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COLLECTIVE ACTION : ON THEORY AND PRAXIS

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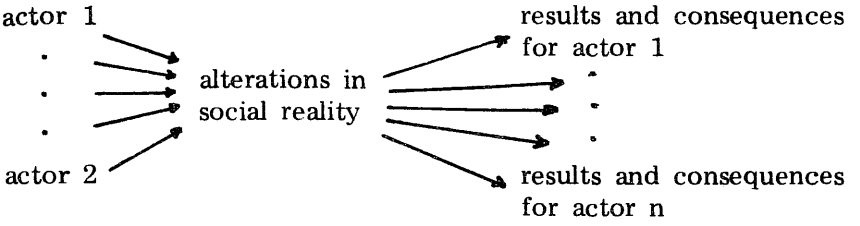
1. Related to the introduction of the editors, we propose to treat the following questions. Which is the context of the development of the new domain of theoretical thinking, namely "collective action". Why do people talk about "collective action" and in what context do they do so ? What is the meaning of "the theory of collective action", and the "mathematics of collective action" ? And finally, what is meant by "collective action" and "theory of collective action" ?

It seems reasonable to answer the former questions, which relate to the context, after one has given some specifications on the latter ones, which relate both to the meaning of "collective action" and of "theory".

Collective action is a process enabling several actors to influence social reality, or enabling them to change social reality in correspondance with their definite purposes and interests. If one intends to treat the subject more precisely, seeking for a greater content of the concept, one cannot avoid several difficult problems.

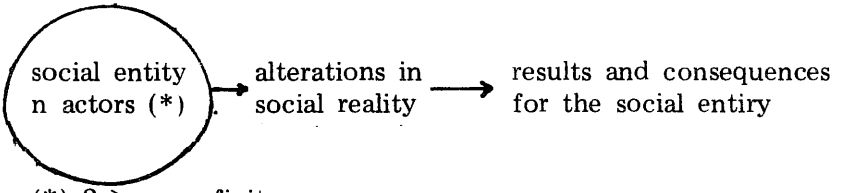
Sometimes collective action is thought of as follows :



J. Coleman conceives of it in this manner (1). He takes into consideration (a) a social system consisting of n actors; (b) and consisting of m events; (c) each event has two or more results; (d) each actor will undertake actions so as to obtain a partial or a total

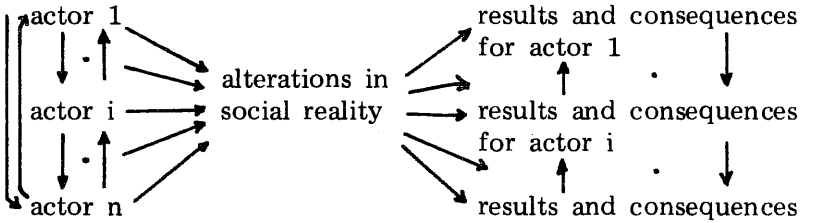
control of an event; the control of the event will give him certainty about the possible results. Further specification can be supplied concerning the utility, the consequences of actions, and concerning the content of partial and total control.

Defining collective action in this way, one stresses the role of the individual actor. The individual actor and his action are the principal starting points. This has many consequences both for the theoretical conception of social behaviour and for the kind of knowledge one is aiming at. This will become clear when we oppose three other definitions to the former :

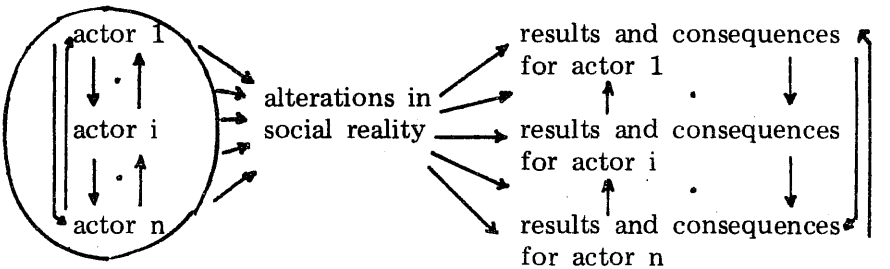


(*) $2 > n$, n finite.

For the moment the content of the social entity may be considered as unimportant. In the next scheme this will not be the case; the arrows stand for social relationships in the context of the action processes.



Evidently one has also to add the results and consequences for the arrows, hence for the social relationships between the actors A fourth scheme can be constructed, characterized by growing complexity.



