

I 19-85

# MANIFEST AND LATENT FUNCTIONS

## TOWARD THE CODIFICATION OF FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS IN SOCIOLOGY

**F**UNCTIONAL ANALYSIS is at once the most promising and possibly the least codified of contemporary orientations to problems of sociological interpretation. Having developed on many intellectual fronts at the same time, it has grown in shreds and patches rather than in depth. The accomplishments of functional analysis are sufficient to suggest that its large promise will progressively be fulfilled, just as its current deficiencies testify to the need for periodically overhauling the past the better to build for the future. At the very least, occasional re-assessments bring into open discussion many of the difficulties which otherwise remain tacit and unspoken.

Like all interpretative schemes, functional analysis depends upon a triple alliance between theory, method and data. Of the three allies, method is by all odds the weakest. Many of the major practitioners of functional analysis have been devoted to theoretic formulations and to the clearing up of concepts; some have steeped themselves in data directly relevant to a functional frame of reference; but few have broken the prevailing silence regarding how one goes about the business of functional analysis. Yet the plenty and variety of functional analyses force the conclusion that *some* methods have been employed and awaken the hope that much may be learned from their inspection.

Although methods can be profitably examined without reference to theory or substantive data—methodology or the logic of procedure of course has precisely that as its assignment—empirically oriented disciplines are more fully served by inquiry into procedures if this takes due account of their theoretic problems and substantive findings. For the use of “method” involves not only logic but, unfortunately perhaps for those who must struggle with the difficulties of research, also the practical problems of aligning data with the requirements of theory. At least, that is our premise. Accordingly, we shall interweave our account with a systematic review of some of the chief conceptions of functional theory.

## THE VOCABULARIES OF FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

From its very beginnings, the functional approach in sociology has been caught up in terminological confusion. *Too often, a single term has been used to symbolize different concepts, just as the same concept has been symbolized by different terms.* Clarity of analysis and adequacy of communication are both victims of this frivolous use of words. At times, the analysis suffers from the unwitting shift in the conceptual content of a given term, and communication with others breaks down when the essentially same content is obscured by a battery of diverse terms. We have only to follow, for a short distance, the vagaries of the concept of 'function' to discover how conceptual clarity is effectively marred and communication defeated by competing vocabularies of functional analysis.

*Single Term, Diverse Concepts*

The word "function" has been pre-empted by several disciplines and by popular speech with the not unexpected result that its connotation often becomes obscure in sociology proper. By confining ourselves to only five connotations commonly assigned to this one word, we neglect numerous others. There is first, popular usage, according to which function refers to some public gathering or festive occasion, usually conducted with ceremonial overtones. It is in this connection, one must assume, that a newspaper headline asserts: "Mayor Tobin Not Backing Social Function," for the news account goes on to explain that "Mayor Tobin announced today that he is not interested in any social function, nor has he authorized anyone to sell tickets or sell advertising for any affair." Common as this usage is, it enters into the academic literature too seldom to contribute any great share to the prevailing chaos of terminology. Clearly, *this* connotation of the word is wholly alien to functional analysis in sociology.

2. A second usage makes the term function virtually equivalent to the term occupation. Max Weber, for example, defines occupation as "the mode of specialization, specification and combination of the functions of an individual so far as it constitutes for him the basis of a continual opportunity for income or for profit."<sup>1</sup> This is a frequent, indeed almost a typical, usage of the term by some economists who refer to the "functional analysis of a group" when they report the distribution of occupations in that group. Since this is the case, it may be expedient to follow the suggestion of Sargent Florence,<sup>2</sup> that the more nearly descriptive phrase "occupational analysis" be adopted for such inquiries.

1. Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (edited by Talcott Parsons), (London: William Hodge and Co., 1947), 230.

2. P. Sargent Florence, *Statistical Method in Economics*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929), 357-58n.

3. A third usage, representing a special instance of the preceding one, is found both in popular speech and in political science. Function is often used to refer to the activities assigned to the incumbent of a social status, and more particularly, to the occupant of an office or political position. This gives rise to the term functionary, or official. Although function in this sense overlaps the broader meaning assigned the term in sociology and anthropology, it had best be excluded since it diverts attention from the fact that functions are performed not only by the occupants of designated positions, but by a wide range of standardized activities, social processes, culture patterns and belief-systems found in a society.

