

Part VI

SOCIAL CHANGE

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Collective Behavior and Collective Praxis

DESCRIPTIVE AND IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT "COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR"

The term "collective behavior" is a useful descriptive term because it allows us to distinguish between conventionalized human behavior which follows the rules of everyday life in society—work, family, school, church, etc.—and those episodes of unconventional behavior, including collective protests which demand a change in society as it is through new collective *praxis*.¹ When human beings collectively decide that society can no longer be tolerated as "business as usual," usually only in periods of extreme stress, they may break through the institutionalized codes or customs with an episode of collective protest, such as a rebellion, a riot, a cultural-revitalization movement, a craze, or perhaps a new collective definition of reality promoted by an organized mass within the society (a social movement). The traditional sociologist has referred to collective praxis as "collective behavior."²

Unconventional behavior is interesting from both a scholarly and a human point of view. We have all, at one time or another, held a great deal of curiosity about a revolution, a social movement, or a craze that has in some way touched our lives, either by calling into question our own self-understanding or by disrupting our lives to the point that we must, of necessity, take notice. The war in Vietnam, for example, touched the lives of every American alive in the 1960s, sent 500,000 Americans into exile in Canada and produced at least 1,000,000³ antiwar activists who engaged in collective protest in the face of American technological genocide⁴ against a country which was fighting for its national independence.⁵ A more current example of a movement which touches and redefines the consciousness and lives of Americans is the women's liberation movement,⁶ which, during the 1970s, brought women and men to revise their ideas about such issues as abortion, rape,⁷ employment, "proper" sex-typed behavior, the patriarchal family,⁸ and the very nature of heterosexuality itself.⁹

A riot or rebellion, which is more localized in nature than either a mass movement or revolution, tends not to interrupt our lives unless it happens in our community or is reported in the mass media. Few of us who were TV watchers in 1968 will soon forget the police riot in Chicago, where newsmen, as well as protesters, were beaten by Chicago police.¹⁰ Generally speaking, the term "collective behavior" is used by sociologists to denote unconventional interaction within a group framework which occurs within a relatively limited span of time—phenomena like panics, crazes, riots, etc. The study of social movements, on the other hand, is more likely to focus on organized and protracted attempts to change patterns of social interaction and established social relations. Within sociology, there is no clear boundary between episodes of collective behavior and social movements, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. In this chapter, our theme is the sociological study of collective behavior, and in the next chapter, our theme is social movements.

The sociological concept of "collective behavior" is useful because it sensitizes us to look for the phenomenon of collective praxis and to distinguish it conceptually from the phenomenon of everyday life—conventionalized, culturally prescribed and structurally constrained social behavior. On the other hand, this concept, like many of the concepts of American and European sociology, has an ideological function as well as a descriptive one.¹¹ The ideological function of the concept of collective behavior becomes clear when we understand that the concept is linked to:

- A. A history of opposition to popular movements, including democracy, and
- B. A positivist problematic and an empiricist theory of knowledge¹² which have the combined effect of reducing peoples' conscious praxis to externally conditioned and caused "behavior."

THE POSITIVIST PROBLEMATIC

All concepts exist in a social and cultural context which is often taken for granted. A theory of knowledge, or an epistemology, defines what knowledge is and suggests a methodology for obtaining knowledge. A concept also has a history of use. The tradition of collective behavior, founded as it was by Gustave LeBon,¹³ was antidemocratic at its inception. LeBon used concepts of "imitation," "contagion," "crowd hysteria," and other similar terms in an attempt to deny the validity of the

collective praxis of the French Revolution, something that many scholars hold as a model of human collective action. LeBon's theory reduced this human achievement to the meanderings of an unruly, disorderly mob. LeBon was not only taken seriously, but was also made into the "father" of collective behavior theory and analysis. This indicates the mood of reaction which existed in France at the close of the nineteenth century, and the degree to which the democratic ideals of the French Revolution had been buried by the heirs of liberal positivism at the onset of the twentieth century.

In comparison with liberal French sociologists of this period, such as Emile Durkheim, LeBon appears an extreme conservative. And unlike August Comte, that "reactionary palladin of the bourgeois absolutist state,"¹⁴ LeBon did not even develop a system of sociology worthy of study. He was interested in social disorder from the point of view of antidemocratic elements in society—who could not see the beneficial aspects of democracy—ruled as it was by the sentiments of the mob and revolutionary violence.

How did such a theoretical perspective gain ascendancy in sociology as the founding statement of collective behavior? The answer lies, we think, in the more sophisticated aspects of the theory, in its theory of knowledge—aspects linked to a larger liberal world view, which was moving from a defense of democracy and liberal capitalism to a defense of monopoly capitalism. This period of European history, after the American Civil War and the Paris Commune of 1871, was characterized by the restoration of order, but this time through liberal corporate myths of scientism rather than through the monarchy. The response to the proletarian uprisings of the nineteenth century was a deterministic world view which removed collective protest from the realm of the normal and placed it in the domain of the deviant and the disruptive. Such a concept of collective behavior implies that there is a phenomenon of collective response, which is external to human consciousness and is determined and caused by external social factors which can be measured and observed by sociologists whose ultimate goal is to control such disruptive behavior. The terms action and protest cannot be used because they are too voluntaristic (implying that humans have free will). Such a methodological posture is clearly part of the sociology of Emile Durkheim who, though a theoretical opponent of LeBon, shared his positivist problematic. Both of these sociologists saw social behavior as something which could be understood and controlled, predicted and determined (and possibly reformed with the help of the benevolent

sociologist), but never as something collectively created by human beings. Consequently, the sociological field of collective behavior has emerged as an ideological category of social control aimed at disruptive elements of the population who might threaten the established order. The concept of collective behavior serves to mask the true nature of collective action under the guise of externally determined and controllable forms of hysteria or emotional contagion, just as the concept of deviant behavior reduces the phenomena of crime and madness, which in a class society represent forms of class and sex oppression. In short, the positivist problematic of the concept of collective behavior renders it a category useful for those who wish to control collective protests.

THE EMPIRICIST THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Closely linked to the positivist problematic is the empiricist theory of knowledge. This theory of knowledge defines knowledge as sensory and value-free. Knowledge can thus become a "free" product or commodity that can be exchanged without moral question on the academic marketplace and sold to foundations. The function of such knowledge is to define and preserve, not to question or change, the reality to which they are addressed. A critical analysis of revolution which might help oppressed people overcome their oppressions is defined not as knowledge but as ideology by empiricist theory. Sociological positivism and the sociological "control" perspectives of collective behavior suggest knowledge of one type—knowledge which, though it appears neutral on the surface, serves the demands for social control. Other models of sociological knowledge which might be counterposed to this positivist/empiricist model include the "pedagogy of the oppressed" of Paulo Friere,¹⁵ the "critical theory" of the Frankfurt School,¹⁶ the existential Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre, the radical phenomenology of R.D. Laing and David Cooper, and other critical sociological perspectives discussed in this book.¹⁷ All of these approaches have as their basis the desire to further develop human self-consciousness and the desire to actualize the potential liberation in any given social structure.¹⁸

In this chapter, we will first critique the positivist/empiricist sociologies of collective behavior. We will look at the origins of the collective behavior perspective in the work of LeBon, then move to psychoanalysis and examine Freud's theory of collective behavior as a form of father worship. We discuss the work of Neil J. Smelser—which, while accepting the positivist problematic, transcends it through the

original social theory of Max Weber and his American interpreter, Talcott Parsons. Finally, we will present Jean-Paul Sartre's systematization of collective protest phenomena. It is his system which allows us to reconceptualize the field of collective behavior as collective praxis.

THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

GUSTAVE LEBON: *THE CROWD*

Gustave LeBon was a French sociologist who wrote his significant work in the 1890s. LeBon believed that conventionalized behavior was determined by national or "racial" character, whereas crowd behavior was unconscious, "mentally inferior," and represented a situation in which conventionalized racial behavior was eclipsed by a "mania for great reforms."¹⁹ Social reform was impossible, according to LeBon, because social institutions were created by national character; it is impossible to use laws or institutions to change character; hence, according to his view, it is impossible to change society.

Besides taking the position that social reforms were sociologically impossible, LeBon subscribed to the canons of "scientific sociology," an approach which went hand in hand with the rejection of reformist sociology. During this same period in America, Albion Small and E.A. Ross presented value-committed versions of reformist sociology, while Durkheim was solidifying the positivist, "scientific" position in Europe.²⁰ LeBon's formulation of positivist/empiricist sociological methodology was, however, somewhat less sophisticated than that of Durkheim. According to LeBon:

I have endeavoured to examine the difficult problem presented by crowds in a purely scientific manner—that is by making an effort to proceed with method, and without being influenced by opinions, theories, and doctrines. This, I believe, is the only mode of arriving at the discovery of some few particles of truth, especially when dealing, as is the case there, with a question that is the subject of impassioned controversy. A man of science bent on verifying a phenomenon is not called upon to concern himself with the interests his verifications may hurt.²¹

LeBon was unaware that the verificational model of knowledge has an implicit interest in scientific and technical control of the phenomena studied.²² To verify knowledge about a phenomenon within a scientific model and then to publish that information, when the phenomenon is the

collective protest of an oppressed group (such as a crowd of workers in the French Revolution of 1789 or 1848 or 1871), is to treat the workers' collective protest the same way a biologist treats bacteria. The scientist in both cases wishes to verify knowledge about a phenomenon in order to better control it. This is the implicit positivist problematic and theory of knowledge of LeBon's theory of the crowd, which is carried over into modern "empirical" studies of the phenomenon of collective behavior.

LeBon was convinced that crowds possess a "group mind" and are governed by unconscious motivation. He included in his definition of crowds not only the acting "street" crowd, but also juries, electorates and parliamentary assemblies.²³

Lest we dismiss LeBon too quickly, it must be said that his theories contain some elements of truth. That mass movements are in large part unconsciously motivated has been aptly demonstrated in the twentieth century by the rise of Hitler and Mussolini.²⁴ On the theoretical level, Karl Mannheim has demonstrated that ideologies and utopias, which account for a larger part of the motivation of mass movements, are, at least in part, unconscious phenomena.²⁵ To be sure, we agree with LeBon that it is the masses of people, and not great men, who make history. Our divergence seems to be in terms of our opinion of the merit of this state of affairs, and to LeBon it is distasteful to the extreme. According to LeBon, we are entering a historical epoch he calls the "Era of Crowds," and by this he simply means the era of the masses or the Democratic Age (in less derogatory terminology).

According to LeBon, the crowd or the masses, favor social, political and economic democracy, while he opposed such democracy.²⁶ He thought that the advent of the powers of the masses heralded the final decline of western civilization. According to LeBon, "Civilizations as yet have only been created and directed by a small intellectual aristocracy, never by crowds," and "When the structure of civilization is rotten, it is always the masses that bring about its downfall."²⁷ LeBon equates democracy and socialism with a decline of civilization. He anchored his analysis of the destructive nature of crowds and popular mass movements in the "law of the mental unity of crowds," in which he suggested that crowds have a group mind which is of an inferior mental nature to the individual mind.²⁸ LeBon fancied himself following in the tradition of Napoleon, and in a racist manner, he suggested that Napoleon could have conquered Spain had he but understood Spanish racial psychology as well as LeBon did. Referring to Napoleon's defeat in

Spain, LeBon wrote that “A psychologist acquainted with the hereditary instincts of the Spanish race would have easily foreseen this reception.”²⁹ LeBon went on to seriously suggest that when in a crowd, human brain activity disappears and human intelligence is lowered. He stated that, “In the collective mind the intellectual aptitudes of the individuals, and in consequence their individuality, are weakened. . . . This very fact that crowds possess in common ordinary qualities explains why they can never accomplish acts demanding a high degree of intelligence.”³⁰ And, “In crowds it is stupidity and not mother-wit that is accumulated.” The lowering of the intelligence of individuals in crowds is caused, according to LeBon, by several factors. First, conventional behavior is thought to be determined by cultural tradition or “racial genius,” which LeBon thought to be hereditary. Second, most conventional behavior was thought by LeBon to be *unconscious*. Third, there are several social psychological factors thought to be at work in crowds which lead them to lower intelligence. These are:

1. Contagion.
2. Loss of responsibility through anonymity, as a result of the size of the crowd, and
3. Greater suggestibility of persons in a crowd situation.

These processes hypnotize the crowd participants, according to LeBon, and render them unconscious of their actions.³¹ It is important to note here that these mechanisms of hypnotizing individuals and making them unconscious and less intelligent in crowd behavior, are still given in introductory sociology textbooks as mechanisms of crowd behavior.³² Anonymity, contagion, and suggestion, then, are the central mechanisms of crowd behavior by which LeBon explained the “mental inferiority of the masses.” He noted that crowds tend as a consequence, to be impulsive, irritable, unable to reason or be critical, and to demonstrate exaggerated sentiments. It is important to recall that LeBon seriously held such views with regard to the democratically elected French Parliament of 1848. Of electoral crowds, LeBon asserted that they are influenced by their leaders with the techniques of affirmation, repetition, prestige, and contagion.

