Othering, an Analysis

Lajos Brons

> I understand now that nothing but "otherness" killed Jews, and it began with naming them, by reducing them to the other. Then everything became possible. Even the worst atrocities like concentration camps or the slaughtering of civilians in Croatia or Bosnia.
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> Slavenka Drakulić 1992: 145

> 知人者智，自知者明。He who understands other people has knowledge; he who understands himself is seeing clearly.
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> Laozi 老子, *Dao De Jing* 道德經 §30

1 introduction

Since De Beauvoir's (1949) introduction of the notion of "the other" as a construction opposing and thereby constructing "the self", the concepts of "the other", "othering", and "otherness" have taken root in areas of thought and inquiry ranging from nursing science (Canales 2010) to cultural geography (Crang 1998). De Beauvoir's "other" was not an entirely new idea, however, as she acknowledged herself (see section 3), but was heavily influenced by Hegel's dialectic of identification and distantiation in the encounter of the self with some other in his "Master-Slave Dialectic" (1807 B.IV.A).

The "Master-Slave Dialectic" is a rather ambiguous text, but may very well thank its influence to that ambiguity and consequent interpretive flexibility. It has found a place "in any critical discourse that wrestles with some idea of the 'other' as that against which you define yourself" (Cole 2004: 578). The ambiguity of the "Master-Slave Dialectic" is the corollary of its two intertwined themes or dimensions: the political/historical dimension and the more fundamental, psychological dimension. The former concerns the relationship between feudal lords and serfs and is the stronger theme in the second part of the text; the latter is a much more abstract account of self-consciousness in relationship with (an encounter with) the other and is the main theme of the first nine or ten paragraphs. Apparently contradictorily, in that first part Hegel suggests that in its encounter with the other, self-consciousness sees that other as *both* self and not-self. Self-consciousness "does not see the other as [another] essential being, but sees itself in the other" (146), and conversely, self-identity is (or originates in) the "exclusion of everything other outside itself" (147) and that "other is [thus] unessential, negative" (148), that is, *not*-self.[1]

In the "Master-Slave Dialectic" (which is a rather short text) this dialectic of identification and distantiation is not further developed, and neither does it play a significant role in much later

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[1] All translations are mine. Page references are to the original language versions.

work by others based in part on Hegel's text. Rather, most of this later work focuses on just one side of the dialectic, on the other as *not*-self (i.e. self-other distantiation), usually in connection with the text's political dimension. In feminist and post-colonial thought, such politically charged self-identification by means of distantiation from the other was further developed as the notion of *othering*. Like Hegel's text itself, othering (in this context) is simultaneously psychological and political - an accusation of othering is an accusation of political incorrectness, almost of thought-crime. The Hegelian roots of the concepts of "othering" and "the other" suggest much wider implications and applications, however: if Hegel is right, then something like othering takes place in any encounter between two intelligent, interpreting creatures. An assessment of this suggestion requires empirical research as well as conceptual clarification; it requires - in the first place - an analysis of what othering is and how it works, that is, of the logical structure of othering. This paper aims to provide such an analysis by placing othering in the wider context of research on self-other identification and distantiation in interpretation and related processes, and by exploring the "logic" of othering.

I will argue that different kinds of othering can be distinguished, and that the differences between them concern their logical structure and the construction of otherness (and do not coincide with different domains of application). The main distinction is that between *crude* and *sophisticated othering*, which differ in form, but not in their conclusions. Of these two, sophisticated othering is the more Hegelian kind of othering, and the primary focus of this paper.

Although "othering" is a theme in continental philosophy, critical theory, and fields of inquiry influenced by those primarily, the role of othering in interpretation, in understanding the other *and ourselves*, should be of equal concern to analytic philosophers interested in interpretation, to empirical social psychologists, and to theorists of rhetoric and argumentation. For that reason, I tried to be as neutral and non-sectarian as possible in my analysis, and to integrate different perspectives and ideas. By implication, this is not a paper in continental or analytic philosophy - it borrows from both, but doesn't belong to either.

2   a distinction, and six observations

Cultural geographer Crang (1998: 61) describes othering as "a process (...) through which identities are set up in an unequal relationship". Othering is the simultaneous construction of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in mutual and unequal opposition through identification of some desirable characteristic that the self/in-group has and the other/out-group lacks and/or some undesirable characteristic that the other/out-group has and the self/in-group lacks. Othering thus sets up a superior self/in-group in contrast to an inferior other/out-group, but this superiority/inferiority is nearly always left implicit.

Compared to Hegel's intricate dialectic of self-other identification and distantiation, this notion of othering seems rather crude and one-dimensional, but in addition to this kind of "crude othering", a more "sophisticated" kind of othering can be distinguished that corresponds more closely to Hegel's dialectic.[2] What sets apart *crude* from *sophisticated* othering, is that in case of the former, otherness is constructed just through self-other distantiation, while in case of the latter, self-other identification plays a key role in the process. That is, in crude othering, the distribution of the (un)desirable characteristic is more or less assumed or posited, while in sophisticated othering it follows from an argument that is partially based on a self-other-identifying assumption. More specifically, in both kinds of othering, there is a perceived difference between the self or

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[2]The term "sophisticated" has both positive and negative connotations. Among the latter are associations with sophistry. The negative connotations of the term (including the link to sophistry) are more appropriate here than the positive ones.

in-group and the other or out-group, but while this difference is the (un)desirable characteristic in case of crude othering, it is a *relatively* neutral difference in case of sophisticated othering. However, perceived through the lens of self-other identification, this relatively neutral difference leads to the construction of another difference, and that other difference is the (un)desirable characteristic. Self-other identification in this sense, is what Hegel described as "self-consciousness seeing itself in the other" (see above). It is the implicit, and largely unconscious, modeling of the other as self by assuming that what's true for the self is true for the encountered other as well.

As an example of such sophisticated othering, consider the following case. About a decade ago, in a context I don't exactly remember, I had a conversation with a Dutch teenager of Turkish descent, who at some point remarked that I was a Christian (he was a Muslim himself). I denied, which led him to inquire into my religious beliefs. My explanation that I didn't have any, that I was (and am) an atheist, lead to strong disapproval. In his mind, being an atheist implied that I was completely amoral. His argument was roughly that right and wrong are determined by God, that moral rules are God's commands, and therefore, that someone who doesn't believe in God cannot believe in right and wrong or moral rules either. It wasn't so much my atheism itself that made me a bad person, but what followed from it.

The sentiment my partner in conversation expressed is by no means unique. Among religious believers there is a rather common misconception that atheists are necessarily amoral, although the prevalence of this misconception differs widely between countries and seems to be related to education as well as other factors (e.g. Pew Research Center 2014). In most - if not all - cases, the underlying argument seems to be something like the following: (a) moral beliefs are religious beliefs; (b) the other has no religious beliefs; therefore (c) the other has no moral beliefs. Premise (a), however, results from an inductive fallacy like the psychologist's fallacy (James 1890), that is, from an invalid generalization of (a*) *my* moral beliefs are religious beliefs.[3] This step from (a*) to (a) is Hegel's "self-consciousness seeing itself in the other". And of course, the conclusion that atheists are (necessarily) amoral is where othering is played out. That my partner in conversation considered the amorality he attributed to me inferior was obvious enough.

For comparison, stock examples of crude othering are the Orientalist and sexist myths of the rational, and therefore superior, West, respectively male gender, versus the emotional or otherwise less rational, and therefore inferior, East, respectively female gender. In these cases, the (un)desirable characteristic - rationality and/or lack thereof - is attributed directly, rather than as the conclusion of an argument involving self-other identification.

