

New Realism

Problems and Perspectives

Edited by

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Preface

This volume contains 19 papers presented at the International Humboldt Conference on New Realism, held at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria, 26–28 May 2017. It brings together papers by scholars from universities in Germany, Italy, Bulgaria and Hungary, including the founders of the movement of new realism – Maurizio Ferraris from the University of Turin and Markus Gabriel from the University of Bonn. I owe many thanks to each of the authors for their participation in the conference and their contributions to this volume. I wish to express my gratitude to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for the patronage and generous financial support of the conference. Thanks also to the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” for providing material and administrative support. Further thanks are due to all those who helped with the organisation of the conference and the publication of this collection. Special gratitude goes to Blagovest Mollov for his editorial help.

What Is Context and Distext?¹

Vassil Vidinsky

1. Realism and contextualism: preliminary remarks

Realism is a philosophical position which can be defended or contested at least in three different directions. **Firstly**, within the scope of ontology it is a claim about the *existence* of objects. These objects might be of any type – of physical, mathematical, cultural, axiological or metaphysical nature, thus allowing, for instance, one to be a realist about values and an antirealist about numbers at the same time. **Secondly**, within the scope of epistemology it is a claim about the *independence* of these objects from various forms of subjectivity, referring not, however, to our abilities to “build a house” or “write a book”, since such a type of dependency between us and the objects is a trivial one. **Thirdly**, within the scope of semantics realism and antirealism are claims about the *truth value* of the statements concerning these objects. In the present paper I will discuss context only in the first and second aspects; the first will be treated in realist terms, the second in moderately antirealist ones². The general philosophical idea behind this text is that restricting discussions of realism to scientific challenges seems to be an arbitrary limitation; as an argument backing this restriction is lacking, discussions of realism should not neglect cultural phenomena.³

In contemporary discussions we sometimes witness the emergence of a certain tension between the terms *realism* and *contextualism*, inasmuch as the first term would often be associated with objectivity and truth, while the second one – with relativity, constructivism and historical contingency. Some philosophers relate the first term to precise and experimental scientific activities, while the second one is quite often related to “postmodern” interpretative strategies and discourses. Such an opposition, however, is valid neither in conceptual terms, nor in historical perspective; it is very likely to be a product of psychological or social tensions, rather than a result of philosophical analysis.

¹ I am thankful for the final critical remarks made by Philipp Steinkrüger, Dimitar Bojkov, Viktoras Bachmetjevas, and Vesselin Dafov. This does not imply that they will agree with the concepts and arguments in the paper.

² The objects and their properties are only partially dependent on our conceptual schemes, linguistic practices, cultural stereotypes and so on.

³ In terms of methodology this is a part of a tendency towards overcoming the opposition between the “analytic” and “continental” traditions of the 20th century (in fact this “conceptual” distinction is as meaningful as the opposition between “mammals” and “fast animals”). This opposition is historically and contextually based and it can thereby be sublated.

The subject matter of context is an interesting one as it mediates complex relations between philosophy, science and culture (between science and art, in particular) and therefore is directly related to the subject matter of realism. I would like to clarify this relation in accordance with the philosophical tradition of *becoming*, *historicism* and *evolution*⁴ (which commenced in the 19th century), and also in accordance with the more contemporary understanding proffered by the emerging program of *new realism*.⁵ For this purpose, the concept of *context* has to be clarified first. The term *context*, however, is vague and ambiguous to such an extent that it rarely functions as a philosophical concept despite its constant presence as some kind of a general and self-explanatory idea.⁶ On the other hand, philosophical research and theories on context encounter yet another problem: it often happens that the more we probe into this extremely fruitful subject, the more trivial it becomes, and we come up with threadbare conclusions as a result. Without harboring the conviction that I could evade those two types of problems, I will endeavor to present some clarifications on the subject matter of *context*, as well as one succinct hypothesis on its function. In the end, I will proceed to explicate the concept of *distext*.

