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## Similarity / Ähnlichkeit.

### A Cultural-Theoretical Paradigm\*

Until recently, difference, alterity, and identity have dominated the theory and practice of cultural studies, whereas the alternative, complementary tradition of reflecting on similarities and deriving a secular social practice on this basis has been insufficiently examined for its relevance in contemporary, complex societies. The project outlined in this paper envisages an historical reexamination of the traditions of thinking about similarity in various fields relevant to cultural studies. The paper argues that paying increased attention to the question of similarity is important for dealing with pluri-cultural situations and societies characterized by migration, multilingualism, and overlapping traditions: situations that require a flexible conceptual approach and a critique of asymmetric narratives of modernity.

#### *1. The concept*

Where in the history of twentieth century theory the concept of difference was enormously popular across the widest range of academic disciplines, the concept of similarity had fewer adherents. Until the present, it has experienced very little development of a theoretical nature.

As a concept, “similarity” self-evidently does not constitute a blank slate; nor is the paradigm it presents a new one. Very much to the contrary: prominent authors from antiquity to classical modernism have emphasized the importance of similarity as a guiding cognitive idea—and practice—at central points of their work. But, ongoing discussions of cultural concepts, interculturality, and trans-culturality have not taken up this tradition. Consequently “similarity” will here be presented not as a new paradigm but very much as an innovative concept. Examples of its usage will not be offered at this stage of our project—they will be reserved for a report on our research results.

By the same token our main concern below will not be describing those results but rather formulating research questions and outlining a working framework. This will necessitate both historical and systematic focal points. Within the historical perspective, a salient consideration will be identifying conceptual traditions centered on similarity that are potentially fruitful for cultural theory. We will here need to establish a distinction from related concepts and procedures, for instance from the historical comparison of cultures or the concept of “assimilation”.

Within the systematic perspective, a salient question will be the nature of the functional relationship within which similarity, identity, and difference can be conceived and made use of.

Not only structuralist and post-structuralist theorems have declared difference and its specifically deconstructionist pendant, *différance*, to be paradigms for the organization of knowledge; rather, as a response to the relativization of Western universalism, cultural theorists have worked to break apart entrenched hierarchies, in the process placing the encounter between members of various cultures under the sign of an experience of “difference” and “alterity.”

At the same time, above all the question of cultural identity has been moved to the foreground. Within this schema, acceptance, tolerance, and understanding, but also conflict and confrontation, rest on the tacit premise of a dualism of identity and difference, as in the following statement by Samuel Huntington: “In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural.”<sup>1</sup> The idea of a radical difference between cultures evidently demands the complementary idea of a closed, homogenous identity.<sup>2</sup> But meanwhile both the idea of a “clash of civilizations” and the assumption, in an age of postmodern migrational streams, of a fixed and integral cultural identity have emerged as increasingly problematic.<sup>3</sup>

The question thus emerges of whether what is here at stake is actually such an “either/or” option or “forced alternatives”<sup>4</sup> between so-called identity and what is defined as alterity, the difference between what is alien and innately “one’s own.”<sup>5</sup> Does action have to take place against the horizon of such strict alternatives, or can it involve reflection on a broad range of options?<sup>6</sup> Instead of a thinking grounded solely in difference, might there also be a valid realm of “This, as well as that”, a philosophy centered on similarity? In light of these basic questions, the category of similarity calls for historical and systematic scrutiny regarding both functional usefulness and theoretical scope.<sup>7</sup> The category’s potential role alongside ideas of difference and identity will need to be clarified. Similarity here needs to be understood as a heuristic concept, on the one hand; on the other hand, it is possibly part of cultural praxis itself. In his *Les lois de l’imitation* (1890), the French cultural sociologist Gabriel Tarde developed a concept of cultural evolution on the basis of relations of similarity.<sup>8</sup> Although by no means unknown, Tarde could not make headway with his theses against the school of Emile Durkheim; but remarkably, like other theorists of similarity he has experienced a renaissance over recent years, and he is considered a pioneer of actor-network theory.<sup>9</sup> For Tarde, sociologically relevant similarities rest on the phenomena of imitation and variation, which together amount to groups of similar things. If these are in turn part of a set of things adding up to a superordinate whole, then their proliferation is called growth or evolution.<sup>10</sup> The analogy with natural laws is manifest; Tarde discusses it in an extended look at pertinent history of science.