By criminal crowd, LeBon understood those crowds of Jacobins who murdered aristocrats during the reign of terror of the French Revolution of 1789. Crowds differ, according to LeBon, principally in that crowds are made up of people of different races, because, as he asserts over and over again, race is the most important determinant of behavior. He stated

that “When examining, for instance, the political institutions of France we showed that parties to all appearance utterly distinct—royalists, radicals, imperialists, socialists, etc., have an ideal absolutely identical, and that this ideal is solely dependent on the mental structure of the French race. . . .”³³

FREUD: GROUP PSYCHOLOGY AND AN ANALYSIS OF THE EGO

We are perhaps fortunate that so great a mind as that of Sigmund Freud saw fit to address himself to the theories of an antidemocratic conservative like LeBon. As a result, we may now compare a psychoanalytic interpretation of LeBon with the politically oriented sociological critique presented above. Freud wrote his critique of LeBon’s 1896 manuscript in 1920, three years after the Russian revolution and well past the critiques of the socialists of the Second International, such as Engels, Bebel and Kautsky, which were ignored by LeBon. Freud did not, however, focus on the political impact of LeBon’s theory, but on the key explanatory concepts, such as *contagion*, *suggestion* and *unconscious motivation*, all of which he was able to interpret as special cases of psychoanalytic concepts. Freud reduced LeBon’s notion of the racial unconscious to a matter of the exposure of the libido, which occurs when “the mental superstructure, the development of which in individuals shows such dissimilarities, is removed, and the unconscious foundations, which are similar in everyone, stand exposed to view.”³⁴ This is clearly a distortion of LeBon’s position. LeBon stated clearly that different races (national cultures) have different unconscious forms of racial genius.³⁵ But Freud was able to find in LeBon enough support for the basic Freudian idea of the unconscious to make LeBon into a creative, if somewhat superficial and confused, psychoanalyst.

It is interesting to note that both Freud and LeBon conceived group or mass movement activity as unconscious, while they viewed conventional institutionalized behavior of everyday life as somehow conscious because it is in keeping with custom and tradition. Our analysis would indicate just the opposite—that during periods of daily drudgery in the factory, farm, or office, most people are unconscious, but that during periods of collective protest and praxis, such as the San Francisco General Strike of 1934 or the events of May 1968 in France, people conceive of themselves as actors on the stage of history—a stage which, in America at least, is usually dominated by bankers and millionaires.

LeBon and Freud came to opposite conclusions when compared to more progressive thinkers, such as Marx and Sartre, about which social behavior is conscious action and which is unconscious submission. Freud and LeBon have us submissive to “unconscious instincts” during collective behavior, while Marx and Sartre have us submissive to “false consciousness” during periods of conventional behavior.

Freud agreed with LeBon’s comparison of the mental life of the masses to that of children and “primitive” peoples and gave psychoanalytic data in support of the contention that the mind of the masses or the group mind is structurally similar to the mind of children and neurotics.³⁶ Freud’s antidemocratic impulses were somewhat similar to those of LeBon, except that Freud’s concept of group was somewhat more of a structural sociological concept and somewhat less of a synonym for the general population. Thus, the electorate is like a poor neurotic or child, and only needs the fatherly touch of the doctor or psychoanalyst to straighten out their infantile demands for democracy.

Unlike LeBon, who was obsessed with irrational factors of group process such as suggestibility, contagion and unconscious motivation, Freud was primarily concerned with the phenomenon of leadership. This connection allowed Freud to build a bridge from LeBon’s group psychology to the psychoanalytic emphasis on the role of the father in the family and tribe, the incest taboo and Oedipal relations resulting from repressed sexuality and displaced aggression. LeBon had no such subtlety of analysis, for to him, “A group is an obedient herd, which could never live without a master. It has such a thirst for obedience that it submits instinctively to anyone who appoints himself its master.”³⁷ We do not deny the relevance of unconscious dimensions of group behavior, but we do not share LeBon’s analysis and perception of them.³⁸ Freud also criticized the work of McDougal, whose work, *The Group Mind*, is very similar to that of LeBon. McDougal put forward the concept of “direct induction of emotion by way of primitive sympathetic response” to explain collective praxis as irrational group behavior in a way similar in ideological impact to LeBon’s concept of emotional contagion. Freud put forward his own psychoanalytic theory of collective behavior with the concepts of libido and suggestion. Freud took issue with the suggestion-contagion theorists and stated that such terms really explain nothing; they only rename an observed phenomenon—mutual influence and decreased intelligence among people gathered in groups. We would like to point out that not only is the explanation—contagion—faulty, but the “fact” itself

of increased suggestibility and decreased intelligence in the group situation, could only have been “discovered” by elitist scholars with a distaste for democracy and popular power. Even so, it is easy to agree with Freud that contagion hardly explains this non-fact. Freud substituted the notion of identification of followers with a leader in which the follower gives up his “ego ideal” to the leader, producing libidinal (brotherly love) ties among the members of the in-group. With these ideas Freud claimed to be able to explain 1) armies, 2) churches, and 3) the origin of social organization from the primal horde. According to Freud,³⁹ armies are held together because each soldier is loved equally by his commander-in-chief, and this produces brotherly love among the soldier comrades. The church, said Freud, is held together by the common love of Christ for all Christians, and would collapse if someone discovered the body of Jesus in Jerusalem.³⁹

While he may have been pointing to some of the psychological factors which induce people to join armies or churches, Freud in no way explained such institutions in their fullness. For Freud to ignore economic factors motivating men to fight, or nationalism, which is clearly one of the major motivating ideologies of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is a major shortcoming.

SMELSER’S ANALYTICAL SCHEME

In the collective behavior tradition, Neil Smelser’s model has been used to analyze collective behavior episodes and has proven to be a useful frame of reference. Zurcher and Kirkpatrick used it to analyze two antipornography crusades.⁴⁰ Brown used Smelser’s model to analyze the Detroit race riot of 1943.⁴¹ Milgram and Toch, in a “pedagogical example,” applied the model to the Berkeley student riots of 1965.⁴² Fendrich and Pearson, in a presentation of empirical data and “hypothesis testing,” employed Smelser’s model and categories in their analysis of alienation and its correlates among black veterans. Quarantelli and Hundley saw the model as falsifiable and did a rudimentary job of “subjecting it to disproof,”⁴³ and James L. Wood used it to analyze the student movement of the 1960s.⁴⁴

Smelser’s theory is based on the work of Talcott Parsons.⁴⁵ Central to Parsons’ theory of sociocultural change is the notion of a hierarchy of control: Values, norms, mobilization of motivation for action, and knowledge of facilities to define a social situation are four components in a sociocultural system on which human social action is based. Behavior is

made meaningful by a cultural audience which observes and shares definitions of meaning. Parsons took his model from Max Weber.⁴⁶ For example, a football game can be analyzed by suggesting that it is made legitimate in American culture by the shared value of competition. It is organized around certain norms of fairness, aggressiveness, and conquest. It is dependent upon a complex and intricate system of rewards which motivates people to play the roles prescribed by the norms and made legitimate by the values. The football game cannot be played without requisite knowledge and skills (situational facilities).

In Smelser's model,⁴⁷ collective behavior is differentiated from normal social behavior by the fact that from the point of view of group consciousness, there is short-circuiting between levels of the components of action. Short-circuiting results in generalized beliefs, or ideology, becoming the basis for action without other elements of the system being involved. Types of collective behavior are determined by types of generalized belief which cause the short-circuit. A *panic* is based on a belief characterized by generalized hysteria. It defines all possible outcomes of a social situation (situational facilities) as negative. A *craze* is the result of a generalized belief in wish fulfillment, which defines all possible outcomes of a social situation as positive. A *hostile outburst* (a riot) is the result of a belief in generalized hostility, which is short-circuited within the component of action consisting of motivation and roles. A specific agent in the form of an abstracted role is judged to be responsible for a stressful or unsatisfactory state of affairs. A *norm-oriented movement* is based on an ideology which short-circuits on the normative level. A change in normative principles is specified, which will reduce stress in the social situation. Cultural elements in between the general principle and the empirical situation, necessary for change in the social system, are left out. A *value-oriented movement* is based on a belief which envisions a change in the standards of legitimacy of a group, without mechanisms to articulate the value change into action.

Smelser argues that value-oriented beliefs contain norm-oriented beliefs, which contain hostile beliefs, which contain both hysteria and wish fulfillment. These beliefs operate according to the principle of hierarchy of control. Smelser posits the hierarchy of control as the underlying mechanism of normal social action, thereby implying that collective behavior is "irrational." The type of generalized belief which short-circuits among the levels of social action determines the form of collective behavior. Structural variables determine whether a belief is

articulated in behavior or whether it is frustrated and eventually leads to another belief.

Let us examine the process of short-circuiting within the levels of social action. Smelser indicates that the four components of social action—values, norms, mobilization and facilities—stand in a hierarchy of control. If there is a value change, there must necessarily be a normative change, a role change, and a knowledge change. The converse *may* also be so, but this is not necessarily or logically the case. *Social action* is articulated within a particular pattern of components, carefully moving from stage to stage. *Social change* is change in some component with all other components changing accordingly before action. *Collective behavior* is change in one component, which immediately identifies behavioral outcomes, without attending properly to the other components.

The bias of this system is toward the status quo and against social change. It talks not of human beings who make their own history, but of components of action which must be changed in a slow and careful step-by-step fashion in order to avoid riot and revolution. Revolution and riot are irrational ways to attain goals, while normal social change should be carefully articulated through the existing components of the system. Smelser neglects to mention that the components are in people's heads and that people can change their minds and can change history.

Smelser's method, as a set of categories in the mind of the sociologist, is a frame of reference imposed on the data. It illuminates the phenomena from the point of view of the investigator. His theories are discussed further in the next chapter. Before we do so, we pause to consider a different perspective.

JEAN PAUL SARTRE'S THEORY OF PRAXIS

The term "collective behavior" can be used in a descriptive way when there is consensus among all parties—oppressor and oppressed, bourgeoisie and proletariat, etc.—that the behavior under study should be controlled, as in the case of a panic in a burning theater. But in cases in which class struggle or cultural conflict are involved, such a designation, if employed, will only represent the interests of social control.⁴⁸ The use of the term "collective action" instead of the term "collective behavior" might satisfy most of our objections to the "social control" implications of the latter term. The term "collective action" implies that human

beings have the right and the power to consciously choose among alternative ends and values in the process of directing their joint action, but it still leaves something to be desired because it implies that the historical and social process can be understood “from the outside” by the sympathetic scientific observer. A dialectical concept—such as “collective praxis,” which we shall introduce as the most viable alternative to the positivist “collective behavior”—recognizes that historical collective action cannot be understood from the outside by an objective observer, because the consciousness of any observer is constituted by the same historical collective process that constitutes the consciousness of the participants in the collective action.

Put another way, the concept of collective praxis demands that the sociologist take a stand and acknowledge himself as part of the historical collective action he is trying to understand. Jean-Paul Sartre developed a scheme for the description, classification and understanding of collective group phenomena⁴⁹ based on the notion of collective praxis. In situations where people become conscious of and act in terms of their interests in spontaneous rebellion, (such as the storming of the Bastille, the May 1968 events in France,⁵⁰ the Kronstadt Rebellion of 1921, the San Francisco General Strike of 1934, etc.), we may accurately speak of collective praxis.⁵¹ On the other hand, we may have cases of cultural resistance or cultural counter-movements, social movements, religious movements, or similar phenomena in which conscious voluntary social action and human values are involved, but in which there cannot be said to be a conscious process of collective redefinition of the collective consciousness. There may only be the conscious development of one particular cultural formation of reality at the expense of another. In this case we can use the term “collective action,” but we cannot refer to the conscious self-formative process of human development, or *praxis*.⁵² Cases like religious cultural revitalization movements such as Cargo Cults, the Ghost Dance, the Millennial movements of the Middle Ages, and the major salvation religions would probably fall into this category of conscious and value-informed, but not consciously self-formative, movements. The movements of the post-Enlightenment period in modern Europe and the Third World movements of the twentieth century all seem to fit the characterization of conscious collective praxis.⁵³

Sartre, in his theory of collective praxis, is addressing four audiences—Marxists, existentialists, activists, and sociologists.⁵⁴ Because of the nature of his theory, it is not enough that we merely learn Sartre’s

concepts to understand him; we must learn the dialectical method of understanding and influencing history and become part of the historical process we are trying to describe. Perhaps most of us are not willing to go that far just yet—to become Marxists, existentialists, activists, and sociologists in order to understand Sartre’s theory. Some hesitancy is surely justified, but nonetheless, this is what Sartre demands of us. If we are to understand collective behavior, we must become part of the historical struggle, of which Marxism is a theoretical expression and of which existentialism is a concrete subjective description. In the words of R.D. Laing:

Dialectical knowledge of objects . . . is inextricable from knowledge of the dialectic. The dialectic is a method of knowing, and a moment in the object known. The structure of the real and that of our own praxis are interlinked.⁵⁵

For example, Sartre’s theory of collective praxis—of the development from serial to group to praxis—is not merely a way of understanding the May 1968 General Strike in Paris, it was also part of the theory which contributed to that strike and made it possible. Even to interpret the French Revolution of 1789 in dialectical terms, is to enter the historical stage and influence the next human social revolution which in any way constitutes itself through reflection on that “mother of revolutions.” Our interpretation of sociology in this book is itself related to the actual process of critical reinterpretation of sociology and society such that social systems may be changed in the interests of the vast majority of people.

Sartre develops his theory of collective praxis out of an explanation of the French Revolution of 1789. This is the same French revolution that LeBon used as the basis of his attack against popular suffrage and democratic values in his 1896 essay, *The Crowd*. Lest it be thought that LeBon’s antidemocratic thinking is a thing of the past, we wish to point out that in a recent major American introductory sociology textbook, one that captures quite a share of the textbook market, people engaged in spontaneous rebellion against their oppression are described as a *mob*. According to Light and Keller,⁵⁶ who refer to Hoult,⁵⁷ “a mob is a crowd whose members are emotionally aroused and are engaged in or are ready to engage in violence.” This is the way most reactionary opponents of democracy would like to portray the French Revolution of 1789 as well as other incidents of collective praxis.