In this case one should add the results and the consequences both for the social relationships and for the social entity. For a good understanding of the growing complexity we can ask the following question : "what are the possible combinations of relationships between the actors, and between groups of actors, in case of expansion of the social entity from 2 to n members ? ". Later on we intend to show for which reason one ought to consider this question as unrealistic. The only thing to do is to investigate the concrete and actual relationships. Anyway, it can be easily demonstrated, that with the expansion from 2 to n, the quantity of relationships between two actors is equal to $n(n - 1)/2$, the quantity of the singular relationships between all actors is equal to $2^n - (n + 1)$, and finally the quantity of all possible plural relationships between all actors is equal to $n(2n/2 - 1)$. This gives us a good picture of the limitations of our knowledge of social life. (2) What are the advantages of Coleman's definition ? For some people it may be as if the other schemes are not adequate at all, for eventually collective action is action of individuals. Or maybe, while the other schemes give a reasonable account of relevant properties of collective action, they should be held subsidiary, for too many difficulties enter into the picture. Similar considerations may have led Coleman to choose for his approach. If we understood well the editors' introduction, the problem of the definition is left open; they did not suggest a position concerning the theoretical priority of whichever scheme pictured above.

However this may be, the conception that collective action is a *fundamental* phenomenon, demanding to be conceived of theoretically, so that our scientific understanding of many other social phenomena relies on it, seems characteristic for both J. Coleman and the editors (3). In this manner a "theory of collective action" appears to be a basic one, a conditio sine qua non for the progress of the social sciences. We intend to show that this is a rather specific point of view.

So we are left with the second kind of questions. Which social and historical background caused the questions about the theory of collective action ? In their introduction the editors said :

> If one thinks about this problem ("collective action", "collective actor") both with reference to attempts towards social reorganization, and with reference to scientific inquiry considered as a type of social action, one is immediately confronted with normative problems, on the one hand in politics and ideology, on the other hand in logic and methodology. In

both cases (social reconstruction and collective scientific inquiry) ethical considerations are moreover relevant.

The importance of social organization, particularly social organization of scientific inquiry, and their axiological fundaments, is stressed

Without a picture of the social and historical backgrounds, collective action cannot adequately be approached. What does this picture look like ? At the end of the nineteenth century and in relationship with the penetrating development of capitalist production, individual and social purposive action received an evergrowing emphasis in social philosophy. As a consequence of this revitalizing and devastating evolution, the old "axiological" problem of the foundation of human action, and of the values embedded in it, was resuscitated. Those nineteenth-century trends of capitalism were affirmed and prolonged in the periods between the two world wars and after world war two. The development of economic life and technology made people increasingly dependent on processes of collective deliberation and action. Scientific and technological know-how got concentrated in fewer hands, an evolution showing great similarity with the concentration and centralization of capital in economic life. The great debates concerning democratisation are related to this evolution, and its induced effects on social, political and cultural life. Communication and information became more and more questioned phenomena. Reliance on second and third hand information and on mass media, having their proper organizational evolution, became greater and greater. On the other hand, more people, of different nationalities, continents, classes, occupations, value-systems, got involved in this worldwide social reorganization.

Within the institutional framework of what has been called "the first world", the developped countries such as the USA, the Western European countries of the Common Market, Canada, Japan, the "invisible hand" has long stopped its action. This seems true for economic, political, social and cultural life. Intervention in social and cultural life of thousands became more and more an urgent matter. With a few alterations the same holds for the other, less favorized nations of the world (4).

The boundaries of our world, the world we are conscious of, and consequently the boundaries of our language, changed constantly. When we are obliged to think and speak about human action, we cannot but take into account different nations, continents, and socio-economic formations. For example, we are frequently confronted with problematic relationships, such as the relationships

between rural area and township, between agriculture and industry, between peasantry and proletariat, between economic and technological underdevelopment and development, between labor and technology, ecology and population. Already for a long time subjects of consideration within the Marxian school of thought, they now emerged as original subjects for Western academic science.

We are facing an evolution from a "provincialistic" towards a "mondialistic" world. It takes the shape of a "massive collective process", in which the place of science is steadily increasing. An ever growing quantity of scientific workers, organized in academic and non-academic collectivities, institutes, schools, staffs, laboratories, is introduced in social life itself. More and more science is requested for the "responsible direction and prevision" of human behaviour. This total process has organic features, and specific patterns of development. Those regularities themselves can be made subject of inquiry and might lead to the consciousness that man is faced with the characteristics of viable systems in general. Consequently, new poles of attraction originated in science, among them the "theory of collective action".

Moreover the "emergence" of the subject of "collective action" seems not in contradiction with the proper history of social science. The themes of efficient, rational behaviour and of the optimilization of action, take eminent places in social science once it began to develop out of social philosophy. In the administrative science in the eighteenth century in France, and later on in economic science in England and on the continent, and finally in sociology itself, those themes gained independent theoretical significance.