But the critical points within the similarity concept also need to be identified and examined. Until the present, two approaches have generally been evident in the concept's critique or marginalization. One of these approaches has been basically systemic, drawing on a critique of assimilation and related ideas of a forcibly executed alignment of cultures, sexes, and religions.<sup>11</sup> The other approach is basically historical, viewing similarity as a phenomenon that, in contrast to difference, fails to fulfill current requirements of conceptual precision and verifiability of results: a phenomenon related to magical practices, hence to a pre-modern episteme. "Those speaking of similarities evidently know nothing precise" is the way the editors of one German-language collection put it in 2001.<sup>12</sup> And in fact, "thinking in similarities" stands opposed to a broadly held desire for precise definition and demarcation. The term rather describes vague relationships and diffuse dynamics. This may spark unease; in any event it is important to keep in mind that the suitability and usability of concepts related to cultural theory must be oriented towards data and phenomena—and a very broad range of cultural phenomena fail to manifest themselves in terms of sharp demarcations and precisely defined contents. Rather, fluid transitions and broad border regions are usually at play.

The possibility thus emerges that the concept of similarity indeed reveals a high degree of compatibility with certain aspects of research in cultural history and theory. For a long time now, common references in historiography to, for example, an epoch's "threshold" and to "Sattelzeit" ("saddle time")<sup>13</sup> have reflected a sense that historical demarcations and contours are anything but sharply drawn—that what is usually at play here are gradations from relative similarity to relative dissimilarity. Hans Blumenberg speaks in this context of an "imperceptible *limes*"<sup>14</sup> only identifiable as a transition after the fact. In the humanities, these epochal thresholds tend not to be considered hybrid or deficient interim periods but rather as marking epochs of distinct acceleration, dense innovation, and enduring evolution—as was the case, for instance, in the period between roughly 1770 and 1830. A range of approaches thus emphasize "shared history" or "connected history," *histoire croisée*, and are meant to overcome narrow national narratives through this focus on intertwining world-historical structures.<sup>15</sup> In an analogous manner, as an alternative to similarities within historical chronology, *spaces* of cultural similarity can be identified: the heightened attention being paid to multilingualism in India or some African states here serves as an example.

## 2. *The Historical Framework*

### 2.1. *Similarity in Theory*

A tradition extending back to Plato and including both Thomas Aquinas and Leibniz<sup>16</sup> has pointed to similarity as a concept grounded in cognitive theory—one thus possessing authentic cultural-historical resonance. Broad reflection on phenomena involving similarity is especially apparent in European Romanticism, for example in Novalis's writing. For most theorists of similarity within this long tradition, the sign's relation with what is being denoted is not arbitrary but has been divinely generated: a belief clearly irreconcilable with modern semiotic theory and only of historical interest. It is the reason similarity-theory formulated in a semiological context is often quickly associated with a pre-modern episteme. Furthermore, historically most theorists of similarity have not presumed a radical opposition between object and subject, human beings and things,<sup>17</sup> itself a characteristic often tied to pre-modern cultures.

Nevertheless, in recent years the existence of a genuinely modern discourse of similarity has become evident; often overlooked, it has been experimenting with new constellations of things and persons since the beginning of modernism around 1900. The question of identifying alternatives to the idealistic dichotomy of subject and object is authentically modern,<sup>18</sup> playing a central role in contemporary cultural theory. This is the case, for instance, with Bruno Latour's particular revision of modernity<sup>19</sup> which makes clear that natural-scientific paradigms are not the sole constitutive ingredient of modern thinking, despite this being suggested in most modernist self-description. The formula Latour offers in this framework is "we were never modern,"<sup>20</sup> reflecting a contention that the distinction between modern and pre-modern cultures is itself a modernist self-deception: a contention itself resting on an analysis of the great heuristic "separations" undertaken in modern science. The separation into nature and society, subject and object, human beings and machines, leads, Latour observes, to a number of false conclusions, and, in their wake, to the false diagnoses of an end to both history and metaphysics.

Here modernism is described as a highly complex process of discursive differentiation. Strikingly, the process can function not only according to the model of difference but also to that of similarity. This is also the case in respect to the relationship between persons and things. With his concept of "hybrid" things, Latour has offered the decisive philosophical initiative for a new approach vis-à-vis the inquiry into modernism's living objects. For Latour, modernism is not exclusively the result of natural-scientific evolution; rather, inversely, the natural-scientific episteme is both an aspect and characteristic of modernism. He also confirms the possibility of other epistemic constellations, including those tied to similarity, which have conceivably long-since been basically latent but never became fully obsolete. In his reflections, Latour draws on Foucault's characterization of similarity as a pre-modern episteme, but goes beyond Foucault in his differentiated observation of current developments.