The way Sartre explains the “mob” which stormed the Bastille during the French Revolution is very different. While he is concerned with a theory of praxis, rather than a theory of voluntary action or of determined behavior, he is still theoretical, in that he wants a general model that will account for conscious behavior from 1789 to 1968, in societies in the Third World and in industrial societies of the West. Sartre seriously dealt with all of the concepts introduced by LeBon—including imitation and rumor, but he did so in the context of an existential Marxist theory of praxis. Let’s examine Sartre’s model. In a description of what Smelser might call structural strain, Sartre described the situation in Paris in July of 1789 as follows:

Since the twelfth of July, the people of Paris have been in a state of insurrection. Its wrath has deep causes, but these causes as yet have reached the lower classes only in their common powerlessness (cold, hunger, etc., everything experienced in resignation . . . unorganized outbursts, riots, etc.)⁵⁸

Sartre then moved from a description of the subjective experience of the oppressed, whose consciousness was not yet at the stage of praxis, to a description of the way in which the ruling class maintained its legitimacy. He noted that, “From the exterior, the government constitutes Paris as a totality.”⁵⁹ So King Louis XVI could say, “It is necessary that I use my power to restore and maintain order in the capital. . . . These are the reasons that have led me to have troops assembled around Paris.”⁶⁰ Then posters were put up around Paris which announced that troops were surrounding Paris in order to “protect Paris from criminals.” In other words, Paris was defined as a social construct and this definition was controlled from the outside by the ruling class of that time—the crown. The problem for the people of Paris was to achieve a new collective definition or collective consciousness of “Paris,” one which would render the king a decadent tyrant and transform the people from a rioting mob into authors of a collective praxis in the new democratic age. How this process occurs is the process of collective praxis.

According to Sartre, the city of Paris was an “inert crowd,” when defined by the exterior praxis of the ruling class and organized as a totality or whole. Within this enclosed crowd, *rumors*, posters, and the news communicated to the Parisian citizen that he or she was a particle sealed within the totality Paris. Here Sartre’s theory seems to support the notion that *rumor*, far from being the distorted murmurings of an emotional mob, is simply the improvised form of news created by the

people of Paris themselves, and somewhat less controlled by the ruling class than the public posters of the king. At this level, according to Sartre, the totality *Paris* was lived and experienced by the people of Paris in *seriality*. *Seriality* is one of the key concepts of Sartre’s theory of collective praxis. People live in seriality when they are mutually constituted and focused in their experience by a common cultural backdrop, such as those San Franciscans who read the *Chronicle* but who live in isolation from each other. Through conscious choice, promoted and delineated by circumstance and exteriority, the members of a *series* may transform themselves into a *group*. This is what happened in Paris, July 12, 1789, when the looting of an arms depot occurred. Out of this spontaneous mass action, the consciousness in each individual participant of his or her membership in a group with common needs arose. Their own spontaneous unification, combined with the outside threat of the king’s armies, helped them to form a new totality, or collective consciousness, which redefined the situation. Their own organization as a group with a common praxis sprang from this new totalizing force. The collection of individuals in seriality was transformed into collective praxis, not as an event determined by external forces, but as a conscious free action which created a new totality for both participant and observer. Such a concept of collective praxis allows sociologists to evaluate the processes of social change, protest, rebellion, and revolution from the point of view of those oppressed and to further knowledge as participants in those processes.

The difference between observation and participation, although often a subtle one, has long been a topic for debate among sociologists, particularly when unconventional behavior is concerned. In the next two chapters, we investigate the study of social movements and seek to relate some of the problems of this area of sociology to the larger questions of fact and value, observation and participation.

NOTES

1. Collective praxis is understood in the sense of conscious, self-determined human behavior which changes the world.
2. This distinction between conventionalized and collective behavior is typically made by sociologists. See Metta Spencer, *Foundations of Modern Sociology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976).
3. See James L. Wood, *The Social Sources of American Student Activism* (New York: D.C. Heath, 1976), for a good discussion of the student antiwar movement.
4. See J.P. Sartre, "On Genocide," in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968).
5. See Wilfred Burchett, *Vietnam Will Win!* (New York: International Publishers, 1966).
6. See Juliet Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), Part I, for one of the best discussions of the development of the Women's Liberation Movement out of the New Left of the 1960s.
7. Susan Brownmiller's recent book, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), is a good example of the rising tide of feminist consciousness against the most common of the terroristic crimes against women.
8. Juliet Mitchell, in *Woman's Estate* (1971; rpt. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), Part 2, also probably has the best analysis of the patriarchal family since Frederick Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1942; rpt. New York: International Publishers, 1972).
9. See Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973) for a good discussion of the radical feminist lesbian alternative to sexist heterosexual culture of domination which permeates American capitalist culture to the point of woman hating. See also Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974).
10. For discussion of the Chicago experience, see Tom Hayden, *The Trial* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970).
11. For discussion of other ideological concepts in common usage as "scientific" ones in contemporary sociology, see Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).
12. See John Horton, "Combatting Empiricism: Toward a Practical Understanding of Marxist Methodology," *Insurgent Sociologist*, Summer, 1972, for a discussion of the ideological effects of an empiricist theory of knowledge, which implicitly informs most of American sociology.
13. Gustav LeBon, *The Crowd* (1896; rpt. London: Ernest Benn, 1952).
14. Herman and Julia Schwendinger, *The Sociologists of the Chair* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).
15. Paulo Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970).
16. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972).
17. Wilfred Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), David Graham Cooper, *The Death of the Family* (1970; rpt. New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), and Karl Marx, *Capital* (New York: International Publishers, 1967).
18. See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
19. Gustav LeBon, *The Crowd* (1896; rept. London: Ernest Benn, 1952), pp. 6-7.
20. Herman and Julia Schwendinger, *The Sociologists of the Chair* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), E.A. Ross, *Social Control* (New York & London: Macmillan, 1901), Albion Small, *Origins of Sociology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1924), and Lester Ward, *Pure Sociology* (New York & London: Macmillan Co., 1903).
21. Gustav LeBon, *The Crowd*, p. 6.
22. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Appendix.

23. Gustav LeBon, "Parliamentary Assemblies," *The Crowd*, pp. 186-207.
24. Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970).
25. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1936).
26. Gustav LeBon, *The Crowd*, pp. 15-16.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
32. See, e.g., Metta Spencer, *Foundations of Modern Sociology* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976) or Roger Brown, "Collective Behavior," in *Social Psychology* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1965).
33. Gustav LeBon, *The Crowd*, p. 147.
34. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and an Analysis of the Ego* (1959; rpt. New York: Liveright, 1967).
35. Gustav LeBon, *The Crowd*, pp. 141-155.
36. Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and an Analysis of the Ego*, pp. 10-11.
37. *Ibid.* LeBon, quoted by Freud.
38. See T.W. Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950), Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (1955; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1962), Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970), and Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1941). And, perhaps refer also to the current feminist analysis of Freud in Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).
39. Sigmund Freud, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-31.
40. Louis A. Zurcher & R. George Kirkpatrick, *Citizens for Decency: Anti-pornography Crusades as Status Defense* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1976).
41. Roger Brown, *Social Psychology* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1965), pp. 728-733.
42. Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, ed., *Handbook of Social Psychology* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1968-69).
43. Robert Evans, ed., *Readings in Collective Behavior* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969).
44. James L. Wood, *The Social Sources of American Student Activism* (New York: D.C. Heath, 1975).
45. Talcott Parsons, et al., ed., *Theories of Society* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).
46. Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (New York: Bedminister Press, 1968).
47. Neil J. Smelser, *A Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).
48. Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
49. Wilfred Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965).
50. See George Katsiaficas, "The Meaning of May 1968" in *Monthly Review*, May 1978.
51. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960) or excerpts in Robert D. Cumming, *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 456-484, for Sartre's analysis of the storming of the Bastille. See Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968) regarding May, 1968 in Paris. See Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press,

1970) and Mike Quinn (pseud. Paul Ryan Williams), *The Big Strike* (Olema, Calif.: Olema Pub. Co., 1949) regarding the San Francisco General Strike of 1934.

52. A similar distinction between class conscious and non-class conscious social movements is made by Roberta Ash in her *Social Movements in America* (Chicago: Markham Pub., 1972). Ash, however, cannot deal conceptually with short term collective behavior type phenomena such as the panic, or with short term spontaneous rebellion all within the same conceptual model, as can be done by using the existential Marxist theory.
53. See Edward Rice, *John Frum, He Come* (New York: Doubleday, 1974). On Cargo Cults, see James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890* (U.S. Bureau of American ethnology, 14th annual report, 1892-93, Washington, 1896), Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of Millennium* (Fair Lawn, N.J.: Essential Books, 1957), and Max Weber, *The Religion of India* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958), and *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).
54. Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), chapt. 4.
55. R.D. Laing and David Cooper, *Reason and Violence* (New York: Vintage, 1964), p. 94.
56. Donald Light and Suzanne Keller, *Sociology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), pp. 292-293.
57. Thomas Ford Hault, *A Dictionary of Modern Sociology* (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams, 1969).
58. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la Raison Dialectique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 384-386; Robert D. Cumming, *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 466.
59. Robert D. Cumming, p. 466.
60. Ibid.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Social Movements

THE STUDY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: FROM NATURAL HISTORY TO SOCIAL ACTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, sociological theories sought to explain revolutions by analogies to Nature. Lyford Edwards did this quite clearly in *The Natural History of Revolution*: "A revolution, in certain respects, resembles an elephant. The elephant is the slowest breeding of all living creatures, and a revolution is the slowest forming of all social movements."¹ Crane Brinton's *The Anatomy of Revolution*, first published in 1938, drew a similar parallel: ". . . The best conceptual scheme for our purposes would seem to be one borrowed from pathology. We shall regard revolutions as a kind of fever."² These analogies to biology were the defining characteristic of the natural history conception of revolutions. A cyclical pattern was gleaned from the dynamics of past revolutions, and a temporal sequence not dissimilar to the four seasons in New England was posited as their inevitable cycle: from Fall—the appearance of symptoms (the defection of the intellectuals, the onset of economic crisis, etc.); to Winter—a "crisis frequently accompanied by delirium" (the Reign of Terror); to Spring—a period of convalescence (Thermidor); and finally to Summer—the return to "normality" (the Restoration of a ruling elite). Such was the natural history view of revolutions. Although these analogies to biology were made with some reservations, they were carried out. In the words of Lyford Edwards:

The practice of referring to biological analogies in the study of human social life has been so abused by the early writers on sociology that anyone employing it today (1927) feels constrained to apologize for doing so. Nevertheless, if the biological analogy be employed, *as it should*, to denote resemblance without affinity, it has its place. It is a useful device in exposition and especially useful in clarifying our conceptions of social phenomena.³ (Our emphasis)

Ten years after the publication of *The Natural History of Revolution*, Talcott Parsons's *The Structure of Social Action* appeared, a work destined to have monumental importance for sociology. Parsons synthesized a systematic model of social action by combining social theory from England (a utilitarian individualized means-end framework), France (normative order and a structural-functional system) and Germany (phenomenological analysis of the subjective state of the actor.)⁴ His work had the effect of producing a shift from understanding social movements through biological analogies to a system of analytic determinants. The building block of the Parsonian system was the unit act:

Just as the units of a mechanical system in the classical sense, particles, can be defined only in terms of their properties, mass, velocity, location in space, direction of motion, etc., so the units of action systems also have certain basic properties without such it is not possible to conceive of the unit as "existing."⁵

At first glance, Parsons appears to have moved sociology from biological analogies to ones based on physics, but in his next breath, he assures us otherwise:

. . . unlike that of the physical sciences, the phenomena being studied (in sociology) have a scientifically relevant subjective aspect. . . . This necessitates the distinction of the objective and subjective points of view.⁶

Although Parsons derived his theory of action in the first place from what he called "individualistic positivism" beginning with Hobbes, he criticized Hobbes for being "almost entirely devoid of normative thinking." For Hobbes, the whole of social reality was the sum of the individual parts, but within that formulation, the problem of social cohesion arose: why and how these separate parts come together to form a whole. If, as for Hobbes, the whole is equal to the sum of the parts and the parts are in a natural state of "war of all men against all men," then the whole's existence is possible only through a "visible power to keep men in awe," a "mortal God," a "Leviathan." The power of the strong in the state of Nature becomes the legal power of the state.

For Parsons (and Emile Durkheim), the whole is not merely equal to the sum of the parts—it is a reality "existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations."⁷ The whole is the integration of the parts—i.e., Durkheim made the leap from geometry to calculus in his social thought.⁸ "Normative order" for Durkheim and Parsons plays the role of Hobbes's "Leviathan" in maintaining social cohesion.⁹

Despite their differences concerning *the way* in which the social order is held together, these theorists similarly envisioned the substances held together: whether added or integrated, the units remained abstract individuals. Such is the legacy which Parsons inherited and adapted. Concrete acts by real people were treated by Parsons as worthy of mere description, whereas his analytical system "consists in generalizing the conceptual scheme so as to bring out the functional relations involved in the facts already descriptively arranged." Within his conceptual scheme, however, Parsons relapsed into an uncritical acceptance of common-sense notions of fact and value, the most obvious (and most criticized) example being the description of the "normal" as opposed to "deviant." For Parsons, the social system naturally tends toward equilibrium, and any disturbance of this equilibrium is not normal. Parsons shared a world view with the natural history school in their similar treatment of social movements (and unconventional behavior generally) as pathological or deviant.

