

THE NEW SOCIOLOGY: STRICTLY FOR EUROPEANS

By

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PROLOGUE

It would not be surprising to find some citizens from the ex-colonial world who still have living memories of «Europeans Only» signs on various public utilities in their colonised countries. This was a sign of insecurity on the part of those who were laying claim to what did not belong to them. No citizen in his native Europe would have thought of it. Yet, the Europeanness of the colonists is something which hardly anybody denies. Underlying this is a pervasive system of antinomies. All European extensions, including the United States of America and the former British dominions, are in a fundamental sense European. This is given substance by the intrusive and imposing European bourgeois civilisation. At the socio-cultural level this has to include Eastern Europeans, despite the apparent differences between them and the Western Europeans in style of life and stated ideologies. It is to this European intrusiveness that the modern world owes its shape. But this has to be understood dialectically. If at first European imperialism succeeded precisely by crushing non-European identities, eventually it succeeded in raising them to new heights. Third World nationalism, like its foster parent, European imperialism, is not simply national but universalistic in its rules of exclusion. There are now forms of thought or of doing which are regarded as for «Europeans Only» in the ethnocentric sense.

This is a sociological observation which is not fully grasped even by sociologists in the North. They often confuse liberal paternalism with revolutionary transformation of thought patterns. The root cause of this is the persistent European belief in the universality of their science. In the true rationalist tradition it is supposed that not only can reflective individuals see the limitations of their thought systems but can always overcome them. The idea of self-correcting scientific/rational thought overlooks a number of theoretical considerations regarding the process of knowledge-making. Among these may be mentioned the fact that, bourgeois individualism notwithstanding, knowledge-making is profoundly social. By this is meant not the now fashionable collaboration among members of a given scientific community but the fact that the direction and the content of scientific enquiry are socially determined. However, these determinations do not occur everyday but rather coincide with identifiable historical changes which are always preceded by intolerable social crises. Here we confront the basic contradiction in the transformation of human societies.

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In the normal process of social reproduction *homo faber* creates circumstances which ultimately lead to contradictions. In the interests of the same process of reproduction *homo sapiens* refuses to acknowledge the contradictions until they become socially intolerable i.e. until social reproduction cannot be guaranteed on the same basis as before.

At first glance this metaphor would seem to be at variance with European notions of progress, especially technical progress. Indeed, it is undeniable that in the last forty years Europe has witnessed the most spectacular technological advances. Nonetheless, during the same period Europe suffered visible decay which is best exemplified by the problem of *pollution*. Now do we explain the scientific inability of the Europeans to deal with the contradictions which emanate from their glorious advances? The answer must reside ultimately in the same desire to guarantee social production and reproduction on the same basis as before. Then, what of *homo sapiens* and the vaunted European rationality? Along with John MILTON, we may enquire accusingly «Where ye nymphs when Lycidas died?».

The idea that crises are a necessary condition for radical or historical change would seem self-evident, especially to social scientists since «social problems» are their professional preoccupation. But at what point do social problems amount to a societal crisis? Supposedly, when they are no longer amenable to the usual practical and theoretical rationalisations. Despite lingering neo-Hegelian predispositions, this is perfectly in accord with the distinction Thomas KUHN sought to make in 1962 between «normal science» and «scientific revolutions». Whereas the former is part of the process of social/scientific reproduction in a given set-up, the latter is a negation of the *status quo* and is born of inexplicable anomalies. According to KUHN, repeated anomalies constitute a scientific crisis which can only be resolved by the emergence of a new and incompatible paradigm. «Incompatible» can here be construed as the acknowledgement of an ultimate contradiction by the natural scientist.

Here, we enter an area of ambiguity, as the said contradiction could be internal or external to the scientific community. KUHN failed to overcome this ambiguity and, instead, resorted to psychologism and sociologism, as is charged by his Popperian critics. This is attributable to two main factors, namely, his retention of the philosophy of the individual as the maker of knowledge and the traditional European separation between ideology and science. This makes it impossible to discern the permutations of the same basic contradiction in society at different levels of social discourse. Natural science, no less than social science, is thoroughly social. It is communication about things among people in relation to socially determined goals. But in historical society such determinations have never been uniform. Science in its practice reflects this unevenness and is subject to the contradictions and crises generated by it. In so far as this is true, science and ideology are constitutive of each other. This is not to say that the two, as methods of discourse, are indistinguishable. Analytically, each is governed by its own standards of validation. This as it may, no practising scientist thinks of himself at one moment as a bearer of ideology and at

another as a scientist. On the contrary, each tries to rationalise his total existence by making the «right» choices. Therefore, we wonder what choices were made on behalf of the International Sociological Association for its crucial congress in 1982.

SOCIOLOGY: THE STATE OF THE ART

This was the title of the report submitted by the Research Council of the International Sociological Association (ISA) at the 10th Congress of the association in Mexico in 1982. It symbolised the felt-need among sociologists to make some critical choices in their profession. After a prolonged crisis in sociology which had been so forebodingly announced by GOULDNER (1971), the Research Council decided to launch a series of reports on current sociological research which were to coincide with the four-yearly meetings of the ISA. However, this does not seem to have sufficed, for the Council found it necessary to give a sharper focus to the research effort than had been hitherto. It gave its research committees a mandate «either to concentrate on those theories and/or methodologies most often used in their given subareas of sociology... or to concentrate on the most controversial theories and/or methodologies». According to the organisers, the call by the Research Council was met with great enthusiasm. About thirty papers were presented at the preparatory meeting in Poland in August, 1980. Nearly, half of these appeared in the final report which was distributed in Mexico. The success of the enterprise can be measured by the fact that in 1983 Sage Publications announced that *Sociology: the State of the Art* was one of its best selling titles. And yet, this leaves a number of basic questions unanswered.