Particularly prominent is Foucault's periodization in *The Order of Things*, with "similarity in the thinking of Western culture" playing a "leading role" until the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup> With the arrival of the modern age, a "cruel reason of identities and differences" came to the fore, similarity now being banished to the nether-sphere of non-reason, conceits, and confusion.<sup>22</sup> In articulating his own critique of "cruel reason," Latour is very much operating within the tradition of Foucault's writing, while, again, moving past Foucault's diagnosis to argue that this thinking in terms of identities and differences was not as absolute as might appear

After all Foucault himself acknowledged having made use of similarity as an epistemic concept. In a conversation with Raymond Bellour taking place in 1966, he briefly characterized what are probably his two most famous works—and in the process the two central lines of his cultural research—as follows: "*Madness and Civilization* is the history of difference, *The Order of Things* the history of similarity, the same, identity."<sup>23</sup> On one level, we can thus consider Latour's project as involving a revision of *The Order of Things*, at the same time an effort to "rehabilitate" similarity with the aid of current reflections on the concept. In this manner, modern cultural theory and above all cultural anthropology, are working with approaches aimed at describing the relationship between modernism and the imagination, nature and culture, persons and things, not through schematic dichotomies but in suitably complex form. Many of these works explicitly proceed from anthropological research into ideas and practice based on magic.

## 2.2. Similarity in Magic

In the *Wörterbuch des Aberglaubens*, we read that "[m]agical action is analogical [*gleichnishaft*] action that comprehends connections in accordance with similarity."<sup>24</sup> One particular magical practice is relevant in this context, so-called "analogical magic"; representing one of the basic forms of human action, it is grounded in a belief that manipulation of something similar has a similar effect on the person or object constituting the actual aim of the magical action. Enchantment functions according to ideas of similarity and contiguity, the laws of recognition and contact. "Magic resting on the law of similarity," we read in the same reference work, "can be termed homeopathic or imitative magic; enchantments resting on the law of contact or direct transfer [*Übertragung*] could be designated as a form of *transfer-magic*."<sup>25</sup> Hence enchantment functions according to the principle found in homeopathy as well, of *similia similibus curant*.<sup>26</sup>

For James Frazer, who in his time brought together and systematized anthropological research and theory, magic was likewise rooted in the laws of ideational association, more specifically in the two basic rules of linkage, similarity and contact. In his classic *Golden Bough*, Frazer thus describes magical practices as involving a confusion between such association and factual, causal relations; a primitive error is thus at work within the "law of similarity," the belief "that things which resemble each other are the same, or as Frazer restates it: "that like produces like... that an affect resembles its cause."<sup>27</sup> To be sure, the rationality of the civilized is not immune to a regression into such delusional relational systems: "We seem to move on a thin crust which may

at any moment be rent by the subterranean forces slumbering below.”<sup>28</sup> Frazer nevertheless conveys the essential premise that “they” allow themselves to be led astray into magical praxis through the conceptual bridge of similarity while “we” have learned to scientifically objectify things; the premise will continue to be at work when the valuation is inverted. This is the case, for instance, in the work of Lévy-Bruhl, who considers what he sees as the pre-logical, participative thinking of primitive peoples as reflecting a state of ignorance, although he at the same time mourns for the “intimate communal consciousness” with things made possible by such thinking.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most illuminating documents offering such an early reflection on a non-modern modernity is found in Aby Warburg’s writing, at a point where he focuses on “participation” in the fluidity and instability of the universe and a subversion of fundamental categories of modern orientation in the world. Warburg’s famous talk on the North American Indian snake-ritual can be read as the record of a multi-layered experiment with vexing similarities. Warburg held the talk in 1923, in Ludwig Binswanger’s popular Kreuzlingen clinic for nervous disorders (named “Bellevue”), where he was a long-term patient; one purpose of the talk was to demonstrate to himself and his doctors that he was on the path of recovery, in a kind of intermediate stage finding his way back from madness into science. He does not describe the American-Indian ceremonies he had witnessed twenty years before from the perspective of an advanced civilization—a perspective that would have defined the efforts to bring forth rain through snake dances as absurd. Rather, he approaches the manner in which American Indians explain nature and its laws as a form of participation fundamentally distinct from that of Western cultures. “The coexistence of fantastical magic and sober purposive action seems a symptom of schism to us; for the Indians it is not schizoid; On the contrary, it is a liberating experience of the *possibility of a boundless relation between human beings and their surrounding*.” “The mask dance is danced causality,” Warburg asserts,<sup>30</sup> thus addressing not only the relationship between medicine and madness, the threshold between creativity and illness, but also that between thinking and art, science and magic.