2. As has been done in sociological theory in the past, the editors consider "action" as a key concept in social science (5). Therefore the problem of the meaning of collective action and collective actor gets a central place. We will first consider the problem of the nature and extent of the scientific approach of action. Which type of explanation is conceived of in social science? Which type of explanation ought to be conceived of? One cannot avoid a confrontation with the methodology of social science. In his book on "collective action" J. Coleman stresses the difference between two separate approaches of action. The first a causal one, the second a teleological one. He says :

> There are two quite different streams of work in the study of social action, both of which begin at the level of the individual. The two streams of work represent fundamentally different

> conceptions of man.
> ...
> The first conception explains man's behaviour as response to his environment; the second explains his behaviour as pursuit of a goal. The first searches for causal processes and determinants of behaviour, and often uses a mechanistic explanatory frame, which employs the concepts of 'forces' and 'resultants'.
> ...
> The second conception sees man's action as goal-directed, and focuses attention less on present environmental conditions than on future desired states (6).

This differentiation between "explanation", which account for causes, and "explanation" which accounts for reasons of action (purposes, intentions), when either individual or collective action is concerned, seems to us a false starting point (7). Eighteenth-century social philosophy took one of both an adequate basis to approach social behaviour. Later on, after the coming into existence of the various social sciences, the two different approaches were hypostasied, as J. Coleman states.

It seems reasonable to assume that the differentiation between the so-called causal-like and teleological-like explanations proceeded out of slowly changing ideological, religious, philosophical conceptions of man and society, which took place in correlation with changing technological, economic and political-administrative praxis.

We hold that the two divergent approaches of social sciences are typical for what we may call "a pre-scientific" state, in which "pre-scientific" stands for an incubation-period in the scientific approach of human behaviour and social organization. In the work of Max Weber, the difference between "Kausale Adäquanz" and "Sinnhafte Adäquanz" is of crucial importance. Weber attempted to unite the two approaches. Demonstrating that the far too great optimism concerning "mechanical explanation" could be injurious for serious social and historical inquiry, the Weberian attempt mentions the difference between "Handeln" and "Verhalten". "Handeln" is human action of which the subjective meaning can be understood. The purpose of action, showing the intentions of the actor, is understood. "Verhalten" is human behaviour the social scientist can investigate without knowing the "subjective meaning". In this way purposes and intentions of the actor(s) remain obscure to the observer. Hence, Weber's diversification between "das aktuelle Verstehen" and "das erklärende Verstehen". The former is empirical knowledge, based on observations, facts, and concrete evidence. The

latter is knowledge based on the interpretations of the subjective meaning of behaviour. It is rooted in the interpretation of action and actors and cannot do without the knowledge of the communicated or non-communicated and hidden purposes and intentions. So "kausale Adäquanz" is the very opposite of "sinnhafte Adäquanz". However, in Weber's opinion adequate knowledge of action and organization should result out of the convergence of the two kinds of explanation (8).

It can hardly be denied that explanations using causes of action, and explanations using purposes of actions played an important and stimulating role for the "take-off" of scientific investigation of human behaviour and social organization. Social sciences are rooted in social praxis, and present scientific inquiry in society remains linked with purposive actions, such as in the military-industrial domain, or with antecedent causes of a particular nature, such as the environmental factors, as the example of the significance of rainwood forest for warfare clearly shows. Conflict-studies give us a good example of this practical origin. Uptil the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies analysis of triadic conflict situations became increasingly subject of political and sociological thinking in the United States. It resulted in new theoretical and formal constructions, seemingly detached from actual political reality. But in the same period the "ping-pong" diplomacy started and the People's Republic of China made its appearance on the world "check board", to stay with United States" political and sociological verbiage.

What can be considered as an evident as well as a fruitful starting-point for social sciences, may very well inhibit their further development. The present involution of the social sciences cannot be disregarded. Therefore we are forced to reconsider "explanation" in social sciences, without ignoring the deep crisis in which they rest. We should account for the close relationship between understanding, investigating, and observing social phenomena on the one hand, and intervening in and changing social phenomena, on the other. We intend to do so by means of an hypothetical statement, concerning the dynamics of social inquiry. The statement runs as follows : depending on the urgency of the investigation of action and organization for action and organization themselves, or to put it another way, depending on the connection between research and researcher, on one hand, and action and organization on the other, the influence of causal and/or teleological explanatory schemes will increase. It is evident that the attempts to explain social phenomena from causes and/or purposes will increase, the more successfull these

explanations seem for action and organization. But even then the "paradox of prediction" (9) will be at work. Consequently, knowing social reality better means changing it faster and a fortiori knowing it worse.