These examples - the "Amoral Atheists" and the "Irrational Women/East" - invite a number of observations. FIRSTLY, and perhaps most obviously, it is very well possible that the othering in the second case(s) was originally the result of an argument structured like sophisticated othering (i.e. that the otherness-increasing attribution of irrationality followed form another observed difference seen through the lens of self-other identification). Regardless of whether that is the case here, there is no reason to assume that there are no such cases at all. All it takes for sophisticated othering to become crude is a loss of the original argument, which seems to be a rather common occurrence in the popularization of ideas. The other side of the coin is that apparent cases of crude othering may turn out to be sophisticated upon closer inspection. In other words, there is no hard boundary between crude and sophisticated othering: the second may turn into the first, and the first may turn out to be a case of the second. (But notice that this is not a symmetrical relation.)

SECONDLY, both kinds of othering get some of their rhetorical force from their self-affirming conclusion, but sophisticated othering is not primarily driven thereby. What makes sophisticated othering especially persuasive is its apparent reasonableness. Furthermore, because the flaw in the argument is non-obvious and the conclusion welcome, sophisticated othering may be accepted

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[3]"My" here refers to the person inferring (a) from (a*); not to me as the author of this paper.

without much critical reflection. Crude othering, on the other hand, is more easily exposed, but its crudeness may also make it relatively immune to counterargument: what does not depend on reason, cannot easily be countered by reason either.

THIRDLY, the conclusion of othering is self-other distantiating and dehumanizes the other, but this does not necessarily have to take the form of an affirmation of self-superiority and other-inferiority. Although othering often sets up a superior self/in-group in contrast to an inferior other/out-group, it can also create distance between self/in-group and other/out-group by means of a dehumanizing over-inflation of otherness. The other then, is not so much (implicitly) inferior, but *radically alien*. In either case, the effect is a near impenetrable border between the self/in-group and the inferior and/or radically alien other/out-group, "justifying" social exclusion, discrimination, and/or subjection. And in either case, othering is usually enthymematic; the conclusion of othering tends to be unspoken, implicit. Nevertheless, these different conclusions - the inferior vs. the radically alien other - present a second distinction between kinds or variants of othering in addition to the more fundamental distinction between crude and sophisticated othering, and like that distinction it isn't a dichotomy: the other can be constructed as *both* inferior and radically alien. Furthermore, these two dimensions of othering, summarized in table 1, are independent from each other: in principle, any combination is possible.

Table 1: **two dimensions of othering**

othering: crude *vs.* sophisticated	the other: inferior *vs.* radically alien
crude	inferior other (and superior self)
crude, but originally sophisticated	radically alien other
apparently crude, but really sophisticated	*both* inferior and radically alien
sophisticated	

FOURTHLY, the two cases point at a third dimension: othering in case of the Irrational Women/East draws a boundary between two very large social groups, the in-group and out-group, but the case of the Amoral Atheists *as presented in the example* doesn't have to be interpreted in the same way (although it can be): that case can also be seen as an individual me-*versus*-you othering rather than a social us-*versus*-them. Hegel's dialectic of self-other identification and distantiation is explicitly individualist - it is about the encounter between an individual self and an individual other - but othering as it is usually understood is inherently social. My encounter with the aforementioned Dutch-Turkish teenager was probably an example of both simultaneously: theists *versus* atheists and him *versus* me. If that's right, then, like the other dimensions of othering (see table 1), there is no sharp boundary between the two kinds, but overlap, and possibly a gray area in which it isn't clear whether othering is individual or social or both.

FIFTHLY, Hegel's dialectic of self-other identification and distantiation is a (rough and sketchy) theory of the encounter of the self with the other *in general*, that is, of *any* self and *any* other. In any encounter between two intelligent, interpreting creatures, the first creature, in making sense of the second creature - that is, in interpreting the other - will (have to) depend on this dialectic of self-other identification and distantiation. However, if this dialectical process is as ubiquitous as this suggests, then this raises the question how often it derails and results in sophisticated othering, or in other words, how pervasive othering is.

SIXTHLY, the case of the Amoral Atheists does not just illustrate the basic structure of sophisticated othering, but also points at its "transcendence". In a passage that is very difficult to

translate, Hegel writes that the transcendence (*Aufhebung*)[4] of otherness is also a return of the self in itself, because this transcendence brings back the self, and because it releases the other from her otherness by giving the other's self back to the other.[5] As I interpret Hegel, this is indeed what a successful exposure of the fallacy in sophisticated othering accomplishes. Contrary to the original conclusion (c), most atheists, with a possible exception of the Marquis de Sade[6] and a few others, do (or did) have moral beliefs, and corroborating that shifts the focus to the faulty premise (a) that resulted from the interpretation of the other through self-other identification. In this way, exposure of the fallacy turns the self towards herself, and at the same time, by rejecting the conclusion (that atheists are amoral), it liberates the other from her inferiority and/or radical alienness (i.e. her otherness) and thus rehumanizes her: the other turns out to be more similar to the self than previously believed.

This paper is primarily concerned with the third, fifth and sixth of these observations. The first can only be addressed through extensive philological and historical research, and is, therefore, beyond the scope of this paper. Something similar applies to the second observation (on rhetorical force), which is primarily (social) psychological (but see section 6). Because the difference between individual and social othering does not seem to play an important role in the form and structure of othering (and space is limited), the fourth observation is not addressed extensively in this paper either (but perhaps future work needs to amend this).

The third observation (on two kinds of otherness) will be deepened and substantiated in the latter part of section 3. The fifth and sixth observations (on pervasiveness and transcendence, respectively) are addressed in section 6. Before that, taking the perspective on othering as a derailing of interpretation suggested by observation 5, sections 3 and 4 discuss the main theories of self-other identification and distantiation in the encounter with and interpretation of the other, and section 5 analyzes the logical forms of othering and connects those forms with those theories. The final, short, concluding section 7 recapitulates the main points.

3   self-other distantiation

The two sides of the dialectic of self-other identification and distantiation in Hegel's "Master-Slave Dialectic" are rarely found together in a single theory or even in the same theoretical context; and while Hegel's shadow looms large over the literature on self-other distantiation, his influence is virtually absent in that on self-other identification. On either side there is an abundance of relevant theories and ideas, but few that deal with the issue both explicitly and rigorously. Moreover, the literatures that contain these theories and ideas are rather fragmented, perhaps even compartmentalized, and consequently, the eclectic but brief - and therefore incomplete - overview in this and the following section may seem to suggest theoretical relations where there are none, or at least not genetically.

The family of theories and ideas that most explicitly deal with self-other distantiation is, of course, the extensive literature on the notions of "the other" and "othering" itself. Some aspects thereof, and/or of self-other distantiation in general, have supporting parallels in psychology.

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[4]The standard translation of *Aufhebung* is "sublation". Contrary to that convention, I chose to translate the term as "transcendence" here, because that term better captures Hegel's point. See also the next note.

[5]Baillie (see Hegel 1967) translates the relevant passage as follows: "This sublation in a double sense of its otherness in a double sense is at the same time a return in a double sense into its self. For, firstly, through sublation, it gets back itself, because it becomes one with itself again through the canceling of ITS otherness; but secondly, it likewise gives otherness back again to the other self-consciousness, for it was aware of being in the other, it cancels this its own being in the other and thus lets the other again go free." See also the previous note.

[6]Most of De Sade's books include more or less extensive arguments on why materialism and atheism should imply a rejection of morality.

These theories will be briefly introduced in this section. Closest to a theory of self-other identification is the simulation theory of folk psychology and further relevant ideas can be found in some forms of conceptual relativism and in the principles of charity and humanity. Section 4 will summarize these ideas.