In early film theory, contact points between *technology* and magic played a central role. Here as well, we find a foregrounding of a new constellation between subject and object in the framework of the similarity between things and persons: this similarity, so the argument went, only first became visible in film and was in fact the true achievement of the new medium. A theoretical vocabulary here emerged that described cinematic medial experience as a specific form of “participation” no longer allowing a strict division into objective and subjective spheres; rather, the focus was located in magic, mysticism, animism, Indian “mana,” childlike naiveté, the unconscious, meditative immersion, self-forgetting, and hypnotic states.<sup>31</sup> “Doubtless,” Edgar Morin thus indicates, “Lumièrian cinematography was not only aimed at bringing back the old magic, but beneath the threshold of consciousness it renewed an animistic or vitalistic sensibility for everything simultaneously fluid and mobile...and film extends this special capability to all objects.”<sup>32</sup> Media-historical texts, such as this example, themselves undermine prevalent ideas of a separation between the living and nonliving, objective and subjective, mimesis and representation; they strive for “participation” and an aesthetic theory of similarity.

A juncture between anthropological or cultural-historical and aesthetic arguments is to be found in Walter Benjamin's theory of the mimetic faculty, "vanished" in modernity or only persisting as "a weak rudiment of a once enormous compulsion to be and act similarly"<sup>33</sup>—a compulsion nonetheless preserved in language as in a great storehouse of "earlier forces of mimetic production and conceptualization."<sup>34</sup>

With all the above-cited authors, the concept of similarity stands in the service of a narrative of modernity that in the end, one way or another, is asymmetric: whether following optimistic, progress-centered premises as a lower, now-overcome level of rationality or nostalgic premises as a lost capacity to participate in the world of things. Both practically and theoretically, offering a kind of reserve for a sense of the similar is here consigned to art alone.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, in the age of colonialism Europe was open to non-European forms of thinking and representation primarily in the aesthetic sphere; freed from the norms of Western rationality, art—understood in the broadest sense—here emerges as the only truly receptive channel for *mutual* cultural exchange, and in this sense as the reserve for a "thinking in similarities" again becoming widespread.

### 3. *Modern forms of Similarity*

In any event within modern European thinking, a conceptual tradition exists running counter to an exteriorization of similarity, its genealogy calling for detailed study. It is reflected not least of all in a cognitive-theoretical skepticism whose main twentieth century representatives include Ludwig Wittgenstein, Aby Warburg, and Fritz Mauthner. Wittgenstein's felicitous term "Family resemblance" (understood as similarity) doubtless has had the most influence; but Mauthner will here serve as our principle example because he ties the concept of similarity in a highly concise way with presently very topical reflections on the functionality of the approximate. In Mauthner's essay on subjectivity, we thus read as follows:

Our entire classification of nature, hence our entire language, is grounded in the variable play of similarities....But here I wish to maintain that [the] simple similarity [at work in] the scientific or mathematical incomparability of things made our speaking or thinking possible in the first place, hence that the gaps in our ideas, the mistakes in our sensory tools, shaped our language. If our brain naturally worked only nearly as exactly as microscopes, precision thermometers, chronometers, and other human tools, if we were to conceive as sharp an image of every individual thing and hold it in our memory, then conceptual language would perhaps be impossible....To speak seriously, the entire conceptual formation of language would not be possible if we did not grope around among nothing but incomplete images, overestimating similarity precisely on account of the incompleteness, thus making a virtue of necessity.<sup>36</sup>

Here “similarity” is not understood as a deficient mode for grasping the world, a mode inadequately enlightened concerning itself and bowing in the face of the sciences’ “clean” conceptual classifications and precise technical instruments. Rather, a “thinking in similarities” represents the precondition for verbal capacity, hence use of concepts in the first place. Mauthner’s heuristics of similarity point forward to concepts presently applied in certain technical areas (e.g., “fuzzy logic”), in the cognitive sciences (cognitive schemata), in theories of institution and action (acting and deciding in conditions of incomplete information), and above all in the realm of cultural orientation.

Early cultural-historical approaches, especially within “history of everyday life,” clearly incorporate various procedures for recognizing and evaluating similarity as methodologically and theoretically relevant. Alongside iconology, developed by Warburg in the 1920s and continuing to stamp research in art history, Carlo Ginzburg’s historiography here deserves special mention. In an essay on what he terms “clues,” Ginzburg has laid out the epistemological foundations of what he refers to as the “conjectural paradigm” manifest in all areas of knowledge: in art history, it has been used since the end of the nineteenth century to identify images; in paleontology to uncover cultural interrelationships; and in criminology it is manifest in the emergence of fingerprinting as a technique and as evidence in criminal trials around 1880, and in Sherlock Holmes taking on the role of hero of clue-reading starting around the same time. Psychoanalysis is itself an “art” of reading clues; resting entirely on the evidentiary strength of symptoms, it thus postulates a form of similarity between manifest symptoms and, for instance, the hidden, latent content of dreams.