Subsequent investigation in the history of social sciences must show in how far "causal" and/or "teleological" explanation become more and more evident as a consequence of the effective involvment of social inquiry in action and organization. We are dealing with a complex relationship, which has to be considered against the whole background of social sciences. It seems clear that what is subsumed under the close relationship between research and action, is continually changing in the course of social reality itself. It can be demonstrated that the growing complexity of the social universum, the internationalization of human action processes is giving a contradictory impulse at social inquiry : from this point of view "causal" and "teleological" explanation appear more and more to be "egocentric" forms of explanation, an heritage of an over-optimistic period of social research. We can explicitly refer to Jean Piaget's approach of the egocentric forms of thinking in the individual development of a human being. One should bear in mind that similar over-optimistic and hard-deterministic positions slowly faded away in natural science (10).

The last decennia a different and more realistic view on "explanation", and theoretical activity in general, has emerged in social science. Let us try to illustrate this with some examples. Our first example concerns Schaller's and Emlen's inquiry into the social behaviour and the social organization of the mountain gorilla (11). The subject of research is action, patterns of action, not of human beings however, but of mammals very similar to human beings. The authors investigated among other things the social context of primate behaviour. What kind of "explanation", if explanation it can be called, is considered ? One can neither speak of causal explanation, nor of teleological. Schaller and Emlen describe patterns of behaviour in characteristic socio-ecological situations. At least a correlation between the following data is given : (a) the described pattern of behaviour, and their relevant variables; frequency, duration, composition, etc.; (b) the ecological and socio-ecological situations of influence and the relevant variables, such as temperature, type of vegetation, and so on. They never attempt to give causal explanations. Anyhow, they seek to link the variables of the set *a* to the variables of the set *b*. If this should result in explanatory endeavours, it could be neither causal, nor teleological.

Schaller's and Emlen's work shows us that observations dealing

with supposed, guessed, and recorded correlations between the two (or more) sets of variables, result in empirical and theoretical activities which may lead to a lawlike theory. The sum total of this investigations will point in a nomothetic direction. But in their work, the distance between investigation, investigator, research, on one hand, and the subject of research on the other, is very great. Man as investigator is not equal to man as intervener in reality. And this diminishes the probability of explanation in either the causal or the teleological way. But does the research of primate behaviour show any relevance for the investigation of human beings ? We will answer this question indirectly, referring to recent examples of sociological inquiry. In the sixties a whole range of research was directed towards "formal organizations". By formal organization we mean organizations such as hospitals, universities, armies, corporations This extensional, descriptive and non-analytical definition can be completed as follows : formal organizations are organizations in which actors collaborate, in a cooperative or competitive way, in view of one or some (non-contradictory) purposes. The actors take different positions, play various roles, and fulfill different and specialized tasks. Purpose, task-diversification, division of labour, together with structural differentiation in an horizontal and vertical way, are the explicit features of a formal organization. Research into these features constitutes a well-developped and specialized part of social inquiry, in which causalistic and teleological explanations are for a great deal irrelevant.

In one of his recent works, P.M. Blau investigates the organization of academic work. He takes a comparative point of view. Some general hypotheses are tested, as he did earlier for other specific cases of formal organization (12). His hypothetical statements relate to the following variables : (a) the extent of organizations; (b) structural differentiation; (c) division of labour, among others. Collecting data concerning these variables does not lead to a comprehension of social organization, by means of intentions, purposes of actors (or of the organization), reasons for action. On the other hand, causal explanation falls short for the focus is not individual action in an organizational context, but organizational life itself, and consequently causal chains in which individual actions figures are not significant. This does not exclude causal explanations. One of the variables could play a causal role in relation to the others. But how this may be, the inquiry attempts to link variations in the variables, and to induce some general lawlike propositions. So, if explanation is understood in the sense of "explanation of particular facts, circumstances, covering them under a set of general lawlike

propositions", we are obliged to acknowledge that the sociological work of Blau and others, leads to such a type of explanation (13). When the empirical data allow for it, Blau and others, try to formulate general propositions in which the systematic correlation of variations of variables is expressed. Some of these propositions take an explicit mathematical form (14).

Similar research is done concerning other significant sociological concepts : status, power, rank. Even if one cannot pretend that the overall development of the theoretical activities is that clear, it seems that sociology is moving away from the explanatory schemes characteristic for an earlier period.

Evidently, the research we mentioned deals with the organization of individuals in a formal way. This facilitates the observation and handling of the data. Formal organizations are highly closed systems, a characteristic which facilitates "outside" observation. The comparative treatment of the data can be conceived of. Even if Blau and others are anxious about too hasty comparisons, they are working towards cautious generalizations.Things are not that easy all the time. Many social systems under investigation are more open, less stable and more in a fluid state, than formal organizations. So the identification of the variables determining a system becomes a difficult task, and the same holds for the correlation of the variables (15).