In its initial formulation, the Parsonian system sentenced collective behavior to exile from the scope of normative behavior. This banishment of collective behavior from the Parsonian system should not be viewed apart from the near simultaneous emergence of "symbolic interactionism," a term coined in 1937 by Herbert Blumer. In opposition to Parsons's verification of human action as structurally induced, Blumer developed a model of the individual stressing the cognitive interaction of human actors. He went as far as denying the existence of social structures, modeling human behavior instead as a striving for symbolic meaning in the flux of social interaction. For Blumer, the term "collective behavior" included any behavior "not based on the adherence to common understanding or rules."¹⁰ His perspective shared with Parsons a sharp distinction between normal functioning and nonconventional behavior, even though for Blumer, that which is disrupted is a cognitive system of norms, values, beliefs and attitudes, not a system of interdependent social structures. Collective behavior was seen as a social-psychological attempt to reconstruct the symbolic meaning and order of the social world. The breakdown of established norms gives rise to behavior that Blumer identified as no longer being cognitively mediated, as irrational:

The loss of customary critical interpretation and the arousing of impulses and excited feelings explain the queer, vehement, and surprising behavior so frequent among members of a genuine crowd. Impulses which ordinarily would be subject to a severe

check by the individual's judgment and control of himself now have a free passage to expression. That many of these impulses should have an atavistic character is not strange nor, consequently, is it surprising that much of the actual behavior should be violent, cruel, and destructive."¹¹

In short, the symbolic-interactionism of Blumer and the structural-functionalism of Parsons shared a belief in the normality of order and the abnormality of conflict, an *a priori* belief which made each theory highly problematic as time went on.

For Parsonian structural-functionalism, the notion that the normative order "naturally" tended to insure the cohesion and equilibrium of the social system was a presupposition carrying within it the notion that non-normative action could not be a part of the social system—i.e., that the vehicle of social change lay outside the boundaries of the system. An exogenous view of the why and how of social change coupled with a static model of the social system stands in sharp contrast to the view that change continually unfolds endogenously (from within a constantly changing, conflict-filled social formation). Within the scope of the Parsonian system, the emergence of new social forces could only be comprehended as *externally* induced; disturbances must, as Parsons tell us, be "introduced into the system" from the outside.¹² In discussing this topic, C. Wright Mills commented:

The idea of the normative order set forth leads us to assume a sort of harmony of interests as the natural feature of any society. . . . The magical elimination of conflict, and the wondrous achievement of harmony, remove from this "systematic" and "general" theory the possibilities of dealing with social change, with history. . . . Any systematic ideas of how history itself occurs, of its mechanics and processes, are unavailable to grand theory and accordingly, Parsons believes, unavailable to social change. . . .¹³

A key conceptual world in which both Blumer and Parsons live is the Hobbesian assertion that "Both part of a contradiction cannot be true."¹⁴ The premise shared by structural-functionalism and symbolic-interactionism that their systems tend by themselves toward equilibrium refutes the notion of the contradictory nature of reality without advancing a single argument.

Parsons succeeded in building a steady-state system of social equilibrium in theory, but the practical movement of history soon gave him

reason to try and adjust his model to the changing political environment. His system more or less accurately reflected the situation in the United States after World War II. It was American in another sense as well: in his orientation to action, not to thought, Parsons's system was an action-oriented version of Kant's system of knowledge. Although thought was a form of action for Parsons, he posited "doing" as eternal and focused his system on a theory of action, not of thinking. Whereas Kant and German philosophy in general concerned itself with the *goals* of human endeavor *as a whole*, Parsons took the goals (and cultural values) of a social system as "given" in much the same way as the goals of a biological or mechanical system are "given." This assumption by Parsons overlooks the fact that human values must be interpreted. Unlike animals, whose goal of survival as given by Nature is also their values, humans construct goals and values other than those given to us by Nature. These social goals are not "given"; they are historically determined. According to Habermas they

can at best be "found" by way of a political formation of the will. But that would be possible only if one presupposes a general and public discussion by the members of the society based on available information about the given conditions of reproduction of the system. Then a relative agreement could be brought about on a value system that included the objective goal values previously withdrawn from the knowledge and will of the citizens. In such a communication, previously recognized cultural values could not function only as standards; cultural values would themselves be drawn into the discussion.¹⁵

If the goals of the whole society are not democratically decided by the majority of the members of society, how then are they defined? For Parsons, the answer lay in the fact that each "unit act" has its goal, and the goals of the whole system flow from the integration of the various parts. This position neatly parallels the economic-utilitarian theories of Adam Smith, but it became increasingly problematic in an era of large industrial concentrations, a large state, and an increasingly complex and more comprehensive world system.

As previously mentioned, the early Parsonian system attributed relatively little importance to the role of the state in defining social goals and maintaining social equilibrium. To Parsons, the social system was held together by its normative order, and he did not—at least in his early

theories—concern himself with the role of the state in maintaining social stability. As Alvin Gouldner pointed out:

The focus of early Positivistic Sociology was largely on “spontaneous” social arrangements that grew “naturally”. . . . There is no doubt that Durkheim believed the state incompetent to manage what he regarded as the decisive problem of modern Europe, its “poverty of morality,” *anomie*. . . . In a similar vein, early Parsonian theory, warning of the unpredictabilities of “purposive social action,” expressed suspicion of the Welfare State then crystallizing in New Deal reforms.¹⁶

Only after World War II was it the case that functionalism, in the words of Alvin Gouldner: “began to give explicit support to the Welfare State as a way to satisfy the need for action to regulate the economy and to protect society against the ‘international Communist conspiracy.’”¹⁷ The consequences of this change in the Parsonian system are not to be underestimated. Once it is admitted that modern society is no longer held together by normative structures, the problems of system integration and determining the goals of society become key issues, issues which drove Parsons, the master system builder, to reorient himself to the problems of power in society and the relationship of the economy to politics. He republished new versions of his system both in *The Social System* (1951) and *Economy and Society* (1956). In the latter work (written together with Neil Smelser), the polity was “analytically defined as a functional subsystem of the larger system.”¹⁸ Writing in 1969, Parsons criticized his three earlier works on social systems for his “assymetry between the economic and political.” His earlier treatment of politics was one which he recognized “to have been quite unsatisfactory.”¹⁹ Parsons later went further: “No social system, perhaps least of all a polity, functions in a completely stable environment.”²⁰ Even this later formulation, however, in its stress on “environment,” remains faithful to a conception of nonconventional behavior as external to the system of social action.

After Parsons admitted the failure of his earlier formulations of the social system, he attempted to account for the role of the state in maintaining social order. His newly found emphasis on the polity led him to redefine the state as “the goal attainment subsystem of any social system.”²¹ This change meant abandoning his emphasis on the primary role of individualized moral values in holding society together. By jettisoning the belief that the social order was naturally normative (that society maintains equilibrium without the need for purposive-rational action *aimed at control*), Parsons helped pave the road for the rise of

modern systems analysis and for the eclipse of systematic theory which attempts to understand social action from the point of view of the actors. His concern with systematic subjectivity was later reformulated by his colleague Neil Smelser, and we now return to Smelser and recent developments in the sociology of social movements.

CURRENT RESEARCH ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In 1962, Talcott Parsons’s student and colleague, Neil Smelser, reformulated his teacher’s system in such a way that purposive social action, including unconventional behavior and social movements, could be analyzed from within the same conceptual framework as conventional behavior.²² In so doing, Smelser helped sociology make the same leap that economics had made through the theories of Keynes.²³ In 1968, Smelser went on to single out the “government-and-control apparatus” as the one variable which could be seen as “determining the long-term direction of change” in the social system.²⁴ If the polity is capable of purposive rational action—as Smelser’s conceived it to be—then the same could potentially be true of collective behavior.

In the *Theory of Collective Behavior*, Smelser defined collective behavior as “mobilization on the basis of a belief which redefines social action.”²⁵ He acknowledged that this definition was close to that of Blumer,²⁶ but he maintained his distance from social psychology through a definition of social action which corresponded to the view of Parsons.²⁷ Smelser maintained that:

The defining characteristics of collective behavior are not *physical* or *temporal* (p. 9); They do not lie in any kind of *communication* or *interaction* (p. 10); nor are they psychological (p. 11).

What Smelser attempted was to develop an abstract method of classifying collective behavior similar to the way in which Parsons developed analytical concepts to understand social action. The result, however, was to bring collective behavior into the ahistorical, collapsed time-space continuum of the Parsonian system. Smelser borrowed from Paul Samuelson’s economic theory the notion of a “value added” relationship between the components of action. He did so to comprehend dynamic changes, but even here, his temporal conception can at most comprehend months, not historical time.

If collective behavior (and social movements as one kind of collective behavior for Smelser) are not primarily defined in “physical” or “temporal” terms (i.e., in *history*), then how are they activated? The answer for Smelser lay in his analytical category of “structural strain”:

“an impairment of the relations among and consequently inadequate functioning of the components of action.”²⁸ In other words, “strain” in Smelser’s system corresponds to the concept of “dysfunction” in Parsons: they mean that the system is not in equilibrium. In Smelser’s model, it is structural strain which gives rise to collective behavior, which he precisely defined as “an uninstitutionalized mobilization for action in order to modify one or more kinds of strain on the basis of a generalized reconstitution of a component of action.”²⁹ As we previously discussed, what distinguishes collective from conventional behavior for Smelser is the “short-circuiting” of the participant’s thoughts. Conventional behavior is characterized by an integrated system of norms, values, roles, and knowledge, but episodes of collective behavior arise from the belief that the “strain can be relieved by a direct application of a generalized component,” a newly created belief which lies outside the established system of action. This new belief implies nonconformity (short-circuiting) in response to strain. Since Smelser assumes that the established system by itself will lead to the eventual reduction of strain, nonconformist attempts to resolve strain are not only unnecessary, they are also mistaken.

It is here that Smelser’s view of society becomes clear: society is like a large robot directed by the control center. When a circuit shorts out, rather than waiting for help to arrive from the control center, that circuit wildly seeks to find its own solution. For Smelser, collective behavior is the “action of the impatient”; it displays “crudeness, excess, and eccentricity”; it is “clumsy and primitive.”³⁰ There may be short-term instances “when institutionalized means of overcoming the strain are inadequate,” but even then, nonconformist collective behavior should be contained by *social control* which “channels the energy of collective outbursts into more modest kinds of behavior.”³¹ Smelser conceived of collective behavior as irrational, based as it is on generalized beliefs that are “short-circuited.” Although he analyzed conventional and collective behavior from the same perspective, he distinguished between the beliefs underlying each type of action. The notions which guide collective behavior “involve a belief in the existence of extraordinary forces—threats, conspiracies, etc.—which are at work in the universe.” They are “akin to magical beliefs” insofar as the participants do not believe in the ability of the system to resolve social strains.³²

The bias of Smelser’s beliefs are toward the status quo. Any behavior which challenges the system as it exists is defined as unrealistic and irrational. The possibility that the norms and values of society can be

simultaneously different and conflicting is assumed to be false. Rather, Smelser assumed that a consensus exists which approves of the whole organization of society. Any behavior which departs from such a belief in the perfectibility of the system on its own accord is conceived as irrational. The view that the whole organization of society has evolved in an unplanned, Nature-like way—that the whole system in its present form could be irrational—lies outside the domain of Smelser’s theory: he accepts the system as it has evolved and as it exists.

Despite these conservative biases, Smelser’s theory (along with that of Ralph Turner)³³ played an important role in legitimizing collective behavior and social movements as a focus for sociological inquiry. In the last two decades, studies of social movements have grown from a corner of collective behavior to a field of sociological analysis more or less distinct from those social phenomena covered by the term collective behavior. In 1968, at the same time as worldwide movements were a key feature of social reality, Rudolf Heberle published an article, “Types and Functions of Social Movements,” for the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. He described social movements as “a specific kind of concerted-action groups; they last longer and are more integrated than mobs, masses, and crowds and yet are not organized like political clubs and other associations . . . social movements are distinguished from “social trends,” which are often referred to as movements and are the result of similar but uncoordinated actions of many individuals (for example, the suburban movement, fads, and fashions).”³⁴ A companion article by Joseph Gusfield, “The Study of Social Movements,” sketched a view of social movements as “socially shared demands for change in some aspect of the social order. This definition emphasizes the part played by social movements in the development of social change . . . it has the character of an explicit and conscious indictment of whole or part of the social order, together with the conscious demand for change.”³⁵

It is not necessarily the case that progress has been made through the constitution of social movements as a separate field, as Joseph Gusfield pointed out ten years after his 1968 article:

To define an area of study and describe its parts and direction provides readers with boundaries and channels that create needed organization and clarity. But boundaries are also cages that lock students into ways of thinking and studying that shut them out from the complex and unexpected realities of life. There is a form of metaphysical arrogance in the process of field building. It implicitly couples belief in the reality of the field, as

if “social movements” are a self-consistent phenomenon just waiting to be described and analyzed. The study assumes the characteristic of a *ding an sich* (a thing in itself) apart and above from its discoverers and analysts.³⁶

Recent sociological studies have often attempted to fit reality into preconceived theoretical frameworks rather than constructing investigations of social movements on the basis of concrete reality. The goal of such studies is either to build upon the accumulated knowledge of past studies or to validate a specific theory by empirically demonstrating the correspondence of the generated facts to the accepted theory. As previously mentioned, Smelser’s *Theory of Collective Behavior*, has been used to analyze antipornography campaigns, race riots, student riots, alienation, and the student movement of the 1960s. Such an empirical use of generalized theory may have the effect of overlooking significant facts as much as making them apparent. It may be possible to mathematically and “scientifically” prove theories which in actuality could be utterly false. To reiterate what Gusfield said, previous attempts to create paradigmatic models for future inquiry have often provided boundaries for research insofar as they have attempted to focus attention on significant variables.

