

How does tourism, deliberations on Christian Doctrine and a form-theoretical analysis fit together in one and the same argument? The answer lies in a quote by Luhmann, set forth in an interview shortly before his untimely death in 1998. In a reflective dialogue on creation of mankind and the problem of evil in the world, he ends with a remarkable observation: “my position is always with the Devil. His distinctions are the strongest and he sees the most” (Luhmann in Hagen 2011: 77). Luhmann makes explicit mentioning of the Mephistopheles in Faust by Goethe. The interview ends with this sentence,

("externale Zurechnung") ist ihrerseits eine Systemstrategie. Das alles heißt jedoch nicht, daß die Umwelt vom System abhängt oder daß das System über seine Umwelt nach Belieben disponieren könnte. Vielmehr schließt die Komplexität des Systems und der Umwelt - wir kommen darauf zurück - jede totalisierende Form von Abhängigkeit in der einen oder anderen Richtung aus"

… meine Partie ist immer beim Teufel. Der unterscheidet am schärfsten und sieht am moisten.”
and we are left with our own capacity for reasoning.
In the book of Iob in the old testament, the Devil is an angel alongside the other archangels, pushing God to deprave Iob of all things good in life to test his belief. If we follow the historical trajectory, the Devil reemerges as the outcast of creation, testing Jesus in his 40 days in the desert. Milton poignantly leaves the devil with powers and knowledge to bring Jesus in despair.

“Men generally think me much a foe
To all mankind. Why should I? they to me
Never did wrong or violence. By them
I lost not what I lost; rather by them
I gained what I have gained, and with them dwell
Copartner in these regions of the World,
If not disposer—lend them oft my aid,
Oft my advice by presages and signs,
And answers, oracles, portents, and dreams,
Whereby they may direct their future life.”

(The Devil in: Milton: Paradise Regained, I: 387-396)

if Luhmann had had the Miltonian Devil in mind, it would have served as a warning of the power of systems theory with its persuasive analytical power. The Devil of Paradise lost is a devil of many words and capabilities and yet disguises his own ambitions.
Four hundred years earlier, the Devil was placed in the center of the earth, deep down in hell. Dante entered Hell from Limbo and circled down to the deepest and innermost circle of Hell.

The evil Emperor stood forth in his pit
From his mid-chest on up, and just the same
Or worse as my arm to a giant’s arm,
A giant’s arm to his compares, so think
How huge his whole capacity for harm
Must be. His mighty strength gives you the link
Between his two lives. If his beauty was
A match for all the foulness he has now,
We see that all our sorrow came because
He set his face against his Maker.

(Dante: Divine Comedy, I:34, 30-43)

In this concept of the Devil, the Luhmannian position would have opposed his maker and purged from heaven the angel Lucifer (light-bearer), now stuck in a pit of misery, plucking away on text after text, speechless. The Satan of Dante has become stuck in his pit, immovable while sinners circle hell in descend downwards without hope of redemption. Has systems theory become an all-consuming theory? Probably not, even though it has continued to show its usability in such diverse fields such as microsociology of interactions, war studies, religion, law and organizational studies.
European history has since the advent of Christianity been occupied by God and the good, alas the church needed a programme for distinguishing between the Good and the Evil – personified as God and the Devil (or devils). While the Devil is not considered an active part of modernity in the large cities and organizations of Europe, he shouldn’t be disregarded. “Those who want to explore Europe should ask about God, but also about the devil” (Flasch 2015: 49). Just as the evolution of the relation between God and Creation changed form throughout history, so has the Devil changed form.

The Devil of Milton and Goethe does not occupy a separate entity in the universe such as Hell. He lives in the creation, trying to expand his powers, even though he at times know, he’ll fail in the end (Benz 1932). Since the reformation, the Devil (and devils) have grown in intellect and persuasive capacities, while at the same time loosing world-altering powers. He deceives women and men to sign contracts (!) promising individual gains by reimbursement of the personal soul after death. The Inquisition and other legal stands in the wake of reformation on all sides of the religious strifes and wars struggled to define and proof the existence of contracts, developing new forms of investigations and legal contract theory (Flasch 2005: 223-306).

When Luhmann proposed his position to be that of Mephistopheles, he may have envisioned him a tourist in time and across system boundaries. He does not see what God sees, yet is able to move in the world, even though his home is hell. The Devil limits the eternal flow of goodness, grace, Gloria by infusing temporal limitations upon the outflows of heaven. The diabolic vision discerns the symbolism of Gloria, distinguishes it from itself by existing as the impossible opposition, always on the move through time and space.

Inverting the late medieval understanding of creation, God created the garden of Eden and gave life to eternal joy for Adam and Eve. By original sin “she pluck’ed, she ate”, the snake created the beginning of time and enforced the Godly system to react. Since the late Romans, the snake is understood as the Devil in disguise.

By heightening the level of abstraction, the function of the Devil becomes clearer. The Devil is an observational device, that has no place in creation, yet is present, like parasites feeding of hosts, sometimes destroying their host, at other times entering a symbiotic relationship strengthening their common goal for survival. The Devil is the parasite in systems theory, showing the limits of systems analysis. But the devil is also the tourist, touring systems and their respective semantics, permeating the otherwise perfect continence of the paradoxical concept of S=S/E by linking observations of multiple systems.

The Faustian Devil wants, what others have: love, hope and forgiveness. Whatever he tries, he can’t experience it himself, bound by his diabolic nature. Worldly observers such as social systems are forced to reflect their diabolic nature to continue operating on the designated side of their code, that is: their common mode of operations. Three examples suffice.

Protesters in cities such as Barcelona and Dubrovnik mark their result of the reflection on the experienced disambiguation from daily life. Tourism isn’t evil per se. It just provides for reflection on the diabolic sides of the economic wealth flowing.

According to Luhmann, “the largest danger in politics stems from those, who mean it well” (Luhmann in Münkler et al. 2009: 64)\(^{18}\). This observation does not discredit politics per se, but advises politicians

\(^{18}\) “Die größte Gefahr in der Politik geht von denen aus, die es gut meinen”
to reflect not only upon their good wills, but also on the personal and collective effects of certain legislations. Those “who mean it well” are in danger of forgetting the diabolic reflections, as positive sanctioning and resource allocation always(!!) is an actual or potential negative sanctioning in other domains of political actions.

Lastly, Luhmann by his reference to Mephistopheles sends out an invitation to tour the world with the scientific tools of systems theory to observe, re-produce or falsify observations and arguments. The Devil is (also) a tourist, so either be the Advocate of the Devil or at least, have some
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