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RECONSTRUCTING THE SELF:
A GOFFMANIAN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

In his influential study *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*,[1] Erving Goffman provides an insightful account of the formation of social selves. Goffman's work has been extensively discussed in the literature.[2] Yet, the presuppositional underpinnings, let alone the socio-ontological implications, of his conception of personhood have not been systematically examined. The main reason for the lack of methodical engagement with the principal assumptions that lie at the heart of Goffman's theory of the self is that his approach is widely regarded as an eclectic account that, while drawing on different sociological traditions, does not make any claim to universal validity.[3]

The persuasiveness of the contention that Goffman's analysis of the self cannot be reduced to a general theory of human personhood appears to be confirmed by the fact that both supporters and detractors of his sociological project tend to agree that it would be misleading to identify his oeuvre with only one particular school of thought. On this view, it would be erroneous to deduce a foundational framework of sociological investigation from his numerous studies concerned with the interaction between self and society. The aim of this essay is to challenge this interpretation by demonstrating that, in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman provides a fairly systematic account of human personhood. More significantly, this enquiry suggests that a fine-grained examination of Goffman's key concepts permits us to propose an *outline of a general theory of the human self*. In the final section, attention will be drawn to several controversial

issues that arise when faced with the task of assessing both the strengths and the weaknesses of Goffman's account of the self.

To be clear, in what follows no attempt will be undertaken to do justice to the entire complexity of Goffman's intellectual accomplishments. Rather, the analysis will focus on Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, illustrating that it contains a series of fundamental presuppositions about the construction of human selfhood. Before embarking upon the ambitious task of developing an outline of a general theory of the self, however, it seems reasonable to situate Goffman's work in the field of sociological research. Aware of the wide-ranging scope and multi-thematic spirit of Goffman's writings,[4] most commentators share the position that his perspective may be described as a *dramaturgical approach* to social life.[5] According to this reading of his oeuvre, Goffman's sociology possesses five essential features, which shall be considered in subsequent sections.

First, as a *micro-sociological* account, Goffman's approach centres on the study of *everyday life*. Macro-sociological frameworks seek to explore the nature of society, of which they tend to conceive in terms of a structural totality. Micro-sociological frameworks, on the other hand, aim to grasp the constitution of sociality, which they tend to interpret in terms of an experienced reality. Macro-sociological accounts are concerned, above all, with *Gesellschaft*, understood as a conglomerate of interconnected actors whose existence lies *beyond* the horizon of their immediate experience of the world. By contrast, micro-sociological accounts grapple, first and foremost, with *Gemeinschaft*, defined as a community of interconnected actors whose existence lies *within* the horizon of their immediate experience of the world.[6] If macro-sociological studies seek to uncover the *systemic structures* that make *social order* possible, micro-sociological studies aim to understand the *quotidian practices* that involve particular forms of *social interaction*. Since Goffman's writings flesh out the intricacies inherent in the presentation of self in everyday life, his work falls, unambiguously, into the area of micro-sociology. Within the Goffmanian architecture of the social, the reality of everyday life is placed at centre stage: the ordinary reality of the *lifeworld* — epitomized in the normative force of quotidian interactions, as well as in the mundane character of habits and routines — possesses a *foundational status* in the daily unfolding of social existence.

Second, as an *interactionist* account, Goffman's approach focuses on the study of *human interaction*. As such, it sheds light on the intersubjective aspects that allow for the construction of the human self. Interactionist programmes scrutinize the ways in which performative subjects relate to one another in their everyday lives in order to grasp how they participate

in, attribute meaning to and act upon the world. Far from existing simply for themselves as entirely independent and isolated entities, human selves live their lives with and through other human selves. Only insofar as we are able to relate to our human fellows are we capable of relating to ourselves. Our encounter with life is an encounter both with ourselves and with other selves: our encounter with our subjectivity is pervaded by our experience of society, just as our encounter with society is impregnated with our experience of subjectivity. As interactional beings, whose principal existential reference point is their lifeworld, we need to be exposed to and involved in shared practices. We encounter the facticity of worldly objectivity by referring to the parameters of validity acquired through our experiences of life-worldly intersubjectivity. Put differently, we face up to our immersion in reality by engaging in face-to-face interactions with other members of society.

Third, as a *communicational* account, Goffman's approach attaches considerable importance to the study of *human language*. Language is a crucial component of the human universe. Subjects capable of speech, reflection and action are entities equipped with species-constitutive resources permitting them to participate in processes of linguistically mediated forms of communication. Language allows for the possibility of establishing reflectively coordinated and discursively motivated modes of coexistence. In human societies, both the constitution and the development of everyday interactions cannot be dissociated from intersubjective processes based on ordinary communication. Not only do humans have a deep-seated need to relate to others in order to be able to relate to themselves as well as to their environment, but, in addition, they have a profound desire to find their place in the world by seeking to be understood by fellow members of their species. In fact, linguistically mediated communication enables human subjects to translate the apparent givenness of reality into a matter of contemplation when engaging in speech acts aimed at discourse, questioning and deliberation. Speaking animals attribute meaning to life by mobilizing the interpretive resources of their language.

Fourth, as a *pragmatist* account, Goffman's approach is concerned with the study of *social practices*. What we need to understand in order to explain the elasticity of social life is the *preponderance of 'practical reason' over 'theoretical reason'*: our 'know-how' is more important for the functioning of society than our 'know-that'. The former enables us to contribute — directly and routinely — to the everyday construction of the world. The latter permits us to describe, to analyse, to interpret, to explain and to make judgements about different aspects of the world.

To the extent that we, as ordinary actors, are expected to cope with a large variety of real-life issues that are thrown at us by the outside world, the intuitive command of practical knowledge obtains ontological primacy over the discursive mastery of theoretical knowledge. The smooth functioning of the social world depends on our intuitive capacity to engage in life practices, rather than on our critical capacity to reflect upon life premises. Indeed, in a radical sense, the ultimate premise of social life is human practice.

Fifth, as a *dramaturgical* account, Goffman's approach proposes to take seriously the study of *role performances*. In essence, dramaturgical frameworks explore the social world as if it were a sequence of theatrical scenes. Given that, in Goffman's writings, social encounters are analysed 'by drawing upon metaphors from and analogies with the theatre',[7] his work is often referred to as 'dramaturgical'.[8] As performers living in increasingly complex societies, we are expected to be able to adopt multiple — often contradictory and often competing — roles. Social roles are a constitutive component of human life. In order to become fully-fledged members of society, we need to prove that we are capable of slipping into different roles, without whose existence there would be no division of tasks, positions and responsibilities within small-scale or large-scale communities. Every time we take on a social role, we confirm both the performativity and the contingency of our personality: the *performativity* of our personality stems from the fact that we need to *act upon* our environment, and the *contingency* of our personality is due to the fact that we need to *adapt to* our environment. To the degree that our engagement with the world is mediated by the construction and adoption of different social roles, our immersion in reality depends on our performative and assimilative engagement with the expectation-laden construction of our communities.

