

**Revisiting *On the
Beginning of Social Inquiry***

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Edinburgh University

**Organizers: Stanley Raffel and Eric
Laurier**

Conference Papers

Titles, Authors & Abstracts

(Alphabetical by author)

Dasein/Analysis? Blum and McHugh within the Continental Tradition

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In this paper, I reposition Blum and McHugh's "Analysis" school within a wider constellation of ancestors associated with existential European thought. While the ethnomethodological tradition is the obvious foil for Blum and McHugh's analysis, a focus on "analysis vs. ethno" can obscure a rather different set of connections to a range of other streams of social thought. The most intriguing, if certainly not the most obvious, of these might be the "Daseinanalysis" proposed by Ludwig Binswanger as a fusion of Heideggerian existentialism with neo-Freudian psychology (doubly interesting given Blum's recent address at IEMCA on "The Jouissance of Ethnomethodology"). The existential flavour of Analysis—evident in Grathoff's perplexed 1975 review of *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry*—can be obscured by viewing it as merely a wayward offspring of ethnomethodology but can be put into richer relief through a European reading of Blum and McHugh, the task of this paper.

Doing being local at the Lakeside Lounge

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The purpose of establishing yourself as a local in a place like the Lakeside Lounge, is the same as becoming part of any community in a city. Being local is being committed. It enables oneself to bump into people on a regular basis. To have a place within the anonymity of the city where people know what you are going to drink, what your political opinions are and later on maybe even your name.

"To locate motive is (...) not to 'find' anything but to describe the necessary and analytically prior understandings and conventions which must be employed in order for a member even to invoke motive as a method for making a social environment orderly and sensible." (McHugh et al. 1974, p.32)

This paper attempts to carefully describe the different steps that are involved in establishing yourself as a local in a place like the Lakeside Lounge.

Using my fieldnotes to describe the work that is going on I am taking the path of an ethnographer. Coming from an ethnomethodological approach, however, the data presented are taken from fieldnotes, in which my own understandings and activities provide the phenomena for analysis. The paper aims to focus on the different steps specifically as a series of methods for doing being local.

On the Unending Beginning of Social Inquiry

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To honor the anniversary of this book I will review the climate in which the book's critique of positivism occurred as an attempt to modernize the Socratic dialectic under the organizational constraints of the American university and its empirical model(s) of social science. Exercised by the influences of Greek philosophy and the theoretic renovations introduced by Heidegger and Wittgenstein among others, Peter McHugh and I worked on developing a systematic approach to the analysis of interpretive instabilities and conflicts in everyday life by focusing upon existential and ontological presuppositions of commonplace representations.

In *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* (1974) we tried to develop this focus of tension around the ambiguity of violence and its two-sided character in a research program that was not fully appreciated at that time. We could only accomplish our project by reformulating violence as the methodical system of classification and exclusion on which any social order was based. Yet violence seemed a hyperbolic figure for describing the methods and procedures entering into the constitution of social life described eloquently by Goffman and by Garfinkel, making culture transparent not only in routines and ritual for doing activities but for undoing as well, for example in excluding matters of concern and relevance. In that work we took up the surreptitious violence perpetrated by a normative order in our inquiries into positivism, objectification, bias, acceptance and rejection of research and the problematic criteria on which such evaluation had to be based. Yet the violence of our approach seemed to reciprocate the violence of the social order in a transference relationship that appeared to offer no escape through analysis, no respite from what Girard was to call a sacrificial crisis in a world abandoned by the indubitable referent.

In *On the Beginning*, our polemic led to analyses of travel and art as two non-violent attempts to subvert the oppressive regime of expectations governing any social order regarding gains and losses; but, the limits of escapist travel and even of the best of art lead us to appreciate the dialogical method of the book as itself an alternative means for restraining violence and as a possible way of arresting or mediating the ideological exchange between normative and transgressive extremism. We sought to rejuvenate the idea of conversation as a method for healing and in this the work anticipated and offered resources to the imaginative reader for surpassing the various representations of impasse recognized in much poststructuralist inquiry. We hoped to tie our theorizing to methods for inducing reflective relations to ambiguity that were neither dogmatic nor banal.