4. Since it was first introduced by Leibniz, the word function has its most precise significance in mathematics, where it refers to a variable considered in relation to one or more other variables in terms of which it may be expressed or on the value of which its own value depends. This conception, in a more extended (and often more imprecise) sense, is expressed by such phrases as "functional interdependence" and "functional relations," so often adopted by social scientists.<sup>3</sup> When Mannheim observes that "every social fact is a function of the time and place in which it occurs," or when a demographer states that "birth-rates are a function of economic status," they are manifestly making use of the mathematical connotation, though the first is not reported in the form of equations and the second is. The context generally makes it clear that the term function is being used in this mathematical sense, but social scientists not infrequently shuttle back and forth between this and another related, though distinct, connotation, which also involves the notion of "interdependence," "reciprocal relation" or "mutually dependent variations."

5. It is this fifth connotation which is central to functional analysis as this has been practiced in sociology and social anthropology. Stemming in part from the native mathematical sense of the term, this usage is more often explicitly adopted from the biological sciences, where the term function is understood to refer to the "vital or organic processes considered in the respects in which they contribute to the maintenance of the organism."<sup>4</sup> With modifications appropriate to the study of human

3. Thus, Alexander Lesser: "In its logical essentials, what is a functional relation? Is it any different in kind from functional relations in other fields of science? I think not. A genuinely functional relation is one which is established between two or more terms or variables such that it can be asserted that under certain defined conditions (which form one term of the relation) certain determined expressions of those conditions (which is the other term of the relation) are observed. The functional relation or relations asserted of any delimited aspect of culture must be such as to explain the nature and character of the delimited aspect under defined conditions." "Functionalism in social anthropology," *American Anthropologist*, N.S. 37 (1935), 386-93, at 392.

4. See for example, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *Modern Theories of Development*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 9 ff., 184 ff.; W. M. Bayliss, *Principles of General Physiology* (London, 1915), 706, where he reports his researches on the functions of the hormone discovered by Starling and himself; W. B. Cannon, *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1929), 222, describing the "emergency functions of the sympathico-adrenal system."

society, this corresponds rather closely to the key concept of function as adopted by the anthropological functionalists, pure or tempered.<sup>5</sup>

Radcliffe-Brown is the most often explicit in tracing his working conception of social function to the analogical model found in the biological sciences. After the fashion of Durkheim, he asserts that "the function of a recurrent physiological process is thus a correspondence between it and the needs (i.e., the necessary conditions of existence) of the organism." And in the social sphere where individual human beings, "the essential units," are connected by networks of social relations into an integrated whole, "the function of any recurrent activity, such as the punishment of a crime, or a funeral ceremony, is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity."<sup>6</sup>

Though Malinowski differs in several respects from the formulations of Radcliffe-Brown, he joins him in making the core of functional analysis the study of "the part which [social or cultural items] play in the society." "This type of theory," Malinowski explains in one of his early declarations of purpose, "aims at the explanation of anthropological facts at all levels of development by *their function, by the part which they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other within the system.* . . ."<sup>7</sup>

As we shall presently see in some detail, such recurrent phrases as "the part played in the social or cultural system" tend to blur the important distinction between the concept of function as "interdependence" and as "process." Nor need we pause here to observe that the postulate which holds that every item of culture has *some* enduring relations with other items, that it has *some* distinctive place in the total culture scarcely equips the field-observer or the analyst with a specific guide to procedure. All this had better wait. At the moment, we need only recognize that more recent formulations have clarified and extended this concept of function through progressive specifications. Thus, Kluckhohn: ". . . a given bit of culture is 'functional' insofar as it defines a mode of response

5. Lowie makes a distinction between the "pure functionalism" of a Malinowski and the "tempered functionalism" of a Thurnwald. Sound as the distinction is, it will soon become apparent that it is not pertinent for our purposes. R. H. Lowie, *The History of Ethnological Theory* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937), Chapter 13.

6. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "On the concept of function in social science," *American Anthropologist*, 1935, 37, 395-6. See also his later presidential address before the Royal Anthropological Institute, where he states: ". . . I would define the social function of a socially standardized mode of activity, or mode of thought, as its relation to the social structure to the existence and continuity of which it makes some contribution. Analogously, in a living organism, the physiological function of the beating of the heart, or the secretion of gastric juices, is its relation to the organic structure. . . ." "On social structure," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1940, 70, Pt. I, 9-10.