Generally speaking, the current state of the field of social movements consists, on the one side, of elaborated theoretical systems which seeks to explain a broad class of phenomena, and, on the other side, of fragmentary social research which attempts to validate one of the variants of generalized theory. The principal approaches to grand theory include: structural-functional consensus theories generally derived from Smelser’s model;³⁷ social-psychological theories from Blumer to Gurr;³⁸ conflict theories exemplified in the work of Anthony Oberschall and Charles Tilly;³⁹ organization theories like those of Mayer Zald and John McCarthy;⁴⁰ symbolic-status theories as in the work of Joseph Gusfield;⁴¹ world system and mass society models derived in large part from the work of William Kornhauser and recently refined by Theda Skocpol;⁴² and finally various types of Marxism found in the work of Roberta Ash Gardner, Eric Hobsbaum, and George Rude.⁴³

Each of these theories seeks to explain social movements in relation to *partial* aspects of social reality, aspects which the theory defines as significant. Consensus theorists focus on the breakdown of social equilibrium and have little to offer about conflict; social psychological theories focus on the changing norms of human actors and have little to say about power and economics; conflict theorists focus on the structures of power but fail to explain the formation of collectivity; organizational theorists

offer insight into the resources and organization of activists but neglect their “hearts and minds”; status theorists focus on the ways in which social problems are cognitively defined and the interests such definitions actually serve but give little insight into objective structures; mass society theorists deal with the relationship of elites to masses but have little to say about the subjectivity of human actors and the cultural sources of cohesion and conflict.

What all of these theories have in common is the fragmentation of the object of inquiry. By presupposing an empirically fragmented social reality, i.e., by failing to deal with the totality of society (with simultaneously existent objective and subjective moments), these theories narrow the possibility of facticity and truth without grounding this reduction historically or theoretically. Without an understanding of social movements which simultaneously comprehends subjectivity and objectivity (micro and macro or interactive–psychological–symbolic moments as well as the structural and conflictual), fragmented theory reduces living reality without advancing a single argument for the appropriateness of such a reduction.

The division of labor in academia has led to the fragmentation of the study of social movements, on the one hand, and the divorce of one discipline from another on the other. The formulation of *abstract* explanations is seen as the purview of sociology and the recounting of particular conjunctures and events as the domain of history. If, however, the point of view of totality is considered, it becomes clear that universals (sociology) without the concrete (history)—or vice versa—are insufficient to either understand or explain any particular aspect of social reality.⁴⁴ The divorce of sociology from history is a glaring consequence of the modern academic division of labor. Some theorists argue that to understand society, we must:

turn to history and only to history if what we are seeking are the actual causes, sources and conditions of overt changes of patterns and structures in society. Conventional wisdom to the contrary, in modern social theory, we shall not find the explanation of change in those studies that are abstracted from history; whether these be studies of small groups in the social laboratory, group dynamics generally, staged experiments in social interaction, or mathematical analyses of so-called social systems. Nor will we find the sources of change in contemporary revivals of the comparative methods with its ascending staircase of cultural similarities and differences plucked from all space and time.⁴⁵

Others, from Parsons to Goffman, argue that social actions can be analyzed outside of history, that there are "eternal truths" to human behavior which can be uncovered without an understanding of their historical manifestation.⁴⁶

Despite these (and other) theoretical questions concerning the capability of research to understand and explain social reality, sociology has continued to generate "facts." In the last two decades, several intervening forces have shifted the focus of sociological inquiry away from grand theories and epistemological debates. At the beginning of the 1960s, increased government expenditures mobilized vast amounts of social science resources for the study of specific social problems. The federal government's expenditures in support of social science research jumped from \$118,000,000 in 1962 to \$200,000,000 in 1964.⁴⁷ By 1970, more and more sociology Ph.D.s in the U.S. were employed by the federal government. The vast growth in the demand for social research by government and industry was matched by the supply of social theory which could be applied to practical problems.

The demand on social science to solve social problems has helped bring about a conceptual shift to middle-range theories. Much of current sociology focuses on techniques of data collection and its computer analysis. As one sociologist put it:

The relation of ongoing research specialties to general theory is seldom questioned. The student is advised to learn modern methods of research and precise techniques for tabulating and correcting data, and exhorted to find a field of specialization. Here the vicissitudes of granting agencies determine which specialty is higher or lower in the scale of financial allocation.⁴⁸

Middle-range theories have the statesmanlike quality of justifying ongoing research without attempting to deal with general theory as more than "hypothesis construction." At best, as Robert Merton suggested, general theory will come from a future synthesis of the mass of existing data. For the sake of establishing near laboratory conditions and generating valid "facts," empirical social research endangers itself as being confined to the inessential. When the available method prescribes the object of inquiry, instead of the method being related to the object, the findings of much empirical work are (at worst) inconclusive and *at best* merely represent information useful for administrative purposes. This problem of empirical research is derived from a mistaken conception of facticity as well as from the social position assigned to sociology by the

administrators of society. Recognizing this, Paul Lazarsfeld has contrasted "administrative social research" with "critical research."⁴⁹

There is, however, a perspective from which finely focused empirical social research can be accorded a moment of truth. Insofar as the standardization of modern society has been conditioned by extreme concentration of economic power, methods which are standardized are not only a reflection of the situation but also a suitable means for describing it.⁵⁰

Description, however, is not the same as scientific understanding, particularly when that which is described is but a fragment of the whole. Middle-range theories may to some extent be able to describe aspects of society, but they are unable to account for the emergence of social movements. There may be a certain utility, for example, in understanding the relationship of family background and activism, but such a study cannot account for periods of inactivity when childrearing practices remain fairly constant. The inability of empirical research to comprehend changes makes its usefulness in the study of social movements highly dubious. As Gramsci cogently observed:

. . . The fact has not been properly emphasized that statistical laws can be employed in the science and art of politics only so long as the great masses of the population remain (or at least are reputed to remain) essentially passive. . . . It should be observed that political action tends precisely to rouse the masses from passivity; in other words to destroy the law of large numbers. So how can that law be considered a law of sociology?⁵¹

Otto Neurath, himself a modern logical positivist, would also agree that "the most significant changes are not to be grasped in this way at the outset. The comparison of total complexes does not grant us any possibility of predicting revolutions, if these are not the usual occurrences. One must await the appearance of the new phenomena, and only then can one discover the new laws which govern them."⁵²

Empirical social research reaches its logical focus by slicing social reality into pieces small enough to be analyzed in much the same way that modern physics has proceeded to discover and focus research on atomic particles, or modern biology has come to be defined by research on chromosomes and DNA. These methods owe a great deal to technical advances like the electron microscope and computers. In the case of social science (and possibly natural science as well), the instruments of analysis cannot be exempted from the process of inquiry as if they were

neutral methods of viewing reality. They focus attention on certain aspects of the whole, and often have the effect of changing that which they intrude upon in the process of investigation. By studying partial aspects of society, empirical research (implicitly or not) idealistically posits a fragmented social reality without first proving the validity of such a method. Systems theory attempts to remedy the fragmented comprehension of empiricism by focusing attention on the whole system, but in so doing, posits the existence of the system without proof. What both "abstract empiricism" (or "dust bowl empiricism" as C. Wright Mills called it)⁵³ and systems theory have in common is their mutual concentration on the object of knowledge defined without a conception of *conscious* human actors who create both society and knowledge of society. By presupposing the existence of social fact and dynamics which await discovery, objectivistic methods of gathering facts fail to comprehend how the construction of facticity is an act of mind. If not entirely obliterated, subjectivity is made purely quantifiable. Reality is assumed to consist solely of what appears at a given moment, hiding the reality of emergent forces which may not already have become visible.

An additional question which can be raised concerning empirical research into partial aspects of society is how the focus of study is singled out. Much of modern research is focused on what is considered to be a social problem. As Joseph Gusfield has recently pointed out, the ways in which social problems are defined contains a subjective moment which applied social research generally fails to consider. No problem definition is neutral:

The structure of public problems is then an arena of conflict in which a set of groups and institutions . . . compete and struggle. . . . knowledge is a part of the process, providing a way of seeing the problems . . . whatever its source, the appeal to a basis in "fact" has implications for the practical solutions sought to public problems.⁵⁴

The fact that "problems" are often studied in isolation from the whole organization of society leads each inquiry to seek solutions to its particular "problem," solutions which may have the effect of patching up fragmentary bits and pieces of the whole organization of society *which itself may be a cause of the particular problem*. In this sense, fragmented empirical research (oriented to administrative purposes or not) may actually have the effect of contributing to the problems it seeks to solve even if the researcher is oriented to values of "change" rather than "order." "Pure and neutral" administrative social research may serve the control

center by providing it with the "facts" necessary to maintain the social order.

The fact that positivistic studies often treat social phenomena as objects without a subjectivity—or at best quantifies subjectivity—renders it incapable of comprehending a situation where the objects of problems become the subjects of problem resolution. As Horkheimer stated it:

The object with which the scientific specialist deals is not affected at all by his own theory. Subject and object are kept strictly apart. . . . The objective occurrence is independent of the theory. . . . A consciously critical attitude, however, is part of the development of society: the construing of the course of history as the necessary product of an economic mechanism simultaneously contains both a protest against this order of things . . . and the idea of the self-determination for the human race. . . . If we think of the object of the theory in separation from the theory, we falsify it and fall into quietism or conformism.⁵⁵

If neo-empiricism can at best comprehend only a quantified subjectivity, sociological formalism—particularly in the work of Goffman—seeks to develop a qualitative understanding of the individual human actor. Goffman's frame of reference is the "eternal here and now"—i.e., the individual actor is analyzed outside history.⁵⁶ Goffman's dramaturgy focuses on human acting without reference to the stage. In his view, all people act to extend their ego and to protect the normatively structured interaction ("saving face"). Everyone in Goffman's world functions to avoid conflict, to escape embarrassment. Unlike Parsons, Goffman has a conception of the normative code as changing, but nonetheless, his similarities to Parsons are striking. Their focus is completely different, but insofar as interaction is conceived as normatively structured, and insofar as the time-space continuum is collapsed so that history disappears, they bear marked resemblances to each other. Goffman carries within his analysis of "unit acts" the same theoretical presuppositions contained in Parsons' formulation of grand theory.⁵⁷ As neo-empiricism seeks to validate specific relationships within the special order, Goffman seeks to comprehend the human "atoms" who compose society. Goffman's unit of analysis is the:

. . . occasion of talk or episode of interactions as a naturally bounded unit. This unit consists of the total activity that occurs

during the time that a given set of participants have accredited one another for talk and maintain a single moving focus of attention.⁵⁸

He focuses on the *performance* element of human life, the ways in which we (cognitively or not) symbolize and present ourselves. For Goffman, such situations are not simply given, they must be “framed,” and it is this process of creating meanings which interests him. In the process of interaction, Goffman notes that: “the participants will sense what sort of conduct *ought* to be maintained,”⁵⁹ and he assumes this is the conflict-free world of structured interaction, a world which denies spontaneity, sudden breakdowns, crises and emergence of qualitatively new modes of human interaction. In this sense, it is the world of the given “performance principle” and it gives this world without grounding it in a concrete social context.⁶⁰ It is the world of the given, yet what is given is not complete:

The theoretical results refer to universal social processes like leadership, conflict resolution, and problem solving, with little connection to the social structural conditions under which such propositions are true.⁶¹

It is the world of abstract individuals—not real human beings but the world of individuals which he himself constructs.

There is, however, an aspect of Goffman’s actors which merits closer attention: his positing of a transcendental self—that “the system doesn’t contain me.”⁶² In his open conception of the self—i.e., that the self exists both inside and outside of the situation—lies the possibility that the actor does not merely become his role. Goffman’s concern with the tension between self and role contains the possibility of the self not being confined to the given role. It is here that Goffman is at his best. By investigating the process by which a situation is defined by its actors, he opens the possibility that uniformity is not assumed—i.e., that a social problem for example, cannot merely be defined as given by a conflict with existing norms and expectations. His interest in how interaction goes astray is subsumed in his focus on embarrassment. But as soon as he begins to focus on embarrassment, he immediately calls attention to means of “social engineering” which may “save” a situation.⁶³

In short, Goffman’s world is the drama of interaction, and in this world, he imagines that all actors similarly strive to project a convincing image of self to others. This is ultimately a world of appearances, not reality, a world where individuals partake in the marketing of themselves

through “social engineering.” Goffman explicitly states that “. . . people everywhere are the same. . . .” By cutting himself off from history, Goffman’s work heads to a dead end, at least as far as the study of social movements are concerned.⁶⁴ By restricting himself to human performances as “merchants of morality,”⁶⁵ he ultimately joins the ranks of those who accept the status quo of capitalist relations.

In this chapter, we have sought to sketch some of the ways in which various kinds of sociological analysis are incapable of comprehending social movements. Should the reader think we have been too harsh in our critique, we will quote from a sympathetic summary by sociologists of recent research on collective behavior and social movements:

There is a lack of clear definition of, and agreement on, *what collective behavior is* and how it differs from conventional behavior; it has tended to be a residual, often negatively defined category, with diverse phenomena lumped together, to the exclusion of conventional phenomena with which it may share important characteristics.⁶⁶

Another sympathetic observer, the sociologist Peter Park, was even more pessimistic:

Sociology has been singularly unproductive as a science; it may be said fairly that there is not a quantitative generalization in sociology that can claim universal, or near universal, validity. This is in spite of the apparent fact that sociology today is a complex edifice made up of theories, deductions, hypotheses, instruments, measurements, and, sometimes, mathematics. Something seems to have gone wrong with science as applied to social phenomena.⁶⁷

After decades of research and debate, how is it possible that social science has been unable even to define these phenomena of collective behavior or to generate one universally valid generalization? In an attempt to answer this question, we now turn to a discussion of sociology as a whole.