⁴ The evolution (or historical change) of contexts and distexts implies that both empirical and abstract conditions can alter many (possibly all) of the intrinsic and all of the extrinsic properties. We will label *conditional intrinsic properties* all properties that undergo change should conditions themselves be subject to change (all extrinsic properties are in all cases *conditional extrinsic properties*). So which kind of properties can be considered unconditional? The extent to which all intrinsic properties are *conditional intrinsic properties* depends solely on the possible deformations of the conditions. Yet, it is thinkable that extremely dynamic conditions or extremely altered conditions could deform all essential intrinsic properties and quite possibly the existence of the things themselves.

⁵ The meaning of the term *context* curiously overlaps with that of Markus Gabriel's term *fields of sense*: "'Appearance in a field of sense' is just a technical version of 'being in a context'", see Markus Gabriel, *Fields of Sense: A New Realist Ontology*, ed. Graham Harman, *Speculative Realism Series* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2015, 158ff.). In this view, Gabriel's statement that there exists no world can be positively rendered: there exist only different contexts. The present study discusses the initial conditions of the *dynamics and relatedness of contexts*.

⁶ After the beginning of the 19th century there emerges a slow-paced but gradually increasing interest towards this subject. Authors who had a marked impact on the philosophical conception of context include Georg Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Willard Quine, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, David Kaplan, etc. Last year was the tenth anniversary of the international and interdisciplinary biannual conference "CONTEXT", inaugurated in 1997. Each of its meetings is followed by the publication of text collections where philosophers, technologists, psychologists, philologists, etc. share their views on this rather amorphous subject. For a methodological approach and earlier concrete reflections on context, see Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence*, VII ed. (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1942); Gotthard Günther, *Beiträge zur Grundlegung einer operationsfähigen Dialektik*, 3 vols., vol. II: Wirklichkeit als Poly-Kontextualität (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1979).

2. A working concept of *context*

I will begin by establishing the working concepts to be employed. Of course, this is not a claim to reveal the fundamental essence of each term; it is rather an attempt to coordinate their various historical uses. At present, the question “What is context?” can be replaced by the question “How to understand the concept of context?”

To begin with, by the term **concept** I mean only *rational understanding*. Here are some direct consequences of this narrow explication: (a) the ‘concept’ allows for accumulation and complexity, just as ‘understanding’ itself; (b) the ‘concept’ has mandatory synthetic character; with each analysis improving its synthetic construction; (c) the ‘concept’ can be developed and improved through historical reconceptualisations.

In order to clarify the concept of context, it seems necessary above all to specify what I mean by the term ‘condition’, because these two terms (context and condition) are closely related both in history of philosophy and in our everyday usage. I will define **conditions** (or circumstances) as *definite or indefinite varieties of objects, predicates, processes and so on, interacting both with one another and with the particular (possibly random) focus object*. These relations need not be causal, yet causality is not excluded from the types of possible interactions; neither is it necessary that there be an *essential* focus object.

We can finally conceptualize the **context** – it would be all *cultural conditions of possible or actual emergence or existence*. This approach of understanding ‘context’ can be termed transcendental-historical⁷; respectively, the conditions of possibility and actuality can be spatiotemporal (amorphous or rigid) fragments of possible cultural worlds, conditional historical varieties, institutionalized procedures or even routine and typically communicative situations and abstract, formal multitudes. Within the network of relations, necessarily included in the context, we can detect various subjects, structures, causal relations, analogies, distinctions, etc. Since, of course, this conceptualization of the context is rather general and encompassing, it does not bind us to a specific approach when dealing with it in the course of our further study. Thus, we have various ways of analyzing the conditions of possibility: as substrate, as structure, and as function. In this paper I will try to explicate only the last one.