But the examples of social inquiry on which we relied, show that theoretical activity within social sciences is moving in another direction. This must become clear when we refer to the discussions about "theory" themselves. It is a characteristic of many social theories that they give a classification of some selected social phenomena by means of constructed concepts. In this way social scientists (among them Talcott Parsons, and related to him a whole range of sociologists) are constantly rebuilding "society" in a conceptual way, and activity which they consider as equal to theory-construction. Linked with it the disease of "criteriologitis" and "conceptualitis" inhibited social science in many ways. It resulted in "premature systematization" : cumbersome conceptualizations and monumental criteriological constructions, lacking concrete historical and social content.

In the same way theory-construction is identified with logical, axiomatic and mathematical reconstruction of social reality. New verbal universes are created to replace older ones, an activity considered as furthering social sciences. What is insufficiently stressed is that these intuitive, formal-axiomatic, mathematical and verbal reconstruction of actual social phenomena played a

stimulating as well as inhibiting role in the theoretical development of the social sciences, for neither the empirical content, nor the explanatory force progressed. This ought not to prevent us to account for these constructions without however committing the error of exaggerating their significance. Even if reconstructions of social reality could serve as starting points for a proper theoretical development, they present the risk of a specialistic alienation : indeed, to know the conceptual, logical, axiomatical or mathematical apparatus, becomes more important than to know social reality itself. This specialistic alienation moreover stimulated the compartimantalization of social science, resulting in the growing demand for "multi-" and "interdisciplinary" research. The aforementioned reconstructions of social reality, falsely identified with theory, are capable only to play a heuristic role with respect to the rich material of empirical data about action-processes, contained in disciplines such as social psychology, cultural and/or social anthropology, economic anthropology, economic science, and sociology. As soon as social scientists overevaluate them, exaggerating their heuristic significance, we are confronted, as in the past, with merely trivial or esthetic results, blocking the development towards the further synthesis of the empirical material.

The research about action-processes, also the so-called collective action-processes, ought to grow out of the investigations of the social sciences at large. All social sciences treat action-processes, for societies are continuously changing systems of human action and human relationships. How could a theory of collective action be conceived of distinct from the totality of the social sciences ?

Let us illustrate our point of view with a famous example in economic theory. In their introduction the editors suggest to consider the problem of the aggregation of preferences : we might call it a nightmare in social science, in economic and political theory particularly. We guessed that the editors were suggesting that one can hardly speak in a theoretical sense about the processes of action, in which decisions, interests, needs, take an eminent place, without first resolving the problem of planification, hence of the aggregation of preferences. The editors alluded upon the debates about "methodological individualism" (17).

If one concentrates on another meaning of explanation, and if one avoids to insist on causal and teleological explanation, and consequently if one stresses the correlations within time and space between significant data of social phenomena, relying on massive empirical investigations, the problem of "methodological individualism" can be viewed from another point of view. It does not

depend on the solution of the problem, to tackle social phenomena, and to treat them in a lawlike direction. Moreover it should prevent us from taking an anti-reductionist position. Methodological indiviualism implies reductionism of explanations; however one can conceive of reductionism without taking a methodological individualist position. As Ernst Nagel has demonstrated, anti-reductionism is not plausible from a logical point of view. In this way one can argue that the impossibility of reduction is a consequence of the lack of relevant empirical data and of a refined theoretical apparatus.This is the important point when reductionism is discussed : in order to reduce propositions about social phenomena to one another, the social scientist is urged to develop, to adapt, and to renovate the theoretical apparatus, and to extend the empirical material.

This is shown by the debates on the aggregation of preferences. One should demonstrate that the problem of the aggregation of preferences is a false problem. The "Arrowian nightmare" is a nightmare for one type of social science, in which, alienated from actual socia life, some boring "theoretical solutions" are tried out in an "ideal-typical" and normative sense. It is evident that Arrow's own contribution has a great merit, in that it has proven the impossibility of the "democratic" solution of the aggregation of preferences. But even in his case, the aggregation-problem is treated from behind the desk. Moreover in the normative treatment of "democracy", the "frontier" and calvinistic ideal of democracy, typical for the dominant ideology in the United States, is put forward. For this one should not conclude that "aggregation of preferences" is not possible in living social systems, one should avoid to say that some actual democratic solutions are beyond our reach. In some of their most interesting developments, social anthropology, the sociology of economic life, and other subdisciplines, are rich in factual examples of aggregation. This is concrete material, to be treated in its historical context, waiting for investigation in a systematic way. Social anthropology the sociology of economic life, and other subdisciplines, are concerned with examples of "collective action-processes", in specific socio-economic settings, within typical institutional frames, in which collective ideals, values and codes of behaviour play an important role. A "theory of collective action", when considered as a specific subject of investigation, must proceed out of this material.

