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1. Introduction

One of the standard discussion topics of the philosophy of the social sciences deals with the question whether all social explanations should be in terms of individuals. The approach called “methodological individualism” answers the question affirmatively and is quite popular. In a fairly recent paper, Sally Haslanger (2016) disagrees with methodological individualism. She claims that some social explanations should rather focus on social structures. My thesis tries to explain and evaluate Haslanger’s account of social structural explanation. For that purpose, I will investigate how Haslanger’s account is connected to her other work and how some philosophers have responded to her account. I will argue that Haslanger succeeds in showing that social explanations do not necessarily need to focus on individuals and can focus on structures. However, ontologically individuals still are essential for the social world.

There does not exist a lot of established research on the topic of my thesis, since Haslanger’s (2016) paper is relatively new. Regarding the connection of Haslanger’s (2016) account with her other work, Elizabeth Barnes (2016) contends that Haslanger combines realism about social structures with social constructionism. Regarding the assessment of Haslanger’s account, Amie Thomasson (2016) thinks that structural explanations should also be able to deal with cases where individuals do not consciously make a choice, Rachel Sterken (2018) claims that Haslanger mistakenly focuses on the wrong type of structures, and Alex Madva (2016) states that there is no reason to prioritize structural solutions to social problems over individualistic solutions.

Unsurprisingly, most of the selected literature for my thesis is by Haslanger. The central piece is Haslanger’s (2016) paper on social structural explanation. Other papers of hers deal with social structure (Haslanger 2012 [2007]; 2012 [2011]) and methodological individualism (Haslanger forthcoming). Haslanger’s (2012 [1995]; 2012 [2003]; 2012b) view on social construction is relevant because social structures are socially constructed. Haslanger’s (2012 [2000]; 2012 [2002]; 2012 [2004]) view of gender and race is relevant because, under Haslanger’s account, gender and race are examples of structural phenomena. Furthermore, I will deal with Haslanger’s critics who have been mentioned in the previous paragraph (except for Barnes who will only make a short appearance). The methods of my thesis are mostly description and analysis of the selected material. The final part features a critical assessment of the topic of my thesis with standard methods of argumentation.

My thesis is structured as following. I will begin with a description of some of Haslanger’s work (mostly) released prior to her (2016) paper on structural explanation. As will hopefully become apparent, the described work forms the background for her account of structural

explanation. The second chapter is about Haslanger's view of gender and race. The following chapter, I will analyze Haslanger's account of social construction. This sets the stage for a more in-depth explanation of social structure in the fourth chapter, which is followed by Haslanger's theory of social structural explanation in the fifth chapter at the heart of my thesis. The chapters describing Haslanger's view are concluded with her opinion on methodological individualism. Next, I will devote a chapter to Haslanger's critics. Finally, I voice my own opinion on the matter, before I conclude with a summary of my thesis.

2. Gender and Race

Let me start with a description of Haslanger's (2012 [2000]; 2012 [2002]; 2012 [2004]) account of gender and race. Gender and race are both targets of Haslanger's social critique and paradigm examples of social construction. Haslanger's philosophy of the social sciences is often connected to her social critique, as it is in the case of gender, race, and structural explanation. Social construction is relevant for Haslanger's account of structural explanation because social structures are socially constructed. Arguably, gender and race are not just examples of social construction but also of social structure. Therefore, gender and race are relevant for Haslanger's account of structural explanation.

2.1 What is Gender?

Haslanger (2012 [2002]) analyzes the claim that reason is gendered. More important for my thesis, she also presents parts of her account of gender and how something can be gendered. Haslanger employs the terms "male" and "female" to distinguish people along their anatomical features. Besides that distinction she leaves the notion of "sex" open. She does not say which anatomical features are relevant for the distinction. The distinction does not mark a clear differentiation of people. Some people might be neither male nor female, or both male and female. (ibid., 39-40)

Unlike sex, gender is not defined in terms of anatomical features. Haslanger uses the terms "man" and "woman" to distinguish between different genders. Gender is defined in terms of social relations. Haslanger uses two examples to illustrate how a distinction is defined in terms of social relations. The first example is a scapegoat. The notion of "scapegoat" is not applied based on intrinsic features of a person. One is not a scapegoat because of bodily features, character, or other intrinsic features. Anyone can become a scapegoat. An individual is a scapegoat because of the social relations the individual has. When someone is a scapegoat, she occupies a certain position in a social group. The second example is a landlord. Again, an individual is not a landlord because of her intrinsic features. Anyone can become a landlord. One is a landlord because one stands in certain social relations to other people, such as renting out your properties. (ibid., 40)

Like in the case of scapegoat and landlord, one has a gender not based on intrinsic features (such as bodily features) but based on one's social relations. One has a certain gender because one is treated as belonging to that gender. Changes in society can lead to changes in the relations that constitute men and women. This could even lead to no more men and women existing,

while males and females still do. (ibid., 40-41) Under this account of gender, a male can be a woman and a female can be a man, as long as one occupies the right position in a social system. (ibid., 59)

Haslanger does not describe in detail how the social relations that determine men and women look like and I think this works out in her favor. Specifying the social relations that constitute gender exactly would be an arduous task, which she does not need to undertake to make her point. Haslanger argues that the social relations that determine gender vary depending on different cultures and times. There is, nevertheless, one unifying element that is encountered in most cases: Social relations that determine gender usually function to oppress women. (ibid., 41-42)

2.2 The Definition of Gender

Haslanger (2012 [2000]) poses three principles which determine her definition of gender:

- (i) Gender categories are defined in terms of how one is socially positioned, where this is a function of, for example, how one is viewed, how one is treated, and how one's life is structured socially, legally, and economically; gender is not defined in terms of an individual's intrinsic physical or psychological features.
 - (ii) Gender categories are defined hierarchically within a broader complex of oppressive relations; one group (viz., women) is socially positioned as subordinate to the other (viz., men), typically within the context of other forms of economic and social oppression.
 - (iii) Sexual difference functions as the physical marker to distinguish the two groups, and is used in the justification of viewing and treating the members of each group differently.
- (ibid., 229-230)

Haslanger refers to Marilyn Frye (1983), Iris Young (1990), and Barrie Thorne (1993) to explain the nature of gender oppression, which is mentioned in the principles. Frye holds that oppression has to be understood in terms of structures. Oppression privileges some groups at the expense of other groups. (Frye 1983, 11-16) Young points out that authorities in many cases are not to blame for oppressive structures. (Young 1990, 41) Instead, oppressive structures are imposed through normal processes of everyday life, such as sometimes unconscious assumptions and actions of people in "ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms" (ibid., 41). Thorne conducted a study on gender socialization of elementary school children. She argues against

two mistaken, common assumptions: That gender differences can be inferred from stereotypical situations and that individuals do not actively participate in gender socialization. (Thorne 1993, 84) Haslanger writes that both Frye's and Thorne's views have their merits. Frye focuses on oppression as a structure, Thorne on oppression of individuals. On the one hand, singular offenses can appear insignificant if you do not analyze structural problems. On the other hand, structures can appear unchangeable if you neglect the influence of individual agency. (Haslanger 2012 [2000], 233)

Haslanger tries to accommodate both views in her definition of gender. She presents the following definition of a woman:

S functions as a woman in context C iff_{df}

- (i) S is observed or imagined in C to have certain bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction;
- (ii) that S has these features marks S within the background ideology of C as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social position that are in fact subordinate (and so motivates and justifies S's occupying such a position); and
- (iii) the fact that S satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in S's systematic subordination in C, that is, along some dimension, S's social position in C is oppressive, and S's satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of subordination. (Haslanger 2012 [2000], 235)

Haslanger also formulates a definition of a man (ibid., 234), which I do not quote here because I think the definition of a woman suffices. The main differences in the definition of a man are the "bodily features presumed to be evidence of a male's biological role in reproduction" (ibid., 234) and that men are not oppressed or subordinated, but privileged. Haslanger does not assume that the quoted definition is a definition that fits every case. The roles that men and women are assigned can vary depending on time and place. (ibid., 239) Haslanger also formulates a definition of gender which is free of hierarchies and which ends up being her ultimate definition of gender. This definition allows for hierarchy-free genders and therefore also for genders not divided into the binary man-woman system. (ibid., 244)

Haslanger's definition highlights the moral issues with current conceptions of gender. These conceptions assume that their understanding of gender is based on natural and inevitable facts about men and women. According to Haslanger, gender is based on social relations and not on anatomical differences. This purported naturalness of gender is supposed to justify an organization of society which is oppressive towards women. Because gender differences are assumed to be natural, it is very hard to get rid of the conceptions of gender and the oppressive

relations. If something is assumed to be natural, people do not worry about possible injustice. The social relations in question are natural and therefore inevitable. Haslanger's definition highlights this error in thought and prepares for an approach towards gender which can help to fight injustice.

2.3 The Definition of Race

Haslanger's (2012 [2000]) definition of race has some similarities to her definition of gender. Haslanger (2012b) distinguishes between race and what she calls "color". The "color" of a person includes various physical features such as skin color, eye, nose and lip shape, hair color and texture, height, and physique. These physical features supposedly are indications of a person's geographical ancestry. An individual has certain physical features, and it is possible to tell differences and similarities between the physical features of different individuals. For instance, one person might have a dark skin tone and another one a light skin tone. In this respect, the physical features of "color" are similar to the anatomical features which constitute sex. In this respect, people might have them for biological reasons. Hence, in this respect, these might be intrinsic features of a person. (ibid., 193)

However, Haslanger argues that "color" is more than just physical features. The actual explanation is more complicated, but I will try to summarize it as easy as possible for the purposes of my thesis. The physical features are presumed to connect a person to their recent ancestral geographical origins. For instance, a person with a certain dark skin tone might supposedly originate from Africa. There is, however, no reliable way to determine this just based on the physical features of a person. Two people might have the same skin tone and yet one has recently African and the other recently Latin American ancestry. To fully determine a person's "color" you need to know about the recent ancestral geographical origins of a person. This means that "color" is not just an intrinsic feature. Geographical origins are extrinsic features because they depend on the time and place of a person's ancestry. (ibid., 193-194)

"Color" includes the physical features of a person and their recent ancestral origins. Although extrinsic features are included, color is just that: physical features plus recent ancestral origins. Race to a certain degree can be compared to gender. Just as gender is more than just sex, race is more than just "color". Examples for races are Blacks, Whites, or Latinos. People are commonly taken to have a certain race based on their color, but this is a widely mistaken assumption. There is no biological basis for the differences associated with different races. Based on their "color" people are assumed to have a certain nature, which might, for instance, include certain types of personalities. For instance, it might be assumed that "Black

people are violent”. This assumed nature places people of a race in certain positions of a broad social network. These positions are usually either privileged or subordinated. Just like gender race is constituted by the social relations of a person, which are extrinsic features. (Haslanger 2012 [2000], 235-236)

Haslanger therefore defines race as following:

A group G is racialized relative to context C iff_{df} members of G are (all and only) those:

- (i) who are observed or imagined to have certain bodily features presumed in C to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region (or regions);
- (ii) whose having (or being imagined to have) these features marks them within the context of the background ideology in C as appropriately occupying certain kinds of social position that are in fact either subordinate or privileged (and so motivates and justifies their occupying such a position); and
- (iii) whose satisfying (i) and (ii) plays (or would play) a role in their systematic subordination or privilege in C , that is, who are along some dimension systematically subordinated or privileged when in C , and satisfying (i) and (ii) plays (or would play) a role in that dimension of privilege or subordination. (ibid., 236-237)

What characteristics and social positions are associated with a race varies depending on culture and time. Furthermore, how membership in a certain race is determined also varies depending on culture and time. Haslanger mentions that, for instance, some people who are considered “Black” in the USA are not considered as such in Brazil. (ibid., 235)

3. Social Construction

Social construction is essential in much of Haslanger's work, especially for her social critique and her theory of social ontology, which in turn is the basis for her account of structural explanation. Social structures are socially constructed. Haslanger develops her (2012 [1995]; 2012 [2003]; 2012b) account of social construction in several papers. Haslanger's account of social construction tries to explain which parts of reality are socially constructed and how they are socially constructed. According to Haslanger, there are several ways how something can be socially constructed (Haslanger 2012 [1995], 85). Furthermore, social construction is often seen as an opposing view to realism. Haslanger considers her account of social construction to be compatible with realism. (Haslanger 2012b, 183-184) This allows her to argue that social phenomena, like gender, race, or social structures, are really existing, objective phenomena, despite being socially constructed. (Barnes 2016, 2424)

3.1 Different Types of Social Construction

In "Ontology and Social Construction" Haslanger (2012 [1995]) examines the potential of a social construction of reality. To do that, she develops different types of social construction. Haslanger writes that feminism has been sceptic of the alleged naturalness of gender and race. Many theorists defend the view that gender and race are socially constructed, which has serious political implications. Some theorists have gone even further and argue that everything (including reality) is socially constructed. For Haslanger, this approach is too extreme. If everything is socially constructed, then it is hard to claim that there is a reality that does not depend on social sources. (ibid., 83-85)

Haslanger distinguishes between different types of social construction. Different scholars claim of all sorts of objects that they are socially constructed. Artifacts are usually good examples of social construction. In a very general sense, all artifacts are socially constructed. Examples are washing machines, power drills, the Supreme Court of the United States, chess games, languages, literature, and scientific inquiry. These artifacts are socially constructed because they depend on or are the result of social factors. (ibid., 85-86) Haslanger then defines this sort of social construction:

Generic social construction: Something is a social construction in the generic sense just in case it is an intended or unintended product of a social practice. (ibid., 86)

This definition, however, is very general and does not distinguish between different types of social construction. There are artifacts which are socially constructed because they are caused to be (the way they are) by humans. Examples are washing machines, chess games, languages, and cities. Artifacts can also be socially constructed, in the sense that their definitions have to reference social factors. Examples of this are social kinds like the category of professor or wife. The conditions for being a professor or wife depend on social relations. You can only be a wife if it is possible to marry within the social system that you belong to. (ibid., 86)

In cases where entities are created by humans, the construction is causal. In cases where the definitions of the entities reference social factors, the construction is constitutive. Here is yet another example of Haslanger. The statement that gender is socially constructed can be understood in several ways. First, the statement that gender is socially constructed can be understood in a causal way. The statement then claims that people have gender-coded traits due to social factors. Feminine and masculine traits in women and men are the result of social and not biological factors. Second, the statement that gender is socially constructed can be understood in a constitutive way. The statement then claims that the concept of gender is based on social relations. “Man” and “woman” are social kinds. They are kinds that are defined in terms of social factors. (ibid., 86-87)

Following the examples Haslanger defines the mentioned two types of social construction:

Causal construction: Something is causally constructed iff social factors play a causal role in bringing it into existence or, to some substantial extent, in its being the way it is.

Constitutive construction: Something is constitutively constructed iff in defining it we must make reference to social factors. (ibid., 87)

Haslanger follows up with a more detailed analysis of causal construction. This leads to her definition of a type of causal construction. Descriptions of people might change the behavior and mind-set of these people if they are aware of their descriptions. Descriptions sometimes have an evaluative character. Haslanger uses the classification “cool” as an example. In a certain social context, some people might be considered cool and others not. For some people it might be desirable and for others undesirable to be cool. People also might vindicate their actions based on supposed coolness, such as “we didn't invite him because he is not cool” (ibid., 88). Such justifications might reinforce a division between cool and uncool individuals. (ibid., 87-88)

The process involved in this type of causal construction is sometimes called a “feedback loop”, because two events continuously cause each other, forming a recurring loop. (ibid., 88)

Haslanger does not specify how this works in the coolness example. My suspicion is that it could work in the following way. Some people are assumed to be cool. These people start to identify with and behave according to their description because it has certain benefits, such as being invited to a party, and acquire and maintain characteristics considered to be cool. This in turn causes these people to be considered cool and so forth. A better example, in my opinion, is the feedback loop involved in gender-norms. For instance, women might be assumed to be caring (by nature). This ideology causes women to exhibit a caring behavior because they think that this is how they just are. This reinforces the assumption that women are caring because many women in society are caring.

Haslanger infers that descriptions may not just plainly describe people. Descriptions can set and maintain divisions between people, who can at some point accord to the description. This insight leads Haslanger to her definition of discursive construction, which is a subtype of causal construction. Discursive construction is a type of social construction in the sense that the character or features of a person are the result of social descriptions. (ibid., 88)

Discursive construction: Something is discursively constructed just in case it is the way it is, to some substantial extent, because of what is attributed (and/or self-attributed) to it. (ibid., 88)

Haslanger thinks that everyone is partially discursively (and hence socially) constructed. Individuals often develop parts of their personality in response to how they have been described by others. If, for instance, you have been described as “smart” this might have caused you to keep studying and improve your intelligence and knowledge. Regarding discursively constructed traits adult individuals are similar to artifacts. (ibid., 88)

Haslanger distinguishes yet another type of generic social construction which, along with causal and constitutive construction, represents the third type. In this type of social construction, classifications (like “smart” or “cool”) are socially constructed. The use of these classifications does not rely on inherent properties of the classified entities but on social circumstances. (ibid., 89)

Haslanger uses “cool” as an example of a classification whose use is completely determined by social factors. “Cool” does not refer to intrinsic features of individuals. Instead, it signifies social relations that a person has. Attributions of coolness are based on approval by a social group. You might want to form a social group. You consider people who you like (and who you want to have in your group) “cool” and people who you dislike (and who you do not want to have in your group) “uncool”. Coolness, then, has nothing to do with intrinsic features of the

described people. It only captures how these people are related to you, i.e., if you like them or not. In this sense, coolness is similar to gender and race. Coolness is also assumed to be an intrinsic feature while it is not. “Cool” actually refers to extrinsic features of a person, i.e., social relations. (ibid., 89)

Haslanger defines the just described third type of social construction as follows:

Pragmatic construction: A classificatory apparatus (be it a full-blown classification scheme or just a conceptual distinction or descriptive term) is socially constructed just in case its use is determined, at least in part, by social factors. (ibid., 90)

Haslanger makes a further distinction between two types of pragmatic construction. The first type makes a weaker claim. It supposes that the use of a distinction depends on social (and hence, contingent) circumstances, as well as on other non-social circumstances. In this sense, all distinctions are socially constructed. Language is a social phenomenon and our distinctions have evolved over time through a social community. The second type makes a stronger claim. It states that the application of a distinction solely relies on social circumstances. In this case, the distinction does not represent any facts that are independent of social factors. (ibid., 90)

Here is Haslanger's definition of the two types of pragmatic construction:

A distinction is *weakly pragmatically* constructed if social factors only partly determine our use of it.

A distinction is *strongly pragmatically* constructed if social factors wholly determine our use of it, and it fails to represent accurately any “fact of the matter.” (ibid., 90)

To explain strong pragmatic construction, Haslanger returns to the example of coolness. When you attribute coolness to others, this is based on which people you approve of. Usually, when you consider someone cool, you think that this person is inherently cool. You do not claim that the person is cool just because you like her. The use of the term “cool” is supposed to be justified by the inherent coolness of the person. This means that there is some misconception about the attribution of coolness because there is no inherent coolness. What coolness is commonly taken to be fails to accurately express the fact of the matter. The misconception of strong pragmatic constructions is based on the thought that the classifications capture some specific facts. However, classifications that are strongly pragmatically constructed can still correspond to a valid distinction. In the example of coolness, this is the distinction between those who you like and who you do not. (ibid., 90-91)

When classifications are weakly pragmatically constructed, they are conditioned by social factors. This still allows for the classifications to describe real facts and distinctions. (ibid., 91) Consider the term “length”. The term surely is socially conditioned in some way, since it is a linguistic expression which has evolved in a social community. However, the claim that “this object is 1 meter long” can accurately describe a fact of the matter because the object might actually be 1 meter long. Length is, in this sense, not an illusory concept like what “coolness” is commonly taken to be.