Under the influence of Hegel (through Kojève) and Freud (through Lacan), "the other" became a central, albeit rather polymorphous theme in much of 20th century French philosophy. The concept of "the other" has been used (therein) to designate a range of rather different but interrelated ideas that are not always (clearly) distinguished. If these are disentangled, three main variants, three different "others" can be distinguished, and three different thinkers can be associated - more or less as primary sources and/or representatives - with these three different "others".

The first is "the other" as another individual, as another mind (and body) that is (largely) unknowable to the interpreting self. This is "the other" of Levinas's (1948) thought on the ethical consequences of the necessary encounter with this absolutely other other. Levinas overturns the paradigmatic relation between self and other in Western thought, in which the other either plays no (significant) role at all (Descartes is an illustrative example), or is reduced to mere faceless enemy (as in Hobbes's "state of nature" or Hegel's "Master-Slave Dialectic"). According to Levinas, this common, solipsistic negation of the other is rooted in a repugnance for the proximity of the other, which itself is born from a repugnance for the inaccessibility of the other's mind (1979; see also 1990). Contrary to this absent other or other-as-enemy, Levinas's other is a neighbor, and the self is constituted in its relation with that other-as-neighbor.[7] (And consequently, the self is responsible for that other, and *vice versa*.)

The second is "the other" as construction in opposition to the self, and by implication, the construction of the self in opposition to that other, "the other" of self-other distantiation and othering. This is "the other" of De Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*; 1949) to which we will turn in a few paragraphs, but this "other" can also be found in many of Sartre's writings.

The third is a much more abstract notion of "the other" as something (more than someone) outside of and/or in some way opposed to the self. This is (part or aspect of) Lacan's "big Other". Building on Freud, but also influenced by Kojève's interpretation of Hegel, Lacan distinguished *little other* and *big Other*, which he represented in pseudo-mathematical notation as a and A (the first letter of "*autre*", French for "other"). Little other or a is a reflection and projection of the self (of the "ego", in particular); big Other or A is radically other and includes both other subjects and the (institutionalized) relationships between the self and those others (Evans 1996).

Although De Beauvoir's "other" is the primary source for "the other" in/as self-other distantiation (the primary focus of this section), the influence of Lacan's "others" (a and A) on that same literature can hardly be overestimated. There does not seem to be much French 20th century philosophy that is not indebted to Lacan, and especially in postmodern thought (in the broadest possible sense of that label) his influence has been vast. It was Derrida who most influentially elaborated Lacan's (big) "other" and made it a core idea of postmodernism. The postmodern "other", however, also builds on "the other" of othering (i.e. De Beauvoir's "other"), and consequently, these two "others" and many of their associated ideas became near inseparably intertwined. Cahoone (2003) summarizes the resulting postmodern "other" and its theoretical context as follows:

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[7]This latter idea also plays a central role in Davidson's philosophy (see next section), who similarly rejected the Western reflex of negating the other (or "the second person" in Davidson's terminology). The strength of this reflex is, perhaps, best illustrated by the fact that of all of Davidson's ideas, this one has met the fiercest resistance, even from philosophers that are otherwise sympathetic to Davidson's thought.

> The apparent identity of what appear to be cultural units - human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems, social organizations - are maintained only through *constitutive repression*, an active process of *exclusion, opposition,* and *hierarchization*. A phenomenon maintains its identity in semiotic systems only if other units are represented as foreign or "other" through a hierarchical dualism in which the first is *privileged* or favored while the other is *deprivileged* or devalued in some way. This process must itself be hidden or covered up, so that the hierarchy can be *assumed inherent* in the nature of the phenomena, rather than a motivated construction. (11)

The unhiding of hidden, uncovery of covered up hierarchical oppositions is what Derrida (1967) called "deconstruction" and which is probably his most influential (or at least best known) contribution to philosophy. Significantly, this idea is not just relevant for the rather abstract hierarchies Derrida focused much of his attention on (such as that of speech over writing), but also for all kinds of institutionalized, social hierarchies: male - female, West - rest, and so forth. "Deconstruction" of such social hierarchies became a central concern in much of feminist and post-colonial studies from De Beauvoir's (1949) and Fanon's (1952) pioneering works onwards.

Both De Beauvoir and Fanon refer explicitly to Hegel's "Master-Slave Dialectic", which according to De Beauvoir (at least partly) applies more to the relationship between men and women than that between masters and slaves[8], and which is the subject of most of the last chapter of Fanon's *Peau noire masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*; 1952). Both are also (strongly) influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis. A third major influence on De Beauvoir's notion of "the other" is Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory of binary oppositions in human thought. These are the binary oppositions that Derrida sought out to "deconstruct", and that according to De Beauvoir are the origin of all "otherness":

> The category of the *Other* is as fundamental as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most antique mythologies, one finds a duality, that of the Self and the Other; this division was not originally placed under the sign of the division of the sexes, and it did not depend on what was empirically given: (...). In the couples Varuna-Mitra, Uranus-Zeus, Sun-Moon, Day-Night no female element is originally implied; not more than in the opposition of Good and Bad, fortune and misfortune, right and left, God and Lucifer; otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. No group ever defines itself without simultaneously positing the Other facing itself. (18)

While De Beauvoir's influence on feminist thought is vast, and her notion of "otherness" provides a focal point, "the other" of post-colonial thought is more fragmented. Fanon's *Peau noire* remained relatively unknown and uninfluential for a long time, and (at least) two other "others" (in addition to those borrowed from other literatures) compete(d) for attention: Said's and that of self-reflective ethnography. In his *Orientalism* (1978), Said combines a notion of "the other" with exoticism, the commercial exploitation of constructed otherness, to analyze the Occidental picture of the Orient. In the second half of the twentieth century, ethnography/anthropology increasingly turned a critical eye towards its own practice in dealing with and describing "the other". Especially in case of early ethnography, "the author's ethnographic report is a reversed mirror image of his own ethnocultural ideal", and because of that, "these early ethnographies reveal as much about the West as about their objects of study" (Vidich & Lyman 1994: 26).

The realization of this latter point - that "'we' use the Other to define ourselves: 'we' understand ourselves in relation to what 'we' are *not*" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996: 8) - led to a

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[8]Explicitly at p. 166, but see also pp. 22-23 in the introduction where the "master-slave" relationship is mentioned first.

growing literature of attempts to deconstruct or transcend othering. Sometimes these attempts are mere reversals of hierarchies (making the original self other and *vice versa*), but some are closer to Hegel's idea of transcending otherness resulting in a liberation (from the restraints of otherness) of both the other and the self (see sections 2 and 6), although it is rarely the original interpreting self that deconstructs or transcends the othering of the original interpretation. (For examples from ethnography, see Vidich & Lyman 1994; for examples from feminist thought, see Kitzinger & Wilkinson 1996.)

Self-other distantiation in psychology focuses predominantly on psychological needs for othering. In the introduction of a psychological case study of switching between distantiation and identification, Gillespie (2007) wrote that there is much evidence for "a widespread tendency to differentiate in-group from out-group and Self from Other in such a way as to bolster and protect Self" (580). The positive discrimination of the self and the in-group from others and out-groups ("we" *versus* "them") has been observed and documented by many psychologists and social scientists (e.g. Mead 1934; Heider 1958; Tajfel & Turner 1979), and empirical research has shown that people tend to create a positive self-concept/self-image by means of a self-affirmative perspective on the world and others (e.g. Gecas 1982; Hogg & Abrams 1990; Mackie & Smith 1998; Campbell & Sedikides 1999; Sherman & Cohen 2006).

