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Searching for the Fourfold in Critical Discourse Analysis

There are a diversity of approaches to discourse analysis, which has different meanings for different authors (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: ch. 1; Dijk 2011: ch. 1; Johnstone 2018: ch. 1). It still, however, makes sense to claim that one common denominator among the family of discourse analysis approaches is its interest in ongoing, actual, linguistic practices as they happen within existing, but also continuously negotiated, linguistic structures. Discourse analysis is commonly conceived as an analysis of what *is* said within the larger existing structures of what *can* be said.

It is both a methodological blessing and challenge in discourse analysis that the analyses are themselves shaped by language, and hence affected by discursive structures. The blessing is connected with the way discursive structures *bring out* elements or phenomena and make these elements and phenomena available to scientific reflection. By approaching actual discursive practices through a second level scientific vocabulary, a pertinent corpus of discourses and discursive structures are brought to mind, and their significance can be discussed. On the other hand, the discursive structures of the methodological approaches also entail a necessary blinding to all that could be said, with the bringing-out of certain elements and phenomena happening at the cost of something falling out of sight in the analyses (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 109).

One way to handle this methodological challenge is by continuously developing new analytic approaches. So, even though each singular discourse analysis may be founded upon structures that narrow the reflective outlook, other discourse analyses may supplement it with reflections on other aspects, thus compensating for the necessary blindness comported by each approach.

The current paper subscribes to the continuous development of new approaches in discourse analysis by bringing into relation to them a certain reading of the late Martin Heidegger's reflections of the Fourfold (*das Geviert*), which, as we hope to show, makes a valuable contribution to the analysis of otherwise obscured discursive processes. It will be argued that the Fourfold points out elements or foundations of discursive structures that orient us to differing, and to some extent opposing, directions that are at the same time mutually interdependent.

This relationship between pointing out elements that are both opposing and mutually interdependent adds further to the advantage of incorporating Heidegger's notion of the Fourfold in discourse analysis: Analysts will gain an increased awareness of the inner tensions of discourses and – through the analysis of what *is* said the analyst will gain an awareness of what is *not* said within the existing practices. As such, the approach presented here is most closely related to the *critical* tradition of discourse studies.

A discursive analysis of how the Fourfold is at play in prevailing discursive exchanges and structures will thus be pointing *beyond* existing practices and structures, the inadequacy of which will come to light during the analysis. I will argue that this character of the Fourfold analysis is attractive in analytical approaches that are driven by a wish for *critical* reflections – such as are found in the tradition for *critical* discourse analysis (e.g. in Fairclough 1992; 2013; 2015). As such the approach in this paper is in line with Johnstone, when she writes:

All uses of discourse analysis result in descriptions, but the end goal of discourse analysis is not always simply description of the status quo but social critique and, sometimes, intervention. (Johnstone 2018: 33)

The starting point of discourse analysis is descriptive, but insofar as the description brings out contingencies that are either forgotten or naturalised, the description itself entails critical and reflective conclusions.

However, even the traditional approach of critical discourse analysis, which is driven by an emancipatory agenda, primarily “aims to make the implicit explicit in language use” (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018: 1) and the critical reflection then mainly focuses upon unequal distribution of power (Flowerdew and Richardson 2018: 4). The unstable character of the Fourfold will add an awareness of not only what is *implicit* in discourses, but also what is essentially *excluded*; how discourses are based upon inner tensions between opposing issues that must be silenced for the discourses to be of pragmatic worth – i.e. the suggested approach brings forth the silences upon which discourses are based.

The following approach subscribes to Fairclough’s ideal of “arriving at and settling on ‘imaginaries’ for possible alternatives to problematised states of affairs” (Fairclough 2018: 18). In Fairclough’s approach, the analysis remains an analysis of the text’s internal argument, evaluating it against some “essential goals” and evaluating the premises of the argument (Fairclough 2018: 19). To complement this approach, a Heidegger-inspired analysis offers a tool to demonstrate how any argument must *necessarily* be built on an unstable ground, as the articulation itself relies on a silence that constitutes the discursive horizon. This new approach offers an additional tool for critical reflection. It does not, as such, provide clear and distinct instructions for action, since every alternative will be subject to the same objections. As such this approach will be less action inducing, compared to the ideals of Fairclough. It does, however, offer a tool to increase the “imaginaries” for *possible* alternatives.

The story this paper tells has five distinct parts. In section (I), I will revitalize an old idea that underlying structures of silence constitute, in part, discursive structures. Heidegger’s analyses of the Fourfold gives us a heuristic through which this can be analysed. In section (II) I will briefly summarize Heidegger’s account of the four elements in the Fourfold, emphasizing that each element constitutes a tension between opposing mechanisms. In section (III) I will sketch how using the Fourfold heuristic can contribute to discourse analysis. It will be argued, that the Fourfold can be analysed in various aspects of “measuring” that are essentially founded upon the unstable elements of the Fourfold – an instability that is

necessarily subject to silencing in practical discursive engagements. However, the silenced part and its function can be seen by the analyst when we bring the structuring instability to the front. In section (IV) I demonstrate how this approach might be used in an analysis of a debate between Greta Thunberg and Bjørn Lomborg. I demonstrate how both sides in this larger debate about the environment are limited in their understanding of what are the desired goods of future generations, and how much adult management is based upon rational goals. In section (V) I summarize the findings of the paper. I argue that by seeking out the “cracks” of prevailing discourses by the comprehensive fourfold heuristic, we can bring into play the constituting silences for further discussion.