In short, from a Goffmanian point of view, human life is composed of five essential features: *quotidianity*, *interactionality*, *linguisticality*, *functionality* and *performativity*. First, the importance of everyday life is due to the *quotidian* nature of our immediate experience of the world. Second, the centrality of social interaction stems from the *intersubjective* nature of selfhood. Third, the power of linguistic communication is rooted in the *meaning-laden* nature of human existence. Fourth, the prevalence of social practices manifests itself in the preponderance of the *pragmatic* nature of social life. Finally, the power of social performances is expressed in the *assimilative* nature of our engagement with the expectation-laden construction of our communities.

These five presuppositions lie at the heart of the Goffmanian architecture of the social, emphasizing the significance of the *micro-sociological*,

interactional, *communicational*, *practical* and *dramaturgical* aspects of culturally constructed realities. Yet, taking into account that 'Goffman consciously avoided the development of a consistent theoretical frame of reference',[9] and given that it would be reductive to associate his work with one single doctrine, both his advocates and his critics have drawn attention to the eclectic, and seemingly unsystematic, nature of his writings. In this light, it appears that there is little, if any, room for proposing a Goffmanian outline of a general theory of the human self. Without denying Goffman's resistance to conceptual pigeonholing and his refusal to confine himself to the defence of one particular paradigm, the following sections seek to demonstrate that his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* contains a set of foundational assumptions about the construction of personhood. If this holds true, Goffman — perhaps, unwittingly — offers a theoretical framework that succeeds in shedding light on the key features underlying the emergence of the human self.[10]

1. THE INFORMATION-GATHERING SELF

Human selves are *information-gathering* selves. 'When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him [or her] or to bring into play information about him [or her] already possessed.'[11] In other words, when engaging in social interaction, we aim to obtain information about one another so that we can relate to each other in an — at least seemingly — appropriate, receptive and knowledgeable fashion.

> *Information* about the individual helps to *define the situation*, enabling others to *know in advance* what he [or she] will *expect* of them and what they may *expect* of him [or her]. *Informed* in these ways, the others will *know how best to act* in order to call forth a *desired response* from him [or her].[12]

There are five main reasons why we are information-gathering entities.

(a) Our information-seeking attitude is linked to our *interactional* nature. Only insofar as we are able to attain information about one another are we in a position to generate both sustainable and meaningful forms of social interaction. The relative continuity, stability and predictability of social interaction depend on its protagonists' capacity to develop a sense of trust, solidarity and mutual expectations.

(b) Our information-seeking attitude is linked to our *expectational* nature. Possessing at least a minimal amount of information about the people with whom we interact is a precondition for guiding our conduct in accordance with the expectations that are implicit in particular social encounters. Information about others permits us to define the interactional situation in which we find ourselves immersed.

(c) Our information-seeking attitude is linked to our *conventional* nature. Most social actions are — albeit, for the most part, implicitly — codified. In the majority of cases, we seek to acquire information about the persons with whom we engage in interactions, in order to ensure that we behave appropriately. Access to information about our immediately experienced fellow human beings is a requirement for the emergence of empirically viable patterns of interaction, based on the establishment of norms, rules and conventions.

(d) Our information-seeking attitude is linked to our *judgemental* nature. Every time we engage in social interactions, we — consciously or unconsciously — make assumptions about those involved in the encounter. Every perception of the other compels us to make judgements about the other. Our experience of fellow members of society cannot be divorced from our cognitive projection of biases and assessments upon reality.

(e) Our information-seeking attitude is linked to our *spatiotemporal* nature. As embodied actors, we are both spatially and temporally situated, that is, we occupy particular positions in both space and time. Given the contextual contingency of our encounters with worldly realities, we constantly need to obtain information about our environment, in order to cope with the burden of agency. Different situations require different pieces of information: we seek to acquire knowledge *about* the world in order to be able to relate *to* the world.

In short, it is due to our *interactional*, *expectational*, *conventional*, *judgemental* and *spatiotemporal* nature that we, as human beings, are *information-gathering* selves.

2. THE IMPRESSION-DEPENDENT SELF

Human selves are *impression-dependent* selves. Impressions are a guiding force in our everyday existence. Our engagement *with* the world is shaped by our impressions *of* the world. In our everyday interactions, we need to

be able to have perceptions of others in order to interact with them. Impressions are immensely powerful because they can decide what we think of others and what others think of us. Insofar as we, as human actors, participate in the construction of society, we are involved in a *double hermeneutics of expressions and impressions*. On the one hand, we have impressions of others, relying on our perceptions of reality in general and of the people with whom we interact in particular. On the other hand, others have impressions of us, which is why, on most occasions, we seek to evoke favourable perceptions of our personality. Thus, we are not only substantially influenced by the impressions we have of others, but also eager to have an impact on the impressions others may, or may not, have of us.

'In everyday life, of course, there is a clear understanding that first impressions are important.'[13] Indeed, 'getting off on the right foot',[14] or failing to do so, can have far-reaching consequences for the course of our actions and interactions. *Impression management*, then, is a *dramaturgical virtue*: being able to manage the impressions that others may have of us endows us with the power to create a picture that others have of us. 'The *expressiveness* of the individual (and therefore his [or her] capacity to give impressions)'[15] is the basis of the *impressiveness* of the individual (and therefore his [or her] capacity to convey expressions). Following the logic of a successful form of impression management, 'the individual will have to act so that he [or she] intentionally or unintentionally *expresses* himself [or herself], and the others will in turn have to be *impressed* in some way by him [or by her].'[16] The unfolding of social life is inconceivable without the perpetual interplay between expressions and impressions.

To be sure, in the course of further interaction with individual or collective subjects, first impressions can be *either* confirmed *or* contradicted. Performatively sustained spheres of existence are marked by the fundamental difference between *appearance* and *substance*, that is, between a *surface reality*, whose components are visible, and a *core reality*, whose features are hidden.[17] The two existentialist questions arising in this context can be synthesized as follows: 'Do you want to *be* who you *appear* to be? Or, do you want to *appear* to be who you *are*?' To the extent that Goffman was a sociologist of everyday reality, rather than a philosopher of morality, he was interested in the pragmatics, rather than in the ethics, of social interactions. On his — arguably pragmatist — account, we cannot escape what may be described as the 'performative circle' of human life: we often *avoid appearing to be who we are* (for instance, with the aim of hiding our weaknesses or undesirable qualities, which form part of our personality), and we

often *pretend to be who we are not* (for instance, with the aim of making others believe that we possess certain strengths or desirable qualities, with which — in fact — we are not equipped). Irrespective of whether impressions are accurate or misleading, they are remarkably powerful in terms of the impact they have on the ways in which we interact with others as well as on the ways in which others interact with us.