This psychological need of self-affirmation drives the construction of the superior self/in-group *versus* the inferior other/out-group, but has no obvious direct relation to the other possible conclusion of othering mentioned in section 2 (third observation): the dehumanizing over-inflation of otherness leading to the construction of a *radically alien* other. There is no reason to assume that self-affirmation is the *only* motivation for othering, however, and a need for a radically alien other may have entirely different roots. For example, in "Needing the Other" (Brons 2014), I analyzed the Mass Noun Thesis as a case of sophisticated othering driven by a theoretical need for a radically alien other.

The "Mass Noun Thesis" is the name for a number of theories claiming that all nouns in certain languages are grammatically and folk ontologically similar to mass nouns in English. Quine (1968) made a suggestion of this nature about Japanese in his argument about the indeterminacy of translation; Hansen (1983) developed a famous version of the thesis for classical Chinese, and Lucy (1992b) for Yucatec Maya; but the Mass Noun Thesis has also been applied to modern Chinese, to Korean, and to some other Middle and South-American languages besides Maya. What these languages have in common is a lack of plurals and articles, and a numeral classifier system, which is superficially similar to a system of mass individuation used in English phrases like "three cups of water". Hence, all nouns in these languages seem to have the typical features of mass nouns in English. Therefore, so it is argued, they essentially are mass nouns. And because mass nouns denote stuffs rather than discrete objects, people speaking a language with only mass nouns must have a folk ontology of masses or stuffs rather than objects; that is, they think in terms of stuffs or materials rather than in terms of things or objects (and stuffs only additionally). The Mass Noun Thesis, in this way, constructs the other/out-group as radically alien by attributing a radically alien folk ontology.[9] However, neither Quine, nor Hansen or Lucy can be plausibly accused of being driven by a need to distinguish a superior self/in-group from an inferior other/out-group.[10] Rather, in all three cases of the Mass Noun Thesis, there is a theoretical need for a radically alien other; that is, the radically alien other serves as "evidence" for some theoretical point.

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[9]For a collection of critical papers on the linguistics of mass and count nouns and the Mass Noun Thesis, see Massam (2012).

[10]The version of the Mass Noun Thesis that comes closest to the superiority/inferiority-constructing kind of othering is Chierchia's (1998). Or at least, Chierchia leaves that impression by comparing Chinese to early child grammar, by ranking languages with Chinese at the lowest and Germanic/Slavic at the highest level, and by his concluding statement that the latter are "closer to 'virtual perfection'".

Quine used the example of Japanese numerals as an illustration of the indeterminacy of translation, in pointing out that there are or may be cases in which based on all possibly available evidence no choice can be made between different alternative translations of the same language fragment. "*Go-tou-no ushi*" may be "five cows" or "five heads of cattle", attributing either an ontology of objects or stuffs to speakers of Japanese. The Japanese analytic philosopher Iida (1998) responded: "When I read this passage a long time ago, my first reaction was that of disbelief. Of course, Professor Quine is not suggesting that we should construe a Japanese noun *ushi* as a mass term; he is only pointing out a possibility of so construing" (113). It is indeed merely that *possibility* of so construing that Quine needed. To illustrate his theory of the indeterminacy of translation, Quine needed the theoretical possibility of a language that cuts up the world in a radically different way: he needed the theoretical possibility of a radically alien other.

Hansen's version of the Mass Noun Thesis should be located in the broader context of his argument that "contrastive analysis must replace comparative analysis in comparative philosophy" (1972: 169) because of "the fundamentally contrasting nature of Chinese intellectual activity" (1985: 494). In Hansen's opinion, the ancient Chinese way of thinking is so different that this precludes any kind of meaningful comparison - contrastive analysis is all that is possible. The Mass Noun Thesis is one of his arguments in constructing the ancient Chinese as radically alien (see also Roetz 1993).

Lucy's version of the Mass Noun Thesis for Yucatec Maya was published simultaneously with his (1992a) reformulation and defense of the *Sapir-Whorf Thesis*, the idea that the languages we speak somehow influence or even determine the way we think (see section 4). Ever since, Lucy has been one of the main defenders of that thesis, and the Mass Noun Thesis is his strongest "evidence".

In all (these) three cases of the Mass Noun Thesis, what motivates othering is a need to (empirically) support a theory in which the author heavily invested intellectually. All three *needed* the other to be radically alien to proof or support a theoretical point. This is a different need from the psychological need for self-affirmation (and the related self-superiority *vs.* other-inferiority),[11] and perhaps there are further needs for othering. Regardless of whether there are, the case of the Mass Noun Thesis shows that what (can) motivate(s) othering is much more complex than a simple self-affirmative separation of "us" from "them".

Based on the theories and ideas discussed in this section, three different aspects or phases of self-other distantiation can be distinguished: (i) the encounter with the other and the bare recognition of that other as not-self (that is, without or before stressing otherness), (ii) the attribution of otherness to the other, and (iii) the motivation and/or payoff of that attribution of otherness. Lacan's "big Other" and, perhaps, Levinas' "absolute other" are primarily concerned with (i);[12] De Beauvoir's, Fanon's and related "others" concern (ii); and the psychological need of self-affirmation and other motivations for the attribution of inferiority or radical alienness concern (iii). Of these three, the first two are easily identified in Hegel's "Master-Slave Dialectic", but the third is not (or not unambiguously, at least). A fourth aspect of othering, self-other identification, plays a key role in Hegel's text and is the topic of the next section. After that, section 5 analyzes the logical form of othering against the background of these four aspects or phases.

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[11]On the other hand, successfully supporting one's own theory seems very self-affirming, which suggests that the need to support one's own theory is not completely unrelated to the need for self-affirmation.

[12]What distinguishes Levinas' encounter with the other from (a.o.) Hegel's, is that for Levinas the other is neighbor rather than enemy. This is just a difference in attitude (towards the other), however, and Levinas also recognizes that the bare encounter with the other is more typically associated with hostility (or "repugnance") than with hospitality. (See above.)

4   self-other identification

Hegel's claim that in the encounter with the other "self-consciousness sees itself in the other" (see section 1) suggests that self-other identification is the default (starting point) in interpretation. Before further looking into this idea, some attention needs to be paid to the apparent alternative: bracketing the self in interpreting the other, that is, seeing the other from a neutral point of view. This is the ideal of objectivity and impartiality, commonly found in science, but often assumed to be attainable - if not attained - in common sense. Such neutrality/objectivity, however, requires the interpreting self to temporarily step out of her own cultural, linguistic, ideological, and so forth biases, out of her (pre-) conceptions and perspective(s). The neutral point of view is a point outside all perspectives, outside all cultures, languages, systems of belief, and so forth. It presumes what Haraway (1988: 582) calls "a god trick". The problem is that there is, and cannot be such a point of view. All observation or interpretation is localized (or situated) - no one, no observer or interpreter, is or can be "nowhere" (e.g. Nagel 1986; Haraway 1988). And consequently, rather than interpreting the other from a neutral point of view, the interpreter, *trying* to step out of her perspective, unconsciously universalizes some part thereof, and takes that as the "neutral" point of view. In other words, the interpreter ends up interpreting the other from the point of view of the self, thus negating the very idea of objectivity. In response to such an objectivist paradigm in hermeneutics, Gadamer (1960) wrote that "wanting to avoid one's own concepts in the explanation is not just impossible, but obvious foolishness. On the contrary, to explain means to bring one's own pre-concept(ion)s into play, such that with them the meaning of the text is really brought to speak" (374-375). (We will return to the latter point in section 6.)