First, it may be noted that the authors of *Sociology: the State of the Art* were European or North American to the man/woman. Second, as judged by the leaders, the authors reflected best the current sociological concerns in this part of the world. To think of it, there is no sociology but European and American sociology. However, it is generally acknowledged that there are sociologists outside the northern hemisphere. In fact, SMELSER and co-authors reported that they had polled them as well but drew nearly a blank: «Most of the 100 replies we received were from North Americans (50 %), Europeans (25 %) and Asians (15 %); few questionnaires were returned from Latin-America (less than 10 %), although almost as many were mailed to them as to North Americans and Europeans» (*Sociology*, p. 157). The exceptions from the southern hemisphere are equally interesting: «We received replies from scholars residing in nearly every European nation, the Middle East from Israel, Egypt, and Turkey, and in Asia from Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. From Latin-America most replies came from Brazilian scholars (most likely explained by the Brazilian representation on our Executive Committee), while from Africa we heard from Kenyans, Senegaleses, and South Africans», further reported SMELSER and co-authors (op. cit., p. 157). They were wise enough not to give a sociological explanation for this anomaly. Yet, one suspects that this would have brought us closer to the underlying logic and, perhaps, to the realisation of a truly new sociology.

Even the least conscious sociologist would grant that representations from countries such as Israel, South Africa and Japan have a negative appeal to Third World nationalists. Countries such as Kenya, Senegal, Thailand and Brazil, while accepted as part of the Third World, have been lampooned as lackeys of the West which qualify for the damning epithet, «neo-colonialist». Whereas this is not applicable at the level of the individual, it is a question whether or not SMELSER and his friend would have got any response from countries such as Tanzania, Algeria, Mozambique, Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua and even Mexico where the 10th congress of ISA was held. This is neither a question of communist ideology, as is shown by the active participation of the Eastern Europeans, nor lack of a sociological establishment, as is revealed by the non-representation of most of the Latin-American countries, India and Nigeria in Africa. The contrasting examples of Third World countries given above are not meant as an invitation to the unwary to start quibbling about exceptions of any sort. It is rather a bold warning that there is a general conspiracy in Third World countries against European intellectual and ideological hegemony. As in any movement its moments are amplified or flattened according to individual countries. But the ideological and intellectual pressure cuts across countries, as is evinced by the formation of organisations such as the Third World Forum, the Third World Association of Economists or the South-South Forum. In the context of these organisations European presuppositions are readily spurned.

At the ISA congress in Mexico there was underlying tension, which even Fernando CARDOSO, the Brazilian or Latin-American representative, could not diffuse altogether. Among the young Mexican/Spanish-speaking sociologists there was the not-so-hidden feeling that they were being expropriated, intellectually, by the North. In a more subtle way C.S. DUBÉ, the doyen of Indian anthropology, used the Indian anthropological viewpoint, to highlight the fact that there is more than one world of reference. His frequent references to GHANDI confirmed the impression that his is a Third World liberal nationalism. In contrast, yet another Indian delegate rejected outrightly European rationalism and the idea of a universalising science. In his case this included BACON's and NEWTON's *principia mathematica* as well as Marxism. This discontinuous perception was echoed by an American Indian in a special session on nuclear disarmament. He asked damningly, «What difference does it make to me as an American Indian whether the super-powers destroy each other or not?» In a subsequent workshop in Rome in December, 1982, the members of the South-South Forum summarised their views as follows: «We support the peace movement, but we reserve the right to fight for our independence». The search for an independent identity is as strong as it is real. But how is it understood by the North, sociologically?

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE NEW SOCIOLOGY

Out of thirteen contributions to *Sociology: the State of the Art*, only two papers dealt with this issue: «Recent Trends in Theory and Methodology in the Study of Economy and Society» by Harry MAKLER,

Arnaud SALES and Neil SMELSER; and «Innovate Processes in Social Change: Theory, Method and Social Practice» by Ulf HIMMELSTRAND. In what has become a customary sociological way of dealing with the Third World, SMELSER *et. al.* use modernisation theories as their point of departure. They see recent development in the study of economy and society as a movement away from two main presuppositions: a) the «convergence thesis which presupposed that nations, as they develop irregularly and by different paths, will come to resemble one another more and more»; and b) the stress on internal factors or traditionalism as determinants of economic and social change. This started off as an internal liberal critique by writers such as GUSFIELD, GERSCHENKRON and BENDIX, followed by «more radical attacks» from the ECLA writers such as PREBISCH, FURTADO, SUNKEL and Pedro PAZ, and culminated in the formulation of the «dependency theory» by writers such as CARDOSO, FRANK, DOS SANTOS, QUIJANO and MARINI. Here, SMELSER *et. al.* mention but do not emphasize the division of the world into «developed» and underdeveloped» nations. However, they acknowledge the fact that we reach the point of no return in the work of writers such as Samir AMIN, PALLOIX, WALLERSTEIN and MICHALET: «These works mark the most radical rejection of the modernization theorists' stress on internal determinants, obstacles, and stages of development». In conclusion SMELSER *et. al.* note that the analysis of these writers is «informed by neo-Marxist and other conflict perspectives».

