

SOCIAL CONFLICT

TOWARDS A METHODOLOGICAL

AND THEORETICAL POSITION

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Glynda Volbrecht, 1973.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE

This study rests on the assumption that the methods of science embodied in the general canons of the scientific enterprise (particularly in relation to theory formulation and validation) constitute the realm of theoretical practice from which to develop a methodological and theoretical position relevant to the phenomenon of social conflict.

In its historical development every scientific discipline has been faced with the problem of delineating its field of inquiry and giving explanation to major aspects within its particular field. No scientific discipline can claim to give a 'total' explanation of physical, social and cultural reality. To state this is to state a truism, but this in no way implies an easy solution to the problem — the problem of delineating a field of study and of giving adequate explanation to the aspects of reality with which the discipline concerns itself.

For sociology the problem is two-fold: methodological and theoretical. In short, the 'How' and the 'What' of sociology.

If the sociologist accepts the necessity of the construction of an adequate (as opposed to speculative or piecemeal) explanation then he/she is faced with the problem of constructing a scientific explanation. This constitutes the methodological problematic.⁽¹⁾ Assuming, that the sociologist accepts that he/she is confronting social (as opposed to physical or cultural) reality, what theoretical assumptions, concepts, propositions are required to develop a scientific theory of a particular aspect of social reality? This constitutes the theoretical problematic.

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1. The word 'problematic' is used interchangeably with 'problem.' The problems dealt with in this study are seen in terms of the methodological and theoretical framework of sociology. Hence methodological and theoretical problematic of social conflict (within the framework of sociology viewed as a scientific discipline).

The use of the term 'problem' or 'problematic' is not arbitrary. There are no clear-cut agreements with regard to the methodological and theoretical positions a sociologist should or can adopt. At both levels the sociologist encounters problems and enters not one but many courts of appeal. This study as a point of departure will be concerned only with the position which concedes the relevance of the general canons of the scientific method. The problems are therefore related to the applicability of the general canons of the scientific method. More specifically, the problems concern theory formulation and validation. (This will be fully discussed in subsequent chapters.)

The canons of the scientific enterprise clearly include the development of a theory with a more or less explicit methodological and theoretical position. The development of a theory is seen as a prerequisite of a scientific explanation of social conflict. This involves the acceptance of theoretical activity or what is termed theoretical practice,⁽²⁾ as vital to an explanation of the phenomenon of social conflict (assuming that the theoretical activity takes place within the framework of the scientific enterprise).

There may of course be other approaches to methodological and theoretical problems concerning social conflict. For example, some may claim that it is not possible a priori to place sociology in any scientific methodological or theoretical court of appeal. It is not possible to be engaged in theoretical practice on the grounds that social reality can only be understood by 'experiencing' it.

Parsons (1968, p.28, Vol. I) has said:

It is fundamental that there is no empirical knowledge which is not in some sense and to some degree conceptually formed. All talk of "pure sense data," "raw experience" or the unformed stream of consciousness is not descriptive of actual experience, but a matter of methodological abstraction In other words in Professor Henderson's phrase empirical observation is "in terms of a conceptual scheme." This is true not only of sophisticated scientific observation but of the simplest common sense statements of fact. Conceptual schemes in this sense are inherent in the structure of language

2. Piaget, J. (Structuralism, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London 1971, p.125) refers to Louis Althusser's point that the development of a scientific theory constitutes theoretical practice. In other words, the activity by which scientific knowledge is produced.

The claim that 'experiencing' social reality does not involve conceptualization rests on a misconception of the nature of human experience and language. All experience is to some degree conceptually formed. To claim that theoretical practice is not legitimate rests on a misconception of what language entails, whether scientific statements or 'common-sense' statements. Further, it is not the function of a scientific statement to reproduce experience.

To deny that observation of social reality (which amounts to theoretical practice) is legitimate, denies the nature of human experience and human action itself. There is no reason to believe that "raw experience" does not entail observation. Parsons (1968, P.723 Vol. II) maintains that:

Eliminating observation of the facts as an important element in the development of the theory of action really amounts to eliminating action itself, For action itself in the relevant sense is not conceivable without some degree of correctness in observation of facts.

To assert the importance of theoretical practice and observation does not deny the relation between theory or observation and concrete reality. The scientific adequacy of a theory rests on its confirmation by empirical fact, unless there be a purely fortuitous harmony between the outline of the theory and the facts to which it refers.

A claim which has received considerable attention in Western sociology particularly through C. Wright Mills' (1970) emphasis is that of a sociology geared to political and social issues. This claim is vitally important with regard to the relevance of sociology in view of the crises faced in Western Society.

However, there is no guarantee that a 'relevant' sociology is automatically an adequately scientific sociology. This is not to be construed as an excuse for what C. Wright Mills (1970, Chapters 2 and 3) has called "Abstracted Empiricism" or "Grand Theory" but as a caution against empty polemic which admits of no confirmation or disconfirmation by empirical evidence.

Sociologists cannot assume that "anything goes" or "you pays your money and you takes your choice" ⁽³⁾ according to which there are alleged to be no serious scientific criteria by which to judge an explanation's adequacy. Though it may be necessary, it is simply not sufficient to claim that a sociologist should be aware or 'reflexive' in Gouldner's (1971) sense. To claim as he does for a "Reflexive Sociology" which makes the sociologist aware of his role and transforms his existence, is no substitution for the claim that if sociology is to be relevant as a scientific discipline it cannot ignore the criteria necessary for an adequate explanation of social reality. To say that it is important to study social conflict is not relevant without an adequate explanation of social conflict.

In short, if sociologists do not know 'How' to study social reality or even 'What' they are studying it is difficult to conceive of sociology as becoming relevant with regard to social and political problems in Western Society. This is not to claim that action may not be relevant without a coherent theoretical framework, but that in some cases theoretical activity is vital to social and political activity. (Of course, if we deny conceptualization and observation then 'raw experience' (regardless of the misconceptions on which it is based) becomes the only 'valid' ⁽⁴⁾ method of explanation of social and political action.)

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3. Parsons ("An Outline of the Social System" in Theories of Society, eds., Parsons et al, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1965, p. 79) suggests that sociologists in presenting a theoretical view avoid "... the Charybdis of that formless eclecticism ... according to which "anything goes," or "you pays your money and you takes your choice."
 4. The fact that 'raw experience' becomes the only operative approach does not therefore make it valid in the scientific sense.

It is impossible within the scope of this study to consider in detail those arguments which deny the sociologist or for that matter anyone, the recognition that it is possible to work within the scientific frame of reference in order to give an explanation of social reality or the phenomenon of social conflict. The arguments usually rest on the misconception of the nature of social reality or of the function of scientific explanation. It must be restated that no science aims at a 'total' explanation or a 'reproduction' of social reality. Parsons (1965, p. 70) strongly asserts:

Science is not a photographic reproduction of reality, but is a highly selective mode of organizing man's orientation to reality.

As stated previously this study rests on the assumption that the methods of science embodied in the general canons of the scientific enterprise (particularly in relation to theory formulation and validation), constitute the realm of theoretical practice from which to develop a methodological and theoretical position relevant to the phenomenon of social conflict. The canons of the scientific enterprise though necessary are not seen to be in themselves capable of yielding a 'total' explanation of social conflict. It is maintained that if sociologists choose to be engaged in the scientific enterprise, one aspect of which is theoretical practice, there are certain criteria from which the sociologist can approach the particular methodological problems — the 'How', and the theoretical problems — the 'What', with regard to the phenomenon of social conflict. Otherwise, and unfortunately, we fall the victims of formless eclecticism and speculative confusion in which "anything goes" or "you pays your money and you takes your choice."

Bottomore (1970, p. 138) remarked that sociologists are far from possessing an adequate theory of social conflict at the present time. Lewis Coser (1968, p. 26) suggests that while the early American sociologists recognized the importance of social conflict, the sociologists of the 1950's tended to neglect it as a major area of significance or dismissed it as a purely disruptive phenomenon. Jessie Bernard (1950, pp.11-16) lamented:

Where is the modern sociology of conflict ... since the time of such early pioneers as Small, Park and Ross little progress has been made ... American sociologists in recent years have been content to leave the scientific study of conflict where Simmel left it.

This is not to say that there was no interest at all in the phenomenon of social conflict after the period in which the founders of sociology and the classical nineteenth - century writers made their studies. There has been a strong tradition of 'conflict' sociologists in the Soviet Union, Poland, Germany, and France. Generally speaking in the mid-fifties and in the sixties there was a rediscovery of the significance of conflict — a belated awakening to the character of this century, with its two world wars, its revolutionary movements, its national liberation struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and its student rebellions.

The ubiquity of conflict and its importance in shaping human affairs is obvious. From the social scientist however, more is expected than a simple acknowledgement of fact. Sociology must be able to furnish an adequate explanation of the historical causes, the effects and the variations of conflict. The development of an adequate theory is at times inhibited by the arguments of a 'consensus' (integration) versus a 'conflict' (coercion) approach to the study of social conflict. Coser (1970, p. 9) makes a relevant point when he maintains:

I do not think that it can be shown that factors that make for societal conflict are more "fundamental" elements of the historical and social processes than those creating an underlying harmony, nor are events and behaviour that contribute to harmony more "essential" elements of social life.

Coser agrees with Robin Williams Jr. that actual societies are held together by consensus, by interdependence and by social coercion and the task of social analysis is to show how social structures and processes operating in these ways can be predicted and explained. An analysis of social conflict does not therefore supplant analysis of other social processes.

The task of this study is to examine some of the methodological and theoretical problems relevant to the analysis of social conflict,

to develop a methodological and theoretical position which forms the basis of a general theory of social conflict. Some of the issues it will be apparent apply generally to sociological analysis whether concerned with the phenomenon of social conflict or any other social process. It can be argued that the approach to social conflict should be more restricted, dealing directly with specific problems related to social conflict itself. However, when sociologists are engaged with the analysis of social conflict there are certain basic principles (methodological and theoretical) that are common to theoretical activity in sociology. It is the opinion of the author of this study that the sociologist studying social conflict cannot omit to grapple with the fundamental issues that concern the discipline of sociology in general. For the possibility of developing new insights rests on the ability of the sociologist to come to terms with the nagging problems that restrict the development of an adequate explanation whether of social conflict or other social processes.

This study therefore deals with the methodological and theoretical issues which have a bearing on social conflict. The issues serve to locate the problem of explanation of social conflict, to define the framework within which the problems are posed and to develop an outline of a theory of social conflict. This task clearly includes the necessity of developing an explicit methodological and theoretical position. Only by the concern with fundamental problems is it possible to reach a position to examine what the process of social conflict involves, what the definition of social conflict is and what an adequate theory entails (unless there be a purely fortuitous harmony between social conflict and an explanation thereof). If the importance of methodological issues is denied an easy concession to piecemeal speculation is made. If the importance of theoretical issues is denied an easy concession to formless eclecticism is made.

The theoretical activity of this study is aimed at developing a sociology of social conflict and at illustrating that the commitment to a systematic explanation is by no means devoid of the problems which confront sociological analysis in general.

OUTLINE OF STUDY

This study, taking as a point of departure the importance of theoretical activity as included in the canons of the scientific method, is concerned with developing a methodological and theoretical position with regard to the phenomenon of social conflict.

SECTION A: (Chapters II and III)

Outlines the methodological criteria and assumptions adopted for the purposes of giving an explanation to social conflict.