7. B. Malinowski, "Anthropology," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, First Supplementary Volume, (London and New York, 1926), 132-133 [italics supplied].

which is adaptive from the standpoint of the society and adjustive from the standpoint of the individual."<sup>8</sup>

From these connotations of the term "function," and we have touched upon only a few drawn from a more varied array, it is plain that many concepts are caught up in the same word. This invites confusion. And when many different words are held to express the same concept, there develops confusion worse confounded.

### Single Concept, Diverse Terms

The large assembly of terms used indifferently and almost synonymously with "function" presently includes use, utility, purpose, motive, intention, aim, consequences. Were these and similar terms put to use to refer to the same strictly defined concept, there would of course be little point in noticing their numerous variety. But the fact is that the undisciplined use of these terms, with their ostensibly similar conceptual reference, leads to successively greater departures from tight-knit and rigorous functional analysis. The connotations of each term which differ from rather than agree with the connotation that they have in common are made the (unwitting) basis for inferences which become increasingly dubious as they become progressively remote from the central concept of function. One or two illustrations will bear out the point that a shifting vocabulary makes for the multiplication of misunderstandings.

In the following passage drawn from one of the most sensible of treatises on the sociology of crime, one can detect the shifts in meaning of nominally synonymous terms and the questionable inferences which depend upon these shifts. (The key terms are italicized to help in picking one's way through the argument.)

*Purpose of Punishment.* Attempts are being made to determine the *purpose* or *function* of punishment in different groups at different times. Many investigators have insisted that some one *motive* was *the motive* in punishment. On the other hand, the *function* of punishment in restoring the solidarity of the group which has been weakened by the crime is emphasized. Thomas and Znaniecki have indicated that among the Polish peasants the punishment of crime is *designed primarily* to restore the situation which existed before the crime and renew the solidarity of the group, and that revenge is a *secondary consideration*. From this point of view punishment is *concerned primarily* with the group and only *secondarily* with the offender. On the other hand, expiation, deterrence, retribution, reformation, income for the state, and other things have been posited as *the function* of punishment. In the past as at present it is not clear that any one of these is *the motive*; punishments seem to grow from *many motives* and to perform *many functions*. This is true both of the individual victims of crimes and of the state. Certainly the laws of the present

8. Clyde Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, (Cambridge: Peabody Museum, 1944), XXII, No. 2, 47a.

day are not consistent in *aims or motives*; probably the same condition existed in earlier societies.<sup>9</sup>

We should attend first to the list of terms ostensibly referring to the same concept: purpose, function, motive, designed, secondary consideration, primary concern, aim. Through inspection, it becomes clear that *these terms group into quite distinct conceptual frames of reference*. At times, some of these terms—motive, design, aim and purpose—clearly refer to the *explicit ends-in-view of the representatives of the state*. Others—motive, secondary consideration—refer to the *ends-in-view of the victim of the crime*. And both of these sets of terms are alike in referring to the *subjective anticipations of the results of punishment*. But the concept of function involves the standpoint of *the observer*, not necessarily that of the participant. Social function refers to *observable objective consequences*, and not to *subjective dispositions* (aims, motives, purposes). And the failure to distinguish between the objective sociological consequences and the subjective dispositions inevitably leads to confusion of functional analysis, as can be seen from the following excerpt (in which the key terms are again italicized):

The extreme of unreality is attained in the discussion of the so-called "functions" of the family. The family, we hear, performs important *functions* in society; it provides for the perpetuation of the species and the training of the young; it performs economic and religious functions, and so on. Almost we are encouraged to believe that *people marry and have children because they are eager to perform these needed societal functions*. In fact, people marry *because they are in love, or for other less romantic but no less personal reasons*. The *function* of the family, *from the viewpoint of individuals*, is to satisfy their wishes. The *function* of the family or any other social institution is *merely what people use it for*. Social "*functions*" are mostly *rationalizations of established practices*; we act first, explain afterwards; we act for *personal reasons*, and justify *our* behavior by social and ethical *principles*. Insofar as these *functions* of institutions have any real basis, it must be stated in terms of the social processes in which people engage *in the attempt* to satisfy their wishes. Functions arise from the inter-action of concrete human beings and concrete *purposes*.<sup>10</sup>