Without going into the question of what conflict or contradiction, SMELSER and collaborators reported that «Practically all or 90 % of our respondents indicated that Marxist or neo-Marxist approaches are most used in the study of the economy and society» in the past 20 years. What was even more surprising to the investigators is the fact that most of those who thought that «a Marxist theoretical and methodological approach held most promise for future studies» were not «Third Worlders» but North Americans, followed by Europeans. But the sample was 75 % in their favour and nothing significant could be said about Third World scholars on its basis. A few of the respondents who were mostly Europeans and Asians thought that «a Marxist combined with a Weberian approach had grown in the past 20 years and held great promise for future research». Some South and North Americans shared the same point of view, the significance of this will probably come out later. Only a few respondents subscribed to the World System Analysis and a mere half a dozen respondents, «mostly from the Third World and Canada» were *dependentistas*. How so? Is it again a problem of a biased sample? The last entry in the survey is «a few remnants of the modernization and social-psychological approaches» among the respondents. No attempt was made in the review to advocate any particular theoretical or methodological approach. The most the authors offered was «... the four we have described will likely be the most conspicuous during the coming decade». This optimism is more an article of faith than a result of the actual polling in the survey.

In contrast to SMELSER and co-authors, Ulf HIMMELSTRAND in his contribution was concerned to advertise a particular methodology viz., «participatory action-research». However, «Modernisation and Diffusion of Innovations» was the brief of his working group. HIMMELSTRAND

reported that their sessions were characterised by a controversy between modernisation theorists who upheld the «diffusion-of-innovation» approach and sociologists from the «less developed countries» who saw «modernisation» as an excuse for imperialist penetration, neo-colonialism and class exploitation. These are familiar theoretical postures and HIMMELSTRAND believes that neither of them is «value-free or strictly scientific but rather ideological». He saw this as a problem: «A theoretical difficulty common to both sides... is the fact that both sides tend to be idealistic or subjectivistic in their approach», he declares.

In spite of these difficulties, HIMMELSTRAND believes that good progress was made by his research committee. The term, «modernisation» with all its «distasteful» connotations, was expunged from their vocabulary. The effects of diffusion were studied «in a more matter-of-fact manner without implying anything in particular about related broad-ranging social changes. «Such an example was a study by Hage and Hollingsworth on «Centralisation and the Diffusion Process of Medical Innovation». Apparently, East Europeans were not impressed with this terminological refinement. They stubbornly adhered to the term «modernisation». HIMMELSTRAND surmises that: «... the modernisation approach with its emphasis on impacts coming from outside or from the centre rather than from within the periphery, is more congenial to more centralized political and economic systems..., as is the case in most socialist countries». However, he concedes – perhaps too readily – that «In welfare terms modernisation in socialist countries has led to much more widely acceptable outcome than modernisation in developing countries, or even in some capitalist countries».

HIMMELSTRAND finds it very difficult to reconcile his conjecture about socialist states and the fact that modernisation theories originated from super-capitalist America. One way of cutting through this particular Gordian-knot would have been to accept the logical deduction that the theory of modernisation, like any other theory, serves the purpose of rationalising social control. In this case this would be domination or control from above which always facilitate appropriation or expropriation. This is as true of imperialist domination as it is of bureaucratic socialism. HIMMELSTRAND obfuscated the issue by concerning himself with varied ameliorations among all and sundry. Yet, historically, the indubitable object of modernisation theories was what is now called the Third World or underdeveloped countries – not Europe or even the eastern kind. Indeed, HIMMELSTRAND does us a disservice by drawing a parallel between TONNIE's *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* and the traditionalism-modernity paradigm. European classical sociological theory was *not instrumentalist* in its assumptions. TONNIE did not favour the *Gesellschaft* over the *Gemeinschaft*. If anything, he regretted the undermining of the latter. Whether under the influence of the instrumentalist philosophy of John DEWEY or the rising tide of technological revolution in the New World, American modernisation theorists took for granted the «passing of tradition» and glorified industrialism or modernity. It is this instrumentalism that the Americans have in common with the Eastern European bureaucratic socialists and the new right-wing industrialism in Western Europe. The

so-called nuclear crisis in the North is a direct result of the desire for social domination through technology. As MARCUSE had warned, technology has got abstracted even from the *Gesellschaft*. Both Western and Eastern Europeans are urging their clients in the Third World to take advantage of western technology. This convergence has met with increasing divergence from the South, as is shown by the uncompromising rejection of modernisation theories. As the Indian enquired, «If the two elephant bulls fight, why should I, the grass, suffer?» The reply from a northern cynic, which HIMMELSTRAND is not, could be: «Grow and be as tall as elephant grass».

Having failed to push his argument to its logical conclusion, HIMMELSTRAND was posed for a compromise or petit-reformism. He retreated from the broader implications of modernisation theories in «politically repressive... Eastern European state socialism» and in the Third World into the niceties of social democracy. He admits just as much when he states: «We now have nothing particular to say about the broader context of change to which our deserted grand notion was referring. We are better guarded against critical attacks, but also more limited». In the circumstances HIMMELSTRAND derives solace from the fact that: «The contradictions of capitalism, particularly where it is combined with pluralist democracy... provides more issues and more scope for critical sociology, and thus for opposition to an approach as dominant as the DIA (Diffusion-Innovation-Approach) used to be». What are the attributes of critical sociology and what kind of theories is it capable of generating?