CHAPTER II deals generally with the methodological problems related to a sociological study of social conflict. The problems discussed are relevant to many of the methodological issues which concern the sociologist in general whether interested in the phenomenon of social conflict or any other social process. These problems are so fundamental that it would be almost impertinent for the sociologist studying methodological problems in relation to social conflict to ignore them.

CHAPTER III deals with the specific methodological position adopted for the purpose of this study. The position adopted is closely linked to the problems discussed in Chapter II.

SECTION B: (Chapters IV and V)

Outlines the theoretical criteria, assumptions, concepts and propositions relevant to a sociological explanation of social conflict. This attempt will have to be judged against the methodological position adopted.

CHAPTER IV deals generally with the theoretical problems related to social conflict in terms of the Voluntaristic Postulate, and focuses on analysis at the levels of the Unit Action System and the Social Action System. A definition of social conflict is suggested and the process of conflict itself is explained.

CHAPTER V deals with an outline of a general theory of social conflict and represents a conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

(1) A COMMON LOGIC OF JUSTIFICATION

The distinction made between methodological and theoretical problems is intentional. Although both problematics imply theoretical activity, it is maintained that sociologists do not have their 'own' methodology in contrast to other sciences. Sociologists may be confronted in some cases with methodological problems arising from their particular field of inquiry (although even this is disputed by Nagel (1968) who asserts that the same logical canons are applicable to those sociologists who propose a subjective logic of inquiry and justification). However, the fact that certain methodological problems are encountered does not necessitate a claim for a separate logic of justification ⁽⁵⁾ or a non-scientific method of inquiry. (Non-Scientific implying methods which do not have recourse to logical canons inherent in scientific formulations.) Method or methodology of a science is according to Rudner (1966, p. 5):

...the rationale on which it bases its acceptance or rejection of hypothesis or theories.

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5. The logic of justification refers to the logic of scientific inquiry, the rationale on which it bases its acceptance or rejection of theories, hypotheses, etc. In this study the logic of justification and the logic of validation are used interchangeably. In the arguments relating to methodological separatism it is important not to confuse the context of justification with the context of discovery (that area of empirical inquiry). We do not infer from the context of empirical inquiry a thesis relating to the logic whereby a theory or hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The validation logic relating to a theory is independent of a theory's substantive concerns.

To say that all sciences share a common logic of justification is to make the claim that sociology shares the applicability to its discipline the logic inherent in scientific formulations. In other words to place sociology in the scientific methodological court of appeal, where methodology is defined according to van Zyl Slabbert (1973. p. 6):

... as that area of study which has as its primary aim inquiry into the logic of scientific formulations.

Methodology defined in this way has particular relevance to theory construction and concept formation, the adequacy of which rests on the criteria of description, explanation and prediction. Therefore, when the phenomenon of social conflict is being examined with a view to the development of a theory, it is subject to a common logic of justification inherent in scientific formulations. Further, the adequacy of such a theory rests on its descriptive, explanatory and predictive power.

The problems related to theory construction are discussed in terms of the claims made for partial formalization.

(2) PARTIAL FORMALIZATION

Assuming the importance of theoretical abstraction for theoretical activity, theory is seen to be a vital component of scientific knowledge. Without theory descriptions become arbitrary points of discussion, the possibility of adequate explanation is reduced and without adequate explanation, prediction becomes difficult.

The purpose of a theory of social conflict is to reduce the reign of arbitrary and piecemeal categories of description and prediction. If we agree that the aim of science is according to van Zyl Slabbert (1973, p. 9),

... the systematic accumulation of knowledge so that the occurrence of phenomena can be described, predicted and explained,

then the notion of "systematic accumulation" clearly includes the role of theory.

Rudner (1966, p. 10) defines theory as:

... a systematically related set of statements, including some law-like generalizations, that is empirically testable.

The difficulties with regard to the development of a scientific theory of social conflict relate to the criteria necessary for systematization, law-like generalization, and propositions that admit of empirical testability.

- (i) Systematization refers to the necessity of logical integration of the concepts and propositions in a theory. It is an ideal of science to connect together in logical relations the concepts and propositions embodying whatever knowledge is acquired. Parsons (1965, p. 32) suggests:

The ideal ... is a system of propositions so related that their logical interdependence is complete, so that all the propositions in the system can be rigorously derived from a set of primary postulates and definitions.

Full formalization in theory of social conflict is an ideal. If this is applied as a necessary criterion the attempts at theory construction will be severely inhibited. Rudner (1966, p. 11) suggests that partial formalization is a legitimate goal:

In practice, to be sure, only a few theories achieve full formalization (i.e., are formulated as completely articulated deductive systems) and, indeed, there are reasons that cast doubt on whether attempts at full formulation need always be good strategy, particularly in those sciences where our knowledge is relatively tentative and restricted and where our uncertainty about the precise meaning and 'centrality' of frequently used concepts is marked. The overwhelming majority of extant scientific theories in the social sciences are not at present susceptible of fruitful or easy full formulation.

- (ii) Law-like generalization is not to be confused with a naive form of deterministic laws. The logically incoherent assumption of randomly distributed concepts must be replaced with the view that for the purposes of explanation of social conflict, generalizations are organized in such a way as to assume that under certain necessary conditions the tendency for the occurrence of social conflict can be characterized by law-like generalizations. This in no way implies the reduction of social conflict to deterministic laws. Rudner (1966, pp. 90-91) suggests that:

Perhaps the most important source of confusion attending the use of 'deterministic' has been the failure to recognize that to call a theory deterministic is to say something about that theory's logical properties, broadly speaking, but nothing whatever about that theory's truth — and hence nothing whatever about its degree of certitude.

The quest for systematic explanation requires that inquiry be directed to relations of dependence between things. Law-like generalizations therefore consist of a formulation of the conditions under which events occur, by ascertaining the repeatable patterns or relations of dependence in which these events stand to one another.

The construction of law-like generalizations relates to prediction. Science is not based on the premise that perfect prediction is possible only that law-like generalizations have predictive power if events are related together and, that if certain necessary conditions are present, it is possible to make predictions with regard to the occurrence of a particular phenomenon such as social conflict.

At this point it is clear that systematic organization and law-like generalizations are necessary to the aims of science — description, explanation and prediction. If social conflict is to be studied within the framework of science, systematization and the construction of law-like generalizations are then important to a scientific theory of social conflict.

(iii) Empirical testability refers generally to the principle of operationalism. To what extent do we employ this principle with regard to our concepts and propositions in such a way as to meet traditional empiricist demands for testability? Rudner (1966, p. 21) suggests:

... that one way of meeting the demand of empirical testability on any candidate concept that we are considering introducing into a theory is to introduce it through definition by primitives which, themselves, are known to have empirically testable reference. Thus, an important by-product of the experimental testability criterion for a set of primitives lies in the fact that any set that meets this condition in a theory guarantees that all new concepts introduced through definition will, in turn, be experimentally testable concepts.

Rudner however, concludes that scientists and philosophers of science have come to realise that the unqualified fulfillment of this requirement is immensely difficult, perhaps impossible. Therefore insistence on its fulfillment for the validation of theory may be an unjustifiable demand. The modification of this demand rather can take the form of a demand for clarity especially in social science where partial formalization of theories necessitates a modification of the criterion of empirical testability.

In developing a theory of social conflict the criterion of clarity will be applied but it is not assumed that it is necessary to couch concepts and propositions at the primitive level in observable terms.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the demands for scientific explanation be applied with some degree of liberalism. This does not imply that a commitment to a common logic of justification is forfeited or that the recognition with regard to the difficulties of full

formalization be viewed in such a way as to absolve this study from its commitment to inquiry inherent in scientific formulations.

The following discussion serves the purpose of clarifying problems which confront sociologists who choose to be placed in the scientific methodological court of appeal. The reproductive fallacy and the position of methodological separatism will be briefly examined.

(3) REPRODUCTIVE FALLACY

A claim that accepts the possibility of explanation but maintains that the only valid explanation of social conflict is one that 'captures' the experience of conflict in a particular situation, indicates a misconception with regard to the nature and function of scientific explanation. This is termed the reproductive fallacy which rests on the assumption that science must function to 'reproduce' reality. Rudner (1966, p. 83) maintains:

The claim that the only understanding appropriate to social science is one that consists of a reproduction of the conditions or states of affairs being studied, is logically the same as the claim that the only understanding appropriate to the investigation of tornadoes is that gained in the direct experience of tornadoes.

A description of the phenomenon of social conflict does not fail to be adequate on account of its abstraction. Abstraction and conceptualization are inherent in the nature of human language and experience (as asserted in Chapter 1). Concepts describing a phenomenon are not deemed to be coextensive with the phenomenon as occurring in the empirical world. It is not necessary to deny that some sort of knowledge is gained by experiencing a particular phenomenon (for example the labour strikes in Zululand). However, this does not imply that a direct experience of social conflict is the only possible method of explanation or that direct experience is a substitute for a theoretical explanation of social conflict. In other words there is no a priori reason to believe that 'raw experience' constitutes a 'better' method of study as opposed to a scientific theoretical explanation.

Sociologists do not claim that to describe and explain social conflict is to be social conflict itself. (Einstein has said that to describe the taste of the soup is not to be the soup)

Abstraction in contrast to coextension is inherent in the nature of scientific formulations (and the nature of human experience). The claim for coextension can easily be interpreted as a disguised claim for empiricism. To deny the validity of abstraction is to remove sociology from the realm of scientific activity — theoretical practice. Theoretical practice rests on the premise that abstractions (the raw material of science) are 'worked on' in such a way as to develop theories related to the phenomenon of social reality.

Abstraction does not entail reproduction. Opposed to the attitude that scientific concepts and their relation to reality are mere 'fictions,' it is maintained that at least some of the general concepts related to the phenomenon of social conflict represent an adequate grasp of the concrete phenomenon. Parsons (1968, p. 730, Vol. II) makes a plea for analytical realism with regard to abstraction:

There is no implication that the value of any one such element, or even of all those included in one logically coherent system, is completely descriptive of any particular concrete thing or event.

Another implication of the reproductive fallacy is that prediction is impossible. For prediction to be a possibility we would have to be able to reproduce events. No science can reproduce an event, prediction refers only to the likelihood that a particular event will occur under a specific set of circumstances. Therefore in order to predict the possibility of social conflict we do not reproduce a set of circumstances from which social conflict occurs. Reproduction being impossible the likelihood of this type of prediction is nil.

(4) METHODOLOGICAL SEPARATISM:

Apart from the erroneous claims that the phenomenon of social conflict cannot be examined because theoretical activity is not legitimate,

or that the only valid explanation constitutes a reproduction of social reality, there is another position. This is termed methodological separatism and relates to claims that (while recognizing certain general canons of the scientific method) assert that a different or separate logic of justification is required because the 'logic of inquiry' of social reality differs from that of physical reality.