Self-other identification as the default (starting point) in interpretation has its roots in two psychological phenomena: simulation and the conceptual organization of experience. According to the *simulation theory* of folk psychology[13] people interpret and make predictions about others' behavior by means of simulation, by asking themselves the question: "what would I do in those circumstances?" (e.g. Gordon 1986; Goldman 1993; Stich & Ravenscroft 1994). Stueber (2006) suggests the term "empathy" in his philosophical analysis of the implications of simulation theory (in relation with the *principle of charity* to which we will turn below) for interpretation in social science, and argues that "empathy must be regarded as of central epistemic importance and as the epistemic default mode in understanding other agents" (219).

To a considerable extent, the conceptual organization of experience can be seen as the linguistic counterpart of simulation theory - rather than asking ourselves "what would I *do* in those circumstances?", we ask the question: "what would I *mean* with that (in those circumstances)?", and base our interpretation of the other('s words) thereon. Approximately two centuries ago, German philosophers Herder and Von Humboldt were among the first to consider the influence of our native languages on our ways of experiencing things. The idea proved to be rather influential and returned in different forms in the work of later German-speaking philosophers, and from there spread to other areas of science and philosophy. Nietzsche, for example, wrote that "rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off" (1886: §22). Essence of the idea is that, by default and by necessity, all our perception, interpretation, and (theoretical) thought takes place in terms of the categories provided by our language(s), in terms of our concepts and (pre-) conceptions. Such sets of categories, concepts, conceptions, and the relationships therebetween are often called conceptual schemes, but many other terms have been used for the same or similar ideas: "perspectives" (perhaps the most common term) or "points of view", "horizons" (Gadamer 1960), "paradigms" (Kuhn 1962), "world images" (Vidich & Lyman

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[13]Folk psychology is the collection of assumptions, convictions, and so forth that people use in their everyday lives to make sense of the behavior of others and themselves.

1994), and so forth. The most explicitly *linguistic* version of the idea was defended by Sapir (1921) and Whorf (1953), and is often called the *Sapir-Whorf Thesis*. Famously, Davidson (1974) attacked and rejected "the" idea, but what he (successfully, I think) refuted is a (Quinean) metaphysical/epistemological interpretation of conceptual schemes, not the much weaker version that underlies the general idea that we understand the world and others in terms of the concepts we have and use, and that different conceptualizations (schemes, paradigms, languages, etc.) frustrate interpretation across "schemic" boundaries (Brons 2011).[14]

Lacking an alternative, by necessity all interpretation of the other takes place in the terms of the interpreting self, and with that interpreting self as model, *at least initially*. There is - as mentioned - no neutral ground, no interpretation outside schemes. We can learn new concepts, new schemes, new languages, new models, but even if we attempt to learn a new language, we learn this language partly and initially in terms (of the meanings) already learned in our native language (Carroll 1964; Albert & Obler 1978; Larson-Freeman & Long 1991; Bhela 1999). Although we may eventually learn the other's scheme or language, until we *fully* grasp it, at least some of the other's (linguistic *and* other) behavior will be understood in *our* terms, and with ourselves as models, because that is the only option available. James's (1980) psychologist's fallacy (see section 2) is the "scientific" corollary hereof: by (implicitly) taking the interpreting self and one's own concepts or scheme as standard - that is, by assuming the objectivity/universality thereof - the interpreter misinterprets the other.

The "principle of charity" and "principle of humanity" are the names of a number of related ideas about how we should and/or are able to interpret others. The shared core idea is that in interpreting some statement by some other, the interpreter *must* interpret that statement as reasonable as possible, and not attribute irrationality, incoherence, or obvious falsehoods to the other. The first explicit endorsement of this idea was Wilson's (1959), but most prominent defenders of versions of the principle of charity are Quine (1960) and Davidson (e.g. 1973, 1991), and the principle of humanity was introduced by Grandy (1973). Quine once summarized his version of charity as: "assertions startlingly false on the face of them are likely to turn on hidden differences of language" (1960: 59; "assertions" here refers to assertions about the other).

Versions of charity/humanity differ from each other in two important respects: (1) the meaning of above italicized "must", and (2) what and how much exactly is or should be attributed to the other. "Must" is either command or necessity: it is the first in Quine's version of charity as a methodological principle, and the second in Davidson's. According to Davidson, charity is something an interpreter cannot possibly do without to be an interpreter, or even to be a speaker of a language (as learning a language depends on interpreting).[15] Either when trying to make sense of a completely unknown language by means of "radical interpretation", or in learning a first language, the interpreter/learner does not know at first what the speaker/other means, nor what she beliefs. Only by assuming that the speaker/other is coherent and shares a world with the interpreter/learner can the latter start making sense of the utterances of the former. If Davidson is right, then so is Hegel: the interpreting self *must* in some sense "see itself in the other"; the only alternative is not to be an interpreter at all, but it is doubtful that that is a real option for human beings.

Regarding (2) what and how much exactly is or should be attributed to the other, versions of charity/humanity range from *minimal* versions of charity as the assumption of the other's

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[14]Actually, Davidson defended such a weak version of conceptual schemes on a number of occasions. See, for example, (1997: 128).

[15]This is more or less the received view on Davidson's principle of charity, but it is not entirely correct. In most occurrences of the term, it indeed refers to this charity as necessity, but the Quinean prescriptive notion of charity also occurs in Davidson's writings. See, for example, (1986: 204).

intention to be rational, coherent and truthful (in normal circumstances) and nothing more than that, to maximal versions that nearly coincide with Grandy's principle of humanity. According to Grandy (1973) the principle of charity may fail to produce accurate interpretations or translations in certain circumstances. If it is "the purpose of translation (...) to enable the translator to make the best possible prediction and to offer the best possible explanations of the behavior of the translatee" (442), then the translator needs a model of the translatee (the other) to assist her in making such predictions. However, since in many cases we do not have such a model (or perhaps only a partial one), "the most obvious alternative is that we use *ourselves* in order to arrive at the prediction: we consider what we should do if we had the relevant beliefs and desires" (443; emphasis added). The essential difference between humanity and maximal versions of charity is that the latter models the other on the *actual* thoughts and beliefs of the interpreter, while humanity models the other on the thoughts and beliefs the interpreter thinks she *would* have had in the other's circumstances and with the other's background.

The simulation theory of folk pyschology and the various theories about conceptual schemes and how they affect our interpretation of the world and the behavior of others are descriptive theories about how we actually interpret. Davidson's version of charity seems similarly descriptive, but he has denied that on a number of occasions.[16] Davidson's charity is not so much what we actually do, but a metaphysical requirement to make interpretation possible. Quine's version of charity and Grandy's principle of humanity, on the other hand, are explicitly prescriptive: they advise us how to interpret. Aside from that difference, there is a striking similarity between the principle of humanity (and perhaps maximal versions of charity) and the simulation theory of folk psychology mentioned above. According to humanity, to understand the other, we *should* take ourselves as models. According to the simulation theory, that is what we *actually do*. Borrowing Grandy's term, in its most primitive (perhaps, automatic or default) form, this actual process of unreflective, uncritical interpretation of the other by means of self-based simulation (i.e. "seeing oneself in the other") could be called "*naive humanity*".[17]

5   the logical forms of othering

The formal structure of *crude othering* is rather simple (hence, the qualification "crude"). There is an assumption, which is usually hidden, that it is better to have some property F than to not have that property F; an explicit assumption that the self/in-group has this property F and the other/out-group does not;[18] and an implicit, enthymematic conclusion that, therefore, the other/out-group is inferior and/or radically alien. The "and/or" in the conclusion (see also section 2 on these two kinds of otherness) suggests a complication, but that complication is merely apparent. The two possible conclusions are (i) that the self/in-group is superior and the other/out-group is inferior, or (ii) that the other/out-group is radically alien. These may seem to be monadic properties, but that is not the case. Superiority and inferiority are diadic relations: to be superior means to be superior to something, and the same for inferiority. And similarly, to be radically alien means to be radically alien to/for something (non-alien/familiar). Hence, formally the difference between the two possible conclusions is irrelevant: both can be expressed as the diadic relation $O(s,o)$, which can be read as "s is superior to o and o is inferior to s" or

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[16]See, for example, Davidson's replies to Burge and Soles in (Hahn 1999).