It transpires that the ingredients of HIMMELSTRAND's critical sociology are «'conscientisation' and action», combined with a «methodological bias for participatory action-research». HIMMELSTRAND is careful to dissociate himself from the instrumentalism of Kurt LEWIN (1948). His counter-proposition, formulated in a bowl-of-wax fashion, is that:

«Participatory action-research is rather an inseparable combination of theory, research and practice characterised by a dialogue between actors and researchers enlightening the actors as well as researchers about the meaning of the action intended, and eventually resulting in an increasing autonomy of actors in relationship to researchers, and to an emancipation from questionable and restraining beliefs in the inevitability of the given order of things».

Careful analysis would show that implicit in this proposition is a number of assumptions which amount to nothing less than theoretical or sociological fallacies. In the kind of research proposed above, effectively, what would be the dividing line between determining the objectives of the research in advance and the determination of the location of the research as well as the identification of the target group in advance? Secondly, if the researcher reserves the right to liberate, be it through «maieutic dialogue», the voice of the actors from mistaken «reflections of hegemonic socio-political relations», then what would be the basis for authenticity: «Their own voice»? By acknowledging the existence of a liberator with greater discretionary sense than the actors, do not action researchers exhibit the usual liberal paternalism? Does this not reveal the refractory nature of ideology and the imperatives of unevenly developed knowledge in class society?

Before we go into any further discussion of the contradictory nature of «discourse-oriented action-research» and its ultimate theoretical incoherence, it is important to point out that, historically, there might be nothing new about it. In what is known as «participatory observation» anthropologists have long-used the technique of discourse-oriented interviews and learning by participating in the social activities of the people under study, something which at times led to ameliorative action. The difference, however, is that the anthropologists were interested primarily in extracting authentic information from the subjects, without imposing their own views. Secondly, they were interested in producing scientific knowledge for European bourgeois society whose ideology they took for granted. Thirdly, they insisted on maintaining their autonomy as observers. The guiding motto was «Be unobtrusive». The story is told of a young anthropologist in Africa who, on expressing concern about the flies on the faces of the children, was sternly reminded by her supervisor, «Your job is to count them». This notwithstanding, the field-worker was required to empathise with the natives so as to establish the necessary rapport. This position is identical to that of sociologists such as Ralph TURNER and TOURRAINE who, while not opposed to action-research, insist that empathy should not be an excuse for adopting the standpoint of the actor and that the researcher must maintain his independent sense of judgement.

On the question of «conscientisation» through inter-subjective communication, reference could be made to the influential work of Alfred SCHUTZ and his followers which is consciously «subjectivist» and un-programmatic. In addition, there is the work of Paulo FREIRE which was aimed at providing the people with their own voice by encouraging them to write their own texts. Thus, FREIRE, unlike the new action-researchers, scrupulously avoided introduction of texts from outside. Secondly, unlike the phenomenologists who treated the individual as the subject of knowledge, he looked upon the community as the appropriate subject. Finally, concerning the question of combining theory with praxis, MARX has by far the prior claim. But, unlike the later-day action-researchers, MARX's conception was strictly political and revolutionary. It had no academic pretensions and saw political agitation for what it is, imposition of contradictory ideologies which are rationalisations of particular class interests. Hence, power in society is hotly contested. For MARX, the role of the critical intellect could not be deciphered outside these social struggles. To become part of the proletarian revolution in capitalist society, the radical petit-bourgeois intellectual had to commit class suicide. Among other things, this meant ideological commitment, which does not necessarily preclude individual judgement. Indeed, theoretical squabbles and factions are legion among Marxists. Relative to classical anthropology, action-research can claim to be progressive insofar as it has abandoned the idea of «value-free» social science. But, like classical anthropology, it is plagued by liberal paternalism. Secondly, in a way reminiscent of the former, its ethnographic particularism is liable to two things: loss of a holistic view of society, and theoretical degeneration as the subjective and the parochial become predominant. This had already been the complaint against the

subjectivism and the individualism of the phenomenologists, even though they were concerned to develop a general theory. Thirdly, the petit-reformism of the action-researchers is bound to lead to political disillusionment. The fate of FREIRE and his conscientisation efforts are too well-known to be recounted here. Even stronger grounds for disquiet are provided by HIMMELSTRAND who reported more «disruption» than success in recent action-research in Sweden, where social democracy prevails. Then, one wonders what are the grounds for optimism for action-researchers such as Fals BORDA who comes from a country (Colombia) where contradictions are so acute that even a simple discourse between a peasant and his «conscientiser» might cost both their lives. When the lines are so drawn, are we not in fact talking about political subversion or revolutionary conspiracy?

