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ABSTRACT
In this paper we elucidate the notion of 'social wrongs'. It differs from moral wrongness, and is broader than narrowly political wrongs. We distinguish conceptually monadic wrongness (1.1), dyadic wronging (1.2), and the idea of there being something 'wrong with' an entity (1.3). We argue that social and political wrongs share a feature with natural badness or wrongness (illnesses of organisms) as well as malfunctioning artifacts or dysfunctional organizations: they violate so called ought-to-be norms; they are not as they ought to be; there is something wrong with them. In contrast, moral wrongs are violations of ought-to-do norms. Social wrongs typically, but not invariably, include dyadic wronging. We examine who or what can wrong whom or what, and by what means: we can be wronged by individuals and groups, as well as by practices, institutions or structures (2.1–2.3). The notion of structural injustice is compared to the notion of social wrongs in 2.4. Social wrongs are defined as there being something wrong with the social reality (3.3), in comparison to there being something wrong with an organism or a system (3.1), including the narrowly political wrongs of systems of governance (3.2).

Introduction

This paper contributes to the tradition of social philosophy understood as an independent field, which can be defined as dealing with wrongs that are not narrowly political or moral but more broadly *social*. These wrongs, or social pathologies, can be e.g., forms of domination and oppression, ideological misrecognition, invisibilisation, rationality distortions, reification, exploitation via institutionalised self-realization, anomie, or alienation (Zurn, 2011). This distinguishes social philosophy from moral philosophy on the one hand, and political philosophy on the other (Honneth, 2007; Fischbach, 2009; Jaeggi & Celikates, 2017; Särkelä, 2018; Särkelä & Laitinen, 2018). On this view, social philosophy differs from theories of justice (*a la* Rawls) and other attempts of normative theories to formulate valid ideals or principles ('political ethics' as it were). On the other hand, social philosophy differs from that kind of political

philosophy, which focuses on questions of political governance of the social world, and the related questions of democracy, politization, and legitimacy of government. Political philosophy abstracts from other aspects of the social world, and focuses on political action and structures ('philosophy of politics', *a la* Arendt, 1958; Schmitt, 1927). If social philosophy is an analysis of social wrongs, it is crucial to understand the very concept of 'social wrongs', and its difference to 'moral wrongs' and 'political wrongs'

Typically the authors who employ 'social wrongs' refer to structurally caused oppression exemplified by the racial relations in the U.S. (see e.g., Darr, 2017; Higham, 1997; Lyons, 2013). Similar phenomena can also be analyzed with the help of the concept of 'structural injustice' (e.g., Young, 2011). Both are used in critical social philosophy, and both differ from individual moral wrongs, not only in that the perpetrator is not a lone individual, engaged in a one-shot action, but also in that the sense of 'wrongness' at stake is different.

This paper also contributes to understanding how social wrongs and structural injustices are related. Taken literally, 'structural injustice' is narrower than 'social wrong'. Social wrongs need not be exactly structural, but can be collective or institutional in ways that are not merely or not exactly structural: they can be agential as well. Further, there can be other forms of wronging than injustice. Something can of course be wrong because unjust, but also wrong because a case of domination, oppression, ideological misrecognition, invisibilisation etc. 'Injustice' is sometimes used as an umbrella term for all wrongs. In that usage, one cannot say that something being unjust is what makes it wrong, because injustice and wrongness are interchangeable. We will advocate a narrower usage of justice as a specific type of wrong, and retain injustice as a wrong-making feature alongside other wrong-making features. Not all structural wrongs are structural *injustices*, and not all social wrongs are *structural* wrongs.

A further motivation for elucidating the notion of 'social wrong' is intrinsic to the tradition of social philosophy understood as separate from moral philosophy and philosophy of politics. There are in principle two ways in which social philosophy so understood could approach life-worldly wrongs: one way would be to categorize wrongs so that each would belong to just one of the three classes – moral, social, and political wrongs. Lying is perhaps a paradigm moral wrong, tyranny is perhaps a paradigm political wrong and male domination or obstacles for social trust and co-operation are perhaps paradigms of social wrongs. One could try to cast any negative phenomenon into one of these three baskets. We do not adopt that approach. The reason is, or so the other approach adopted here suggests, that some negative, criticizable phenomena can belong to several of these baskets – one can approach, say, gender inequality or male domination *qua* a moral wrong, *qua* a social wrong, and *qua* a political wrong. Analogically to how murdering

people can be both a violation of a religious code, positive law, and morality (and so we can understand what it means to approach murders *qua* violations of a religious, legal or moral code), we in this paper try to shed light on what it would mean to approach something, for example, male domination, *as a social wrong*, as opposed to moral or political wrong. There might be cases that belong to just one basket of wrongs, but some cases belong to several, and so we need conceptual work to distinguish moral, political and social wrongs.

Finally, another motivation for the work undertaken in this paper is that there may be unnecessary obstacles for understanding social pathologies as something wrong, if the notion of 'wrong' is understood exclusively as a feature of individual acts in circumstances (i.e. what we will call below monadic wrongness of acts): if wrongness is a feature of acts, then there is conceptual room for social wrongness only as a feature of acts of social agents. That would make it impossible to capture the nature of structural injustices or social pathologies as 'wrongs'. Introducing dyadic wrongness and what can be called 'wrongness-with' will help in escaping this unnecessary obstacle.

In what follows, we analyze how the idea of 'social wrongs' differs from moral wrongness on the one hand, and how social wrongs are not restricted to cases discussed in mainstream political philosophy (such as illegitimacy) on the other hand. Both social and political wrongs share a feature with natural badness or wrongness (for example, illnesses of organisms) as well as malfunctioning artifacts or dysfunctional organizations: they violate so called *ought-to-be* norms; they are not as they ought to be and so there is something *wrong with* them.[1] By contrast, moral wrongness violates *ought-to-do* norms; the moral violator does something she ought not to do.