[17]If self-other distantiation *dehumanizes* the other, then it seems appropriate to use a term for this kind of self-other identification that suggests the opposite.

[18]Assuming bivalence, $Fx \land \neg Fy$ can stand for both "x has a certain property and y hasn't", and "y has a certain property and x hasn't". In the latter case F means not having that property. Hence, $Fx \land \neg Fy$ is sufficient to formalize the criterion of othering that there is "some characteristic that the self/in-group has and the other/out-group lacks *and/or* some characteristic that the other/out-group has and the self/in-group lacks".

as "o is radically alien to/for s". With this in mind, and using s and o to represent self/in-group and other/out-group, respectively, the formal structure of crude othering, hereafter referred to as "[CO]", is the following:

[CO]
1. $\quad \forall x, y[(Fx \land \neg Fy) \rightarrow O(x, y)]$ assumption (usually hidden)
2. $\quad Fs \land \neg Fo$ explicit assumption
3. $\quad O(s, o)$ 1, 2 (usually implicit)

Sophisticated othering, on the other hand, is considerably more complicated. All three steps of the crude othering argument also occur at some point in the sophisticated othering argument, but there are a few more steps and some other complications. The argument in the case of the Amoral Atheists was summarized in section 2 as follows:

> (a) moral beliefs are religious beliefs; (b) the other has no religious beliefs; therefore (c) the other has no moral beliefs. Premise (a), however, results (...) from an invalid generalization of (a*) *my* moral beliefs are religious beliefs.

Importantly, this is not (primarily) an argument about the other, but about beliefs. Similarly, the Mass Noun Thesis (see section 3) can be summarized as:[19]

> (a) count nouns refer to discrete objects (and mass nouns to stuffs); (b) the other's language has only mass nouns and thus no count nouns; therefore (c) the other's folk ontology is an ontology of stuffs rather than of discrete objects.

As in the case of the Amoral Atheists, the argument is not (primarily) about the other, but about words, kinds of nouns specifically. Hence, in both cases the argument is primarily about specific kinds of objects that are in specific ways related to the self/in-group and/or other/out-group. Formally, this can be represented by means of a single diadic relation $R(x, y)$, which then means "x is a belief in the belief system of y" in the first case, and "x is a noun in the language of y" in the second. In both cases, the objects in question have further properties, however: they are moral and religious beliefs in the first, and they are words that refer to discrete objects and count nouns in the second. If these further properties are represented as A and B, respectively, then in both cases, the interpreter/self holds that $\forall x, y[R(x, y) \rightarrow (Ax \rightarrow Bx)]$, which can be read as "all beliefs (in any belief system) that are moral beliefs are also religious beliefs" or as "all nouns (in any language) that refer to discrete objects are count nouns". This is (a) in the two argument summaries above.

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[19]This "summary" somewhat oversimplifies the Mass Noun Thesis, but for the present purpose it is close enough. For a more detailed analysis of the Mass Noun Thesis as a case of sophisticated othering, see Brons (2014).

The whole argument has the following formal structure, hereafter referred to as "[SO]":

[SO]

1.	$\exists x[R(x,s) \wedge Ax]$	observation	
2.	$\forall x[R(x,s) \rightarrow (Ax \rightarrow Bx)]$	observation	(a*)
3.	$\forall x,y[R(x,y) \rightarrow (Ax \rightarrow Bx)]$	2, generalization (invalid!)	(a)
4.	$\forall x[Fx \leftrightarrow \exists y[R(y,x) \wedge Ay]]$	definition or assumption	
5.	Fs	4, 1	
6.	$\forall x,y[(Fx \wedge \neg Fy) \rightarrow O(x,y)]$	assumption	
7.	$\forall x[R(x,o) \rightarrow \neg Bx]$	observation	(b)
8.	$\forall x[R(x,o) \rightarrow \neg Ax]$	3, 7	(c)
9.	$\neg Fo$	4, 8	
10.	$O(s,o)$	6, 5 and 9	

All bracketed Hindu-Arabic numerals in the remainder of this paper refer to propositions of [SO]. In the cases of the Amoral Atheists and the Mass Noun Thesis, [SO] can be read as follows:

	Amoral Atheists	*Mass Noun Thesis*
1.	There are moral beliefs in the self/in-group's belief system.	There are words in the self/in-group's language that refer to discrete objects.
2.	All moral beliefs in the self/in-group's belief system are religious beliefs.	All words in the self/in-group's language that refer to discrete objects are count nouns.
3.	All moral beliefs are religious beliefs.	All words that refer to discrete objects are count nouns.
4.	Being moral means (or is defined as) having moral beliefs. (Or more formally: Someone is moral if and only if she has moral beliefs.)	Someone has an object ontology if and only if her language includes words that refer to discrete objects.
5.	The self/in-group is moral.	The self/in-group has an object-ontology.
6.	Being moral is superior to not being moral (i.e. to being amoral).	Not having an object-ontology makes one radically alien.
7.	There are no religious beliefs in the other/out-group's belief system.	The (language of the) other/out-group has (only mass nouns and therefore) no count nouns.
8.	The other/out-group has no moral beliefs.	The other/out-group has no words that refer to discrete objects.
9.	The other/out-group is not moral.	The other/out-group does not have an object-ontology.
10.	The self/in-group is superior to the other/out-group.	The other/out-group is radically alien.

At the end of the overview of ideas and theories about self-other distantiation in section 3, three different aspects or phases thereof were distinguished: (i) the encounter with the other and the bare recognition of that other as not-self (i.e. without or before stressing otherness), (ii) the attribution of otherness to the other, and (iii) the motivation and/or payoff of that attribution of otherness. As mentioned above, Levinas' "absolute other" and Lacan's "big Other" are primarily

concerned with (i);[20] De Beauvoir's, Fanon's and related "others" concern (ii); and self-affirmation and/or attribution of radical alienness concern (iii). Section 4 added the apparently contrary aspect of (iv) self-other identification, manifested in Hegel's "self-consciousness seeing itself in the other", self-based simulation, conceptual schemes, naive humanity, and so forth.

Although all four aspects or phases can be distinguished in [SO], some of them are more entangled in practice than in theory. This especially concerns (i) and (iv). (i) as bare encounter with the other takes place *before* observation (7). (7) is or implies the observation of a difference between interpreter/self/in-group and the other, which constitutes (i) the recognition of the other as not-self, but this observation is already - and by necessity - an interpretation in terms of the interpreting self (because those are the only terms available to the interpreter). Hence, in (7), (i) the identification of the other as not-self, and (iv) "self-consciousness seeing itself in the other" come together. Nevertheless, (i) starts before (7), and (iv) continues with (8). Much more explicitly than in (7), in (8) the interpreter/self sees the other through her own conceptual scheme (e.g. moral = religious), or through herself-as-model. The attribution of otherness (ii) takes place in (9). Here the difference between the self/in-group and the other is no longer merely the observation of (7), but something more important (invalidly) inferred from it. The resulting otherness is stressed by the conclusion (10) where (iii) the payoff takes place: the other turns out to be inferior and/or radically alien.

