CHAPTER THREE
DIFFERENCE IN THE INTERPERSONAL RELATION

The third chapter of this study seeks to establish a dialogue with social-philosophical and ethical approaches that explicitly deal with the question of how the structure of social interaction can be characterized as a structure of interpersonal relations and interpersonal difference. Therefore, the focus of attention will shift from the interaction and its consequences to the phenomenal field of interpersonal sociality. To this end, this chapter will discuss theoretical concepts of social philosophy that focus on the potential for conflict in human social relationships (which the economic studies examined on a biological and behavioral level). They take the interpersonal relation as the starting point for their reflections and think about its social, political and ethical consequences. Methodologically speaking, however, the social-philosophical approaches reconstruct the dynamics of social interaction not only at the site of the individual, as experimental economics did in its description of social preferences. Instead, they

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1 Thoughts on interpersonal sociality have already been introduced in §§2 and 10. These sections referred to interpersonal sociality as the phenomenal excess of human interaction that eludes measurable empirical description and that denotes the sphere of human behavior in which human beings mutually affect each other and bring about awareness of each other. This can occur through words, gestures, looks, symbols, or also through silence.
go beyond methodological individualism by first considering the basic phenomenological structure of interpersonal relations. Then, they use the description of this relationship structure as a starting point for developing models of human cooperation or conflict and describe the inner dynamics of this relationship structure in its consequences for the societal coexistence of humanity.

The three concepts discussed in this chapter are all based on the assumption of a difference or asymmetry at the root of the interpersonal encounter. On the basis of this difference, they endeavor to comprehend the humane possibility of configuring this encounter politically and ethically. Here, the descriptions from the various perspectives range from interpersonal difference as an antagonistic confrontation, to this very same difference as a site of responsibility for an other, whose presence in the interpersonal encounter remains transcendent and elusive. An intermediate position is adopted by those concepts which deal with the ethics and politics of recognition, in which the conflict potential of the interpersonal relation is to be pacified by the ideal of symmetry and reciprocity. All three concepts deal with the asymmetrical relationship constellations that also served as the starting point in the modelings of experimental economics. There, these constellations were used to represent social conflicts between altruistic and egoistic agents and to examine the causes and conditions that could lead to solving these conflicts. Unlike economics, the social-philosophical theories discuss new forms of a social conflict that can be understood, not by looking at the consequences of human interaction, but by considering the interactional relationship and the interpersonal difference at work in it. In addition, the solution of social conflicts is not viewed only in terms of the evolution of a cooperative human interaction focused on strong reciprocity. From a social-philosophical perspective, it is questionable whether a pacification of social conflicts that aims to establish a symmetrical synchronization of the interaction partners and their transactions does not misunderstand the nature of these conflicts as such.

Another factor that must be taken into account in considering the three possible conceptions of the basic character of interpersonal relation and difference, is the fact that the basic types of antagonism, recognition and alterity can each only describe one aspect of the interpersonal encounter. Unlike the constructions of economic behavioral science, the discourses of social philosophy cannot create a meaningful unified perspective, nor do they aim to do so. Therefore, in order to