NOTES

1. Lyford Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolution* (Russell and Russell, 1965) p. 16.
2. Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (Vintage Books, 1965) p. 16.
3. Edwards, op. cit. p. 16.
4. Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (Free Press, 1949). Also see "Talcott Parsons and the Phenomenological Tradition in Sociology: An Unresolved Debate," by Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Human Studies*, (1980) pp. 311-330.
5. Parsons, op. cit. p. 43.
6. Ibid., p. 46.
7. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor*, p. 13; T. Parsons "Society," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. XLV, pp. 225, 231.
8. This leap from geometry to calculus could also be presented as the leap from circular simple reproduction to expanded (spiral) reproduction of capital.
9. The role of socialization plays an important role in Parsons' theory.
10. Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in *New Outline of the Principles of Sociology*, A.M. Lee (ed.) (Barnes and Noble, 1951) p. 171.
11. Ibid. p. 181.
12. Parsons, *The Social System* (Free Press, 1951) p. 262.
13. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 1959) pp. 42-43.
14. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford University Press, 1881) p. 88.
15. J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Beacon Press, 1972) p. 148.
16. Alvin Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (Basic Books, 1970) pp. 342-43.
17. Ibid., p. 344.
18. T. Parsons and N. Smelser, *Economy and Society* (Free Press, 1956), p. 312.
19. T. Parsons, *Politics and Social Structure* (Free Press, 1969) p. XV and p. 395.
20. *Economy and Society*, op. cit. p. 343.
21. Ibid., p. 312.
22. Gary Marx and James Wood, "Strands of Theory and Research in Collective Behavior," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1975.
23. Alvin Gouldner *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (Basic Books, 1970) p. 347.
24. N. Smelser, *Essays in Sociological Explanation* (Prentice-Hall, 1968) p. 278.
25. N. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (Free Press, 1962) p. 8.
26. H. Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in J.B. Gittler (ed.), *Review of Sociology: Analysis of a Decade* (New York, 1957).
27. Smelser comprises social action as composed of values, norms, mobilization of motivation and action, and situational facilities. These four categories neatly match Parsons' four social functions: latent pattern maintenance, integration, goal attainment, and adaptation.
28. *Theory of Collective Behavior*, p. 47.
29. Ibid., p. 71.
30. Ibid., p. 72.
31. Ibid., p. 73.
32. Ibid., p. 8.
33. Ralph H. Turner, "Collective Behavior," in *Handbook of Modern Sociology*, R.E.L. Farris (ed.) (Chicago, 1964) pp. 382-455.
34. Rudolf Heberle, "Types and Functions of Social Movements," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Vol. 14) 1968, p. 439.
35. Joseph Gusfield, "The Study of Social Movements," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Vol. 14) 1968, p. 445.
36. J. Gusfield, "Historical Problematics and Sociological Fields: American Liberalism and the Study of Social Movements," *Research in Sociology of Knowledge, Sciences and Art*, Vol. 1. (1978) p. 121.
37. Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston, 1966).
38. Ted R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1970).
39. Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (Prentice-Hall, 1973); Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Addison-Wesley, 1978).

40. John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization," (General Learning Press, 1973).
41. Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade* (Illinois, 1966).
42. William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Free Press, 1959); Theda Skocpol; *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge University Press, 1979). "Mass society" theory differs from world-systems theory, but in terms of social revolutions, each theory seems capable only of conceiving of the transfer of power between elites, not of the fundamental transformation of social structures. Skocpol hints at such a possibility at the very end of her book (p. 293), but, in general, her analysis is based on a statist model.
43. Roberta Ash Gardner, *Social Movements in America* (Rand McNally, 1977); Eric Hobsbaum, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1959); *Revolutionaries* George Rude, *Ideology and Popular Protest* (Pantheon, 1980).
44. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* (Herder and Herder, 1972) p. 264.
45. Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History* (Oxford University Press, 1969) pp. 302-03.
46. See, for example Goffman, *Interaction Ritual* (Anchor Books, 1967) p. 108.
47. Alvin Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, p. 345.
48. Herbert Gamberg, "Science and Scientism: The State of Sociology," *The American Sociologist*, Vol. 4, No. 2, May 1969, p. 111.
49. Paul Lazarsfeld, "Remarks on Administrative and Critical Communications Research," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, Vol. IX, New York, 1941.
50. *Aspects of Sociology*, Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (Beacon Press, 1972) pp. 117-128.
51. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers, 1975) pp. 428-29.
52. Otto Neurath, *Empirische Sociologie* (Vienna, 1931) p. 106.
53. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 1976).
54. Joseph Gusfield, *The Culture of Public Problems: Drinking, Driving and the Symbolic Order* (University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 15. Also see Mills, p. 76.
55. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, p. 229.
56. Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, p. 108.
57. We are indebted to Joseph Gusfield for discussion of this issue.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
60. See Aaron Cicourel, *Cognitive Sociology: Language and Meaning in Social Interaction* (Free Press, 1974) pp. 25-26. Interpretive sociology makes this critique because in the process of a definition of a situation of interaction, uniformity cannot be assumed.
61. Gamberg, *op. cit.*, p. 113. The possible exception is Goffman's *Asylums* (Anchor Books, 1961).
62. Goffman, *Encounters*, p. 133.
63. *Interaction Ritual*, p. 105.
64. Gouldner, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology*, pp. 378-409.
65. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Anchor Books, 1959).
66. Marx and Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 415.
67. Peter Park, *Sociology Tomorrow* (New York, 1969) p. xii.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Unity of Scientism and Humanism

The original promise of sociology was to arrive at scientific explanation of the nature of society as a whole.¹ The early history of sociology was the attempt to fashion a model for social science based upon natural science. In the wake of the French revolution, August Comte, the founder of modern sociology, put forth a “positive philosophy” as an alternative to the “anarchic force of purely revolutionary principles.” By subordinating imagination to observation, he hoped to concern himself with “facts,” not speculation, with scientific laws, not fanciful contemplation, “with organization and order instead of negation and destruction.”² By sticking to the facts, Comte hoped to attain objectivity on the model of the natural sciences: formal and mathematical on the one hand, substantive and empirical on the other. Comte originally designated this new science as “social physics,” and it was not until 1838 that he used the word “sociology.”³ Comte sought to create a unitary and unified secular system of principles and laws which could explain social reality as a whole. He defined sociology as “a positive study of the totality of fundamental laws proper to social phenomena.”

For Comte, sociology was not merely aimed at description: “To see in order to foresee: that is the permanent distinguishing feature of true science.”⁴ In other words, sociology was originally conceived as a science capable of prediction. The goal which was to be served by such a science was the “continuous improvement of our individual and collective conditions of life—in opposition to the vain gratification of a sterile curiosity.”⁵ For Comte, the progress of science and technology was a basis for a better life for all members of society. This was reflected even in his definition of technology as “no longer exclusively geometrical, mechanical, or chemical, etc., but also and primarily political *and moral*.”⁶ From this statement on technology, it should not be inferred, however, that Comte conceived of sociology as an activist science. On

the contrary, theory and practice were sharply divorced, since, in his view:

All intermixture or any links of theory and practice tend to endanger both equally, because it inhibits the full scope of the former—theory—and lets the latter vacillate back and forth without guidance. . . . The new social philosophy must thus carefully protect itself from that tendency, only too general today, which would induce it to intervene actively in actual political movements; these must above all remain a permanent object of thorough observation for it.⁷

If as a discipline, sociology did not exist until after the French revolution, it was for the same reason that the conception of “society”—understood as comprising the whole of social reality—did not appear until around the same time.⁸ For the ancient Greeks, the polis was the focus for social and political thought; for Machiavelli, it was the feudal state. But with the rise of capitalism, the whole world was subjected to a unified economic process for the first time in history. Previously independent monarchies and city-states became integrated into a world system which broke down the isolation of manorial life and freed serfs and lords alike from the bondage of feudal obligation. In short, as a world system came into being, the fate of individuals and groups was seen as determined by unified laws and existing in a unified reality: “society.”

Not only did the concepts of society and sociology emerge in this era, so did the modern notion of the individual. The earlier contributions of Hume, Locke, and English empiricism helped prepare the ground for the emergence of the “individual” in conjunction with the emergence of “society” and “sociology.” All three of these conceptions as we know them emerged in the nineteenth century, and in the opinion of George Herbert Mead, the individual was the greatest invention of that century, greater than society or sociology. The common sense view that the individual is naturally “given” confuses the biological birth of the individual with its historical emergence. The individual as a person who differentiates the self from the *polis*, tribe, or community hardly occurs before the eighteenth century, and what the concept denotes is not much older than the early Renaissance.⁹

Social theory of all ideological viewpoints around the time of the French revolution attempted to discover scientific explanations for the nature and development of “society.” We see this same search in the

work of such different theorists as Comte and Hegel, Condorcet and Saint-Simon. The intellectual climate in the aftermath of the French revolution demanded that knowledge be sequential, that it move from the less rational to more rational, from multiple explanations to unified explanation. Within this post-religious context, the question was posed: what kind of agent could find the order, clarity and rationality within itself which was embodied in the emergent "society." For Hegel, Comte, and Condorcet, the answer lay in the human mind. The search for the "motor force" to history, conceived by Aristotle as the "immovable mover" and deified by Christians, Moslems and Jews as "God," was for Comte the mental organization of the human mind and its "eternal" laws. For Hegel, history was embodied in the "spirit of the people" or in "Great Men," and history "had a feature entirely different from that of Nature--the desire toward perfectibility."¹⁰

It was not until the outbreak of a new conflict in society after the French revolution that Karl Marx posited human beings involved in class struggles as the agent of history. Marx negated the abstract universals of philosophy and preserved them by sketching the emergence of a *concrete* universal in its two manifestations: establishment of a "world market" and the process of the self-formation of humans as *Gattungswesen*, or "species-being." History, for Marx, was not anything but the concrete actions of human beings in their society:

History does nothing, it "possesses *no* immense wealth," it "wages *no* battles". It is *humans*, real, living humans who do all that, who possess and fight; "history" is not, as it were, a person apart, using humans as a means to achieve *its own* aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of humans pursuing their aims." (emphasis in the original)¹¹

The belief in "eternal" laws of history was criticized as "the reflection of man's plight in bourgeois society and of his helpless enslavement by the forces of production."¹² In other words, even though modern history appeared as the object of immutable, eternal laws of Nature, these laws were not eternal but the *historically bounded* laws of the capitalist world system. The "discovery" made by Marx was that history consists of concrete relationships between human beings, social relationships that "are just as much the product of humans as linen, flax, etc.,"¹³ and that these relationships in "pre-history" were (and are) primarily conditioned by the economic organization of society. Social relationships were seen

as simultaneously inherited from the past and reproduced in the present. That is the meaning of his famous passage:

Humans 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. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.¹⁴

Human relationships were seen as "not those between one individual and another, but between worker and capitalist, tenant and landlord . . ." i.e. relationships between concrete human beings *in history*.¹⁵ Theories which pose abstract laws of society as eternally valid take the existent reality and project it as true for all time. To his credit, Marx realized that the laws which govern capitalism (laws which he *incompletely* discovered and critiqued in *Capital*) are valid only within the particular epoch of the "separation of the producers from the means of production."¹⁶

In contrast to an idealistic conception of history as the unfolding of mind, Marx argued for a concrete understanding:

Each principle has had its own century in which to manifest itself. The principle of authority, for example, had the eleventh century, just as the principle of individualism had the eighteenth century . . . in order to save principles as much as to save history, we ask ourselves why a particular principle was manifested in the eleventh or in the eighteenth century rather than in any other, we are necessarily forced to examine minutely what humans were like in the eleventh century, what they were like in the eighteenth, what were their respective needs, their productive forces, their mode of production, the raw materials of their production--in short, what were the relations between human and human which resulted from all these conditions of existence. To get to the bottom of all these questions-- what is it but to draw up the real, profane history of humans as both the authors and actors of their own drama? But at the moment you present humans as the actors and authors of their own history, you arrive--by a detour--at the real starting point, because you have abandoned those eternal principles of which you spoke at the outset.¹⁷

SCIENTISTIC AND HUMANISTIC PARADIGMS

Unlike physics or biology, sociology has proven itself unable to develop a unified theoretical paradigm,¹⁸ to agree on the method and content of investigation that research must use to arrive at some form of truth. Although one or another conceptual scheme may claim such a validity, it has been the case—and seems likely to continue to be for quite some time—that sociology will be composed of a number of disparate strategies for conceptualizing society.¹⁹ This problem of paradigms was discussed by Joseph Gusfield in his reflections on the study of social movements:

Like many areas of sociological work, the study of social movements is one whose history is less a story of the cumulation of knowledge moving toward a goal than a collection of separate issues and problems with diverse orientations and perspectives, often clashing and sometimes unrelated even through conflict. What has created its slim modicum of unity and relational dialogue is not agreement on paradigms of analysis, but a consensus about problems of substance around which theory and hypotheses collect.²⁰

Within sociology, there have evolved (at least) two seemingly incompatible paradigms: the scientistic and humanistic. By scientistic, we refer to the acceptance of the established routine of science. Much of modern sociology uses a model taken from natural science: history is seen as reproducible (not unique); the creation of instruments of study which are not themselves affected by the study are assumed to be possible (computerized mathematical correlations for example); and social interaction is assumed to be predictable by the development of laws (the same conditions here producing the same results there). The goals of scientistic social research are the creation of theories, laws, generalizations, or principles which can be used to deduce and predict truthful facticity.