3. In what we said earlier, when discussing some theoretical aspects of the study of collective action, intuitive conceptions on action and

action-processes appeared. Let us attempt to elucidate them. One of our conceptions was that action and planning of action as such are difficult things to conceive of. A second conception entailed that actions in which various persons are involved, are complex phenomena both in extension and in time. What is the nature of this complexity ?

One must insist on some subjects of importance to social philosophy, in order to answer the last question. If action in social systems is considered, we can, as Georg Simmel did, imagine two extremes. One extreme : a social system composed of two individuals; the second : a social system of n-individuals Simmel's question which we mentioned earlier, was : what will happen both on the levels of interpersonal relationship and of social action, when a social system grows from 2 to n ?

In a similar approach one is obliged to indicate the role of science and of ideology. Science and ideology, together with moral codes, appear as the controlling factors of the process of social differentiation, when a social system grows, and as a consequence forms of alienation become effective. For example, in the first part of our paper, we sketched the trend of social development, as a consequence of which active intervention in society's processes became more and more urgent. Within a world in which millions of people are interconnected with one another, by means of ideology, economic activity and organization, law-systems, and the like, planned intervention appeared the more and more urgent. The problems with this intervention are how the choose means and how to determine ends for action and organization. How can one anticipate, and how must the plans for the future be conceived of ? To put it in another way : can science of society and of human action be conceived of without rescueing in utopia ? All these questions relate to a fast growing social world system, a the entangling development of social relationships, and the role of science and ideology in the mobilization of human beings, in the determination of ends and the choice of means. Historically speaking, one should ask the question : "How did the modern world system grew in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, and how and by means of what it developped later on ? ' (18). It is evident we cannot expose this subject, yet we can specify quite generally the role of science and ideology, and of alienation, in the aforementioned process of social differentiation, even if we should prefer to conceive of it historically.

An expanding social universe, to use this metaphor, is a universe of change. We can endeavour to know the patterns of alteration and we ought to look for the historical appearance of these patterns. As the

first is concerned, both the characteristics of processes and structure must be the subject of inquiry. A process of social differentiation develops in a horizontal and in a vertical way. The networks people form obtain a "solid" state. For each Moses, one gets one Aäron, and every Aäron gets his priests. This example has at least one great merit. No process of social differentiation can be conceived of without calling into existence "symbolic universes", such as codes, specific languages, secret rituals, and so on. The existence of these "symbolic universes" together with the social distance resulting out of the process of differentiation, call for justification and legitimation against Kore, Datan and Abiram.

Let us recapitulate the broad outlines of the expansion of a social universum, in order to say something on the role of science, ideology, and the place of alienation. People act in a social way and in doing so they form groups, they start division of labour, they specialize tasks. In all this they are directed by means of cognitions, volitions and emotions, for every action-process causes the mixture of these three. The substance of the division of labour, in the largest sense, will be different : economic, religious, artistic, technological, and so on. Yet an economic base is common to them all. Acting socially means to differentiate among people, and this calls for a symbolic universe, a symbolic integration using words, ritual acts, ritual objects, moral codes, etc.

The social differentiation, similar to the structural differentiation mentioned earlier, takes place in a vertical and a horizontal way. Vertical differentiation means the creation of hierarchical relations among individuals. Hierarchy and subordination calls for justification and legitimation. Horizontal differentiation means creation of different tasks, considered to be on equal level, and calling for coordination and adjustment. Once again justification and legitimation is needed to ensure a viable combination in view of the global action-process.

With the widening of the horizon, we mentioned above, more people and more organizational units of individuals (nations, parties, pressure groups, institutes) got involved on a world-wide scale. The production, the manufacturing and both the consommation and consumption of collective conceptions or ideas, capable to accomplish symbolic integration when social differentiation has divided people, became a work of many. So the process of social differentiation leads towards a new specialization : the task to construct, to manufacture and to use collective conceptions. But again this task will be the subject of task differentiation.

We can illustrate this with the example of Marxism. Marxism

appears both as scientific and ideological thinking about society, and action. It originated in the nineteenth century when the working class began to organize. This happened roughly speaking in two movements. First, a class has a common project of the social organization in the future : a project to change the present related to some goals. The origins of this project are the common interests, depending on the common objective situations in which workers were living (19). The situations, the needs, the common interests, serve as fundaments for the conception and the formulation of the project about social reality. The ways of perceiving and interpreting social reality are linked with it. The constellation of ends and means for social action are made explicit, translated into action devices and used for the mobilization of the masses and for propaganda towards them. A first "symbolic universe" is born. But even at this moment a process of social differentiation starts, affecting the manufacturing of the symbolic universes (20). Second, a particular group, a subgroup of the class, or a group added to it, keeps specializing to manufacture the cognitive and the cathectic conceptions. Justification and legitimation-processes begin to work, and consequently a further expansion develops. Precisely this evolution renders the combination of the original common interests and expectations with the refined and elaborated conceptions and formulations that grew out of it, a difficult and problematic task.