In Section One, we distinguish three senses of 'wrong'. In doing so, we use the distinction between *monadic* and *dyadic* descriptions. To say that A is B's father is a dyadic, or two-hat, description. To say that A is a father is a monadic, or one-hat, description. Of course, A can be a father by being someone's father, but a monadic description merely links fatherhood to A, and does not reveal whose father he is.[2]

The first sense of 'wrong' is an agent doing something (morally) wrong. This is a *monadic*, one-hat, description of an agent's action in a circumstance. This is monadic, since the picture involves only one agent, who acts wrongly. In this, it differs from structural injustices or social pathologies, which are more systemic, and less agential. Note that the agent can be a group agent, or even an institutional agent, and yet the sense of 'wrong' is monadic. A related usage of monadic wrongness concerns violations of social norms(1.1). The second sense of 'wrong' comes to fore with a *dyadic* description, possibly of the same situation. In addition to the violator, there is an explicit reference to the victim: a victim being wronged by an agent (or by an institution or

a social structure). This is dyadic, since *X wrongs Y*. (1.2). The third sense is different and is at play with malfunctioning artifacts or ill organisms. This is the sense of there being something *wrong with X*; X is not as it ought to be. Here there is a violation of an ought-to-be norm rather than an ought-to-do norm. The notion of social pathology is of help in grasping the idea of there being something wrong with the social life: social pathologies are coextensive with social wrongs (1.3).

Section Two takes a closer look at social *wronging*: what is at stake in the social cases when X wrongs Y? Who or what (2.1) wrongs whom or what (2.2) by what means or in what way (2.3)?

We argue that the violator X can be i) a group agent, ii) an institution (regarded as an agent, or as a structure) or X can be iii) a social structure (as in cases of structural injustice). Interestingly, institutions can wrong the victims in three different ways: i) Directly by 'sending a message' by adopting a rule or a policy, thereby misrecognizing or granting a subordinate status to someone[3]; ii) by acting (wrongly), or iii) by affecting agents so that systematic patterns of unintended consequences follow. The question will be posed how the three kinds of agents (institutions, collective agents, and structures) can be understood as 'wronging' by these three means. We further argue that the wronged party, Y, can only be an individual or a group, not an institution or a structure.

Section Three takes a look at the idea of *something being wrong with X*; and connects it to the notion of social pathologies. We introduce the notion with the help of natural and artificial cases of there being something wrong with an organism or a system (3.1), and then turn to the narrowly political wrongs of systems of governance (3.2), after which the broader category of social wrongs (3.3) will be discussed.

1. Varieties of wrongness

When an act is characterized as being wrong or impermissible, we are focusing on one agent in a circumstance. This is thereby a monadic perspective (1.1). When an agent is characterized as wronging a victim, (or, a victim is wronged by an agent), a dyadic characterization is given (1.2).

Below we will extend the 'dyadic' sense also to cases of being wronged by a social or political system, including structural injustices.

In addition to the monadic and dyadic wrongness, there is the sense of something being 'wrong with' a system (1.3). We need this third sense to capture the full extension of 'social wrongs'. The first, monadic sense of wrongness can admittedly capture violations of not only moral norms but also of social norms that are in force. But that fails to capture what is wrong with pathological or unjust systems of social norms. The second, dyadic sense of wronging can be fruitfully extended to structural and institutional cases of

wronging. We will suggest that it provides an analysis of *social wronging*. Whenever there are victims of social wrongs, the pathologies and violations of ought-to-be norms go hand in hand with social wronging, but the meaning of 'wrong with' is different from 'A wronging B'.

1.1. Monadic wrongness: acting wrongly

The paradigm case of monadic wrongness is moral impermissibility (1.1.1), but another case of acting wrongly in some sense is that of violating social norms in force (which need not be moral norms).

1.1.1. Moral impermissibility

Moral philosophy typically analyzes moral wrongness and rightness of actions of individuals in situations. While the situation typically involves other moral persons, sentient creatures, and institutional settings, the description focuses on one agent, and the alternative actions that the agent faces in the situation. All other persons and creatures are packed into the description of the circumstance C. (See e.g., Smith, 1994)

X acts wrongly, when X does φ in circumstance C.

Each of the alternative courses of action is either morally permissible (right) or morally impermissible (wrong). Nothing is ever morally wrong just like that – there is always some wrong-making characteristic that explains the wrongness: something can be wrong if it is a case of deceiving, of letting die, of not helping someone in need. Normative moral theories are accounts of what makes actions wrong and what makes actions right. By contrast, metaethics asks questions like 'what sort of property is wrongness?'. What interests us here is the fact that only one agent is explicitly mentioned. Because of the focus on one agent, this kind of wrongness of an action can be called *monadic* (or 'one-hat' description), in distinction from dyadic (or 'two-hat' description) (see Thompson, 2004; Thomson, 1990). Importantly, in the monadic description, all other agents just figure in the description of the *circumstance*. This is comparable to the difference between characterizing A as B's father (dyadic), or just a father (monadic).

Morally wrong actions are violations of 'ought-to-do' norms in distinction from 'ought-to-be' norms. When an agent *acts* wrongly, the agent does something he or she ought not *do*. Social pathologies or structural injustices are not primarily moral wrongs in this sense: they do not concern alternative actions of agents in circumstances, and they are not necessarily violations of ought-to-do norms. They are more structural than agential, as it were.

Note however that the agent that acts wrongly can be a group agent or an institutional agent. In that specific sense, it can be a social and not merely individual phenomenon. Violations of ought-to-do-norms by social agents

are however only a small subclass of social wrongs, and the rest of the paper will try to show that the monadic sense of 'wrong' is not the central sense for capturing social wrongs.

