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Critical remarks on existence theory: Between existentialism and phenomenology

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the 'existence theory' proposed by Patrick Baert, Marcus Morgan, and Rin Ushiyama. To this end, it focuses on some key issues that could, and arguably should, be explored in more detail, especially if the authors decide to develop their project further, permitting them to establish a new interdisciplinary branch of inquiry. The comments and suggestions made in this paper are meant to be constructive, supporting the idea that Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama's outline could, and should, be turned into a bold, systematic, and long-term research programme. More specifically, the in-depth analysis of Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama's theoretical framework demonstrates that their undertaking, which draws on central insights from both existentialism and phenomenology, contributes to bridging the disciplinary gap between philosophy and sociology. The paper concludes by asserting that Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama's model provides a solid foundation for an ambitious, but viable, project that may result in the creation of a new current of research, capable of generating valuable insights into the tension-laden confluence of existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies in the theatre of human life.

Patrick Baert, Marcus Morgan, and Rin Ushiyama are to be congratulated for having succeeded in providing an outline of a truly promising, original, and thought-provoking approach, to which they refer as 'existence theory'.[1] Irrespective of whether one prefers to characterize their framework as 'socio-philosophical' or 'philosophico-sociological', there can be little doubt that one of its most noticeable accomplishments is to have bridged the gap between two major disciplines, namely philosophy and sociology. The former may be regarded as 'foundational' to the humanities, given its attempts to grapple

with the 'big questions' associated with, and arising from, existence in general and human existence in particular. The latter may be considered 'foundational' to the social sciences, given its commitment to studying any elements of human existence that, in different ways and to different degrees, are socially constituted.

Granted, the ambition to bridge the – on many levels, artificial – disciplinary gap between philosophy and sociology has been on the agenda of intellectual investigation for some time.[2] Still, even if Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (henceforth, BMU) do not boast about how fruitful their proposal may be in terms of cross-fertilizing insights from several academic disciplines, notably philosophy and sociology, it is one of their most significant achievements. This is a noteworthy contribution in itself – not least because it is *one* thing to advocate such an undertaking (which, in the context of the widespread glorification of interdisciplinary research, has become commonplace) and quite *another* to accomplish it (which, bearing in mind the predominance of standardized and canonized modes of functioning shaping institutionalized academic research, is less common).

The following comments and suggestions are meant to be constructive, in the hope that – in the future – BMU's outline of a new 'existence theory' will be turned into a bold, systematic, and long-term research programme. The analysis will focus on some key issues that – in my view – could, or perhaps should, be explored in more detail, especially if the authors decide to develop their project further, permitting them to establish a new interdisciplinary branch of inquiry.

1. Sources of Inspiration

BMU announce that they 'propose the outlines of a new theory of social behaviour that centres around the temporality of existence in society'[3]. This, of course, is a laudable purpose. In a rather modest fashion, the authors stress that they wish to focus only on the key features – in the form of a *Grundriß* – of their endeavour. Broadly speaking, their approach is based on a critical and creative synthesis of influential traditions of thought: at the *philosophical* level, existentialism and phenomenology; and, at the *sociological* level, both micro- and macro-perspectives, including interpretive sociology, existentialist sociology, and ethnomethodology as well as functionalist sociology, critical sociology, and structuration theory.

Let us reflect on the intellectual landscape in which BMU's 'existence theory' is situated:

First, it is noticeable that BMU do not mention *hermeneutics and pragmatism*, although their outline contains substantial similarities with both of these traditions – particularly with regard to issues concerning meaning and interpretation, action and interaction, as well as the construction and employment of different types of knowledge in social life. Baert's previous writings on 'hermeneutics-inspired pragmatism'[4] permeate the spirit of 'existence theory', as proposed by him and his co-authors.

Second, it is striking that, when elucidating the *methodological* underpinnings of their work, the authors centre on research tools and strategies prevalent in *sociology*: 'biographical and autobiographical methods, life history analysis, oral history,

ethnographic or participant observational approaches, and other qualitative methods focused on longitudinal experiences'[5]. It may be useful to elaborate on the main *epistemological* devices and instruments borrowed from *philosophy* relevant to their 'existence theory' – above all, with respect to key controversies over the relationship between rationalism and empiricism, deductivism and inductivism, universalism and contextualism, absolutism and relativism, foundationalism and antifoundationalism, a priori and a posteriori knowledge. In an extended version of their outline, they may spell out where they stand in relation to these debates – not as a pointless exercise of intellectual posturing, but as a way of demonstrating that their approach may shed new light on at least some of these age-old disputes.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, it is perfectly legitimate to draw on prominent philosophical and sociological traditions of investigation. When doing so, however, one needs to elucidate what the theoretical and practical advantages of such a venture are supposed to be and, hence, why it constitutes a worthwhile enterprise. To this end, it may be prudent to identify the principal points of *convergence* and *divergence* between the approaches upon which one wishes to build. It may be even more beneficial, however, to explore the crucial points of possible *integration* and *cross-fertilization* between them, especially when seeking to take the discussion to a higher – or, if one prefers, more fruitful – level, with the aim of creating an insightful, valuable, and original theory. Clearly, BMU's outline generates intellectual synergies, not least because the authors propose to combine research traditions that, at first glance, may appear irreconcilable. These may be conceptualized in terms of programmatic oppositions: philosophy versus sociology, existentialism versus structuralism, phenomenology versus systems theory, hermeneutics versus functionalism, idealism versus materialism, normative internalization models versus practice-based models – to list only a few. If the authors decide to turn their outline into a larger project, it will be useful to explain to what extent their endeavour is not only inspired by these intellectual traditions, but also cross-fertilizes the main insights gained from each of them, enabling them to develop an innovative theoretical framework.

2. Whose Existential Milestones?

BMU draw on the writings of several seminal thinkers, such as the following: Jeffrey C. Alexander, Les Back, Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck, Gary Becker, Peter Berger, Pierre Bourdieu, Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, Erich Fromm, Harold Garfinkel, Anthony Giddens, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Søren Kierkegaard, Imre Lakatos, George-Herbert Mead, C. Wright Mills, Talcott Parsons, Jean-Paul Sartre, Alfred Schütz, Bryan S. Turner, Victor Turner, Arnold van Gennep, and Max Weber. In terms of the underlying 'demographics' of BMU's study, the aforementioned scholars can be classified in a number of ways, notably with reference to the following key sociological variables: *class*, *gender*, *'race'*, *ethnicity*, *nationality*, *language*, and/or *disciplinary expertise*.[6]

As I have argued in previous commentaries[7], there is not much point in taking these 'demographic' forms of analysis too far. The *quality* of a particular conceptual, methodological, and/or empirical approach should be measured not in terms of the sociological

composition of the pool of thinkers upon which it draws but, rather, in terms of its theoretical and/or practical *contributions* to our understanding of a specific issue or set of issues. It is important, however, to be aware that unsympathetic critics may complain that BMU's outline of 'existence theory' suffers from the typical '-isms' pervading 'mainstream' social theory.

According to social researchers committed to the deconstruction and subversion of intersectionally constituted power relations, these '-isms' need to be exposed and challenged, especially if they contribute to the reinforcement of hegemonic forms of knowledge production. Among these '-isms' are the following: canonical classism (predominantly privileged); canonical sexism ('malestream'); canonical racism (predominantly 'white'); canonical ethnocentrism (predominantly Judeo-Christian); canonical Western-centrism (predominantly European or Anglo-American); canonical linguacentrism (predominantly Anglophone, Germanophone, or Francophone); canonical tribalism (predominantly sociologists and/or philosophers).

Their detractors – including postmodernists, poststructuralists, postcolonialists, feminists, and intersectionalists – will object that BMU's choice of thinkers is biased towards *socioeconomically privileged*, *male*, *white*, *Judeo-Christian*, *Western*, *Northern*, *Anglo-/Germano-/Francophone*, and *sociological/philosophical* scholars. In short, the three authors may be accused of failing to challenge, let alone to transcend, the established canons of the humanities and social sciences. On this account, their understanding of 'existence' – far from being 'universalist', in the sense that it may provide us with cross-contextually valid insights into the things that really matter in people's lives – remains trapped in a 'particularist' horizon, in the sense that it is based on a conceptual and methodological framework that draws on a socially confined pool of scholars, whose epistemic tools reflect the views, interests, and privileges of a specific – and, by comparison, rather small – group of the world population. If BMU turn their outline into a larger research project, they will be well advised to address this line of criticism, enabling them to make an even stronger case for the intellectual underpinnings of their promising theoretical framework.[8]

3. Epistemic Tensions

A noteworthy aspect of BMU's outline is that it is marked by several tensions, which, at first glance, may not be obvious, but which, upon closer examination, are significant in that they oblige the critical reader to grapple with key implications of their proposal. In the authors' defence, it should be recognized that they stress that their 'contribution is by no means a fully fleshed-out model'[9]. In a way, this makes their project all the more interesting. Its main features – which are laid out with remarkable clarity – could serve as the foundation for a promising, innovative, and long-term research agenda, based on an imaginative combination of rigorous conceptual tools, useful methodological strategies, and illuminating empirical reference points. Building on this fertile confluence of ideas, instruments, and devices, their outline 'attempts to sketch the *lineaments* of a new way of looking at social order and action, in need of further development to realize its full potential in understanding social life'[10].