3. THE PERFORMATIVE SELF

Human selves are *performative* selves. 'People are constantly monitoring themselves, masking bits of their selves and accentuating other aspects. The way we dress, the way we speak, our gestures — all these are meant both to convey and [to] conceal who we are.'[18] By definition, social practices are carried out by performative selves. For there is no social action without social performance. Performance, however, is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it enables us to *reveal* particular aspects of our personality; on the other hand, it permits us to *conceal* particular aspects of our personality. Our capacity to reveal specific elements of who we are to others gives us the opportunity to *disclose* those facets of our subjectivity that we wish to make accessible to others. Our capacity to conceal specific elements of who we are to others provides us with the competence to *cover up* those facets of our subjectivity that we wish to hide from others. In order to participate in processes of social interaction, we need to engage in the tension-laden *dialectic of disclosure and disguise*.

Even when seeking to *reveal* something about ourselves to others, we draw attention away from other aspects of our personality. There is no form of social interaction through which we can disclose everything about ourselves. Even when seeking to *conceal* something about ourselves from others, we draw attention to some aspects of our personality. There is no form of social interaction through which we can hide everything about ourselves.

> […] *the performance of an individual accentuates certain matters and conceals others*. If we see perception as a form of contact and communion, then control over what is perceived is control over contact that is made, and the limitation and regulation of what is shown is a limitation and regulation of contact.[19]

Put differently, control over our contact with others depends on control over our contact with ourselves: the performances in which we engage in

relation to others are always performances in which we engage in relation to ourselves.

4. THE INTERESTED SELF

Human selves are *interested* selves. To be more precise, human selves are both interest-laden and interest-driven selves.[20] Since we are interest-laden selves, our actions are *permeated* by a series of interests. Since we are interest-driven selves, our actions can be *motivated* by a series of interests. *All* social actions are *interest-laden*; as such, they are *pervaded* by a variety of interests, which individuals may have both as members of society and as members of humanity. *Some* social actions are *interest-driven*; as such, they are *determined* by particular interests, which individuals may have both as members of society and as members of humanity.[21]

In the Goffmanian universe of social interactions, the central importance of interests is inextricably linked to the existential significance of performances: in everyday interactions, '*the individual is likely to present himself [or herself] in a light that is favourable to him [or her]*'.[22] We seek to 'come across' in such a way that our bodily control over ourselves gives — or, at least, appears to give — us a certain amount of performative command over the situation in which we find ourselves. Our capacity to engage in social interactions is inconceivable without our ability to exercise at least a minimal degree of power over the external perception of our subjectivity. '[W]hen an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him [or her] to mobilize his [or her] activity so that it will *convey an impression to others which it is in his [or her] interests to convey*.'[23] Whenever we seek to transmit a specific image of ourselves to our human fellows, we do so because we have an interest in doing so.

5. THE REFERENTIAL SELF

Human selves are *referential* selves. Their referential nature is expressed in their participation in and dependence on social groups, or — in Goffmanian terms — 'teams'.[24] A team, in the Goffmanian sense, is the social reference group *par excellence*. 'I will use the term "*performance team*" or, in short, "*team*" to refer to *any set of individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine*.'[25] Given that, in our daily lives, we are — at

different times and in different places — immersed in a variety of collective acts that can be characterized as routine staging, we are part of a series of teams. Humans have to be able to relate to society in order to be able to relate to themselves. Performance teams are situationally contingent ensembles of actors to which we refer in order to refer to ourselves. We can conceive of ourselves as individuals only insofar as we — that is, our existence and identity — are recognized by other members of the performance teams to which we belong.

Far from being reducible to a factual given, however, participation in a performance team constitutes an interactional process. A performance team is not only a social fact but also a social act.

> A *team*, then, may be defined as a set of individuals whose intimate *cooperation* is required if a given *projected definition of the situation* is to be maintained. A team is a *grouping*, but it is a grouping not in relation to a social structure or social organization but rather in relation to an *interaction* or *series of interactions* in which the *relevant definition of the situation* is maintained.[26]

In other words, rather than regarding a performance team as a collection of actors who *possess* a set of structural, organizational or institutional characteristics, here it is conceived of as an ensemble of individuals who are united by the fact that they *project* roughly the same definition of a particular situation onto a socially constructed — and, hence, spatiotemporally confined — domain of reality.[27]

Insofar as we are constantly thrown into different situations and interactions, we are continuously required to function within definitional frameworks created by members of particular performance teams. Every performance team has an idiosyncratic code of legitimacy, whose existence determines both the short-term and the long-term viability of its normative validity.

> *One overall objective of any team is to sustain the definition of the situation that its performance fosters.* This will involve the over-communication of some facts and the under-communication of others.[28]

The existence of a performance team hinges upon the practices carried out by interrelated social actors. To the extent that actors' practices contribute to the maintenance of their collective situation, they participate — directly or indirectly — in the reproduction of the performance team in relation to which they are undertaken in the first place. In brief, social life is composed of different performance teams functioning in different situations according to different definitions.

6. THE SITUATIONAL SELF

Human selves are *situational* selves. Given that we are situational selves, the constitution of our subjectivity depends on the social contexts in which we find ourselves immersed. The power of context stems from the fact that *social life is 'framed'*. When navigating our way through our daily lives, we move from situation to situation, from context to context and from 'frame' to 'frame'. Every socially constructed situation constitutes a coexistential frame of reference in which human action unfolds. To be sure, each interactional situation requires a praxeological — that is, context-sensitive — definition: 'a definition of the situation'.[29] The definitions that we generate and exchange within a given context provide us not only with an understanding of a particular situation but also, at least potentially, with an understanding of the world, which we interpret from the angle of the setting in which we are embedded in a given point in time. Every communicative encounter with others obliges us to produce and to negotiate perspective-laden definitions about specific aspects of reality. In fact, we need to be familiar with the — implicit or explicit — definitions of the situations in which we are placed in order to be able to interact with fellow human actors in a meaningful manner. The recognition of others is always filtered through the definitional frameworks that we mobilize within the situations
in which we interact with our fellow human beings.

> When we allow that the individual *projects a definition of the situation* when he [or she] appears before others, we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively *project a definition of the situation* by virtue of their response to the individual and by virtue of any lines of action they initiate to him [or her].[30]

The definitions of situations — emerging within and attached to particular contexts — contain at least five significant features:

(a) Definitions of situations are *performatively* established: the specificity of interactional settings depends on the performativity of social practices.

(b) Definitions of situations are *intersubjectively* established: every time we interact with others we produce or reproduce collective understandings, whose existence is indicative of the normativity implicit in social encounters.

(c) Definitions of situations are *projectively* established: we project perceptions and reflections upon the world, thereby confirming that, in our daily interactions with other members of society, our interpretations

have a tangible impact on both the constitution and the development of reality.

(d) Definitions of situations are *reciprocally* established: an intersubjectively established reading of a shared set of circumstances can be maintained only insofar as its legitimacy is corroborated by dynamics of reciprocity, which are generated by spatiotemporally embedded actors.