1.1.2. Violations of social norms

'Social norms' are sometimes analyzed as something separate from moral principles (which concern all members of a moral community) and prudential considerations (that concern the agent's own long-term well-being) (Bicchieri 2006; Brennan et al., 2013; Gilbert, 2006). Social conventions and practices may create norms, obligations and oughts, which concern members of the community and whose validity relativistically depends on the norms being 'in force', that is, practiced, understood and sanctioned by sufficiently many in the community. Traffic rules and rules of etiquette are typical examples of social norms in this sense. It is a platitude in moral philosophy, that it may be morally right to violate such social rules.[4]

Obviously, if there are social norms in force, an agent may also fail to obey the norms. That would be one possible, although superficial, usage of 'social wrong' (analogously to moral impermissibility): it would be a monadic property of an agent's action that it violates a social norm. Such actions do not meet the expectations of others, expectations being based on the rule being in force.

The bulk of this article will focus on deeper meanings of 'social wrongs', where it is not a matter of someone's actions failing to conform to social norms and social practices, but there being something wrong with the social practices themselves, or the social practices wronging individuals, for example, because it is a case of structural injustice. In order to avoid confusion, we do *not* use the notion of 'social wrong' in this superficial sense of an action failing to conform to social norms in force. We simply call them violations of social norms.[5] It is however possible for social wrongs (such as racial injustice) to consist of violations of social norms: one and the same case can belong to many baskets of wrongs.

1.2. Dyadic: wronging someone

A second conceptualization is dyadic, or a 'two-hat' conceptualization: it focuses on an agent wronging someone else. Whereas the one-hat conception concerned an agent acting wrongly in a situation, here the event (possibly the same one) is described as someone wronging someone else (See M. Thompson, 2004). Other two-hat conceptualizations concern rights and directed obligations: A has a right against B, B owes something to A, B has an obligation to A. (Gilbert, 2006; Scanlon, 1998; Thomson, 1990)

When A wrongs B, she violates B's right, or some other legitimate claim of B, and at the same time violates A's directed obligation towards B.

> X wrongs Y, when X φs in circumstance C.

Typically, when an agent wrongs someone, the agent also acts wrongly. Only in moral dilemmas such as two conflicting promises, or being able to help only some in need, it may be that one cannot avoid wronging someone, so even the permissible or right actions (perhaps ones that cause the lesser evil) may be cases of wronging someone. There will be moral residues in these cases, such as the duty to apologize (see e.g., Terrance, 1996). The dyadic considerations clarify our notions of who ought to apologize or compensate whom, and sometimes apologies or compensations are due even in cases when one acted (monadically) morally right, but had to violate a promise or other moral claims.[6] There may also be cases of 'harmless wrongdoing', where an action is morally impermissible without it being a case of the agent wronging someone.[7] Thus, the relationship between the dyadic 'A wrongs B' and the monadic 'A acts wrongly' is less tight than the conceptually necessary relation between 'A is B's father' and 'A is a father'; but *pro tanto* when A wrongs B, A acts wrongly.

1.3. Something wrong with X: ought-to-be norms

The third sense of 'wrong' comes to fore in cases where there is something *wrong with* an entity. Unlike the monadic sense of acting wrongly and the dyadic sense of wronging someone, which concern ought-to-do norms, this sense is closely connected to ought-to-be norms. Typically, certain things are (normatively) expected to work in some way. These things may be artifacts, organs, organisms, and, relevantly for the notion of 'social wrong', institutions, societies or other social entities. For example, a clock ought to be such, that by looking at the position of its hands, you know what time it is. These things can, however, fail to function according to the legitimate expectations; they can disappoint us and frustrate our expectations. In such cases, there is something *wrong with* that thing (or with our expectations).

So the third sense is:

> Something is wrong with X.

This sense of wrongness will be discussed below, in Section Three. We will define the notion of 'social wrong' with the help of this sense.

2. Social wronging

Let us now turn to the cases of social wronging. Ultimately we will argue that social wrongs do not invariably include social wronging, and so cannot be defined with the help of this notion. Yet many important and weighty cases of social wrongs include social wronging. It is clear that *individuals* can wrong

other individuals, as theorized in moral theory (Scanlon, 1998). To the extent that there are *group agents*, it is relatively clear that they can also wrong individuals, say when a gang beats up someone. What is less clear is whether institutions or, further, (non-instituted) social structures can wrong individuals. We will suggest they can (2.1). In the paradigm case, wronging someone takes place by doing something. But we should also ask whether wronging is also possible merely by adopting and maintaining a stance, or a policy, towards the other?[8] And can wronging be a matter of unintended consequences piling up? If so, these may be important ways in which social wrongs are constituted. In discussing this, we also address the question of how structural injustice relates to dyadic wronging (2.2) It is also clear that individuals can be wronged. But what about other social entities? (2.3).

2.1. Who or what can wrong individuals or groups?

A key distinction in approaches to social reality is that between agency and structures. Structures enable and constrain agents. They do not function independently, but only via affecting how agents act. It is however important to leave room for social structures being deformed in ways, which do not reduce to collective action, and for suffering caused by functional connections, which emerge from indirect consequences of social interactions; even though social structures in some sense exist through action. The category of 'agency' does not capture the aspects of 'patiency' or involuntary undergoing, and the aspects of relationships and larger processes: they do not all reduce to agency.

It is absurd to hold that everything in an individual's situation is the result of that individual's choices. Let us illustrate that absurdity with a quote:

> You must recognize that *you alone* are the source of all the conditions and situations in your life. You must recognize that whatever your world looks like right now, *you alone* have caused it to look that way. The state of your health, your finances, your personal relationships – all of it is *your* doing, yours and no one else's. (Hernancki, 2001, xii, 47.[9])

It is equally absurd to think that everything in a collective agent's situation is the result of that collective agent's choice. It would mean that the collective agent will end up including everyone who ever lived, and given the way that nature shapes social life, it would lead to including also nature in the absolute, collective subject. It would also lead to revising Marx's observation that 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past' (Marx, 2010, p. 103) to read 'Men make history in the circumstances of their choice'. Moreover, this universal collective agent would be Spinoza's God, *Deus sive*

Natura, which has infinite attributes and all events are its affections and all things and agents its finite modes.[10]

Another key notion is that of an institution (See e.g., Guala, 2016, Miller, 2010). Although institutions are structure-like in guiding individual agents, we will not treat institutions and structures interchangeably. Institutions can also act and possess agency: there are institutional agents. Furthermore, there is an important difference between institutions as instituted systems of defined roles (such as fire brigades) and emergent non-instituted structures, systems of structural positions of power and resources (such as the positions of the richer and the poorer).