I. Analysing silence that constitutes discourses

The idea that silence is essential in the constitution of discourses is an old one. In 1963 Derrida opened a controversial debate with Foucault (Derrida 1967) by objecting to the naiveté in Foucault’s program of “the archaeology of that silence” that made a discourse of madness possible (Foucault 1961: 160; Foucault 1988: xi).

Within the dimension of historicity in general, which is to be confused neither with some ahistorical eternity, nor with an empirically determined moment of the history of facts, silence plays the irreducible role of that which bears and haunts language, outside and *against* which alone language can emerge ... [...] Like nonmeaning, silence is the work’s limit and profound resource. (Derrida 2001: 65-6; French original: 1967: 84 – italics in the original)

Derrida thus agrees with Foucault that the underlying forms of silence that make discourses possible must be including in any totalizing understanding of ongoing discourses. Since, however, the relationship between discourse and silence is so intricate, he warns against understanding silencing as a determined certainty. Silencing is constituted together with the discourses that silencing makes possible. Derrida criticizes Foucault for “essentializing madness” (ibid.) in a too sharp separation of discourse and silence.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of whether or not Derrida’s reading of Foucault is fair. However, our point here is to take Derrida’s notion that discourses and silences are mutually dependent as our starting point. An understanding of this relationship in prevailing discourses will be helpful in analysing the unstable foundations of communicative practices. This has been more broadly demonstrated elsewhere (Hansen 2017; 2018; 2021; 2022).

Out of Derrida’s critique of Foucault emerges the question of how discourse analysis might focus upon how silence shapes significance in discourses. The methodological problem for discourse analysis is that of including not only an analysis of what is positively articulated, but also the forms of silence that are not themselves articulated but nevertheless play a significant role in the existing discursive structures and practices (Buchmeier 2020; Hall, Sarangi, and Slembrouck 1997; Hess & Waller 2020; MacLure m.fl. 2010; Schröter 2013;

Thiesmeyer 2003; Watts 1997). This implies: 1), differences within silences, which dissolves its unity into many shapes, thus implying that silence plays a role in many different ways – and in many cases unconsciously; 2), silence must constitute the language through which we could articulate the analyses if it always functions as the limit and reserve of enunciation itself; 3), silence theoretically arises as a consequence of pressing or even necessary assignments that can only be handled reductively (what Derrida conceives of as *aporetic* assignments – Derrida 1994; 1996).

One approach to handling these challenges could be to focus upon *specific* kinds of silence – without implying that silence is exhausted by these focusses. In this section I will suggest that a reading of Heidegger’s analyses of the Fourfold in his later writings may serve as a starting point for showing how discursive practices and structures are based on certain specific kinds of silence that found an implicit understanding of sky and earth, divinities and the mortals – the main elements in his analysis of the *Fourfold*. It will be argued that this silence is necessary because the elements of the Fourfold are not stable, and do not give us a certainty upon which to found discourses, the required stability is reached by silent limits upon which they depend. Discursive reflections that bring forth silence will thus potentially have a critical-reflective implication by showing both the contingency of a given discourse and the possible alternatives in which it situates itself.

Heidegger’s reflections upon the Fourfold emerges in his writings from 1949, and Heidegger repeatedly returns to this theme until his death (Mitchell 2015). Heidegger himself does not engage in discourse analysis. Language plays an important role in his writings, but, in contrast to the Anglo-American analytic philosophers, language is not *generally* central to his philosophical interest. And when he does turn towards language, he is less interested in how people use language than in how language does something to us:

To reflect on language thus demands that we enter into the speaking of language in order to take up our stay with language, i.e., within *its* speaking, not within our own. (Heidegger 2009: 188 – italics in original; German original: 1985: 10)

Heidegger himself is thus mainly interested in how language itself speaks. In the current discourse analytical setting, I will translate Heidegger’s endeavour into reflections on how language structures and constitutes a relationship between thought and specific forms of being. This translation might leave the impression that Heidegger is a structuralist, something he explicitly problematizes (Heidegger 2009: 206; 1985: 29). However, since my goal is primarily to show how Heidegger’s writings can be used within discursive analyses, the characterization suffices for our purpose.