(e) Definitions of situations are, for the most part, *implicitly* established: the more familiar we are with a socially constructed and symbolically mediated comprehension of a particular ensemble of conditions, the more likely we are to take its existence — and, indeed, the validity of its collectively shared representations — for granted.

Thus, as situational selves, we are capable of functioning in accordance with different forms of 'interactional *modus vivendi*',[31] that is, with different ways of doing things in line with implicitly or explicitly established forms of praxeological consensus within an intersubjectively created state of affairs:

> I will refer to this *level of agreement as a 'working consensus'*. It is to be understood that the working consensus established in one interaction setting will be quite different in content from the working consensus established in a different type of setting.[32]

When we *act* upon the world, we *work* upon the world; when we *act* with others, we *work* upon others. Every interactional consensus is a working consensus. Social encounters cannot escape the definitional specificity of their contextual contingency.

> When an individual appears before others, he [or she] knowingly and unwittingly projects a definition of the situation, of which a conception of himself [or herself] is an important part.[33]

Every conception *of* the world is, at the same time, a projection *on* the world. The ontology of social objectivity is intimately intertwined with the phenomenology of human subjectivity.[34] The world that we carry within ourselves is marked by the world that surrounds us. The situational self is trapped both within society and within itself. Viewed in this light, human reality is an eternal odyssey: in our daily lives, we travel from situation to situation. As self-conscious entities, we cannot separate our awareness of *our* existence from our awareness of *others'* existence. The situation known as human life is, by definition, a social stage of performative actors able to adapt to changing circumstances.

7. THE REGIONAL SELF

Human selves are *regional* selves. Not only do we move from situation to situation, but we also move from region to region. '*A region may be defined as any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception.*'[35] Hence, within the Goffmanian universe of the social, the concept of region refers to any place whose scope of existence is delineated in terms of a separation between what is *visible* and what is *hidden* to the actors interacting within it. According to this binary interpretation, social life consists of both regions that are *publicly* experienced and regions that are *privately* experienced.[36] As actors with both *performative* and *preparative* capacities, we travel back and forth between the '*front regions*' and the '*back regions*' of our existence. Whereas our public — and, thus, essentially observable — activities take place in the 'front region', our private — and, hence, largely concealed — activities are situated in the 'back region'.[37] When we are involved in performative acts of the 'front region', we are exposed to the public eye. When we engage in preparative activities of the 'back region', by contrast, we are accountable only to the private eye. Of course, 'front regions' may be stratified in the sense that only particular members or groups of society may be in a position to access them; 'back regions' tend to be closed off in the sense that, normally, only individuals who inhabit them have access — that is, privileged access — to them.

Social life, then, is a constant *aller-retour* between 'front regions' and 'back regions':

> […] it is natural to expect that the passage from the front region to the back region will be kept closed to members of the audience or that the entire back region will be kept hidden from them. This is a widely practised technique of impression management […].[38]

The whole point of secluding ourselves into 'back regions' is to keep our retraction into privacy to ourselves, rather than disclosing it to the general audience. Such 'techniques of privacy' enable us to sustain the myths of 'purity', 'spontaneity' and 'authenticity', as they are being performed by protagonists of public agency.

To be clear, *impression management* is inextricably linked to *region management*: impressions are so powerful because of, not despite, the fact that they are based on a partial — and, therefore, limited — perception of the world. Paradoxically, to have access to 'the entire picture' — that is, to both the 'front regions' and the 'back regions' of one's existence — may require having to destroy the picture altogether: when we know how actors

have prepared for a performance, the immaculate aura of originality and creativity, celebrated in their 'front region', may evaporate in light of underlying — and, potentially, disenchanting — mechanisms of calculability and habituality, which may serve as motivational driving forces in their 'back region'. Notwithstanding the circumstances under which we relate to, attribute meaning to and act upon the world, we are performative selves caught up in the construction of different regions. As regional selves, we are eternal commuters[39]: we travel back and forth between our 'front regions' and our 'back regions'.

8. THE MASKED SELF

Human selves are *masked* selves. Every individual has a public persona, which differs — in some cases, fundamentally — from the person they are in private. To the extent that Goffman seeks to explore the nature of social interactions, he is interested in both our public and our private ways of engaging with — as well as not engaging with or, indeed, disengaging from — our intersubjectively constituted environment. Our public persona forces us to 'adopt a social face',[40] that is, a face that is constructed both *through* and *for* society: it is constructed *through* society, because it is developed *via* our interaction with the social world; at the same time, it is constructed *for* society, because it is oriented *towards* our interaction with the social world.

Different types of social interaction require that we develop different forms of persona: in order to function in different social scenarios, we need to cultivate different social roles. Given the multiplicity of social settings to which we can be exposed, we have no choice but to develop performative personalities that permit us to combine *the authenticity of who we actually are* with *the contextual contingency of who we are expected to be*. Putting on different persona obliges us to wear different masks: we can never disclose every single aspect of our personality, as this would undermine our immersion in sociality. From a Goffmanian perspective, we are 'sociable' insofar as we are 'maskable': every public performance is a masking performance, since human subjects need to play different social roles in order to fit into different interactional situations.

As *social* beings, we are required to function as both normalized and normalizing — and, consequently, *disciplinary* — creatures. We need to acquire a minimal degree of discipline in order to adapt to both the implicit and the explicit rules, standards and conventions of our social environment.

'Through social discipline […] a mask of manner can be held in place from within.'[41] Thus, masks of manner are not simply part of us, but they need to be learned, cultivated and assimilated through the quotidian exercise of *social discipline*.[42] Putting on different social masks is tantamount to dressing in different clothes. The power of manners is worthless without ritualized displays of discipline. Certainly, in the Goffmanian universe, masking ourselves is not necessarily a manipulative or distortive undertaking. Rather, it is a supportive and performative precondition for the very possibility of social interaction. In every interactional encounter we need to combine the relative *closure* and the relative *disclosure* of our subjectivity in order to allow for our *enclosure* in society.

9. THE IMPRESSION-MANAGING SELF

Human selves are *impression-managing* selves. Individuals seek to control the way in which they are perceived by others through a number of performative devices. Managing the impressions that others may have of us seems to give us a sense of existential security: 'impression management' appears to endow us with a considerable degree of self-control. Ironically, while we develop different techniques of impression management always in relation to *others*, we create them also in relation to *ourselves*. For the impressions we convey to others about our personality feed back into the formation of our identity.

According to Goffman, we can distinguish three types of impression-managing practices: (a) *defensive practices*, (b) *protective practices* and (c) *flexible practices*.

(a) *Defensive practices* allow actors to generate a sense of dramaturgical loyalty: members of the same team need to be able to trust one another and to keep secrets to which they, as members of the same group, have privileged access.

(b) *Protective practices* oblige — or, indeed, permit — the audience to keep away from 'back regions' or to display tactful inattention, in order to avoid exposure to embarrassing situations.