It is not as if enthusiasts such as HIMMELSTRAND are oblivious of the fact that: i) «In some countries people who have come into possession of 'their own voices' are seen as politically troublesome, if not dangerous»; ii) «Such action research presupposes the absence of antagonistic interests among the actors within the projects»; iii)... the requirements of local action may... create difficulties for the researcher in fulfilling his particular role in the production and dissemination of new knowledge..., and iv) the existence of «the highly different methodological approaches also present in our research committee». Nevertheless, under a section entitled «The End of Controversy?», he makes a plea that... our controversies should not be exaggerated». To counteract the possibility of a «lax polyparadigmatic pluralism where everybody does their own thing without caring much for what others do in the fields of DIA», HIMMELSTRAND in his report hinted «... at the linkages which exist between studies of incremental changes and the growth of structural contradiction of society on the one hand, action-oriented discourse and discourse-oriented action on the other». In pursuance of this riddle he contrived a model which purported «to be neutral with regard to Marxist and non-Marxist approaches to the analysis of society».

This is the end of not only ideology but also of epistemology, as is at least understood in Europe. Coming from a specialist in methodology as it does, it must mark the limits of theoretical bankruptcy in European sociology. First, it is known that, epistemologically, theories, like languages, are characterised by their own syntax and semantics. Accordingly, it would be impossible to assimilate two languages into one syntactical form, without creating haitus. Conceivably, HIMMELSTRAND could argue that his is a meta-language since it is «neutral». This will not do, for he admits that it is capable of generating incompatible semantic categories such as are found in all existing sociological theories, be they positivist, subjectivist, idealist or Marxist (*vide Sociology*, pp. 54–62). This is contrary not only to the theory of growth of languages or knowledge but also to historical experience.

Theories, far from accomodating one another, compete for ascendancy. As any philosopher of science would admit, the growth of knowledge is accounted for by the replacement of old theories with new and incompatible ones. Indeed, in the report submitted by HIMMELSTRAND

and SMELSER *et. al.*, it is apparent that «modernisation theories» are getting discredited and are being displaced by neo-Marxist or neo-Weberian theories. It is precisely the inherent tendency in theories to undermine one another which guarantees the existence of a «dialectical community of scholars», not synthetic texts or models, as is suggested by HIMMELSTRAND. Furthermore, the inclination towards consensus models is not only impoverishing, theoretically, but is also suspect, socially and politically. One must agree with BOTTOMORE's observation in the introduction to *Sociology* that: «The diverse theoretical viewpoints of the present time cannot be regarded simply as the outcome of purely theoretical disagreements and controversies in the course of which new scientific paradigms and research strategies have emerged. They are also the products of the changing context of politics and policy-making, as is plainly recognized in many of the following papers». The last point is in doubt, for if that were the case, the futility of creating consensus models in the face of mounting social and theoretical/ideological contradictions would have been recognised. The current theoretical confrontations will persist until something new emerges from the social base.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANTI-CLIMAX

The epistemological issues implicit in current sociological debates cannot be resolved on the basis of HIMMELSTRAND's eclecticism and volitional use of concepts. First, in his discourse there is frequent confusion between methodology (epistemology) and methods or techniques. For instance, as has been indicated already, the methods or techniques used by action-researchers are not peculiar to them. They have them in common with classical anthropologists, phenomenologists and pioneers such as Paulo FREIRE. This has to be so because, as in any language, at the level of vocabulary or facts there are no necessary connections. It is only at the level of syntax or theory that such distinctive connections occur at all. Therefore, HIMMELSTRAND should not have treated action-research as a new methodology, without proffering epistemological grounds for doing so.

For that matter, the theoretical status of action-research is ambiguous. Action-research is an intellectual form of protest against the iniquities of bourgeois society, without being a negation of bourgeois society. Its supposition that knowledge could develop spontaneously as a result of inter-subjective discourse between the researcher and the voiceless is an abdication of responsibility which is confirmed by the need on the part of the researcher to bring from outside knowledge that is not given to the actors. What is the source of such knowledge, it may be asked? Pretences aside, it is apparent that the work of action-researchers is anchored in logical-positivism. Its treatment of the subjective views of the «conscientised» actors as a substitute for or as on a par with scientific knowledge is simply an unrecognized confusion of scientific with socially sound knowledge. Furthermore, action-research could, logically-speaking, be self-defeating insofar as it can only guarantee the social reproduction of «conscientised» actors but not that of better social scientists. However, it can

be assumed from first principles that action-researchers, like everybody else, do not mean to liquidate themselves. Cybernetic models, with their mystifying boxes and feed-back loops, and an insatiable quest for meta-theories by leading exponents such as Heinz MOSER and Fals BORDA testify to the professional interests and positivist inclinations of its practitioners. Ideologically, action-research can be seen as a form of *noblesse oblige* emanating from guilt-ridden petit-bourgeois intellectuals. If it is true that, intellectually and ideologically, action-research operates within the confines of bourgeois society, then what does this say about the state of the art of sociology in contemporary Europe?