While individuals are the paradigm agents in moral theory, it is worth studying whether the wronging party can be a group *agent* (2.1.1); an *institution* which can be regarded both as an agent and a structure (2.1.2); or a (non-instituted) *social structure* (2.1.3).

We will here presume that the parties that can be wronged are individuals (such as you and me) or groups (such as women). We take a brief look at that assumption in Section 2.3 and ask whether also institutions can be wronged.

2.1.1. Being wronged by group agents

It is easy to accept (apart from eliminativists concerning group agents), that the agent wronging the victim can also be a collective agent, a group: a group can violate someone's rights, for example. A vivid example can be coordinated group violence towards an individual, say, when a gang abuses someone.

In our typology, this is conceptually a case of a dyadic relationship, as there is an agent doing the wronging, it is just that the agent is a group of individuals. For various purposes it may be important to distinguish between being wronged by an individual agent and being wronged by a group agent. For example, the leader of the group need not personally take part in the action, and yet may have the main responsibility for it.

Groups act via its members or hired hands acting. The individual agent in doing their share of the collective action may or may not wrong the victim, the wrongness may depend on the whole collective deed. The way in which individuals, when participating in a collective deed, are responsible for the collective outcome (and thus responsible not only for what the individual does him- or herself) has been extensively studied in the literature on group agency and collective responsibility.[11] We will not here contribute to that literature, but merely acknowledge the complications.

Thus there can be rival descriptions of the same event:

The group G wrongs B, when the group does P in circumstance C.

> The group G wrongs B, when member M1 does P1 in circumstance C1, M2 does P2 in circumstance C2, … [12]

The differences in the distribution of contributory tasks between the members will affect the distribution of individual responsibilities, but what is relevant here is that the whole group (even though it only acts via its members or representatives) can be the agent wronging the victim. Will something similar be possible concerning social systems: could they be the 'agent' of wronging even though literally it will be individuals that act?

2.1.2. Being wronged by social systems: practices, institutions, structures

Social and political wrongs will arguably include cases, where someone is wronged not by another agent, but by the functioning of wider social practices, institutions and structures, including the political system.

Such social wrongs differ from moral wrongs. They concern ways in which social practices are structured: the practices may be biased against some for the benefit of others, they may oppress some for the benefit of others, they may leave some in an exploited position for the benefit of others, they may distort the conditions of well-being for some or even for everyone, they may manifest defective forms of social life.

To give a mundane example, when a car driver drives against a red light, and hits a pedestrian crossing the street, the car driver acts wrongly. That is the monadic, one-hat conceptualization: the act is wrong. The dyadic two-hat conceptualization is that the driver wrong the pedestrian, or that the pedestrian is wronged by the driver. It may be that the traffic light system functions as it ought to, and this accident was just a one-off incident, and so there need not be any sense in which the pedestrian is wronged by the system. But suppose the traffic lights malfunctioned and showed green light to all parties, and that the car driver had taken due care and had all the reason to believe it is safe to drive. In that case the pedestrian was wronged by the system.

> The system S wronged Y, when – following the explicit misguidance by S - X did P in circumstance C.

Arguably, in such cases the system S may wrong the agent X as well, in causing X to have agent's regret over an accident (see Nagel, 1979; Williams, 1981).

Or, in a more complicated example, suppose social research can show statistically that the probabilities of being hit by a car differ geographically, and depend on where one lives and moves.[13] Suppose further that social research can show that there are systematic biases and systems of incentives, which contribute to the driver hitting the red lights, and that it looks like the safety of pedestrians is better protected in some areas than in other areas – perhaps it is just a matter of time when the next accident will happen in the

less protected area. That is, perhaps there is a structural explanation which shows that some populations (pedestrians in certain areas) are systematically discriminated against by the traffic light system. (On structural explanation, see Haslanger, 2016). In that case, these pedestrians are being wronged not only by the car-driver, who drives when the red lights are on, but also by the system.

The social pathologies examined by Frankfurt School Critical Theory, and the tradition of social philosophy that according to Honneth (2007) started with Rousseau, are often social wrongs with such structural explanations: cases where people are being wronged by social systems.

> The system S wrongs B, when A1 does P1 in circumstance C1, A2 does P2 in circumstance C2, …, and the cumulative effect is that SUC happens to B.

SUC here stands for Systemic Unintended Consequences. This formulation does not attribute agency to the system – the harming or wronging results from what individuals or social groups do in their respective circumstances. The wronging may result from cumulative unintended consequences, and the agents may be unaware that they contribute to such a harmful pattern. That the unintended consequences are systemic distinguishes the important social wrongs from the one-off case, where the traffic light system wronged someone already in virtue of one driver doing something, which ended up being harmful.

Structural *injustice*, as analyzed for example, by Young (2011), when taken literally, is just one type of structural wrong: something can be wrong because *unjust*, or wrong because, say, a violation of privacy, or because it is paternalistic or illegitimate interference. (Injustice may e.g., include violations of rights and violations of fair distribution of resources, Rawls, 1972.) If justice is considered to be one wrong-making property alongside others, structural injustice is just one specific subclass of social wrongs. That is the usage of 'justice' we adopt here.

On a broader conception of justice, wrongness and injustice become synonyms: all structural wrongs are also cases of injustice. Yet, on that conception, justice cannot figure as a wrong-making property. That may as such be fine, but as we already have the notion of 'wrong', we can reserve the term 'injustice' for a narrower wrong-making feature.