The Method of Dialectic

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In research regarding the question of whether the urban or rural setting is better for raising children, I applied the method that was first articulated in 1974 in *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* and developed in Blum and McHugh's 1984 work, *Self Reflection in the Arts and Sciences*. In their 1974 book, the authors' integrated a reflexivity that phenomenological sociology introduced into research as a collaboration that was inspired by Platonic dialectic, especially as described in the 'Introduction' (1974: 13 – 20). This paper proposes to revisit the method of dialectic in their early and late work as a way to address conference topic 1 (innovative) and topic 2 (collaboration) in the Call For

Papers. Where possible, a comparison will be made with the way Gadamer, also influenced by Plato, develops the method of dialectic in *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*.

Some reflections on art and analysis, with specific reference to Pasolini's film theory

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Some reflections on art and analysis, with specific reference to Pasolini's film theory

In the introduction to *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* the fundamentals of analysis are outlined: besides identifying how a given practice is made accountable to members of a linguistic community, as in ethnomethodology, analysis also seeks to bring out the underlying form of life by which such an account is possible.

In the final chapter of the collection art is identified as a practice that is harder to analyse than the likes of science and snubs, as presented in the intermediate chapters. For (unlike science) art (the art object) cannot be evaluated by reference to external criteria. Rather, art is something that we must see as such, whether this be an abstract expressionist painting or the departures that Bresson's film *Diary of a Country Priest* make from Bernanos's novel *Diary of a Country Priest* to assert the film as art.

In this paper I posit that this diverse range of example can lead to conflating different forms of artistic life. More specifically film was historically discussed as a realist art form due to its indexical relationship to whatever was before the camera being recorded. If film is not essentially referential, for most of its existence its potential to be considered art has largely been discussed in such terms.

An important illustration of this is Pasolini's critique of the application of linguistic models, such as that of Metz, to cinema, via the former's conceptualisations of an infinite dictionary of images; the absence of grammar over the syntagmatic and paradigmatic; and, most pertinently, the contrasting forms of life of the cinemas of poetry and prose. In turn the cinema of poetry is particularly notable for presenting two somewhat alternate forms of camera consciousness: the intersubjective free indirect camera by which the perspectives of the character and the director are combined and the camera as a presence in itself, ostensibly independent of character and director.

Revisiting Personhood in *On the Beginning*

Allison Carter

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This paper explores the idea of personhood through the analyses in *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry*. In the essay on "Travel," the authors claim that they are first taking up the "idea of people" in contrast to their exploration of snubs and evaluation where "the idea of people, as those bodies who perform and look and refuse recognition and distort science has been neglected." In the examination of travel, their method is to articulate differences between the ideas of the inhabitant, the stranger and the traveller as a way to access an understanding of committed character of selfhood and an inquiry into the grounds of thinking. The analysis of travel is an "occasion" for showing the trouble with "thinking of the social as people who do this and that," and I would like to explore how that critique enables understanding the grounds of social actors' partaking of the social, but also the possibilities that are uncovered for understanding personhood. Can we

achieve a dialectical relationship to pain, escapism, preference, desire for recognition, motives, points of view, etc. while preserving an interest in persons?

**Collaboration And The Birth Of Comedy:
From The Symbolic To The Real In The Development Of Analysis**

Patrick Colfer

Independent Scholar

On the Beginning of Social Inquiry (the “Orange Book”) argues the centrality of collaboration, involving a dialectic of ego and alter, as the basis for its generating the new type of sociology it announces as “analysis”. Briefly, I argue that the Orange Book is tragic rather than comic in its articulation of the notion of collaboration, but that nonetheless the practice of collaboration enables the move to comedy evidenced in *Self-Reflection in the Arts and Sciences* and subsequent analysis.