So far our review has been concerned with theoretical perspectives from Western Europe and yet, included in the research committees which produced *Sociology*, were scholars from Eastern Europe. This presupposes a difference in approach, theory of society and in epistemological assumptions. Stefan NOWAK, Professor of the Methodology of the Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw, among all the contributors to the report was best placed to throw light on this matter. Whether consciously or not, Professor NOWAK evaded the issue altogether. Where HIMMELSTRAND and BOTTOMORE were willing to make specific references to the research undertaken by their colleagues and tried to elucidate on its theoretical implications, NOWAK chose to refer to trivial, hypothetical cases and to confine himself to stale scientific formalism. Examples of the latter are the attempt to associate «science» only with «propositional theories», «predictability» and «verification» in the best empiricist traditions. In his words: «When these regularities have been formulated, they constitute generalisations of social science and, if we can do that, they can eventually be systematized into propositional theories which can be used for the prediction or explanation of the phenomena which are denoted by the concepts of these theories». In addition, he believes that: «For any level of social reality ... we find a number of statements that are definitely propositional generalisations...» (no examples given). Nevertheless, NOWAK is not unmindful of the fact that: «Some sociologists are doubtful whether we will ever be able to formulate in sociology universal laws of science stating certain general relationships of constant character between phenomena or variables under specific conditions». Rightly so, for in more than a hundred years of its existence sociology has not produced a single universal law. Nor is prediction one of its attributes – maybe some informed guesses, but certainly a wealth of *studied social insights*. We shall have occasion to elaborate on the theoretical significance of the latter.

In the meantime, it is important to note that our strictures against NOWAK amount to an absolute denial of the existence or possible existence of ontological concepts or models in sociological theory. In contrast NOWAK firmly believes that:

«When one hears the term 'ontology' one thinks about a set of concepts which are in a way all-inclusive, which embrace the totality of social reality and have extremely broad areas of applicability. But if we think that these ontological models are just supplements to our

necessarily partial knowledge, that they are added by our insights and imagination to what we know about various aspects or fragments of reality, or that they stimulate these fragmentary pictures of scientific knowledge, we understand that these ontological models are not all-inclusive. They are just a partial picture of social reality seen from one particular perspective» (Sociology, p. 16).

On the basis of this and contrary to the «neo-positivistic» notion of «philosophy of science», NOWAK offers an alternative proposal: «I now suggest that we introduce another notion; namely, that of 'philosophy for science', which would formulate alternative, complementary ontological models of the human mind or of social phenomena which would really guide our future theoretical studies». How so? Had not LEVI-STRAUSS a generation ago proposed the same in vain? Despite HIMMELSTRAND's compromise solution (*Sociology*, p. 58), the fact remains that cognition is not accessible to the sociologist, except through its social manifestations. Likewise, ontological concepts, which refer to the *essence of things* in the metaphysical sense, are incompatible with sociological concepts whose field of reference is the concrete social relationships in society. Even in biology, thanks to new advances in genetics and bio-chemistry, it can no longer be argued that ontology defines phylogeny.

The relationship between cognition and social perception in human societies is even more indeterminate. Furthermore, though NOWAK makes it appear that the relationship between the two is instantaneous, in fact conception is more akin to perception than it is to conceptualisation. One is socially-derived and the other is intellectually-contrived. This is the dynamic link between the individual and his/her professional community.

NOWAK confuses this with «approach». Referring to visions or images which individual researchers might have, he says: «They may determine our 'approach' to the reality studied, here understood narrowly as a set of research questions, and consequently these visions or vague notions may eventually lead to propositional theories». While it is true that an «approach» can lead to theoretical propositions, what is crucial in the present context is the fact that the relationship between the two is asymmetrical. For instance, it is confusing, if not misleading, to refer to Marxism as an «approach», as NOWAK does. This would presuppose that included in the denotations of the term is epistemology, theory and ideological predispositions. Methodologically, this is insupportable. Social scientists would be well-advised to restrict the term to «research strategy», a pre-conceived way of asking questions, and to accept the logical implication that all theories are amenable to more than one research strategy. This is independent of the fact that such strategies may strengthen or undermine a given theory by giving rise to anomalies. The likely collision between paradigms which are derived from the same basic theory e.g. modernisation theories and their obverse, action-research, is distinguishable from the inevitable confrontation between theories which are inspired by different epistemologies e.g. Marxism and positivism.

These distinctions are lost in NOWAK's theoretical trajectory. Having failed to confront the Marxist monster in theory and practice in Eastern European societies in the same spirit as disillusioned liberals deal with their capitalist dragon, he slipped into the easy philosophy of «eclecticism». Accordingly, he recommends: i) «The application of several sets of a different concept is enough for what might be called multidimensional description, and consequently multi-dimensional comparison of the object of our study»; and ii) «The second step is the problem of theoretical explanation of our object or process with the *use of several theories at the same time* (my emphasis). We then have the problem as to which of these theories and to what degree it applies to the case in question». The answer to this question is as vacuous, syntactically and substantively, as the «meta-theoretical 'vector-like' models», the «multiperspectivistic description» or «multiperspectivistic diagnosis» NOWAK is trying to foist upon us. To justify his revisionism (in both sense of the word), he proclaims that: «We... have some societies which are more Marxist in their structure and 'behaviour' while others seem to be more Parsonian or Weberian, when we regard certain aspects of their structure, functioning, and/or change» (*vide Sociology*, pp. 20–22).

In a single shot NOWAK succeeds in committing all the imaginable methodological crimes. Use of metaphor notwithstanding, the conflation between types of theory and types of society is not only crass but is also outright reification. The supposed division of labour among different theories is unmitigated relativisation of theory – an invitation to cuckoo-land where everything is possible. The *laissez-faire* approach to concepts and theories is a negation of all epistemology, as is known in Europe. If so, the grounds for taking such a step can hardly be *ad hoc* or conversational. This is particularly so that radical departures have been made by methodologists such as HINDESS and HIRST, and FEYERABEND. Otherwise, we are unable to decide whether what we are witnessing is personal intellectual/political timidity or a general decline in European sociological thinking.