The argument is obviously invalid, as the inference of (3) from (2) is fallacious, but that is not necessarily the only error in the argument. Any of the premises (1, 2, 4, 6, and 7) can be false (or dubious at least). Furthermore, the invalid inference of (3) doesn't guarantee its falsehood (that would be a fallacy fallacy). In case of the Amoral Atheists, it is possible that the fallacious inference of (3) is the only error in the argument, however, which implies that in that case othering depends solely on interpreting the other too much like, or in terms of, the interpreting self. This illustrates that in sophisticated othering, the ultimate source of self-other distantiation is self-other identification. For contrast, in crude othering the self-other distantiation is direct.

Comparing the two arguments (i.e. [CO] and [SO]), it is easy to see what they have in common: their assumption $\forall x, y[(Fx \wedge \neg Fy) \rightarrow O(x,y)]$ and their conclusion $O(s,o)$. Without that conclusion there is no case of othering (and of course, without hat assumption there is no such conclusion). Othering is the attribution of relative inferiority and/or radical alienness to some other/out-group. This is the third of the four aspects/phases of self-other distantiation and identification mentioned above, but while the other three are easily identified in Hegel's "Master-Slave Dialectic", (iii) is not. Perhaps, it is present, but not unambiguously so. This is significant, because it implies that something like [SO] but without (6) and (10) conforms to Hegel's dialectic of self-identification and distantiation, but is *not* a case of othering, while these two ideas are supposed to be very closely related (see sections 1 and 3).

Hereafter, I will use the term *quasi-othering* for [SO] *minus* (6) and (10). Again, quasi-othering is not othering, but it is almost othering (as the prefix "quasi" suggest). Both quasi-othering and sophisticated othering conform (more or less) to the Hegelian model in the "Master-Slave Dialectic", but crude othering does not; and both crude and sophisticated othering are forms of othering, but quasi-othering is not.

Returning to the comparison of [CO] and [SO]: what differs between variants of othering is just the argument leading to the conclusion $O(s,o)$. The difference in arguments, however, implies a difference in the ways of exposing and countering othering. Crude othering is based on a valid argument, and thus the full weight of the conclusion rests on the two premises. In sophisticated (and quasi-) othering, on the other hand, there is an obvious fallacy involved in (3), but this becomes obvious only after analysis of the argument underlying a particular case of suspected othering, and it may be the case that one or more premises are dubious or false as well.

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[20]But note, again, the difference in attitude.

6   the transcendence of othering

The formal analysis of sophisticated othering in the previous section seems to lead to the para-
doxical conclusion that the less we see the other as self, the more the other will turn out to be like
self. This apparent paradox preys on metaphor, however. "Seeing the other as self" is a metaphor
here for the interpretation of the other through naive humanity and so forth, while "being like
self" negates othering and/or the attribution of otherness. These - as shown in sections 3 and 4,
and by [SO] - are very different processes, however, and consequently, the apparent contradiction
between not "seeing the other as self" and "being like self" is merely apparent. A more accurate,
less metaphorical, and less paradoxical phrasing of the same conclusion would be that the less we
are inclined to see the other through the lens of self-other identification - that is, the more we are
willing to postpone our self-based preconceptions - the more similar (i.e. the less other) the other
will turn out to be.[21] The theories discussed in section 4, however, suggest that naive humanity
(i.e. seeing the other through the lens of self-other identification) is not voluntary, but is - at least
to some extent - unavoidable: there is no "god trick" that allows the interpreter to step outside
her perspective and that perspective is largely determined by the interpreter's perception of the
self/in-group. But if that is the case, then this in turn would seem to suggest that othering is not
an exceptional derailing of interpretation but a very common phenomenon.

The fifth observation about othering in section 2 was that Hegel's dialectic of self-other identi-
fication and distantiation applies to *any* encounter between two intelligent, interpreting creatures
(see also section 1), and therefore, that this dialectical process is pervasive, which raises the
question how often it derails. What needs to be stressed, however, is that not every derailment
constitutes othering, and that the argument in the preceding paragraph (and in section 4) merely
suggests that interpretive error related to naive humanity is common. The latter kind of interpre-
tive error is similar to sophisticated othering in form, but lacks (6) and (10). In other words, it is
quasi-othering (see section 5), and as argued above, quasi-othering is not othering: an [SO]-like
argument leading to misinterpretation of the other *only* constitutes othering if it concludes that
(10) the other is inferior and/or radically alien. By implication, othering is at most as common
as properties F that can be ground for attribution of $O(s, o)$, and consequently, even if quasi-
othering is common, as suggested by Hegel's dialectic of self-other identification and distantiation
(see section 2, fifth observation),[22] this doesn't mean that othering is. In circumstances where
there is no need for a radically alien and/or inferior other, the occurrence of othering is improba-
ble. Conversely, any (implicit) attribution of radical alienness or inferiority should be grounds for
suspicion. Othering is ideology in the Marxian sense of that term. It serves the interests of the
self/in-group by constructing an essential boundary between self/in-group and other/out-group; a
boundary that "justifies" social exclusion, discrimination, and/or subjection of the other. History
should teach us to be suspicious of such boundaries.

Unfortunately, section 3 suggests that the need for a radically alien and/or inferior other is
rather common. Our sense of self-worth depends partially on the lesser worth of others; the
boundaries of our in-groups depend on the clear exclusion of others as belonging to out-groups;
and in addition to these psychological needs, we may need radically alien others to satisfy other

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[21]This should not be taken to mean that *not* seeing the other through the lens of self-other identification
(if possible) would remove *all* differences between self/in-group and other/out-group, but merely that it would
remove *some* differences, namely those that constitute othering. Even if differences remain, if *some* are removed,
the self/in-group and other/out-group are more similar than before.

[22]Based on personal experience, I'm inclined to say that this kind of misinterpretation is very common. I'm a
Dutchman married to a Japanese and teaching at an American liberal arts college in Tokyo, Japan. My students
and colleagues come from more than a dozen different countries. Unsurprisingly, minor misinterpretations (both
by and of me) occur frequently, but are usually corrected almost immediately. Reflecting on the source and nature
of such misinterpretations (which I almost instinctively do), it seems to me that they invariably fit in the pattern
of quasi-othering.

needs - such as proving a point - as well. Perhaps then, othering is common. Answering the question "How common?" is well beyond the scope of this paper, however - that would require extensive philological, historical, and psychological research - but what is beyond doubt, is that othering (both crude and sophisticated) *does* occur. And given its malignantly dehumanizing nature, it seems almost a platitude to say that it, therefore, is *too* common. But if something is unavoidable, as sections 3 and 4 suggest to be the case for sophisticated othering, then saying that it is "too common" is absurd more than platitudinous, and a more useful attitude towards othering would be to focus on its transcendence (rather than just on its occurrence).

According to Hegel, the transcendence of othering both releases the other from her otherness, thus rehumanizing her, and brings back the self (see section 2, sixth observation). This is a key insight. Sophisticated othering or quasi-othering starts to unravel by the discovery of counter-evidence to (8) or (9): the discovery that the other has moral beliefs in case of the Amoral Atheists (see section 2), or that the other has a folk ontology of both discrete objects and mass stuffs (see Brons 2014). If (8) or (9) is shown to be false, then this quickly refocuses the attention to (3) and (7) from which (8) is inferred. (7) is the perception of the other in terms provided by the interpreter/self's conceptual scheme (as those are the only terms available; see section 4); (3) is the false generalization of what is true of the self/in-group (i.e. naive humanity). Hence, the rejection of (8) or (9) forces the interpreter/self to look into her own preconceptions. Vidich and Lyman wrote about early ethnography that "the author's ethnographic report is a reversed mirror image of his own ethnocultural ideal" (1994: 26; emphasis added). Indeed, (quasi-) othering creates the other as *mirror image*, but that means that as soon as it unravels and reveals itself as a case of (quasi-) othering, the interpreter/self can start to see herself in that mirror. Ideally, such a transcendence of (quasi-) othering corrects both the interpretation of the other/out-group and that of the self/in-group.