The following claims will be briefly examined:

- (i) that claim that rests on a confusion between 'methodology' and 'techniques'.
 - (ii) that claim that rests on the assumption that social reality is more complex and more unique and therefore requires a different logic of explanation.
 - (iii) that claim that rests on the assumption that the defining characteristic of social reality is 'subjectivity' and therefore social reality requires a different logic of justification.
- (i) The claim that the social sciences require a radically distinct methodology different from that required in other sciences is often the result of a confusion between 'methodology' and 'technique'. To be sure the phenomenon of social conflict may require different techniques of investigation, but Rudner (1966, p. 5) maintains:

In general, to become aware that various scientific disciplines employ differing techniques of investigation is not to become aware of anything significant about the nature of social science ... To claim that there is a difference in methodology is by contrast, to make a very radical claim. For the methodology of a scientific discipline is not a matter of its transient techniques but of its logic of justification ... Accordingly to hold that the social sciences are methodologically distinct from the non-social sciences is to hold not merely (or perhaps not at all) the banal view that the social sciences require a different logic of

inquiry ... to deny that all of science is characterized by a common logic of justification in its acceptance or rejection of hypotheses or theories.

- (ii) That social reality is more complex or social phenomena more 'unique' than non-social phenomena is seen to be a rationale for a different methodology in the social sciences. The argument of complexity is dismissed on the grounds that science does not aim at reproduction of events or at 'capturing' the complexity of events in their entirety. Further there is no reason to believe that physical reality is less complex.

The important point to note is that we cannot infer from empirical evidence (the context of discovery) a thesis in the context of justification. The extent to which social reality is complex or even unique, and that problems arise with regard to the analysis of certain empirical phenomena relate to the empirical questions with which sociology deals in its inquiry. Therefore, when examining the phenomenon of conflict we do not infer from empirical evidence a thesis in the context of justification. The thesis that social reality is more complex than physical reality would have to be validated.

Science it is argued (and correctly) is capable of systematization only by generalization. Social reality because it consists of 'unique' phenomena cannot be grasped by the scientific method. However, logically, any entity is unique in the sense of being different. The aim of inquiry into social conflict is to grasp adequately, repeatable patterns present in social reality which if theoretically systematized yield an adequate explanation. The question of 'uniqueness' of social conflict (whether true or not) does not relate to the logic of justification and explanation of social conflict.

- (iii) A position of methodological separatism that has received serious attention is one that maintains that the only valid 'logic of inquiry' for the sociologist is one that characterizes the subjectivity of social behaviour.

This method is termed 'understanding' or 'empathy.'
Leaving aside the problems related to the exact meaning
of these terms the following points will be discussed:

- (a) Reproductive Fallacy?
 - (b) Is subjective 'understanding' the only possible
method in sociology?
 - (c) Is the subjective method validational?
- (a) Schutz appears to be guilty of the reproductive fallacy.
Schutz (1960, p. 214) has said:

Summing up, we come to the conclusion that social
things are only understandable if they can be re-
duced to human activities, and, human activities
are only made understandable by showing their in-
order-to or because motives. The deeper reason
for this fact is that as I naively live within the
social world I am able to understand other people's
acts only if I can imagine that I myself would per-
form analogous acts if I were in the same situation,
directed by the same because motives, or oriented
by the same in-order-to motives.

Schutz maintains that unless we know these motives and at
the same time are able to identify ourselves with the
human actor we will not 'understand' behaviour. For
him the fallacy of behaviourism and other forms of
objectivism consists in the substitution of a 'fictional
world' for social reality. Winch (1958) similarly argues
that social behaviour is rule governed and the appropriate
knowledge would be gained by "coming to learn the rules."
Therefore the social scientist must be able to know the
experience of behaving in conformity with the rules.

The argument again seems to demand that the social scientist be
able to 'reproduce' reality. We must be able to be the phenomenon
under study. (How may it be possible to be the social conflict under
study?) In the study of social conflict it is strongly asserted that
the aim is not to reproduce social reality! This argument has previously
been dismissed.

- (b) Nagel (1968, p. 35) suggests that the distinctions required for examining social reality are not exclusively subjective. It is beyond doubt that human behaviour is characterized by subjective elements — human behaviour is characterized by purposive and motivational elements. However, we are not confined to distinctions that relate exclusively to psychological states.

In the study of social conflict a premium is placed on observable aspects of behaviour, because overt behaviour constitutes a more adequate basis for study than an introspective analysis of because or in-order-to motives. No claim is made that observation of such overt behaviour is the only source of information anyone has concerning the experience and actions of human actors. It is not inconsistent to maintain that there are such things as private psychic states but that overt behaviour constitutes the most important source of knowledge of individual and social action with regard to the study of social conflict.

- (c) Related to (b) it is important here that the issue is not whether "putting oneself in the place of" is a technique for discovering the subjective character of human action. The question to be answered is whether this 'understanding' is a validation method, a basis for accepting or rejecting a hypothesis or proposition. If this is so then we would be able to say that 'subjective' (in contrast to scientific) explanation is constituted by its own logic of justification.

Rudner (1966, p. 73) suggests that we do not argue against 'empathy' or 'understanding' or discard it as a validation step,

... but clearly, in order to accept some specific empathetic act as validation, we must presuppose an investigation establishing that this act is veridical.

This implies that some means are available, independent of empathy for establishing that the empathy is sufficiently like the state of which it is in empathy. Rudner argues that the very logic of the methodological employment of empathy precludes its indispensability as a methodological device in the social sciences by guaranteeing that there is an independent means "for validating the hypothesis its use is intended to validate."

CONCLUSION

With regard to the study of social conflict it is maintained that the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses ~~are~~^{is} characterized by a common logic of justification inherent in scientific formulations. That this logic relates to 'objective' factors in the sense of overt behaviour is not inconsistent with the claim that subjective factors are important with regard to the phenomenon of social conflict. We do not however, infer from empirical fact a thesis in the context of validation. The logic of justification refers to the criterion of adequacy of description, explanation, and prediction. Theoretical activity is not restricted by the demand for full formalization when attempting to develop a theory of social conflict.

It is apparent that the methodological problems discussed in this chapter are relevant to sociological analysis in general. The problems however, are also extremely relevant to a study of social conflict. In fact it is difficult to develop an explicit methodological position adequate to the study of social conflict without comingⁿ to terms with why it is valid and useful to accept the scientific methodological court of appeal.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL POSITION

Theory construction is closely linked to the methodological principles a theorist adopts. To adopt certain methodological principles is to place theoretical activity before the criteria which determine the adequacy of a particular theory that is constructed. We cannot rest comfortably when once we have chosen the scientific methodological court of appeal. The adequacy of the theory is then determined by explicit criteria inherent in the logic of scientific formulations.

The basic premises for the methodological position to be outlined in this chapter were discussed in Chapter II. The task of this chapter is to make explicit the methodological position and logic of explanation adopted with regard to the phenomenon of social conflict. It is hoped that the position adopted will be consistent with the theoretical position outlined in the forthcoming chapters.

(1) THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY:

Parsons (1965, p. 32) has said that the consensus with regard to the general canons of the scientific method:

... clearly includes the role of theory in science and the nature of conceptual schemes which scientific theory employs.

Rex (1970) advocates the type of scientific approach which emphasizes the role of theoretical models. Another sociologist (1973, p. 9) has said that science aims at

... the systematic accumulation of knowledge so that the occurrence of phenomena can be described, predicted, and explained.

Three points are evident:

- (i) That in order to explain the phenomenon of social conflict it is necessary to develop a theory of social conflict. Theory is a vital component of scientific knowledge:
- (ii) Therefore, in the study of social conflict we do not engage ourselves in a piecemeal collection of randomly organized or unrelated sets of ideas which lead no further than to speculative confusion. In terms of the aims of science our task is that of a systematic accumulation of knowledge. As discussed in Chapter II, it is not inadmissible to make the plea for partial formalization or for liberalism with regard to the logical integration. This does not constitute a recognition of formlessness or a claim for a 'separate' methodology. The claim for a common logic of justification remains.
- (iii) In order to systematize our knowledge and develop a general theory of social conflict it is necessary to make analytical abstractions and generalizations. Science does not aim at the reconstruction of social reality; it is a highly selective mode of organizing our knowledge. In the study of social conflict we cannot give analytical content to everything empirically knowable about the phenomenon of social conflict. Parsons (1965, p. 32) has said that sociologists:

... cannot possibly embrace everything empirically knowable about the concrete phenomena at hand. They must select, ie., abstract, according to their own criteria of relevance to theoretical problems.

Opposed to the view that scientific concepts in their relation to reality constitute 'useful fictions,' it is maintained that at least some of the general concepts of science adequately grasp aspects of the objective external world. Parsons' plea for analytical realism is admissible.

THEORY AS 'SYSTEM'

In the theoretical study of social conflict another important point must be discussed:

It has been stated that the aim of science is the systematic accumulation of knowledge, that science is a highly selective mode of organizing our knowledge. Given that theory is a vital component of scientific knowledge, the criteria for its adequacy imply a body of systematically related set of statements that are logically integrated. With regard to the theory of social conflict the concept of system is an application of the criteria of logical integration. (This does not imply a restrictive claim for logical closure. The claim in other words does not demand complete deductive formulation of the system, but some degree of logical integration.)

It is assumed that social reality exhibits certain patterns of interdependence (the extent of this interdependence is of course, an empirical question, subject to confirmation or disconfirmation by empirical evidence.) Parsons (1965, p. 32) suggests:

Systematization of theory clearly implies the concept of empirical system as its counterpart ... If a theory is to be empirically relevant, it must present demonstrably verifiable patterns of interdependence among empirical phenomena. In order to do this, however, it must delineate and classify phenomena according to criteria of relevance and importance. An empirical system, then, is a body of presumptively interdependent phenomena to which a given abstract analytical schema is relevant. It is impossible to study everything at once empirically. An empirical system is a theoretically defined field of relevant phenomena, with reference to which certain problem-statements have been abstracted.

With regard to explanation of social conflict the aspect of systematic interrelatedness both theoretically and empirically will be taken as a point of departure. This aspect satisfies the criteria of logical integration in theoretical formulations, and importantly, represents the principle on which the logic of explanation of social conflict is based — the logic of the dialectic. The notion of system implies the concept of structure that is, a way of ordering the universe of events. A theory of social conflict thus implies a systematic interrelation of concepts and propositions with some degree of logical integration which implies a structural ordering of empirical events.

(2) A STRUCTURAL - FUNCTIONAL APPROACH:

Before looking at the logic of the dialectical method there are certain methodological premises which if accepted serve as the basis from which it becomes possible to employ the logic of the dialectic.

The question that must be answered is — how is it logically possible to give an explanation of social conflict? The term social conflict (at this point still undefined) conjures up a preliminary notion of some sort of dynamic process. The approach to the notion of conflict as involving process is termed the Structural-Functional approach.

To say that it is impossible to give explanation to the dynamics of social conflict on the grounds that we cannot reduce 'dynamics' to 'static' scientific categories (or structures), is to deny the possibility of scientific explanation. Science rests on the assumption not only that it is in principle possible to explain the dynamics of a particular aspect of social reality, but that it is the task of science to do so. The aims of science are not limited to structural morphology or classification. Science itself is a dynamic process, not a static cumulation of knowledge but a dynamic, changing and even a revolutionizing process which makes possible the growth of knowledge. (6)

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6. Thomas Kuhn (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970) maintains that science develops by revolutionary paradigm shifts and not by a mere static accumulation of knowledge.

The dynamics of social conflict are not 'reduced' to structural categories. However, logically, any explanation of social conflict entails an identification of the phenomena which constitute social conflict. These phenomena are conceptually defined as the structures of social conflict. Parsons (1965, p. 70) maintains that:

The categorical assertion that any assumptions about structure are scientifically inadmissible, because in the last analysis everything is in flux, denies the legitimacy of science. In any science, and in sociology in particular, the concept of change (or as in this study the process of social conflict) is meaningful only in terms of a defineable something, i.e., something which can be described in structural terms. (My insertion).