One may point out, in a somewhat pedantic manner, that there is a discrepancy between the title, in which the authors refer to an 'outline for a theory of *social behaviour*'[11], and the introductory section, in which they characterize their approach as 'a new way of looking at *social order and action*'[12]. Although the terms 'social behaviour', 'social action', and 'social order' are intimately interrelated, they should *not* be used interchangeably. More importantly, the exact role of each of these concepts in BMU's framework should be laid bare.

Another crucial issue, however, relates to epistemic tensions by which their 'existence theory' appears to be marked: universalism versus contextualism, essentialism versus constructivism, foundationalism versus pragmatism – to mention only a few. At the core of their outline lies the assumption that the pursuit of the realization of existential milestones may either facilitate or obstruct one's '*ability to live out a fully human life*'[13]. The problem with this contention, however, is that *different* individuals and *different* social groups (which may be defined by class, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, and/or other sociological variables) will have *different* conceptions of what 'a fully human life' may (or may not) be and *different* ideas of how it may (or may not) be 'lived out' and realized.

Drawing upon valuable insights from both philosophy *and* sociology (as well as other disciplines, such as anthropology, political science, and history), BMU are conscious of the socio-historical contingency that permeates human forms of life, including competing conceptions of 'the good life'[14]. It is not obvious, however, to what degree their approach enables us to resolve the tensions between, on the one hand, *universalism*, *essentialism*, and *foundationalism* and, on the other hand, *contextualism*, *constructivism*, and *pragmatism*. Of course, they may not wish to overcome them and, instead, accept – if not embrace – them as a source of fruitful antinomies permeating both human existence itself (at the practical level) and all socio-philosophically inspired attempts to conceptualize human existence (at the theoretical level).

In this respect, we are confronted with three options:

- The first option may be defined as the *universalist-essentialist-foundationalist* perspective. On this view, the characteristics of 'a fully human life' are universal (in the sense that they apply to the analysis of *all* human forms of life), essential (in the sense that they apply to the analysis of *all* human beings), and foundational (in the sense that they apply to the analysis of *all* foundations underlying the possibilities for individual and collective self-realization).
- The second option may be defined as the *contextualist-constructivist-pragmatist* perspective. On this view, the characteristics of 'a fully human life' are contextually contingent (in the sense that they apply to the analysis of *some*, but by no means all, human forms of life), normatively and/or subjectively constructed (in the sense that they apply to the analysis of *some*, but by no means all, human beings or groups of human beings), and pragmatic (in the sense that they apply to the analysis of *some*, but by no means all, conceptions of the conditions for the possibilities of individual and collective self-realization).
- The third option may be defined as the *compromise approach* – that is, as a perspective that aims to reconcile, and to cross-fertilize, key conceptual, methodological, and empirical insights gained from universalism *and* contextualism,

essentialism *and* constructivism, foundationalism *and* pragmatism, when seeking to explore – and, possibly, to identify – the characteristics of 'a fully human life'. Arguably, such a framework distinguishes between universally shared and contextually contingent, anthropologically invariable and sociologically variable, context-transcending and context-dependent characteristics of 'a fully human life'.

Broadly speaking, BMU's outline falls into the third category. Their account suggests that the aforementioned tensions are embedded in a set of misleading, if not 'false', epistemic oppositions. It would be useful if, in any future elaboration of their project, the authors positioned themselves *explicitly* in relation to these tensions. It is relatively straightforward to delineate them; it is far more difficult, however, to provide a convincing answer to the question of how they can (or cannot), or indeed should (or should not), be resolved.

The question concerning the distinction between universal and contingent features of *human existence* extends to the question concerning the distinction between universal and contingent features of *existential milestones*, *existential ladders*, and *existential urgencies*. Arguably, it is the task of a philosophically informed sociology to expose their *contingent* features, just as it is the task of a sociologically informed philosophy to uncover their *universal* features.

4. Individual and Society

Based on their discussion of the socio-ontological role of existential milestones, the authors offer an illuminating interpretation of the relationship between individual and society. More specifically, they posit that, for the sake of simplicity, their approach tends to presuppose '*a relative harmony*'[15] between, on the one hand, 'the dominant *societal or communal* expectations regarding people's existential milestones'[16] and, on the other hand, 'what *individuals* themselves might see as their existential milestones'[17]. In this context, they persuasively argue that the main reason this presumed simplicity is justified is that 'an individual's existential milestones are themselves frequently derived from these dominant societal or communal norms'[18]. In addition, they assert that the distinction between 'the individual' and 'the collective' is crucial – not least because, in many cases, there is 'a *discrepancy*, and often a *contradiction*, between the two'[19]. In other words, personal conceptions of both the contents and the significance of existential milestones may differ, often radically, from those imposed upon them by society, whether this be by virtue of behavioural, ideological, or institutional pressures (or a combination of these pressures).

The authors give several useful examples to illustrate not only the validity but also the centrality of this point. Interestingly, they provide their readers with a largely *sociological* analysis of potential or actual discrepancies between individual and collective engagements with existential milestones. On this view, their symbolic and material construction hinges upon the interplay between (subjective) projections and (normative) expectations. Given the authors' attachment to existentialism, however, it might be useful to give this issue a more *philosophical* reading, which would complement, rather than compete with, their sociological perspective. The relationship between freedom and

necessity – conceptualized in the dispute between voluntarist and determinist accounts of human action – is vital to a critical understanding of existential milestones (along with existential ladders and existential urgencies).

To be clear, it would be erroneous to associate the side of 'freedom', 'autonomy', and 'reason' exclusively with *philosophy* (notably its existentialist, phenomenological, and subjectivist variants) and the side of 'necessity', 'determinacy', and 'external forces' exclusively with *sociology* (notably its structuralist, functionalist, and objectivist variants). Just as philosophers may subscribe to different (for instance, positivist or metaphysical) versions of determinism, sociologists may advocate different (for instance, constructivist or postmetaphysical) versions of non- or anti-determinism.

One of the main ambitions of Bourdieu's entire project has been to transcend the '*apparent* antinomy'[20] between subjectivism and objectivism, in order to expose the artificial and counterproductive ways in which it divides the humanities and social sciences, while drawing on the compelling and constructive insights from each of them.[21] The structure-agency debate – to which BMU make reference – expresses a similar concern, as in Giddens's structuration theory.[22] In this sense, this issue is far from new; if anything, it has been discussed, for a long time, by numerous scholars in the humanities and social sciences, including by one of the founding figures of sociology, Karl Marx:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.[23]

If BMU convert their outline into a more elaborate, if not fully fleshed-out, theoretical model, then the relationship between freedom and necessity deserves to be explored in further detail. Unsurprisingly, a key question that BMU will need to tackle is the extent to which their *'freedom-oriented'* assumptions, borrowed mainly from existentialist philosophy, can (or cannot) be reconciled with their *'necessity-conscious'* convictions, especially those inspired by both classical and contemporary versions of sociology, most of which are marked by a critical engagement with different forms and degrees of socio-structural determinacy permeating the seemingly most sovereign and unique expressions of human agency.

BMU make reference to the works of Heidegger and Sartre, as well as Schütz, Mead, and Jaspers, highlighting that, to a greater or lesser extent, the approaches developed by these seminal thinkers offer valuable insights into 'the centrality of time for understanding the experience of being human'[24]. BMU stress that their own 'proposal intends to add to these theories a greater sensitivity to the social as *both an enabler and a constraint* on one's phenomenological existence'[25]. In other words, they seek to do justice to the role of both agency *and* structure in the unfolding of social life. At the same time, they contend that their own 'model allows [them] to build in greater agency'[26] than prominent sociological – notably Bourdieusian – approaches, many of which effectively attribute overriding importance to the power of social structures in terms of shaping, if not determining, human practices. Unlike sociologistic approaches of this sort, irrespective of whether these are labelled 'genetic structuralism' or 'structuralist constructivism'[27], the three authors seek to do justice to the role of both structure *and* agency in the unfolding

of social life. In short, BMU's approach is an attempt to account for the confluence of structural and agential forces in the theatre of human life.

Inadvertently, perhaps, BMU associate the side of *agency* with *philosophy* (notably its existentialist versions) and the side of *structure* with *sociology* (notably its Bourdieusian versions). Any prospective fine-tuning of their framework should not only avoid simplistic conceptual dichotomizations, along the lines of 'philosophy/ agency versus sociology/structure', but also investigate the degree to which seemingly incompatible explanatory perspectives – including philosophical *and* sociological approaches focusing on 'agency' and 'indeterminacy', as well as sociological *and* philosophical approaches focusing on 'structure' and 'determinacy' – can (or, possibly, cannot) be reconciled.