(c) *Flexible practices* are symptomatic of the fact that, in most interactional situations, performers need to be equipped with a minimum of reciprocal perceptivity, which enables them to be sensitive to any hints provided by the audience, so that they are able to attune their behaviour if required.

A social actor needs to be capable of 'guiding the impression he [or she] makes'[43] in order to succeed in producing the personality he [or she] fakes. To be sure, 'faking', in the Goffmanian sense, is not necessarily a synonym of 'misleading'. Rather, the fake of personality stems from the making of sociality: the social world is a relationally constituted universe of coexistential contingencies. Only by adjusting to coexistential contingencies can our personalities flourish in a relationally constructed space of open realities.

> It may even be said that if our special interest is the *study of impression management*, of the contingencies which arise in fostering an impression, and of the techniques for meeting these contingencies, then the *team* and the *team-performance* may well be the best units to take as the *fundamental point of reference*.[44]

In other words, interactional contingencies are praxeological potentialities: teams are our quotidian points of reference and vehicles of performance. We relate to life by referring to others, and we act in life by performing both with and before others. Practices of impression management constitute processes of referential performance.

10. THE POWER-LADEN SELF

Human selves are *power-laden* selves. To be exact, our power *to* act and *to* interact always depends on our power *over* the situation in which we act and interact. 'It is often felt that control of the setting is an advantage during interaction.'[45] All social relations are permeated by power relations.[46] When engaging in practices of social interaction, we are involved in processes of power structuration. The situational framework within which we are embedded has a crucial impact upon the constitution of social interaction. Consequently, control over a spatiotemporally confined setting can be a precondition for control over a social interaction. Put differently, the power *to* interact with others hinges upon the power *over* the situation in which human performance takes place.

The praxeological force of our power *to* do something cannot be divorced from the contextual force of our power *over* the particular situation in which we seek to do so. If social selves are situated selves and if, furthermore, social situations are impregnated with power relations, then the construction of human subjectivity is pervaded by the struggle over authority. The most authoritative individual or collective force in a particular setting can determine both the course and the outcome of a given social interaction. In short, relative control over social situations endows us with

a sense of ontological security in relation to the interactions in which we engage.

Every interactional scenario is a power scenario. Regardless of how subtle or hidden the power mechanisms that underlie our actions may be, social practices are conceivable only as power-laden performances. Power may operate underneath the surface of social interactionality, but it penetrates the entire constitution of human agency. Performance without power would be pointless, because performance without power would be non-performative. Power *is* performance, and performance *is* power.[47] As the German word *Macht* suggests, the exercise of power is unthinkable without an actor's ability to do and to make (*machen*) things. Viewed in this light, the presence of power manifests itself in the presence of human practices. We need to influence the definitions projected upon social settings, in order to obtain power over the roles we, and others, play in our daily interactions.

CONCLUSION

As illustrated in the previous analysis, Goffman — in his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* — provides an insightful account of the formation of social selves. More specifically, the preceding enquiry has demonstrated that Goffman offers a fairly systematic explanatory framework for the sociological study of human personhood. Granted, it would be far-fetched to describe Goffman as 'a conceptual system builder', let alone as 'an advocate of grand theory'. As shown above, however, a fine-grained examination of Goffman's key concepts permits us to propose an *outline of a general theory of the human self*. Following the thematic structure of the foregoing investigation, it shall be the task of this concluding section to reflect on important questions arising from Goffman's conception of the self.

1. Goffman rightly emphasizes the fact that human selves are *information-gathering* entities. Given the (a) interactional, (b) expectational, (c) conventional, (d) judgemental and (e) spatiotemporal constitution of their immersion in the world, the act of gathering — implicit or explicit — information about others, as well as about the situations in which they encounter them, helps individuals to define the parameters underlying their engagement with their environments. It is far from obvious, however, on what *grounds* ordinary actors can assess the *validity* of the information on which they rely in their everyday lives. Not only ordinary

actors themselves, but also the social scientists who study them, may distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong', 'correct' and 'erroneous', 'reliable' and 'unreliable', 'revealing' and 'concealing', 'truthful' and 'misleading' information. The crucial question for a critical sociology of everyday life concerns the extent to which information-gathering practices constitute, in many cases, socio-cognitive processes based on *misconceptions*, *misperceptions* and *misrepresentations*. Actors, or those who study them, may *think* that they have, or do not have, access to the right information permitting them to define a social situation, which — as participants — they may *experience* or which — as observers — they may *scrutinize*. Yet, *insofar as the validity of information can be evaluated in terms of objective, normative or subjective criteria, cognitive reference points remain relatively arbitrary*. The symbolic or material legitimacy attributed to knowledge-based claims to validity is contingent upon the epistemic benchmarks used to define the rules of theoretical or practical   acceptability.

2. Goffman draws attention the fact that human selves are *impression-dependent* entities. As such, they are caught up in a double hermeneutics of expressions and impressions. In light of this performative dialectics, social actors have the capacity to express themselves — either verbally or non-verbally — in a way that influences, more or less effectively, the impressions that others may, or may not, have of them. In this context, the questions of (a) whether we want to *be* who we *appear* to be and (b) whether we want to *appear* to be who we *are* can be regarded as central, obliging us to face up to one of the most complex predicaments of human existence: the stronger one's explicit assertion of authenticity, the less authentic one's realization of authenticity becomes. To put it bluntly, if we try too hard, we run the risk of coming across as — and, effectively, degrading ourselves to — wannabes chasing after unachievable goals. The situation gets even more complicated when recognizing the difficulties attached to the *task of identifying objective, normative or subjective foundations on which to distinguish between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' facets of our personality*. Goffman's approach accomplishes little in the way of shedding light on, let alone solving, this problem. Yet, the search for one's own, or for someone else's, authenticity remains, and will always remain, a fundamental challenge that interpretive subjects face in the meaning-laden construction of everyday life.

3. Goffman insists upon the sociological significance of the fact that human selves are *performative* entities. As such, they are equipped with

the capacity both to *reveal* and to *conceal* particular aspects of their personality. Just as they can seek to *disclose* those facets of their being that they wish to make accessible to others, they can seek to *cover up* those facets of their being that they wish to hide from others. Undoubtedly, these are vital dramaturgical techniques, permitting social actors to mobilize the performative resources of their dispositional repertoire in order to gain a context-sensitive mode of control over the ways in which they are perceived, placed and treated by others. What is not evident from Goffman's analysis, however, is the extent to which *in reality the distinction between 'revealing' and 'concealing' practices is blurred*, rather than clear-cut. It would be naïve to suggest that actors are, in some situations, entirely conscious or, in other situations, entirely unconscious of the motivational driving forces behind their performances. Furthermore, it would be erroneous to draw a neat typological line between 'revealing' and 'concealing' practices, since a large degree of how we are (rightly or wrongly) perceived by others *escapes* our control. To the extent that actors *project* preconceptions, judgements and expectations upon one another, they can never be in total control of the ways in which they may, or may not, be perceived, placed and treated by others. Within spheres of symbolically mediated interaction, the highest degrees of (real or imagined) *objectivity* cannot annihilate the structuring power of both *normativity* and *subjectivity*, through which humans relate not only to themselves but also to other members of society and, in fact, to *all* aspects of their internal or external reality. The sociological challenge, then, consists in studying 'revealing' and 'concealing' practices in terms of ambivalent — that is, both empowering and disempowering, clear and ambiguous, controllable and uncontrollable — facets shaping the development of human life forms.