Drawing on the Lacanian notions of the imaginary, symbolic, and real as further developed in Žižek and Župancic, I argue that the tragic character of the Orange Book derives from the auspices under which it grounds itself, its notion of the inaccessibility of the real. I explicate how this is articulated in the Orange Book. I then explore how the move to comedy in *Self-Reflection* consists in making the real (indirectly) accessible through its creative development of the Hegelian notion that substance (the real) is subject.....to discourse.

There is thus a parallel within the historic development of analysis to the analogous development in Lacan under the slogan “from the symbolic to the real”. I explore the practice of collaboration as the poeticized mechanism or apparatus that brings about the movement from tragic to comic self-articulation.

In this way, I develop a response to Suggested Topic 1 of the Conference: how the Orange Book rightly considered itself as innovative, although in ways more than it could itself articulate. Its own implicit comedy, if you will, is that it was thus “ahead of itself”.

A Case Study in the Application of the Dialectical Analysis on Friendship and Shared Understandings in Plato’s Crito

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This paper is an attempt to expand on the dialectic method as a method in social sciences. To develop the dialectical method of analysis, this study uses a Platonic dialogue ‘Crito’ as a case study, where close attention is paid to illuminate topics related to subject/object split in social inquiry, the need of the world of friendship to achieve shared understandings and the relation between the universal and the particular in the process of understanding. This paper argues that the openness to collaborate in the dialectical process facilitated by the world of friendship is necessary to arrive at deeper understandings about social phenomena. This paper attempts to incorporate the works of Gadamer, McHugh, Raffel, Foss, Blum, Bonner and Arendt in developing the dialectical method of analysis to illuminate the world of friendship shared between Socrates and Crito in the dialogue and to argue for its necessity in arriving at shared understandings.

Expats

Richard Feeseey

Independent Scholar

Partly in homage to the Travel piece now forty years old, another movement of the apparently rootless is analysed. Defying the ties and claims of belonging are now expats. Expatriates' emigre lifestyle behaviours and attitudes, anathema to patriots, nationalists and citizens alike, challenge us to reinstate the conspicuous limbo land of their inhabiting (a land of place without context just like the traveller's world) could represent the way our language too, in the course of analysing, finds itself in exploitative sojourns where it too could not remain. Expats' bon viveur escape doesn't stay deserting its sinking ship for ever: they often go home to die embosomed in the same under-funded immigrant-dependent NHS that had so repelled them. So too is the non-involvement and non-contribution of analysis' own space for itself, its most thoughtful words, always on its way home to the originating responsibilities to that which called for analysis.

Rethinking motive for social inquiry

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This paper will show the significance of McHugh et al's (1974) analysis method and how it continues to impact how social inquiry should be conducted today. Using an example of a rigorously reflexive analysis of a motive talk of an immigrant in Canada, I will address the need for a higher level of reflexivity for social inquiry. Inspired by Bonner's radical interpretive method of theorizing, I will challenge ethnomethodologist Lynch's (2000) arguments against reflexivity and examine the similarities and differences between analysis and ethnomethodology. The paper will seek to show that collaboration is an infinite process that allows theorists to be in a community where a brighter understanding is always being constructed.

The City that Moves Us: Being Mobile in Toronto

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Mobility and movement in the city is typically discussed as a function, or question, of infrastructure, accessibility and the like. Currently, in the city of Toronto, debates circulate around the various ways of building infrastructure (subways, LRTs, road repairs, bicycle lanes, walkable neighbourhoods, etc.) to facilitate mobility and movement. Yet, what is not discussed are the ways in which modes of mobility reflect a conception or formulation of the city and city life. In other words, it is always a conception of the city and city life that grounds any project of mobility infrastructure and mobility choice. It is that attention to the grounds of speech as an analytic focus that the work of McHugh et al, as exemplified in *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* (1974), is directed, and from which this proposed paper takes its inspiration as it endeavours to bring to view the conception and image of the city of Toronto that is concealed by debates having to do with infrastructure and choice around different modes of mobility, as well as the nature of the experience with the social and physical environment of the city that such practices

permit.