Humanistic sociology, on the other hand, is premised on the qualitative difference between human being and natural reality. The reflexive nature of humans makes us an object to ourselves; humans interact symbolically as well as instrumentally; human behavior contains a moment of unique and unpredictable spontaneity; and finally, humanistic sociology recognizes the reactive nature of humans on the instrument of investigation as well as the human creation of these instruments, implying that the instrument of social analysis cannot be separated from its

object. The seeming incompatibility of humanistic and scientistic sociology can be made apparent by contrasting Kenneth Burke with Ralf Dahrendorf. Dahrendorf asserts that:

If in this study I speak of “theory,” “hypothesis,” “empirical test,” “refutation,” and “science,” I use these terms in the strict sense of the methodological characteristics of an empirical discipline. At least logically, physics, physiology, and sociology are subject to the same laws—whatever may render one or the other of these disciplines empirically preferable in terms of exactness.²¹

Kenneth Burke, on the other hand, points out that:

... a physical scientist's relation to the materials involved in the study of motion differs in quality from his relation to his colleagues. He would never think of “petitioning” the objects of his experiments or “arguing with them,” as he would with persons whom he asks to collaborate with him or to judge the results of his experiment. Implicit in these two relations is the distinction between the sheer motion of things and the actions of persons.²²

Each of these views contains premises which seem incompatible with the other. The scientistic view reduces human life by ignoring a key insight into the difference between natural and human history: human actors (consciously and unconsciously) have helped to create history but not Nature: that which humans have made, humans can change. On the other hand, humanists sever humans from their natural origins: human thought and imagination distinguish us from the animal-mineral world. If the scientist tends toward the creation of laws and systems which contain human behavior, the humanist tends to deny the existence of any law or reproducible pattern of human behavior.²³

At first glance, these differences seem insurmountable, but from a wider perspective, these two paradigms complement each other in their very contradiction: they unite in their denial of concrete history. The scientists pose eternal laws; the humanists argue their impossibility. They agree, however, on the whatness over which they disagree—i.e. on the evaluation of human behavior outside history. The scientistic view collapses history into eternal laws—the humanist denies the possibility of history as a process. For the scientist, natural history *is* history, and for the humanist, history has no *Nature*, only uniqueness. For the scientist,

humans are conceptualized according to natural science; for the humanist, human thought is separated from Nature; it is not seen as Nature reflecting upon itself.

The unity of the contradiction between scientific and humanistic sociology lies not only in their rejection of history, but also in their undialectical separation of humans and Nature. The scientific conception of Nature not only reduces humans to the same categories as animals and minerals, it goes on to fragment and objectify Nature, an objectification which accompanies the abolition of the knowing subject. The humanistic conception de-naturalizes humans, thereby depriving Nature of any reflexivity. *These two paradigms unite in their celebration of the domination of Nature*—not only the domination of “external” nature but “inner” human nature as well.²⁴ The “humanistic” denial of Nature in humans was viewed by Adorno and Horkheimer as *the* regressive thrust of the Enlightenment, as a cause for the irrationality of modern society:

In class history, the enmity of the self to sacrifice implied a sacrifice of the self inasmuch as it was paid for by a denial of nature in man for the sake of domination over nonhuman nature and over other men. This very denial, the nucleus of all civilizing rationality, is the germ cell of a proliferating mythic irrationality: with the denial of nature in man not merely the telos of the outward control of nature, but the telos of man’s own life is distorted and defogged. As soon as man discards his awareness that he himself is nature, all the claims for which he keeps himself alive—social progress, the intensification of all his material and spiritual powers, even consciousness itself—are nullified, and the enthronement of the means as an end, which under capitalism is tantamount to open insanity, is already perceptible in the prehistory of subjectivity.²⁵

The domination of external Nature necessarily preceded the domination of human by human for the simple reason that power and the state, social status, prestige, wealth and money are humanly created artificial concerns, concerns which necessarily had as their precondition the satisfaction of our survival needs. In another sense, these two aspects of domination go hand-in-hand: the domination of external Nature has a price: the desensitization of inner Nature, i.e., the banishing of awe at the complex contradictory harmony of the universe through its replacement by awe with techniques aimed at certainty and control.²⁶ As the precondition for “society” to emerge was the overcoming of fragmentary

precapitalist formations, so the precondition for the bifurcation of sociology into positivist and humanist paradigms was the overcoming of “awe” by “fact,” the separation of *Eros* and *Logos*.

At the dawn of social thought, *physis* and *nomos* expressed roughly the same fundamental opposition which today is found between *scientific* and *humanistic*. Aristotle’s development of formal logic stands as a key step in the divorce of *Logos* and *Eros*, in the break between the necessary and useful, on the one side, and the beautiful on the other.²⁷ Plato’s logic was ironic, subversive, and self-contradictory in contrast to Aristotle’s linear and progressive dialectic.²⁸ When the link between *Logos* and *Eros* was broken, the door was open for scientific rationality to emerge as essentially neutral, for theory to be divorced from practice.²⁹ To be sure, the conscious aim of both Plato and Aristotle was the “good,” but Aristotle’s reduction of logic from Plato’s internal subversion of the human mind to the logic of classification of external Nature has served as a basis for the reduction of human progress (the “good”) to scientific progress (the “useful”). Modern scientific progress seems to have taken us (at least the majority in the industrialized countries) to the threshold of freedom from material scarcity. Could it be that the leap from this potential freedom to its actualization necessitates a return to the unity of the “good” and the “useful”? Such a notion may be considered a regression—a return to the past—but it serves the purpose of questioning whether or not genuine human progress can be equated with scientific-technical progress.³⁰

Is it possible that the species has *devolved* over the last twenty centuries? A contrast between Plato and Hobbes is instructive on this point. For Plato, the *polis* was founded for protection of humans from being “devoured by wild beasts.”³¹ For Hobbes, however, the Leviathan was needed for protection against other humans, because of the “war of all men against all men.”

The ways in which the dialectical relationship of humans and Nature is conceptualized is a key to understanding the nuances and orientation of theory, to grasping the cultural universe of the theorist, and to appreciating the ultimate effects of the theory. Humans and Nature, conceived in the form of scientific fact, described by abstract symbols and impersonal adjectives, function in a system of *co-determination*; but humans and Nature, conceived as a living, changing, inseparable and contradictory unity, described in their process of interpenetration and concrete particularity, make the construction of a system problematic (if not impossible)

and assert the essential feature of life as *self-determination*. The differences between these two conceptions are immense. Only the latter allows for the possibility of a qualitatively new species-existence (the leap from “prehistory” to “history,” and the actualization of genuine “species-being”). In this sense, this difference becomes a perspective from which to view the ways in which theorists reify the given reality, and to uncover ways in which existing categories of life are posited as eternal. According to Jürgen Habermas:

The resurrection of nature cannot be *logically* conceived within materialism. . . . The unity of the social subject and nature that comes into being “in industry” cannot eradicate the autonomy of nature and the *complete otherness* that is lodged in its facticity. (my emphasis)³²

Certainly it has not always been the case that Nature has been “completely other,” since at the beginning of the human species, we emerged from Nature. Nonetheless, Habermas asserts this position in the name of logic even though the logic of Hegel considered the enunciation of an “other” as the first step toward its domination. Habermas’s position is based on a model of the human actor which considers the unconscious, following Freud, as “inner foreign territory”³³; and he maintains what seems to be an overly rational (i.e. ego-oriented) ideal for human perfection.³⁴

He criticized Marcuse’s notion of a “New Technology,” one not based on the domination of Nature but one which conceives of Nature as a partner in life, as one “which will not stand to *logical* scrutiny.”³⁵ In each case, Habermas argues on the basis of *logic* that Nature must be an “eternal” other. Isn’t it possible that as in a love relationship, the “other” can simultaneously become “self”?

Nature is an eternal other from the point of view of *rationalistic* understanding, specifically from a conception of rationality which excludes intuition as one of its forms. German speculative philosophy, the tradition from which Habermas derives his thinking, could never pose the subject without the object. (Nor could it be one with the natural world; indeed it was its incessant criticism of empiricism which informed its development.) A *wholistic* conception of rationality, on the other hand, would include the forms of rationality (instrumental, hermeneutic, critical) of the right side of the brain as well as the intuitive movements of the left side.³⁶

There is another question we would like to raise with regard to Habermas. Much of his work is concerned with the explanation of the distinction between instrumental reason (reason oriented to technical ends), hermeneutic reason (reason oriented to explanation), and critical reason (reason oriented to emancipation). His treatment of these three categories of reason, however, seems to deny the possibility of their simultaneity (and in this sense is derived from Kant rather than Heidegger).

In contrast to Habermas, Marcuse opens the possibility of a liberated human relationship with Nature. The present technical domination of Nature could conceivably be replaced by a “New Technology” which would preserve, foster, and release the potentialities of Nature.³⁷ There is a deeper level at which Marcuse imagines this possibility; namely, that it may be precisely the natural essence of humans, the instinct for freedom, which drives humans toward liberation and perfection.³⁸ In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse notes the anthropological description of Arapesh culture as a “fundamentally different experience of the world; nature is taken, not as an object of domination and exploitation, but as a ‘garden’ which can grow while making human beings grow.”³⁹ He goes on to discuss this question not in terms of the past, but in terms of the future of mature civilization.⁴⁰ He imagines a future where work can become play, where *Logos* and *Eros* are reunited, where Nature and humans once more lovingly embrace each other. Marcuse accomplishes this reunion of Nature and humans not on the basis of a positivistic dialectics of Nature (following Engels). Indeed, Marcuse has argued that:

Only human existence and all the objects comprehended, formed, created and animated by “being there” (*Dasein*) in its Existence, are historical according to their being. . . . The nonhistorical are according to their essence the objects of the mathematical and physical sciences. . . . The dividing line between that which is considered historical and nonhistorical being is thus ontological. . . . Dialectical being is historical being. Not all being is dialectical.⁴¹

His view of the relationship between the human-species and Nature is not merely a dualism. As he earlier maintained, “The whole process whereby nature becomes history is part of the primary character of existence and belongs to the fundamental structure of historicity.”⁴² From this perspective, it becomes possible to grasp a fundamental insight into revolution by contrasting it with evolution. The process of evolution

is defined by Nature, but in revolution, *Nature becomes history*; human beings, at essence natural and simultaneously the essence of natural evolution, leap from unplanned evolution (“prehistory”) into the realm of genuine “history” through revolution. From such a perspective, it follows that these *leaps* define the essential nature of revolution and of social movements: the leap from unreflexive survival and adaptation (“prehistory”) to consciously determined “history.”

From such a perspective, it is possible to explain once again why both scientific and humanistic sociology have been unable to comprehend revolutions. Scientific views pose categories of social reality modeled on Nature as eternal; there is no room for humans in “prehistory” to transform themselves and the whole organization of society and make the leap into “history.” Humanistic views, on the other hand, contain a model of humans as already distinct from Nature; they have no eyes to see the leap from “prehistory” to “history,” since to their eyes, human history already exists.

FACT AND VALUE

What unites both scientific and humanistic sociology today is their agreement on the need for a “value-free” social science. In the case of scientific sociology, the “facts” are “given” in the external world, and the facts generated correspond to that world. So, for example, Durkheim’s proposition that “social facts are things” is nothing but the carrying over of the commodity form to the analysis of social reality.⁴³ Knowledge thereby becomes a “thing” which can be bought and sold in the marketplace. Such a sociology not only reflects the practice of society, but more often than not, it serves to reproduce it.

Modern “value-free” sociology, in its “humanistic” case, assumes that human values can be made external to the process of inquiry. It assumes that it is possible (and desirable) to separate research from values, knowledge from action, and theory from practice. To divorce “fact” and “value” is to bifurcate thought, but reality, as Lukács noted, can only be understood *as a totality*:

. . . but reality can only be understood and penetrated as a totality, and only a subject which is itself a totality is capable of this penetration. . . . It was left to Marx to make the concrete discovery of ‘truth as the subject’ and hence to establish the unity of theory and practice.⁴⁴

The bifurcation of fact and value has its roots in Aristotle’s formal logic, but it was *explicitly* systematized by Machiavelli. He wrote *The Prince* in the hope that weak Italy could become strong, and in the interests of princely domination, Machiavelli wrote:

But my intention being to write something of use to those who understand, it appears to be more proper to go to the real truth of the matter than to its imagination; and many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality; for how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. . . . Therefore it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, *to learn how not to be good* . . .⁴⁵ (my emphasis)

In modern times the idea of a “value-free” sociology was enunciated by Max Weber, who also lived in a weak nation which desired strength. Weber maintained that although values were relevant in choosing a *topic* for scientific inquiry, the process of inquiry itself demanded a suspension of value judgments. Weber’s views have been the subject of intense debate, and it would be difficult to summarize his views on method in a few pages.⁴⁶ It does seem, however, that the modern reading of Weber takes him far afield from his own statements, as Herbert Gamberg has pointed out:

Weber’s original exposition has undergone a rather marked transmogrification in recent times. Owing to the professionalization of sociology and its separation from the major current of intellectual life, Weber’s emphasis on a problem’s relevance to value has changed to an emphasis on its relevance to the discipline. . . . Weber is now interpreted (he is seldom read anymore) to mean that objectivity is best guaranteed if the researcher has no moral or political interest in the subject he [or she] is studying.⁴⁷

The subtlety of Weber’s position on values seems to be largely unrecognized. His critique of scientism was based on the view that there is no absolutely “objective” scientific analysis of culture, and further that: “An *attitude of moral indifference* has no connection with *scientific* ‘objectivity.’”⁴⁸ On the other hand, Weber attempted to distinguish the cognitive from the normative, to differentiate “knowledge of what ‘is,’”

from “knowledge of what ‘should be.’”⁴⁹ In his view, “An empirical science cannot tell anyone what he *should* do—but rather what he *can* do. . . .”⁵⁰

It is here that Weber distinguished ends from means. In so doing, he attempted to “free” sociology from “value-laden” ends and ground it as a scientific means for understanding human action. The practical effect of such a position, however, is to make science “free” to accept values imposed on it from the outside.⁵¹ The notion of “value-freedom” is itself a “value-laden” concept, and the interests served by it are those of modern scientifically-oriented industrial civilization.⁵² Although he developed a comprehensive typology of the forms of authority, Weber did not include scientific authority in his list. He seemed quite unaware that science could be a form of domination.