The assumption of structure does not refer to a metaphysical belief of ontological stability of the phenomena in the social world. The notion of social conflict as a dynamic process would make pure nonsense in terms of this belief. The assumption that social reality exhibits certain patterns of interdependence is sufficient to maintain that the notion of structure is a workable pragmatic assumption. Dahrendorf (1969, p. 122) suggests that

... processes are accessible to our analysis only, if we dissect them into their static elements; more precisely, if we try to reconstruct them from a static basis (which changes) and from certain forces (which cause change).

Once the structure of a system is seen as a positive constituent of dynamic analysis there must be some way of linking the structural categories to the dynamically variable elements in the system. This link is supplied by the concept function. When we say that a structure functions in a particular way, we are saying that function is the process by which a particular structure either transforms, develops or simply speaking is in motion.' Dahrendorf (1969, p. 123) suggests that:

There are in other words, within social structures certain elements or forces which are at the same time their constituent parts (and therefore "function" within them) and impulses operating towards their supersedence and change.

The category 'structure' and the category 'function' are therefore closely linked.

Goldmann (1969, p. 14) maintains that the disjunction of the ideas of structure and function promote methodological principles which seem to him to confirm the methodological denial of any historical dimension to social facts:

... if one separates structure from function, he has already committed himself to the creation of either an ahistorical and formalistic structuralism or a functionalism with the same orientation.

The link therefore between structure and function constitutes a dynamic historical approach to the study of social conflict.

(3) THE DIALECTIC:

The logic of the dialectic:

In sociology there is much confusion as to the precise meaning of the dialectic. Schneider (1971, pp. 667-678) suggests that the dialectic need not be tied to any particular philosophy of history or world view. This study takes as a point of departure Marx's formulation of the dialectic. The debate as to the truth or falsity of Marx's approach is not at issue in this study. The dialectic is adopted as a heuristic device for the purposes of a theoretical explanation of social conflict.

The logic of the dialectic is premised on the concept of interrelation both theoretically and empirically. The concept of system is a vital component of the dialectic. Further, the concept of system as constituted by a structure linked to the concept of function gives content to the second premise of the dialectic, that of a dynamic system. Following this is the third premise of the dialectic, that the link between structure and function commits us to a historical view of social reality.

For the purpose of clarity the particular formulation of the logic of the dialectic relevant to the study of conflict is outlined:

- (i) The dialectic presupposes a theoretical 'system' which is conceived of as a logically interrelated body of concepts and propositions. The theoretical system is conceived of as a structural point of reference from which to formulate coherently a theory of social conflict.

- (ii) An empirical system is conceived of as a related counterpart of the theoretical system. It is not assumed that the logical integration of an empirical system is an a priori true statement of fact. The extent of its integration is in part an empirical question subject to confirmation by empirical evidence. The empirical system is also conceived of as a structural point of reference from which it is possible to analyse social conflict.

- (iii) The recognition of the theoretical and empirical system as structural points of reference is extended to the assumption of certain structurally given reference points within these systems. It is not logically possible to proceed with a dynamic analysis without definable points of reference, conceived of as structurally given.

- (iv) Therefore:
The explanatory power of the dialectic rests on the heuristic device of structurally defined reference points within a theoretical and empirical system.

- (v) For the purposes of dynamic analysis the dialectic logically relates the concept of function to a particular structurally given reference point (theoretically and empirically).

- (vi) The structure of a system is therefore intrinsically related to the functioning of its constituent parts and to the functioning of the system taken as a whole. This means that the system as a whole is taken as a reference point for the explanation of the relationship between structure and function but that the relationship can also be conceptualized analytically, in terms of a particular part of the system. This does not imply that the system as a whole is no longer a consistent point of reference but that certain constituent parts of the system can be taken as analytically separable points of reference. (7)
- (vii) It is necessary to adopt a methodological position consistent with this formulation of the dynamics of the system. This position is the Structural-Functional approach.
- (viii) The logic of the dialectic is thus a dynamic system of relational logic which theoretically complies with the demand for logical integration and systematization. This logic is assumed to be operative if social reality is regarded as relational, that is, consisting of an interrelationship between it's structure and it's functioning.

The dialectic is a method capable of conceiving of the dynamics of social conflict. At this point the definition of social conflict clearly included the notion of a process, involving an interrelation between the concepts structure and function. The problem which is now apparent is that of the application of the dialectic to the actual process of social conflict. This process relates to the concept of reconstitution which is incorporated in the logic of the dialectic.

7. For example, Smelser (Theory of Collective Behaviour, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1970) conceives of norm-oriented collective movements as related to the normative structural reference points within a particular systemic framework. For the purposes of analysis norm-oriented movements are analytically separable phenomena and their consequences can be analyzed in terms of the system taken as a whole or in terms of the system's constituent parts.

The dialectic and reconstitution:

Social conflict then is preliminary defined as that process involving a reconstitution of the structural components of a system. The concept reconstitution relates to a reorganization of the components of a system. This reorganization refers to the process of conflict (or the development of contradictions) between the components of a system.⁽⁸⁾

For the purposes of clarity the logic of the argument is outlined:

- (i) The internal relations (that is the relations between the structural components) are organized in such a way as to conceive of their reconstitution. The structural components are related in a hierarchy of organization (explained in 'Note on the Dialectic').
- (ii) By means of a dialectical (reciprocal) interaction of the internal relations it is logically possible to conceive of the reconstitution of the system as a whole and of the reconstitution only of some of its constituent parts.
- (iii) The structural components at the base of the hierarchy, the primary components are seen to be interrelated with the components at the top of the hierarchy, the secondary components. By means of a reciprocal interaction of the primary components with the secondary components and interaction within the secondary components themselves, it is possible to conceive of two types or forms of contradictions.
- (iv) Principle contradictions related to the primary (base) components of the hierarchy, in interaction with secondary components are seen to cause a reconstitution of the relations in the system as a whole.

8. Reconstitution as a process may not necessary refer to the development of conflict (or contradictions). In this study however, the concept of reconstitution refers to the process of social conflict.

- (v) Secondary contradictions also related to the primary and secondary components of the hierarchy, but are seen to cause a reconstitution of only parts of the relations in the system.
- (vi) Secondary contradictions related to the secondary components of the hierarchy are seen to cause a reconstitution of the components of the system which are related only to the secondary components of the hierarchy.
- (vii) Both principle and secondary contradictions therefore function causally in relation to the structural components of the system.
- (viii) The development of principle and secondary contradictions are not seen to become operative for the system in terms of a simple causal logic. The sufficient condition for a contradiction (whether principle or secondary) to become operative is the combination of a complex set of conditions.⁽⁹⁾

The conception of the dialectic as a system of relational logic based on the hierarchy of organization of internal relations within a system makes it logically possible then to conceive of

- (a) principle contradictions and,
- (b) secondary contradictions.

The contradictions relate to the concept of reconstitution which is seen to be necessary in a theoretical explanation of social conflict.

9. Piaget (1971, p. 126) observes that Louis Althusser stresses the complex development of contradictions inherent in Marx's formulation of the dialectic. Thus for Marx an accumulation of a complex set of conditions is necessary for a contradiction to develop in a system. Similarly, Smelser (1970) conceives of the development of an incident of collective behaviour as the combination of a number of conditions.

(4) NOTE ON THE DIALECTIC: PRIMARY & SECONDARY COMPONENTS

When discussing the structural hierarchy of organization as constituted by primary and secondary components no mention was made of the reason for conceiving of the hierarchy in this way.

It is important for the purposes of this study to clarify what is meant by this conception of the hierarchy.

The social world contains both material (means of production, physical environment) and ideal (normative) elements. In fact, it is not possible to conceive of the social world in any other way unless we adopt the scientifically untenable position that the social world consists only of material elements, or alternatively, only of ideal elements. The position adopted in this study affirms the impossibility of adopting either of these latter positions. The material and ideal elements in their interaction produce social reality.

However, the question may be asked — why 'primary' and why 'secondary' components? Broadly speaking primary components refer to the material aspects of social reality and secondary components refer to those elements constituting the normative elements (values; political, religious, intellectual and juridical ideas). The material world is conceived of as 'primary' on the grounds that the secondary elements are 'grounded on' the primary elements of the social world — taking as Marx did the premise that social-material existence precedes consciousness.

The recognition of the material elements as primary does not imply that they are to be studied without giving import to non-material elements. There is a dialectical interrelationship between both these elements. The historical development of social reality is predicated on the indissoluble link between the material and the non-material elements of social reality, on their dialectical interrelationship. This constitutes the theoretical and methodological position of dialectical materialism.

That social reality is predicated on the interrelationship between the material and non-material elements refutes any claim of vulgar materialism. That weight is given to material conditions of social existence on the grounds that material conditions precede consciousness, does not imply that social existence precludes consciousness (or non-material elements).

Goldmann (1969, p. 62) maintains:

There is nothing more curious than the lament constantly reiterated by opponents of Marxism that it neglects the realm of ideas and the spiritual life. One of the basic theses of the Marxist method is that any serious study of human reality leads back to thought when its material aspect has been taken as the point of departure and to social and economic reality when one has begun with the history of ideas.

The notion of primary and secondary components serves as the departure point for this study's explanation of social conflict. The logic of the dialectic, as a system of relational logic which includes the notion of contradiction, is seen to be applicable to the concept of social conflict as a process of 'reconstitution.' The structural-functional approach is seen as the methodological position from which to develop an explanation of social conflict.

- (2) How is the process of reconstitution related to a voluntaristic conception of social conflict, and, concerning the process of reconstitution itself,
- (3) what level of analysis is adequate for conceiving of social conflict in terms of its consequences for the system as a whole or of its parts, assuming that a system of action as a structurally given reference point for the analysis of conflict is required? The reference points of the unit action system and the social action system are to be discussed.
- (4) Given a particular definition of social conflict, what are the determinants of social conflict?

(1) THE VOLUNTARISTIC POSTULATE

Both Parsons and Marx have seen the postulate of voluntarism as fundamental to human action. Generally speaking the concept refers to the assumption that human activity constitutes the motive force in the development of social reality. Bottomore (1970, p. 78) quotes Marx:

History does nothing; it 'does not possess immense riches,' 'it does not fight battles.' It is men, real living men, who do all this, who possess things and fight battles. It is not 'history' which uses men as a means of achieving — as if it were an individual person — its own ends. History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends.

The term action is used in such a way as to logically conceive of human activity as voluntaristic. A distinction is made between behaviour (a moth fluttering towards a candle flame) which is a response to a stimulus, and action which is conceived of as the process of human activity taking place within certain 'limits' constituted by normative and non-normative (material) elements. That action is voluntaristic implies that action involves certain elements: rationality,

subjective orientation, and 'effort,' and that action in contrast to behaviour, is not a simple mechanistically determined response to a particular stimulus.

To say that human action is 'determined' by material conditions (physical environment) denies that man is an active agent who has historically adapted to and transformed the material conditions of existence. The assumption that human action is purposive and involves rationality implies that man is continually 'acting on' the social and material environment to achieve certain ends (whether the ends be rational or non-rational). If man is wholly 'determined' by material conditions rationality and purposive action disappears, action in the relevant sense is eliminated and becomes a behavioural response to a stimulus. The material conditions of existence become the sum of sensory stimuli impinging on the behavioural organism.