Exploring the Relationship Between *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* and Feminist Perspectives

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Amongst the topics addressed in *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* is the notion of bias. One criticism made of the positivist notion of bias is that it misconstrues commitment as favouritism, seeing it as private or capricious. By contrast the authors do not see commitment as problematic, and identify its (concealed) presence even within positivist positions, as in the 'commitment to non-commitment'. In this talk I want to consider the relationship between the view of bias and commitment developed in *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* and that present within feminist arguments for a reflexive orientation to methodology. There appear to be strong similarities between these two positions, in their critiques of positivism and the concealment of grounds as well as in their affirmative views of commitment. The issue I want to explore further is whether there are ultimately differences as well as similarities.

Reflexivity and Judgment: Examining the Foundations of Culture Beyond Practical Everyday Reality

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In her essay, "A Crisis in Culture," Arendt (1969) puts forth the question of whether what is true for mass society becomes true for mass culture also. To further Arendt's inquiry, I ask, what then happens to the cultural community to which members belong (in terms of an immortal culture), if members engage in merely practical (i.e., functional) reasoning concerning their everyday circumstances (as Garfinkel (1967) demonstrates to us, that they do). To put it another way, if members do not reason about the deep structure of the content that they are practically engaged in, what happens to their ability to assess the essence of that content, and subsequently, what sort of community is built on this unexamined essence? In order to examine these questions the present paper will focus on how practical everyday reality can be accessed, beyond the practical (Garfinkel 1967) and subsequently assessed (Bonner 2001; McHugh et al 1974) by the everyday member using reflexive techniques (Garfinkel 1967; McHugh et al 1974; Pollner 1991).

Snubs and reunions

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In this paper I will revisit both the 'Snubs' chapter of *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* and Roy Turner's earlier piece on ethnomethodology and accounts, to which it was a response and an occasion for further analysis. Turner's initial chapter built on Austin's performative utterances to examine how snubs were produced and recognised by their speakers and hearers, and then, in turn, by sociology. The example he used was of a former mental patient 'Bert' telling of being snubbed by another former mental patient. In BSI, the inadequacy of Turner's description of the snub failed because it did not

extend sufficiently beyond the concrete to the conditions that make snubs possible. What I would like to attend to is two forms of acknowledgement, rather than avoidance, that feature in Turner's article. The first is the discussion group's responses to Bert's story and the second is the reunion that might have happened had Bert not been snubbed. Reunions raise the question of the causes of the separation for the parties and are occasions for acknowledging a shared past.

How viable is the idea in *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* of collective and collaborative problem-solving?

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The aim of this paper is to examine the notion of resistance. In the original formulation the idea, "collective and collaborative problem-solving" meant the disclosing of the auspices, of the grounds, which make the problem/action (speech, writing, behaviour, making, etc.) possible. This disclosure was thought to be impossible outside the collaborative work of the "ego" and the "alter".

If this premise is correct, and it seems to me that it is, then the process of problem solving would not occur separate from collaboration. However, in "collaboration" as stated and manifested in the reflective practices of for example Socrates, Aristophanes, and Derrida, is there real resistance that is exercised? In other words, is collaboration a necessary outcome of a limit or inadequacy (negative) or rather is it an essential manifestation of the struggle to be?

Rethinking the Travel Paper

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'Travel', Chapter 6 in *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* disputes the idea that travel can ever lead to real change. It identifies as the core phenomenon-the usage- of travel the experience of 'denaturalization.' It treats this phenomenon as inevitably painful and recommends belonging to a place as the only mature alternative to the 'escape from suffering' that is travel. However, an anomalous fact from the point of view of the authors of the paper is that one of them, who was finding his life in Toronto less than fulfilling, travelled to Venice and returned not so much with a strong impression of Venice but with a revived and 'denaturalized' experience of Toronto. I interpret this experience in an attempt to consider aspects of travel and inhabiting that the original paper, arguably, missed.