5. Temporal Constraints between Universals and Particulars

Throughout their article, BMU underscore the importance of their attempt to provide a novel theoretical perspective based on both existentialist and phenomenological philosophies. They concede that numerous social scientists – notably sociologists and social theorists – may be suspicious of such an undertaking, not least because existentialist and phenomenological approaches are commonly accused of downplaying, if not ignoring, the extent to which human forms of life are marked by 'power dynamics and social inequalities'[28]. They note, however, that such a characterization may be a caricature, which fails to offer an accurate picture of these philosophical frameworks. They argue that misrepresentations of this kind may be weaponized by some scholars, such as Bourdieu, seeking to flesh out the uniqueness of their own intellectual contributions.[29]

Notwithstanding the merits and limitations of these sociologically inspired criticisms of existentialist and phenomenological philosophies, BMU insist that a key objective of their 'existence theory' is to place 'the structural features of intractable power inequality centre stage'[30]. As part of this enterprise, they – similar to Bourdieu and his followers – are committed to overcoming artificial and counterproductive antinomies in the humanities and social sciences, by recognizing the 'micro-macro link'[31] that is built into all forms of human existence.

BMU deliberately label their own approach 'existence theory' to emphasize 'the connection between its core ideas and existentialist notions'[32]. In this sense, their venture is bound to have similarities with previous attempts to combine existentialist philosophies with sociology, resulting in what is described as 'existentialist sociology'[33]. These programmatic efforts display striking similarities with ethnomethodological research agendas, especially with regard to their interest in the role of symbolically mediated interactions and emotionally charged experiences in the construction of everyday life.[34] Unlike these endeavours, however, BMU propose to 'take a longer temporal perspective, paying attention to how individuals organize their lives around broader projects'[35]. Indeed, they examine human life from both an existential(ist) and a temporal(ist) angle: there is no comprehensive understanding of human existence without an in-depth analysis of the far-reaching implications of its temporal constitution.

BMU provide a rich and promising account of the temporal dimensions permeating human existence. Critics may suggest that, owing to its centrality, their interpretation of the role of *time* in the unfolding of social life needs to be developed in further detail in the next stages of their research agenda. Suffice it to say, however, that its key dimensions are elucidated with a high degree of clarity and cogency in their outline. Let us, for the sake of brevity, focus on four principal sources of *temporal constraint*, which are identified and discussed in their article: (a) *biological*, (b) *social-institutional*, (c) *physical/environmental*, and (d) *normative*.[36] The authors substantiate each of these points with several pertinent examples. Crucially, they maintain that these sets of temporal constraint are in a constant state of flux, due to incessant (a) scientific discoveries and advances, (b) social trends and developments, (c) environmental and demographic changes and challenges, and (d) adjustments of, and shifts in, cultural norms, standards, values, and conventions. Arguably, any further elaboration of 'existence theory' will benefit from shedding light on the following relationships:

- the relationship between (competing or complementary) *existential milestones*;
- the relationship between (competing or complementary) *existential ladders*;
- the relationship between (competing or complementary) *existential urgencies*;
- the relationship between *existential milestones*, *existential ladders*, and *existential urgencies*;
- the relationship between, on the one hand, *an individual's perception, interpretation, and pursuit (or rejection)* of existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies and, on the other hand, *society's widely shared expectations* in relation to these milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies;
- the relationship between (competing or complementary) *temporal constraints*;
- the relationship between, on the one hand, *temporal constraints* and, on the other hand, *existential milestones*, *existential ladders*, and *existential urgencies*.

In one way or another, BMU's proposal touches upon all of these relationships. If they decide to convert their outline into a long-term research programme, such a project will benefit from scrutinizing the aforementioned relationships both *within* and *across* societies. It is likely that, when embarking on this journey, they will discover *both universals and particulars* – that is, both cross-culturally convergent and cross-culturally divergent patterns of behavioural, ideological, and institutional functioning, some of which will confirm, and some of which will undermine, the priority that 'existence theory' gives to the (obvious or concealed) presence of existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies in people's lives.

The point of such a typologization is not to convert BMU's proposal into a schematic, let alone reductive, programme of conceptual system-building. Rather, the point is to establish both the validity and the applicability of their model by identifying *both* universal and particular – that is, *both* (objectively) inherent *and* (normatively and/or subjectively) contingent – characteristics of existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies. Their universal features illustrate the *ubiquity* of these existential ingredients in all human societies, *regardless* of their civilizational (notably economic, cultural, political, ideological, linguistic, epistemic, artistic, technological, organizational, demographic, and historical)

specificities. Their contingent features reflect the *variability* of these existential ingredients in all human societies, *because* of their civilizational (notably economic, cultural, political, ideological, linguistic, epistemic, artistic, technological, organizational, demographic, and historical) specificities. Existence is universal among living beings, but it is contingent upon the multiple ways in which it is sustained, and experienced, by them.

6. The Risk of Existentialist Reductionism

As the previous reflections have sought to convey, there are many reasons to view BMU's approach in a largely favourable light. Unsympathetic critics, however, may accuse the authors of advocating a tacit form of explanatory reductionism – that is, of proposing a perspective that effectively portrays every element of human reality as an epiphenomenal expression of an underlying existentialist logic at work 'behind people's backs'. Presumably, this subjacent logic is essentially driven by the triadic interplay between existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies.

In response to this criticism, the authors may argue that one of the main objectives of their programme is – similar to Luc Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique' – to *take ordinary actors seriously*, by accounting for the socio-ontological role of their critical, reflective, and moral capacities, which permit them not only to *justify* their beliefs and actions but also to *assert* different degrees of autonomy and freedom and, crucially, to *project* themselves into the future. Moreover, in response to this criticism, the authors may posit that the purpose of their venture is *not* to reduce 'everything under the sun' to a hidden existentialist logic permeating the triadic interplay between existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies. Still, in any prospective development of their undertaking, the authors should seek to define the explanatory scope and applicability of their proposal as clearly as possible. Arguably, this will allow them to pre-empt the charge that – to put it bluntly – 'their endeavour is doomed to failure because the existentialist parameters upon which it is based apply to everything and nothing'.

Similar types of criticism (regarding paradigm-driven, if not mono-paradigmatic, approaches) have been levelled at a number of influential theories in sociology and philosophy, such as the following: Michel Foucault's theory of power[37], Paul Ricœur's theory of interpretation[38], Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction[39], Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action[40], Axel Honneth's theory of recognition[41], Ernesto Laclau's theory of hegemony[42], Slavoj Žižek's theory of ideology[43], Judith Butler's theory of performativity[44], Bryan S. Turner's theory of the body[45], Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration[46], Luc Boltanski's theory of critical capacity[47], Rainer Forst's theory of justification[48], Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance[49], and Rahel Jaeggi's theory of forms of life[50]. Of course, all of these perspectives are far more complex than these catch-all labels may suggest. One aspect they have in common, however, is that *each* of them tends to be associated with *one* overriding paradigm, serving as *the* main reference point and *the* key conceptual device within the epistemic boundaries of its respective theoretical framework.

The charge of explanatory reductionism may be more justified in some cases than in others, depending on one's view of the approach in question. BMU do *not* intend to make

a case for any kind of explanatory monism, let alone existentialist reductionism. Any future elaboration of their outline, however, will gain in strength if the authors sketch out its explanatory scope and applicability. The task of delineating what a particular theoretical framework can, and cannot, explain is far from straightforward. Such a task, in order to be accomplished, must not be converted into a sterile exercise of conceptual, methodological, and/or empirical confinement, let alone epistemic dogmatism. If anything, it should be carried out in an open, pluralistic, and tentative fashion – that is, in this case, not only by the architects of 'existence theory', but also by the researchers and scholars who draw upon it. Still, BMU may, so to speak, take the wind out of their detractors' sails by conceding that their 'existence theory' may be more useful for some areas of study than for others (and, if possible, by identifying these areas). Ultimately, this kind of nuanced epistemic transparency will permit them to forestall the accusation that, unwittingly, they are caught in a web of existentialist reductionism.

7. Between Domination and Emancipation

BMU's outline may help us to understand both mechanisms of domination and processes of emancipation from a new – as it were, 'milestone-conscious' – angle. Consider the following statement:

> Addressing both the oppressive and the emancipatory potential of existential milestones can help to develop a better understanding of when and how organized opposition to existential milestones accumulates to the point of initiating broader social change, thereby connecting the micro-social (sense of self) to the macro-social (political change, legal reform). Furthermore, such an approach allows us to understand and provide systematic cross-cultural and cross-historical comparisons of the normative architectures unique to particular societies.[51]

Let us analyse the central elements of this contention:

a. Existential milestones can be experienced as *both oppressive and emancipatory*. In other words, they are marked by a profound normative ambivalence, implying that they are neither exclusively 'good' nor exclusively 'bad' in themselves but, rather, marked by a complex set of potentially empowering and potentially disempowering features and, when acted (or not acted) upon, consequences.

b. Existential milestones can be *both reproductive and transformative* in terms of their normative outlook and social effects. People's opposition to – and, one may add, their pursuit of – existential milestones may trigger different forms and degrees of *social conformity* or *social alterity*. Far from being reducible to merely abstract, let alone metaphysical, ingredients of detached and self-referential thought experiments, existential milestones are not only embedded in human reality, but also impact upon its constitution, functioning, and development in a tangible manner.

c. Existential milestones affect *both micro-social and macro-social* dimensions of human forms of life, connecting these two spheres in a way that demonstrate that the individual pursuit of self-realization cannot be divorced from its entanglement

in, and dependence upon, a collectively created spatiotemporal horizon of inter-connected behavioural, ideological, and institutional modes of functioning.

d. Paradoxically, existential milestones have *both invariable and variable* features, suggesting that their cross-cultural and cross-historical study is likely to reveal that they possess some characteristics that transcend, and others that express, their spatiotemporal situatedness. Existential milestones may be regarded as (i) 'foundational' insofar as they exist in *all* human societies, (ii) 'contingent' insofar as they exist only in *some*, but by no means all, human societies, or (iii) 'founda-tional-contingent' insofar as their constitutive contents and overarching teleolog-ical orientation *converge*, but the modes of pursuit and realization associated with them *diverge*, between human societies.

Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that BMU's framework provides a rich source of possible tools for describing, analysing, interpreting, explaining, and evaluating key structural, processual, and agential elements contributing to the emergence and develop-ment of different social – and, by implication, normative – orders.

In relation to the aforementioned points, however, any further elaboration of BMU's framework will have to grapple with the following questions:

a. How is it possible to distinguish between *oppressive* and *emancipatory* dimen-sions of particular existential milestones? To what extent does the value of spe-cific existential milestones hinge upon the *confluence of objective, normative, and subjective criteria*? Is it possible to measure the degree to which they either facilitate or obstruct individual and/or collective forms of domination and/or emancipation? Is any judgement regarding their negative or positive value – ulti-mately – 'normative' and/or 'subjective', rather than 'objective'? To what extent can their *causes* (that is, the factors that brought them into being) be distinguished from their *consequences* (that is, the effects they have on people's lives)?

b. Would it make sense to develop a *typology of existential milestones* (and, by implication, of existential ladders and existential urgencies)? If so, would such a typology allow us to determine which ones are more likely, and which ones are less likely, to trigger different forms and degrees of *social change*? Are there some types of existential milestones (and, by implication, of existential ladders and existential urgencies) that tend to matter more to people than others in a *uni-versal*, if not *anthropological*, sense (that is, *regardless* of the social environment in which they gain traction)? Or is the significance of all existential milestones (and, by implication, of all existential ladders and existential urgencies), by defi-nition, configurationally – that is, objectively, normatively, and subjectively – *contingent*?

c. What is the *relationship between micro-social and macro-social dynamics* in the emergence, influence, and disappearance of particular existential milestones (and, by implication, of particular existential ladders and existential urgencies)? More specifically, is their development subject to *both bottom-up and top-down processes*, which either enhance or hinder their currency? If so, can bottom-up ways of constructing, reconstructing, or deconstructing existential milestones be

just as empowering or disempowering (for those involved in their pursuit and realization) as their top-down equivalents?

d. Should we distinguish between *foundational* existential milestones (which, in one form or another, are present in *all* human societies), *contingent* existential milestones (which are present only in *some*, but by no means all, human societies, and *foundational-contingent* existential milestones (whose constitutive contents and overarching teleological orientation *converge*, but whose corresponding modes of pursuit and realization *diverge*, between human societies)? Furthermore, should we distinguish between *short-lived*, *medium-lived*, and *long-lived* as well as between *rare* (that is, culturally and historically marginal), *common* (that is, cross-culturally and cross-historically prevalent), and *ubiquitous* (that is, anthropologically universal) existential milestones?

These (and other) questions open up a plethora of research avenues, which can, and should, be pursued from different disciplinary angles (notably sociology and philosophy, but also psychology, anthropology, and history). Even tentative answers to these (admittedly difficult) questions may provide us with valuable insights into the nature and development of human societies and, ultimately, of the human condition.

8. Existential Milestones in Contemporary Societies

BMU examine the role of existential milestones in contemporary societies. They do so by identifying five major dimensions, stating that three of them 'relate to properties attached to existential milestones themselves'[52], whereas two of them 'relate to temporal features of such milestones'[53]. One may argue that, in fact, all five of these dimensions comprise temporal aspects. Be that as it may, the authors make a convincing case for the significance of these five dimensions. It is worth reflecting on each of them in a critical fashion.

a.

Authenticity and Privilege: Given the plurality of lifestyles in highly differentiated societies, it is likely that a growing number of people may question, if not openly reject or largely ignore, hegemonic conceptions of 'the accomplished life'[54] and, by extension, of 'the good life'[55]. This trend, if empirically confirmed, may be interpreted as a shift towards an increasing emphasis on personal identity, autonomy, and – ultimately – authenticity. BMU distance themselves from theoretical accounts associated with the notion that we have entered an era that may be described as 'reflexive modernity'[56], not least because, unlike most advocates of this thesis, they recognize that it would be erroneous to lose sight of the fact that the very possibility of pursuing milestone-oriented goals 'is often (quite literally) afforded by social privilege'[57]. This issue illustrates the deep intertwinement of a key *philosophical* concern ('authenticity') with a central *sociological* concern ('privilege').

In line with this interdisciplinary spirit, any further elaboration of BMU's 'existence theory' will gain in depth and breadth if it explores not only the *philosophical*

implications of 'the human search for authenticity' and the *sociological* implications of 'the social power of privilege' but also, somewhat counterintuitively, the *sociological* implications of 'the construction of authenticity' and the *philosophical* implications of 'the ontology of privilege'. Just as the search for authenticity may be a manifestation of social privilege, it may be an expression of a human need. And just as the power of privilege may convey the privilege of power, it may reflect a human predicament. Arguably, 'a realized materialism would at the same time be the abolition of materialism, the abolition of the domination of material interests'[58]. A realized authenticity based on human privilege would at the same be the abolition of particular privilege, the abolition of the domination of social privileges. In short, the critical analysis of the relationship between 'authenticity' and 'privilege' has both sociological *and* philosophical implications.

b.

Pluralism and Globalization: In contemporary societies, notably those in 'the West', it is fairly common for different value systems to co-exist in a largely peaceful and fruitful manner. On many levels, these value systems may compete, if not enter into conflict, with one another. The 'co-presence of multiple value systems'[59], however, remains a constitutive feature of modernity. In most modern societies, religions no longer hold an almost unassailable monopoly on setting the normative parameters underlying behavioural, ideological, and institutional modes of functioning.[60] It appears, then, that 'increased cultural diversity'[61] is likely to contribute to the construction of a society founded on principles of mutual respect, acceptance, and open-mindedness. Such a shift towards an ever more pluralistic, liberal, multicultural, heterogeneous, and differentiated society is reflected, for instance, in a rising number of 'international, inter-racial, and inter-religious marriage[s]'[62]. Indeed, BMU go a step further by asserting that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that 'no *single* value system is likely to be dominant without sustaining substantial criticism and opposition'[63]. In relation to this point, the authors formulate an interesting hypothesis:

> [. . .] this *modern multiplication of value systems*, and the associated *proliferation of often-conflicting existential milestones*, comprises *a social basis for the intensification of a mainstay feature of existential philosophy*: the angst produced by the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of choice in *an increasingly pluralistic world in which we are 'condemned to be free'* [. . .].[64]

The validity of this hypothesis may be corroborated by considering at least three issues in more detail:

First, the proliferation of *existential milestones* is intimately related to the proliferation of *existential narratives* (that is, both 'small' and 'grand' narratives). Five types of micro- and macro- (or meta-) narrative have been, and continue to be, crucial in terms of shaping contemporary societies: political, philosophical, religious, economic, and cultural.[65] Given their far-reaching influence, it is likely that the values that are brought to bear on actors engaged in the mobilization (or deconstruction) of

existential milestones are inextricably linked to, if not embedded in, the values articulated in these types of narrative. One's perception, appreciation, and interpretation of existential milestones are inevitably influenced by the multiple components of one's worldview (and vice versa). Arguably, this is a vital matter, the implications of which the authors may wish to explore further.

Second, unsympathetic critics may reject BMU's account of value systems as unduly optimistic. In the authors' defence, it must be said, however, that they are aware of recent – arguably retrograde – trends associated with the rise of populism, authoritarianism, nationalism, protectionism, exclusivism, nativism, and jingoism.[66] These developments may be interpreted from different angles. Yet, it is hard to deny that, at least to some extent, they represent a backlash against the 'increasingly pluralistic world'[67] of incessant globalization, which many people experience as a state in which – if anything – they find themselves 'condemned to be unfree', 'taken for granted', 'worse off', and 'on the losing end of history'. The authors may be right in suggesting that it is highly unlikely that any *single* value system will exert a certain degree of dominance or hegemony 'without sustaining substantial criticism and opposition'[68]. In the 21st century, however, there are two hegemonic forms of governance, which can be broadly characterized as follows: on the one hand, *variants of liberalism, combined with different degrees of state-(de)regulated capitalism*; and, on the other hand, *variants of authoritarianism, combined with state-controlled capitalism*. Granted, these are *not* the only two games in town. Still, it is hard to overlook the fact that they constitute the two predominant options, as illustrated in the global influence exerted by the United States of America and the People's Republic of China (not to mention the European Union, Russia, India, Brazil, and several other established or emerging 'big players'). A key challenge for prospective investigations inspired by BMU's approach consists in undertaking *comparative-historical research* on the points of convergence and divergence between social systems in terms of their respective construction (or, indeed, destruction or transformation) of existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies.