We should not, however, omit a third important element. If we have an idea of the particular context of the events observed, we are rather dealing with a **contextual model** (mental contextual model) – *a representation, an interpretation or a construction of relevant context characteristics*. It is obvious that the

⁷ One may suggest an analogy (without establishing any identity) with Foucault’s approach, more specifically with his concept of *historical a priori*, repeatedly employed and theoretically developed in Michel Foucault, *L’archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969, 166-173.). In Foucault’s earlier texts from the 1960s this concept appears along with the notion of the *concrete a priori* [*l’a priori concret*].

contextual model can be a form of reduction (distortion, refraction) with regard to the respective context. It is illustrative that the idea of a contextual model, owing to its subjective and cognitive character, enjoys a much greater recognition within the scope of philosophy (i.e. early empiricism, contemporary cognitivism, some forms of phenomenology) than the very concept of context.

It is worth noting that the relation between the terms *conditions* and *context* is analogical (yet not identical) to the tension and complexity existing between the terms of the non-binary pair *nature* and *culture*. Likewise, the tension between *context* and *contextual model* is analogical (yet not identical) to the tension and complexity existing between the terms of the non-binary pair *society* and *individual*. As context can both employ and transform the conditions, so is the contextual model a secondary formation or transformation of the context (i.e. a transformation of the cultural conditions of emergence or existence). These distinctions are very important because the generalization from *context* to *conditions* allows us to think of the possibility of different cultures existing in very similar or identical conditions, as well as to assume hypothetical non-subject states and problems. And the generalization from *contextual model* to *context* allows us to think of the possibility of different individual notions or practices existing within the framework of similar or identical contexts, as well as to assume the existence of non-anthropological practices.

3. Functional interpretation of context

Inasmuch as the substrate and structural approaches to context have been for a long time the more routine ones, I would like to present briefly a hypothesis on the relation between *conditions*, *context* and *contextual model* through a functional approach, which is more characteristic of philosophy during the second half of the 20th century. This functional approach is intended as a methodological (not conceptual) analogy related to Rudolf Carnap, and more specifically related to David Kaplan's manner of discussing contextuality.⁸ The hypothesis consists of two parts, both cases involving the employment of the concept of *function* as a type of dynamic dependency or a principle of transformation.

1. Culture is a *function*, which transforms the conditions of possibility into understanding, i.e. culture is a function, which determines our understanding in a variety of conditions (circumstances). Respectively, different cultures can understand identical conditions differently.

2. Understanding is in turn a *function*, which transforms the context into a contextual model, i.e. that which determines contextual models within a wide

⁸ David Kaplan, "On the Logic of Demonstratives", *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1979); David Kaplan, "Afterthoughts", *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Joseph Almog, John Perry and Howard Wettstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

variety of contexts. Respectively, different individuals can construct different contextual models within identical contexts.⁹

This would mean there are two principal functions – culture and understanding – and three determining or determinable elements: conditions, contexts and contextual models. From right to left in this list we observe a recognizable generalization. For clarity we could present these relations in the following way:

Table 1

Culture is a function	
from <i>Conditions</i>	towards <i>Understanding</i>
Understanding is a function	
from <i>Context</i>	towards <i>Contextual model</i>

The convenience of this hypothesis is that: (a) it is more formal; (b) it does not attempt to explain where conditions come from; (c) it does not analyze the ‘nature’ or ‘essence’ of conditions and contexts, it only analyzes their function. The crucial point in understanding the dynamics of this hypothesis is what we mean by *determination*. Firstly, starting from left to right, there is no strict defining or predetermining, only vague determining – this affirms our intuition that culture and understanding are normative (prescriptive) functions, meaning that they allow exceptions. Secondly, the determination could go both ways – from conditions towards understanding and from understanding towards conditions; from contexts towards contextual models and vice versa (this is a difference in relation to Carnap’s and Kaplan’s approaches). Thirdly, in reverse (from right to left), it is a different type of determination – an epistemological one.

Two-way determination and *normativity* (which allows for exceptions) are the most important features of this hypothesis. I would like to specify forthwith that everything said so far does not constitute the full picture. Further below, when dealing with the term *distext*, the present hypothesis will be expanded.