Historically, “value-free” social scientists have not been so free of values. Pitrim Sorokin, for example, took great pains to assert his neutrality in *The Sociology of Revolution*:

The phenomena of revolution are very exotic and romantic—therefore the investigator must be especially prosaic; he has to study with the methods and purposes of a naturalist. The purpose of this book is neither to blame, praise, apotheosize nor to condemn revolution. It is only to study revolution in all its reality.⁵³

This passage stands in Chapter 1, entitled “The Perversion of Human Behavior in Revolution.”

Gustav Le Bon similarly spent considerable space asserting his scientific posture in his book, *The Crowd*:

I have endeavored to examine the difficult problem presented by crowds in a purely scientific manner—that is by making an effort to proceed with method, and without being influenced by opinions, theories, and doctrines. This, I believe, is the only mode of arriving at the discovery of some few particles of truth, especially when dealing, as is the case here, with a question that is the subject of impassioned controversy. A man of science bent on verifying a phenomenon is not called upon to concern himself with the interests his verification may hurt.⁵⁴

The reader need only continue a few pages to find Le Bon comparing crowds to worms:

In consequence of the purely destructive nature of their power, crowds act like those microbes which hasten the dissolution of enfeebled or dead bodies.

Max Weber, the most “value-free” of all sociologists, called for members of the radical Left to be sent to the madhouse, the zoo, or the firing squad.⁵⁵

In theory, value-free sociology asserts a superiority to “value-laden” research, but in practice, the effect of value-free sociology in a highly specialized industrial society is to provide the “control center” with bits and pieces of information that can be used to maintain the social order as it exists. That “value-free” sociology succumbs to the control center was demonstrated in horrifying ways during the Vietnam war. Using “value-free” methods, Ithiel de Sola Pool analyzed questionnaire results from interrogations of captured prisoners in order to determine the motivational sources of enemy actions.⁵⁶ Samuel Huntington helped design the “forced urbanization” of Vietnam: the saturation bombing of the countryside which forced hundreds of thousands of peasants into the U.S. controlled urban areas and “strategic hamlets”—a “value-free” version of Nazi concentration camps.

How is it possible that “value-free” social science could come to these undescribably horrible deeds? To some, this question should be answered according to the nature of the particular personalities involved, but what is really at stake here is much more. If, in the name of “value-free science,” such atrocities have been committed, it is also because “value-free” science has taken on a larger-than-life meaning; i.e., it has become a belief system which obscures its own impact. For centuries, murder, pillage and rape have been committed in the name of god: in the secularized twentieth century, science has taken on the function of god—an external all-knowing solution to all problems. The dualistic form of the religious world view which demands a higher authority has been realized in the secularized scientific ideology of “value-free truth.”

Comte was quite explicit in his belief that he had . . .

. . . discovered a great fundamental law, to which the mind is subjected by an invariable necessity . . . each branch of our knowledge passes in succession through three different theoretical states: the theological or fictitious state, the metaphysical or abstract state, and the scientific or positive state.⁵⁷

He believed sociologists in the scientific state would play a role analogous to that of priests in the theological state. A recent speech by a president of the Pacific Sociological Association did not differ.

We can anticipate a tremendous period of growth. . . . Who knows, before the end of the century we may finally assume our predicted place in Comte's hierarchy of the sciences.⁵⁸

In their call for "value-free" sociology, scientists are making commands similar to those of church in medieval society.⁵⁹ Already in the theory positivism—its abolition of the conscious human subject of knowledge and its reification of objective fact—is contained its practical effect: the elimination of morality and the reduction of human reality. Writing after World War II, Horkheimer put it this way:

The death factories in Europe cast as much significant light on the relations between science and cultural progress as does the manufacturing of stockings out of air. . . . It must be observed here that the division of all human truth into science and humanities is itself a social product that was hypostatized by the organization of the universities and ultimately by some philosophical schools, particularly those of Rickert and Max Weber. The so-called practical world has no place for truth, and therefore splits it to conform it to its own image: the physical sciences are endowed with so-called objectivity, but emptied of human content; the humanities preserve the human content, but only as ideology, at the expense of truth.⁶⁰

Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas have similarly interpreted modern science and technology as forces of social domination and as ideology.⁶¹ In Marcuse's view, it is the "value-free" character of science which makes it ideology:

. . . it is precisely its neutral character which relates objectivity to a specific historical subject—namely, to the consciousness that prevails in the society by which and for which neutrality is established.⁶²

It is possible that "value-free" science contains within it the seeds of a "New Science." After all, modern science does rely on the individual mind for its development. Such an optimistic interpretation of science (and revolution) was put forth by Howard Mumford Jones:

The assumption of science is that inner vision is intellectually dependable . . . modern science tries to meet the implied diffi-

culty by dealing only with what has become, not with what is becoming. . . . What the two great revolutions, American and French, left to modern man was therefore not stability but striving . . . a human being in whom there is usually some degree of the good, is of necessity conscious, and, in his struggles to live, knowingly or half-knowingly aware that there is rectitude or righteousness somewhere. This emphasis upon striving is what separates the nineteenth from the eighteenth century with its status society, and is the principal legacy of the revolutionary years to the world of the West.⁶³

What Jones did not say is that the twentieth century—particularly its scientific and social theory—has been a period of the redefinition of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful to technical expertise, instrumental fact, and "the elegance of mathematics." Jones deals with "modern man" in the abstract, not in the concrete world of today. There exists today—in contrast to the *whole of history*—an entirely new balance in the relationship of human beings and Nature: the human species is now the domineering factor, not the dominated one. The accumulation of technical power over Nature which capitalism (and the French and American revolutions) has made possible means today that the "striving" of the species, technically at least, can result in the nuclear annihilation of all life on earth. The accumulation of the technical progress of the industrial revolution (the accumulation of "dead labor") and the breakthrough of the two scientific-technological revolutions (transistor and cybernetic) of the twentieth century, taken together, have resulted in the change from quantity to quality: from a situation of human powerlessness and awe in the face of Nature, we stand today as conquerors of Nature and hold our technology in awe. The realistic alternatives posed by the species' technical "progress" are fundamentally those of life versus death; nuclear war, ecological catastrophe, blatant barbarism in the Third World and its "refined" counterpart in the metropolises, on the one side, versus disarmament, a New Technology, fundamental changes in the goals of the whole organization of society, and the creation of a structural and human Oneness with all life, on the other side. "Human striving" may result in either of these alternatives: neither is inevitable.

The alternatives posed today by the development of the species means that the current dilemma of sociology may begin to be unraveled through a recognition that every social researcher and every theory brings with it a human perspective and serves certain interests. Those who

choose to continue the quest for objectivity should honestly seek to make apparent the values which motivate and inform the research process. Such an honest appraisal could make conscious the real interests served, interests which are often hidden behind the apparent neutrality of science.

If, as argued in this chapter, "value-free" sociology, in one way or another, serves to reproduce the values and stability of industrial civilization as it has evolved, critical sociology takes on a different purpose: the enhancement and protection of all life. In one form or another, this cognitive interest has consistently guided critical theory. Habermas is quite explicit in this matter:

The interest behind the examination of crisis tendencies in late- and post-capitalist class societies is in exploring the possibilities of a 'post-modern' society—that is, a historically new principle of organization and not a different name for the surprising vigor of an aged capitalism. . . . In contrast to systems analysis, then, critique is related to the consciousness of addressees susceptible of enlightenment.⁶⁴

Or as Marcuse put it, critical theory is based on . . .

. . . the judgment that human life is worth living, or rather can be and ought to be made worth living. This judgment underlies all intellectual effort; it is the *a priori* of social theory, and its rejection (which is perfectly logical) rejects theory itself.⁶⁵

If there is hope for sociology to emerge from its current state of uncertainty, it is ultimately contained in the emergence of the human species from its still uncertain existence.

NOTES

1. C.W. Mills (ed.), *Images of Man: The Classical Tradition in Sociological Thinking* (New York: Braziller, 1960) pp. 1-17.
2. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 345.
3. Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive* (Paris, 1908), Vol. 4, p. 132.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 618. I have used the translation in J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 77.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
7. Quoted from *Aspects of Sociology*, Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 4.
8. As defined by Bluntschli's *Deutsche Staats-Wörterbuch* (1859), "society" is a "concept of the Third Estate."
9. See *Aspects of Sociology*, op. cit. pp. 37-53.
10. G. Hegel, *Reason in History* (Liberal Arts Press, 1953), p. 68.
11. Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 110.
12. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1970) Vol. 1, p. 75.
13. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), p. 135.
14. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 15.
15. *The Poverty of Philosophy* op. cit., p. 112.
16. In the *German Ideology* (Progress Publishers, 1976), Marx analyzed both the rise and fall of the world system. See pages 58-59.

17. *The Poverty of Philosophy* op. cit., p. 115. In this book, Marx critiques the theories of the anarchist Proudhon. His observation seems to apply equally well to Comte.
18. In Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1970), paradigms are defined as "some accepted examples of actual scientific practice-examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together—which provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research." p. 10. For an indirect critique of Kuhn's notion of paradigm as existing outside history, see Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) pp. 195-6. The use of the word "paradigm" may presuppose a parallel structure to natural and social science (a presupposition I do not wish to encourage), but I will use it tentatively for explanatory purposes alone.
19. Randall Collins, *Conflict Sociology* (New York: Academic Press, 1975).
20. J. Gusfield, "Historical Problematiques and Sociological Fields: American Liberalism and the Study of Social Movements," *Research in Sociology of Knowledge, Sciences and Art*, Vol. I, 1978, p. 122.
21. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), p. IX.
22. Kenneth Burke, "Dramatism," *Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, 1968, p. 448.
23. Collins, op. cit., p. 42. Also see Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949) especially pp. 164-188.
24. William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974).
25. Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 54.
26. Alan Blum, *Theorizing* (London: Heinemann, 1974).
27. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1333a: 31-2; *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, McKeon (ed.) (Random House, 1941), p. 1298; also see Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 130; Blum, op. cit., p. 108.
28. Blum, op. cit., p. 4.
29. *One Dimensional Man*, op. cit., p. 147; Herbert Marcuse, *Negations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 88-89.
30. Herbert Marcuse, "Progress and Freud's Theory of Instincts," *Five Lectures* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) pp. 28-43.
31. Plato, *Protagoras* 322b in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (eds.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 319.
32. J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) pp. 32-33.
33. J. Habermas, "On Systematically Distorted Communication," *Inquiry*, Vol. 13, p. 207.
34. J. Habermas, "Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence," *Inquiry*, Vol. 13, pp. 360-75.
35. J. Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972) p. 88.
36. See *Knowledge and Human Interests*, op. cit., especially pp. 301-317; W. Ten Houten and C. Kaplan, *Science and Its Mirror Image* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
37. *One Dimensional Man*, op. cit., p. 236.
38. Herbert Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) pp. 7-22.
39. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), p. 216.
40. Also see "Obsolescence of the Freudian Concept of Man," *Five Lectures*, op. cit., p. 56.
41. Herbert Marcuse, "On the Problem of the Dialectic," *Telos* 27, Spring 1976, pp. 21-22.

42. Herbert Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," *Telos* 4, Fall 1969, p. 31.
43. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1964) p. 14. Chapter two begins: "The first and most fundamental rule is: *Consider social facts as things.*"
44. George Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1973) p. 39.
45. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Mentor Books, 1952) p. 84.
46. Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, op. cit.; for an intense and interesting exchange on Weber, see *Max Weber and Sociology Today*, Otto Stammer (ed.) (Harper and Row, 1972).
47. Herbert Gamberg, "Science and Scientism: The State of Sociology," *The American Sociologist*, May 1969, p. 115.
48. Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, op. cit., p. 60.
49. Ibid., p. 51.
50. Ibid., p. 54.
51. Herbert Marcuse, "Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber," *Negations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 201-226.
52. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory* op. cit., p. 191.
53. Pitrim A. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution* (J.P. Lippincott, 1925), p. 11.
54. Gustav Le Bon, *The Crowd* (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p. 3.
55. *Max Weber and Sociology Today*, op. cit., p. 138.
56. The unity of theory and practice is clear here since Pool's theory must obliterate the human construction of facticity. Methodologically, the positivistic construction of a fact based on numerical measure relies on the judgment of the human being who assigns the number to reality (the coders). This problematique is resolved by Ithiel De Sola Pool through the invention of the "human computer"—i.e., by superimposing the qualities of a machine onto the researcher. The interchangeability of coders is assumed (in much the same way that instruments of mass production use spare parts), and the meaning of the numbers are assumed to be self-evident according to common sense. Ithiel De Sola Pool, *Trends in Content Analysis* (Illinois, 1959). For a further critique, see Aaron Cicourel, *Method and Measurement in Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1964). For a methodological critique of positivism, see Chapter one of this book.
57. A. Comte, *The Nature and Importance of Positive Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 1.
58. Carl Backman quoted in J. Gusfield, "Buddy, Can You Paradigm," *Pacific Sociological Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Jan. 1979, p. 4.
59. Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 91.
60. Ibid., p. 75.
61. J. Habermas, "Technology and Science as 'Ideology,'" in *Toward A Rational Society*, op. cit., pp. 81-122.
62. H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, op. cit., p. 156.
63. Howard Mumford Jones, *Romanticism and Revolution* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 429-30.
64. J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), pp. 17, 28; C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 185.
65. H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, op. cit., p. X.