Third, it should be noted that globalization has not simply 'resulted in increased cultural diversity'[69] but, rather, resulted in an increased *awareness* of cultural diversity. The world has been a culturally diverse place for a long time, predating the rise of the catchphrase 'globalization'. Paradoxically, globalization entails trends towards both hybridization *and* standardization, heterogenization *and* homogenization, fragmentation *and* unification, complexification *and* simplification. The interesting question that poses itself, then, is to what extent – in the context of globalization – existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies have *also* been both hybridized *and* standardized, heterogenized *and* homogenized, fragmented *and* unified, complexified *and* simplified in different societies across the world.

C.

Rights and Modernity: As posited by the authors, in numerous spheres of modern society, 'the diversity of plural value systems has been accompanied by the *expansion of rights* to certain hitherto marginalized or discriminated groups'[70]. Various examples substantiating

the validity of this claim can be found in the modern history of rights, in terms of both their implementation and their violation. BMU rightly draw attention to 'the contradictory developments of modernization processes'[71]. Arguably, these developments are indicative of the deep ambivalence that lies at the core of modernity in general and of the Enlightenment in particular.[72] An aspect of their analysis that may be regarded as problematic in this respect, however, is the contention that 'it has become possible for minority groups in these [i.e. modern-liberal] societies to pursue existential milestones which were denied to them in previous eras'[73]. While this assertion is factually correct, it conceals an underlying issue: the taken-for-grantedness, if not tacit imposition, of the authors' own (normatively and/or subjectively contingent) values, principles, and standards. More specifically, it reveals what critics may perceive as a *liberal*, *ethnocentric*, and *evolutionist* conception of existential milestones:

- *liberal*, because of its implicit commitment to pluralism;
- *ethnocentric*, because of its 'Western'-centric bias; and
- *evolutionist*, because of its underlying teleological storyline, oriented towards the realization of progressive ideals – such as inclusivity, dignity, and democracy.

One may have good reason to defend a liberal, ethnocentric, and evolutionist understanding of existential milestones. Nevertheless, in any future elaboration of their approach, the authors will need to think of a way in which they can convincingly respond to the charge that, effectively, they provide a liberal/hyper-pluralistic, ethnocentric/'Western'-centric, and evolutionist/teleological account of existential milestones – a criticism that is likely to be raised by advocates of different versions of poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and posthumanism.[74]

To put it bluntly, some minorities may wish to pursue a set of existential milestones that have not only been traditionally denied to them, but that are not even on the radar of pluralistic, Western, and highly differentiated societies. In fact, some minorities may reject 'the ideology of existential milestones'[75] – especially its vocabulary around 'experiences of completeness or incompleteness'[76] – all together and, hence, not fit into any rigid scheme of a milestone-focused account of society, let alone humanity. Undoubtedly, 'the possibility of pursuing existential milestones is structured and socially differentiated'[77]. Even an intersectionalist analysis of existential milestones, however, may not go far enough if it fails to reflect on, let alone to transcend, the ideological presuppositions underlying its own conditions of possibility.

d.

Delay and Change: The authors make a valid point about a noticeable trend: in Western societies, more and more people appear to 'delay the accomplishment of existential milestones'[78], as illustrated in behavioural changes regarding marriage and parenthood. Some of these changes are linked to 'higher requisite levels of education'[79], a process that has substantial knock-on effects – including deferral, if not suspension, of life projects associated with professional and domestic stability, getting married, and/or having children.[80] Crucially, the authors remind us that a sociological explanation that rests on a simplistic

'base and superstructure'[81] logic fails to capture the potential or actual complexity of these processes: 'economic development does not always result in cultural change'[82], implying that established behavioural and ideological modes of functioning – for instance, in relation to gender roles – do not necessarily undergo a reform, let alone a revolution, due to shifts in the material infrastructure of society.

An interesting theoretical question that the authors may explore further in their forthcoming research is *to what extent economic and/or cultural transformations may (or may not) result in the reconfiguration of existential milestones, existential ladders*, *and existential urgencies* – both in the short term and in the long term. Even if it is not possible, and perhaps not desirable, to 'discover' lawlike social mechanisms determining both the constitution and the evolution of existential milestones, it may be possible, and arguably desirable, to find out whether or not their development follows certain structural and agential *patterns* under particular sets of circumstances.

e.

The Reversibility of Time:

> [. . .] the dawning of *contemporary modernity in certain locales*, and for certain groups, can be characterized as having allowed *an increasing 'reversibility of time'*, while for other groups, in other locales, the opposite may be the case, and of course the former may be internally connected to, in the sense of relying upon, the latter.[83]

It is striking that the authors emphasize the spatiotemporal specificity and, by implication, variability of the degree to which 'an increasing "reversibility of time"'[84] affects some groups more than others. Seeking to break out of the ethnocentric straitjacket of Western sociological analysis, we may ask to what degree the role of existential milestones varies between different types of society. In a schematic – and, admittedly, somewhat dualistic – way, human forms of life may be categorized as follows: 'primitive' versus 'complex', 'tight' versus 'loose', 'horizontally structured' versus 'vertically structured', 'control-based' versus 'freedom-based', 'collectivist' versus 'individualist', 'relatively homogeneous' versus 'relatively heterogeneous'.[85]

If 'lost' existential milestones are 'now being recuperated'[86] due to the arrival of cutting-edge technologies, and if access to these technologies is 'itself a function [and, one may add, a product] of social power and privilege'[87], then at least two crucial distinctions (which partly converge with the preceding ones) need to be added to this conceptual framework: 'technologically backward' versus 'technologically advanced' and 'socially egalitarian' versus 'socially asymmetrical'. The first pair overlaps largely with the 'primitive' versus 'complex' opposition. The second pair overlaps substantially with the 'horizontally structured' versus 'vertically structured' opposition.

Still, for the purpose of analytical precision, they can, and arguably should, be distinguished from the other ones. In relation to the objective, normative, and subjective weight of existential milestones in different societies, however, all of the aforementioned categorizations may be useful when exploring similarities and differences between them. Future comparative-historical research inspired by 'existence theory' needs to cast light

on the extent to which the *significance*, *constitution*, and *development* of existential milestones *vary* between human forms of life. Important sociological and philosophical lessons may be learnt from such an undertaking.

9. Power, Privilege, and Inequality

BMU make several interesting remarks on the role of *power*, *privilege*, and *inequality* in their critical analysis of existential milestones. Let us consider some key facets of this important part of their outline.

a.

BMU rightly reject reductionist models that portray life decisions as outcomes of mainly, if not exclusively, *rational* calculations driven by the motivation to maximize one's advantages – and, ultimately, one's power and privilege(s) – in a *transactional* fashion.[88] Even if we dismiss such a short-sighted account, the use of the term 'economy of milestones' may not only be justified but also be required to comprehend the impact of asymmetrically distributed resources on people's capacity to pursue particular life projects. In contemporary societies, the lives of (resource-dependent) actors are both symbolically and materially affected by the production, distribution, valuation, and commodification of existential milestones.

Given their rejection of both economistic (i.e. Beckerian) and fatalistic (i.e. Bourdieusian) variants of explanatory reductionism and, moreover, given their commitment to conceiving of ordinary people as meaning-seeking entities capable of making decisions and justifying their actions, there is a lot of common ground between BMU's 'existence theory' and Boltanski's 'pragmatic sociology of critique'.[89] Any prospective elaboration of 'existence theory' may open up new avenues of research by way of examining the similarities and differences between 'economies of milestones' and 'economies of worth'.[90]

b.

Consider the following statement:

> All other things being equal therefore, we can use existence theory to state that more privileged actors or groups in a particular social domain will (a) possess more ambitious *normative* definitions of existential milestones, (b) hold an enhanced capacity to *fulfil* existential milestones, and (c) have greater capacity to *redefine* existential milestones for themselves and for others, or the moments at which such existential milestones are to be achieved.[91]

One need not be a critical (notably Marxist or Bourdieusian) sociologist to recognize that points 'b' and 'c' are accurate. Point 'a', however, needs to be qualified. While it is true that an actor with a socially privileged background and/or access to a large variety of socially relevant resources is more likely to be equipped with an enhanced capacity to fulfil and, if required, to redefine existential milestones than their less privileged

counterparts, it is not true that the former's normative definitions of existential mile-stones are necessarily more ambitious than those of the latter. In fact, in many cases, the opposite is the case: pursuing and realizing certain milestones may require the less privileged to possess even *more* ambitious normative definitions than the privileged – both objectively (from the observer's 'detached' point of view) and subjectively (from the participant's 'involved' point of view). Given their lack of entitlement and lack of access to socially relevant resources, underprivileged groups, unlike their privileged counterparts, have to be particularly determined to overcome the constraining power of social determinism by climbing existential ladders against all odds.[92]

c.