In the lecture “Language” published in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* Heidegger argues that language operates through a *calling* (“rufen”). In a reading of G. Trakl’s poem “Ein Winterabend”, he argues that language

...calls things, bids them come. Where? Not to be present among things present[...]. The place of arrival which is also called in the calling is a presence sheltered in absence. [...] It invites things in, so that they may bear upon men as things. (Heidegger 2009: 197; German original: 1985: 19)

Language thus calls things as a presence “sheltered in absence”. Admittedly this is a quite dense claim that is further emphasized by the claim that language operates *through* the structure of sheltered absence – “*Language speaks as the peal of stillness*” (Heidegger 2009: 205 – italics in the original; German original: 1985: 27).

In an attempt to translate the claims into our context it can be said that Heidegger wants to point out that language can only bring something forward as significant, insofar as something else is brought to silence – articulation is always not-articulating other things. The significance of the spoken word depends upon the words that are not brought out, issues that are not brought up, a contingent hierarchizing of what is and is not significant. The relevance of the said can be measured by the amount of alternative utterances that are not put forward. Stillness thus creates language not by being “quiet” (Heidegger 2009: 204; German original: 1985: 26), but rather by letting certain issues stand out on the background of other issues standing back. The “peal” of stillness is spoken (or written, etc.) words, they only are significant (loaded with meaning) because of the underlying stillness.

This structure is further substantiated in the analysis of the Fourfold:

The things that were named, thus called, gather to themselves sky and earth, mortals and divinities. The four are united primarily in being toward one another, a fourfold. [...] The unitary fourfold of sky and earth, mortals and divinities, which is stayed in the thinging of things, we call – the world. (Heidegger 2009: 197; German original: 1985: 19)

Heidegger thus argues that language calls things into a presence sheltered in absence that bears upon us through a “unitary fourfold”, consisting of sky, earth, mortals and divinities. The world is, according to Heidegger’s analysis, coming to us through a Fourfold that is called out by language. Each of the elements will be discussed in the following section, however the overall idea is that in the process of naming, the Fourfold is called out, we cannot articulate anything without implying a specific account of the relationship between sky, earth, mortals and divinities.

In Heidegger’s approach the Fourfold is not handled and reshaped by we as humans. The emergence of the world through the Fourfold is, as it were, a given that we operate *through*. In the current paper it will be suggested that even though it is true that we cannot approach the world independently of a Fourfold, it is still possible to rethink or restructure prevailing understandings of the Fourfold, whereby the world may come to us in new ways. By questioning or making our understandings of the earth, sky, divinities and the mortals explicit

we are invited to contemplate the relationship between presence and absence in new ways. Something that is of value in discourse analyses, as we shall see.

In order to do this, it is, however, necessary to understand the meaning of the notions of earth, sky, divinities and the mortals.

II. Presence and Absence in Earth, Sky, Divinities, and the Mortals

In the analysis of the Fourfold, *earth* brings out the fact that things stand out through the *withdrawal* of earth. In Heidegger's oeuvre, the analysis of earth as withdrawal has its roots in his famous world-earth analyses in the interwar period (Heidegger 1935: esp. 32-36 + 50-52; 1989: throughout), but in the 1950's it is increasingly analysed in tandem with the *sky*. For example,

The tree roots soundly in the earth. Thus it is sound and flourishes into a blooming that opens itself to heaven's [the sky's] blessing. (Heidegger 2009: 198 – square brackets added by author, since the German "Himmel" is not in this context interpreted religiously; German original: 1985: 21)

For the "tree" to become a tree, earth must withdraw itself, earth must make space for something else to stand out. For things to stand out, it is necessary that "Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water" (Heidegger 2009: 147; German original: 2000: 151). Heidegger's rhetoric is admittedly rooted in a somewhat romantic vocabulary. The point is, however, more general: The *earth*-aspect of the Fourfold brings out how a thoughtful relation to issues in the world must happen through some kind of withdrawal. To take an example: In order to approach a book, it is in normal cases necessary to ignore issues like how it was printed, what kind of glue keeps it together, etc. Withdrawing earth (present as absent) is a necessary condition for the book to exist as "a book".

The tree is, however, not exhausted by the withdrawal of earth. The withdrawing of earth needs to be *brought out*, the tree is brought out by the illuminations from the *sky*:

The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether. (Heidegger 2009: 147; German original: 1985: 151)

Generalizing this aspect of the Fourfold, the sky is the openness and variability of Being. Despite the variability of the sky – the day, the night, the weather, the seasons – the tree is still a tree. The tree stands out with some level of constancy in the intersection between withdrawing earth and illuminating sky. The constancy is, however, certainly not an absolute fact. If the tree is struck by lightning and burns down, we say that the tree is no more. The sky element brings out how issues can occur as *the same in a variety of ways*. However, just as

with the earth, the sameness in the variability can only emerge insofar as the variability itself withdraws.