The postulate of determinism denies that human action is oriented to ends where ends are conceived of as goals (values), and where orientation to ends is normatively regulated. Parsons emphasizes strongly that action involves normative or evaluative elements. To accept a materialist determinism is to eliminate from empirical relevance the role of normative elements which characterize the subjective orientation of human action. Parsons (1968, pp. 81-82)^{Vol. I.} maintains:

Positively a voluntaristic system involves elements of a normative character. Radical positivism eliminates all such elements completely from empirical relevance. A utilitarian system admits them but only in the status of random ends which are thus only data for the empirical application of the theoretical system. In the voluntaristic theory they become interdependent with the other elements in specifically determinate ways.

On the other hand, if human action is said to be 'determined' by normative elements, action then becomes an emanation of ideal elements. Parsons (1968, p. 82)^{Vol. I.} has said:

In an idealistic theory 'action' becomes a process of "emanation," of "self expression" of ideal or normative factors.

Parsons maintains that a voluntaristic system is predicated on the interdependence of the normative and non-normative elements.

Although Parsons has said that non-normative elements play an important role he has been criticized for his emphasis on normative elements. Moodie (1972, p. 2) suggests that this leads him to a position of "static value determinism." Following Weber's thesis on the influence of Protestantism on the rise of Capitalism, Parsons tends to stress the independent causal significance of value elements in social action. While it is important to emphasize the 'active' role of values in action it is not admissible to imply that action takes place independently of the material conditions of existence. This would come to the same thing as seeing action as the process of emanation of normative elements. (Idealism.) To see ends (values, goals) as rooted in conditions, and norms capable of being altered in conformity with the material conditions and facilities or means available to the actor, is not to deny the powerful force that normative elements have in human action.

In this study the relationship between the normative and non-normative elements is seen as dialectical. Neither of the elements are conceived of as epiphenomena. If we attribute independent causal significance to normative elements we fall into the scientifically untenable position, idealism. If we attribute independent causal significance to material elements, we fall into the equally untenable position, materialism. In short, we deny the voluntaristic character of human action.

The position adopted in the previous chapter, dialectical materialism, rests on the premise that action consists of an interrelationship between the material and normative elements. The fact that weight is given to material elements as primary components of social action does not in the least deny the

interrelationship between the material and normative elements. That normative elements are 'secondary' components of action does not therefore imply that they are less fundamental, or as previously mentioned, without causal significance. Neither does dialectical materialism imply a vulgar materialist determinism. Marx strongly criticized the eighteenth-century French materialists for leaving the human element out of their accounts of the influence of material conditions. Mc Lellan (1972, p. 124) quotes Marx:

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by man and the educator must himself be educated.

The central idea of dialectical materialism is that the key to understanding human action is to be found in the way men and women produce their means of existence and that the forms of social relations (political, religious, juridical) are interdependent with the particular form of material production. Mc Lellan (1972, p. 123) takes an example — the rights of man as proclaimed in the French Revolution and the first constitution of the United States were not

... eternal truths about the nature of man that happened to be discovered at that particular time; they could only be fully understood if viewed in the context of demands by new commercial groups for the end of feudal restrictions and for free competition in economic affairs.

It has been mentioned that human action takes place within 'limits' constituted by material and normative elements. This appears to refute the voluntaristic character of human action. However, the recognition that human action is not 'free-floating' indicates that it takes place within a defined set of conditions but which do not render action impossible. If the voluntaristic conception is to be upheld then the problem of how action takes place must be solved. Parsons (1968, p. 719) suggests the use of the term "effort" which he sees as having analytical status

analogous to that of energy in physics. The normative and material elements become 'activated' through the effort of action itself (involving motivation towards the gratification of needs, the appropriation of means available to facilitate the end or goal, normative orientation between the means and the end). Parsons says courses of action are "open" within the limits prescribed by the conditional elements of social reality. Similarly, Marx's conception of praxis (human activity) according to Lefebvre (1968) indicates that praxis is "open," but according to Marx, quoted in Mc Lellan (1973, p. 123), human action

... is itself conditioned by the circumstances in which men find themselves, by the productive forces already acquired, by the social form which exists before they do, which they do not create, which is the product of the preceding generation.

In other words (Marx in Mc Lellan (1972, pp. 129),

circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances.

Voluntarism implies that action is possible within certain conditional limits. If the voluntaristic conception is denied on the grounds that men and women act independently of the limits, material and normative, of social reality, then we have to make the scientifically untenable admission that man is 'free-floating.' In short, that action takes place in a realm which is independent of social reality.

The voluntaristic conception of social conflict as a form of action assumes:

- (i) that social conflict involves rationality, subjective orientation and 'effort' and therefore:
- (ii) that social conflict is not a mechanistic response to a particular stimulus;

- (iii) that social conflict takes place within the limits set by both material and normative elements of social reality and therefore, that:
- (iv) the process of social conflict involves an interrelation of both these elements in terms of the principle of dialectical materialism.

(2) RECONSTITUTION

Given these assumptions, social conflict (as preliminary defined) refers to the process of action which involves reconstitution. In other words, the functioning of the structural components of social action is defined in terms of the concept of reconstitution. In Chapter III this process was conceived of as the dynamic interrelationship of the primary (material) and secondary (normative) components, according to the principle of hierarchical organization. This principle includes the position of dialectical materialism which in terms of the voluntaristic postulate positively interrelates the primary and secondary components. If the process of reconstitution is to be systematized in order to develop an explanation of social conflict, it is fundamentally important to give clarity to the concepts primary and secondary components. How can they be defined so as to be useful for explanatory purposes?

The traditional empiricist demand for observational terms which have a direct empirically testable reference imposes a restriction on the concepts to be admitted in an explanation. Attempts at systematization cannot proceed by dispensing with non-observational terms. Further, it is not an imperative that all theoretical concepts be couched in observational terms of reference particularly in the social sciences where it is legitimate to plea for partial formalization in concept formation and theory construction. Therefore the traditional empiricist demand of empirical testability is modified to the criterion of clarity.

The validity of an explanation does in the last analysis rest on its empirical application and testability if the theorist is committed to a scientific explanation. However, the development of a theoretically systematic explanation of social conflict is not inhibited by restrictive empiricist demands.

The normative components of action concern the values, beliefs, goals, and norms, sanctions, which actors utilize in their action and interaction. Values are the most general statements of legitimate ends (goals) which guide action. Values constitute a system of beliefs which give definition to action and the goals of action. Religions, political, philosophical and juridical values are some of the patterns of belief and ideas which guide action. Norms are more specific than general values and are the regulatory, culturally defined sanctions governing the pursuit of goals and actions. Values and norms constitute the normative limits within which action takes place.

During the process of social conflict if these elements are activated in relation to the material components of action, the process of reconstitution becomes operative for the internal relations of the system as a whole. This constitutes a principle contradiction. The normative elements in interrelation with the material components may also give rise to a process of reconstitution which does not have consequences for the system as a whole but only for the relations of parts of the system. This constitutes a secondary contradiction. The normative components in their interrelation with each other can also give rise to a secondary contradiction which has consequences only for the relations between the normative components.

The material components concern the facilities, the means of production, and aspects of the physical environment which actors utilize (in relationship with the normative components) in their action and interaction. Facilities refer to the available skills which are utilized as a means for the attainment of a particular goal (end) of action. Facilities are incorporated in the means of production constituted by the productive forces and productive mode of

activity which actors utilize to produce their means of existence and to attain goals related to their production. The environment is comprised of the physical aspects of the natural world which are utilized as facilities in the production of the actors' existence. Empirically the environment is also constituted by the forms of social and cultural relations developed by actors as a means for the attainment of particular ends (for example, the family). Therefore when action takes place the environment is constituted by both the physical and socio-cultural aspects of reality, but for logical reasons the physical environment constitutes an element of the material components of action. The facilities, the means of production and, the physical environment constitute (analytically) the material limits within which action takes place.

During the process of social conflict if these elements are activated in relation to the normative components of action, the process of reconstitution becomes operative for the internal relations of the system as a whole. This constitutes a principle contradiction. However, the material elements in their interrelation with some of the elements of the normative components may also give rise to a process of reconstitution which does not have consequences for the system as a whole but only for parts of the relations of the system. This constitutes a secondary contradiction. Interrelation between the material elements themselves are not seen to be constitutive of relations of social conflict. The development of facilities or the means of productive only in relation to the normative components can be activated to give rise to a process of reconstitution in the system.

It is important to emphasize that the distinction made between the primary and the secondary components is a logical one in terms of the premises of dialectical materialism. Empirically these components are not conceived of as separate elements of social reality. The normative and material components can be defined as analytically separate categories. During the process of reconstitution these categories are linked to form the action of social conflict.

Neither are the components static descriptive categories. If this was the case, the explanation of social conflict would represent a mere formalistic structuralism which denies the conception of social conflict as a dynamic process. The approach in this study has been termed the structural-functional approach which conceives of the dynamic functioning of the structural components in terms of the premises of dialectical materialism.

Having defined the material and normative components and their interaction during the process of reconstitution it is now possible to take a closer look at reconstitution. Three significant points were made:

- (i) The secondary (normative) components in their interrelation with the primary (material) give rise to a process of reconstitution of the system as a whole (principle contradiction)
- (ii) or, give rise to a process of reconstitution of parts of the relations of the system (secondary contradiction).
- (iii) The secondary components in their interrelation with each other give rise to a process of reconstitution which has consequences for the relations of parts of the system (secondary contradiction).

In Chapter III the dialectic and reconstitution was discussed and it was stated that by means of a dialectical (reciprocal) interaction of the internal relations of the system, it is possible to conceive of a reconstitution of the system as a whole and of a reconstitution only of some of its constituent parts.

The concept fusion is used to illustrate the interrelation of the components during the process of social conflict. The components or some of their elements fuse into a ruptural unit which indicates a disynchronization (a rupture) between the relations in the system. Conceived of in this way, the process of reconstitution refers to the ruptural function of particular relations between the components in the system. In other words when the process of

reconstitution becomes operative in the system, the interaction between the components has the function of bringing about a rupture in the system which has consequences for the reconstitution of the relations in the system. The process of reconstitution in terms of principle and secondary contradictions will now be discussed and illustrated with examples.

By means of a reciprocal interaction of the primary components with the secondary components the relations of the system as a whole are reconstituted. This was referred to as a principle contradiction. The relations between the secondary components and the primary components are seen as disynchronous and the process of reconstitution necessarily involves a reconstitution of the elements of the material components and of the elements of the normative components of action. This process of reconstitution indicates a complex ruptural unity of all the components of the system. It is therefore not a simple contradiction between the primary and secondary components. If the principle contradiction is to become active in the strongest sense, to become a ruptural principle, there must be an accumulation of conditions that fuse the primary and secondary components into a ruptural unit which indicates a disynchronous relationship between the normative and material components of action.

The notion of a ruptural principle is used to indicate the disynchronization of the relations in the system as a whole during the process of reconstitution in which a principle contradiction is operative. This contradiction is constituted (as stated) by a complex accumulation of conditions which make it possible to conceive of the disynchronization between the primary and secondary components as becoming operative for the reconstitution of the relations in the system as a whole.