4. Goffman emphasizes the far-reaching, and multi-layered, implications of the fact that human selves are *interested* entities. *All* social actions are *interest-laden* insofar as they are *pervaded* by a series of interests, but only *some* social actions are *interest-driven* insofar as they are *determined* by particular interests. From a Goffmanian perspective, it is imperative to account for people's capacity — or, in many cases, their lack of capacity — to give impressions that are in their *interest* to convey. What is missing from Goffman's framework, however, is a *systematic* account of interests. Both micro- and macro-sociologists need to face up to the explanatory task of developing a conceptually sophisticated *typology of interests*, capable of doing justice to the pivotal role

they play in the construction of human life forms — notably, in highly differentiated social formations. When taking on this challenge, the following levels of analysis are particularly significant:

Two-level typology of interests:

- ○ public interests *vs.* private interests
- ○ open interests *vs.* hidden interests
- ○ reconcilable interests *vs.* antagonistic interests
- ○ real interests *vs.* imagined interests
- ○ end-in-itself interests *vs.* means-to-an-end interests
- ○ value-based interests *vs.* instrumental interests
- ○ interests 'in themselves' *vs.* interests 'for themselves'
- ○ conscious interests *vs.* unconscious interests
- ○ role-dependent interests *vs.* role-transcendent interests
- ○ interested interests *vs.* disinterested interests

Three-level typology of interests:

- ○ (a) species-constitutive/human interests; (b) group-constitutive/ collective interests; (c) actor-constitutive/individual interests
- ○ (a) macro-level interests; (b) meso-level interests; (c) micro-level interests
- ○ (a) societal interests; (b) communitarian interests; (c) personal interests
- ○ (a) foundational interests; (b) contingent interests; (c) ephemeral interests
- ○ (a) intra-role interests; (b) inter-role interests; (c) trans-role interests
- ○ (a) objective interests; (b) normative interests; (c) subjective interests

Multiple-level typology of interests:

- ○ human interests; social interests; cultural interests; political interests; economic interests; military interests; demographic interests; environmental interests; sexual interests; reproductive interests; biological interests; evolutionary interests; moral interests; historical interests; etc.

A critical sociology of action is inconceivable without a comprehensive analysis of interests.

5. Goffman proposes to study social interactions by taking into consideration the fact that human selves are *referential* entities. As such, they relate to, attribute meaning to and act upon the world by identifying with reference groups, which — owing to their socio-performative functions — may be described as 'teams'. Team members are united by

the fact that, as interrelated individuals, they project a broadly shared definition upon a particular situation, enabling them to cooperate in staging a set of practices by virtue of which they develop joint patterns of action, reflection, bonding and belonging. The performative nature of group building illustrates that, far from being reducible to a set of social *facts*, every team constitutes a dynamic ensemble of individual and collective *acts*. The underlying — quasi-teleological — mission of every team, then, is to uphold the symbolically mediated definitions necessary to maintain the existence of a situation on the basis of its members' interrelated performances. The successful staging of a situation depends as much on the *over-communication and exaggeration* of some facts as on the *under-communication and trivialization* of others. What needs to be given further attention in this respect, however, are the following key sociological questions:

(a) Is a team defined, and can its existence be measured, on the basis of *objective*, *normative* or *subjective* criteria (or, indeed, on the basis of a *combination* of these criteria)?

(b) What is the *role* of these — *objective*, *normative* or *subjective* — criteria in shaping team formation? In particular, who or what determines which of these criteria are *decisive* when bringing a team into existence?

(c) To what extent do we need to distinguish between *different types of team membership* (such as 'enforced' *vs.* 'chosen', 'ascribed' *vs.* 'achieved', 'rigid' *vs.* 'playful', 'formal' *vs.* 'informal', 'overt' *vs.* 'hidden')?

(d) To what degree is it possible for *'teamless' actors* to emerge, to be recognized and to survive in the social world? Indeed, is it possible for some social situations to come into existence because of, rather than despite, the absence of teams (or at least the absence of clearly defined teams)?

(e) What are the *normative implications of team building*, notably in terms of the balance (or imbalance) between individualization and socialization processes? Put differently, how much team building is good, and how much team building is bad, for individuals in particular and society in general?

(f) Breaking out of the ethnocentric straitjacket of Western sociological analysis, to what extent do the *multiple functions of teams and team building vary between different types of society*? Human life forms may be characterized as 'primitive' or 'complex', 'tight' or

'loose', 'horizontally structured' or 'vertically structured', 'control-based' or 'freedom-based', 'collectivist' or 'individualist', 'relatively homogeneous' or 'relatively heterogeneous'.[48] A critical sociology of the self needs to take on the challenge of shedding light on the extent to which the role of teams, and of team formation, varies between these (and other) human life forms.

6. Goffman's insightful account of everyday life is a reminder of the fact that human selves are *situational* entities. Social interactions are 'framed' in the sense that they are embedded in relationally constituted settings, which may be described as 'situations'. Definitions of situations are (a) *performatively*, (b) *intersubjectively*, (c) *projectively*, (d) *reciprocally* and (e) — for the most part — *implicitly* established. Individuals need to reach a minimal level of tacit agreement, or 'working consensus', in order to generate, and to sustain, a realm of interaction worthy of being characterized as a 'situation'. Yet, the preceding reflections on the limitations inherent in Goffman's conception of 'teams' apply, in a similar manner, to his conception of 'situation':

(a) Is a situation defined, and can its existence be measured, on the basis of *objective*, *normative* or *subjective* criteria (or, indeed, on the basis of a *combination* of these criteria)?

(b) What is the *role* of these — *objective*, *normative* or *subjective* — criteria in shaping a situation? In particular, who or what determines which of these criteria are *decisive* when bringing a situation into existence?

(c) To what extent do we need to distinguish between *different types of situation* (such as 'enforced' *vs.* 'chosen', 'ascribed' *vs.* 'achieved', 'rigid' *vs.* 'playful', 'formal' *vs.* 'informal', 'overt' *vs.* 'hidden')?

(d) To what degree is it possible for *'situationless' actors* to emerge, to be recognized and to survive in the social world? Indeed, is it possible for some teams to come into existence because of, rather than despite, the absence of situations (or at least the absence of clearly defined situations)?