To clarify the differences, let me recall Kaplan’s interpretation which specifies the concept of *meaning* by introducing the term *character* (akin to ‘linguistic meaning’)¹⁰ and demonstrating how *character*, *intension* and *extension* relate to one another:

⁹ For another type of relation between context and understanding see Henk W. de Regt and Dennis Dieks, “A Contextual Approach to Scientific Understanding”, *Synthese*, 144, 1 (2005).

¹⁰ The ‘character’ of an expression is invariant across contexts (it is context independent) and provides the rule for its correct use in each particular situation: this is an important difference from *Table 1*. Of course, Hilary Putnam’s philosophical treatment in “Meaning and Reference” (1973) is more influential, but Kaplan’s approach is more suitable for my methodological analogy.

Table 2

Character is a function	
from <i>Context</i>	towards <i>Intension</i>
Intension is a function	
from <i>Circumstances of evaluation</i>	towards <i>Extension</i>

Evidently, this second table could serve as an embranchment of the first one (the initial function in *Table 2* takes the place of the second function in *Table 1*). The embranchment shows that we think of context differently – in the first case it is treated in general terms, while in the second case it is viewed rather objectively.¹¹ I say “general terms” because the distinction between subjective and objective is sublated in *Table 1* through the notions of transformation, evolution or development. It is exactly this sublation that renders my proposal in this paper *realistic*. Even if cultural transformations have subject character (so far this is the case), they are not simply subjective but are manifested objectively. In history of philosophy, practice and transformation often stand in opposition to the more rigid subject – object division. As is well known, sublating such binary oppositions does not lead to their abolishment.

The tables illustrate two different approaches: whether context is what determines the contextual model (a more general approach described in *Table 1*); or whether context is what determines intension (a semantic or linguistic approach described in *Table 2*). In fact, context can assume both functions since this is not an exclusive disjunction.

4. Additional observations on contexts

(1) The outside. It is crucial that context always excludes or removes something, which in each particular case is redundant or unnecessary – *the context always has an outside to itself*. This means that context never determines things completely

¹¹ Kaplan’s “Afterthoughts” specifically mentions an objective or metaphysical context – this stands in contrast with the formal, yet subjective approach in John McCarthy, “Notes on Formalizing Context”, *Proceedings of the 13th International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence* (Chambery, France: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 1993). See commentary and criticism on treating context objectively, as well as a brief overview of the division between objectivist and subjectivist theories on context in Carlo Penco, “Objective and Cognitive Context”, in *Modeling and Using Context. Second International and Interdisciplinary Conference, CONTEXT’99. Trento, Italy, September 9-11, 1999. Proceedings*, ed. Paolo Bouquet et al. (Berlin: Springer, 1999). In the present case I distinguish context both from subjective contextual models and mere objective conditions, i.e. context possesses subject characteristics but it is objective, just as human history, society and culture exist objectively.

(even if we accept the worldview of some fixed causal determinism or monotonic entailment), nor is it something firmly established. On the contrary, it can be transgressed, modified, and is therefore unstable, according to the definition given above. Furthermore, in the course of history or communication any context is threatened by outside interventions, which are contingent or accidental for the context itself. This is precisely the idea behind ‘contextualization’: within the framework of a given context *not anything is possible*, meaning that some things are excluded not because they do not exist (although this might also be the case) but because they do not matter in a particular occasion. And since they can be regarded as redundant and expendable, context can be viewed in each case as a *restrictive resource*, i.e. the cultural conditions of possible or actual emergence or existence are necessarily restrictive. We can rephrase it in the following way: some things are contextually impossible, yet through intervention from the outside they could become actual. Of course, the idea of intervention is a risky one – context, itself a conservative resource, offers strong resistance, and the outside factors cannot so easily automate the cultural conditions, so as to ensure unequivocal implementation. Yet, the outside truly contains additional possibilities which are principally omitted by the context. This can be generalized by the following statement: historical tendencies and accumulations always have something outside seeping into them which could possibly become part of history. The outside is grasped and understood only *post factum*, only after the events have taken place.¹²