Being wronged by systems, structures, institutions or social practices comes in two importantly different forms. In one, the wronging party is an *institution* designed for some purpose, such as a fire brigade, school, hospital, business corporation, NGO, or an administrative institution. Such institutions follow some designed rules, and have roles and offices for human agents to inhabit. The agents as role-holders can engage in institutional action: act in the name of the institution, and act in the role they have been granted.

On the other hand, there are de facto *structures* that have not been instituted for any purpose, but they emerge from interactions between people.[14] Such structures can be real, even if the participants are unaware of them – they may require social scientists to be discovered. Think of a distribution or allocation of resources and the corresponding opportunities in life: the playing-field may not be leveled. The rich and the poor are in different *structural positions*, even though they haven't been granted these as *institutional roles*. Or think of attitudinal biases such as racism or sexism: the participants might not have the word or concept for 'racism.' Clearly racism and sexism need not be explicitly instituted in order to exist. Nonetheless, they can affect people's lives gravely, and can amount to structural injustice, and other forms of social wrongs.

The difference between role-institutions and such non-instituted structures will be relevant when we ask how, or by what means, the system wrongs someone. The crucial difference is that *role-institutions can in themselves be seen both as agents and as structures*, and so are to be contrasted with de facto structures that function only indirectly via agents. Further, the process of instituting norm-systems and granting explicit roles differs from how structural positions emerge.

Our analysis is that in structural injustice individuals (or groups) are literally wronged by structures. It is a form of *dyadic* wronging (that we distinguish from monadic wrongness and the third sense, *'wrong-with'*).[15] 'Structural *wrongs'* is broader than 'structural *injustice,'* if the wrong-making feature is something else than injustice. And further, 'social wronging' is broader than structural wronging: it can include wronging by institutional agents and wronging by (non-institutional) collective *agents*.

2.2. By what means?

In the case of agents, paradigmatically the formulation already given above holds:

> X wrongs Y, when X φs in circumstance C.

There is no mystery concerning how agents wrong the victims: by acting in ways that violate legitimate rights or claims of the victims.

By contrast, in the case of structures that are not agents, paradigmatically we have a case of systemic unintended consequences piling up to a wrongful harm:

> Structure S wrongs Y, when S makes X1, X2, X3, ... do φ1, φ2, φ3, ... so that a harmful outcome H is cumulatively produced over time, and H is in violation of Y's rightful claims

How exactly structures make agents act is of course much studied. Via carrots and sticks, via laying out an unleveled playing field in terms of rules and resources, via expectations, norms and ideals, via habituation, via structuring the available choice architecture etc. The important thing here is the indirect and systemic way in which structures lead to wrongful harms.

In some cases, the harm admittedly need not be cumulative, as in indivi-dual police-shootings[16]; but what is cumulative is e.g., the propensity of people of color to be targeted for police violence; and the climate of racism, which labels people and cumulatively allots them into racialized positions.

If structures don't act, how can they have unintended consequences? The relevant consequences are of actions by agents affected by the structures. The structures make certain outcomes more likely, or have a tendency or propensity to produce certain outcomes, but do that via (individual, group, and institutional) agents acting. When an individual agent contributes to a structural wrong, the propensity of the structure to lead to such actions can feature in a structural explanation. The outcome of the action is then included as the SUC of the structure. Even in rare case, where contributing to the outcome is the *intended* result of the individual agent, the majority of the contributions are likely to be done for other reasons. In any case, the structure (which *qua* structure is not an agent) has not intended the consequences of the actions made probable by the structure.

Role-institutions can wrong individuals in yet another way: by 'sending a message' or conferring a status or by attaching to a social kind:

> Institution I wrongs Y, when it adopts a policy or rule, which amounts to misrecognition of Y, as it confers to Y a subordinate status, in violation of Y's rightful claims

The idea is that there is a direct harm or wrong in being misrecognized in this way; independently of what material harms it (or actions motivated by it) causes. A person might not want to go to the library, or the opera, or a festival anyways, but being excluded because of belonging to, say, a 'race' is to be a victim of unjustified exclusion and misrecognition. Or, more centrally to one's status as an equal citizen, being excluded from certain forms of educa-tion, health services, job opportunities, voting, political decision-making, or insurances will be direct harms in the dimension of one's status – in addition to missing the relevant goods (of education etc.). One may fare extraordina-rily well in economic resources and yet suffer from status subordination, as in the example of a Wall Street broker, who cannot get a taxi because she is a person of colour. One may have an otherwise privileged social status, but nonetheless belong to a stigmatized minority.[17] And, as is growingly recog-nized nowadays under the title of intersectionality, the standing of a member of two subordinate classes (say, a woman of colour) is not simply an additive combination of the two memberships.

Table 1.

	Sending a message (via the adopted ends and policies, the 'ethos')	Action (the ends & the means of action by the wronging entity itself)	Systemic unintended consequences (structurally explainable by reference to the wronging entity)
Rule-governed institutions	X		
(Non-institutional) Group agents		X	
'Blind structures': regularities or patterns of social practices; systematic fallouts.			X

With three modes of wronging, and three kinds of wronging parties, we get at least a table that looks like this (Table 1):

Will other combinations be possible? Arguably yes. Institutions also act by their role-occupiers acting in the name of the institution. Further, institutions can also wrong by the systematic unintended consequences that they lead to. To a limited extent, possibly group agents as well. It is just that agents and institutions (as agents) do it via their own actions, and structures (and institutions considered in light of structural explanations) by making the agents act.

Institutions can thus wrong people in three ways: by the very rules 'sending messages' (e.g., discriminatory policies may be forms of misrecognition), by institutional actions (the ways in which as such acceptable ends are being pursued end up being disrespectful), and by systemic unintended consequences of the institutional actions, and other actions structurally explainable with reference to the institutions.