Consequently, through the confrontation with the other the interpreter also learns to better understand herself. Laozi said that "he who understands other people has knowledge; he who understands himself is seeing clearly" (§33). As it turns out, understanding oneself is a prerequisite for understanding the other, but the former is only possible through the confrontation with the other.[23] By implication, a desire to completely avoid (quasi-) othering may be self-contradictory: such avoidance would require a *previous* confrontation with that other, a previous (quasi-) othering and its transcendence. Unless, of course, the interpreter/self would somehow be able to avoid seeing the other in her own terms, but "wanting to avoid one's own concepts in the explanation is not just impossible, but obvious foolishness" (Gadamer 1960: 374) - the alternative for one's own concepts is not some set of neutral concepts, but no concepts at all (see section 4). And therefore, rather than foolishly trying to avoid them, "to explain means to bring one's own pre-concept(ion)s into play, such that with them the meaning of the text is really brought to speak" (375). By consciously bringing one's own pre-concept(ion)s into play, the interpreter acknowledges that those are not outside the "game", but potentially object of scrutiny as well. This is not sufficient to stop sophisticated othering in its track, however - one more ingredient is needed.

Proposition (7) in [SO] claims that the other doesn't have moral beliefs or words that refer to discrete objects. Given the fact that humans are social beings and that social groups cannot function without conventions *including* moral conventions, and given that we share a world that contains many discrete objects (at least on the scale relevant to human perception), these claims attribute irrational beliefs (or world views) to the other, and therefore, these are uncharitable claims. Moreover, it is often exactly this uncharitable attribution of irrationality that constitutes the ground for othering the other. According to (one version of) the principle of charity (see

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[23]That understanding oneself is a prerequisite for understanding the other may very well be part of what Laozi meant with the quote, but that understanding oneself requires the confrontation with the other seems much less in line with his thought.

section 4), "serious deviations from fundamental standards of rationality are more apt to be in the eye of the interpreter than in the mind of the interpreted" (Davidson 1986: 204). Adherence to this principle would prevent uncritical acceptance of (7) or (8); it would force the interpreter to investigate whether indeed the anomaly is in the eye of the self/interpreter rather than in the mind of the other/interpreted. And it would therefore point the interpreter towards herself *before* quasi-othering becomes sophisticated othering, that is, before dehumanizing the other.[24] This does, however, require an attitude towards the other that is Levinasian more than Hegelian, an attitude that is characterized more by hospitality than hostility, and that perceives the other as neighbor rather than enemy (see section 3).

7   conclusion

Although the theoretical roots of othering grew in Hegelian soil, the relation between Hegel's dialectic of self-other identification and distantiation in the "Master-Slave Dialectic" and othering (as the (process of) construction and identification of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in mutual, unequal opposition by attributing relative inferiority and/or radical alienness to the other/out-group) is hardly one of identity. Rather, the relation is better described by means of the following Venn diagram:
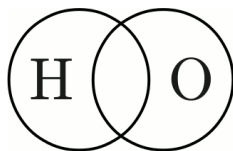
in which the circle marked H represents Hegel's dialectic of identification and distantiation, and the circle marked O represents othering as construction of unequal opposition (etc.).

Three varieties of (quasi-) othering were distinguished in this paper. Both *crude othering* and *sophisticated othering* attribute relative inferiority and/or radical alienness to the other or out-group, and it is that attribution that defines othering. *Quasi-othering* lacks that attribution, but is closely related to sophisticated othering in its logical form. The essential difference between the two kinds of othering is that crude othering is merely self-other distantiating, while sophisticated othering (as well as quasi-othering) partially depends on self-other identification. In terms of the Venn diagram above, the overlap between H and O is sophisticated othering; crude othering is in O, but not in H; quasi-othering is in H, but not in O. Hence, crude othering, which seems to be the paradigmatic form of othering, is *not* Hegelian, and conversely, quasi-othering, which seems to be closest to what Hegel had in mind, is not othering.

Hegel's sketch of the encounter of self-consciousness with the other (i.e. H) does not concern some particular scenario or type of encounter, but applies to any encounter between two interpreting creatures. In any such encounter, to interpret the other, the interpreting self necessarily depends on self-other identifying and distantiating strategies. By implication, if Hegel is right, then H is a necessary, unavoidable aspect of social existence. O, on the other hand, may be driven by psychological and/or other needs, but that doesn't make it necessary or unavoidable in the same way or to a similar extent. Furthermore, while O's attribution of inferiority or radical

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[24]Insufficient attention to adjectives may suggest a contradiction here. *Naive* humanity can be a cause of othering, while charity can prevent it, but the principles of charity and humanity are close cousins (see section 4). It is the naivety of the first that makes the difference, however.

alienness to the other/out-group is malignant, quasi-othering (i.e. the part of H that is not in O) can play an important role in coming to (better) understand *both* the other and the self.

The essential difference between quasi-othering and sophisticated othering is the premise (6) (which the latter shares with crude othering) that some characteristic F, which is attributed to the other, is sufficient ground for dehumanization of that other. With that premise, the belief that F applies to the other leads to the conclusion that the other is inferior or radically alien (and it is that conclusion that constitutes othering). Without that premise (i.e. in quasi-othering), that conclusion does not follow. In case of quasi-othering the other is still different, but this is not the malignant, dehumanizing difference of othering.

Significantly, the fact that F must be sufficient ground for dehumanizing the other for the othering conclusion to follow severely limits what kind of characteristic F can be. Dehumanization does not *usually* occur on the ground of being unfashionable or having strange culinary habits, for example. The two examples of grounds for sophisticated othering discussed in this paper are amorality and a folk ontology of stuffs (rather than discrete objects), respectively. These are uncharitable attributions; that is, they do not just attribute different or even strange beliefs to the other/out-group, but – by everything we know – *irrational* beliefs. Although it is in principle possible that there are grounds for othering F that do not explicitly or implicitly attribute (some kind of) irrationality, there is probably no more effective way to oust someone (or some group) from human (=our) society than by denying her (or their) rationality. But according to the principle of charity, such attribution of irrationality is more likely to be the result of the interpreter's preconceptions than an accurate description of the other.

As a principle of interpretation, charity forbids attribution of (such a property) F to the other, and thus forces the interpreter to investigate her own preconceptions (almost) leading to that attribution. In this way, charity can prevent quasi-othering from turning into (sophisticated) othering (or counter it afterwards and rehumanize the other),[25] but it simultaneously leads the interpreter to examine herself (or her own (pre-) conceptions, at least). This is how I interpret Hegel's claim that the transcendence of othering both releases the other and the (interpreting) self (see section 2, 6th observation). Charity releases the other from dehumanizing misunderstanding *and* the (interpreting) self from false preconceptions. By implication, charity has wider scope than usually assumed: we do not just need charity to understand the other, but – through the confrontation with the other – to understand ourselves as well.

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[25]In principle charity could also prevent or counter crude othering as that is formally based on a similar uncharitable premise. However, as observed in section 2, crude othering is in practice rarely based on (explicit) reason, and therefore, not easily vanquished by reason either.

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