The Russian Revolution (1917) is an example of a principle contradiction. An accumulation of forces during the period of 1861 (the emancipation of serfs) to 1917 led to a disynchronization between the structural components of Russian society.

The final outbreak of conflict (the interrelation of the components in a ruptural principle) in 1917 had consequences for the reconstitution of the structure of the society as a whole (its primary and secondary components).

The relations of the primary components may also fuse into ruptural unit with the secondary components without having consequences for the relations of the system as a whole. In other words the contradiction is not a ruptural principle but constitutes a secondary contradiction. Therefore there may be a disynchronous relationship between some of the elements of the primary components and some of the elements of the secondary components. For example, facilities utilized for the attainment of an end, and norms restricting the attainment of an end. An empirical instance would be the demand of workers for the right to strike for higher wages and the lack of trade unions as a facility for the attainment of this end in terms of a normative regulation restricting the right to form a trade union. The consequences of this conflict does not necessarily become operative for the system as a whole unless all the normative and material components fuse in a unit and become a ruptural principle in the system as a whole.

A reconstitution of the normative components does not involve a reconstitution of the relations of the system as a whole unless the normative components are interrelated (fused) with the material components in such a way as to become a ruptural principle. The elements of the normative components can be disynchronous such that only the elements of these components are reconstituted. This also constitutes a secondary contradiction. The relation between the secondary components are fused into a ruptural unit (by means of an accumulation of a set of conditions) but do not have consequences for the relations in the system as a whole. That this type of conflict involves only the normative components does not imply that the secondary contradiction does not take place within certain material limits. This would indicate an inconsistency in the approach of dialectical materialism which conceives of the process of conflict as involving both material and normative elements.

(The premise being that action is constituted by an interrelation of elements of the material and normative components.) The point is that logically and empirically the interrelation between the secondary components does not have a ruptural consequence (or function) for the relations in the system as a whole.

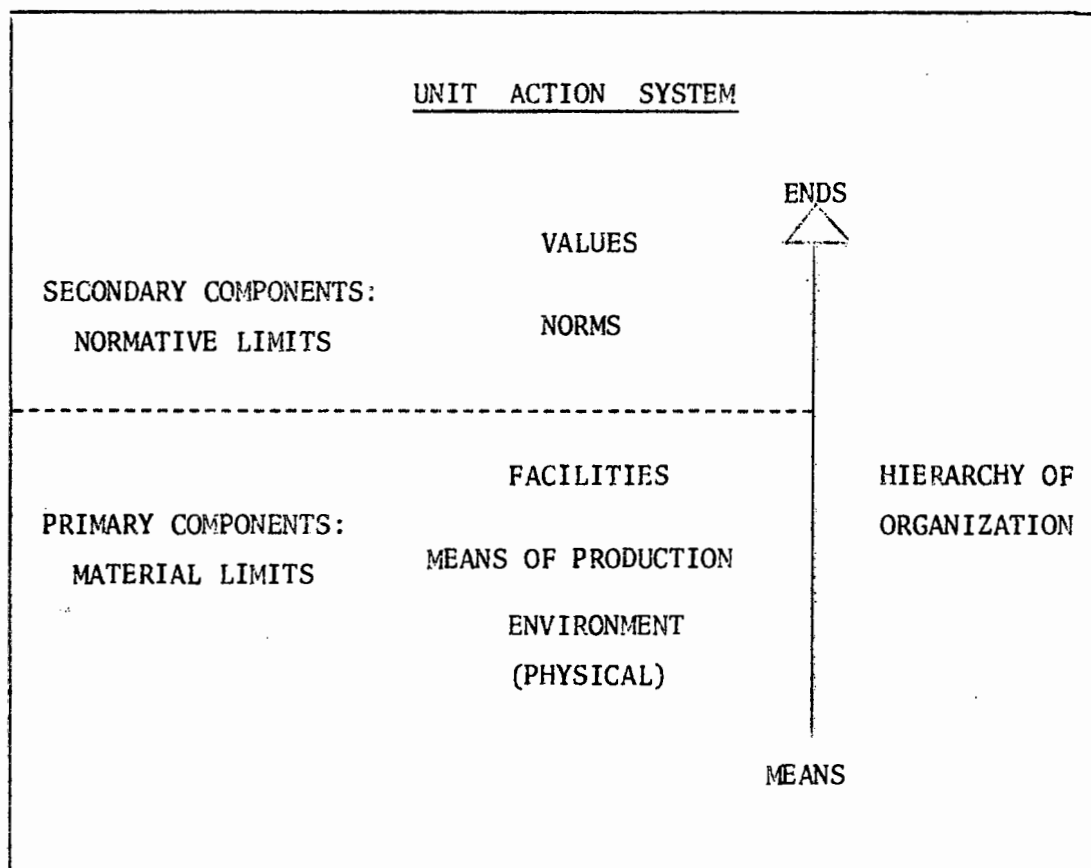
An example of this type of contradiction is illustrated by a disynchronous relationship between norms and values. An empirical instance of this would be a call by some ministers for the implementation of common worship regardless of race, in terms of the values of the Judeo-Christian ethic. The attainment of this value however, is restricted by norms regulating segregated worship. This conflict does not have implications for the reconstitution of the material components of action and is therefore not a ruptural principle. However, this conflict has implications for the values and norms within a particular system.

The problem of giving adequate explanation to the process of reconstitution is fundamental to a theory of social conflict. Thus far the emphasis of theoretical activity has been directed at the explanation of social conflict as a particular form of voluntaristic action, and directed at an explanation of the process of reconstitution itself. The process of reconstitution must be given a theoretical reference point to gain explanatory power in a theory of social conflict. Given the assumption that a theoretical system as a structurally given reference point is required where must the theoretical focus be in order to give explanation to social conflict? Two reference points are considered:

the unit action system and the social action system.

(3) UNIT ACTION SYSTEM AND SOCIAL ACTION SYSTEM

The unit action system is the smallest structurally given reference point from which the analysis of human action is possible. The unit action system consists of the primitive components of action represented in the diagram below:



Analysis at this level concerns the action system of an individual actor in a role. The concept role is the dynamic category by means of which the process of action becomes operative in a system. In other words the role in terms of which an actor functions, represents the 'activation' of the material and normative limits of the action system of the individual actor. The process of action involves the motivation or 'effort' of action towards a particular end, in terms of the utilization of means to the attainment of the end. Voluntaristically conceived this process involves subjective orientation and rationality (purposive action).

A fundamental problem at this level of analysis is that the process of reconstitution concerns only the relations between the components of an individual action system. For example, if the individual role incumbent experiences a desynchronization between elements of normative regulation and value elements (that is,

conflict between these elements), the consequences of the process of reconstitution relate to the individual's action system. A husband who believes that affection is a general legitimating value in action but whose conduct is regulated in terms of norms restricting his affection to his wife may experience conflict. This conflict however, does not necessarily have consequences for the action of all husband role incumbents.

In developing a general theory of social conflict what is required is a level of analysis which focuses on the process of reconstitution in terms of the action systems of a plurality of individual actors. To remain at the level of an individual's action system is to limit the scope of an explanation and in doing this, the explanatory power of the theory becomes restricted. In this study social conflict does not focus on the process of reconstitution with reference to one actor or interaction between two actors. It is therefore necessary to consider another level of analysis in which the structure and functioning of a theoretically defined system refers to social action, where social action is a process which takes place between a plurality of interacting individuals, and where the components of action refer to structural relations incorporating a plurality of actors. This level of analysis is termed the social action system.

The Social action system:

The social action system consists of a plurality of interacting individuals and structures of patterned interaction. If the social action system is to be the structurally given reference point from which to analyse social conflict, two additional concepts are required to give analytical content to a plurality of actors and the structured patterns of relations within the social action system. These two concepts are fundamental to theory of social conflict which takes the social action system as a structurally given point of reference. The concepts are termed collectivities and institutions.

The concept collectivities refers to groups of actors and

therefore, not only to an individual actor's role but a plurality of roles incorporated into structurally defined groups. The claim for voluntarism is extended to collectivities which are conceived of as actors. This claim for collective voluntarism attempts to overcome the inhibition of treating individual actors as the only valid structurally given reference points. That individual actors in sociological analysis are less reified than collectivities conceived of as actors, makes an easy concession to methodological individualism. In the analysis of action there is no reason to believe that theorists reify individual action less than they reify collective action. A concession to methodological individualism would remove the theorist from a commitment to the development of a general theory of social conflict. In a theory of conflict, the concept of collectivities is fundamental to the analysis of the process of reconstitution of the components of the social action system and not the individual action system. Collectivities 'activate' the components of the social action system during the process of reconstitution. The components are no longer restricted to the action system of individuals but refer to structured patterns of interaction or the social structures of the social action system. This necessitates the introduction of the second fundamental concept, institutions.

Although the components of the social action system are (as in unit action system) hierarchically organized into the material and normative limits of action, the components refer to collective patterns or structures within which interaction takes place. These are the institutional structures. The elements of values, norms, and facilities incorporated into the means of production, are the major institutional structures of the social action system.

(4) DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CONFLICT

Social conflict was preliminary defined as a process involving a dialectical interrelation of the primary and secondary components (hierarchically organized) in a system in such a way as to give rise to the reconstitution of the relations in the

system as a whole, or specific relations in the system. Conflict was seen as a process involving two types of contradictions, the principle and secondary contradictions, which indicated a disynchronization between the relations in the system. In the case of principle contradictions, a ruptural principle referred to the disynchronization of the primary and secondary components fused into a ruptural unit having consequences for the relations in the system as a whole. In the case of secondary contradictions the secondary or primary and secondary components fuse into a ruptural unit indicating a disynchronization between specific relations in system. The development of the contradictions was seen as the result of a complex accumulation of conditions.

Social conflict was then defined as a voluntaristic form of action. The postulate of voluntarism sees the process of action as involving a dialectical interrelationship between the primary and secondary components which provide the 'limits' of action but within which courses of action are open. The process of reconstitution is therefore a dynamic voluntaristic process in which neither the primary or secondary components 'determine' action. The principle of dialectical materialism sees both components as causally significant, and actors as the *primum agens* in social conflict.

The social action system is the structurally given point of reference from which to examine the process of reconstitution. The components of action (as in the unit action system) are hierarchically organized, but action refers to a plurality of actors and the components are the structured institutional patterns of interaction (and not patterns of individual action as in the unit action system). The process of reconstitution refers to the action of collectivities in institutions, hence social action system.

Formally defined, social conflict is a particular form of action (where action is conceived of as voluntaristic), involving a plurality of actors (collectivities), and is that dynamic process by which the structural components (institutions) in the

social action system are reconstituted (as a whole or partially).

THE DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL CONFLICT:

Given the social action system as a point of reference, the last fundamental problem to be discussed relates to the determinant conditions in the system which cause conflict. Once it is clear what the process of reconstitution involves for the relations in the system, it is evident that the way in which the process takes place must be explained.

The operation of the principle and secondary contradictions has preliminary been referred to as resulting from an accumulation of a set of conditions. These conditions relate to the functioning of the social action system. In the case of the principle contradiction this accumulation has been described in terms of the fusion of the primary and secondary components of the system in a disynchronous relationship, (a ruptural unit) according to a ruptural principle. In the case of secondary contradictions the accumulation results in the fusion of the primary and secondary components, or elements of the secondary components in a disynchronous relationship, (a ruptural unit). The insistence that in both cases an accumulation of conditions results in a process of reconstitution, indicates that there is no simple causal logic inherent in the operation of determinants.