Haslanger continues with a comparison between the different types of social construction. The three (major) types were causal, constitutive, and pragmatic. All three can be applied to the example of coolness. ‘Cool people’ are discursively (and hence causally) constructed because people that are called cool might modify their behavior. Cool people acquire ‘cool’ behavior and wear ‘cool’ clothes so that they are liked by a certain social group. Intrinsic coolness is strongly pragmatically constructed, because there is a misconception about it. Haslanger argues that the goal of the social constructionist is to expose the misconception of inherent coolness. The social constructionist demonstrates that the use of the term “cool” completely depends on approval of a social group. The social constructionist shows that coolness is actually constitutively constructed. A correct definition of “cool” needs to refer to social circumstances. (ibid., 92)

Regarding the term “cool”, there are two concepts at work. Haslanger distinguishes between the “operative concept” and the “manifest concept”. The manifest concept describes what people commonly think the term is used for. In the case of coolness, the manifest concept purports to attribute inherent coolness to people or things. This, however, is an illusion. The manifest concept hides how the term is actually applied to cases. The operative concept is the concept which determines how the term is actually applied to cases. In the case of coolness, the operative concept refers to the preferences of a social group. Haslanger argues that the aim of a social constructionist is to move people’s attention from the manifest concept to the operative concept. (ibid., 92-93)

After the application of the three types of social construction (causal, constitutive, pragmatic) to the coolness example, Haslanger applies them to gender. Individuals with a gender are discursively constructed. For instance, some people are women because they have been described and have self-described themselves as women. This description usually is accompanied by an ascription of Woman’s Nature. Individual women, then, are causally constructed. (ibid., 93)

Furthermore, the concept “Woman's Nature” is strongly pragmatically constructed. People commonly think that Woman’s Nature is an inherent feature of a person. This, however, is

misconception. The operative concept of Woman's Nature is defined in terms of social relations. Haslanger argues that the concepts "man", "woman", "male", and "female" are weakly pragmatically constructed. The concepts partly depend on social circumstances, but not entirely. (ibid., 93-94)

Haslanger repeats her examples of the different types of social construction:

Discursively (and so causally) constructed: individual women; cool dudes.

Strongly pragmatically constructed: Woman's Nature; intrinsic coolness.

Constitutively constructed: the operative concept of "coolness"; the operative concept of "Woman's Nature."

Weakly pragmatically constructed: The distinction between men and women, between male and female; the distinction between those who wear black t-shirts more than once a week and those who don't. (ibid., 94)

For some reason, Haslanger splits here her conception of "gender" into "woman" and "Woman's Nature", which are evaluated differently. She does not specify what exactly the difference is and why the distinction between men and women is weakly pragmatically constructed.

3.2 The Social Construction of Reality

Haslanger states that social construction is often associated with anti-realism. (Haslanger 2012b, 183) Many social constructionists defend the claim that all of reality is socially constructed. Since Haslanger has developed different types of social construction, she can use them to analyze whether reality is socially constructed in any of these senses. (Haslanger 2012 [1995], 94)

The first topic is causal construction. Haslanger argues that reality is not causally constructed. There are objects like artifacts which are causally constructed. However, the world contains all sorts of entities, many of which are not artifacts, such as atoms or the sun. Many things are not formed by human actions and even if humans had an impact on an object, this does not necessarily make it an artifact. It is not necessary to assume that an independent reality (which is not causally constructed) is a reality which is completely unaffected by human actions. Something can be independently real, even if it is influenced by humans. Hence, even if reality was causally constructed, we could still assume that it is an independent reality. (ibid., 94-95)

The next topic that Haslanger considers is pragmatic construction. She argues that reality certainly is weakly pragmatically constructed. The concept of "reality" is a linguistic term and

all linguistic terms are at least weakly pragmatically constructed because language depends both in its origin and application on contingent historical and social circumstances. Reality being weakly pragmatically constructed is consistent with the assumption that at least parts of reality exists independently of us. Our concepts can refer to non-social facts. (ibid., 96-97)

Is reality also strongly pragmatically constructed? According to Haslanger, to show that reality is strongly pragmatically constructed, there are two strategies available. Either one could look at various cases and show that, in each of them, the object in question is strongly pragmatically constructed. Or one could show that our manifest concept of “reality” is somehow misguided. If you could show that our concept of “reality” does not describe an independent reality but instead (like in the case of coolness) a socially relevant fiction, then this would firmly support the assumption that reality is strongly pragmatically constructed. (ibid., 98-99)

Haslanger (ibid., 104-105) claims that Catharine MacKinnon, in pursuit of the first strategy, argues that reality is strongly pragmatically constructed because every concept only describes how things appear to us and not how they really are. When we describe something, we only describe that something stands in a relation to us, i.e., how it appears to us. How something appears to us is a social fact. Hence, we are always talking about social facts and never about an independent reality. It is not possible to talk about a world that is not related to us (in the sense described above). We can only refer to a world that we perceive from our point of view. (MacKinnon 1989, 83-119)

Haslanger contends that “even if we grant that the epistemic criteria for applying any term will implicate us, we need not equate such social criteria with the content of our attribution” (Haslanger 2012 [1995], 106). Take, for instance, the term “water”. Our attributions of the term to some entity depend on how that entity appears to us. We might say that something is water because it is a clear and colorless liquid that does not taste like much. However, when we think some entity is water, we determine that entity is a liquid with a certain chemical composure (H_2O). Something’s chemical composure is different from its appearance. How a term is applied and what it describes are not necessarily the same. Even if the application of every term depended on social circumstances, this does not mean that the terms cannot refer to entities independent of us. (ibid., 106-107)

Haslanger concludes that MacKinnon's account works well for some concepts, like “coolness”. There are concepts with social content which only describe how something appears to us. When we say something is cool, we say that we like it, i.e., how it appears to us. For many other concepts, such as “water” or “dog”, which do not have specifically social content, however, MacKinnon's analysis seems to be mistaken. These concepts do not need to describe how something appears to us and can refer to objects independent of us, even if social factors

play a role in the application of these concepts. (ibid., 107)

The second strategy tries to show that the concept of “reality” is strongly pragmatically constructed, which is taken to imply that reality is only a social fiction. Since all concepts are weakly pragmatically constructed, so is the concept of “reality”. This, however, does not necessitate that the concept is strongly pragmatically constructed. (ibid., 108)

According to Haslanger, proponents of the second strategy would attack the following view:

(ObInq) An inquiry is objective in the relevant sense just in case the way the world is and the rationality of the inquirers are the only factors that determine its outcome. (ibid., 108)

This view supposes that you can acquire objective knowledge of reality. The conditions for an inquiry that yields this knowledge are given in the definition above. In an objective inquiry, no social factors or ‘illusions’ are involved. The outcome of the inquiry is determined solely by the world and the rationality of the person doing the inquiry. (ibid., 108) The outcome supposedly represents an objective view of the world:

(ObRel) An object or a fact is objectively real just in case it is (or can be) objectively known. (ibid., 109)

Haslanger contends that the objective account of knowledge is mistaken. Since human inquiry depends on language, any human inquiry is at least partially affected by social circumstances. It is not possible to have an inquiry which is only determined by the world and the rationality of an inquirer. If the objective view of reality is the only view of an independent reality, then it seems like you would need to give up the view of an independent reality. Proponents of the second strategy argue that objective reality, in this sense, is an illusion, which is trying to obscure the social factors which determine our distinction between “real” and “unreal”. (ibid., 109)

Haslanger thinks that we do not need to conclude that there is no independent reality. This conclusion would only be warranted if the only other option was the objective view of reality. Haslanger opts for a more modest form of realism. Even if there is no objective reality, an independent reality can exist. Abandoning the notion of “objective reality” only means giving up the assumption that some knowledge can be acquired without the involvement of any social factors. Language and knowledge depend on social influences. Hence, the notion of “objective reality” is mistaken. However, it is still possible to claim that there is an independent reality. There is a difference between how something is known and what is known. How we know

something might be under the influence of social factors. What we know, i.e., the content of our knowledge, is something else. Even if social factors play a role in how we know something, we still can have knowledge about an independent reality. (ibid., 110-112)

3.3 Realism

Haslanger (2012 [1995]; 2012 [2003]; 2012b) argues in various papers that social construction is compatible with realism. Section 3.2 of my thesis already gave some insight into her account regarding this issue. In one paper she (2012b) examines realism regarding race. She states that realism regarding a domain D holds that propositions regarding D can be true or false and at least some of these propositions are true. (ibid., 198) This leaves two possibilities for anti-realism:

1. *Non-cognitivism*: although our claims about D appear to be truth-apt, in fact they should be understood differently, for example, as imperatives or exclamations.
2. *Error Theory*: although the claims in D are truth-apt, none of them are actually true. (ibid., 198)

Haslanger thinks that regarding phenomena in the social world error theory makes more sense. (ibid., 198) For instance, there are several error theorists regarding race (e.g., Appiah 1996; Zack 2002). These error theorists contend that there are no races. A racial concept cannot be correctly applied to anything. This means that all claims involving racial concepts, despite pretending to be true or false, are false. (Haslanger 2012b, 198) There are, for instance, no “Whites” or “Blacks”, and therefore the following assumption is wrong:

- (a) Whites, on average, hold greater wealth in the United States than Blacks. (ibid., 198)

Haslanger thinks that error theorists about race, for instance, have difficulties explaining the consequences of slavery and racism in the United States. To explain such phenomena, one needs to use concepts for racial groups, which the error theorists cannot. According to Haslanger, an error theorist would reply that one can make claims somewhat like (a) with the crucial difference that the racial concepts are applied to racialized groups. Racialized groups are groups which are regarded as races, although they are not. (ibid., 198-199) (a) then would mean:

- (b) Members of the group racialized as White, on average, hold greater wealth in the

United States than members of the group racialized as Black. (ibid., 199)

Instead of:

(c) Members of the White race, on average, hold greater wealth in the United States than members of the Black race. (ibid., 199)

Haslanger holds that this response does not work because it helps the racial realist. The racial realist claims that races like Whites and Blacks exist and are based on biological features. The racial realist would approve (c). According to the error theorist, (b) is true and a paraphrase of (a). As long as (a) has the same meaning as (b), (a) would be true as well. Error theory, however, demands that (a) is false. Haslanger argues that there are two ways to avoid this problem. Either the error theorist can say that (a) is wrong and (b) has not the same meaning as (a). In that case error theorists still cannot explain the consequences of racism. Or she can assume that racial terms can successfully be applied to something, but not to what is commonly associated with the terms. This is the option that Haslanger endorses. (ibid., 199) Remember that Haslanger defines race in terms of social relations.

Haslanger holds that the example of error theory about race shows why realism should be endorsed. One can commit to realism in different strengths. There are strong and weak forms of realism. The error theorist is not even willing to grant a minimal degree of realism. The error theorist assumes that there is nothing real about race, which implies a radical change in common thought and speech. Haslanger, on the other hand, grants that there is something real about race, but it is not what people commonly assume. (ibid., 199-200)

4. Structure and Ideology

4.1 Ideology

Haslanger's (2012 [2007]; 2012 [2011]) concept of “ideology” is tied to her understanding of social structures. As will be elaborated, ideology is part of the basis for social structures. Haslanger thinks that “in the most basic sense ideologies are representations of social life that serve in some way to undergird social practices” (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 411). Haslanger argues that we do not only have passive roles in social structures. Much more we create and uphold social structures through our actions. These actions are guided by certain representations, i.e., ideology. (ibid., 411) Haslanger quotes:

. . . ideology and discourse refer to pretty much the same aspect of social life—the idea that human individuals participate in forms of understanding, comprehension or consciousness of the relations and activities in which they are involved This consciousness is borne through language and other systems of signs, it is transmitted between people and institutions and, perhaps most important of all, it makes a difference; that is, the way in which people comprehend and make sense of the social world has consequences for the direction and character of their action and inaction. Both ‘discourse’ and ‘ideology’ refer to these aspects of social life. (Purvis and Hunt 1993, 474; see also McCarthy 1990, 440)

The quote describes the understanding of ideology that Haslanger uses. This understanding covers a great variety of ideology. As defined here, ideology is abundant in society. There is another, more specific and negative understanding of ideology, which Haslanger mentions. “Ideology” in this sense are concepts and ideas that are mistaken. For instance, these ideas could cause damage to the people who entertain them. Haslanger, however, only makes use of the first understanding of ideology. (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 412) Under that understanding, ideology is “the background cognitive and affective frame that gives actions and reactions meaning within a social system and contributes to its survival” (Haslanger 2012 [2011], 447).

Haslanger argues that ideology does not just consist of beliefs. Ideology can contain all sorts of cognitive and affective states, such as “more primitive dispositions, habits, and a broader range of attitudes” (ibid., 448). This means that in order to change ideology, changing beliefs is not always sufficient. Sometimes, ideology can involve less conscious or intellectual states, such as habits, which need to be changed in ways different to changing beliefs. (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 412-413)

Haslanger (2012 [2011]) calls ideology that is not quite on the level of belief “hegemony”. Along a continuum, ideology can show up in different degrees of hegemony. The less hegemonic an ideology is, the more it is challenged. The less hegemonic ideology is, the less established and more conscious it is. The more hegemonic ideology is, the more established and less conscious it is. Less hegemonic ideology is easier to change, while more hegemonic ideology is more difficult to change. (ibid., 448)

According to Haslanger, philosophers have to consider two groups of questions that are raised by ideology. First, one can ask how ideology affects the actions of individuals, sometimes without them noticing. This is not a purely philosophical issue, since its answer also involves input from psychology and sociology. Any good theory of ideology needs to explain the following phenomena: How people are familiar with the social background that allows for social actions, how the background makes the actions what they are, and how the background can be changed. (ibid., 448)

Second, one can ask how ideology should be assessed from an epistemic or moral point of view. Ideologies are not necessarily malign. They can also serve good purposes. Regardless of the assessment, ideology is needed for social cooperation. To address potential issues caused by ideology, the ideology needs to be evaluated. The ideology can be evaluated regarding either epistemic or moral values. In the first case, one needs to evaluate whether the ideology correctly represents the world. In the second case, one needs to evaluate the justice of an ideology. (ibid., 448)

Haslanger argues that social critique can also be an epistemic issue. Within the context of an existent social world propositions regarding that social world can in some sense be true for peculiar reasons. If, for instance, marriage legally needs to be contracted between a man and a woman, then it is, in some sense, true that only a man and a woman can get married. A union between a man and a man would not count as a marriage. In this sense, people who live under such laws have reasons to believe that marriage is between man and woman. One could even argue that this conception of marriage is social knowledge. If the ideology constituting this knowledge is hegemonic, then people think that this limit on marriage is not just a legal limit in this society, but that this is the only way it can be. Another example is male dominance. If men are dominant within a society, then women are comparatively submissive. In some sense, the claim that women are more submissive is true and people living in that society have a reason to believe it. If this ideology is hegemonic, the claim does not just mention how women are in this particular society, but how women naturally are (regardless of society). (ibid., 448-449)

The effects of hegemonic ideologies pretend to be natural and not social. They appear to be inevitable. As already mentioned, hegemonic ideologies are hard to change. The same applies

to the social structures that they constitute. These workings of hegemonic ideology have already been present in previous chapters, even though they were not explicitly mentioned as ideology. For instance, the definitions of gender and race explain that people think that many of the features associated with gender and race are natural, although they are not.

4.2 Social Structure

Haslanger (2012 [2007]; 2012 [2011]; 2014; 2016) develops her account of social structure in several papers. My description of her account will be split. I will discuss different parts of her account in different parts of my thesis. In this section I will discuss the basis of her account (2012 [2007]; 2012 [2011]; 2016) and its relation to ideology. Later, I will discuss her account (2016) of social structural explanation.

Haslanger contends that ideology is essential for creating and maintaining social structures. She claims that “‘social structure’ is a general category of social phenomena, including, for example, social institutions, social practices and conventions, social roles, social hierarchies, social locations or geographies, and the like” (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 413). Haslanger's definition of social structures has not always stayed the same, but I think the different definitions are consistent. She always writes that schemas and resources together constitute social practices. (e.g., Haslanger 2012 [2007], 414) In some of her work, she argues that patterns of interdependent practices constitute social structures. (Haslanger 2012 [2011], 465; see also Haslanger 2012 [2007]; Haslanger 2018) In other works, she argues that social structures are networks of social relations. Social relations are constituted by interconnected practices. (Haslanger 2016, 125; see also Haslanger 2014) To be more precise, in the first part of her work referenced above she never says what social structures actually are. She only argues that patterns of interdependent practices constitute structures. This is consistent with social structures being networks of social relations, as she argues in the other part of her work. Because practices constitute relations and structures are networks of relations, practices also constitute structures.

Haslanger refers to William Sewell (1992), who in turn draws on work of Anthony Giddens (1986 [1984]) and argues that social structures are “both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems” (Sewell 1992, 4, quoting Giddens 1981, 27). Social practices constitute structures and structures influence the practices of people. In a social context, the ability to act (through practices) and social structures depend on each other. (Sewell 1992, 4) Giddens defines structures as rules and resources. (Giddens 1986 [1984], 17) Sewell bases structures on schemas and resources because he thinks that the cognitive part does not

need to be a rule. (Sewell 1992, 8) He thinks that schemas can be for instance:

. . . all the variety of cultural schemas that anthropologists have uncovered in their research: not only the array of binary oppositions that make up a given society's fundamental tools of thought, but also the various conventions, recipes, scenarios, principles of action, and habits of speech and gesture built up with these fundamental tools. (Sewell 1992, 7–8)

Sewell claims that schemas are public and do not belong to one individual only. Schemas can be transferred from individual to individual. (ibid., 8) Haslanger refers to Judith Howard (1994), who argues that Sewell's application of the notion of “schema” is dissimilar from how it is applied in social psychology. In social psychology “schema” is used to describe how a person structures her ideas. Sewell's use, on the other hand, is more concerned with interpersonal and cultural aspects. Howard suggests that one should combine the two conceptions of “schema”. Schemas should be assumed to be both mental and social. (ibid., 218)

Haslanger agrees and assumes that schemas are “intersubjective patterns of perception, thought, and behavior” (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 415). Schemas affect how people view certain things and how they behave in certain situations. Schemas can occur in the form of knowledge and instructions how to interact with other people or your objects. (ibid., 415)

There are different depths for schemas. Schemas can exist as deep or surface schemas or somewhere in between. Deep schemas are deep-rooted. People often are not aware of deep schemas. Deep schemas, hence, are more difficult to change. Surface schemas exist at a superficial level and are easier to change. People usually are aware of surface schemas. When you shift a surface schema, the deeper schema might continue to exist. (ibid., 415) Schemas are strongly tied to ideology because ideology often manifests itself in the form of schemas. Schemas, in a sense, carry ideology. (ibid., 412, 418) I think this implies that surface schemas and deep schemas, to a certain degree, can be connected to more and less hegemonic ideology. Deep schemas, like more hegemonic ideology, are less conscious and more difficult to change.