Marxist thought is a paradigm of this problematic situation. How to succeed in bringing a unitary, relevant action project for the present and the future social reality, when a far reaching differentiation-process of interests has stated (21).

One of the details we must consider, is the diversification between the cognitive and the cathectic components of the collective conceptions. In this aspect the fundament of the difference between scientific and ideological functions is rooted.The collective ideas, the common conceptions play both a restraining, dividing and deforming role, and a stimulating, integrating and rationalizing role, in the development of social praxis. When the contradiction between the two roles becomes highest, the tension between the scientific and the ideological activities is at its maximul. To speak with Pareto's words : the tension between the "logical" and the "illogical" components of these conceptions will reach its maximum. This phenomenon even seems present in the totality of scientific activities in the twentieth century. Indeed, one can notice that the critics of modern science are sometimes more realistic in accepting irrational trends in the totality of the scientific fabric, a complex which together with technical progress is mastering our life, than the classical and stereotypical

defenders of some ideal conceptions of scientific activity.

The way we considered action-processes, or social praxis, alienation in its various forms will be always present and active. For us alienation has the following meaning : it is the phenomenon of people drawn away, in the evolution of social praxis properly, from their own ends and means of action, as a consequence of which they are turned away from social and physical reality, and finally divided into antagonistic social groups. Whichever action-process must be considered as calling into existence new forms of alienation, with the purpose of destroying older forms of alienation. For this reason the idea of an "exact ethics", proposed by the editors, to be considered when collective action is treated, seems to us completely inadequate. We interpret the notion "exact ethics" as the conception of a total annihilation and transcendence of all forms of alienation, by means of scientific thinking and action-processes based on it. In our view such a total annihilation and transcendence of all forms of alienation equals the annihilation and transcendence of the historical and actual processes of social differentiation, and hence of social life itself. The view of an "exact ethics" conceives of the inconceivable viz. a social praxis which will annihilate its necessary conditions, namely task differentiation, vertical and horizontal structuration, and their consequences in the symbolic level.

How then should the relationship between "science" and "ideology" in social praxis be conceived of? We cannot but conclude this paper with some introductory remarks on this subject. The recent developments in social praxis on a world-wide scale made it difficult to differentiate sharply between the two. We should make a difference between scientific method and scientific activity in general, and between the content and the form of scientific and ideological activities In their content science and ideology may appear similar. In the procedure to proceed towards the content, and in using method, they are different and contradictory. Scientific activity relies on, but is not identic with "permanent critique" and "permanent revision", whereas ideology needs suppression of critique and elimination of revision. That is the reason one is speaking of "revisionists" if ideology is concerned, whereas one ommits this expression if scientific evolution is considered.

Again referring to Norbert Elias (22) we can conclude by saying, that when the role of scientific and ideological thinking in the process of "collective action" is considered, our aim ought to be to enlarge the understanding of the blind and undirected social processes. The purpose has to be to give better direction and orientation in social networks and structure, and in the process of

social differentiation. This must be considered as the primordial purpose, even if one knows quite well that the "paradox of prediction" is permanently at work.So, the task of social philosophy and social science is a contradictory one. In obtaining better knowledge and comprehension by means of the disentanglement of complex networks and processes of social differentiation (in which the so-called "law of the uneven and combined development" is effective), one is enlarging the possibillities of direction and control of society. This is done at the cost of calling into existence a new process of social differentiation, new entangling networks and new forms of alienation. Yet this should not be considered as a pessimistic social philosophy. On the contrary, we think it to be a "realistic" view on progress (however not towards some absolute end) in history through social action. A more profound exposition of this vision would ask for the explicit treatment of our metaphysical and anthropological ideas on man and society. If we intend to formulate them, we should not ignore the words of the poet :

Il ne faut pas laisser les intellectuals jouer avec les allumettes
Parce que Messieurs quand on le laisse seul
Le monde mental Messieurs
N'est pas du tout brillant
Et sitôt qu'il est seul
Travaille arbitrairement
S'érigeant pour soi-même
Et soi-disant généreusement en l'honneur des travailleurs du bâtiment
Un auto-monument
Répétons-le Messssssssieurs
Quand on le laisse seul
Le monde mental
Ment
Monumentalement. (23).