The operation of determinants of social conflict are conceived of as a value-added process. Every determinant indicates a 'stage' which 'adds its value' to the process in which each determinant is a necessary condition for the next to operate as a determinant⁽¹⁰⁾. Therefore every determinant is a necessary

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10. Smelser (1970, p. 14) views the accumulation of the determinants of collective behaviour as a value-added process:

Every stage in the value-added process, therefore, is a necessary condition for the appropriate and effective addition of value in the next stage.

condition for the process of reconstitution to become operative for the relations in the system. The sufficient condition for the final outcome of social conflict is the cumulative combination of every necessary condition. The accumulation of conditions is viewed not as a temporal process but as an analytic process. Each determinant is therefore logically necessary for the next condition to act as a determinant.

The particular consequences of conflict depend on which relations in the system are 'activated' when the value-added process develops. The relations in the system may be disynchronous before the operation of determinants begins. However, for the outcome of social conflict the determinants must accumulate and combine in relation to the functioning of the system. For the determinants to become a ruptural principle, that is a principle contradiction, the relations between the primary and secondary components must be such that there is a desynchronization between these elements which has consequences for the system as a whole. For the determinants to become operative in secondary contradictions, the relations between some of the components of the system must be desynchronized such that when the determinants accumulate specific relations in the system become reconstituted. Therefore the determinants combine and have consequences for the system depending on which relations in the system are desynchronized. In other words the determinants of social conflict are linked to the functioning of the social action system.

The determinants of social conflict and their relation to the process of reconstitution will now be discussed. As stated, the determinants accumulate according to a value-added process and become operative in the system in terms of a principle or a secondary contradiction.

The determinants of social conflict are structural conduciveness, structural strain, generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization for action, social control.

Structural conduciveness: refers to the most general condition necessary for the process of reconstitution. The relations in the system must be disynchronized to some degree for the process of reconstitution to become operative. Depending on which relations in the system are disynchronized, a principle or a secondary contradiction may become operative. However, unless this determinant combines with the other determinants, the system at this general level may remain disynchronized for a long time.

Structural strain: refers to the particular levels at which the relations in the system are disynchronized. This determinant can assume significance within the scope established by prior conditions of conduciveness. To classify the types of strain in the system the relations between the components must be examined. Depending on which relations are strained, a principle or a secondary contradiction can become operative in the system. However, both structural conduciveness and structural strain may exist before contradictions become active in a process of reconstitution.

Generalized beliefs: refer to the identification of the conditions of strain by a plurality of actors. The crystallization of generalized beliefs has the function of identifying or 'explaining' the sources of strain. Generalized beliefs can exist before becoming active in the process of reconstitution. Under conditions of conduciveness and strain however, generalized beliefs come into play as determinants of social conflict. Once the source of strain is identified, the location of disynchronization becomes more determinant with regard to whether a ^{ncipal} primary or secondary contradiction will become operative in the system.

Precipitating factors: sharpen the definition of strain and conduciveness by activating the existence of these latter determinants. Precipitating factors must occur in the context of other determinants to have significance in the process of reconstitution. These factors relate to the particular strain experienced in the system. If there is present a desynchronization between the primary and secondary components, then one or more precipitating factors serve to identify and activate this desynchronization. In the same way precipitating factors can activate the desynchronized relations that refer to secondary contradictions. Precipitating factors are logically prior to mobilization on the grounds that when the definition of strain is sufficiently sharpened the final necessary condition is that actors be mobilized in terms of the definition of strain.

Mobilization of action: refers to the plurality of actors who 'prepare' for the activation of a principle or secondary contradiction. Once the other determinants are established, the final necessary condition to bring a collectivity into action is the mobilization of its actors. The process of reconstitution is therefore not a mechanistic development of contradictions in the system, in each stage it is the actors who are its motivating force. Depending on the relations in the system which are desynchronized, the actors are mobilized in terms of a principle or secondary contradiction. In some cases the actors may be mobilized during the early stages of the operation of determinants or they may become mobilized during the actual outcome of conflict in the system.

Social control: refers to those counter-determinants which at any stage prevent or inhibit the accumulation of determinants. There are social controls which minimize

conduciveness and strain and prevent the development of a process of reconstitution, and those which emerge only after social conflict becomes operative in the system.

The accumulation of these determinants according to a value-added sequence, indicates the way in which the process of reconstitution develops and becomes operative for the relations in the social action system. These determinants are based on Smelser's (1970) determinants of collective behaviour. Smelser suggests the operation of the determinants in terms of a value-added process in which each determinant constitutes a necessary stage in the development of an outburst of collective behaviour. However, in relation to the structural components of action the functioning of these determinants differs fundamentally from Smelser's conception.

Briefly, Smelser views the components of action as organized according to a hierarchy with values as the component that is central to the reconstitution of all the other components in the system. This is not to say that Smelser ignores the functioning of the determinants in relation to the material components (as defined in this study) of action. Smelser suggests that logically in terms of his conception of the hierarchy of components, a change in the definition of values would radically alter the organization of the components in the system. Logically, changes (or a reconstitution) of elements of what he calls "situational facilities" do not involve changes in the norms or values, in the system. In other words according to Smelser (1970, pp. 33-34):

Changes in basic values entail changes in the definition of norms, organization (roles of collectiveness) and facilities (material components). Changes in norms entail changes in the definition of organization and facilities, but not values. Changes in organization entail changes in the definition of facilities but not norms or values. Changes in facilities, finally, do not necessarily impose any changes on the other components. (My insertions)

Smelser emphasizes that this is a logical conception of reconstitution and that empirical modifications at the lower levels that is, particularly at the level of situational facilities may initiate changes in the organization of roles, or accumulate to redefine norms or values. Logically, Smelers' conception differs from the explanation of the process of reconstitution adopted in this study in the following ways:

- (i) According to Smelser, a redefinition of values gives rise to a redefinition of the other components in a system. This differs from a principle contradiction in that a redefinition of values in relation to the material components constitutes a reconstitution of all the relations in the system.
- (ii) According to Smelser, a redefinition of norms does not entail a redefinition of values. This differs from a secondary contradiction in that a disynchronization between norms and values can give rise to a reconstitution of both values and norms.
- (iii) According to Smelser, a redefinition of situational facilities does not logically entail a redefinition of either norms or values. This differs from another type of secondary contradiction in which a disynchronous relationship between some of the elements of the normative components in relation to for example, facilities, can constitute a reconstitution of part of the components in the system. Therefore a reconstitution of facilities can entail a reconstitution of norms.

When Smelser's determinants of collective behaviour are applied as determinants of social conflict in this study, it is therefore important to note Smelser's organization of the components of action and his conception of interrelation during the process of reconstitution.

The theoretical problems relevant to an explanation of social conflict in this study have focused on:

- (1) social conflict as a particular form of action, where action is defined in terms of the voluntaristic postulate;
- (2) the process of reconstitution seen as related to the components of action which become reconstituted according to the principle of dialectical contradictions in the system;
- (3) the social action system as the structurally given reference point from which the process of reconstitution is explained;
- (4) a definition of social conflict and the determinants of conflict within the social action system.

Given the resolution of these theoretical problems it is now possible to proceed with a conclusion of this study and with an outline of a general theory of social conflict.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

(1) OUTLINE OF A GENERAL THEORY
OF SOCIAL CONFLICT

The development of an explanation of social conflict in this study has been governed by certain procedural considerations:

- (i) the location of the problem, that is, the posing of the problem within a particular methodological and theoretical framework;
- (ii) the definition of the problem, that is, in terms of a methodological and theoretical position;
- (iii) the formulation of an explanatory framework, that is, an outline of a theory of social conflict.

The solution to these problems is not self-evident, even if it can be said that the 'truth' or 'essence' of social conflict already exists in empirical reality. Neither can the theoretical expression of a solution be taken for granted. The location of the problem, its specific definition, and the development of a theory requires theoretical labour. Hence the emphasis on theoretical activity which transforms the expression of a problem into a systematically structured framework within which the problem can be explained. The theoretical activity in this study has aimed at the development of a framework for a theory of social conflict. In terms of the commitment to the formulation of a scientific theory of social conflict, the theoretical activity has focused specifically on theory validation and formulation within scientific methodology.

In order to formulate a theory of social conflict the general issues relating to the logic of justification and explanation are seen as fundamental with regard to the theoretical activity in this study.

Sociologists too often short-circuit their analysis of particular problems by leaving unexamined their methodological and theoretical premises. The price of this neglect is undoubtedly formless eclecticism.

If sociological theory is to be taken seriously it must come to terms with what can be called the burning questions of the sociologists' commitment to science. Only then can the laments that sociology consists of no theories of social reality be confidently challenged. For the prerequisite of the development of theories in a discipline is the explication of methodological and theoretical premises within a common court of appeal. In this case, the scientific court of appeal.

The methodological premises of social conflict refer to the question of 'How' social conflict can be explained. By means of a critical examination of certain methodological problems, a methodological position was developed. The fundamental premises are outlined as follows:

- (i) It is maintained that the problem of explanation must be seen in terms of the general canons of the scientific method. Therefore the problem of explanation is located within the framework constituted by scientific methodology. More specifically, in relation to the validation and formulation of a theory of social conflict.
- (ii) Therefore the validation of a theory of social conflict is characterized by a common logic of justification, the rationale by which an explanation is accepted or rejected. The plea for a separate logic of justification was dismissed on the grounds that the logic of justification does not refer to the problems encountered in the sphere of empirical inquiry, but is constituted by the criteria (the rationale) in terms of which an explanation is accepted or rejected. Further, given this view, the logic of justification is not a matter of the different techniques utilized in empirical inquiry. The misconceptions relating to the nature and function of science

were critically examined in terms of the reproductive fallacy. The aim of science is the systematic accumulation of knowledge for the purposes of explanation and prediction. This aim does not include the reproduction of social reality (an impossible task for a scientist or anyone else).

- (iii) Given the acceptance of a common logic of justification the construction of an explanation of social conflict is based on the logic of explanation inherent in scientific formulations. The systematization of concepts and propositions in a logically integrated system, demands the construction of a theory of social conflict. A theoretical system is seen as a structural point of reference from which it becomes possible to explain the phenomenon of social conflict. The liberal claim for partial formalization is seen as a strategy for theory construction in the social sciences. The aim of a fully formalized deductive theory remains an ideal of science and is not viewed as a restrictive criterion inhibiting theory construction. Neither does the plea for partial formalization legitimate a claim for methodological separatism. Theoretical activity would be removed from the realm of the scientific enterprise if partial formalization necessitated a claim for methodological separatism.

Given the location of the problem of explanation within the framework of the scientific method, the following premises, specifically with reference to social conflict are adopted:

- (i) Social conflict seen as a dynamic process is accessible to analysis when the concepts 'structure' and 'function' are methodologically admitted. Only the identification of a structural point of reference makes it possible to examine the functioning of a system. The methodological approach in terms of this assumption is termed the Structural-Functional approach. The criticism of a formalistic structuralism or a static functionalism indicates the necessity of linking the

concepts structure and function in such a way that social conflict can be examined as a dynamic process.

