

## *Translator's Note*

Like Prufrock, the translator does well to point out that he is “not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be.” Even if no more than an “attendant prince” to the author, he must escape the self-deprecation of Eliot’s melancholy figure to cultivate his positive qualities: “Deferential, glad to be of use, / Politic, cautious, and meticulous.” Taking on the world according to Niklas Luhmann is certainly not a task not to be assumed without humility, caution, and care (“Do I dare / Disturb the universe? / In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse”). And not without a great deal of informed help.

My first venture in the field appeared in 1993 under the title *Risk: A Sociological Theory*.<sup>1</sup> To my great fortune I was able to discuss my efforts with Luhmann to my and his satisfaction.

Without the invaluable, consistent, and ever ready help and advice of the outstanding Luhmann expert Dirk Baecker, the present translation of Volume 1 of *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* would not have been possible.



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