As highlighted by BMU, existentialist and phenomenological philosophies have often been condemned for their 'alleged neglect of power dynamics and social inequalities'[93]. One may add that this is a typical line of attack in modern intellectual thought. Bourdieu famously criticized so-called 'subjectivist' and 'idealist' approaches on these grounds, notably the following: existentialism and phenomenology (esp. Heidegger, Sartre, and Schütz); micro-sociology, ethnomethodology, and symbolic interactionism (esp. Mead, Goffman, and Garfinkel); and, last but not least, transcendental pragmatics and universal pragmatics (esp. Apel and Habermas). If a lesson is to be learnt from Bourdieu's (mis) representation of these approaches, it is that it is important to ensure one's social theory is 'power-tight'. In other words, it needs to be constructed in such a way that the charge that it fails to account for the ubiquity, let alone the complexity, of power relations in social life is pre-empted – not as a box-ticking exercise, but as a commitment to exposing both the causes and the consequences of the unequal distribution of socially relevant resources. BMU's outline delivers on this front. Any further development of their pro-ject, however, will benefit from exploring the extent to which existential milestones can both reinforce *and* transcend, reproduce *and* subvert, strengthen *and* dislodge mecha-nisms of power and domination.

d.

In their outline, BMU tend to regard 'power' as a largely, if not exclusively, *negative* force. Arguably, their approach is able to accommodate a more nuanced account of power, underscoring its *ambivalent* role in society. In this respect, the following concep-tual oppositions are particularly important:[94]

  i.   'Soft power' versus 'hard power': The former is 'soft' in the sense that it refers to *symbolic* forms of power. These may be articulated conceptually, linguistically, discursively, and/or ideologically. The latter is 'hard' in the sense that it concerns *material* forms of power. These may be observed and measured empirically, inso-far as they constitute tangible components of social reality.
  ii. 'Power to' versus 'power over': The former designates an entity's capacity to do something and/or to act upon the world in a particular way. In this sense, it may be described as a *productive* form of power. The latter captures an entity's capacity to

exercise a certain degree of influence, or even control, over something or some-body in a particular way. In this sense, it may be interpreted as a *coercive* form of power.

iii. 'Power for' versus 'power against': The former stands for power as the *assertion* of something or somebody. The latter refers to power as the *rejection* of some-thing or somebody. The dialectic of 'power for' and 'power against' – which may be conceived of in terms of the relationship between 'power' and 'counter-power'[95] or, if one prefers, 'power' and 'anti-power'[96] – lies at the heart of behav-ioural, ideological, and institutional struggles between asymmetrically positioned actors in stratified settings.

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the constitution of power in human socie-ties. Indeed, the aforementioned conceptual oppositions may be misleading to the extent that, in real life, the exercise of power is, on many levels, far more complex, messy, and ambiguous than such a schematic synthesis may suggest.[97] Yet, the advantage of a more systematic depiction would be a more differentiated and more subtle understanding of the ways in which power dynamics permeate the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of existential milestones in human societies:

i. The presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones may be an expression of 'soft power' or 'hard power'. From a *constructivist* point of view, existential milestones are part of our *representational* world, which is composed of *symbolic* forms – notably people's conceptual, linguistic, discursive, and/or ideological imaginaries. In this sense, existential milestones are shaped by, and in turn shape, 'soft power'. From a *realist* point of view, existential milestones are part of our *empirical* world, which is composed of *material* constituents – nota-bly factual, physical, and measurable realities. In this sense, existential mile-stones are shaped by, and in turn shape, 'hard power'. The question that arises, then, is to what degree, in a particular context, the power of existential milestones is due to the 'soft' power of belief, conviction, and persuasion or due to the 'hard' power of imposition, domination, and coercion (or due to both).

ii. The presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones may be an expression of 'power to' or 'power over'. As a form of 'power to', the presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones may convey the capacity of A to think or to do something in accordance with A's – consciously or unconsciously pursued – interests, needs, desires, beliefs, and/or convictions. As a form of 'power over', the presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones may articulate 'the capacity of A to motivate B to think or do something that B would otherwise not have thought or done'[98]. Insofar as the presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones equip an actor with a sense of self-fulfilment and accomplishment, they are an expression of 'power to'. Insofar as the presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones are a product of an external imposition by an actor's social environment, they are an expression of 'power over'. In practice, the economy of existential milestones is shaped by the confluence of 'power to' and 'power over' – not least because their realization

bestows actors not only with the capacity *to* do something and/or *to* act upon the world in a particular way, but also with the capacity to exercise a certain degree of influence, or even control, *over* something or somebody (including their *own* lives) in a particular way.

iii. The presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones may be an expression of 'power for' or 'power against'. As a form of 'power for', the presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones may involve experiences of empowerment and processes of emancipation. As a form of 'power against', the presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones may entail experiences of disempowerment and mechanisms of domination. The dialectic of 'power for' and 'power against' indicates that the deep *ambivalence* of the human condition is an object of permanent struggle *for* and *against* specific constellations of power. The dialectic of 'endorsements of existential milestones' and 'rejections of existential milestones' indicates that the deep *ambivalence* of the human condition is an object of permanent struggle *for* and *against* specific constellations of existence.

BMU are right to stress that the presence, pursuit, and/or realization of existential milestones are contingent upon access to socially relevant – notably material, symbolic, financial, and reputational – resources. In other words, the economy of existential milestones (and, by implication, of existential ladders and existential urgencies) is shot through with power dynamics, characterized by struggles for access to asymmetrically distributed resources. Any future elaboration of 'existence theory', however, will benefit from providing a nuanced understanding of the relationship between different forms of power and different forms of existence.

e.

BMU emphasize the role of *social privilege* in the pursuit of existential milestones. Given the importance attributed to this aspect of their analysis throughout their outline, it may be worth developing a more systematic account of the link between social privilege and existential milestones. For such an undertaking, the following dimensions appear to be crucial:

i. The pursuit of existential milestones may be regarded as *an expression of social privilege*. In the authors' words, 'the possibility of pursuing certain goals is often (quite literally) afforded by social privilege'[99]. Put differently, social privilege may – in extreme cases – be a prerequisite not only for the *pursuit* but also for the *realization* of existential milestones.

ii. The pursuit of existential milestones may be regarded as *a function of social privilege* – that is, as a modus operandi that effectively reinforces social privilege. As 'a function of social power and privilege'[100], the pursuit of existential milestones serves the purpose of perpetuating a type of social order that is based on the unequal distribution of resources.

iii. The pursuit of existential milestones may be regarded as *a legitimization of social privilege*. As such, it constitutes a subtle way of attaching legitimacy to the quest for authenticity. 'The capacity to realize one's "authenticity" is typically a function of privilege'[101], especially to the extent that it is shaped by the confluence of key sociological variables – such as class, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, and/or (dis)ability. The very possibility of the realization of one's 'authenticity' is intimately intertwined with the intersectionally constituted positions one occupies in different fields of society.

iv. The pursuit of existential milestones may be regarded as *an extension of social privilege*. More specifically, 'material privilege affords actors the ability to construct autobiographies with *longer* temporal horizons (towards both the past and the future) that extend to, for example, life after retirement, their children's education, children's marriage partners, and family trusts and businesses'[102]. The extension of social privilege via the pursuit of existential milestones is both *temporal*, in the sense that their realization may be postponed to a later stage in life, and *relational*, in the sense that their realization may be shared with, or even transferred to, other actors. Thus, 'the hypothesis of a correlation between privileged social class and an extended "future orientation"'[103] may have to be supplemented with the hypothesis of a correlation between privileged social positioning and an extended 'transfer orientation'. The economy of existential milestones is pervaded by both temporal projections and interpersonal transactions.

v. The pursuit of existential milestones may be regarded as *a normalization of social privilege*. In this sense, the process itself may favour different 'life projects' for different social groups. The stratification of society is reflected in the stratification of life projects and, ultimately, in the privilege-laden differentiation of existential milestones. Hence, 'the very idea, aspiration, and realistic possibility of a coherent "life project", punctuated by certain milestones along the way, is itself in many ways an effect of relative privilege'[104]. Paradoxically, the *lack* of social privilege may not only *obstruct* but also *trigger* the yearning for and aspiration towards such a life project – because of, rather than despite, the fact that its realization may seem out of reach. Either way, the normalization of privilege goes hand in hand with the normalization of the unequally distributed opportunities for the pursuit, let alone the realization, of existential milestones.

10. Between Protagonism and Realism

a.

It is striking that BMU use various concepts to refer to the *protagonists* of their 'existence theory': 'subjects', 'individuals', 'persons', 'human beings', 'actors', 'social actors', 'conscious actors', 'knowledge agents', 'citizens', and 'denizens' – to mention only the most important ones.