Putting the subject of ‘the outside’ for discussion illustrates once again the context’s *limitedness*, i.e. what exactly is conditionally excluded in a particular context and what takes place around this *conditional limit*. It is partly science – or more specifically research, and partly art – or more specifically the avant-garde, that always transform these conditional limits. In turn, science and art must (preserve or) establish other or entirely new types of limits. Such a contextual transformation serves to expand understanding, along with the possibilities of individual contextual models, and could ultimately be considered a significant expansion of human sensory and speculative nature. In one particular aspect this expansion is manifested in the history of human beings and their culture as *Homo sapiens technicus*.¹³

So far it is evident that the transcendental-historical approach treats context in contrast to certain modern formal approaches.¹⁴ Moreover, explicating the

¹² Vassil Vidinsky, *Sluchaynosti. Istoricheska tipologiya* [Contingencies. Historical Typology] (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2017). p. 250, pp. 371-372.

¹³ See Vassil Vidinsky, “*Homo sapiens technicus* i eksperimentite s prirodata (versiya 1.5)” [*Homo sapiens technicus* and the experiments with nature (v. 1.5)], *Piron*, Vol. 12 – The Inhuman (2016).

¹⁴ See McCarthy, “Notes on Formalizing Context”; Varol Akman and Mehmet Surav, “Steps Toward Formalizing Context”, *AI Magazine*, 17, 3 (1996). For a proper and

differences between the contextual and formal methods could complement our understanding of the concept of context itself. We will proceed to do so in relation to the notions of generalization and contradiction.

(2) The generalizations. The statement to be discussed is the following: the generalization from one context to another can be incomplete. A complete generalization is observable only in a few isolated cases, for example, if we move from rational numbers to real numbers, or in more general terms – from one proper subset to the whole set which contains it, as is the case with inclusion relations. However, contextual generalization is often persistently unrealizable, for example, if we move from the context of Bulgarian radical literary avant-garde (B) to the context of European radical literary avant-garde (E). The former is not just a particular instance of the latter, but also has its own rich variety of textual and contextual specifics. It is only by assuming a more general viewpoint – exactly when the context and specifics of B are lost – that we could argue that there is an inclusion without anything left out, i.e. *inclusion without remainder*. And the conclusions derived from such a generalization are usually too trivial and serve as a sign of contextual ignorance and misunderstanding of B. We have turned the inside into an outside (B into E), i.e. what was the initial subject of our study has eventually become redundant, and the context of B is lost.

Another reason for the drawbacks in employing such a type of formal generalization of contexts is that context is only sometimes a homogeneous and clearly outlined set, while in most of the cases it manifests itself as an indistinct and conditional diversity (or multiformity) – both synchronically and diachronically (historically). The impossibility for a complete generalization – we can call it *inclusion with remainder* – emphasizes something we already know: context always has a local character. In fact, the more context expands, the more contextuality is trivialized; or, in other words, generalization is a way of neutralizing the very context. Likewise, quite often the most abstract reflections on contextuality also become extremely banal, because they fail to grasp precisely the object of their study. This has already been pointed out – context is a specification of the possible, i.e. its limitation, a restrictive resource. Its most important property is the specific type of restriction it is, i.e. the specific cultural conditions of emergence or existence in each particular case. This is a significant drawback to all formal contextual theories – it is not a drawback to their formulation, but to their heuristics.