The relationship between variety and constancy that has been brought out so far does, however, not occur as accidental or unlimited. The issues that are brought to light do not stand out as constructed fantasies, something that we have contingently created. In Heidegger's vocabulary: Being addresses itself through calling – a calling from the *divinities*:

God's speaking [German: Sprechen] is the speaking [German: Zusprechen – better translated as “addressing”] which assigns to man a stiller nature, and so calls on him to give that response by which man rises from what is authentic ruin up into earliness. (Heidegger 1982: 196 – square brackets added by author; German original: 1985: 75)

In Heidegger's understanding, the divinities are thus understood under the grammar of invocation: they call. The element of the divinities designates the urges of reality – how being urges itself upon us. The way in which earth and sky urges itself upon us through varying kinds of withdrawal is not random or completely within the powers of human agents. We are called upon to approach or understand the given in certain ways, and this calling is out of our hands. The calling is at the same time part of and beyond the given:

The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment. (Heidegger 2009: 147-8; German original: 2000: 151)

As with earth and sky, divinities thus contain a duality – here as a duality between a calling that is both urgent presence and a vanishing “beyond”. The fourth element of the Fourfold, the *mortals*, repeats this structure, in this case as a duality between finality and transgression:

The mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies. The animal perishes. [...] We now call mortals mortals – not because their earthly life comes to an end, but because they are capable of death as death. (Heidegger 2009: 176; German original: 2000: 180)

With the category of ‘mortals’, Heidegger intends to show how the limitedness of finite beings – humans – must be distinguished from mere perishing. Finiteness becomes a capability. Being capable of finiteness is to be aware of finality, and through this awareness relate to what is beyond or outside the finite limits, and thus, as it were, transgresses the finiteness – in a finite way.

The above is certainly a very brief summary of Heidegger's reflections on the Fourfold, which has been subject to varying interpretations by various of his readers. Summarizing even further, it can be said that with this idea Heidegger wants to show how the thoughtful approach to issues in the world must occur within four divergent but also interdependent

elements of tension – emergence through withdrawal (earth), sameness through variation (sky), presence through transcendence (divinities), and transgression through finiteness (mortality). The four elements or perspectives in the Fourfold bring forth distinct and to some extent opposing aspects of the occurrence of Being – withdrawal, illumination, transcendence, and finality, each of which is in mutual dependence on the others: Withdrawal only makes sense on the background of something standing out (and vice versa), transcendence only makes sense on the background of something being transcended from (and vice versa).

Intrinsic to Heidegger's notion of the Fourfold is the way it is an intrinsic element of language. The withdrawal, the illumination, the calling, and the finiteness do not themselves persist in language as modalities of articulation – or in more Heideggerian terms: They are speaking silently. They are forms of silence that call things into language. However, as soon as we listen to the withdrawal itself, the illumination itself, the calling divinities as such, or the limits of finiteness, thought and world is reconfigured. In the following section I will suggest that this is something discourse analysis can learn from.

One benefit of doing so will be that given the instability inherent to the Fourfold, the mutual bind between different directions, no particular analysis will be closed. Closure is always deferred. Thus, the risk of establishing new hegemonic discourses – master discourses – will be diminished, as every discourse is internally deconstructed. And this is desirable insofar as the aim of discourse analyses is critical rather than merely descriptive.

III. The Fourfold in Discourse Analysis

It is important to emphasize that importing the Heideggerian schema into discourse analytical does not comport any continuation or rigid loyalty to his work. The analyses of the Fourfold were carried out by late Heidegger, who bracketed human praxis. He emphasised that his analyses did not focus upon human *uses* of language. Rather, he wanted to reveal how language conditions the human activity of speaking:

To reflect on language thus demands that we enter into the speaking of language in order to take up our stay with language, i.e., within its speaking, not within our own. (Heidegger 2009: 188; German original: 1985: 10)

It can be argued that this view is actually not very different from the understanding articulated by Foucault when he talks about finding the “silent murmuring” that “runs between and sometimes collides” with what the speaking subject is intentionally trying to articulate (Foucault 2002: 30; French original: 1969: 39-40). However, even though such an exploration of the unconscious setting of communicating agents is very much in line with discourse analytical approaches, as soon as we begin to reflect on how to apply the structures in methodological and critical analyses, we obviously leave the field of analysis that was of interest to Heidegger.

However, leaving aside an exact exegetic reading of the Heideggerian Fourfold, I want to suggest that critical discourse analyses might well profit from taking the point of view of the

Fourfold in order to pose questions rooted in the fields of tension that underlie each of the elements. These questions would explore how the Fourfold is implied in the analysed discourses. The Fourfold implies that it is not certainty that shapes discourses, but an instability that will never be resolved. Each of the elements contain a duality between opposing mechanisms (unity through variation, transcended finality, urging presence through transcendent calling, becoming through withdrawal); furthermore the interrelations between the elements pull in different equally fundamental but also opposing directions. By bringing out this unstable ground the hegemony or naturalness of the investigated discourses is challenged. Discourses cannot exist independently of the Fourfold, but neither is it ever possible to foreclose on the Fourfold. Uncertainty is a foundational of discourse, on this view. Contemplating the Fourfold brings out a questionableness that must be silenced in discursive acts in order to organize discourses to signify in ordinary communicative practices.