One pillar of social practices (and hence, social structures) are schemas. The second pillar are resources. Social structures are not just constituted by schemas because social structures are also represented in matter. Resources represent the material existence of social structures. They are the material counterparts to the cognitive schemas. Resources ensure that schemas are manifested in the material world. Haslanger says that, for instance, there is a schema of the two sex categories. Toilet facilities represent this schema (toilets for males and toilets for females). Haslanger agrees with Sewell that resources can be straight-up physical, both animate and

inanimate, but also human capacities such as physical strength, dexterity, or knowledge. (ibid., 415; see also Sewell 1992, 9)

Sewell argues that schemas and resources constitute a social structure when schemas and resources depend on each other. (Sewell 1992, 13) Haslanger uses the following example of Sewell's:

A factory is not an inert pile of bricks, wood, and metal. It incorporates or actualizes schemas The factory gate, the punching-in station, the design of the assembly line: all of these features of the factory teach and validate the rules of the capitalist labor contract In short, if resources are instantiations or embodiments of schemas, they therefore inculcate and justify the schemas as well . . . Sets of schemas and resources may properly be said to constitute structures only when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time. (ibid., 13)

According to Sewell, social structures exist when a schema acquired by several individuals and an arrangement of resources causally depend on each other. (ibid., 13) Haslanger argues that Sewell's view, besides a causal relationship, also indicates a constitutive relationship between schemas and resources, because he assumes that they mutually imply and sustain each other over time. (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 416)

Regarding the constitutive interdependence in the factory example, Haslanger thinks that a certain arrangement of resources is regarded as a punching-in station, because the punching-in station is used to carry out certain schemas. These schemas may help managers pay their workers based on hours or help workers signify the hours they have worked. The schemas that managers and workers use to check working hours is a punching-in schema, because there is a punching-in station, which is the basis for determining the income of workers. (ibid., 416) The causal interdependence is, in my opinion, not very well represented in this example, but it works to a certain degree. The punching-in station was built with the idea (schema) in mind that it should be used for checking the working hours. The schema to check working hours continues to exist because there is a punching-in station that enforces this schema. Haslanger defines the two types of interdependence:

Causal interdependence: schemas emerge and develop in response to resources and resources emerge and develop in response to schemas.

Constitutive interdependence: a schema for X is a way of collectively interpreting and organizing information about X's qua resource. Schemas are constitutively defined by

the resources they organize, and something's being a resource of a particular kind depends on what schema interprets/organizes it. (Haslanger 2016, 127)

Of course, there are multiple examples of interdependence between schemas and resources in the factory example: The factory, the factory gate, the assembly-line. It is not entirely clear to me what Haslanger and Sewell assume as a structure in the factory example. Sewell seems to hold that the factory is a structure because it is constituted by sets of schemas and resources. One could argue that the punching-in station, etc. are also structures, because they are also constituted by sets of schemas and resources. This is what Haslanger seems to assume and that is the assumption under which I will continue my analysis. This should be consistent with the assumption that social structures are networks of social relations. The punching-in station, in a way, is a network of social relations. It connects different people (employer, employees) in a network of relations (being kept track of work hours). Yet, if the punching-in station is a structure, it is only a small structure.

Haslanger presents another example which favors this interpretation. In New York City's Riverside Park there is a statue of Joan of Arc. The statue is made of bronze. The bronze is the resource of the statue. Moreover, there is a certain history, function, interpretation, etc, associated with the statue. Schemas are responsible for eliciting this history, function, etc. The bronze by itself would just be a lump of bronze. The schema just by itself would not be instantiated in material form. The bronze causes people to have the schema in their minds. The schema causes the bronze to be interpreted as a statue. (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 416)

Haslanger thinks that interdependence between schemas and resources is very common in the social world. Further examples are "towns, city halls, churches, universities, philosophy departments, gyms, playgrounds, homes" (ibid., 417). All of these material entities are organized and given meaning through schemas. An example of an entity that has been stripped off its schema is a ghost town. Artifacts sometimes are the way they are due to schemas that indicate how the artifact should be used. Schemas sometimes are the way they are because there are artifacts that indicate how the schema should look like. Haslanger concludes that a good number of social phenomena and material entities depend on each other. (ibid., 417)

As Haslanger has argued, practices are the result of organized schemas and resources. Schemas instruct people how to perceive and react to certain things. Resources are represented through human capacities and material entities. This means that practices, and hence structures, are not up to a singular individual. Social structures are not just mental representations but are publicly accessible. For instance, the statue is not just in our heads but is a public structure both in virtue of its material and the associated collective schema. Furthermore, structures are created

by humans just like artifacts are designed by humans. (ibid., 417)

Based on her view of social structures, Haslanger explains the notion of “social milieu.” Haslanger defines “an individual's (general) social milieu in terms of the social structures within which he or she operates, whether or not the public schemas in question have been internalized” (Haslanger 2012 [2011], 465). Social structures are partially constituted by schemas. Often a prevailing schema within a milieu is adopted by most individuals in that milieu. This is not always the case. Individuals can, for instance, be unaware of a prevailing schema, renounce a schema, or change to fit their interests. Furthermore, different schemas can be in conflict over the control of a social milieu. (Haslanger 2012 [2011], 464-465)

Sometimes we can choose the structures, and hence the social milieu, that we want to be part of. Sometimes we cannot. For instance, Haslanger says that she is subject to the legislation of the United States, regardless of her own choice. People usually are part of more than one social milieu. Furthermore, milieus can intermingle. Where you work, live, practice religion, etc. can all be places that may intermingle. (ibid., 465)

4.3 Social Construction and Social Structure

In this section I try to highlight the connections between Haslanger's account of social structure presented in this chapter and her views on gender, race, and social construction. Social structures are relevant for structural explanation because they are what the explanation is about. Social construction is relevant for structural explanation because social structures are socially constructed. Haslanger distinguishes between different ways how something can be socially constructed: causal, constitutive, and pragmatic. (Haslanger 2012 [1995], 87-90) Pragmatic construction only applies to concepts. Strongly pragmatically constructed concepts fail to represent their referents correctly. (ibid., 91-93) Therefore, I consider the concept of “social structure” as weakly pragmatically constructed. It can correctly describe real entities and there is no illusion inherent to this concept.

Causal construction applies to (some) actual social structures (and not the concept). Some social structures are caused to exist and/or be the way they are by social factors, such as human interactions. Many social structures are caused by social factors, although they might not depend on social factors to continue to exist. Some social structures, e.g., money, depend on human interactions to continue to exist. Constitutive construction applies to every social structure. The definition of every social structure needs to reference social factors.

Gender and race are of special importance to Haslanger. They are examples of social construction and arguably social structure as well. I have described Haslanger's view on the

social construction of gender in Section 3.1. Race is constitutively constructed because its definition needs to refer to social factors. Moreover, there is an illusion to the manifest concept of “race.”, i.e., what race is commonly taken to be. Barnes argues that gender and race, under Haslanger’s account, have to be understood as social structures. (Barnes 2016, 2422) Although Haslanger never explicitly states that gender and race are social structures, I agree with Barnes’s interpretation. Haslanger defines gender and race in terms of social relations. Belonging to a gender or a race means having certain relations to other people and things. When you have a gender or race you occupy a certain position or have a certain role in a social system. (Haslanger 2012 [2000], 235-237) Haslanger describes social structures as networks of social relations. (Haslanger 2016, 125) Gender and race appear to be networks of social relations because they are constituted by multiple, different, connected social relations.

Haslanger argues that realism is compatible with her account of social construction. (Haslanger 2012 [1995], 110-112) This also applies to social structures. Social structures are socially constructed, but they are not just ‘made up’. They are real existing entities, just like atoms or trees. (Barnes 2016, 2418) Gender and race are examples for the compatibility of social construction with realism. Section 3.3 dealt with Haslanger’s defense of realism about race.

5. Structural Explanation

Haslanger's (2016) paper "What is a (social) structural explanation?" is the primary concern of this master's thesis. In this paper, Haslanger defends an account of structural explanation. Her focus is on social structural explanation and structural explanation in the social sciences. In her defense of structural explanation, Haslanger builds on her account of social construction and social critique, which has been described in the previous chapters of this thesis. Parts of Haslanger's account of social structure (including a little bit of Haslanger (ibid.)) have been described as well. Let us take a closer look at the remaining parts.

Haslanger writes that social structures are common in social and political theories and arguments. However, what counts as a social structure and what does not count can differ strongly from theorist to theorist. Examples of social structures vary from "broad and deep social phenomena such as the wage-labor system of industrial capitalism and the heteronormative and bionormative nuclear family" (ibid., 113), to "local and flexible phenomena such as the social structure of a particular institution such as a school, church, or business" (ibid., 113). Still, many philosophers and scholars from other fields of research think that social structures are not important in social explanations, while individuals are. (ibid., 113)

5.1 The Basic Idea

Haslanger starts off with an example:

Suppose I am playing ball with my dog. I stuff a treat into a hole in the ball and throw it for him. The ball goes over the lip of a hill and rolls down into a gully. Why did the treat end up in the gully? (ibid., 114)

One possible explanation would focus on the treat. This is the individualistic explanation. The individualistic explanation explains how the treat flies through the air, lands, and rolls into a gully. This explanation is very detailed and circumstantial. Another possible explanation would focus on the fact that the treat was stuffed into a ball. The focus is on the movement of the ball, i.e., how it was thrown and how it rolled into a gully. This explanation is simpler and more straight-forward. It explains the movement of the treat through the movement of a system or structure, i.e., the ball, that the treat is part of. This is the structural explanation. (ibid., 114)

Haslanger argues that the structural explanation is superior to the individualistic explanation. First, the structural explanation is more robust. The structural explanation remains effective through some perturbations. If, for instance, Haslanger had thrown the ball slightly differently,

if the hill had a slightly different shape, the wind had been different, or the ball was of a different material, the treat still would have ended up in the gully. Second, the structural explanation is more useful. It indicates how you could interfere so that the treat does not land in the gully. This can be achieved by, for example, throwing the ball in another direction. (ibid., 114-115)

Haslanger designed the treat example to demonstrate the advantages of structural explanations. Structural explanations work well in situations where an entity is part of a system or structure that puts constraints on the entity. It is important that the system is not simply an aggregate but an organized system. In the treat example, Haslanger also could have thrown a handful of treats but this would not have caused the treat to end up in the gully. The handful of treats are simply an aggregate. This aggregate does not affect the movement of the treat like the ball does. In a structure the different parts depend on each other. Various structures constrain their parts in different ways. For instance, when the treat is stuffed inside a cube, Haslanger's throw will have a different result. (ibid., 115)

5.2 Kinds of Questions

Structural explanations can be made regarding various types of phenomena. Haslanger focuses on structural explanations of social phenomena. She draws on an example of Alan Garfinkel (1981), which shows some of the advantages of social structural explanations:

Suppose that, in a class I am teaching, I announce that the course will be “graded on a curve,” that is, that I have decided beforehand what the overall distribution of grades is going to be. Let us say, for the sake of the example, that I decide that there will be one A, 24 Bs, and 25 Cs. The finals come in, and let us say Mary gets the A. She wrote an original and thoughtful final. (ibid., 41)

Looking at this example, how should the question “Why did Mary get an A?” be answered? According to Garfinkel, the response “She wrote an original and thoughtful final” is not appropriate. Mary could have written an original and thoughtful final and still not get an A. The grading structure allows only one A. This means that Mary needs to write the best final to get an A. The appropriate answer to the question is “Because she wrote the best final”. To answer the question adequately, one needs not only to consider Mary's work, but how good her work is compared with the work of others. (ibid., 41)

Garfinkel holds the common view that explanations are answers to questions. (ibid., 7-8) Furthermore, he thinks that questions determine a contrast space for potential responses. In

contrast spaces possible aspects of a question or subject are contrasted or highlighted. (ibid., 29)
Regarding the Mary example, you can focus your question on several aspects or contrast spaces. (ibid., 43)

The original question was:

1) Why did Mary get an A? (Haslanger 2016, 115)

This question could be focused on the following aspect:

2) Why did Mary get an **A** (as opposed to a B or a C)? (ibid., 115)

Or on this aspect:

3) Why did **Mary** (as opposed to Bob or Susan) get an A? (ibid., 116)

With (2), the contrast space consists of different grades. With (3), the contrast space consists of different students. The different contrast spaces of the question demonstrate that depending on the focus of a question only some explanations are fitting. (ibid., 116) A fitting explanation to the question:

4) Why did **Mary** (as opposed to George Bush or Barack Obama) get an A? (ibid., 116)

Would be that neither George Bush nor Barack Obama signed up for the class and attended the test while Mary did. (ibid., 116)

Garfinkel thinks that the right explanation to (1) needs to explain the grading structure that constrains the students. (Garfinkel 1981, 42) Haslanger thinks that, under Garfinkel's account, (1) should rather be phrased as:

5) Given that the instructor is evaluating all and only the students in the class on an A–B–C grading system with A the highest and C the lowest and a curve that allows only one A, why did Mary get an A? (Haslanger 2016, 116)

To (5) the right answer clearly is “Because Mary wrote the best final in the class.” The grading structure is a background assumption, which puts constraints on the contrast space. Garfinkel calls these constraints structural conditions. Structural conditions affect the range of adequate

explanations. (ibid., 117)

Haslanger draws two conclusions from Garfinkel's account. First, explanations answer questions that determine how appropriate answers can look like. Second, if there are constraints put on the contrast space, which means that there are only some possibilities available, an adequate explanation needs to take these constraints into account. Haslanger applies these conclusions to the treat example. Even if the question is “Why did the treat end up in the gully?”, one has to take into account the background assumption that the treat was inserted into a ball. The best explanation does not focus on the treat. The best explanation focuses the structure within which the treat exists, i.e., the ball. (ibid., 116-117) Haslanger posits the hypothesis “If a particular is part of a system or structure, then the best first step may be to indicate that it is part of the system or structure and proceed to explain what’s up with the structure” (ibid., 118).

5.3 Structures in a more General Understanding

Haslanger continues with a general description of structures. (ibid., 118) She draws on Stewart Shapiro's (1997) analysis of structures. Shapiro develops his analysis of structures for a description of structuralism in the philosophy of mathematics. However, Shapiro often references non-mathematical phenomena in his explanations, which makes his analysis appealing for a more general interpretation of structures. According to Haslanger “structures, broadly understood, are complex entities with parts whose behavior is constrained by their relation to other parts” (Haslanger 2016, 118). Shapiro assumes that a system is “a collection of objects with certain relations” (Shapiro 1997, 73). He gives the following examples. People that are genetically or otherwise related form a system known as family. A chess configuration is a system as well, where different objects have certain positions on a board and are restricted in their movement possibilities. Shapiro defines a structure as “the abstract form of a system” (ibid., 73). In a structure only the relationships between the objects in a system matter. Features of objects that have no influence on their relations to different objects are ignored. (ibid., 73)

Haslanger says that her family is an example of a system with a certain structure. The members of Haslanger’s family are in some way related to each other, signified by expressions like “‘parent of,’ ‘child of,’ ‘spouse of’” (Haslanger 2016, 118). When you abstract from Haslanger’s family system, you get a broader structure that can be applied to various families. Furthermore, there is a difference between a place in a structure and a person or object that occupies that place. For example, Haslanger occupies the position of ‘parent,’ but this position can be occupied by various people. (ibid., 118)

Shapiro also picks up on this distinction. On the one hand, positions in a structure can be

interpreted as offices. An object or individual can occupy an office. For instance, an individual can occupy the office of vice president. (Shapiro 1997, 82) In the office interpretation, one could remark “that the current vice president is more intelligent than his predecessor” (ibid., 82). The office interpretation assumes that there are particular objects or individuals which can occupy the positions in the structure. A government requires individuals that hold certain offices. A chess game requires objects that serve as game pieces. On the other hand, places in a structure can be interpreted as objects. In this case, one describes the places of a structure independently of any particular individuals or objects which might occupy the places. (ibid., 82-83) For instance, one might say that “the vice president is president of the Senate, that the chess bishop moves on a diagonal” (ibid., 83). Haslanger uses the expression “node” to refer to positions in a structure which are interpreted as objects. (Haslanger 2016, 119)

Haslanger argues that some explanations are best at explaining something because they consider places in a structure as objects. In these cases, it is necessary to abstract from the objects or individuals occupying a node in a structure to get the best explanation. In the treat example, much information about the occupier of the place, i.e., the treat, is not relevant for the explanation. It is not relevant which flavor or texture the treat has. It is relevant that the ball in which the treat is inserted is round. Information about the structure which the treat is part of is important. If a problem is described in terms of an individual having a position in a structure, it still might be best to give an explanation that focuses on the structure. This is what Haslanger calls a structural explanation. (ibid., 119)

Haslanger claims that structural explanations can be applied to more variations of phenomena than specific individualistic explanations. Individualistic explanations focus on particular individuals. These explanations are exact, but not very robust. Just a few differences in the phenomenon can make the explanation inadequate. Structural explanations are concerned with types of individuals. In this case, a type is a node within a structure, e.g., parent. Structural explanations are more robust because they abstract from details of the occupants of positions. Structural explanations can deal with variations in a phenomenon and can be applied to a wider range of phenomena. (ibid., 119-120)

5.4 Triggering and Structuring Causes

Another account that can be relevant for an analysis of structure and that Haslanger makes use of is Fred Dretske’s (1988). Dretske distinguishes between triggering and structuring causes. There are different types of causes which can be relevant for the explanation of a phenomenon. A triggering cause initiate an event to occur immediately. A structuring cause prompts a certain

event to occur rather than another event. (ibid., 42) Haslanger takes the following example from Dretske (1988, 42-43), but presents it in a way so that it synergizes with Garfinkel's concept of “contrast spaces” introduced above. Clyde stood up when the queen entered the room. (Haslanger 2016, 120)

One possible question is:

6) Why did Clyde stand up when the Queen entered? (Haslanger 2016, 120)

One possible focus of the question would be:

7) Why did Clyde stand up **when the Queen entered** ... (as opposed to moments before or moments after)? (ibid., 120)

The correct answer is “Because at that moment the queen entered the room.” (ibid., 121) Dretske assumes that this is the triggering cause. The queen entering the room triggers Clyde’s action to stand up. (Dretske 1988, 43)

Another possible focus is:

8) Why did Clyde **stand up** (as opposed to stay seated, take off his hat, clap his hands) when the Queen entered? (Haslanger 2016, 120)

The correct answer to this question is “Because standing up is considered to be a gesture of respect.” (ibid., 121) Dretske holds that this is the structuring cause. It determines why Clyde performed this action and not another one. (Dretske 1988, 43) Haslanger argues that the triggering cause in this example is only the immediate cause of Clyde's action. To explain the structuring cause, one needs to assume that Clyde is part of a certain social structure. The focus is no longer on individuals but on nodes in a structure. Rules of politeness claim that people who occupy places in that social structure need to stand up when the queen arrives. This does not just apply to Clyde. Any other individual in his situation who wants to follow the rules of politeness would have stood up as well. (Haslanger 2016, 121)

Haslanger concludes that structures limit the possibilities of individuals within that structure. In cases where this is relevant for an explanation, structures need to be analyzed. Structures are not just a setting of secondary importance where individuals act. In some cases, structures themselves should be the target of explanations. Haslanger contends that “questions about nodes in structures are the proper subject matter of social science, for it is types of individuals,

types of actions, etc. that are of primary interest” (ibid., 121). Furthermore, triggering causes and structuring causes are not in conflict with each other. They explain different parts of a phenomenon in different ways. (ibid., 121)

5.5 The Invisible Foot

The debate if all social explanations need to be individualistic has a long history. Haslanger argues against the assumption that explanations in social science need to be individualistic, although she does not specify (in this paper) what exactly she rejects about individualism (although she does so in a later paper). She simply provides a positive example of social explanations, which are not individualistic. These are of course structural explanations. Haslanger uses the following example to illustrate a structural explanation. (ibid., 121-122) She begins with a question:

9) Why do women continue to be economically disadvantaged relative to men? (ibid., 122)

With a certain focus the question could be understood as:

10) Why do women continue to be economically disadvantaged relative to men (as opposed to reaching economic parity with men)? (ibid., 122)

Haslanger presents three possible explanations to this question:

Biologistic explanation: women are innately disadvantaged in comparison with men in what it takes (intelligence, competitiveness, etc.) to be successful in high paying jobs.