- (ii) The dialectic as a system of relational logic is a method capable of conceptualizing social conflict as a process of reconstitution. The components of the system interrelate (fuse) indicating a disynchronization between the relations in the system. This disynchronization was conceptualized as giving rise to contradictions which 'rupture' the internal relations of the system. The relations of the system can be disynchronized so that a reconstitution of the system as a whole (principle contradiction) takes place, or a partial reconstitution (secondary contradiction) of the relations in the system takes place.
- (iii) In terms of the premises of dialectical materialism a logical distinction is made between the primary (material) and secondary (normative) components of the system. The process of reconstitution refers to the functioning of both these components (that is, their interrelation). Materialism (which reduces the dynamics of a system to the material components) and idealism (which reduces the dynamics of a system to the emanation of normative components), are rejected as scientifically inadmissible positions for the purposes of the logic of an explanation of social conflict.

The theoretical premises of the study of social conflict refer to the question of 'What' concepts and propositions are required to explain social conflict, given the assumption that it entails a process of interrelation and reconstitution of the relations in a system. The fundamental premises are outlined as follows:

- (i) Social conflict is a form of voluntaristic action. The emphasis on social conflict as a form of action indicates that it is human actors who are the *primum agens* in the process of reconstitution. The conception of voluntarism is predicated on the assumption that the process of action itself

is comprised of an interrelationship of material (primary) and normative (secondary) components. In terms of the premises of dialectical materialism, these components are hierarchically organized and form the 'limits' within which action takes place. An idealist or materialist position denies the interrelation of these components and neglects human action as the motive force in social processes. Social conflict as a process of reconstitution refers to the disynchronization of the relations between the components of the voluntaristic action system.

- (ii) Given the assumption of voluntarism and dialectical materialism, the social action system is taken as the structurally given point of reference (in contrast to the individual action system) from which to analyse the process of reconstitution. The social action system consists of a plurality of actors, collectivities, interacting within the hierarchically organized structural components, institutions. The conception of voluntarism is extended to collectivities, and the process of reconstitution refers to the disynchronous relations between the institutions of the social action system. The institutions are logically constituted by the primary (material) components and secondary (normative) components of social action. A principle contradiction refers to the process of reconstitution which becomes operative for the relations of the system as a whole, and refers to the interrelation of the primary and secondary components. The interrelation between these components may also give rise to a secondary contradiction which has consequences for only some of the relations in the system. The interrelation between the elements of the secondary components may also give rise to a secondary contradiction which does not have consequences for the relations of the system as a whole.

The social action system is the most general structurally given point of reference for the analysis of the process of reconstitution. Therefore the social action system forms the unit of analysis in a general theory of social conflict.

(iii) The determinants of social conflict refer to the functioning of the structural components in the social action system. The operation of determinants during a process of reconstitution is conceived of in terms of a value-added logic. Each determinant is logically necessary for the next to become operative, and the combination of every determinant is the sufficient condition for the outcome of social conflict in the social action system. (The determinants are structural conduciveness, structural strain, crystallization of a generalized belief, precipitating factors, mobilization for action, social control.) If the relations in the system are desynchronized in such a way as to fuse (interrelate) into a ruptural principle, the combination of the determinants becomes operative in a process which results in a principle contradiction. In other words the structural relations in the system as a whole are reconstituted. If the relations in the system are desynchronized and fuse into a ruptural unit, the combination of the determinants becomes operative in a process which results in a secondary contradiction. That is to say, parts of the relations in the system are reconstituted.

These methodological and theoretical premises constitute an outline of a general theory of social conflict. The analysis of conflict is not conceived of as possible without the outline presented in this study — the outline constitutes the fundamental premises on which to base a general theory of social conflict. Hence the task of this study — Social Conflict : Towards a Methodological and Theoretical Position.

(2) CONTEMPORARY 'CONFLICT' THEORIES

Contemporary 'conflict' theorists have focused on particular aspects of the phenomenon of social conflict. Smelser (1970) has studied collective behaviour and given an outline of a general theory of collective behaviour. Dahrendorf (1969) has produced an account of class conflict in modern industrial society.

Rex (1970) has attempted to develop a conflict model of the social system. Other theorists have studied the functions of conflict, revolution, social change, and international conflict. A critical review of these recent theories in terms of the fundamental premises adopted in this study can serve as a basis for the analysis of the shortcomings encountered in contemporary theories of social conflict. Smelser, Dahrendorf, and Rex are briefly discussed for the purpose of illustrating some of the issues raised by this study.

Smelser adopts the Parsonian framework of action and looks at collective behaviour. The structural components are hierarchically organized such that values are central to the functioning of the social action system. According to Smelser, collective behaviour analysed as a process involves the reconstitution (or redefinition) of the structural components of the system. Although Smelser sees values as central to the functioning of the system, he has attempted to formulate a theory of collective behaviour that gives weight to the material components of action or what he has termed situational facilities. This is indicated by the emphasis he gives to factors such as structural conduciveness and structural strain as determinants of collective behaviour. However, Smelser's view of the hierarchical relations between the components of action, commits him to a position of value determinism with regard to the process of reconstitution which becomes operative for the relations of the system as a whole. As previously stated, he does not neglect the importance of the other components of action but he does not stress the interrelationship between the normative components and the non-normative components in a process whereby the system as a whole is reconstituted. The premise of the interrelation of the components of social action is fundamental to a voluntaristic conception of social conflict — a refutation of value determinism (and a materialist determinism).

Smelser's definition of collective behaviour as the mobilization of action to reconstitute a component of social action on the basis of a generalized belief, is not satisfactory in terms of the postulate of voluntarism. Social conflict as a form of collective behaviour involves action which consists of both normative components (beliefs)

and material components (situational facilities). The process of reconstitution is rooted in the conditions of action and oriented towards (or in terms of) particular beliefs. While Smelser does specify the determinant conditions which give rise to a process of reconstitution, his definition of collective behaviour implies an emphasis on the normative components of action.

Smelser's view of collective behaviour is based on the assumption that collective behaviour is an uninstitutionalized mobilization of action. The implication of this view is that the structures of social action are not in themselves constitutive of conflict. While it may be acceptable to see some incidents of collective behaviour as exogenous, for example, a panic during a sudden fire in a cinema, it is not legitimate to claim that all incidents of collective behaviour are external to the functioning of the structures of the social action system. Smelser's proposition that collective behaviour is uninstitutionalized appears to contradict his conceptualization of the determinants of collective behaviour. The accumulation of the determinants relate to the internal structure of the system, for example, structural strain, social control, precipitating factors. If Smelser is saying that collective behaviour is uninstitutionalized in terms of the dominant values of a particular system, then his meaning of the term is unclear. The mobilization of participants for action, the crystallization of generalized beliefs in a norm-oriented or a value-oriented movement (two forms of collective behaviour which Smelser analyses) involve institutionalized action, whether the action is viewed in terms of the dominant values of a system or not. The crucial question is whether a process of reconstitution such as a norm-oriented or value-oriented social movement arises out of conditions which are external to the functioning of the system. If this is what Smelser implies by collective behaviour as uninstitutionalized, he is refuting the fundamental premise that the process of reconstitution is internal to the functioning of the components of the system.

Dahrendorf retains a revised definition of Marx's concept of class and analyses a specific aspect of conflict. According to Dahrendorf conflict is generated within the institutional structures

of modern industrial society. Conflict arises from, and is related to the authority structures inherent in institutions or what he terms imperatively co-ordinated associations. Therefore, in contrast to Smelser, Dahrendorf sees conflict as intrinsically related to the elements of the social structure itself. In modern industrial society conflict is institutionalized, a process incorporated in the functioning of the social structure.

Dahrendorf maintains that conflict arises in different segments of the social structure, for example, the political institutions, or the economic institutions. However, he does not attempt to analyse the relations of conflict between different institutions, but claims that conflict varies from institution to institution according to the relations of authority.

It has been suggested in this study that conflict arises between the elements of the components of the social action system, for example material components and normative components, or norms and values. The process of reconstitution refers to the structural components (of social action) in their dynamic interrelation within a systemic frame of reference. Dahrendorf suggests that in modern industrial society the conflict relations within institutional structures do not necessarily have consequences for the reconstitution of the system as a whole, unless the conflicts in particular institutions are superimposed upon one another. The critical question with regard to the systematization of an explanation of social conflict is the construction of a structural point of reference from which it is possible to analyse the consequences of conflict for the relations between the components of the system taken as a whole, or relation between the elements of the system.

Dahrendorf's view of institutions as based on coercion, that is, on patterns of domination and subjection is inconsistent with his proposition that social structures tend toward conflict and change. If he defines authority as legitimate power then authority relations are characterized by the legitimation of dominance and subjection. The process of reconstitution refers to the contradiction or disynchronization in the relations of the system, and therefore one of the conditions which give rise to disynchronization is predicated on

the strain existing in the system. Thus a breakdown of legitimacy is implied. The further implication of Dahrendorf's view of coercion is that conflict in the sense of reconstitution, is not logically possible within the structures of authority in an imperatively co-ordinated association. Dahrendorf discusses the basis of conflict in society but does not conceptualize how conflict itself functions to reconstitute the relations of authority. He discusses the formation of conflict groups in terms of manifest and latent interests but does not analyse the process of conflict itself. If conflict is to be viewed as a form of voluntaristic action which reconstitutes the structural relations in a system, then it is crucial to conceptualize the way in which conflict becomes operative in a system.

Rex attempts to formulate a conflict model of the social system. He agrees with Dahrendorf that conflict is related to the structures of the social system, that is, conflict arises from the functioning of the structures within the social system. Rex, in contrast to Dahrendorf, maintains that conflict does not vary randomly in the system but relates to the system taken as a whole even if conflict is present only in different segments of the system.

Rex suggests that the basis of conflict is characterized by the balance of power in society and the actual process of conflict itself involves the interrelation of the material and normative components of the system. Social conflict as a form of action within this framework, is characterized by the interaction of ruling groups and subordinate groups (in terms of their relation to the balance of power). If there is a change in the balance of power, Rex argues that the relations of the system as a whole may change (or be reconstituted). He maintains that it is important for a conflict model to include concepts that conceptualize change in a system.

Rex's conflict model represents a valuable attempt at formulating an approach to social conflict. His focus on the action frame of reference indicates a concern with the conception of conflict as voluntaristic, a process involving both the normative and material components of action (as termed by him, the means and ends of action). He views

conflict as a process taking place within the structures of the social system and conceptualizes conflict as a process of dynamic change in the structures of the system. Rex has contributed to the task of systematizing an approach to social conflict.

It is firmly maintained that if the sociological study of social conflict can apply the premises outlined in this study the task of developing a theory of social conflict will not be relegated to the realm of the impossible. Neither will the study of social conflict be viewed with scepticism and criticised as irrelevant with regard to the crises faced in Western society. For as Bottomore (1970, p. 153) suggests:

Conflict is an intrinsic part of social life, sustaining, modifying, or destroying the social groups in which it takes place. It cannot be treated satisfactorily as a minor and exceptional form of social relationship, in a brief apologetic appendix to a theory of social solidarity, as has so often been done. Whether we like it or not, we shall have to pay increasing attention to conflicts of interest and doctrine, and to the role of violence in upholding or overthrowing a social system, if we are to explain events and provide the means by which men can make reasonable choices between alternative courses of social action. And on the other side we shall need to eliminate from sociological thought the vestiges of the melting pot ideology, which assumes that vast inequalities of wealth, power, and enjoyment can and should be harmoniously accommodated without any fundamental changes in the structure of society.

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