What about conferrals of status, or sending a message, or misrecognizing (the first column)? In the debates on the politics of recognition, it is not only institutions that can confer a status. Agents in the expressions of their attitudes can clearly engage in misrecognition or disrespect. Therefore, not only institutions, but also group (and individual) agents can engage in misrecognition by 'sending a message' concerning the recipient.

What about structures? Can they be responsible for sending wrong kind of messages? The systemic unintended consequences lead to different structural positions, so that some are systemically advantaged and some systemically disadvantaged. These positions can be in conflict with the rightful claim to equal standing, or other rightful claims. So, to follow the suggestion of Katharine Jenkins (2020), this also may constitute 'ontic injustice'. It is a form of wronging someone, especially by conferring a status or subjecting to a social kind (and so preventing Y from being as Y ought to be – therefore 'ontic.')

Table 2.

	Conferring a status	Acting	Systematic unintended consequences
Institution	X	X	X
Collective Agent	X	X	(X)
Social Structure	(X)	-	X

There is a tension though, or a big difference between how agents and institutions can directly confer a status, or engage in misrecognition, and how structures produce such outcomes. Structures, that are not institutions, precisely do *not* institute rules, roles or statuses. Yet, they indirectly, in a twice removed manner, can produce systemic unintended consequences, and they can lead to the emergence of what can be called structural positions. Such structural positions can be cases of wronging in a similar way that the messages sent by institutions are. The subordinate position constitutes a wrong (although the position only emerges as a long-term consequence of practices, unlike institutional roles which send the message directly via the representations that precede the existence of the institutions).

So we end up with a table like this (Table 2):

All these cases could be further analyzed, here these are only distinguished to see how structural wrongs are cases of social wrongs.

2.3. Who or what can be wronged?

The discussion above started with the assumption that individuals and groups can be wronged.

Individuals are the paradigm wrongable agents. Individuals can be wronged independently of their group-memberships or institutional roles. But they can also be wronged via their group-memberships or institutional roles: violations of claims or groups and institutions typically harm some affected individuals.

Importantly, also groups of humans can be wronged. Socio-economic classes, racialized groups, sexual or gender groups can be worse off or oppressed, even in cases where individual members of these groups are not.

Whether institutions as such can be wronged, or whether wrongings of institutions must always be translated into wrongings of individuals and groups could be examined further. Institutions can directly be wronged at least in their formal roles: if institutions can own property, then stealing that property is presumably wronging the institution. Similarly, cases of corruption that may in some cases benefit all affected may nonetheless be an affront to the integrity of the institution in a way irreducible to how individuals or groups are affected; but we will not pursue those lines here.

Views, which hold that societies can be more or less free (such as Neuhouser's Hegel, see his Neuhouser, 2000), could argue that bringing about such loss of freedom is wronging the society. And on the 'organicist' reading of social pathologies as 'diseases of society', which are irreducible to individual suffering (Honneth, 2014), perhaps societies can be wronged by bringing about such diseases.

It will be harder to argue that un-instituted de facto structures could be wrongable parties. They do not have interests or stakes, or socially constructed rights. To the extent they do, they count as institutions. They can also not be inflicted unnecessary pain and suffering like other uninstituted systems, such as animals. Thus we stick to the view that un-instituted structures cannot be wronged.[18]

3. Something wrong with the social fabric

The third sense of 'wrong' is that of there being 'something wrong with' social life or a specific social entity: it is not as it ought to be. A clear case is that the entity does not serve its purpose, as in the case of malfunctioning. Both biological entities and artifacts can have functions. It is in this sense that 'social pathologies' are always social wrongs: there is something wrong with the fabric of social life. All cases of structural wronging are cases in which there is something wrong with social life. But there may also be cases where social life can be described as 'pathological' or degenerated or stagnant, and in which individuals are typically harmed or they suffer, but such pathologies do not necessarily amount to *individuals* being wronged. There is thus an entity, social life, about which we can say that there is 'something wrong with' it.

There can be something 'wrong with' an organism, an artifact, an institution or a system, when it is not as it ought to be. These ought-to-be norms differ from ought-to-do norms, that apply only to agents (3.1). Social wrongs include the more narrowly political wrongs of systems of governance as a subclass (3.2).

The categories of social wrongs and social pathologies are co-extensive, but rival theories disagree on whether some pathology is wrong because it is pathological, or whether it is pathological, because it is wrong (Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018; Särkelä & Laitinen, 2019). Concerning social pathologies one can distinguish 'normativistic' views and 'naturalistic' views. The former holds that there is nothing more to social pathologies than social wrongings in the senses analyzed above. By contrast, the 'naturalistic' views hold that there can be dysfunctions or degenerations in social life, cases when there is something 'wrong with' the social fabric which are not necessarily wrong*ings* at all. There are two important subclasses of such naturalistic views. *Organicistic* views start from the idea of a 'sick' society which is not as it ought to be, it is not

a healthy society (just like there is something 'wrong with' an ill organism). Another view starts from the notion of *social life*: when social life degenerates, it is not as it ought to be (Särkelä, 2018, Laitinen & Särkelä, 2019).

The distinction between institutions and structures is relevant here as well. There is something *wrong with* an institution for example, when it is not functioning as it ought to, given its adopted ends and policies: then institutional actions are not as they ought to be. This is a form of internal criticism. As a form of external criticism, one can argue that the institutional reality is not as it ought to be, in light of moral or other non-institutional values. The very ends that the institution was set to serve can be problematic, or the consequences that the institution in fact produces do not correspond to or express value.

By contrast, what is here called a 'blind structure' is just an unintended consequence itself, it need not have been 'instituted'. The 'blind structure' can only be criticized externally, it has no explicit 'point' or end in virtue of which it exists. It may have a function of sorts (say, of advantaging the ruling class), but that is just the propensity of the structure. For example, the metaphor of 'leveling the playing field' for equality of opportunity is fitting, as the rules, resources, social expectations, ideals might favor those in some positions in the field, at the cost of others. In that case, the blind structure is externally criticized in light the value of equality of opportunity (3.3).