(3) The contradictions. There is a well-known and rather interesting difference between contradictions in classical logic and standard contextual contradictions. While the principle of explosion (*ex contradictione quodlibet*) – namely that *from contradiction anything follows* – is valid for the former, it cannot be applied to the

non-formal rationalization of context see Michel Foucault's works.

latter. In classical formal systems the acceptance of universal contradictions leads to a trivialization of the system, in which anything can become truth. From contextual contradictions follow multitudes of events (sometimes they are unpredictable), but context itself restricts the possibilities. This means that not anything may follow from the resulting contradiction. Moreover, we need a specific contextual analysis, in order to establish what could possibly ensue from each local case. In fact, different cultures and contexts privilege certain contextual beliefs, transformations and analogies.¹⁵ Identical contradictions in different contexts can produce fundamentally different consequences; moreover, the result can be perfectly traceable and liable to explanation. We could say this is precisely what different cultures differ in: the ways they react to contradictions that took place within them, the ways they cope with them or not, the ways these contradictions transform them and the emerging possibilities, resulting from these contradictions. All this largely determines the processes of stabilization, development and ageing in history in general, since those cultures, which are unable to cope with their contextual contradictions, often experience this situation in the form of a dramatic crisis.

All things considered, this *nontrivial and constructive role of contextual contradictions* pursues the course of the entire human history in its multifarious cultural distinctiveness. It is not to be underestimated that some attempts in the 20th century at introducing logical contradictions within formal systems employ an analogous procedure, which is definitive of contextual contradictions, namely – localizing the contradiction so that it does not affect the entirety of the system. Indeed, the localized and isolated formal contradiction very much approximates our understanding of contextual contradiction.

If we finally decide to compare these two types of contradictions via the modal concept of possibility, we will notice yet another difference: it is one thing to have *open possibilities*, as with formal systems (even if some obvious restrictions are specified), and it is quite another thing to have *contextual possibilities*, as with significant historical processes, which necessarily include dynamic tendencies and slow-paced, sometimes even undetectable, changes.

5. Distext and dysfunctional functions

While discussing (1) the outside, (2) the generalizations and (3) the contradictions above, we moved from treating the concept of context towards the relations among different contexts. It was mentioned that context can include another context with or without a remainder; moreover, it became clear that it can overlap or mingle with other contexts, and so on. Furthermore, within the context (or between contexts)

¹⁵ Not to mention that the truth conditions and the conditions of transformation can be dependent on contexts themselves, which in turn may be partaking in a broader context and so on.

we can detect serious *incommensurability*, which is in fact an even more puzzling form than contextual contradictions themselves. In contrast to the necessary visibility and conflictual character of the latter, distextual relations (see below) can be latent, implicit or just assuming the form of silent incommensurability. We have two versions of distextuality, which cannot always be so easily distinguished:

First version. When certain contradictions cannot be resolved within a given context, the cultural context concerned could completely disintegrate and produce a distext among the newly formed contexts. Or, if we start with the established state of extremely heterogeneous contexts exhibiting no possibility for broader contextual generalization, then we are once again describing a state of distext. We can therefore define the concept in the following way: **distext** is the *cultural conditions of impossible emergence or existence*.

Second version. But **distext** would also describe any given state in which we observe *a break in the cultural conditions of possible or actual emergence or existence*. Or, briefly put: context itself can contain distext. This is not a necessary condition, yet distext is an extremely important part of the more intricate real contexts in which we exist and which we attempt to understand.¹⁶

In the first version of distext (empty relations among contexts) the negation is applied to the possibility. In the second version (empty relations within a given context) the negation is applied to the conditions. In its first version, distext can be presented more formally, which would further explicate its difference in relation to contradiction: distext is the impossibility to apply norms to relations among contexts (*bridge rules*) or the impossibility to apply axioms for lifting towards a broader context (*lifting axioms*).¹⁷ What is now added to these impossibilities is the second version of distext – a break in the conditions of possibility (including the disruption of the conditions of possibility of understanding).

Typical examples of distextuality can be found at points of various orders: the incommensurable paradigms of Thomas Kuhn, the historical encounters between dissimilar civilizations and cultures during the period of colonization, the proverbial centennial incompatibility between the two pillars of modern physics – quantum mechanics and the general theory of relativity, the existence of avant-garde art in the context of marketing normalization, the isolated ethnical communities or any other internal or external cultural incommensurability. Most commonly, a distext is observed only during a short period of time; it is gradually overcome and contextualized *post factum*, or lifted (sent back) to the level of stark contradictions. Sometimes, however, distext exhibits a long-term and almost invisible presence.