EPILOGUE

As has been remarked in the introduction, *Sociology*, whether by intention or not, turned out to be theoretical representations by Europeans. Even at that, these were by no means as comprehensive as one would have expected. Conspicuous by its absence was GALTUNG's costly research programme for the European region on Basic Needs. One would have thought that this would attract the attention of the action-researchers; and yet not. Even more striking was the general silence on the theoretical innovations by the French School of anthropologists and sociologists who drew their inspiration from ALTHUSSER's structural Marxism. In *Sociology* there is only one fleeting reference to the work of Poulantzas. Surely, a more rounded theoretical evaluation would have alluded to contributions by scholars such as GODELIER, MEILLASSOUX and REY. As far as one is aware, this is the only identifiable school in Europe which in recent years

has been able to generate a consistent set of sociological ideas. While methodologists such as NOWAK continue to babble about Marxist and Parsonian societies, these researchers have tried to push their neo-Marxist theories to the ultimate by confronting them in an uncompromising way with social reality in societies other than the European ones. Indeed, it has to be acknowledged that they are the European counterpart of *Dependencia* theory. Theoretical tension between the two is counterbalanced by ideological consonance and interest in the same *problematique*, if from different perspectives.

In contrast to the interest Third Worlders take in the French neo-Marxist school, in Mexico they showed a great deal of indifference to *Sociology*. The immediate rationalisation was that they were not interested in «listening to Europeans or Americans talking to one another». They wanted to hear «their own voices». This represented the global contradiction between the North and the South, which is subject to more than one set of rationalisations. There were those who, like the Indian delegate, called for the indigenisation of social science, without specifying in whose terms this would be instituted. In other words, while this point of view is impelled to reject impositions, it is not so impelled towards internal negations. This represents a partial critique which is subject to a number of theoretical objections. First of all, it is prone to relativisation of theory and, secondly, because of its partiality, it cannot hope for transcendence of any kind. While it is true that we can change the whole by changing the parts, we can ill-afford to substitute the parts for the whole. Intellectual communities, no less than the different parts in the global system, live together in contradiction. This means that at different historical junctures different theoretical perspectives will predominate. Wherefore, if the Third World at this historical juncture, thanks to imperialist negation discovers a new truth, would it be valid only for them or for their kind, universally?

The answer must reside in the latter, for whatever theory emerges from the Third World will inevitably be an intellectual rationalisation of the actual social struggles that are taking place there but whose determinations do not begin or end there. Here also we encounter the interpenetration between the subjective and the objective, the outcome of which cannot be prejudged. What is apparent, however, is that it will not be a reproduction of either side of Europe. It will be strongly nationalistic, giving prominence to local cultural heritage which had been debased by Europeans of whatever persuasion. For the modernisation theorists, the impact has been direct and devastating. The most the repentant amongst them can do is to preach that «small is beautiful» and that «might is not right». In the opposite direction, Marxists who, traditionally, have abjured ideology, and treated «culture» as a residual category, are in a quandry. Their erudite appeal to classical texts is of no avail under these conditions. The proclaimed European universalism is proving more and more parochial, as the world is being re-defined.

It seems that for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, Europe is going to be liberated from its patent ethnocentrism by external forces. If this sounds presumptuous, we already have at least three historical

precedents. First was the anti-colonial revolution which changed not only the shape of the world but also its perception as well as its social dynamics. Second was the Chinese path to development, while it lasted. Third was the rise of a specifically Third World theoretical paradigm, the *Dependencia* «theory», which pitted itself against the hegemonic theories of modernisation. In its wake it also stimulated neo-Marxist innovations not only in the South but also in the North. WALLERSTEIN's famed world system analysis owes its origins to the *Dependencia* paradigm. Action-research is not untouched by it. Some of this is acknowledged in *Sociology*.

Like all revolutions, these have had their ebbs and flows. For instance if the meteoric rise and universal acknowledgement of the *Dependencia* «theory» marked the beginning of an intellectual revolution in the Third World, that revolution still awaits its fulfilment. There has been unmistakable disillusionment with *Dependencia* «theory», at least as articulated by FRANK. Significantly enough, the search for a new theory has been focussed mainly on the question of the «peasantry». This is not accidental. The Third World societies are primarily agrarian; yet they are contemporaries of industrialised Europe. The social, political, ideological and theoretical ambiguities involved herein are a fertile ground for new discoveries, practically and theoretically. «Practically» is the word because the Third World is being transformed by practical social struggles. These are revolutionary and not reformist, as has been the case in Europe since the Second World War. This is neither a question of virtue or heroism on the part of the Third World revolutionaries. It is rather born on necessity. As one wit put it: «You fight, you die; you don't fight, you still die. So, why not fight?» Of particular relevance to us is the fact that the outcome of these struggles is as ambiguous as the social agents responsible for them. Social aberration and disillusionment come fast and solid in the Third World and intellectuals are kept chasing their tails. Like the social agents, they have to keep experimenting, or fall by the wayside. But the ultimate question is: if the Third World has the initiative, socially and politically, can its intellectuals be far behind?