Individualistic explanation: women, more than men, prefer to spend time with children over being in a high-paying job (...fill in relevant beliefs and desires), so they choose to forego economic success for the benefits and pleasures of motherhood.

Structural explanation: Women are positioned in a self-perpetuating economic structure that systematically disadvantages them. (Haslanger 2016, 122)

Haslanger follows up the explanations with this example:

The Invisible Foot (Okin 1989; Cudd 2006): Imagine a couple, Larry and Lisa, who, we

suppose, are equally intelligent, talented, educated, and experienced in the workplace; they have equal power in their relationship, have no prejudices about gender roles, and are equally capable of all domestic tasks and childrearing tasks. Larry and Lisa decide to have children; baby Lulu arrives. They live in a community where decent childcare is beyond their means. Moreover, let's suppose that in this community, as elsewhere, there is a wage gap: women, on average, make only 75 % of what men make. Under these conditions, unless Larry and Lisa have special reasons to think that they are unusual in their earning capacities, it is reasonable for Larry to work full-time and for Lisa to make adjustments in her work, e.g., to work part-time, to take time off, to take a less demanding job. (Cudd 2006, p. 149)

Ann Cudd (2006) claims that Lisa and Larry are not exceptional and are representative of many men and women, which means that Lisa's income is 75% of Larry's. Hiring women often carries more financial risks. Employers often think that women will either eventually leave their job to take care of their children or will not commit themselves to their jobs as much as men. As a result, women will usually be considered for jobs that require less commitment, mobility, experience, and that will be paid less. To be considered for a high paying job, women will have to perform outstandingly. In conclusion, the structure that gave rise to Lisa's decision is reiterated. (ibid., 148-151)

Haslanger contends that the invisible foot expresses structural problems. It is not possible to grasp these problems with a biologicistic or individualistic explanation. An individualistic explanation would stress that Lisa chose to quit her job. Lisa quit her job because she decided to do so. This is the triggering cause. Further inquiry reveals that Lisa's decision is based on her assumption that this is the decision that her family would profit most from. This explanation, however, still tends to be individualistic. (Haslanger 2016, 123)

A structural explanation shifts the attention from the individuals (in this case, Lisa and Larry) occupying nodes to the nodes (such as woman/man, mother/father, etc.) they occupy. (ibid., 123) The following questions can be raised:

11) Why did **Lisa** (rather than Larry) quit her job?

12) Why did Lisa **quit** her job (rather than find a different solution to the childcare problem, ...)? (ibid., 123)

The individualistic explanation cannot adequately answer neither (11) nor (12). The individualistic explanation is similar to answering the question in Garfinkel's example "Why

did Mary get an A?” with “Because she wrote an original and thoughtful final.” To answer (12), you need to explain the structural constraint that, in Lisa's community, decent childcare is not available. This means that, to have someone who cares for the child, either Lisa or Larry need to quit her or his job. To explain (11), you need to explain the structural constraint that women, on average, only make 75% of what men make. Lisa's personal features are irrelevant for these structural constraints. Under the assumption that Lisa and Larry want to maximize the income for their family, it is rational for Lisa to quit her job because Larry will provide more income for the family. (ibid., 123-124) Both answers to (11) and (12) seem to be referring to the structuring cause.

More important, these structural constraints are not something that only applies to Lisa. They apply to all other women who occupy a node similar to Lisa's as a woman, mother, wife, etc, in a certain social structure, which includes “facts of human infant dependency, a framework of gender relations, and a particular wage-labor system” (ibid., 125). This means that these women will be put under the same pressure to act similar to Lisa (and therefore, to quit their job). This also shows that the structural explanation is more robust. It can be applied to others who live under the same structural constraints as Lisa. (ibid., 124-125)

Overall, the individualistic explanation of the question “Why did Lisa quit her job?” seems to be inadequate. It does not capture the structural constraints, which limit Lisa's options and pressure her to act and choose a certain way. Furthermore, the individualistic and biologicistic explanations do not raise moral or political issues. If the economic disadvantage of women relative to men exists because women simply choose to take care of their children, there is nothing to criticize. If women are biologically disadvantaged relative to men, then it is not surprising that men perform better. Haslanger argues that the structural explanation of the invisible foot highlights the social structures that put women in situations where it is rational for them to choose economic disadvantage. This keeps women subordinate to men. (ibid., 124)

6. Individualism

Haslanger's (2016) paper on social structural explanation already takes a jab at methodological individualism in the philosophy of the social sciences. In this paper, Haslanger argues that social explanations do not need to be individualistic, in the way methodological individualism demands. In a later paper, Haslanger (forthcoming) elaborates in more detail what she opposes about methodological individualism. This paper is the subject of this chapter.

6.1 What Is Methodological Individualism?

Many scholars from the social sciences and philosophy of the social sciences have been fond of methodological individualism for a while now. The basic thought behind methodological individualism is that social explanations should focus on individuals. This is usually motivated by the assumption that the social world is created and constituted by individuals and that there is nothing ontologically that goes "beyond" individuals. Groups or states are, in the opinion of the methodological individualist, ontologically not more than their parts. They are simply collections of individuals. There exist all sorts of variations of methodological individualism and the literature is extensive. (List and Spiekermann 2013, 629)

Haslanger shares the common assumption that methodological individualism can be construed in two ways:

Ontological individualism (OI) is the view that the social world is exhaustively *constituted* by individuals (persons) and their relations and interactions. The slogan is: there is nothing in the social world over and above individuals and their interactions.

Explanatory individualism (EI) is the view that social phenomena should be *explained* in terms of individuals and their interactions. (Haslanger forthcoming, 1)

Haslanger holds that the two construals are often held to support each other. From the point of view of an ontological individualist, explanatory individualism looks attractive. Ontological individualism thinks that all social phenomena depend on individuals, their attitudes, and their actions. Suppose you want to explain the claim that criminal activity increases in summer. For an ontological individualist, this claim means that individuals are more prone to commit crimes in summer. These individuals share a certain type of attitude that leads them to their criminal actions, for instance, because the weather is warmer. If that is true, then an explanation of the claim should be explaining attitudes of individuals. (ibid., 1)

Haslanger refers to Jackson and Pettit, who argue that this interpretation of ontological individualism implies that social explanations need to explain the similarity in the attitudes of individuals, which subsequently leads to similar actions that are responsible for the social phenomenon. (Jackson and Pettit 1992, 132) A popular approach toward providing explanations of that sort is to rationalize actions. (Haslanger forthcoming, 3) This makes explanations in terms of rational choice and game theory appealing (e.g., Lewis 1969).

From the point of view of an explanatory individualist, ontological individualism looks attractive as well. Explanatory individualism holds that explanations should be in terms of individuals. In social explanations it is common to distinguish between the micro and the macro level. At the micro level there are individuals. At the macro level there are collective phenomena like states, ideologies, or the economy. An explanatory individualist, then, holds that macro level phenomena should be explained in terms of micro level phenomena. (Haslanger forthcoming, 2) An example of this approach is “Coleman’s Boat” (Coleman 1990, 8—see figure 1.2). James Coleman analyzes Max Weber’s (1958 [1904]) claim that the protestant religious doctrine improved the growth of capitalism. (Coleman 1990, 6) Coleman argues that to show this claim is true, one needs to show how the protestant religious doctrine affects the values

that

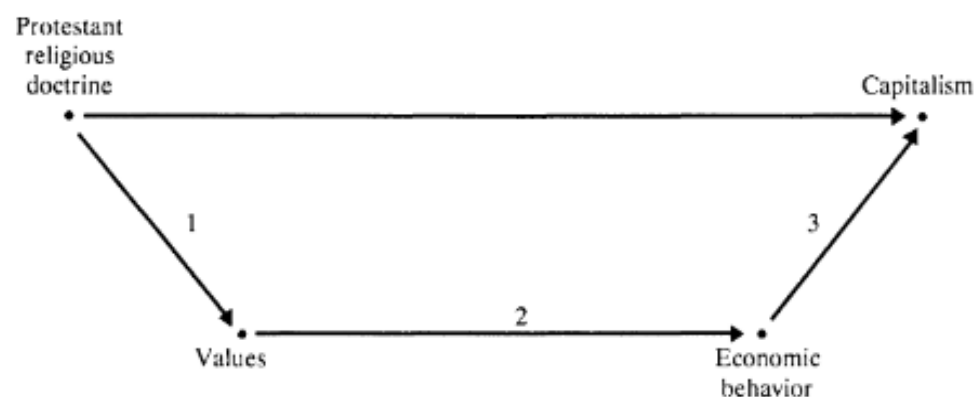


Figure 1.2 Macro- and micro-level propositions: effects of religious doctrine on economic organization.

individuals (who follow the doctrine) hold. Next, one needs to show how these values affect the economic behavior of these individuals. Finally, one needs to show how this economic behavior affects the growth of capitalism. The protestant religious doctrine and capitalism are at the macro level. The values and the economic behavior of individuals are at the micro level. (ibid., 8) Coleman argues that Weber’s argumentation supports line 1 and 2, but not 3. (ibid., 6-9) Haslanger thinks that an ontological individualist would think that their view provides evidence for line 3. Individuals, their relations, and interactions determine the social phenomenon capitalism. If individuals show a certain economic behavior, this affects capitalism. (Haslanger forthcoming, 2)

6.2 Ontological Individualism

Haslanger argues against both ontological and explanatory individualism. (ibid., 3) She holds that there are two common explanations how the social world can be constituted by individuals. On the one hand, there are authors that focus on groups of individuals and collective intentionality (e.g., Tuomela 2013; Ludwig 2016). A group is constituted by individuals. Similarly, states, organizations, or other “bigger” social phenomena are constituted by individuals. (Haslanger forthcoming, 5)

On the other hand, there are authors who contend that collective intentionality can change material objects (or events) into social objects (or events) (e.g., Searle 1995; Ásta 2018). One common example is money. A chunk of metal or paper is not money because a chunk of metal or paper is inherently money. It is money because the material object is assigned the status of being money by a collective of people, such as society. Society assumes that within their social system the chunk of metal counts as an instance of money. The meaning (of being money) is projected onto the material object. (Haslanger forthcoming, 5)

Haslanger defines the two versions of ontological individualism as follows:

Mereological constitution: As (wholly/partly) *constitute* B by being (all of/some of) B’s parts. ...

Causal constitution: As *cause* B to exist, or As *cause* Xs to be Bs. (ibid., 6)

Mereological constitution corresponds to the first version of methodological individualism. There it is claimed that social entities like states or organizations are constituted by individuals. Causal constitution corresponds to the second version of methodological individualism. There it is stated that people collectively cause material entities like a chunk of metal to be social entities like money. Haslanger argues that causal constitution implies that there is not “nothing in the social world over and above individuals and their interactions” (ibid., 6). Under the causal version, there are also material objects, which are assigned statuses. However, the disjunction between mereological and causal constitution is still defensible. The individualist, then, would argue that social phenomena depend on individuals in either a causal or mereological way. (ibid., 6)

Haslanger thinks that both mereological and causal constitution rely on mind-dependence. The same applies to the individualist with a disjunctive view. The social world is mind-dependent, in the sense that either it is constituted by individuals (with minds) or that material

objects are assigned status functions by individuals (with minds). The social world does not depend on just a singular mind but on the minds of a collective. (ibid., 7)

The individualist might argue that there is something which both causal and mereological constitution have in common. In both cases, social facts supervene on facts about individuals. (ibid., 7) Haslanger refers to Brian Epstein, who, she thinks, successfully argues that either social facts do not supervene on facts about individuals, or that the individualist's supervenience claim turns into a supervenience of all facts on material facts. (Epstein 2015, 46-49)

Haslanger uses the following example, the basic idea of which she borrows from Epstein (ibid., 46-49). Consider the example of food. Haslanger thinks that food is a social entity that is constituted by edible entities. Vegetables, for instance, are edible. These are material entities. Food, however, is not exactly the same thing as edible entities. There are many edible things, but whether they are considered food depends on cultural context. Babies or dogs are edible, but they are not considered food in the Western world. (Haslanger forthcoming, 4)

The individualist would argue that determining the facts about individuals determines the social facts. This is not true for food because it also depends on the material properties of the thing that is considered food. Imagine two worlds, w_1 and w_2 . In both worlds, individuals have identical dispositions regarding a species of mushrooms. In both worlds, the species of mushrooms is considered food. However, in w_1 the mushrooms are poisonous. In w_2 they are not. Because of that, in w_1 the mushrooms are not food, and in w_2 they are. The material properties of the mushrooms matter. These are not properties that depend on individuals. (Haslanger forthcoming, 7)

The individualist might argue that social facts should supervene on facts about individuals and all physical facts. Haslanger holds that this move would give up the mind-dependence that the individualist is trying to defend, since social facts would not just supervene on facts about (the minds of) individuals. Haslanger concludes that social facts depend not only on facts about individuals but also on physical facts. (ibid., 8)

6.3 Materiality

One of Haslanger's main points is that individualism does not account for the importance of material facts (that exist independently of the minds of individuals, such as assigning status to an object) for the social world. She uses the following example as central to her argument. Interstate 95 (or I-95) is a highway on the East Coast of the United States. There are several elements to Interstate 95. (ibid., 8)

Consider the following things occupying the space of I-95:

- i) A network of concrete extending from Florida to Maine that is at least 86 feet wide, with a divider down the middle, a slope no more than 6%, with at least 16 feet clearance above and with limited paved access to local streets (etc.). Call this the *concrete network*.
- ii) A network of concrete (as described in (i)) that functions as a route for passage. Call this the *thoroughfare*.
- iii) A network of concrete (as described in (i) and (ii)) that has been designated as part of the Interstate System (I-95), and that is administered by State and Federal agencies. Call this *I-95*. (ibid., 9)

The concrete network is just a material entity. There are similarities here to the money example. A piece of metal is by itself just a piece of metal. Through the assignment of status, the piece of metal can be viewed as money. The concrete network by itself is just a network of concrete. People built the concrete network. In this sense, the concrete network is caused by humans. It is an artifact. However, the concrete network is not essentially social. It is not a concrete network because people assigned it the status of being a concrete network. Once built, the concrete network can exist independently of humans. It is not mind-dependent, so it would not count as a social entity for an individualist. (ibid., 9)

I-95 is I-95 because the concrete network is assigned the status of I-95. I-95 is caused by humans and it is mind-dependent. In this regard, I-95 is similar to money. Haslanger thinks that in the case of I-95 the thesis of causal constitution is fitting. Both for the individualist and for Haslanger, I-95 is a social entity. (ibid., 9-10)

For the thoroughfare, Haslanger's analysis is different. The concrete network is not a thoroughfare by virtue of being assigned the status of a thoroughfare. It is a thoroughfare because it functions as a route of passage, i.e., a route for people (or animals) to use during their travels. To function as a thoroughfare, the concrete network does not need to be thought of as a thoroughfare. Haslanger argues that before the concrete network was built there likely was a path in its place that had the function of a thoroughfare despite not being considered a thoroughfare. Animals also use paths in the wild as thoroughfares without assigning them the status of thoroughfare. The thoroughfare is not mind-dependent by any means. However, it is a social entity because it has a function in a social system. (ibid., 9-10)

6.4 Functions

Besides the importance of material entities for the social world, Haslanger's argumentation

against individualism revolves around the assumption that something is social in virtue of its function. There are two notions of “function” that Haslanger explains. In both cases, function has not necessarily something to do with being created to achieve a certain goal. To be a function, something only needs to be of a certain kind of importance to a system. (ibid., 10)

The first type of functions are etiological functions. An etiological function is defined by the contribution a feature makes to its survival or evolution. For example, one could argue that gills function to extract oxygen from water. (ibid., 10) This feature gave organisms with gills greater fitness compared to those without gills. For that reason, organisms with gills were more likely to survive and make offspring. (Risjord 1999, S304-305) Moreover, etiological functions support their continuity: “X has the function F, just in case X’s ancestors functioning in that sort of way explains X’s existence (or the reproduction of X-type things) (Haslanger forthcoming, 10).” Etiological functions focus on “the” proper function of something. (ibid., 11)

Ruth Millikan (1984, 1989) claims that etiological functions were instrumental in the evolution of language, thought, and various social phenomena. For that reason, etiological functions are also called “Millikan functions.” (Haslanger forthcoming, 12) In social science there are also defenders of the etiological notion of function, e.g., Talcott Parsons (1951). They usually compare society to an organism. The different parts of society function like organs to satisfy people’s interests and to support the survival of society. (Haslanger forthcoming, 10-11)

Etiological functionalism in the social sciences has been condemned on many grounds. Haslanger names three common arguments against it. First, society does not necessarily work like one organism towards one coherent goal. Within society there exist different parties with often opposed goals. Second, society is not necessarily stable and regularly changes. Third, it is hard to locate autonomy and agency within the functionalist’s model because it revolves around structures and functions. Haslanger holds that even if the criticisms are correct, one can still argue that some (and not all) social phenomena should be explained in terms of etiological functions. (ibid., 11)

The other type of function are systems functions. Systems functions look to explain the function of something in a particular context or system, but not the proper function of something. (ibid., 11) Systems functions are also called “Cummins functions” because Robert Cummins (1975) formulated a popular definition of them. Haslanger quotes Mark Risjord’s explanation of systems functions:

A natural way to proceed is to analyze the system into component parts and demonstrate how its capacities are nothing more than the operation of its components. On the "system" conception of a function, the function of an item is simply the contribution it makes to

the capacities of the whole system. (Risjord 1999, S306)

Millikan gives the following example to illustrate the systems view of functions. Within the water-cycle, it is the function of clouds to create rain. This rain provides water for streams and rivers, which moisturizes the soil, which enables vegetation to grow. Outside of the water-cycle system, however, rain has no function per se. (Millikan 1989, 294) Haslanger intends to use systems functions for her analysis. Systems functions do not rely on minds. Something has a function relative to a system regardless whether someone assigns it a certain status. (Haslanger forthcoming, 12)

6.5 Social Systems and Critique

Equipped with the systems notion of “function,” Haslanger revisits her example of I-95. Haslanger argues that the thoroughfare is a social entity. She does not think that the social necessarily relies on collective intentionality, like individualism thinks it does. (ibid., 13) Whether something is social depends on whether something has a function within a social system. (ibid., 15) Haslanger thinks that collective intentionality depends on more primitive types of social activities. These more primitive types of social activities help humans to coordinate and to communicate with each other in ways that do not need to involve intentionality. (ibid., 14)

The thoroughfare is a social entity because it functions as a route of passage within a social system. Haslanger uses the following examples to explain the sociality of a thoroughfare. In nature that there sometimes is a route from one point to another that is much easier to take than any other route. If there is something of importance to animals along that special route, animals will likely take that route. Bears, for instance, may take that route “because they instinctively follow the edges of streams” (ibid., 15), which are easier to traverse. The bears do not follow that route because they coordinate with each other or assign a status to that route. Haslanger calls this certain route simply a “route.” (ibid., 15)

A “route” that has a function in a social system, for instance by being part of a social practice, is a thoroughfare. The route is the material instantiation of the social entity of a thoroughfare. Consider several people camping in a forest. One person figures out an uncomplicated route to the closest river. That member, then, explains the route to other people, who will also take that route when they go to the nearest river. The repeated use of the route by the different group members is a social practice. The route has the function of a thoroughfare within the social system of the campers. (ibid., 15)

Haslanger has made two arguments against individualism. First, social facts depend on material facts. Second, something can be social in virtue of its function within a social system. Haslanger presented the examples of food and thoroughfare, as described above. Both of these examples are social kinds and neither of them are social because they are mind-dependent. Food is constituted by edible things and the thoroughfare is constituted by a concrete network. Food and the thoroughfare are not social kinds because they are assigned a certain status. They are social kinds because they fulfill a function within a social system. Haslanger preserves the assumption that some social entities are mind-dependent, such as I-95. Her point is that not all social entities are mind-dependent. (ibid., 16)

Haslanger thinks that her account fits with structural explanations of social phenomena. (ibid., 17) A social structure is not the same as a social function, but the two notions are connected. For Haslanger, a social structure is constituted by interconnected practices. Something can have a function in a social system when it is part of a social practice. I deduce from this assumption, that social structures can have parts which have a certain function. Furthermore, I assume that social structures can have functions within a social system. An analysis of structure can yield insights into the function of something, and an analysis of the function of something can yield insights into a social structure. Both structure and function are phenomena that are considered with respect to a social system and not just with respect to an individual or a collection of individuals.