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NOTES

[1] J. Coleman, Mathematics of Collective Action, 1973

[2] N. Elias, Wat is Sociologie, 1971.

[3] J. Coleman, o.c., p. 35 :
...of the various approaches to a theory of purposive action, the simple approach on which economic theory is based appears to provide soundest foundation, despite its limitations. I will attempt to build the foundation of a social theory, including power relationships, collective action, and other social phenomena, using this framework and the various extensions of it that have been developed in recent years
Notice that Coleman does not furnish any argument to convince the reader of the "soundest foundation", economic theory will provide to a so-called theory of collective action. Indeed one of the significant questions is "which economic theory and which social theory ? "

[4] E. Carr, What is History, 197 .

[5] We can refer to T. Parsons, The Structure of Social Action, 1949, as well as G.C. Homans, Social Behavior. Its Elementary Forms, 1961

[6] J. Coleman, o.c., p. 1.

[7] In his paper "Morele Oordelen en de zogenaamde Vrije Wil", published in Studia Philosophica Gandensia, 1970, 8, pp. 167-212, Hugo van den Enden insisted on the irrelevance of this distinction. Allthough we agree for the greater part with his arguments, we will try not to disregard the historical importance of this distinction. Anyhow we support the idea that this distinction isn't at all a blessing for the further growth of social science, differing however with van den Enden's arguments in suffering less from the concept of causality, and in skipping with the differences between the concepts of intentions, motives, reasons for action, on one side, and purposes, aimes, on the other. We consider them as belonging to the same family. It is evident that the controversy between determinists and free-will defenders is obscured by neglecting the fact that there is no incompatibility between action with a purpose in mind and action because of some antecedent causes.

[8] M. Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, 1972, p. 5.

[9] Compare R. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, 1968, on prediction.

[10] We refer to K. Popper's Objective Knowledge, 1972; compare his statement, which relates to the nature of scientific knowledge :
The old scientific ideal of episteme — of absolutely certain, demonstrable knowledge — has proved to be an idol. The demand for scientific objectivity makes it inevitable that every scientific statement must remain tentative for ever. It may indeed be corroborated, but every corroboration is relative to other statements which, again, are tentative.
In his Logic of Scientific Discovery, 1968, p. 280.

[11] In their book The Mountain Gorilla, 19 .

[12] P.M. Blau, A Formal Theory of Differentiation in Organizations, Am. Soc. Review, 1970, 201218;
i, The Organization of Academic Work, N.Y., 1973.

[13] For a treatment of "explanation" we refer to E. Nagel, The Structure of Science, 1961; C.G. Hempel, Scientific Explanation, R. Braithwaite, Scientific Explanation, 1968 (1953).
Compare "Explanation in Science", in Enc. of Philosophy, Vol. 3-4, 1972, p. 159, on the "covering law theory of explanation", in which causal explanation is one subset of explanation in general. "A deductive explanation is sometimes called "a causal explanation" and in this case the conditions referred to by the singular premises,..., of the explanans may jointly be called a cause of the explanandum event". In contradistinction the deductive explanation of the "variational form". One of the problems on which we will not dwell further, is the "precise characterization of the logical relation between the explanans and the explanandum". See also Braithwaite, o.c., discussion on the "Why ? " question.

[14] Compare P.M. Blau, The Organization of Academic Work, Appendix B "Variable Definitions, Basic Statistics and Sources, in which 57 variables figure of which Blau investigates the interdependencies; Appendix C "Matrix of simple correlations"; Appendix D "Variables and Simple Correlations for Individual Faculty Members".

[15] K. Popper's comparison, in "Clouds and Clocks", Objective Knowledge, 1972.

[16] For similar points of view see N. Elias, Ueber den Prozess der Zivilization. Sociogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen, 1977, the "Einleitung", pp. vii-lxx.

[17] We do not wish to enter the subject of the exact meaning of meth. individualism. The litterature is of a great extent and the subject is

firmly rooted in the history of social science. See E. Nagel, o.c., and G.C. Hempel, Filosofie van de Natuurwetenschappen, 1970, for a definition of meth. individualism. Compare section 1 of this paper, on the subject of the definition of collective action.

[18] See I. wallerstein, The Modern World-System. Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century, 1974.

[19] E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, 1976, chapter 16, "Class Consciousness".

[20] ibidem, chap. 14 "An Army of redressers", and 15 "Demagogues and Martyrs".

[21] S. Ossowski, Class, Structure in social consciousness, 1963.

[22] N. Elias, Wat is Sociologie, Hfst. V, partim : "Maatschappijidealen en maatschappijwetenschap.

[23] J. Prévert, Paroles, 1972.