In principle, there is nothing wrong with this multitude of ways in which the authors refer to their 'existential protagonists'. Given the central importance that existentialist

and phenomenological approaches attribute to human beings, notably to their individual and collective forms of experience and immersion, however, any future refinement of 'existence theory' may benefit from a selection of clearly defined, explained, and justified terms to characterize the core element of their conceptual scaffolding: *humans not only as interdependent, interactive, and intersubjective beings, but also as embodied, experiential, purposive, co-operative, creative, reflective, interpretive, discursive, imaginative, and projective entities, capable of making decisions and exerting a certain degree of freedom when relating to, engaging with, and acting upon the world in which they find themselves.*

The semantic differences between Bourdieu's use of the concept of 'agent' (in his 'critical sociology') and Boltanski's use of the concept of 'actor' (in his 'pragmatic sociology of critique') are indicative of two fundamentally divergent accounts of society in general and of those who construct it in particular.[105] It would be interesting to know how and where BMU position themselves in relation to their main sources of inspiration – notably key figures such as Fromm, Heidegger, Jaspers, Kierkegaard, Mead, Sartre, and Schütz (among others) – above all, with regard to their respective conception of the human subject.

b.

BMU endeavour to develop an 'existence theory' that allows for an 'analysis of systematic social forces [. . .] in a way that avoids producing *a reified image of social structure as a thing existing "out there"'* [106]. While, in principle, such an undertaking is to be applauded, one should avoid creating straw-man arguments of this sort, especially if they are essential to one's analytical starting point. In contemporary sociology and philosophy, one will struggle to find a large number of thinkers endorsing a view of society that is based on 'a reified image of social structure as a thing existing "out there"'[107]. Granted, crude forms of social realism may still be *implicitly* and *unconsciously* present in a vast amount of social-scientific research carried out, and written about, in the 21st century. Not many researchers, however, will *explicitly* and *consciously* subscribe to naïve and unrefined versions of epistemological realism and/or sociological structuralism.[108]

c.

BMU's outline contains some logical inconsistencies, which should be ironed out in any potential revision of their project. Let us consider one minor, but not insignificant, example. On the one hand, BMU claim that their focus on existential milestones allows for an 'analysis of systematic social forces'[109] and, thus, 'reveals the *systematic patterning of social life*'[110]. On the other hand, BMU contend that, unlike Bourdieu's homological approach[111], their model, since it builds in greater agency than its structuralist and functionalist counterparts, permits them to 'account for *imperfect social patterning* or what might be called *the empirical "mess" of social life*'[112]. Admittedly, in their response, the authors may argue that these two statements are not logically incompatible. They would have to concede, however, that there is at least a logical tension between these two assertions.

Be that as it may, the more interesting – and, perhaps, more fruitful – question is whether or not some spheres of human existence are more 'systematically patterned' than others and, by implication, some are 'empirically messier' than others. Arguably, the economy of existential milestones comprises *both* highly systematic *and* fairly messy aspects. Furthermore, the degree to which these aspects are (normatively) *presented* and/or (subjectively) *perceived* as such may be at odds with the degree to which they are (objectively) *constituted* as such. In brief, the various tensions between the *systematic* and the *messy* dimensions of social life in general and of the economy of existential milestones in particular (including the tensions between their objective constitution, normative presentation, and subjective perception) would be another significant issue that might be worth exploring in the future – not least because it poses major philosophical and sociological questions about the role of both determinacy and indeterminacy in the construction of human forms of life.[113]

d.

Throughout their outline, the authors rightly stress the importance of dynamics of *dominance*, notably the degree to which these impact upon the economy of milestones. Consider the following examples:

- [. . .] *dominant* expectations of what an existential milestone should be for a particular category of social actor, and at what particular moment or life stage this existential milestone ought to be achieved[114];
- *dominant* societal or communal norms[115];
- society's *dominant* expectations of such milestones[116];
- *dominant* societal notions of what an accomplished life should look like[117];
- adherence to *dominant* norms[118];
- evidence that no *single* value system is likely to be *dominant* without sustaining substantial criticism and opposition[119];
- the promises embodied in societies' *dominant* ideologies[120].

BMU convincingly demonstrate the extent to which the economy of milestones is permeated by dynamics of dominance. This theme, of course, touches upon the role that power, privilege, and inequality play in their critical analysis of existential milestones. Curiously, however, they do not make use of the concept of *domination*, let alone of the concept of *hegemony*. This may (or may not) be a deliberate choice of perspective. One need not be a Marxist, feminist, critical race theorist, Bourdieusian, or intersectionalist to recognize that key sociological variables are connected to structures and practices of power, privilege, inequality, *and* domination: class and classism, gender and sexism, 'race' and racism, age and ageism, (dis)ability and ableism – all of these issues manifest themselves in structures and practices of *social domination*, played out in hegemonic and counterhegemonic struggles for (and against) recognition, empowerment, and access to material and symbolic resources. Any prospective elaboration of 'existence theory' would benefit from a radical engagement with structures and practices of *social domination*, including the hegemonic and counterhegemonic dynamics by which they are sustained and/or challenged.

Such a shift in perspective would add to 'the broad applicability of existence theory'[121]. BMU make a persuasive case for its broad applicability – offering several examples, notably in relation to the areas of cultural anthropology, science and technology studies, and the sociology of the family and work, but also in relation to pressing contemporary issues, such as populism[122], refugees and migrants[123], and the recent and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic[124]. An unwavering commitment to shedding light on intersectionally constituted structures and practices of social domination – such as classism, sexism, racism, ageism, and ableism – will extend not only the applicability but also the depth and breadth of 'existence theory' even further.

Conclusion

BMU's outline demonstrates that existential milestones play a pivotal role in the construction of modern societies. The previous analysis has sought to offer some critical, but constructive, reflections that the authors may (or may not) take on board when developing a more elaborate version of their 'existence theory' in the future. As the preceding comments have attempted to illustrate, BMU's model is truly promising, original, and thought-provoking. It provides a solid foundation for an ambitious, but viable, project that may result in the creation of a new current of research, capable of generating valuable insights into the tension-laden confluence of existential milestones, existential ladders, and existential urgencies in the theatre of human life.

Notes

1. See Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022).
2. On this point, see, for example: Adorno (1972 [1968]); Adorno (2000 [1993]); Chernilo (2017); Cordero (2017), pp. x, 7–8, 11, 153, 155, 160, 161n27, and 162; Manent (1998 [1994]); Susen (2017b), pp. 102–103 and 108–110; Susen (2020a), pp. 162–163; Susen (2020c), esp. pp. 124–125; Susen (2021); Susen (2022).
3. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 8.
4. See, for instance: Baert (2003a); Baert (2005); Baert and Silva (2010 [1998]); Baert and Silva (2013); Baert and Turner (2004); Baert and Turner (2007). See also Susen (2013a).
5. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 16 (spelling modified).
6. On the use of most of these (and other) criteria in a different study, see Susen (2015a), pp. 23–31. See also, for instance: Susen (2013a), pp. 85–86 and 99n27; Susen (2017c), pp.

11, 45–46, and 50; Susen (2020a), pp. xviii, 32, 98, and 118; Susen (2020c), esp. pp. 133–136 and 142–143.

7. See previous note.

8. See Baert's previous reactions to this line of criticism: Baert (2017), esp. pp. 128–129; Baert and Silva (2013), esp. p. 102.

9. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 8.

10. Ibid., p. 8 (italics added) (spelling modified).

11. Ibid. (see the second part of the article's title) (italics added).

12. Ibid., p. 8 (italics added).

13. Ibid., p. 9 (italics added).

14. On this point, see, for instance: Rosa (2016), esp. pp. 16, 18, 44–46, 137, 304f., 312, 314, 336, 456, 513, 733f., 749, and 755; Rosa and Henning (2018); Susen (2020b), pp. 312, 315, 319, 321, 327, 328–329, 333, 334, and 339.

15. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 13 (italics added).

16. Ibid., p. 13 (italics added).

17. Ibid., p. 13 (italics added).

18. Ibid., p. 13.

19. Ibid., p. 13 (italics added).

20. Bourdieu (1980), p. 46 (italics added) (my translation).

21. See ibid., p. 43: 'De toutes les oppositions qui divisent artificiellement la science sociale, la plus fondamentale, et la plus ruineuse, est celle qui s'établit entre le subjectivisme et l'objectivisme.' On this point, see also, for instance, Susen (2007), pp. 149 and 167n1.

22. See Giddens (1984). See also, for example: Cohen (1990); Dickie-Clark (1990); Stinchcombe (1990). In addition, see Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), pp. 18–19.

23. Marx (2000/1977 [1852]), p. 329. See also Marx (1972 [1852]), p. 115: 'Die Menschen machen ihre eigene Geschichte, aber sie machen sie nicht aus freien Stücken, nicht unter selbstgewählten, sondern unter unmittelbar vorgefundenen, gegebenen und überlieferten Umständen.' On this point, see, for instance: Boltanski, Rennes, and Susen (2014 [2010]), p. 595; Susen (2008a), p. 77; Susen (2010a), pp. 174–175 and 180–181; Susen (2015a), pp. 239–240; Susen (2021 [2014]), pp. 351, 358, and 363n1.

24. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 8.

25. Ibid., p. 8 (italics added).

26. Ibid., p. 13.

27. On the concepts of 'genetic structuralism' and 'structuralist constructivism', see, for example: Bourdieu (1982), pp. 25 and 57; Bourdieu (1997), p. 137; Bourdieu (2001), p. 151. See also, for instance: Addi (2002), pp. 136–142; Baert (1998); Baert and Silva (2010 [1998]); Frère (2004); Susen (2007), pp. 220 and 228n48; Susen (2013b), p. 205; Wagner (2003), p. 223.

28. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 8. On this point, see also Bourdieu (1977 [1972]), p. 74. Cf. Susen (2007), Chapters 5–8.

29. On this point, see Reed (2020), esp. p. 35. Cf. Susen (2007), pp. 158–167.

30. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 8.

31. Ibid., p. 19.

32. Ibid., p. 8.

33. See, for instance: Douglas and Johnson (1977); Fontana and Kotarba (1984); Hayim (1995); Kotarba and Johnson (2002); Manning (1973); Tiryakian (1962). Cf. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 8.

34. See, for example, Douglas and Johnson (1977).

35. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 8 (spelling modified).

36. See ibid., pp. 12–13.

37. See, for example, Foucault (1979 [1975]).

38. See, for example, Ricœur (1974 [1969]).

39. See, for example, Derrida (1976 [1967]).

40. See, for example, Habermas (1987 [1981]-a) and Habermas (1987 [1981]-b).

41. See, for example, Honneth (1995 [1992]).

42. See, for example, Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]).

43. See, for example, Žižek (1989).

44. See, for example, Butler (1990).

45. See, for example, Turner (1996).

46. See, for example, Giddens (1984).

47. See, for example, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006 [1991]).

48. See, for example, Forst (2012 [2007]).

49. See, for example, Rosa (2019 [2016]).

50. See, for example, Jaeggi (2018 [2014]).

51. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 17 (italics added) (spelling modified).

52. Ibid., p. 13.

53. Ibid., p. 13.

54. See ibid., p. 13.

55. On this point, see, for instance: Rosa (2016), esp. pp. 16, 18, 44–46, 137, 304f., 312, 314, 336, 456, 513, 733f., 749, and 755; Rosa and Henning (2018); Susen (2020b), pp. 312, 315, 319, 321, 327, 328–329, 333, 334, and 339.

56. See Beck, Giddens, and Lash (1994). Cf. Susen (2015a), esp. pp. 9, 17, 34, 36, 37, 45, 54, 55, 56, 61, 62, 95, 112, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 218, 223, 238, 248, 253, 260, 261, 275, 288n167, and 313n18.

57. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 14.

58. Adorno (1997 [1970]), p. 29.

59. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 14.

60. See Berger (1967); Berger (1969). Cf. Berger and Luckmann (1967). See also Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 14.

61. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 14.

62. Ibid., p. 14.

63. Ibid., p. 14 (italics in original).

64. Ibid., p. 14 (italics added). Cf. Fromm (2001 [1941/1942]), Kierkegaard (1992 [1843]), and Sartre (1946).

65. See Susen (2015a), Chapter 4 (esp. pp. 140–143).

66. See Inglis (2021). See also, for instance: Bhambra (2017); Calhoun (2017); Crouch (2017); Delanty (2017); Outhwaite (2017a); Outhwaite (2017b); Susen (2017a).

67. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 14.

68. Ibid., p. 14.

69. Ibid., p. 14.

70. Ibid., p. 14 (italics added) (spelling modified).

71. Ibid., p. 15 (spelling modified).

72. See Adorno and Horkheimer (1997 [1944/1969]). See also Susen (2015a), esp. pp. 16–18, 75, 113, 119, 143, 174, 178–179, 180, 190, 191, 204, 205, 219, 223, 235, 236, 269, 273, 276, 279, and 285n86. In addition, see, for instance: Bauman (1991); Bauman and Tester (2007), esp. pp. 23–25 and 29; Hammond (2011), pp. 305, 310, 312, and 315; Iggers (2005 [1997]), pp. 146–147; Jacobsen and Marshman (2008), pp. 804–807; Kellner (2007), p. 117; Mulinari and Sandell (2009), p. 495; Quicke (1999), p. 281; Smart (1998); Susen (2009); Susen

(2010b), esp. pp. 265–268 and 271–274; Susen (2010c), esp. pp. 62–78; Susen (2020a), pp. 31, 56, 180, 225, 290, and 301; van Raaij (1993), esp. pp. 543–546, 551–555, and 559–561.

73. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 15.

74. On this issue, see, for example, Simon and Turner (2021), esp. pp. 231–232 and 234–236.

75. On the concept of 'ideology', see, for instance: Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980); Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1990); Bourdieu and Boltanski (2008 [1976]); Eagleton (2006 [1976]); Eagleton (2007 [1991]); Gadamer (1971); Jakubowski (1990 [1976]); Larrain (1991 [1983]-b); Marx and Engels (2000/1977 [1846]); Rehmann (2004); Reitz (2004); Susen (2014b); van Dijk (1998); Žižek (1989); Žižek (1994).

76. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 9. On the authors' use of terms related to this issue (such as 'completeness', 'incompleteness', 'incomplete', 'completed pasts', 'completing', and 'completion'), see ibid., pp. 7, 8, 9, 12, and 14.

77. Ibid., p. 15.

78. Ibid., p. 15.

79. Ibid., p. 15.

80. See, for example: Bongaarts, Mensch, and Blanc (2017); Yeung, Sonalde Desai, and Jones (2018).

81. See Marx (2000/1977 [1859]), esp. p. 425. See also, for example: Hall (1977); Larrain (1991 [1983]-a); Weber (1995). In addition, see, for instance: Susen (2007), pp. 22, 72, 122, 126n9, 179, 180, 191, 210, and 227n4; Susen (2012), pp. 284, 299, and 302; Susen (2015a), pp. 90, 91, 97, 99, 100, 101, 265, 295n27, 298n31, and 300n110; Susen (2020a), pp. 102, 111, and 254.

82. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 15.

83. Ibid., p. 15 (italics added) (spelling modified).

84. Ibid., p. 15.

85. 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.) On this point, see also, for example: Susen (2007), pp. 214 and 287–292; Susen (2010c), pp. 67–68 and 80n12; Susen (2012), pp. 309 and 323n147; Susen (2015a), esp. pp. 140 and 203; Susen (2016a), p. 72; Susen (2016b), pp. 132–133 and 139n48.

86. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 15.

87. Ibid., p. 16.

88. See, for instance, Becker (1975) and Becker (1993 [1964]). See also Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 11.

89. See, for instance: Boltanski (1990); Boltanski and Thévenot (1999); Boltanski (2011 [2009]). Cf. Susen and Turner (2014).

90. See Boltanski and Thévenot (2006 [1991]).

91. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 19 (italics in original).

92. Cf. Friedman and Laurison (2019) and Savage (2015).

93. Ibid., p. 8. On this point, see also Bourdieu (1977 [1972]), p. 74. Cf. Susen (2007), Chapters 5–8.

94. See Susen (2018), esp. pp. 5–7.

95. See, for example, Forst (2015), p. 123.

96. See, for instance, Susen (2008a) and Susen (2008b).

97. See Susen (2014a).

98. Forst (2015), p. 115 (italics removed from the entire quotation).

99. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 14.

100. Ibid., p. 16.

101. Ibid., p. 16 (spelling modified).
102. Ibid., pp. 18–19 (italics in original).
103. Ibid., p. 19. On this point, see, for example: Davis and Havighurst (1946); Littman, Robert, and Pierce-Jones (1957); O'Rand and Ellis (1974); Schmidt, Lamm, and Trommsdorff (1978); Sugarman (1967).
104. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 19 (punctuation modified).
105. See Susen (2014 [2015]) and Susen (2015b). See also Bénatouïl (1999a) and Bénatouïl (1999b).
106. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 16 (italics added).
107. Ibid., p. 16. On this issue (and related issues), see, for instance, Boltanski (2014 [2012]), esp. Preface, Chapter 1, and Chapter 6 (notably the section on 'The "Superstitions" of the Social Sciences' [pp. 234–239] and the section on 'How to Escape from Popper's Curse?' [pp. 240–248]). See also, for example, Popper (2002 [1957]), Popper (2002 [1963]), and Popper (2013 [1945]). Cf. Susen (2021).
108. For a critical account, see, for instance: Baert (1996); Baert (2003a); Baert (2003b); Baert (2005). In addition, see, for example: Outhwaite (1986 [1975]); Outhwaite (1987a); Outhwaite (1987b); Outhwaite (1990).
109. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 16.
110. Ibid., p. 16 (italics added).
111. Cf. Susen (2007), Chapters 5–8. Cf. also Kurasawa (2017), esp. p. 3.
112. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 13 (italics added). Cf. Law (2004).
113. Cf. Susen (2015a).
114. Baert, Morgan, and Ushiyama (2022), p. 16 (italics added).
115. Ibid., p. 13 (italics added).
116. Ibid., p. 13 (italics added).
117. Ibid., p. 13 (italics added).
118. Ibid., p. 14 (italics added).
119. Ibid., p. 14 (the word '*single*' appears in italics in the original version; italics added to the word '*dominant*').
120. Ibid., p. 21 (italics added).
121. Ibid., p. 19.
122. See ibid., pp. 20–21.
123. See ibid., pp. 21–22.
124. See ibid., pp. 22–23.

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