To take an example: If we are to discuss climate change, we have to do this in a language in which the object of discussion stands out in certain specific ways, just as in any other discussion, and this specificity is the product of a settlement of the Fourfold. To have a debate about something requires that some degree of urgency conditions the different approaches to the topic. Part of the conversation is a negotiation about what degree of urgency applies, and on that depends the relevance of the topic among the universe of topics one can discuss – but in order for this negotiation to take place, the discussants must agree that it is relevant in the first place. As well, we have to agree (to some extent) upon what we are talking about, etc. In such exchanges the Fourfold will certainly sometimes be reconfigured – e.g. if there is disagreement about definitions of core concepts – but reconfigurations will have to happen within the Fourfold. It can, for example, be discussed whether climate change is actually an issue to be concerned about at the present time, in the light of new kinds of urgency from the divinities (examples of this could be that other issues are brought up as even more important within the spectrum of issues relating to human health, such as the use of GMOs. The discussion can turn to solutions pertaining to these other problems, in which case the discussion about climate change can be cast as an “opportunity cost” – bringing up the topic itself then can seem like it blocks discussion on a more vital short run issue, and so on.). Here the sorting of things to worry about is reconfigured within variations of the sky, etc.

Even though the Fourfold can be reconfigured within ordinary discursive practices, the explicit bringing out of the elements in a Fourfold-oriented discourse analysis is beneficial, because such an analysis will have to happen within an acknowledgement of a necessary contingency: Without a settlement of the Fourfold, there will be no language, expression will be empty. Settlements are, however, necessarily unstable. For the discourses to be of practical value, the instability of the discursive foundationals must be brought to silence. We can, of course, discursively challenge prevailing accounts of the Fourfold,¹ but this will have to happen on the background of a new settlement of the Fourfold.

¹ An obvious example of this is of course the kind of critical discourse analysis that is suggested in this paper: By bringing out the settling aspects of the Fourfold to reflective analysis the settling is challenged. But only insofar as the focus upon the Fourfold itself is accepted as a relevant approach.

In order to seek out how the Fourfold occurs within discourses it is necessary either to question (a) the relationship between the elements or (b) the duality within each of them. This paper will focus upon (a).

In Heidegger's analyses he often brings together earth/sky on the one hand, and divinities/mortals on the other. The connection between earth/sky is found in the constitution of measure taking:

Measure-taking gauges the between, which brings the two, heaven [sky – cf. comment above on how to translate the German “Himmel”] and earth, to one another. (Heidegger 2009: 219 – square brackets added by author; German original: 2000: 199)

Measure taking unites unity/variation with withdrawal. In the measuring, the earth's withdrawal is highlighted as that mechanism whereby the relationship between variation (the counter) and unity (the measure) from the illuminating sky emerges. Just as, vice versa, the illumination from the sky is essential for something to stand out on the background of a withdrawal: If nothing stands out, the constitutive character of withdrawal fails, and becomes mere vanishing. Measuring is constituted by the focus that is established in the illuminated withdrawal. Transferring this to discourse analysis, through the Fourfold based analysis, the analyst can investigate how the measuring of the discourses is itself constituted (Heidegger talks about an “*Unter-schied*” that constitutes what is counted as relevant differences/variations – Heidegger 1985: 22-30).

Transferring this approach to discourse analysis, it is relevant to investigate or reflect upon how standards, norms, values in discourses are products of particular kinds of withdrawal, and how this withdrawal brings forth *particular* scaled variations. To take an example from the discussions of climate: What kind of withdrawal has established that variations in world temperature are considered to be essential? Why has it become morally decisive whether or not we transport ourselves by emission free vehicles rather than fossil driven ones? Etc.

Heidegger also analyses the relationship between the mortals and divinities against notions of measure taking. In Heidegger's understanding, the highest measure is the divinities. Interpreting a poem by Hölderlin, Heidegger writes:

For in the next lines Hölderlin inquires before anything else and in fact exclusively, as to man's [the German original does not contain this reference to “man's”] measure. That measure is the godhead against which man measures himself. [...] “Is God unknown?” Manifestly not. For if he were unknown, how could he, being unknown, ever be the measure? Yet – and this is what we must now listen to and keep in mind – for Hölderlin God, as the one who he is, is unknown and it is just as *this Unknown One* that he is the measure. (Heidegger 2009: 220 – square brackets by author; German original: 2000: 200)

Bringing these reflections into the field of discourse analysis, this passage suggests that in the relationship between the divinities and the mortals, the measure brings together finiteness and transcendence. What this means is that the ultimate measure, the measure that constitutes or even legitimises measures is beyond measuring – you cannot measure the “meter”, just as you cannot measure God, Jesus, Buddha, etc. on the background of the normativity they establish. Standards are the exceptions to their own rule.² You cannot measure the justice of justice, etc. As such the ultimate measure cannot be brought down to the measures that founds discourses, and thus threatens to be unknown – or at least unnameable. However, as completely unknown it would not be able to be the measure, and therefore it is *made* measurable – as beyond measure. The unmeasurable is thus what founds measures, but certainly the unmeasurable is open for discussion – insofar as it is made measurable in different ways – because every act of making it measurable carries an insufficiency, because it happens within the limited understanding (mortality) of the beyond (the divinities).