Clue-reading or recognizing similarities is an art with no learnable rules, despite being centered on the unearthing of evidence Ginzburg insists on the “flexible rigor...of the conjectural paradigm”:

These are essentially mute forms of knowledge in the sense that their precepts do not lend themselves to being either formalized or spoken. No one learns to be a connoisseur or diagnostician by restricting himself to practicing only preexistent rules. In knowledge of this type imponderable elements come into play: instinct, insight, intuition.<sup>37</sup>

Ginzburg sees this type of knowledge as “the property...of hunters; of sailors; of women.”<sup>38</sup> It is knowledge tying rational scientific methods of comparison—e.g. fingerprinting—with more emotional forms of intuition, fantasy, and experience.

In the context of cultural history, the analysis of complex contemporary societies has to take account of processes of homogenization and heterogenization, and with the phenomena of de-territorializing and re-territorializing in language, literature, culture, politics, and society. This mode of analysis becomes topical when it focuses on the effects of migratory movements, strategies of integration, inclusion and exclusion—phenomena leaving their mark on large post-national formations beyond the traditional state order. Until the present, the accent has been on difference, alterity, “the other,” and on a corresponding hermeneutics of the understanding and interpretation of otherness.



This marks the starting point for the concept of similarity. Consideration of the concept—and, tied to it, cohesion and contiguity—allows us to try out a new theoretical-methodological approach: one meant to acknowledge the moment of intermeshing, overlapping, and gradation in cultural contexts. The approach is at a distinct remove from efforts to either grasp socio-cultural diversity or compare cultures through dominant categories of border-demarcation, dichotomy, and “clash.”

Through such a similarity-grounded perspective, the limited validity and sustainability of border delimitations becomes quickly clear. In turn, this has culture-political consequences: in face of fundamentalist schemas involving a sharp dichotomization of the world, here the orientation is toward secularism and syncretistic-pluralistic religious and cultural phenomena, “fuzzy identities,” states of uncertainty. Similarity-based relationships are blurred relationships. They are not centered on discretely conceptualized logical operations but on trained observation, attention, and practice. Similarity is a programmatically fuzzy and relational concept that cannot be meaningfully used in all contexts; but in culture-political and theoretical contexts, it can furnish valuable insight, particularly in respect to specific “spaces” of thinking and acting.

Both metaphorically and pragmatically, thinking in terms of similarity is tied to what over recent years has been referred to as the “spatial turn.” The “third spaces” relevant in this debate (the term is Homi Bhabha’s and Arjun Appadurai’s) need to be conceived of as loci of similarity-relationships. We are here referred back to Yuri Lotman’s discussion of cultural spaces of similarity, with the dynamic relationship between center and periphery representing a central theorem in his cultural semiotics. For Lotman, change in semiotic systems thus depends on a collective’s relationship to other collectives; a particular semiotic system is not unique but one among a range of potential systems: a relationship only made possible after a comparison of languages.<sup>39</sup> Lotman speaks in this context of an interior and exterior “polyglotism” responsible for the system being able to change and allowing development and modernization. But importantly, change is not understood here as homogenization or complete assimilation of peripheral areas, but rather as a processing of similarities and transformation of differences.

More than a half century earlier, Georg Simmel had already addressed questions centered on the dynamic of social and cultural inclusion and exclusion. In his “Excursus on the Stranger” (1908), Simmel describes the stranger as a wanderer who does not wander further—who “comes today and remains tomorrow.”<sup>40</sup> For Simmel as well, there is less a difference, more a relationship between the domestic and alien: the stranger is significant on account of his “unity of nearness and remoteness”;<sup>41</sup> he possesses an intermediary position simultaneously comprising what is interior and exterior. Simmel develops a theoretical typology of cultural space in this framework: he speaks of “empty spaces” and “border deserts,” of “neutral spaces” modern human beings wish to create around themselves,<sup>42</sup> and of a “sphere of reserves practiced against others.” These reserves of everyday life are sometimes located in the heart of cities, as cafes, kiosks, and covered passages, bus stops and train stations, and, we may add, as airports and internet cafés. “No Man’s Lands”, Simmel suggests, are spaces where it is possible to at least live for some time without being noticed;<sup>43</sup> it represents an optimal space for negotiation: “Among the many cases in which the maxim ‘if you don’t do anything to me I won’t do to you’ determines behavior, there is no purer and more vivid case than that of the barren area a group sets us around it: here the principle has become completely embodied in the spatial form.”<sup>44</sup> In such quiet, forgotten places, it is possible

to negotiate over ways of living; mutual interpretation and understanding is here unnecessary—all that is needed is mutual tolerance, hence “hermeneutic abstinence” and non-hermeneutic paths.<sup>45</sup> For Simmel, the negotiation of similarities, the interaction at a distance with those one cannot or is not inclined to understand, is a condition of modern urban life. By contrast, persistent pressure for understanding is nothing less than a neurotic articulation of the “tyranny of intimacy.”<sup>46</sup>