¹⁶ Distextual relations themselves can assume more intense or milder forms. At its highest level, distext can be considered an isolated case of *external or internal empty relation*.

¹⁷ Varol Akman and Mehmet Surav, "Steps Toward Formalizing Context". *AI Magazine*, 17, 3 (Autumn 1996), 55-72.

If we recall *Table 1* we can immediately ask ourselves – what happens now, in a state of misunderstanding? The question imposes itself since the cultural function, transforming the conditions into contextually understandable ones, also necessarily leaves out broad areas of misunderstanding. What this means is that in one and the same act *culture can employ conditions to produce both contexts and distexts*. The function of misunderstanding, however, is not a separate and independent one, it is just *the dysfunctionality of understanding*. In this situation it is not entirely clear what could be produced as output of the second function in *Table 1*. In other words: what exactly is the product of misunderstanding? Distext often leads to suspicions towards the validity of existing contextual models or even to their disintegration – a process we can refer to with the term *dismodelling*. Most certainly, the output of the second function may contain further surprising fissions, since *dysunderstanding* (i.e. dysfunctionality of understanding) has no clear-cut norm or definitiveness. Or in even more general terms: misunderstanding can result in omissions, elusions of observation, etc. So, the simplest version would be to designate the output as *lack of model*.¹⁸ This explains why complex contexts, which often integrate distexts, are principally modelled with significant difficulty.

Table 3

Culture is a function	
from <i>Conditions</i>	towards <i>Dysunderstanding</i> ¹⁹
Dysunderstanding is a function	
from <i>Distext</i>	towards <i>Lack of model</i>

Just as *Table 2* served as an embranchment of *Table 1*, so does *Table 3* assume the same spot of embranchments. In contrast to the former overlapping, which was only of a methodological analogy, what is stated here is the following: *every complex context is accompanied by a distext* (some philosophers are inclined to call such really complex and encompassing contexts *worlds*). This means that *Table 3* is essentially a supplement to *Table 1*, it is on the same level of generality and abstraction, and it displays the same sublation between objective and subjective. Thus, it is exactly within the conservative framework of context (as restrictive resource) that the radical character of distext is manifested – as a destabilizing resource or simply as a state of incommensurability. Suspension, omission and dysfunctionality are essentially inevitable factors of human history and culture.

¹⁸ The more interesting term would be a positive one, not just “a lack of...”, as it is presently formulated. That, however, would require a specific analysis of a given distext.

¹⁹ In the table the term *dysunderstanding* serves as short for *dysfunctionality of understanding*.

6. The transcendental-historical approach

The functional treatment of context and distext presented above (mostly in sections 3 and 5) is a specific implementation of the more general realist transcendental-historical approach employed to define the basic notions (conditions, contexts, contextual models) and then the concept of distext. This approach allows for other non-functional types of treatment, and, of course, the transcendental-historical view in itself is only one of the possible directions in understanding contextuality and distextuality. In the end, I would like to give an additional ground for the existence and employment of this approach.

Since the multitude of contexts in social, historical, communicational, technological and even ontological terms is immense and heterogeneous, one could assume that there can be no single and universal theory of context. On the other hand, not only does context lack a single “essence”, but the instances of the term context represent a heterogeneous aggregate of family resemblances between seemingly similar, yet very different uses. From yet another viewpoint, (1) essentialism and (2) family resemblances are not the only possible variants to choose from. Purely methodologically, we can treat the concept of context via its (3) *contextual differences and transformations*. In such a case, we are neither looking for some internal essence of context (or distext), nor are we seeking to describe the diverse language usage – we are drawing distinctions through actual external relations, but also by way of their objective converted forms. This means that we can trace the *contextual history of transformation*; neither essentialism, nor family resemblances can ever provide us with such results.

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