Adventures in joint examinations of 'motive' talk and sociological analyses

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We are interested in enhancing our own and our students' self-understanding and capability for a meaningful life, through (1) an examination of how we formulate our and others' actions and situations, using vocabularies that could have been different and (2) questioning the life-world which sustains our inquiry eclipsing alternative orientations.

In this paper we present our experiences of reading and discussing, together with graduate students, sociological texts on motive talk informed by Mills' 'vocabularies of motive' and Blum's and McHugh's explication of motives, with its Addendum in the 'Motive' chapter. We pursue the following questions: How can we create a reflexive standpoint by reading and commenting on empirical analyses of motive talk? What different questions do their authors ask, and what positions do they assume? How can we discuss theoretical and empirical treatments of motive with students in order to grasp authors' diverse orientations and to examine our own stances?

Dialectic, indebtedness, ambivalence and the pursuit of analytic speech: notes on revisiting 'On the Beginning of Social Inquiry'

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This paper was occasioned by the idea of revisiting *On the Beginning of Social Inquiry* (OBSI). It is not a lecture or formal presentation, but a series of *notes* designed to initiate dialogue on the contexts, themes and innovations of Analytic (or Reflexive) Sociology. Its overriding theme is the question: *What was/is distinctive about Analytic speech and the reflexive turn marked by OBSI in the human sciences?*

Some of the sub-themes that help articulate this question are:

Re-visiting as a concrete and analytical notion (multiple meanings of *indebtedness*, theorizing as self-conscious indebtedness, memory and recollection; the idea of radicalism as a 'return' to origins/origination; self-reflection as the assumption of responsibility/history, becoming 'other' (*alterity*) through dialogue; the latent structure of ambivalence);

On 'game-changing' texts and practices: Analysis' indebtedness (historical and theoretical contexts shaping OBSI);

Understanding and misunderstanding *self-reflection* and *reflexivity*: the differences and polemics within 'Reflexive sociology' *ca.* 1960s onward (seven 'species' of self-reflection, the unfinished project of reflexive theorizing);

The claims of Analytic speech exemplified in the movement from 'Reflection' to 'Dialogical' discourse (the turn to Language (*logos*), 'collaborative' writing, 'multi-voiced' analysis).

The philosophical status of speech that formulates grounds and auspices (questions of origins, foundationalism, the transcendental, etc.);

Questions of 'method' and the community of Analytic work (is there a single, unified or agreed version of method in Analytic sociology? and related questions of analytical adequacy ('criteria'), creativity, competence, judgement).

Honestly Speaking" – Some Implications of Analysis

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On the Beginning of Social Inquiry is explicitly critical of so-called 'positivist' notions of truth and objectivism. The authors formulate a particular method of analysis as an alternative – rather than uncovering truth, the aim is to re-collect the auspices or possibilities that are covered-over by the presumed self-sufficiency of speech. Speaking the truth is thus argued to also hide something.

The proposed paper will explore whether or not, and if so in what way, the shift away from ‘truth’ also recommends a particular version of ‘honesty.’

The Introduction of the book mentions honesty (or a version of honesty) only in passing or indirectly. For example, “We ‘admit’ to this flexibility, this practicality in our actual work, not just because we are honest, but because it is not for us a damaging admission.” Or again, later in the introduction when discussing Plato and Socrates, the authors mention “speech that is truthful to itself.”

The paper will develop the following line of thought: If ‘honesty’ in its common usage refers to the correspondence of an ‘account’ to a ‘reality’ (see the first example as a usage in this sense), that is, if it is synonymous with speaking the/a truth, then the method proposed in “On the Beginning of Social Inquiry” recommends a version of honesty that refers to speech that is not necessarily truthful about what it says, but instead is interested in its own transparency. Rather than (only) giving an ‘account’, this honesty aims to be ‘accountable.’