Haslanger also contends that her account is useful for social critique. We can further analyze preferable and nonpreferable functions of a social system by looking at the structures and mechanisms that are responsible for these functions. The systems approach to functions is helpful in that regard. We are not (just) looking at individuals and their interactions, like individualism wants us to. Social phenomena can have effects which are completely unintended. In analyzing the function of a social phenomenon, we can capture these effects. (ibid., 17) Haslanger mentions the following example:

The fact that the concrete network is a thoroughfare – that it functions as a route of passage for millions every day – positions it in a transportation system that has had both positive and deeply problematic effects. The Interstate System prioritizes the use of private cars as opposed to public transportation, has destroyed poor and Black communities, supported segregation through White flight to the suburbs, hollowed out urban commercial districts, insulates the affluent from bearing witness to poverty, disrupts non-human animal migration patterns, increases carbon emissions leading to climate change, etc. (ibid., 17)

Haslanger thinks that many of the mentioned effects are not intended and are not the result of people assigning the Interstate system a certain status. Haslanger argues that an individualist would have issues explaining the unanticipated effects of the Interstate system, because individualism focuses on individuals and their interactions. The unanticipated effects of the Interstate system, however, have little correlation with individuals and their interactions but with the function of I-95. (ibid., 17)

7. Critique

I will describe three critiques of Haslanger's account of social structural explanation, one by Amie Thomasson (2016), one by Rachel Sterken (2018), and one by Alex Madva (2016). Thomasson and Sterken agree with Haslanger that social structural explanations are a valid alternative to, and have advantages over, individualistic explanations. Thomasson tries to extend Haslanger's account to situations where agents do not make explicit choices within a social structure. Sterken argues that there are different types of structures. On Sterken's account, Haslanger mistakenly argues for broad and deep structures, while the focus should be on local and flexible structures. Madva thinks that a focus on structural over individualistic solutions to social problems is wrong.

7.1 Thomasson

Thomasson begins with a summary of Haslanger's account. Since I have already described Haslanger's account, I will not discuss Thomasson's mostly accurate summary. Thomasson thinks that Haslanger's argumentation is largely successful. She thinks that structural explanations, as advocated by Haslanger, are perfectly compatible with individualistic explanations. Structures do not take away the autonomy of agents and agents have the opportunity to make rational decisions. Yet, structural explanations have advantages over individualistic explanations and therefore are in some situations preferable. (Thomasson 2016, 131-132)

But Thomasson thinks that Haslanger's account is not broad enough. Haslanger only focuses on cases where structures set up a "choice architecture" for agents, i.e., structures put various constraints on the actions that an individual might take. Structures might allow certain actions and disallow others. They might encourage certain actions and discourage others. This sets up a choice architecture for agents where they are still free to choose, but the available options are influenced by the structure. For example, Lisa (from Haslanger's example) can choose if she wants to quit her job or not, but she is constrained by her child's need for childcare, her income being lower than her husband's, etc. Thomasson suggests that structural explanations can also cover cases where agents are not autonomous. (ibid., 132)

Thomasson lists a couple examples where she thinks that a structural explanation in terms of "choices within a socially structured choice architecture" (ibid., 134) is not fitting well:

- Why don't more women go into engineering (even when they have the skills and aren't

physically or institutionally prevented)?

- Why aren't more working class British kids applying to Oxford and Cambridge, when they aren't prevented, and many have the capability and could get the funding?
- Why don't more women speak up in class? Why are women more often interrupted, not as often given meetings with professors, etc.?
- Why are resumes of minority candidates evaluated as worse than those of comparable white candidates? (ibid., 134)

Thomasson thinks that the issue in the above listed examples is not that people make an intentional choice within the constraints of a social structure. The issue is that people (unintentionally) act in a way that is not transparent to them. Many women do not even think about going into engineering. Many working class British kids do not think about applying to Oxford or Cambridge. Some people cut off women more often or evaluate job applications of minority candidates worse, without noticing it. (ibid., 134)

Thomasson references Haslanger's (2016, 127) claim that social structures organize thought and communication. Thomasson contends that this claim is related to Haslanger's notion of "social schema." Schemas together with resources constitute practices, which, in turn, constitute social structures. Thomasson correctly identifies schemas as "public meanings" (Thomasson 2016, 135) that provide "templates of interaction" (Haslanger 2016, 128) and that "are not up to the individual but depend on collective understandings and the resources that have been organized by those understandings" (ibid., 128). Schemas organize thought and communication because they provide people with meanings that can be used for interpretation of a resource or social interactions. Thomasson argues that schemas are closely tied to norms. (Thomasson 2016, 135)

In a different paper, Thomasson (2014) has outlined an account of norms that draws on ideas from Martin Heidegger (1962 [1927]) and Roman Ingarden (1989 [1961]). Thomasson argues that norms of treatment instruct people how they are supposed to view an object and how to interact with it. These norms are the basis for concepts of artifacts. For instance, a fork is an object that is supposed to be handled in a specific way. The fork is supposed to be used for picking up food for eating. A church is a building in which one is supposed to do certain actions and others not. A priest is supposed to hold a mass following a rite within a church. (Thomasson 2016, 135)

Thomasson holds that this view about norms is not just limited to artifacts. Many social kinds, including social structures and nodes in structures, are normative in the same way as artifacts are. Norms tell us how to view and how to interact with individuals and objects that

hold positions in a social structure, and how the individuals occupying the nodes are supposed to act. For example, a police officer, a professor, or a priest are all social roles (or nodes) that are supposed to be approached in a specific way and that are supposed to act in a specific way. Since social roles are defined by their place in a social structure, norms are essential for our understanding of social structures. Norms also govern the nodes of social kinds like man or woman. How one is supposed to interact with women is different from how one is supposed to interact with men. (ibid., 135-136)

Thomasson thinks that Haslanger has made similar arguments. Haslanger elaborated that the classification of social groups involves norms and concepts regarding that social group. When someone is thought to belong to a social group, then it is assumed that, for instance, this person has to behave in a certain way, or that you are allowed to behave towards that person in a certain way. (Haslanger 2012 [2000], 241) Thomasson argues that norms are closely tied to schemas. Schemas organize thought and behavior. They do so because they are normative. They instruct people to act in a certain way or think of something or someone in a certain way. (Thomasson 2016, 136-137)

Thomasson writes that her approach has the advantage that it covers behavior on a bigger spectrum. The approach neither claims that what we do has to be intentional actions, in the sense of rational choice, nor that our behavior always is unintentional. Haslanger's approach only focuses on cases where rational choice is involved. Thomasson's approach allows cases where it is not. Many things we do are not the result of rational choice. When we use a fork, we usually do not think about the possible applications of a fork before we choose to use it for eating. We usually also do not think about how we could possibly consume our food before we choose to eat with a fork. (ibid., 137) Thomasson introduces another example:

The little girl who rushes to the pink aisles of the toy store and comes to examine the baby dolls and vacuums rather than the trucks and construction toys does not make an explicit rational choice that these things are preferable; nor is she simply 'programmed' by nature or society: instead, given her initiation into local social practices, the toys of the pink aisles simply show up to her as 'for her', as 'to be played with'. (ibid., 137)

Thomasson does not want to argue that individuals within social structures in general are not free to make intentional, rational choices. She wants to argue that there are some cases where individuals either do not get a chance to make a rational choice or do not intentionally make a choice. Structures also constrain by making certain options appear available and others not. That certain options appear available to us might not be something we consciously realize when

we make our choices. The little girl does not intentionally choose to ignore certain toys. Some toys appear available for her and others not. (ibid., 137)

Thomasson understands her approach as phenomenological. The approach focuses on the first-person perspective. To determine the influence of norms on people, you ask them which actions appear to them as “to-be-done” (ibid., 137) and which as “to-be-avoided” (ibid., 137-138). You ask people how objects or people appear as “to-be-treated-in-this-way-or-that” (ibid., 138) to them. Phenomenology is of high importance for social structural explanations and can analyze which options people see as available as a result of social norms (and, hence, social structures). Structural explanations do not need to feature rational choices because norms can affect our behavior, without us realizing that they do so. (ibid., 137-138)

Thomasson holds that there are three ways in which norms can be relevant for structural explanations:

- In determining which (among the various possible choices in a choice architecture) even show up to us as ‘live options’ for pursuing.
- In channeling the ways we navigate our social world, even when we are not making explicit and conscious choices among options that we weigh in a choice architecture based on our beliefs and desires. (e.g. Norms shape the way children navigate a toy store, and the way adults sit, move, and speak in a job interview, in a classroom, etc., in ways that we generally don’t consciously choose, and that do affect our potential for success).
- In channeling the ways others regard and interact with us (interrupting, deferring, attending to, criticizing, shunning, fearing)—again, often in ways that aren’t consciously chosen or even acknowledged. (ibid., 138)

Thomasson concludes that her analysis provides the basis for social critique that is not in conflict with Haslanger’s analysis but adds to it. An analysis of norms can help in cases where structural injustice is not based on choices within a choice architecture. Norms can influence people’s behavior and actions in a way that they might not notice. In such cases, an analysis of norms can highlight which norms affect people in which ways. Norms can then be adjusted accordingly if they turn out to be inefficient, mistaken, or morally unjustified. (ibid., 138-139)

7.2 Sterken

Sterken picks up on a distinction that Haslanger makes at the beginning of her (2016) paper.

There, Haslanger distinguishes between different kinds of social structures in terms of size and depth. On the one hand, there are “broad and deep social phenomena, such as the wage-labor system of industrial capitalism and the heteronormative and bionormative nuclear family” (ibid., 113). On the other hand, there are “local and flexible phenomena such as the social structure of a particular institution, such as a school, church, or business” (ibid., 113). Sterken agrees with Haslanger on the importance of structural explanations. However, Sterken assumes Haslanger to be arguing for explanations that focus on broad and deep structures. Sterken thinks that structural explanations in most cases should focus on local and flexible structures. (Sterken 2018, 173-174)

Sterken begins her critique with several distinctions. She distinguishes between “structures, systems, kinds of structures, stages of structures, kinds of systems and stages of systems” (ibid., 179). Sterken assumes that Haslanger, following Shapiro, distinguishes between systems and structures. I described Haslanger’s and Shapiro’s views on this in section 6.3. (ibid., 179) Sterken quotes Haslanger:

...my family is a system that includes particular individuals (Steve, Isaac, Zina, Sparky, me) who stand in relations such as ‘parent of’, ‘child of’, ‘spouse of’, ‘dog of’, etc. But we can abstract from this particular Yablanger system to see it as instantiating a more general structure shared by other families. (Haslanger 2016, 118)

In this example, a system (Haslanger’s family) is something particular. A structure is something more general that is not necessarily unique to a particular system. Furthermore, a structure is defined by the relations between different nodes, ignoring who- or whatever occupies the nodes. Sterken argues that there are several structures that a family might have. Haslanger has two children. Hence, her family includes two “child of” relations. Sterken’s family includes parents, spouses, and one child. Sterken’s family has a different structure, despite being a family as well. She infers that there are kinds of structures corresponding to different kinds of families. (Sterken 2018, 179-180)

A stage of a structure is a structure at a certain point in time. Practices constitute structures. Schemas and resources constitute practices. Schemas and resources can change over time. The same applies to practices and structures. (ibid., 180) Sterken uses an example by Elizabeth Barnes. Barnes explains Haslanger’s concepts of “social practice” and “social structure” by an analogy to wheel ruts in a dirt road. Individual wagons drive along a dirt road. Every wagon leaves slight ruts where it is driving. Once several wagons have driven along the same path, the ruts of that path have become sufficiently deep. As long as wagons continue to drive along that

path, the ruts will be sustained. However, once the ruts exist, they exist independently of any particular wagon. The wagons are individuals enacting a social practice. The ruts are a social structure. (Barnes 2016, 7) Sterken writes that in Barnes's example the stage of the structure is the rut in the road at a specific moment. At an earlier or later point in time the rut might not be the same. (Sterken 2018, 180)

A stage of a system is a system at a certain point in time. Again, to refer to Barnes's analogy, a stage of a system would be a certain point in time of a wagon driving through the rut. Kinds of systems are collections of systems that have something in common. Sterken holds that the collection of all family systems with only one female having the relation "parent of" is an example of a kind of system. These distinctions between structures, systems, stages of, and kinds of are important for structural explanations because it is necessary to determine whether the phenomenon to be explained is a structure, or a system, a kind of structure, etc. (ibid., 180-181) Broad and deep explanations (explanations that focus on broad and deep structures) revolve around phenomena that are more general, such as, kinds of structures. Local and flexible explanations revolve around phenomena that are more particular, such as, a stage of a system. (ibid., 181-182)

Sterken also distinguishes between local, flexible, broad, and deep phenomena:

A local structure/system/practice is one that is constituted by schemas, resources, individuals and bits of the material world that are more tied to a particular context, circumstance or milieu. A flexible structure/system/practice is one that is constituted by schemas, resources, individuals and bits of the material world that are modally less robust i.e., more contingent/accidental. Broad and deep correspond to the other end of the local-flexible scales just described. (ibid., 184-185)

Local explanations can only explain particular phenomena. The results of such explanations cannot easily be generalized to other phenomena, even if they have something in common with the particular phenomenon featured in that explanation. Broad explanations can explain various phenomena that have something in common. Flexible explanations can only explain phenomena that could have easily been different if the circumstances were different. Deep explanations can explain phenomena that would have been the same even if the circumstances had been different. (ibid., 185)

Sterken presents one example of a broad and deep structure and one example of a local and flexible structure. The example of the broad and deep structure is completely made up. Assume that there is a resource called "smooze". People interact with this resource through the practice

of “smoozing”. Most people smooze frequently in a very similar way. The practice of smoozing constitutes the “smooze” social structure. This structure is broad because it is general and applies to a wide variety of systems. This structure is deep because it is modally robust. In all closest worlds (from the actual world) the structure is the same. (ibid., 185)

For the example of the local and flexible structure, Sterken refers to Garfinkel’s (1981, 41) example of the professor grading their class on a curve that Haslanger makes use of. I described this example in section 6.2. In this example, only one student can earn an A for her final. To explain why Mary got the A, one has to mention that only one A was possible, and that Mary wrote the best final. This structure is local because it only applies to this one particular case. Every professor who chooses to grade their class on a curve often chooses a different curve. The explanation of Garfinkel’s example only applies to other cases with exactly the same curve. The structure is flexible because it easily could have been different. The professor could have easily decided on a different curve because he is free to choose which curve he wants to have. (Sterken 2018, 185-186)

Sterken argues that Haslanger’s “core case” of Lisa quitting her job is best explained by a local and flexible explanation, like the following one:

Lisa occupies node n in her family.

Her family is constrained in way W (by lack of suitable childcare in her family’s community for Lulu, the 75% wage given to Lisa by her employer and a >75% minimum salary required to cover their family’s living expenses).

Node n has 75% wage in her family.

Lisa (in virtue of occupying node n with 75% salary) is constrained in way W and quit her job as a result. (ibid., 186-187)

The structure that this explanation refers to is local because it only applies to Lisa’s particular family. Other families might have suitable childcare in their community or other women might have more than a 75% wage. The structure is flexible because it readily could have varied. Maybe relatives could have resided nearby and therefore could have taken care of Lisa’s child, or maybe Lisa could have worked reduced hours. (ibid., 187)

Sterken assumes that Haslanger argues for a broad and deep explanation of Lisa’s case. (ibid., 188) Haslanger, like Sterken’s local and flexible explanation, mentions the lack of suitable

childcare and Lisa having a lower income than her husband as constraints for Lisa's decision. Furthermore, Haslanger holds that Lisa does have a lower income because she is a woman. Lisa's decision is constrained due to her gender. She occupies the wife/mother node, and this is essential for her decision. (Haslanger 2016, 124) Sterken thinks that Haslanger's explanation invokes a structure that is supposed to be applicable to several cases beyond Lisa's. It applies to (many) women who also have a lower income (due to their gender), who also are wives/mothers, and who also do not have suitable childcare in their community. (Sterken 2018, 188)

According to Sterken, a local explanation of Lisa's decision is better. Most families will live under constraints different from Lisa's. The families might be of a different kind, the wife/mother might not have a 75% income, or the families might have decent childcare available. Lisa does not give up her job because she is a woman, but because she has a 75% income. You could object that Lisa has a 75% income because she is a woman, but more argumentation is needed to show that Lisa being a woman is explanatorily relevant. (ibid., 189) A flexible explanation of Lisa's decision is better as well. Lisa's decision depends on many different factors that could have varied. Under different circumstances Lisa might not have had a 75% income or there were other ways to have the child taken care of. If, for instance, Lisa had gotten a promotion just before she had to make her decision, she would have had a higher wage and might not have given up her job. (ibid., 190-191)

Sterken argues that a broad and deep explanation of the example of Lisa makes use of structures that are not relevant for explaining the problem and provide too much information. (ibid., 192) The questions that should be answered are:

- 1) Why did **Lisa** (rather than Larry) quit her job?
- 2) Why did Lisa **quit** her job (rather than find a different solution to the childcare problem, ...)? (Haslanger 2016, 123)

Sterken thinks that an appropriate answer to (1) and (2) does not need to refer to broad and deep structures, such as gender, a broad wage-labor system, or a broad family structure. Whether Lisa is a woman is not relevant, but that she is placed on the node with a 75% income. Furthermore, Lisa's being a woman does not imply that she has a 75% income and Larry does not. Whether Lisa is part of a certain wage-labor system is not relevant, but that she gets paid a 75% wage by her employer is relevant. Lisa's being part of such a wage-labor system does not imply that she gets paid a 75% wage. (Sterken 2018, 193) Broad and deep structures provide too much information, for similar reasons that they are not relevant. For instance, answering (1)

or (2) by stating Lisa's gender provides more information than is required to answer the questions. (ibid., 194)

Sterken concludes that local and flexible explanations have two advantages. First, they can better answer counterfactual questions, such as:

(Q1) If Lisa had had a better job, would she have quit? If Lisa had had a better job, then she would not have quit.