3.1. Ought-to-be norms and wrong-with

Before turning to social wrongness evident in social pathologies, it is useful to look at other examples of violations of ought-to-be norms (Laitinen, 2020; Sellars, 1968; Tuomela, 2013; Wedgwood, 2007).

A non-deontic usage of 'wrong' concerns (non-agential) violations of ought-to-be norms. Some of them concern pathological states of organisms: 'You look ill, is there something wrong with you?' 'There's something wrong with my stomach.' The idea of natural goodness (Foot, 2001) is relevant for this kind of usage of 'wrong' and 'bad'.

Some other usages concern dysfunctional artifacts: there's something wrong with the engine of my car, it won't start; or with my compass, as the needle won't settle in any direction; or with the heating system as it does not produce enough heat (cf. Thomson, 2007 for this approach to normativity in general). They are not as they ought to be. Similar comments can be made of organizations and institutions: the school system is not functioning as it ought to be, if it does not reach its educational goals; and similarly for hospitals and fire brigades that have been set out to serve a specific function (Miller, 2010).

This kind of wrongness-with can be thought to be simply a form of badness: a good compass would work, a bad compass does not. A good school system would produce the desired results, and the stomach in good condition would function as expected.

But arguably there is a difference between something being bad, and something not being as it ought to be. Calling something merely 'bad' (while correct in that something of negative value is indeed at stake) does not quite capture the normative force in violations of 'ought-to-be' norms. For example, pain is a bad thing, but sometimes it is acceptable to cause pain (e.g., in medical diagnosis and treatment). And typically in punishments, it is normatively acceptable to bring about something that is bad. Further, typically grief is a sort of appropriate suffering at a loss, so it would be inhumane to suggest that the suffering (a bad thing surely) ought not take place. By contrast, calling for example, social pathologies 'wrong' captures the aspect that it is not merely bad, but violates some ought-to-be norms.

Features that are not merely bad but ought-not-be give stronger reasons (and ought-to-do requirements). Perhaps the difference can be expressed in this way: everything that is bad gives agents at least enticing reasons (reasons that do not contribute to oughts) or recommendations to fix them, but if something ought-not-be, it creates requirements (and not mere recommendations) to fix them (On enticing reasons and requirements, see Dancy, 2004).

3.2. Things that can be wrong with a political system

John Rawls (1972) argued that justice is the main virtue of political structures. Many other political theories discuss legitimacy as an equally important virtue of a political system (Simmons, 2001). Yet other theorists can list other virtues of government, or for example, the conditions of authority of governments. One topic that has recently received a lot of attention is the exclusion at the borders of a political community, and other topics of global justice (Brock, 2017).

Such features of political systems or states concern what they ought to be like, ought-to-be norms for political systems. Such 'political wrongs' concern the political structure of the political society; they are structural rather than agential. Typically there are wronged parties, victims of the structural injustices, even though (unlike in the dyadic case) there is no identifiable agent of the wronging. These political wrongs can also be agential if the state is taken to be a collective agent: to that extent what the state is like can be reinterpreted as what the state does, and has done. In that sense, the state as a group agent faces ought-to-do norms. Arguably, the violations of such norms further give rise (in democratic

societies) to a collective responsibility among citizens, a collective responsibly for justice (see Young, 2011), and thus ought-to-do norms for citizens.

Nonetheless, such features of the political system do not cover the whole of social life – there can be social pathologies over and above features of political systems. The society is not reducible to the state and the government, as has been widely recognized at least since Hegel (1991 [1821]).

3.3. Social wrongs more broadly

Social wrongs can be approached as things not being as they ought to be, in social practices or the social fabric as a whole. Such wrongness is not mere badness, and is a matter of social arrangements violating norms of what they ought to be like. It is not monadic moral wrongness of individual actions, or dyadic wrongness of someone wronging someone else, but socio-ethical *wrong-with*, a wrongness of more lasting patterns, practices, structures and institutions. Further, it is not restricted to what the political system, state or government ought to be like (or ought to do) – it can concern other aspects of social life too, such as the structure of intimate relationships, the work culture or prevailing informal educational practices.

Social wrongs and pathologies, like injustice or illegitimacy, can give rise to collective responsibility among the members of a social formation to counter such wrongs – and thus it can lead to ought-to-do norms. Violations of such norms can then be morally wrong. But it is a different kind of claim to propose that, whatever the responsibilities and duties of people to do something, there is something *wrong with* social life. Arguably the phenomena that Frankfurt School Critical Theory has focused on are precisely such social wrongs, from exploitation to oppression, from invisibilization to ideology.[19]

The defining characteristic of social wrongs, then, is that there is something wrong with social life. The social systems and practices (understood more broadly than political systems of governance) are not what they ought to be; there is something wrong with them. Another important characteristic is that when there are victims of social wrongs, they are wronged (dyadically) by the social system in ways analysed in Section Two, especially via unintended consequences, but also via the ontological harm of being forced to a reduced mode of being. Such victims can be individuals or groups. However, there is conceptual room for 'victimless social wrongs' when no-one is wronged. In such cases, the social life as a whole may exist in a reduced or pathological mode of being.

4. Conclusions

In this paper we have elucidated the notion of 'social wrongs'. In Section One we discussed the monadic idea of acting wrongly, the dyadic idea of wronging, and the idea of there being something 'wrong with' an entity, which we connected to so called ought-to-be norms. In Section Two we discussed who or what can wrong whom or what, and by what means; and discussed how the notion of *structural injustice* relates to social wrongness. We also defended the view that social wrongs do not always reduce to agential wrongness of social groups acting wrongly. In Section Three the natural and artificial cases of there being something wrong with an organism or a system, the narrowly political wrongs of systems of governance, and the broader category of social wrongs were discussed.