(e) What are the *normative implications of situation building*, notably in terms of the balance (or imbalance) between individualization and socialization processes? Put differently, how much situation building is good, and how much situation building is bad, for individuals in particular and society in general?

(f) Breaking out of the ethnocentric straitjacket of Western sociological analysis, to what extent do the *multiple functions of situations and situation building vary between different types of society*? A critical sociology of the self needs to take on the challenge of shedding light on the extent to which the role of situations, and of situation formation, varies between human life forms.

7. Goffman highlights the sociological implications of the fact that human selves are *regional* entities. Spatiotemporally positioned actors, as they navigate their way through the social world, move not only from situation to situation but also from region to region. A *region*, in the Goffmanian sense, can be defined as any place whose existence is restricted by barriers, as well as kept alive by processes, of *perception*. Crucial, in this respect, is Goffman's distinction between '*front regions*' and '*back regions*'. The former are produced by our *public* — and, thus, essentially observable — activities. The latter are generated by our *private* — and, hence, largely concealed — activities. In most societies, especially in highly differentiated ones, we are required to travel back and forth between our 'front regions' and our 'back regions'.

What needs to be studied with more precision, however, is the extent to which the boundaries between 'front regions' and 'back regions' are increasingly *blurred*, particularly in complex societies, in which actors are expected to be able to take on numerous roles — often in a contradictory and tension-laden manner. *Preparative* activities *can* take place in '*front* regions' (for instance, studying for an exam in a library, training for a public competition in a park, doing homework at a school, etc.). *Performative* activities *can* take place in '*back* regions' (for instance, singing under the shower, putting on a deceiving role before one's partner in private, engaging in sexual intercourse in the domestic sphere, etc.). The picture gains an even higher level of complexity when taking into account the *impact of technology* — notably, of the Internet — on the degree to which the *boundaries between 'front regions' and 'back regions'* — and, consequently, *between 'public' and 'private'* — are *increasingly blurred*. In the 'digital age',[49] the production, distribution and consumption of both material and symbolic goods cut across traditional social boundaries, including the ones established between 'front regions' and 'back regions'. A critical sociology of the self needs to take behavioural, ideological and institutional transformations — at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels — into consideration, when aiming to capture how human actors operate in an

environment shaped not only by 'front-regional' and 'back-regional' but also, to a growing extent, by 'trans-regional' dynamics.

8. Goffman underscores the sociological significance of the fact that human selves are *masked* — that is, *self-masking* — entities. In most — if not all — societies, every individual develops a public persona, which may differ — in some cases, fundamentally — from the person they are in private. The 'social face' that human actors take on reflects an appearance that they construct — and, frequently, have to readjust — when exposed to others in the public domains of their lives. To a large extent, the capacity to put on a social mask requires the ability to *discipline* one's body, thereby mobilizing one's dispositional resources in a socially acceptable — and, hence, context-sensitive — manner. Far from being ingrained in people's personality, then, social masks are adapted, and can be changed, by those who make use of them in relation to particular settings. Hardly any sociologist would deny the centrality of people's ability to put on 'social faces' and 'social masks' when interacting with others in public environments.

What is open to debate, however, is *what happens when one's social face or mask becomes an integral part, if not the cornerstone, of one's personality and, at the same time, one's personality is articulated mainly, if not exclusively, through one's social face or mask*. Once again, then, we are confronted with the question of what, if anything, constitutes *human authenticity*. In societies in which one's profession continues to represent, for many, a *raison d'être* and, therefore, the ontological foundation of their identity, work-obsessed individuals may, in extreme cases, build their whole sense of who they are around the public persona they have developed when adopting the role that may be required from them while pursuing their occupation. Certainly, it would be presumptuous to regard some people's conscious or unconscious desire to base large — if not, almost all — parts of their identity on their public persona as 'inauthentic', or at least as 'less authentic' than those for whom their social face is little more than a performative act of image management. In fact, one may turn the argument on its head by positing that, insofar as we are social beings, *the identities that we acquire in public settings are no less, and no more, 'authentic' than those that we develop in private settings*. For personal authenticity is ultimately defined by that with which an individual feels most 'comfortable', 'natural' and 'him- or herself'. The question of authenticity is too central an issue — indeed, a real-life concern — to be left to philosophers and,

thus, ignored by sociologists of the self. It would require the launching of a comprehensive research programme to explore the *objective, normative and subjective dimensions of human authenticity*, including the multiple levels at which these dimensions are interrelated and, as an ensemble, serve a fundamental — that is, *socio-ontological* — function in the construction of selfhood.

9. Goffman stresses the sociological significance of the fact that human selves are *impression-managing* entities. As such, they aim to exercise at least a minimal amount of influence on, if not control over, the ways in which they are perceived by others, employing several performative devices, techniques and strategies. As elucidated above, three types of practices oriented towards impression management are particularly important:

(a) *defensive practices*, permitting actors to develop a sense of trust, solidarity and loyalty with other team members, with whom they may share secrets and confidential information, to which they have privileged access;

(b) *protective practices*, allowing actors to ensure that their audience is not granted access to their 'back region', as this may cause — in the best-case scenario — awkwardness and embarrassment or — in the worst-case scenario — dishonour and humiliation;

(c) *flexible practices*, enabling actors to take on board any tacit advice, and to be sensitive to any hints, provided by their audience, giving them the opportunity to adjust their behaviour to the (implicit or explicit) demands that are thrown at them within a given situation.

Yet, irrespective of how sophisticated an actor's dispositional devices, techniques and strategies may be, human performances always take place in socio-culturally specific environments. Unsurprisingly, all individual or collective efforts aimed at influencing intersubjectively generated impressions are *contextually* contingent upon relationally constituted settings. In some cultures and subcultures, practices oriented towards impression management play a greater role than in others. The picture gains in complexity if we account for the fact that human performances are *intersectionally* shaped by *various* sociological variables (such as class, ethnicity, gender, age and ability). In some social groups, practices oriented towards impression management play a greater role than in others. More importantly, actors develop dispositional devices, techniques and strategies *in relation to* the numerous positions they occupy in different social spaces. A critical sociology of the self, therefore, needs to account for the relationally defined

specificity of human agency, if it seeks to grasp the multiple ways in which individuals engage in attempts to manage the impressions they convey when interacting with other members of society.

10. Within Goffman's sociological framework, there is little, if any, room for the possibility of denying the fact that human selves are *power-laden* entities. People's capacity to act and to interact is contingent upon their ability to exercise a minimal amount of influence upon, if not command of, the situation in which they are exposed to the presence of others. Control over a setting, regardless of whether it is perceived as relative or as absolute by those who exercise or those who are affected by it, tends to be tantamount to a performative advantage during social interactions. Those who have — or are, at least, perceived to have — the upper hand over others tend to be in a position to set the agenda and, hence, to determine the course of action within a given situation.