(Q2) If Lisa had had a better employer, would she have quit? If Lisa had had a better employer, then she would not have quit. (ibid., 195-196)

Broad and deep explanations have to answer both of these questions affirmatively because broad and deep explanations are modally more robust and remain the same even when a few factors change. Local and flexible explanations are sensitive to small changes in the phenomena. Second, because local and flexible explanations can better answer counterfactual questions, they are better suited for interventions. Interventions should fit particular cases because they will then be more helpful. If, for instance, one wants to help Lisa, it is better if that help takes into account all the factors that are specific to Lisa's situation. Solutions to structural problems should focus on the system level and not on the broad structure level. (ibid., 196)

7.3 Haslanger's Reply to Sterken

Haslanger (2018a) issues a short reply to Sterken. Haslanger argues that with her paper she was not trying to argue that structural explanations should target broad and deep or local and flexible structures. Both broad (and) deep and local (and) flexible structures can be useful targets for structural explanations. Which one should be prioritized depends entirely on the situation at hand. (ibid., 256)

Haslanger refers to the example of Lisa, the woman who decides to quit her job to be able to take care of her child. (ibid., 251) Sterken claims that gender is not relevant for Lisa's decision to quit her job. (Sterken 2018, 193) Haslanger admits that there are situations where gender is not relevant for answering the question why a woman quits her job. The example of Lisa, however, specifically states that Lisa earns less than her husband because she is a woman. The purpose of the example is to point out structures that are responsible for many women having a lower income. Gender being relevant is basically built into the example. The example of Lisa is not an example of an actually existing woman. The example is made up. Lisa is just meant to be a model of a large group of women that have to live under constraining, economic structures

that cause women to earn less and encourages them to quit their jobs if they are faced with the necessity of someone taking care of their child. (Haslanger 2018a, 254)

As long as Lisa is treated as a model of a group, gender is relevant for the structural explanation. What if Lisa is not a model of a group but an actual individual? Does the situation change? Haslanger argues that the immediate (or triggering) cause of Lisa quitting her job is Lisa deciding to quit her job. This answers the question of the triggering cause of Lisa's action. However, a structural explanation looks for a different kind of cause that makes certain options available. Haslanger acknowledges that Sterken does recognize the importance of structuring causes for a good explanation of Lisa's case, but that, according to Sterken, the explanation should focus on local and flexible structures. This implies that gender wage gap and widespread scarcity of childcare institutions are not relevant. It is relevant that the company that Lisa is working for does not financially support parents leaving their job for a while to take care of their newborns. It is also relevant that there are no childcare institutions in Lisa's local community. (ibid., 254-255)

Haslanger admits that local and flexible structures can be relevant for structural explanations. In some situations, however, broad and deep structures are more important. If we focus on local and flexible structures, most of the blame is directed at the company that Lisa is working for and Lisa's local community. It might work to push that company to provide subsidized parental leave. In that case a local and flexible explanation provides a good basis for social change. However, companies often limit the benefits offered to their employees. The free market is a competitive environment that often causes companies to maximize their profits. As long as companies do not want to provide subsidized parental leave to their employees, a government-mandated regulation is needed to guarantee that companies have to provide subsidized parental leave. This would be a broad and deep solution to the problem because it recognizes a widespread problem and tries to solve it on a broad and deep level. (ibid., 255-256)

7.4 Madva

Alex Madva (2016) responds to several critics (e.g., Anderson 2010; 2012a; 2012b; Dixon et al. 2012; Haslanger 2015; 2016) of individualism, including Haslanger. According to Madva, these critics claim that social injustice is primarily a matter of structural injustice. To solve social problems, structural solutions need to be prioritized. Madva, hence, calls the critics "structural prioritizers" (Madva 2016, 702). (ibid., 701-702) Madva quotes Haslanger:

Correcting the wrongs of racism, sexism, and the like is not best achieved by focusing on

the 'bad attitudes' of individuals . . . structural injustices may persist even when attitudes change. (Haslanger 2015, 2)

Haslanger thinks that we should focus on structural change, which is often necessary to effectively eliminate prejudices and biases. (ibid., 1) Madva argues that structural prioritizers are mistaken. Both individual and structural change are necessary to tackle social problems. (Madva 2016, 702)

Madva illustrates his arguments with the example of prejudice reduction. Many people have prejudices towards, for instance, members of a certain race or a certain gender. A classical individualistic strategy to fight social injustice is to invest in the reduction of people's prejudices. Structural prioritizers hold that social structures and not the attitudes of individuals are responsible for social injustice. (ibid., 702-703) Elizabeth Anderson (2012a), for instance, contends that racial inequality does not persist because people have prejudices towards races. The actual cause is structural, i.e., segregation in various areas, such as housing, education, and employment. (ibid., 171)

In the United States African Americans tend to be poorer than white people. Many poor African Americans live in areas that are far away from good jobs that the African Americans might apply for. They often do not own cars and public transportation in many cases is bad. This segregation in housing tends to lead to poor African Americans remaining poor. Even if employers were not racist at all, the same structural constraints would endure. (Anderson 2010, 27-31) Similarly, education often is worse for segregated African Americans because they are poorer and the budget for local education is based on property taxes. (ibid., 38-43)

Structural prioritizers assume that racist attitudes are merely the outcome of structural injustice. Structural change, hence, leads to a change in prejudices. (Madva 2016, 704) Anderson thinks that racial integration is a good tool to fight racial inequality. When white people have more contact with black people, the two racial groups tend to avoid mistaken assumptions about the other racial group. (Anderson 2010, 123) Madva summarizes the argument of the structural prioritizer:

If racial prejudice vanished overnight, but segregation persisted, then segregation would eventually reignite racism. By contrast, if segregation vanished overnight, and schools, neighborhoods, and voting districts were suddenly integrated, then racism would gradually decline. (Madva 2016, 705)

Structural prioritizers think that structural changes achieve two goals at the same time. First,

they eliminate the structures that are the source of inequality. Second, because the source of inequality has been eliminated, over time people will change their prejudices and biases that are linked to inequality. (ibid., 705)

Madva admits that structural prioritizers are right in some respect. Their analysis of social structures and some of their empirical predictions seem to be correct. Social structures are relevant for battling racism. Just changing the prejudices of people will not be enough to solve the problem of racism. Segregation tends to raise racist prejudices in people. However, this does not imply that structural reformations should be prioritized over solutions that focus on individuals. (ibid., 705)

Anderson claims that racial integration, a structural measure, is the best solution for eliminating racism. (Anderson 2010, 112) Madva thinks that even if integration should be prioritized over individualistic means, such as diversity training, it only follows that in this particular situation a structural solution should be preferred over an individualistic solution. It does not follow that structural solutions should be preferred over individualistic solutions in general. Whether a structural approach should be prioritized over an individualistic approach or vice versa hinges on the situation. In some cases, the individualistic approach is more recommendable, in others the structural. (Madva 2016, 706)

In most cases, however, there is no reason to favor one type of solution over another. Often individualistic and structural means complement each other and both are needed to solve the problem. A good way to achieve racial integration is by motivating people to support racial integration. People that support integration will likely try to bring about integration if they can and elect politicians that support integration. A good way to motivate people to support integration is diversity training. Hence, an individualistic measure is useful for achieving structural changes. (ibid., 707)

Structural prioritizers argue that structural change eliminates both the sources of inequality and people's prejudices. One example of this approach is the structural prioritizers' endorsement of affirmative action. (ibid., 712) Anderson, for instance, contends that black people that do not conform to black stereotypes, such as poverty, counteract prejudices that other people might have about black people. Counterstereotypical individuals indicate to people confronted with them that the stereotypes are wrong. Hence, affirmative action seeks to raise awareness about counterstereotypical black individuals and to bring black people into positions that are not associated with black stereotypes. (Anderson 2010, 150) Madva thinks that affirmative action can work in this way, but that it is by no means guaranteed. Human psychology is very complex, and people respond to counterstereotypical individuals in various ways depending on the circumstances. (Madva 2016, 712)

Madva cites various studies to support his argument. (ibid., 712) For example, math and science are often considered a 'man's domain.' Being taught math and science by at least some women professors, significantly increases undergraduate women's chance of opting for a career in math or science. (Dasgupta 2013; Dasgupta and Asgari 2004; Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, and McManus 2011) However, Madva claims that these counterstereotypical role models only have an effect on women. The prejudices of undergraduate men are unaffected. Madva says that this claim is suggested by research, but he does not cite any research in particular. (Madva 2016, 713) Furthermore, role models for women in math and science only have a positive effect when the women students perceive it as likely that they can be similarly successful. If the role model is assumed to be an extraordinary genius, women students tend to be demotivated to pursue a career in math or science. (Asgari, Dasgupta, and Cote 2010; Asgari, Dasgupta, and Stout 2012) Madva concludes that structural improvements do not guarantee improvements on the individual level. Structural improvements might even have a negative effect on individuals. (Madva 2016, 713)

Structural reforms that encourage diversity do not necessarily cause individuals to accept diversity more. An example are individuals that have benefitted from affirmative action, such as being promoted due to their race. Coworkers might think that the promotion was undeserved and therefore hold a grudge against the promoted person. (Madva 2016, 713) Another problem is pointed out by Michelle Alexander (2012). She argues that prominence of successful, black individuals supports the racial caste system. This prominence leads people to ignore the poverty and racism that limit many black people and to infer that anyone can be successful, if they try hard enough. This reasoning leads to the conclusion that poor or imprisoned black people deserve their fate. (Alexander 2012, 248) Madva takes both of these examples to show that structural reforms can backfire. (Madva 2016, 714) He concludes that the solution of social problems requires both individualistic and structural measures. (ibid., 716)

Madva claims that the errors of structural prioritizers are due to a psychological model that they all presuppose. (ibid., 716-717) Nilanjana Dasgupta (2013) gives a good description of this view. She thinks that implicit attitudes and beliefs are "mirror-like reflections of local environments and communities within which individuals are immersed" (ibid., 240). People passively absorb information from their environment, media, etc. (ibid., 240) People that live in "an unequal society where people are segregated into disparate roles, jobs, and geographies based on group membership" (ibid., 240) absorb this information and form implicit attitudes based on this information. These implicit attitudes assume that people belonging to a certain group typically have certain roles, jobs, geographies, etc.. (ibid., 240)

Madva calls this psychological model "MIRROR." According to this model, people are like

mirrors regarding their prejudices and biases. “A mirror merely reflects the light that hits it. It does not produce any light of its own.” (Madva 2016, 717) The social system throws light onto people and they reflect it. People do not form their prejudices and biases by themselves. They passively absorb the underlying information of their environment and think that this is how things typically are or have to be. (ibid., 717) If MIRROR is correct, then effective measures against injustice are obvious. If you change the social structure, you change the light that is thrown onto people and that they reflect. By changing the social structure, you change people’s prejudices. (ibid., 718)

Madva claims that MIRROR is obviously wrong. Human psychology is much more complex than MIRROR contends. People do not just passively absorb information and then display this information in their attitudes. It certainly can happen that people form their prejudices like MIRROR describes it. In many cases, however, people have an active role in forming their prejudices. Madva states that the confirmation bias that many people suffer from shows that MIRROR is wrong. (ibid., 718-719) Even if they are confronted with strong evidence that proves their assumptions wrong, many people stick to their beliefs. (Lord, Ross, and Lepper 1979) If people were presented with many counterstereotypical examples, people still might not change their prejudices. (Madva 2016, 719)

Madva concludes that structural prioritizers are wrong to prioritize structural change over individual change. They presuppose a mistaken psychological model. Madva admits that the arguments of structural prioritizers have some truth hidden inside them. Individual change by itself will not be enough to fight social inequality. Structural reforms are required too. Furthermore, the arguments of structural prioritizers point out that any interventions can have unintended consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to search for potential unintended consequences and to adjust accordingly if unintended consequences are encountered. (ibid., 720-721)

8. My Assessment

In this chapter I assess Haslanger's account of structural explanation and the critiques issued against that account. Haslanger's account of structural explanation has some strengths. It is built upon a solid theory of social construction and social ontology and it provides novel points of view which are not common in the standard account of methodological individualism. I will argue, however, that Haslanger's account is not fundamentally different from methodological individualism and that methodological individualism can provide structural explanations as well.

8.1 Thomasson

Thomasson's critique is largely compatible with Haslanger account of structural explanation. Thomasson agrees with Haslanger on everything except the scope of Haslanger's account. Thomasson thinks that structural explanations are a valuable alternative to individualistic explanations. Some explanations should be in terms of structures. However, Thomasson claims that Haslanger's account only covers some phenomena that could or should be explained by structural explanations. In Haslanger's case structures constrain an individual's possible actions, while the individual still makes a conscious choice. Thomasson contends that structural explanations should also include cases where individuals are constrained by structures but do not make a conscious choice. (Thomasson 2016, 131-132)

I agree with Thomasson that structural explanations can also cover cases where individuals do not make a conscious choice. Structures can constrain in various ways, some of which an individual might be unaware of. Thomasson provides good examples. One of them is the little girl that intuitively perceives certain toys as toys for her because the norms of her family and community imply that these toys are toys for girls. (ibid., 137) In this example, it is reasonable to assume that there is not necessarily a conscious choice involved. Children are not the only ones affected by norms in this way. Thomasson also includes examples of adults, such as the worse evaluation of resumes of minority candidates. (ibid., 134)

The example of the evaluation of resumes of minority candidates seems to be very similar to, or the same as, implicit bias. The example of the little girl shows some similarity to implicit bias as well. There is, therefore, a similarity to the issues that Madva addresses. Thomasson does not argue for any specific measures that should be taken to fight social problems. If she would opt for a general prioritization of structural solutions, then Madva would disagree with her. However, she does not. Hence, I will not portray Thomasson and Madva as clear

adversaries.

Thomasson contends that norms are very important for structures that are relevant in the cases she described. (ibid., 135-136) For Haslanger structures are constituted by schemas and resources. Thomasson connects norms with Haslanger's notion of "schema", since both organize thought and communication. (ibid., 135) Thomasson is not wrong in her association. Schemas do include norms. However, schemas, on Haslanger's and Sewell's account, are more than just norms. (Haslanger 2012 [2007], 414-415; Sewell 1992, 8) Norms are very similar to rules. Giddens holds that structures are constituted by rules and resources. (Giddens 1986 [1984], 17) Sewell changes this to schemas and resources because resources can also be organized by something else than a rule. (Sewell 1992, 8)

If Thomasson argues that social structures primarily are constituted by norms and resources, then she is contradicting Haslanger. In that case I would side with Haslanger because I agree with her that resources can be organized by something else than a rule. If Thomasson only wants to argue that norms are important for some structures, such as those featured in her examples, then I do not see any disagreement with Haslanger. This is the more charitable interpretation and I think this is what Thomasson wants to argue.

Last, I want to point out potential issues for Thomasson's characterization of her account as a "first-personal" and phenomenological approach. The goal of this approach is to identify the norms that affect people's actions and behaviors and whose effect people are not explicitly aware of. The approach proceeds by asking people which options for their actions they notice and how people think they are supposed to interact with certain people or objects. The approach is first-personal and phenomenological because it focuses on how people, on their view, perceive and experience. (Thomasson 2016, 137-138)

In some cases, this phenomenological approach might work. People can at least sometimes describe their perception and experience that is indicative of the norms that affect them. Even if a person is not explicitly aware that norms affect her actions or behaviors, upon further reflection that person or someone else assessing that reflection could perhaps point out the influence of norms. However, the target of Thomasson's approach is norms that affect people without them noticing. If you are not aware that norms are influencing your behavior, a first-personal description of your perception and experience might not be indicative of any norms that affect you. You might not be aware of or have the relevant experiences. It would, then, not be possible to point out the norms that affect your actions and behavior. The only way to come up with a theory of the norms that affect you is by a third-personal description. You would need to gather evidence that is external to a person's experience and that undergirds your assumptions what norms affect that person.

Concluding, Thomasson's account is mostly compatible with Haslanger's. Depending on interpretation, they might disagree on some points. However, I would not be surprised if Haslanger fully agrees with Thomasson's view.

8.2 Sterken

Sterken is more critical of Haslanger than Thomasson is. Sterken agrees that structural explanations are an important alternative to individualistic explanations. However, she thinks that Haslanger mistakenly argues for broad and deep structural explanations. On Sterken's view, structural explanations should focus on local and flexible structures. (Sterken 2018, 173-174)

Sterken's distinction between structures, kinds of structures, stages of structures, systems, and stages of systems seems to be valid. However, I did not quite understand what the point of kinds of systems is. A kind of system abstracts from a particular system. A kind of system contains what several systems have in common. But does that not sound like one of Haslanger's (Haslanger 2016, 118) conceptions of structure? A structure abstracts from the details of a particular system. A structure is more general and can be applied to several systems. It contains what these systems have in common. Therefore, it is not coherent to try to cast kinds of systems and structures as separate entities. A kind of system basically is a structure. Sterken's bigger argumentation is unaffected by the critique of definitions expressed in this paragraph, so this is only a minor point.

Sterken's distinction between broad and deep and local and flexible structures seems to be valid as well. This is a distinction that Haslanger makes herself, although she does not elaborate it in the way Sterken does.

I largely agree with Haslanger's reply to Sterken. Haslanger points out that she neither argues for broad and deep nor local and flexible structures. (Haslanger 2018a, 256) There is no reason to generally prefer broad and deep over local and flexible structures and vice versa. The relevant type of structure depends on the situation.

Sterken claims that gender is not relevant for Lisa's (from Haslanger's example) decision to quit her job. It is relevant that Lisa earns 75% of what her husband earns. (Sterken 2018, 189) This depiction of Haslanger's example is either wrong or very uncharitable. Haslanger correctly points out that the example specifically states that Lisa is given a lower income because she is a woman. (Haslanger 2018a, 254) I think that it is part of the premises of the example that Lisa earns less because she is a woman. It is certainly possible and unfortunately quite common that a woman earns less due to her gender. It is not contradictory or inconsistent either to assume that Lisa earns less due to her gender. When Sterken contends that Lisa does not earn less

because she is a woman, Sterken is either wrong or describing a different example. Furthermore, Haslanger refers to Cudd's elaborate description of the mechanism that causes women like Lisa to earn less and that perpetuates this inequality. (Haslanger 2016, 122-123; Cudd 2006, 148-151)

Sterken also argues that being a woman does not entail earning less income. The definition of "woman" does not contain "earns less income". Otherwise, every woman would have to earn less than their husband, which is obviously not true. (Sterken 2018, 193) Again, I think this is an uncharitable interpretation of Haslanger's claims. Haslanger does not think that being a woman automatically entails earning less. When Haslanger claims that Lisa earns less because she is a woman, Haslanger contends that Lisa earns less due to social structures that disadvantage women. Not every woman is affected by these structures in the same way. Not every woman has a lower income, but many women do.

Haslanger distinguishes between triggering and structuring causes. The point of structural explanations is to focus on structuring causes. Structuring causes describe how agents are constrained in their choices. When an agent is so constrained that their choice is either irrelevant or only part of the whole picture, it is more useful to focus on structuring causes. (Haslanger 2016, 120-121) I agree with Haslanger that structural explanations do not only look at the immediate cause but at the bigger structure behind that cause. Sterken argues that local and flexible structures are better at explaining. Local and flexible structures are still structures, but they are more immediate causes than broad and deep structures. In some cases, it might, therefore, be more useful to focus on broad and deep structures because they come closer to structuring causes.

Sterken claims that social problems should be solved by local and flexible approaches. Solutions should be tailored to fit specific cases. (Sterken 2018, 196) I agree with Haslanger's reply. She replies that in some cases social problems require broad and deep solutions. In these cases, structural explanations should focus on broad and deep structures. Haslanger gives a good example. It might work to push the specific company that Lisa works for to give her subsidized parental leave. In that case, a local and flexible solution suffices. However, the company might not want to give Lisa subsidized parental leave to maximize profits. In that case, a broad and deep solution is required. For instance, the government could establish a law that obliges companies to provide subsidized parental leave. (Haslanger 2018a, 255-256)

I have an example of my own. In some cases, an approach only works if it is implemented on a broader and deeper level. Consider insurance. If an insurance company only provided insurance to one person their business model would probably not work. People pay for insurance in case that something bad happens to them and the insurance company will cover

their loss or expenses. Many people paying for insurance never end up in a situation where the insurance company might have to cover them. The people that have something bad happening to them can be covered by the money that everybody has paid the company. If only one person had insurance and that person would need to be covered by the company, the company might not have the money to cover that person.