Similarity is a concept capable of dissolving or supplementing well-known oppositions such as homogeneity and heterogeneity, identity and alterity. It serves as a corrective in both directions—to processes of alterization as well as to a forcible homogenization of what is individually inherent and the formation of an identity obliged to hegemonic structures. In this manner similarity is not simply one more concept within the field of cultural theory, but rather one that allows us to suitably recognize and analyze a wide range of cultural practices: both those playing a role in everyday life and, precisely, those critically reflected and commented on in literature and film. Similarity is an open concept simultaneously displaying sufficient contours to structure cooperation between cultural theorists and historians from different disciplines and areas of research.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster 1996, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> See Anil Bhatti: “...zwischen zwei Welten schwebend... Zu Goethes Fremdheitsexperiment im ‘West-östlichen Divan’.” In: Hans-Jörg Knobloch / Helmut Koopmann (eds.): *Goethe. Neue Ansichten*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2007, pp. 103–121; Anil Bhatti: *Der Orient als Experimentierfeld*. Goethes ‘Divan’ und der Aneignungsprozess kolonialen Wissens. In: *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 126 (2009), pp. 115–128.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Welsch: *Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today*. In: Mike Featherstone / Scott Lash (eds.): *Spaces of Culture. City, Nation, World*. London / New Delhi: Sage 1999, pp. 194–213; Albrecht Koschorke: *Wie werden aus Spannungen Differenzen? Feldtheoretische Überlegungen zur Konfliktsemantik*. In: Heinz Fassmann / Wolfgang Müller-Funk / Heidemarie Uhl (eds.): *Kulturen der Differenz – Transformationsprozesse in Zentraleuropa nach 1989. Transdisziplinäre Perspektiven*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009, pp. 271–286.

<sup>4</sup> Reinhart Koselleck: *Jaspers, die Geschichte und das Überpolitische*. In: Jeanne Hersch et al. (eds.): *Karl Jaspers. Philosoph, Arzt, politischer Denker*. Munich: Piper 1986, pp. 292–302, here p. 297.

<sup>5</sup> Jurij Lotman / Boris Uspenskij: *Die Rolle dualistischer Modelle in der Dynamik der russischen Kultur (bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts)*. In: *Poetica* 9/1 (1977), pp. 1–40.

<sup>6</sup> Aleida Assmann / Jan Assman: *Kultur und Konflikt. Aspekte einer Theorie des unkommunikativen Handelns*. In: Jan Assmann / Dietrich Harth (eds.): *Kultur und Konflikt*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 1990, pp. 11–48, here p. 26; see also: Anil Bhatti: *Kulturelle Vielfalt und Homogenisierung*. In: Johannes Feichtinger (ed.): *Habsburg postcolonial. Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*. Innsbruck et al.: StudienVerlag 2003, pp. 55–68; Micha Brumlik: “Alle Kultur ist ein Bastard – und parasitär.” In: *welchem Verhältnis stehen Mensch, Kultur, Gewalt und Konflikt zueinander?* In: Birgit Meding / Norbert Sievers / Andreas Kämpf (eds.): *Shortcut Europe: Kultur und Konflikt. Culture and Conflict*. Bonn: Fonds Soziokultur 2000, pp. 25–35; Özkan Ezli: *Von der*

Identität zur Individuation: "Gegen die Wand" – eine Problematisierung kultureller Identitätszuschreibungen. In: Monika Wohlrab-Sahr / Levent Tezcan (eds.): *Konfliktfeld Islam in Europa. Soziale Welt, Sonderband 17*. Baden-Baden: Nomos 2007, pp. 283–304; Anil Bhatti: Heterogenität, Homogenität, Ähnlichkeit. In: Andrea Allerkamp / Gérard Raulet (eds.): *Kulturwissenschaften in Europa – eine grenzüberschreitende Disziplin?* Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot 2010, pp. 250–256; Dorothee Kimmich: Migration und Literatur: Literatur als Kulturrennter. In: Andrea Allerkamp / Gérard Raulet (eds.): *Kulturwissenschaften in Europa – eine grenzüberschreitende Disziplin?* Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot 2010, pp. 234–249; Dorothee Kimmich: Öde Landschaften und die Nomaden in der eigenen Sprache. Bemerkungen zu Franz Kafka, Feridun Zaimoglu und der Weltliteratur als *littérature mineure*. In: Özkan Ezli / Dorothee Kimmich / Annette Werberger (eds.): *Wider den Kulturrennter. Migration, Kulturalisierung und Weltliteratur*. Bielefeld: Transcript 2009, pp. 297–316; Levent Tezcan: Der Tod der Kultur – Wie Fatih Akin den großen Kulturdialog umgeht. In: Özkan Ezli: *Kultur als Ereignis*. Fatih Akins Film "Auf der anderen Seite" als transkulturelle Narration. Bielefeld: Transcript 2010, pp. 47–70; Jack Goody: *Renaissances. The One or the Many*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010.