As was intimated in the introduction, the main ideological predisposition of intellectuals from the Third World is not to listen to any theoretical noises from the North. They are in search of an indigenous constituency from which they can make their own theoretical projections. This is real and at the same time illusory. Nationalism, while valid in its own right, is not, as is often supposed, an antithesis of internationalism. It is rather a claim to a better place within the international community. Struggles for «independence» bear witness to this. Whereas instruments for fighting nationalist battles are forged internally, this is not done without the hope of having a positive impact on the external system. In other words, divergence at one historical juncture creates grounds for convergence at another. Similarly, any major contradiction in the modern world has its internal as well as external dimensions. If this is true of the political community, it is even truer of the intellectual community. The dissenting voice from the South has not met with complete indifference from the North.

On the contrary, it has led to the emergence of an international community which is genuinely critical of the existing system. Whenever an opportunity offers itself, the members of such a community make collective representations. Think of invitations to conferences, recruitment into academic posts and selection of papers for publication in chosen journals.

The anti-imperialist, and at times anti-capitalist, reflexes of the intellectuals from the Third World have found expression in neo-Marxism which, according to *Sociology*, is the fastest growing tendency in the social sciences. Although the authors of *Sociology* were content to leave this at the level of statistics and merrily went ahead to construct consensus model, it is apparent that the reasons for it are very profound. Within the European tradition Marxism is distinguished by its thorough-going critique of capitalism and open advocacy of revolution against the system. LENIN had the honour of adding the anti-imperialist dimension to it. All this has a natural appeal to the Third World rebels or revolutionaries. It provides them with the necessary cudgels for combating western domination. But as practice would have it, these tools do not quite fit the social reality of Third World countries. This calls for creative adaptations and coincides with a felt-need among some Marxists in post-industrial Europe to up-date their concepts. However, unlike the Third World scholars who are using Marxism as a hatchet for blazing a trail in an unchartered terrain, the European counterparts are often tyrannized by texts and are liable to accusations of revisionism. General absence of an organised revolutionary force outside themselves or a new society in-the-making renders such accusations difficult to discredit, except by recourse to texts or pure logic. This is socially tautological. It would seem that once again, as has happened in history, the barbarians will save the civilised from their own decadence. But this cannot be accomplished, without destroying their hegemony. History is strewn with corroborative examples.

However if we characterise the emerging perspectives from the Third World, it is obvious that they will be impregnated with the negations of the present existence. This is consonant with MARX's negative philosophy. In its scientific perview it relies on «critique», the indictment of the present system for its omissions, the «negated ought». This cannot be relativised, as every society is liable. Therefore, the Third World neo-Marxists cannot, logically, denounce western imperialism, without confronting its internal manifestations. Indigenisation of social science carried to its logical conclusion must denote a totalising critique. This leaves no room for a relativistic theory of society or consensus models, since social scientists, like ordinary mortals, are aligned on either side of a prevailing social contradiction. *Critical sociology*, unlike the positivist functionalism which has pervaded academic sociology in America and Europe for more than half a century, cannot be oblivious to social contradictions and cannot avoid being socially and theoretically subversive. To reveal what is hidden and to include what is excluded is the very definition of subversion. The indictment against the authors of *Sociology* is that they took their world for granted and excluded much that was already written on the wall. Why these omissions? We can only speculate. Intellectual decline? Lack of a social mandate? Vested interests or unconscious ethnocentrism?

RESUME

Dans cet article, l'auteur s'emploie à montrer que la nouvelle sociologie telle qu'elle se présente actuellement est réservée strictement aux Européens. Deux constats fondamentaux lui permettent de confirmer cette hypothèse :

- la croyance ferme à l'Universalité de leur science ;*
- la production scientifique est un phénomène essentiellement social, non pas sous sa forme apparente de collaboration entre les différents membres d'une communauté scientifique mais plutôt parce que le sens et le contenu de la recherche scientifique sont déterminés au plan social ;*
- le désir de garantir la production et la reproduction sociales sur les mêmes bases que par le passé.*

Puis, l'auteur consacre une partie importante de son article à essayer de faire le point de la discipline qu'est la sociologie. Il part d'un rapport publié par l'Association Internationale de sociologie portant sur ce problème et fait remarquer d'emblée que les différents sociologues qui ont contribué à cet ouvrage étaient des européens ou nord-américains, ce qui en soit les prédisposait à ne faire cas que des soucis actuels de la sociologie dans ces parties du monde. Il passe alors en revue les principes directeurs des différentes écoles de sociologie qui ont marqué les étapes successives de l'évolution de la sociologie pour montrer que sur le plan de l'orientation et du contenu cette sociologie n'est faite et n'est acceptable que pour les européens. L'auteur souligne que la participation des sociologues indiens a été particulièrement intéressante car ils ont attiré l'attention des autres participants sur le fait qu'il n'y pas qu'un seul monde de référence.

Après ce tour d'horizon des idées-forces des différentes écoles de sociologie, l'auteur en arrive au problème de la sociologie critique à laquelle il assigne la mission importante de «révéler ce qui est caché et d'inclure ce qui est exclu». Cet article est fort enrichissant tant au plan de la mise au point que l'auteur y fait en ce qui concerne l'état de la sociologie qu'à celui des réflexions critiques qui y sont contenues et qui ont pour ambition de «dé-européaniser» la sociologie afin qu'elle puisse servir les intérêts des pays du tiers-monde.