Individual cases cannot be neatly separated to different categories of wrongs. A case of a police officer shooting an unarmed black victim highlights several categories: the police officer's act is (monadically) morally impermissible and violates the social norms of police conduct. The police officer (dyadically) wrongs the victim. If the event is part of a larger operation of a police squad, the squad as a group may also thereby act in an (monadically) morally impermissible way, in violation of established social norms and thereby (dyadically) wronging the victim. To the extent that the shooting manifests larger tendencies of black people being targeted for unjustified police violence, it is a case of structural wronging. The wronged party can be much larger than the individual, it can be the whole black population. In such cases we can speak of a social pathology, and see that there is something *wrong with* the racialized culture, with the law enforcement institutions, and with their systemic unintended consequences. In this paper, we have argued that social wrongs are such cases of there being something wrong with social life; and they are typically, but not invariably at the same time cases of social wronging.

Notes

1. On ought-to-be – norms, see (Sellars, 1968; Tuomela, 2013; Wedgwood, 2007); see also Laitinen, 2020).
2. On monadic and dyadic features, see Thompson (2004); the terminology of 'one hat' and 'two hat' features comes from Thomson (1990).
3. Cf. Jenkins (2020), Wringe (2016), and Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2007).
4. We do not here discuss whether and why such social norms may nonetheless create genuine reasons for action (at least when morally acceptable). A promising line for such discussion is to see social norms as authoritative when democratic and in a suitable way expressing the will of the participants (see e.g., Christiano, 2008).
5. So far, we have put aside two possible senses in which monadic wrongs can in some sense be 'social': the agent acting wrongly may be a group agent,

and the violated principle need not be a moral norm but can be a social norm.

6. For clarity, it can be asked whether the cases of wronging someone also concern ought-to-do norms. Clearly in the sense that the wronging consists in an agent doing or omitting something. Further, when an agent wrongs someone, the agent typically does something he or she ought not do. But what about the dilemma cases, where the agent wrongs someone, and yet does the morally permissible thing? Perhaps it can be said that the agent does not violate an overall ought-to-do norm, but nonetheless violates a directed obligation (wrongs someone), and so violates some contributory ought-to-do norm, which just is overridden in the situation.

7. See (Feinberg, 1988), for discussion whether the criminal law should include such harmless wrongdoing; and see Scanlon 1988 for an attempt to define morality (in the narrow sense) as including only cases where there is someone being wronged, while allowing morality in a broader sense to include cases where no person is being wronged.

8. Adopting a policy or a rule can of course be a kind of action; maintaining a policy need not be. In some cases, one may maintain a wrongful policy also via actions that are right. Maintaining patterns of male domination may be cases of wronging by maintaining policies – and even rightful actions (say, acceptable cases of hiring a male candidate) may contribute to maintaining such policies. We thank an anonymous referee for pushing us to clarify why adopting and maintaining a stance, policy, or rule is needed in our analysis alongside wronging via actions.

9. as cited in (Kauppinen, 2011).

10. Even if Spinoza's God existed, such an entity could not be understood as 'acting' in analogy to how individuals or groups act. This is Spinoza's famous criticism of anthropomorphic conceptions of God (Spinoza, 2002, 1p32). God does not have a 'will' or an 'understanding' in the same sense as finite agents, because he is unconditionally eternal and does therefore not act against any other entity. The regress of a collective agent into an unconditionally eternal entity threatens to dissolve its agential properties, as such properties can only be attributed to finite modes.

11. On group agency, see Roth (2017) and references there; on collective responsibility, see Smiley (2017) and references there.

12. Groups can act also via hired hands – in that case it need not be members who act, but appointed agents. For simplicity, the formulation only covers the case when it is the members (and not appointed agents) who act in the name of the group.

13. The emergence of state-provided statistics provided an 'avalanche of numbers', which after 1820 showed 'an astonishing regularity in statistics of crime, suicide, workers' sickness, epidemics, biological facts' (Hacking, 1981, 3; cf. also, 1982), and contributed to a shift from a liberal state, where e.g., all workplace accidents are blamed on individuals, to a welfare state, where workplace accidents were seen as a 'social evil' with certain probability (Ewald, 1986). It also lead to brief-lived statistical determinism, an 'astronomical conception of society' (Pettit, 1994, 129).

14. It is of course possible that maintaining structures can be a goal of intentional political action; we thank Åsa Burman for the observation.

15. There will be four loci for how such dyadic wronging relates to 'ought-to-be' – norms. When X wrongs Y by doing φ in circumstance C, we can ask whether that means that X is not as it ought to be, and whether that results in Y not being as Y ought to be (prevents Y from being what Y ought to be), and whether the social relationship between X and Y is as it ought to be, and whether the circumstance C is as it ought to be. For example, due to scarcity and prevention of mutual trust, the circumstances might not enable life in accordance with human dignity, or mutual respect, and thus not be as they ought to be.
16. We thank Bill Wringe for the example.
17. Think for example, of a member of the Soviet Communist Party elite, who happens also to be Jewish. We thank Peter Kraus for the example.
18. Another way of seeing the irreducibility is to stress the difference between ought-to-be normativity and ought-to-do normativity. This is the topic of Section Three. It turns out though that instituted, rule-based institutions are more readily described in terms of ought-to-be norms than 'blind structures'.
19. Christopher Zurn (2011) has suggested that the class of wrongs targeted by Frankfurt School Critical Theory can be conceptualized as 'second-order disorders.' We have criticized this view elsewhere (Laitinen, 2015; Laitinen & Särkelä, 2018; Särkelä & Laitinen, 2019; Särkelä, 2018, Ch. 4 &, p. 8). Instead, we suggest here that social philosophy deals with social pathologies, whose wrongness can be understood as violations of specific kind of ought-to-be norms.

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Disclosure statement

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