<sup>7</sup> The questions are not only pertinent in the context of trans-cultural theory, but also in that of gender research: ideas with a classificatory and conceptual basis in difference have stamped feminist theory; the debate on gender emerging in the 1980s, especially in areas such as queer studies, have begun to move towards new concepts closely related to that of similarity being proposed here; at the same time hardly any foundational cultural-theoretical concepts have yet emerged. See Ortrud Gutjahr / Be'atrice Dumiche / Vivian Liska (eds.): *Geschlechterdifferenzen als Kulturkonflikt*. Bern etc.: Lang 2007 [Akten des XI. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Paris 2005: *Germanistik im Konflikt der Kulturen*. vol. 10]).

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel Tarde, *Les lois de l'imitation*. Paris: Alcan 1890.

<sup>9</sup> See Bruno Latour / Vincent Lépinay: *Die Ökonomie als Wissenschaft der leidenschaftlichen Interessen*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 2010, esp. p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> See Tarde: *Gesetze*, pp. 32 ff.

<sup>11</sup> Hartmut Esser: *Aspekte der Wanderungssoziologie. Assimilation und Integration von Wanderern, ethnischen Gruppen und Minderheiten. Eine handlungstheoretische Analyse*. Neuwied / Darmstadt: Luchterhand 1980; Annette Treibel: *Migration in modernen Gesellschaften*. Weinheim / Munich: Juventa 2008 (4<sup>th</sup> edn.), pp. 94 f.

<sup>12</sup> Gerald Funk / Gert Mattenklott / Michael Pauen: *Symbole und Signaturen. Charakteristik und Geschichte des Ähnlichkeitsdenkens* (editors' intro.). In: G.F. / G.M. / M.P. (eds.): *Ästhetik des Ähnlichen. Zur Poetik und Kunstphilosophie der Moderne*. Frankfurt / M.: Fischer 2001, pp. 7–34, here p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Blumenberg: *Aspekte der Epochenschwelle: Cusaner und Nolaner*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 1976; Reinhart Koselleck: *Einleitung*. In: Otto Brunner / Werner Conze / Reinhart Koselleck (eds.): *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1. Stuttgart: Klett 1979, p. XV.

<sup>14</sup> Blumenberg: *Aspekte*, p. 20

<sup>15</sup> See Christopher A. Bayly: *Imperial Meridian. The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830*. London / New York: Longman 1989; Christopher A. Bayly: *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons*. Oxford: Blackwell 2004; Sanjay Subramanyam: *Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia*. In: *Modern Asian Studies*, 31/III (1997), pp. 735–761; Sebastian Conrad / Shalini Randeria: *Geteilte Geschichten – Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt* (editors' intro.). In: S.C. / S.R. (eds.): *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*. Frankfurt / M. / New York: Campus 2002, pp. 9–49; Jürgen Osterhammel: *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Munich: Beck 2009; Michael Werner / Bénédicte Zimmermann: *Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen*. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002), pp. 607–636; Moritz Csáky: *Das Gedächtnis der Städte. Kulturelle Verflechtungen – Wien und die urbanen Milieus in Zentraleuropa*. Vienna etc.: Böhlau 2010.

<sup>16</sup> "Omnis cognitio est per assimilationem aliquam cognoscentis ad cognitum." (Thomas Aquinas: *Summa theologiae*, vol. 4. Salzburg / Leipzig: Pustet 1936, p. 226). The idea of the self coming to resemble the other is a special form of rendering or becoming similar; for Aquinas it stands in the context of a respectful approximation of the human spirit to the work of God; the idea appears to have lost its attraction in the wake of the Enlightenment replacement of wonder at nature with its conquest.

<sup>17</sup> See Funk / Mattenklott / Pauen: *Symbole*, pp. 15 ff.

<sup>18</sup> See also: Dorothee Kimmich: *Lebendige Dinge in der Moderne: Wahrnehmung, Erinnerung und Ästhetik in der "fluiden Welt" – dans un "monde fluide."* In: Thomas Keller (ed.): *Transgressions / dé fis / provocations: transferts culturels franco-allemands*. Aix-en-Provence: Univ. de Provence, Dép. d'Allemand, 2005 (= *Caheres d'Études Germaniques* 48), pp. 133–145.