Finally, Sterken holds that local and flexible structures are better suited for answering counterfactual questions. Broad and deep structures remain the same even when a few details change. Local and flexible structures do not. If, for instance, Lisa had a better employer or a better job, Lisa would not have quit her job. Local and flexible explanations can explain this change. Broad and deep structures cannot. With a focus on broad and deep structures you would need to argue that Lisa still would have her job. (Sterken 2018, 195-196)

Sterken is in some sense right that broad and deep structures are more modally robust. I think with regards to some aspects broad and deep structures are more modally robust, but not with regards to every aspect. In her counterfactual questions Sterken picks out exactly those aspects that are relevant for broad and deep structures as well. Lisa quit her job because she has a lower income (which she has because she is a woman). When Lisa suddenly had a higher income of course she would not have quit her job. With regards to this aspect the broad and deep structure is not modally robust. According to a broad and deep explanation, Lisa would not have quit her job if she had a higher income. Hence, broad and deep structures can answer counterfactual questions, though broad and deep structures can answer less counterfactual questions than local and flexible structures. Which aspects and counterfactual questions are those of interest depends on the situation.

8.3 Madva

Out of the three critics of Haslanger presented in this thesis Madva is most critical about structural approaches to social problems. Madva targets multiple scholars, one of who happens to be Haslanger. He argues against Haslanger, but I think his critique only partially affects her.

Madva makes some compelling arguments. He does not straight-up argue for individualism. Rather Madva claims that there is no reason to prefer structural over individualistic approaches in general. (Madva 2016, 702) Regarding this claim I agree with Madva. There is no reason to prefer structural over individualistic approaches in every situation. There always might be situations where an individualistic approach yields better results. Even some structural prioritizers might agree with this claim.

Structural prioritizers hold that specific problems like racism and sexism are structural

problems. Hence, racism and sexism need to be solved on a structural level. Madva thinks that for these specific problems there is no reason to prefer structural over individualistic approaches. Madva recognizes the importance of structures. He admits that changing the attitudes of individuals will not be enough to eliminate racism and sexism. However, racism and sexism are problems that exist both at an individual and a structural level. To solve these problems a combination of individualistic and structural measures is necessary. (ibid., 707)

According to Madva, structural prioritizers claim that structural reforms change both the structures which are the source of inequality and the bad attitudes of individuals. Racism persists because social structures perpetuate racism. (ibid., 704-705) I agree with Madva that racism does not persist just due to social structures. Structural prioritizers are right that structures perpetuate racism and sexism. If no one had racist or sexist attitudes while unjust social structures remained, racism and sexism would eventually be reignited. However, racism and sexism may also persist because of the attitudes of individuals. If unjust social structures would be reformed but individuals continue to have bad attitudes, at some point unjust social structures might be reinstated. Consider, for instance, racial segregation just in terms of where people have their homes. You could eliminate this form of segregation by resettling everyone. If people continued to have racist attitudes, they still would try to move to a segregated neighborhood.

Madva also claims that structural prioritizers think that structural reforms will definitely change the attitudes of individuals. If you implemented structural reforms, then racism would eventually disappear. (ibid., 705) If structural prioritizers argue that way, then I think they are mistaken. Madva is correct to point out that people might respond to structural reforms in various ways. It is by no means guaranteed that structural reforms will change people's attitudes. Madva supports his arguments by some credible studies.

I agree with Madva that human psychology is much more complex than MIRROR. People do not have all of their attitudes due to the information that they absorb from their environment. People sometimes have a more active role in forming their attitudes. If structural prioritizers defend MIRROR as a full-fledged model of human psychology, structural prioritizers are wrong. However, I am not sure if structural prioritizers would subscribe to this defense. I am fairly certain that Haslanger would not. As I see it, MIRROR is better viewed as a psychological effect rather than a full-fledged model of human psychology. A good number of attitudes are affected or formed in the way that MIRROR describes. The environment that people live in affects their attitudes as well. When people live in an unequal society, they might form attitudes based on these inequalities. The structural prioritizer should reject MIRROR as a full-fledged model of human psychology, but she can hold onto the claim that MIRROR gives an explanation of an important effect in the formation of some attitudes.

The structural prioritizer can also hold onto the claim that structural reforms are a good way to change people's attitudes. The change might not be guaranteed but it does not need to be guaranteed. As long as structural reforms are fairly successful at changing people's attitudes, the structural prioritizer can use this success to support her argumentation.

On the other hand, I do not agree with structural prioritizers that structural should always be preferred over individualistic measures. I agree with Madva that ideally both structural and individualistic approaches should be applied to solve social problems. Yet, regarding racism and sexism structural approaches seem compelling. Racial integration directly battles segregation, which perpetuates racism. Racial integration does not guarantee the immediate elimination of racist attitudes, but it is a good approach to eliminate racist attitudes in the long term. MIRROR describes a frequent psychological effect that can be utilized to change the attitudes of individuals. If you change the structures you might also change the attitudes of individuals. I think Haslanger would agree with these assumptions. In my opinion, structural prioritizers make a valuable point. They describe how structures perpetuate injustice. Structural change is required for battling social problems like racism and sexism. In some cases, structural reforms can even eliminate bad attitudes.

If you can afford both individual and structural reforms, then you should go for both. In these cases, Madva is correct that individual and structural measures should be taken. In some cases, you might not be able to afford both individual and structural reforms. You need to decide between an individualistic and a structural solution. Although Madva stresses that there is no need to prioritize, in these cases you need to. In these situations, structural prioritizers might have point. Maybe in these situations structural solutions need to be prioritized. I am not sure, however, if any structural prioritizers argue in this way.

In regard to many points, Madva is correct. Often both individualistic and structural approaches are necessary to solve social problems, structural change does not guarantee individual change, and MIRROR does not entirely capture human psychology. Haslanger is not fully affected by Madva's argumentation because she probably only disagrees with the first point. If you do not stick to the hardcore assumption that structural solutions are always better, some claims of the structural prioritizer can be saved. Structural change is necessary for solving problems like racism and sexism and is sometimes an effective way to deal with these problems.

Furthermore, Haslanger's account of structural explanation is only partially affected by Madva's critique as well. As long as there are at least some cases where structures are explanatorily relevant, structural explanations are important. This does not imply that structural solutions need to be prioritized over individualistic solutions in general. Madva's critique revolves around the attitudes of individuals and whether structural changes certainly change the

attitudes of individuals. In Haslanger's core case of Lisa quitting her job the attitudes of individuals are less important than structural features. The lack of childcare facilities and the gender wage gap are structural features and the primary driving forces responsible for Lisa's decision. Changing these structural features does not necessitate a change in the attitudes of individuals. Attitudes of individuals do not need to be affected to change Lisa's decision. If Lisa had a higher income or a childcare facility in her community, she might not have quit her job.

8.4 Individualism

Haslanger's views on gender and race, social construction, and social structure presented in Chapters 2-4 is plausible and well argued. I do not have anything to criticize about these views. Haslanger's critique of methodological individualism is in some aspects compelling and in other aspects puzzling. She divides methodological individualism into explanatory and ontological individualism. Explanatory and ontological individualism can support each other. Hence, some scholars endorse both. (Haslanger forthcoming, 1) Ontological individualism is very common in the literature. I am not sure how many academics endorse explanatory individualism because it is more difficult to defend.

Ontological individualism claims that there is nothing in the social world that is over and above individuals. As a comparison, all matter is constituted by particles. There is no material object that is over and above particles. A stone is constituted by particles and there is nothing that 'magically' gets added to the stone that is not particles. According to ontological individualism, everything in the social world can be traced back to individuals. In some way, individuals are the particles of the social world.

Even if everything in the social world can be traced back to individuals, this does not imply that every social explanation needs to be in terms of individuals. You can argue that social explanations can be in terms of macro-phenomena, even though individuals are the driving force behind the macro-phenomena. It might be easier to simply refer to the macro-phenomena instead of explaining the actions of every individual involved.

Haslanger obviously does not support explanatory individualism. She defends an account of structural explanations, which are meant to be the opposite of individualist explanations. According to her, explanations in terms of structures are not explanations in terms of individuals. Haslanger also does not support ontological individualism. To her, the combination of ontological individualism and the rejection of explanatory individualism presented in the previous paragraph is not a good option.

Haslanger divides ontological individualism into causal and mereological constitution. She

provides examples for and explanations of the two versions of ontological individualism. (ibid., 5-6) Both the examples and the explanations are comprehensible. Individualists ideally defend both versions of ontological individualism. In that case, the individualist wants to claim that all social facts supervene on facts about individuals. (ibid., 7)

Haslanger argues that individualists have trouble accepting the materiality of social systems. She presents two examples that are meant to support this argument. The first example is the species of mushrooms that are poisonous in one world and not poisonous in another. (ibid., 7) I agree with Haslanger that this example shows that social facts do not only supervene on facts about individuals. Social facts also depend on material facts. If the individualist claims that social facts only have to supervene on facts about individuals, she is wrong.

Does the individualist need to make this claim? I do not think so. The essential point of the individualist is that there is nothing over and above individuals in the social world. Collectivists (opponents of individualists) can contend, for instance, that groups are more than the sum of the individuals in them. The group somehow has something to it that cannot be broken down into its member. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. The individualist is committed to disagree with the collectivist's argument, but not to endorse the supervenience claim.

Material facts are more fundamental than facts about individuals. Individuals are made of matter. Everything in the social world is manifested in something material. Money is manifested in a piece of metal or paper, in a number in a book, in binary numbers on a computer. Language is manifested in peoples' brains, books, soundwaves. Corporations are manifested in buildings, items, people. Matter is the basis for everything social. It is therefore not surprising that social facts also can supervene on material facts.

Haslanger's mushroom example can be replicated. Legitimate 50 euro cent coins are made of Nordic gold (a copper alloy). In two worlds the attitudes of individuals towards a certain coin are the same. Everybody thinks that the coin is a legitimate 50 euro cent coin. In one world the coin is made of Nordic gold. In the other world the coin is made of a different material. In the first world the coin is legitimate, i.e., money. In the second world the coin is a counterfeit, i.e., not money. Several social entities are conditional upon material facts. Other examples are: A company's insolvency status can depend on its material assets. (Epstein 2015, 46-49) An individual's eligibility for insurance benefits depends on her health condition. (Haslanger forthcoming, 7-8)

I think the individualist can accept these examples. The social world is constituted by material things and individuals. Matter is not 'magically' added to the social world. The social world is built within the material world, not outside of it. Matter is the basis for social entities. The individualist does not want the whole to be more than the sum of its parts. When social

facts supervene on material facts this does not imply that any whole is more than the sum of its parts.

The individualist loses the claim that social facts only supervene on facts about individuals. Some individualists might want to stick to this claim. In this regard there is a difference between the individualism that loses the claim and the individualism that sticks to the claim. Individualism that loses the claim is certainly weaker because it is less demanding. I will call it 'weak individualism.' The weak individualist can still argue that individuals are essential for making anything social social. This is a different way to define mereological and causal constitution.

According to that definition, individuals are a necessary ingredient in social phenomena. Something can only be social if it either consists at least partially of individuals or is at least partially caused by individuals. This does not mean that social facts only supervene on facts about individuals. It only means that individuals need to be part of the social phenomenon. The mushrooms can only be food if individuals consider them food. The mushrooms by themselves are not food. A piece of metal by itself is not a coin. The piece of metal needs to be coined by individuals (or machines created by individuals). The coin needs to be considered money by individuals (or laws or rules created by individuals) to be money. Material objects by themselves are not assets of a company. The objects need to be considered as belonging to that company. A person can only be eligible for insurance benefits if she is diagnosed with a disease by a doctor.

This brings us to Haslanger's next argument and example. The example features the highway I-95. Haslanger admits that some social entities are constituted like they are in her definitions of mereological and causal constitution. The formal part of I-95 is like that. The concrete network is assigned a status and called I-95 by a federal agency. (ibid., 9-10) Since Haslanger admits the stronger version of individualism in some specific cases, she probably also could accept weak individualism for these cases. However, Haslanger would reply to both strong and weak individualism that some social entities are not social due to individuals but due to having a certain function in a social system. The concrete network is a thoroughfare because it functions as a route of passage.

I apply Haslanger's argument to other mentioned examples. The mushrooms are food because they function as edible, culinary items. The coin is money because it functions as an item of tradeable currency. Haslanger probably would not agree with this statement. She thinks that money is an example of causal constitution. The material objects are assets because they have a function within the company. An individual's health condition affects the eligibility for insurance benefits because the health condition has a function within the insurance company.

There are some issues with Haslanger's examples. Consider the concrete network as a thoroughfare. An individualist can easily argue that the concrete network already is I-95 because it is assigned a status by individuals. I-95 can be used as a route of passage. The thoroughfare is just dead weight. The individualist can make similar arguments regarding the mushrooms. The mushrooms are food in part because people consider them as food. The definition of food in terms of function is unnecessary. Haslanger's example of the route is a bit better. The bears do not assign a path the status of a route (at least not in the same way humans assign status to something). Yet, the path functions as a route for the bears. A path also functions as a route for the campers. (ibid., 15) The individualist can contend that the campers assign the path the status of a route. With bears the argument works well. For humans it is more problematic.

Ideally Haslanger would need an example of a social entity that cannot be constituted by individuals, but that has a function within in a social system. I tried to come up with a good example, but I could not find one. For all social entities, individuals could cause the social entity at least partially. Humans always can become aware of a phenomenon and assign it a status. A social entity that individuals (at some point in time) are not aware of, but that nevertheless is a social entity due to its function, can make the best case for Haslanger. Haslanger's route example could be interpreted in this way. The campers might not be aware of the path and might not assign it the status of a route. Still, the path functions as a route within the campers' social system. This interpretation describes a possible scenario, which shows that functionalism is a real possibility.

Haslanger does not claim that functionalism explains every social phenomenon. It only explains some social phenomena. (ibid., 16) Regarding examples like I-95 and mushrooms it is always possible to argue that the social entity is social due to individuals, but not due to its function. However, it is also possible to argue that the entity is social due to its function. Whether individualism or functionalism are better at explaining the cause of the social entity needs to be decided by further argumentation. In some cases, there might even be a 'double occupation' of both function and assignment of status, like Haslanger thinks of I-95.

Haslanger does not provide a good explanation on what grounds it could be decided whether a social entity is social due to individuals or its function. Haslanger also does not state under what conditions a social entity has a double occupation. These are explanations that Haslanger's paper on individualism lacks. However, they might fall outside the scope of Haslanger's paper, since her paper already covers several discussion points.

Finally, Haslanger contends that individualism has issues with explaining unintended consequences. Functionalism can explain unintended consequences quite well. Haslanger's example are the unintended consequences of I-95. (ibid., 17) I think that individualism can

explain unintended consequences of social entities. Consider a scenario where individuals assign mushrooms the status of food. The mushrooms, however, are poisonous. One person eats one of the mushrooms and dies as a consequence. No one intended for this person to die. Yet, it would be odd to assume that individualism cannot account for this unintended consequence. The death of that person is tragic and impossible to deny. It even can be connected to the actions of individuals. If the group had known that the mushrooms were poisonous and had not assigned them the status of food, no one would have died.

It is usually a feature of unintended consequences that the agents did not anticipate these consequences. In hindsight it is often more apparent what went wrong. This is an issue for functionalism as well. Unintended functions of a social entity often become apparent after the social entity has emerged. In many cases, unintended consequences of social entities can be connected to the actions of individuals. Unintended consequences would be an issue for individualism if individualism only accounts for intended consequences of actions of individuals. I do not see any reason why individualism should only account for intended consequences. As long as consequences (albeit unintended) can be connected to individuals, the individualist has a point.

I concede to Haslanger that functionalism tends to be a little bit better at explaining unintended consequences. Individualism can explain unintended consequences, but the focus of individualism sometimes is more towards mereological and causal constitution. This focus might divert from the unintended consequences or functions of a social entity in scenarios that are more complex. Some of the unintended consequences of I-95 might be such a scenario. If one considers I-95 as a function within a system, it is easier to keep track of the consequences of I-95. Functions directly incorporate consequences, regardless if they are intended or unintended. To describe functions you have to say what the functions are for, i.e., what the function is causing.

To arrive at all the consequences that Haslanger names one needs to consider I-95 as having different functions, sometimes within different systems. I will just describe some of them. I-95 functions as a thoroughfare within society. It supports transportation by car. I-95 also functions as a support for segregation within society. I-95 functions as a disruptor of non-human animal migration within nature. I-95 functions as a contributor to climate change on earth.

8.5 Structural Explanation

Haslanger's account of structural explanation is solid. She presents some good arguments. Structural explanations are intended to be at least a valuable alternative to individualistic

explanations. Haslanger's account is, hence, an alternative to methodological individualism. I do not think that Haslanger abandons individualistic explanations altogether. She still maintains the option of explaining social phenomena in terms of individuals. However, some social phenomena should rather be explained in terms of structures.

Haslanger opens with an example where she throws a ball with a treat stuffed inside. (Haslanger 2016, 114) I think this example is lackluster. I am not sure why Haslanger chose this example as her lead. The examples that she presents later are much better. The point of the example is that the behavior of something (the treat) that occupies a place within a bigger whole (the ball) is sometimes better explained by describing the bigger whole. In that regard the example succeeds. Haslanger considers that bigger whole to be a structure.

In my opinion, the ball is a bad example of a structure. I am not sure if the ball even is a structure. The ball does not quite match the other examples of structures that Haslanger (2016) presents. It is questionable whether a structure with room for only one occupant really is a structure. Usually, you would expect structures to have room for at least two occupants. The occupants of a structure have relations to each other and perhaps other features of the structure. This is a defining property of structures, as Shapiro defines them. You abstract from the features of the entities holding places in a structure and describe the relations between the entities. For instance, in a family people stand in certain relations to each other.

If the ball is a structure, it only has room for one occupant. The ball, then, would be a minimal example of a structure. The treat would not have any relations to other occupants, since it is the only entity within the ball. The treat, however, has relations to the ball. A case can be made that some structures can have room for only one occupant, as long as the occupant stands in a relation to the structure or features of the structure. Still, none of the other structures that Haslanger presents have only one occupant. Mary who got an A on her test has a place in a grading structure that involves several other students. Lisa who decides to quit her job is in a socio-economic structure involving her employer, her husband, etc.

Furthermore, structural explanations are meant to be an alternative to individualistic explanations. An individualist would not have any serious problems with the ball example. It is obvious that a good explanation would focus on the ball and not on the treat. The ball encases the treat. In terms of movement, trajectory, etc. whatever happens to the ball also happens to the treat. In the example the goal is to explain the movement of the treat, so it makes sense that a good explanation needs to take the movement of the ball into account.

The treat does not 'do' anything besides being moved in the same way the ball is. The behavior of the treat is only secondary for the explanation. An individualist can account for this. Assume, for example, that you want to explain why a person is orbiting around the sun. The

person is on earth and the earth is orbiting the sun. The behavior of the person is not important for an explanation. Clearly, the explanation should be in terms of the earth. Since the person is on earth, she moves with it. I doubt that individualists would question the physics behind this and that a good explanation focuses on the movement of the earth.

In the ball and the earth example both the treat and the individual are passive. The ball and the earth have the 'active' roles. Neither the earth nor the ball are social systems or structures. The question arises whether there is any social structure that can be compared to the earth or the ball. Is there any social structure where all individuals only have a passive role, i.e., a structure that is not determined by individuals? Individualists would like to claim that there is not. Individualistic explanations state that social explanations need to be in terms of individuals. A structure that is not determined by individuals can likely not be explained by the actions of individuals. Instead, an explanation would need to be in terms of the structure. If there is a structure that is not determined by individuals, this would certainly strengthen structural explanations.