One concretion of this can be found in the constitution of religions. The relationship between mortality and divinity does not, however, have to be religious in a traditional sense. More generally the relationship can be understood as a relationship between what is considered to be within or beyond our powers, how necessity founds or shapes possibility (and vice versa), how transcendence founds immanence (and vice versa), how the incomprehensible shapes the understandable (and vice versa).

As elements within the Fourfold, the value of reflecting upon these issues is to bring out how these constellations are unstable: We can only relate to the transcendent within the given, and we can only relate to the given by measures that point beyond it. To take up, once again, the conversation about climate change: The “beyondness” (the transcendent, that which is beyond our reach or powers) of current climate discussions tends to be either mechanisms of the sun, greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, irreversible “tipping points”, etc. The constitution of these divinities (i.e. how to respond as finite mortals to these calls in the presently given) diverges severely from how we were to respond, if we were in the shoes of a biblical Noah who understood the threat as stemming from a dissatisfied vengeful God. Both understandings are ultimately faced with annihilation of humanity, an annihilation that (in the worst case scenario) is out of our hands, and this annihilation is something we must necessarily deal with as finite beings, with limited powers and understandings.

The awareness of the relationship between something beyond and the immanently given points towards a necessary assignment that cannot be solved satisfactorily, but (as the assignment is necessary) cannot be left unhandled either. In order to articulate the issues, and act upon, challenges at hand the infinite instability of the Fourfold must be silenced – although the act of silencing is not necessarily intentionally aimed at by any agent. However, the necessity of silencing does not make it absolutely legitimate, but only situationally legitimate. Reflective awareness of the Fourfold may be reflectively opening, but threatens to

² Wittgenstein, in *Philosophical Investigations*, makes a similar point: “There is one thing of which one can state neither that it is 1 metre long, nor that it is not 1 metre long, and that is the standard metre in Paris” (Wittgenstein, 1968: §50; German original: 1953: §50).

lead to practical paralysis³. In order to handle challenges it is necessary to act consistently, engage others and convince them that certain specific actions are necessary, and in such processes it is necessary to tone down or even silence the insecurity. It is in the interrelationship between reflective opening and practical efficiency that a Fourfold-inspired discourse analysis of the relationship between transcendence and finitude like the above sets in as a reminder of the limited outlook of prevailing discourses.

Measure taking is certainly not exhausted with the above reflections. The crossings between the elements in the Fourfold could be analysed within different constellations (as per Heidegger, 2000: 199-208). For the present purpose of showing the value of a focus upon the Fourfold in critical discourse analysis, the above reflections will, however, suffice. So far, the brunt of our argument, after explaining the Heideggerian notion of the Fourfold, suggests that an awareness of foundational instabilities not as a flaw but as a necessary structuring principle is helpful to the analytical approach to discourse, . inviting s us to look for possible alternatives to how the different issues of the Fourfold might be handled. The issues in the Fourfold draw in mutually foundational and diverging directions, and in order to handle this in a pragmatically fruitful manner, the aporetic relationship must be silenced. The silencing of the Fourfold is, as it were, a precondition for the possibility of discussing and reflecting discursively upon different kinds of problems in the world. In the following section, it will be demonstrated how an analysis of this may be of critical value.

IV. The Fourfold Points Towards its Own Alternative

In the previous section, some important narratives of prevailing discourses in the debates about climate change have already been touched on. In order to concretize how the previously revealed analytical focus might prove beneficial, it is necessary to relate to actual statements. For this I will on the one hand start out with a statement from Greta Thunberg, who has become an iconic figure on the side of those who call for quick and radical political precautions to prevent severe climate changes. This view will be countered by a feature article by Bjørn Lomborg (president of the *Copenhagen Consensus Center*), which opposes Greta Thunberg's framing. It will certainly not be possible to exhaust all the different dominating discursive stances in the debate. But both Thunberg and Lomborg represent dominant voices in it.

In September 2019 Greta Thunberg addressed the UN's *Climate Action Summit* in a speech in which she blamed the leaders of the world for not doing enough to prevent severe climate changes. She said that they had "stolen my dreams and my childhood with [their] empty words", that "People are suffering" and "entire ecosystems are collapsing" (Thunberg 2019). The reason for the blame is that they do not take serious the urgency that has been articulated by research ("For more than 30 years, the science has been crystal clear."). Her main substantial critique is articulated thus:

³ With the focus upon practical paralysis we have, certainly, left the field that is of interest to Heidegger.