<sup>19</sup> Bruno Latour: *Das Parlament der Dinge: für eine politische Ökologie*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Bruno Latour: *Wir sind nie modern gewesen. Versuch einer symmetrischen Anthropologie*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault: *Die Ordnung der Dinge. Eine Archäologie der Humanwissenschaften*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp, 1974, p.46 [English version: *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York: Pantheon 1970]

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault: *Die Ordnung der Dinge [Gespräch mit R. Bellour]*. In: M.F.: *Dits et Ecrits. Schriften in vier Bänden. vol. 1: 1954–1969*. ed. by Daniel Defert. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 2001, pp. 644–652, here pp. 644 f.

<sup>24</sup> Dieter Harmening: *Wörterbuch des Aberglaubens*. Stuttgart: Reclam 2005, p. 285.

<sup>25</sup> Harmening: *Wörterbuch*, p. 285.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> James G. Frazer: *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion. Part I: The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings*. London: Macmillan 1911 (3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), pp. 54 and 174.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>29</sup> Lucien Lévy-Bruhl: *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*. Paris: Alcan 1910).

<sup>30</sup> Aby Warburg: *Schlangenritual. Ein Reisebericht. Mit einem Nachwort von Ulrich Raulff*. Berlin: Wagenbach 1992 (4<sup>th</sup> edn.), pp. 10 and 54. (English: *A Lecture on Serpent Ritual (Journal of the Warburg Institute, II London 1939)*. See Erhard Schüttpeitz: *Die Moderne im Spiegel des Primitiven. Weltliteratur und Ethnologie 1870–1960*. Munich: Fink 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Edgar Morin: *Der Mensch und das Kino. Eine anthropologische Untersuchung*. Stuttgart: Klett 1958, p. 77. (French: *Le cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire*. Paris: Minuit 1956).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Benjamin: *Lehre vom Ähnlichen*. In: W.B.: *Gesammelte Schriften, vol. II.1*. ed. by Rolf Tiedemann / Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 1980, pp. 204–210, here p. 210.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Benjamin: *Über das mimetische Vermögen*. In: *ibid.*, pp. 210–213, here p. 213.

<sup>35</sup> See Funk / Mattenklott / Pauen: *Symbole*.

<sup>36</sup> Fritz Mauthner: *Subjektivität*. In: F.M.: *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache. vol. I: Zur Sprache und zur Psychologie*. Hildesheim: Olms 1969 (reprint of 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.), pp. 415–447, esp. pp. 434–438 ("Ähnlichkeit"), here p. 437.

<sup>37</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, translated by John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 96–125, here p. 124f.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

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<sup>39</sup> Yuri Lotman: The *dynamic* model of a *semiotic system*. *Semiotica* 21(3/4): 193-210. See also: Yuri Lotman: *Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London: Tauris 1990.

<sup>40</sup> Georg Simmel: The Stranger [*Exkurs über den Fremden*]. In: *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and transl. by Kurt Wolff, New York: Free Press, 1950, pp. 402 – 408, here p. 402.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Georg Simmel: Über räumliche Projectionen socialer Formen. In: G. S.: *Gesamtausgabe*. vol. 7.1: Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1901–1908. ed. by Rüdiger Kramme / Angelika Rammstedt / Otthein Rammstedt. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 1995, pp. 201–220. [English Version: The Spatial Projections of Social Forms. In: *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, edited by *David Frisby and Mike Featherstone*. (London: Sage Publications, 1997).]

<sup>43</sup> “Survival strategies” for disaggregated and disaggregating modernity, as observed by for instance Georg Simmel or Helmuth Plessner, represent an immunization against impressions, represent an immunization a withdrawal to interiority or “education to coldness” (see Helmut Lethen: *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte. Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 1994). See also: Dorothee Kimmich: *Moralistik und Neue Sachlichkeit. Ein Kommentar zu Helmuth Plessners “Grenzen der Gemeinschaft.”* In: Wolfgang Eßbach / Joachim Fischer / Helmut Lethen (eds.): *Plessners “Grenzen der Gemeinschaft.” Eine Debatte*. Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp 2002, pp. 160–182.

<sup>44</sup> Simmel: Über räumliche Projectionen, p. 215.

<sup>45</sup> Anil Bhatti: Nicht-hermeneutische Wege in der Toleranzdiskussion. In: Heinz-Dieter Assmann / Frank Baasner / Jürgen Wertheimer (eds.): *Kulturen des Dialogs*. Baden-Baden: Nomos 2011, pp. 29–42.

<sup>46</sup> See the German title of Richard Sennet’s *Fall of Public Man: Verfall und Ende des öffentlichen Lebens. Die Tyrannei der Intimität*. Frankfurt / M.: Fischer 1986.

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<sup>39</sup> Yuri Lotman: The *dynamic* model of a *semiotic system*. *Semiotica* 21(3/4): 193-210. See also: Yuri Lotman: *Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London: Tauris 1990.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>44</sup> Simmel: Über räumliche Projectionen, p. 215.

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