First, I want to repeat a distinction between different types of individualism from Section 8.4. There are individualists that defend explanatory individualism and there are those who do not. Explanatory individualists stick to individualistic explanations. Individualists that do not defend explanatory individualism can allow other types of explanations, such as structural explanations. These individualists still advocate ontological individualism. They claim that the social world is constituted by individuals. Theoretically, all social phenomena can be explained in terms of individuals. This, however, is not strictly necessary. Sometimes it is easier to describe the 'bigger' entities or phenomena that are constituted by individuals. For instance, the individualist would claim that structures are constituted by individuals. You could explain a structure by describing the interactions of individuals. This might be unnecessary because primarily the structure is only important for the phenomenon to be explained. Describing the structure without describing the individuals is a 'short-cut.'

I distinguished between weak and strong individualism regarding ontology. Strong individualism is represented in Haslanger's definitions of mereological and causal constitution. Weak individualism allows for social facts to supervene on material facts, as long as individuals are an essential ingredient for every social phenomenon. I think that weak individualism is compatible with a rejection of explanatory individualism, as described in the previous paragraph. With weak individualism the argument is that all explanations of social phenomena could feature individuals as an essential ingredient, but this is not always necessary or helpful.

I think weak individualism with a rejection of explanatory individualism is the most defensible version of individualism. Strong ontological individualism has already been ruled

out by Haslanger's (forthcoming) arguments. Furthermore, Haslanger's (2016) account of structural explanation succeeds in showing that explanatory individualism is mistaken. Regarding Section 5.2 I agree with Haslanger. Questions require adequate answers, as the example of Mary who gets an A on her final indicates. To adequately answer the question why Mary got an A, it is necessary to examine the grading structure that Mary's professor creates. Since only one A is allowed, Mary had to write the best final. A fitting explanation is structural, i.e., it explains the grading structure.

Sections 5.4 and 5.5 are also successful at revealing the flaws of explanatory individualism. There are two causes that can explain why Clyde stood up. The two causes target different questions. The triggering cause is relevant for answering what triggered Clyde's action. He stood up because the Queen entered the room. The structuring cause is relevant for answering why Clyde took this type of action. He stood up as a gesture of respect. Another example is that of Lisa quitting her job. To answer why Lisa quit her job, it is necessary to look at the social structures under which Lisa is living.

Haslanger's arguments and examples at least show that some social explanations can focus on structures. This dismantles explanatory individualism, since it is not necessary that an explanation focuses on individuals. Haslanger goes even further. She claims that structural explanations can explain social phenomena that could not be explained by individualistic explanations. (Haslanger 2016, 123-124) Both explanatory and strong ontological individualism have been shown to be wrong. This leaves weak individualism combined with a rejection of explanatory individualism. This is the version of individualism that I will continue my analysis with.

Individualism would reply to Haslanger that social structures are constituted by individuals. It might not be necessary to explain all social phenomena in terms of individuals. Yet, all social phenomena could be explained in terms of individuals. Hence, structures can be explained in terms of individuals. Structural explanations are simply a short-cut to bypass a more elaborate individualistic explanation.

This reasoning can be applied to Haslanger's examples. Mary gets an A on her final. The grading structure is essential to explaining Mary's result. Individualists would argue that the grading structure was created by an individual, i.e., Mary's professor. Moreover, the grading structure is enforced by the professor. If you explain the actions of the professor, you explain the grading structure. It is not necessary to explain the professor's actions, but it is possible. Hence, a more elaborate explanation that explains the professor's actions and thereby the grading structure is individualistic.

Clyde stood up when the Queen entered the room. Clyde stood up as a gesture of respect.

The gesture of respect is the structuring cause, which is essential to explaining why Clyde did not perform a different type of action. (ibid., 120-121; Dretske 1988, 42-43) Individualists would argue that standing up is considered a gesture of respect because the etiquette says so. The etiquette was created and is continued by individuals. If no one believed and followed the etiquette, Clyde would not have stood up. If you explain the actions of the individuals who created the etiquette and of the individuals who continue the etiquette, you explain the structuring cause. This explanation would be very elaborate and detailed, showing the strength of ‘short-cut’ explanations. Still, the elaborate explanation would be individualistic.

To explain why Lisa quit her job, it is necessary to explain the social structures that constrain her. (Haslanger 2016, 122-125) Individualists would argue that these social structures are constituted by individuals. The lack of daycare centers in Lisa’s local community is the result of actions of individuals. Individuals create daycare centers, keep them running, control them. Perhaps politicians can affect the number of daycare centers with their policies. Many women like Lisa have a lower income due to the actions of individuals. This is a complex matter. The mechanism responsible for women like Lisa having a lower income was explained in Section 5.5. Employers pay women less because women are higher risks for their employers. Employers think that women are more likely to quit their jobs to take care of their children or will devote less energy and time to their jobs than men. Women quit their jobs to take care of their children because these women earn less than their husbands. This cycle is continued by the actions of employers and women, although it would be unfair to say that women are responsible. The structure that leads to Lisa earning less is the result of a combination of actions of several individuals.

Since the structures constraining Lisa can be explained in terms of individuals, a more elaborate explanation is individualistic. Haslanger says that an individualistic explanation of Lisa’s decision would claim that Lisa quit her job because she decided to do so. (ibid., 122) I think individualists of the sort that I am describing would agree with Haslanger that a fitting explanation of Lisa’s decision mentions the structural constraints. The structural constraints can be explained in terms of individuals. However, individualists could admit that individualistic explanations tend to focus on individuals. This focus might hide structural constraints if one is not careful enough, such as the individualistic explanation that Haslanger presents. If you only look at the actions of individuals, but not at what those combined actions create, you might overlook structures.

Earlier I posed the question if there are any social structures that are not determined by individuals. Individualism clearly answers that there are not. The structures of the examples of Mary getting an A and Clyde standing up can be explained by individualism. The structures that

constrain Lisa can be explained by individualism as well. I tried to come up with an example of a social structure that is not determined by individuals, but I could not find one. Particular social structures are usually constituted by individuals. Individuals create social structures and maintain them. I have to admit, weak individualism is very permissive. It makes several concessions to Haslanger. For instance, it allows for social facts to supervene on material facts and for structures to be explanatorily relevant. Weak individualism might not match many other versions of individualism. Some scholars might not even call it individualism.

Are there ways for Haslanger to respond to weak individualism? Based on her (forthcoming) paper on individualism she could claim that structures are not determined by individuals but by the function of the structure within a social system. I agreed with Haslanger that social entities can be social due to their function in a social system. This is a valid way to respond to ontological individualism. The issue with this response is that ideally one would need to show that all structures are determined by their function.

If only some structures are determined by their function, then only structural explanations of these structures could not be reduced to individualistic explanations. This would create a weird divide between structural explanations that are reducible and those that are irreducible (and authentic). Haslanger does not provide a basis for arguments that all structures are determined by their function. She does not claim that all social entities are determined by their function. Haslanger allows for some social entities to be determined by individuals. Haslanger did not come up with any criteria for deciding which social entities are determined by individuals and which are determined by their function. Further argumentation would be needed if Haslanger wanted to defend structural explanation in this way.

Haslanger also could respond to weak individualism that structural explanations abstract from individuals. Section 5.3 is essential for this response. Shapiro contends that in a structure only the relations between the occupants of places in the structure matter. The structure abstracts from properties of occupants that are not relevant for their relations. Furthermore, there are two ways to conceive a structure. In the office interpretation places in a structure are like offices that individuals occupy. In the object interpretation the places in a structure are treated like objects themselves, regardless which individuals occupy these places. (Shapiro 1997, 82-83) Haslanger adopts Shapiro's view on structures. (Haslanger 2016, 118-119)

The office interpretation deals with particular individuals. It describes which person occupies which position in a structure. If Lisa is interpreted as a particular woman, the office interpretation is fitting for her situation. Under the office interpretation, individualism can explain structures. Lisa is a particular individual within a particular social structure. Particular individuals create the social structure.

The object interpretation is more helpful for Haslanger. When a place in a structure is interpreted in the object interpretation, Haslanger calls this place a “node.” In the object interpretation structures abstract from individuals because it does not matter who occupies a node. The node itself is analyzed. Only the relations the node has to other nodes matter. Structural explanations focus on nodes. (ibid., 124-125) Lisa, then, should not be interpreted as a particular woman. She is a placeholder. The example features a woman with a name because this makes the example easier to understand. The real target of a structural explanation is the node that Lisa occupies.

You can exchange Lisa for any other person and that person will have the same structural constraints. Any person occupying Lisa’s node would be pressured to act like Lisa. Again, it does not matter who occupies the node. Only the relations of the node matter. (ibid., 124-125) You might object that Lisa being a woman is essential for her having a lower income. Only women that occupy Lisa’s place would be put under the same constraints. However, Haslanger believes that gender is an extrinsic feature. Gender is defined in terms of social relations. One’s gender is a place that one occupies within a social structure. The gender of a person would be part of the entire social structure that constrains Lisa. Therefore, a male person could also occupy Lisa’s place, although the person would be considered a woman.

Haslanger could object that the strength of structural explanation lies in the abstraction from individuals in a structure. There are some similarities to the concept of multiple realizability. Structures can be realized by different individuals. Individualism is right that real structures need to be realized by some individuals. However, these individuals are interchangeable. In a structural explanation, particular individuals are not relevant. It does not matter who occupies which node. The relations between the nodes, i.e., the structure, matter. Structural explanations are more general. They are not limited to a particular realization of a structure but can be applied to any realization. For that reason, structural explanations are distinct from individualistic explanations. Structural explanations are not just a short-cut. They cannot be substituted by individualistic explanations because they abstract from individuals.

I think individualism can explain structures under the object interpretation. Ontologically individualism is correct. Realized/particular structures are constituted by individuals. Individualism can explain realized structures. This is visible in the individualistic explanations of Haslanger’s examples of Mary, Clyde, and, under the office interpretation, Lisa. Individualism can also explain more general structures. Individualism can assume that structures are created and/or constituted by generic individuals. The explanation still is individualistic because individuals are at the core of the explanation. However, different individuals can take the role of a generic individual. This is visible in the individualistic

explanation of Lisa, as explained above, when you substitute all the individuals involved, including Lisa, for generic individuals.

The question arises why you would want to replace a structural explanation with an individualistic explanation. I do not see any reason to do that, unless you want to explain how a structure is created. Otherwise, the structural explanation is more useful. Structural explanations focus on structural constraints. An individualistic explanation can explain structures as well, but it has a lot of additional baggage that is not required for an analysis of structural constraints.

Furthermore, structural explanations point out something important. The advantage of structural explanations is that the inherent features of individuals are not relevant for the explanation. Under the object interpretation, in a structure only the relations between nodes matter. Any individual can be placed on any node. This shows the power that structures can have. For example, anyone who meets certain requirements could become president. Anyone meeting these requirements could occupy the president node. Once you are president, this gives you power that you otherwise would not have. This power is not an inherent power that you have. It is a structural power that is given to you through the relations that the president node has. Lisa's example is the opposite. When you occupy Lisa's node this gives you disadvantages that you otherwise might not have, and many people could end up in this situation.

9. Summary

I will conclude with a summary of my thesis. Haslanger has developed a compelling account of social structure and structural explanation. She defines social structure in terms of social relations. Social relations are constituted by interconnected practices, which, in turn, are constituted by schemas and resources. Social relations are extrinsic features of an individual. Any person can theoretically come to have any social relations. Under Haslanger's view, gender and race are good examples of social structures. Gender and race are defined by social relations. A person has a gender or race because he or she is placed in a certain position in a social structure.

Social structures are socially constructed. They are created by humans. Haslanger combines social construction with realism. Social structures, despite being socially constructed, are real existing phenomena. They are not just imagination. Correct descriptions of structures correspond to facts about a reality that exists independently of human perception.

According to Haslanger, structural explanations are an alternative to individualistic explanations. In some cases, a social phenomenon is better explained in terms of social structures. A structural explanation focuses on nodes instead of individuals. Any individual can occupy any node in a social structure. All that matters are the extrinsic features of a node, i.e., the social relations it has to other nodes. Because any individual can occupy any node, structural explanations have a wider scope and can be applied to anyone who occupies a certain node in a social structure. Nodes describe structural phenomena. In the 'Invisible Foot' example any individual occupying Lisa's node would be put under the same constraints. The structural explanation of this example applies to many women that are in the same situation as Lisa.

According to Haslanger, structures constrain and enable individuals. They make certain options unavailable or available. Individuals operating within a social structure may be limited in their actions. A structural explanation needs to take structural constraints into account. An individualistic explanation might miss these structural constraints and therefore give an inadequate explanation. An individualistic explanation misses the structural constraints. In the 'Invisible Foot' example Lisa's decision to quit her job is the result of a social structure that constrains her actions. An individualistic explanation claims that Lisa quit her job because she wanted to quit her job. A structural explanation can reveal the structural constraints that pressure Lisa into making this decision.

Haslanger thinks that individualism fails on several other points, besides the failure on the explanation of social structures. Individualism fails to account for the materiality of social systems. Social systems do not only depend on facts about individuals but also on material facts. Individualism also fails to account for social phenomena that are social due to their function.

At least some social phenomena are social due to their function.

I analyzed three critiques of Haslanger's account. Thomasson claims that structural explanations can also account for cases where individuals do not make conscious choices. Sterken contends that Haslanger mistakenly focuses on broad and deep over local and flexible structures. Madva states that there is no reason to prioritize structural over individualistic approaches to social problems.

In my opinion, Thomasson's critique is largely compatible with Haslanger's account. I agree with Thomasson that structural explanations can explain situations where individuals do not make conscious choices. Sterken's critique is unwarranted. Broad and deep and local and flexible structures both have their advantages and disadvantages in explaining social problems. Madva is correct that both structural and individualistic solutions are important. Haslanger, however, is not necessarily affected by Madva's critique. Haslanger can maintain that structural solutions are at least in some cases important while individualistic solutions can also be relevant in some situations.

I agreed with Haslanger that functionalism is a fitting description of some social phenomena and an alternative to individualism. Against Haslanger's view, I argued that a weaker form of individualism can explain the materiality of social systems. Individualism can stick to the claim that individuals are essential for social phenomena without arguing that social phenomena do not supervene on material facts. Individualism can also explain unintended consequences. Individuals can cause effects that they did not intend to cause at all. Functionalism is not necessarily required to explain unintended consequences.

Structural explanations are a valuable addition to explanations of social phenomena. Haslanger easily dismantles explanatory individualism with her argumentation. It is not always necessary to refer to individuals to explain a social phenomenon. Ontological individualism, however, prevails. Individuals are core components of social phenomena. Structures are created and upheld by individuals. They are not independent of individuals. Theoretically, structural explanations could be substituted with individualistic explanations about the individuals that create the structure. These individualistic explanations would be very elaborate, but, in many cases, these explanations are unnecessary work. Describing the structure can perfectly suffice to effectively describe the social phenomenon.

Appendix

Abstract English

One of the standard discussion topics of the philosophy of the social sciences concerns the question whether all social explanations should be in terms of individuals. The approach called “methodological individualism” answers the question affirmatively and is quite popular. In a fairly recent paper, Sally Haslanger (2016) disagrees with methodological individualism. She claims that some social explanations should focus on social structures. Haslanger’s account of structural explanations is connected to her other work on social construction, social structure and individualism. My thesis tries to explain these connections, look at critiques issued against Haslanger’s account and assess these critiques and Haslanger’s account.

According to Haslanger, some social phenomena are best explained by structural explanations. These social phenomena are not a matter of individual actions or choices, like individualism claims. These social phenomena are a matter of structural constraints that limit the options of individuals living in the social structure. Haslanger claims that individualism is also wrong that individuals are essential for all social phenomena. Social phenomena can depend on material facts and can be determined by their function or a social structure.

My thesis discusses three critiques that have been raised against Haslanger. Amie Thomasson claims that structural explanations can also account for cases where individuals do not make conscious choices. Rachel Sterken contends that Haslanger mistakenly focuses on broad and deep over local and flexible structures. Alex Madva states that there is no reason to prioritize structural over individualistic approaches to social problems. I argue that Thomasson’s critique is compatible with Haslanger’s account, while Sterken and Madva wrongly attribute certain ideas to Haslanger.

Haslanger mentions that individualism can be split into two separate claims, which are explanatory individualism and ontological individualism. Explanatory individualism asserts that all social explanations must be in terms of individuals. Ontological individualism asserts that the social world is constituted by individuals. I think that Haslanger’s account of structural explanation effectively dismantles explanatory individualism, but not ontological individualism. Structures are created and upheld by individuals. Theoretically any structural explanation could be substituted with individualistic explanations of the individuals that create the structure. However, usually there is no reason to do that because such an explanation would be much more elaborate and detailed than required.

Abstract Deutsch

Eines der Standarddiskussionsthemen der Philosophie der Sozialwissenschaften betrifft die Frage, ob alle sozialen Erklärungen auf Individuen bezogen sein sollten. Die Denkrichtung des „methodologischen Individualismus“ beantwortet die Frage bejahend und ist recht beliebt. Sally Haslanger (2016) widerspricht in einer relativ neuen Arbeit dem methodologischen Individualismus. Sie behauptet, dass sich einige soziale Erklärungen auf soziale Strukturen konzentrieren sollten. Haslangers Theorie struktureller Erklärungen steht in Verbindung mit ihren anderen Arbeiten zu Sozialkonstruktion, Sozialstruktur und Individualismus. Meine Masterarbeit versucht, diese Zusammenhänge zu erklären, Kritiken gegen Haslangers Theorie zu betrachten und diese Kritiken und Haslangers Theorie zu bewerten.

Einige soziale Phänomene lassen sich laut Haslanger am besten durch strukturelle Erklärungen erklären. Bei diesen sozialen Phänomenen geht es nicht um individuelle Handlungen oder Entscheidungen, wie es der Individualismus behauptet. Bei diesen sozialen Phänomenen geht es um strukturelle Zwänge, die die Optionen der in der sozialen Struktur lebenden Individuen einschränken. Haslanger behauptet, dass Individualismus ebenfalls darin falsch liegt, dass Individuen für alle sozialen Phänomene essentiell sind. Soziale Phänomene können von materiellen Fakten abhängen und durch ihre Funktion oder eine soziale Struktur bestimmt werden.

In meiner Masterarbeit werden drei Kritiken behandelt, die gegen Haslanger vorgebracht wurden. Amie Thomasson behauptet, dass strukturelle Erklärungen auch Fälle erklären können, in denen Individuen keine bewussten Entscheidungen treffen. Rachel Sterken meint, Haslanger bevorzuge fälschlicherweise breite und tiefe statt lokaler und flexibler Strukturen. Alex Madva stellt fest, dass es keinen Grund gibt, strukturellen gegenüber individualistischen Lösungen zu sozialen Problemen Vorrang zu geben. Ich behaupte, dass Thomassons Kritik mit Haslangers Theorie vereinbar ist, während Sterken und Madva fälschlicherweise Haslanger bestimmte Ideen zuschreiben.

Haslanger erwähnt, dass Individualismus in zwei separate Behauptungen aufgeteilt werden kann: explanatorischer Individualismus und ontologischer Individualismus. Der explanatorische Individualismus behauptet, dass alle sozialen Erklärungen in Bezug auf Individuen erfolgen müssen. Der ontologische Individualismus behauptet, dass die soziale Welt aus Individuen besteht. Ich denke, dass Haslangers Theorie der strukturellen Erklärung den explanatorischen Individualismus widerlegt, aber nicht den ontologischen Individualismus. Strukturen werden von Individuen geschaffen und instandgehalten. Theoretisch könnte jede strukturelle Erklärung durch individualistische Erklärungen der Individuen ersetzt werden, die die Struktur erzeugen. In der Regel besteht dazu jedoch kein Anlass, da eine solche Erklärung

viel aufwendiger und detaillierter als erforderlich wäre.

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