The popular idea of cutting our emissions in half in 10 years only gives us a 50% chance of staying below 1.5 degrees [Celsius], and the risk of setting off irreversible chain reactions beyond human control. Fifty percent may be acceptable to you. But those numbers do not include tipping points, most feedback loops, additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution or the aspects of equity and climate justice. They also rely on my generation sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO₂ out of the air with technologies that barely exist. (Thunberg 2019)

In the speech, she operates with an idea of a “world budget of CO₂” that indicates how much CO₂ emission is acceptable if we want to stay within the 1.5 degrees global temperature rise that is seen as a preferable maximum increase since the Paris Agreement in 2015.

Raising the Fourfold-based questions brought forward in the previous sections, Thunberg’s approach operates with a measure-taking in which variations of CO₂-emission and global temperature (and how they affect the ecosystems) stand out on the background of earth’s withdrawal. The mortals are on the one hand the politicians who will have to realise that “change is coming, whether you like it or not”. They are, however, not entrapped within these limits, they are not entirely without influence, they *could* do something now (against the mechanisms that lead to global temperature rises), but if they do not we will face a CO₂-budget facing red numbers, which may lead to “tipping points”, “feedback loops”, etc. that will ultimately lead to suffering and collapsing ecosystems. “Young people” are mortals too – they will “have to live with the consequences”, because there is a risk of the mechanisms going out of our hands. Humanity is faced with mechanisms that will get out of our hands if we do not “temper” fossil emissions. And even if we do, there is no certainty but only a raise from “50% risk” to “67% chance”. The divinities are the mechanisms that lead to rising global temperatures, ultimately the collapsing of ecosystems.

Thunberg’s speech raised multiple reactions, both praising and critical. One of the critical reactions was published by Bjørn Lomborg who objected against what he considered to be Thunberg’s very foundational normative preconditions:

[H]er vision of climate change as the end of the world is unsupported. [...] Plentiful energy, mostly from fossil fuels, has lifted more than a billion people out of poverty in just the past 25 years. That is not evil – it is quite the opposite. Ms. Thunberg believes that climate change means people are dying, but the fact is that weather-related disasters just a century ago killed half a million people each year. Today, despite rising temperatures but because of less poverty and more resilience, droughts, floods, hurricanes and extreme temperatures kill just 20,000 people each year – a reduction of 95 per cent. That is a morally commendable achievement. (Lomborg 2019a)

Lomborg acknowledges that current emissions of CO₂ leads to global warming, but at the same time it will lead to increases in innovation and welfare, and historically the latter has led to more efficient countermeasures against weather-related disasters.

A Fourfold-based analysis shows that in Lomborg's approach earth's withdrawal has brought out slightly different units for the measuring. He too focuses upon CO₂, but now it is coupled with a focus upon human welfare rather than ecosystems. In his understanding, human agency should be measured as to how it affects human welfare (understood in terms of poverty and insecurity), and in this light the hesitant approach of political leaders is less condemnable. In a German version of the text he makes this relationship very clear:

CO₂ has brought humanity out of poverty. (Lomborg 2019b – translated by author)⁴

So, insofar as we look at how the earth/sky-elements of the Fourfold occur in their respective understandings, there is indeed a significant difference: For Thunberg the relevant measuring is to look upon the CO₂/ecosystem relationship, while Lomborg focuses upon the CO₂/welfare relationship.

When it comes to mortality and divinities the difference is less significant – at least on the part of the divinities: Lomborg agrees that unreduced CO₂-emissions will lead to global warming (“Yes, global warming is real and human-caused” – Lomborg 2019). In a first reading, it might be said that Lomborg conceptualizes the mortals as more qualified (“more resilience”), since he trusts the mortals to have powers to make precautions against the (inevitable) changes in climate conditions. However, on a second look it becomes clear that the mortality has merely shifted. In Lomborg's account the finitude of people can be found in their reliance upon CO₂ in order to prosper:

A hard by-hook-or-crook transition [away from fossil-fuel] would cause a real, global catastrophe, sending most of us back into back-breaking poverty. (Lomborg 2019a)

It thus turns out that the real divinities for both Thunberg and Lomborg is *death* or the survival of humanity against ecological challenges. Their understanding of how to respond to this is, however, quite different, and thus the finitude of the mortals is differently measured. In Thunberg's approach we are finite against the developments of future ecosystems to which we are connected if we do not handle CO₂ in a proper way. In Lomborg's approach we are finite against the development of future wealth to which we are connected, if we do not handle CO₂ in a proper way. Either way, CO₂ plays the role of the herald of the divinities. In almost biblical terms, CO₂ turns out to be a punishing saviour.

Having thus sketched a Fourfold-analysis of Thunberg and Lomborg's approaches the question becomes which kinds of critical reflections our findings invites. As shown in the previous sections, each of the elements in the Fourfold are always necessarily reductively conceived, and thus reminding ourselves of how they found existing discourses is by itself a reminder of possible alternatives.

⁴ German original: “CO₂ hat Menschen aus der Armut geholt.”