Yet, the fact that every human action is *power-laden* does not mean that every human action is *power-driven*. Put differently, all human actions are *permeated* by power, but only some of them are *motivated* by power. The task with which a critical sociology of the self is confronted, then, consists in accounting for the role that power dynamics play in the construction of everyday life. Faced with this explanatory challenge, it is essential to make a case for *socio-ontological realism*, in order to avoid falling into the traps of *socio-ontological pessimism* and *socio-ontological optimism*. *Socio-ontological pessimism* is based on the fatalistic assumption that human actions are not only power-permeated but also, unavoidably, power-motivated. *Socio-ontological optimism* is founded on the idealistic assumption that human actions can transcend the influence of power relations insofar as they emanate from allegedly non-instrumental — such as communicative, pristine or altruistic — considerations. *Socio-ontological realism*, by contrast, is prepared to take both the dark and the bright sides of human reality seriously, recognizing that both the pursuit and the critique of power substantially contribute to the tension-laden development of society.

NOTES

1. Goffman (1971 [1959]).
2. See, for example: Baert (1998, pp. 75—82); Branaman (2001); Burns (1992); Ditton (1980); Drew and Wootton (1988); Fine and Smith (2000); Giddens (1988); Jacobsen (2010, 2015); Manning (1991, 1992); Miller (1984, 1987); Mohren (2008);

Plummer (1991, 1996); Raffel (2013); Rawls (1989); Scheff (2006); Schegloff (1988); Smith (2006, 1999); Treviño (2003); Willems (1997); Williams (1983, 1988).

    3. See, for example:

- Baert (1998, p. 80): 'It is worth mentioning that Goffman did not intend to be a social theorist, and that he was actually rather hostile to the enterprise of grand theory.'
- Branaman (2001, pp. 96 and 99): 'He [Goffman] did not believe sociology had advanced to the stage of constructing theories and hypotheses and this did not think there was such a thing as a social theory at all. […] Goffman has been everything to everybody!'
- Giddens (1988, p. 250): 'Goffman would not ordinarily be ranked among the major social theorists.'
- Manning (1992, pp. 2—3): '[…] despite his enthusiasm for this general theory, he also remained extremely sceptical about the possibility of discovering such a general theory.'

    4. See, for instance: Goffman (1961, 1963a, 1963b, 1968 [1961], 1969, 1970, 1971 [1959], 1971, 1972 [1967], 1975 [1974], 1979, 1981, 1983).

    5. On this point, see, for example: Baert (1998, pp. 75—82); Giddens (1988, p. 260); Manning (1991, 1992, pp. 8, 15—16, 40—41 and 143); Schegloff (1988, esp. pp. 90—92); Williams (1988, pp. 74, 77 and 85).

    6. On the difference between *Gesellschaftstheorie* and *Gemeinschaftstheorie*, see, for example, Susen (2013a, p. 89).

    7. Baert (1998, p. 77).

    8. See, for example: *ibid.*, pp. 75—82; Giddens (1988, p. 260); Manning (1991, 1992, pp. 8, 15—16, 40—41 and 143); Schegloff (1988, esp. pp. 90—92); Williams (1988, pp. 74, 77 and 85).

    9. Baert (1998, p. 76).

    10. On the concept of 'the self', see, for example: Bakhurst and Sypnowich (1995); Blumer (1969); Burkitt (2008 [1991]); Crossley (1996); Giddens (1991); Goffman (1971 [1959]); Jenkins (2008 [1996]); Joas (1987); Mead (1967 [1934]); Miller (1987); Nuyen (1998); Plummer (1991, 1996); Raffel (2013); Rawls (1989); Schrag (1997); Seigel (1999); Stead and Bakker (2010); Susen (2007, pp. 82, 84, 91, 91—94, 100n.119, 118, 129n.56, 165, 185, 192—198, 216, 306 and 311); Susen (2010, 2015, esp. pp. 110—123); Zhao (2005).

    11. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 13).

    12. *Ibid.*, p. 13 (italics added).

    13. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

    14. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

    15. *Ibid.*, p. 14 (italics added).

    16. *Ibid.*, p. 14 (italics in original).

    17. On this point, see, for example: Susen (2011a, p. 451), Susen (2011b, pp. 40—42), Susen (2015, pp. 42, 51, 99, 116, 158, 167, 259 and 264).

    18. Baert (1998, p. 77).

    19. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 74) (italics added).

    20. On the concept of 'interest' in sociological analysis, see, for instance, Swedberg (2005).

21. On this point, see, for example, Susen (2014, pp. 16 and 23). On the concept of 'interest', see, for instance, Susen (2015, pp. 3, 7, 32, 57, 65, 67, 68, 74, 90, 95, 126, 151, 192, 196, 210, 212, 220, 224, 226, 238, 247, 277, 279, 281, 294n22, 298n41 and 309n358).

22. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 18) (italics added).

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 15—16 (italics added).

24. See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 85.

25. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 85) (italics added).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 108 (italics added).

27. On this point, see, for example: Susen (2012b, p. 712) (point c), Susen (2014 [2012], p. 192) (point c), Susen (2013b, pp. 349—350) (point 13).

28. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 141) (italics added).

29. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 20 (italics added).

31. *Ibid.*, p. 21 (italics in original).

32. *Ibid.*, p. 21 (italics added).

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 234—235.

34. On this point, see, for example: Susen (2013c, esp. pp. 201—218). See also Susen (2013d).

35. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 109) (italics added).

36. On this point, see, for example, Susen (2011b, esp. pp. 38—42).

37. Baert (1998, p. 78).

38. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 116).

39. On this metaphor, see, for example, Susen (2010, p. 75).

40. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 19).

41. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

42. On this point, see, for example: Susen (2012a, pp. 290 and 310); Susen (2014, pp. 18—19 and 24); Susen (2015, pp. 17, 27, 118 and 119). See also, for instance: Foucault (1979 [1975]); Moore and Casper (2015); Shilling (2012 [1993]); Turner (2006); Wagner (1992, 1994).

43. Goffman (1971 [1959], p. 19).

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 85—86 (italics added).

45. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

46. On this point, see Susen (2014). See also, for example, Susen (2008a) and Susen (2008b). In addition, see, for instance: Browne and Susen (2013c, 2014, esp. pp. 208—218); Susen (2013d, 2015, pp. 10, 37, 43, 47, 70, 78, 108, 117, 126, 152, 157, 174, 184, 218, 243, 245, 266, 274 and 304n249).

47. On this point, see Susen (2014, pp. 14—15).

48. See Triandis (1996, esp. pp. 408—409). (According to Triandis's typology, the following main 'cultural syndromes' can be identified: tightness, cultural complexity, active-passive, honour, collectivism, individualism and vertical and horizontal relationships.)

49. On the 'digital age', see, for example: Athique (2013); Baym (2014 [2010]); Belk and Llamas (2013); Burda (2011); Junge, Berzina, Scheiffele, Westerveld and Zwick (2013); Negroponte (1995); Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Viires and Laak (2013); Westera (2013); Zhao (2005).

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