The critical impetus of the above cannot be exhausted in this paper. However, in analyses of conflicting texts it can often be helpful to reflect upon instances where the approaches overlap. In this case there is an obvious overlap on the CO₂-focus, and of course it could well be argued that to reduce the environmental challenges of future generations to the technical issue of handling CO₂ is reductive. However, I find it more rewarding to look into some of the less obvious overlaps. Two such overlaps can be found in their understanding of time and temporality in the light of the divinities and mortality.

The relationship between transcendence and finitude is quite prevalent in both approaches. Lomborg criticizes Thunberg's account for being too reductive: Even though it is true that global warming will follow from unreduced CO₂-emissions, we are not merely passive agents, some of the challenges can be countered by human ingenuity. However, the same argument could be raised against his own account of finitude: It is not a given, that prosperity is necessarily linked to CO₂-emissions, even though this asserted connection has prevailed historically. However, both disputants object against the time horizon: Thunberg mentions that we do not yet have the technologies to "sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO₂ out of the air", Lomborg acknowledges that "we need [...] low-CO₂ energy that can outcompete fossil fuels" but in his understanding this is not possible within the 8-year timespan that Thunberg suggests.

In a reflection on possible alternatives it turns out that they agree, to some extent, in their understanding of the mortals – they agree that grown people are better suited to respond to the calling of the divinities. Thunberg's discourse focusses upon the mortals in their quality of having decision-making power and they are thus understood as being able to decide the future when it comes to climate. Lomborg's discourse focusses on how the mortals stand out as rationally oriented in their handling of resources and development.

From a discourse analytical perspective it is decisive to reflect upon how these rationality-focussed approaches are reductive. In such a reflection it comes to mind that both approaches focus upon how grown people operate on the background of rational ideas of how to achieve certain desired ends that are for the common good. Even though this is obviously a reasonable demand of democratically elected representatives, it comes at the risk of neglecting how we are more than rational agents, that the power of democratically elected representatives is not solely based upon rational interests on the side of the citizens, and that sometimes the rational ends are not in the interest of the common.

Such perspectives would within Thunberg's approach supplement with an understanding of how representatives might be limited in various ways that are not necessarily based upon lack of understanding or evil – e.g. the risk of losing political power from popular disaffection or the disaffection of business, whereby their decisioning powers would vanish; at which point even the modest climate actions they have produced would be eroded. Against Lomborg's discourse horizon the suggested perspectives might add an understanding of how a general technological advance does not necessarily benefit the most challenged people, who may be

lifted against absolute poverty – but kept in a state of relative poverty – by mechanism that benefits most massively those who are middle class and above in developed economies.

V. Conclusion

The analysis in the previous section is certainly only a beginning, and is primarily meant to exemplify how Fourfold-based analyses might open the horizons of prevailing discourses. The value of the final steps in the above analysis over possible alternative discourses will be that it challenges prevailing oppositions, whereby more fruitful exchanges may take place (if the participants want to). Bringing out how the prevailing discourses share the reductive assumption that adults are considered to be less limited (mortal) than children, invites new discursive horizons: What comes to mind if we consider how young people in certain ways are more capable than adults (reversing the current assumption)? Or if we consider how young people and adults if they joined forces *together* sought to handle the sketched challenges (dissolving the opposition).

Such re-configured exchanges will certainly also have to take place within discourses that are shaped by a certain silencing of the instability of the Fourfold. As such, it cannot be argued that the suggested method leads to “better” discourses according to some a-linguistic standard. It is rather to be understood as a method to seek out the “cracks” in prevailing discourses that was brought up in Foucault’s suggestion of archaeological reflections upon discursive horizons (Foucault 1969: 9-10 + 12-13; 1971: 67). This approach, taking the Fourfold as its starting point, is characterized by basing the analyses upon issues or mechanisms that grounds discourses from within. There will be no discursive formations without a silencing of the inner tensions of the Fourfold. Silence constitutes what can be understood as significant within prevailing discourses. By bringing the silences to the front, the foundation of the discursive structures is brought to the front, and can thus be contemplated.

As a methodological suggestion, this analytical approach certainly also contains a narrowing focus – in this case upon certain quite specific aspects of how silence induces significance in communicative exchanges. As such, this approach cannot stand alone either. However, even with this in mind, insofar as the underlying mechanisms of the Fourfold are brought to light, we are constantly reminded of the instability of the basis of any discursive horizon. As such, the narrowness of the analysis will be less problematic, because the threat of hypostatization will be less prevalent.

This approach adds to the toolbox of critical approaches to discourse. In this case, with the focus upon the Fourfold which consists of issues or mechanisms that inevitably point out their own instability, the approach has the benefit of not being able to suggest approaches that are satisfactory in an ultimate way. The critical impetus of the analysis remains open. Not radically of course, since the Fourfold focus certainly contains a silencing itself. But the silencing of the Fourfold calls out the silencing of its elements, and as such the analyst can continue his or her critical interaction with prevailing discourses endlessly.

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