This passage is an interesting medley of small islets of clarity in the midst of vast confusion. Whenever it mistakenly identifies (subjective) motives with (objective) functions, it abandons a lucid functional approach. For it need not be assumed, as we shall presently see, that the *motives* for entering into marriage ("love," "personal reasons") are identical with the *functions* served by families (socialization of the child). Again, it need not be assumed that the *reasons* advanced by people for their behavior ("*we act for personal reasons*") are one and

9. Edwin H. Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology*, third edition, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1939), 349-350.

10. Willard Waller, *The Family*, (New York: Cordon Company, 1938), 26.

the same as the observed consequences of these patterns of behavior. The subjective disposition may coincide with the objective consequence, but again, it may not. The two vary independently. When, however, it is said that people are motivated to engage in behavior which may give rise to (not necessarily intended) functions, there is offered escape from the troubled sea of confusion.<sup>11</sup>

This brief review of competing terminologies and their unfortunate consequences may be something of a guide to later efforts at codification of the concepts of functional analysis. There will plainly be occasion to limit the use of the sociological concept of function, and there will be need to distinguish clearly between subjective categories of disposition and objective categories of observed consequences. Else the substance of the functional orientation may become lost in a cloud of hazy definitions.

### PREVAILING POSTULATES IN FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

Chiefly but not solely in anthropology, functional analysts have commonly adopted three interconnected postulates which, it will now be suggested, have proved to be debatable and unnecessary to the functional orientation.

Substantially, these postulates hold first, that standardized social activities or cultural items are functional for the *entire social or cultural system*; second, that *all such social and cultural items fulfill sociological functions*; and third, that these items are *consequently indispensable*. Although these three articles of faith are ordinarily seen only in one another's company, they had best be examined separately, since each gives rise to its own distinctive difficulties.

#### *Postulate of the Functional Unity of Society*

It is Radcliffe-Brown who characteristically puts this postulate in explicit terms:

The function of a particular social usage is the contribution it makes to the *total social life* as the functioning of the *total social system*. Such a view implies that a social system (*the total social structure* of a society together with the totality of social usages, in which that structure appears and on which it depends for its continued existence) has a certain kind of unity, which we

11. These two instances of confusion between motive and function are drawn from an easily available storehouse of additional materials of the same kind. Even Radcliffe-Brown, who ordinarily avoids this practice, occasionally fails to make the distinction. For example: "... the exchange of presents did not serve the same *purpose* as trade and barter in more developed communities. The *purpose* that it did serve is a moral one. The *object* of the exchange was to produce a friendly feeling between the two persons concerned, and unless it did this it failed of its *purpose*." Is the "object" of the transaction seen from the standpoint of the observer, the participant, or both? See A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders*, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1948), 84 [italics supplied].

may speak of as a functional unity. We may define it as a condition in which all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, *i.e.*, without producing persistent conflicts which can neither be resolved nor regulated.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to note, however, that he goes on to describe this notion of functional unity as a hypothesis which requires further test.

It would at first appear that Malinowski was questioning the empirical acceptability of this postulate when he notes that "the sociological school" (into which he thrusts Radcliffe-Brown) "exaggerated the social solidarity of primitive man" and "neglected the individual."<sup>13</sup> But it is soon apparent that Malinowski does not so much abandon this dubious assumption as he succeeds in adding another to it. He continues to speak of standardized practices and beliefs as functional "for culture as a whole," and goes on to assume that they are *also* functional for every member of the society. Thus, referring to primitive beliefs in the supernatural, he writes:

Here the functional view is put to its acid test. . . . It is bound to show in what way belief and ritual work for social integration, technical and economic efficiency, for culture as a whole—indirectly therefore for the biological and mental welfare of each individual member.<sup>14</sup>

If the one unqualified assumption is questionable, this twin assumption is doubly so. Whether cultural items do uniformly fulfill functions for the society viewed as a system and for all members of the society is presumably an empirical question of fact, rather than an axiom.

Kluckhohn evidently perceives the problem inasmuch as he extends the alternatives to include the possibility that cultural forms "are adaptive or adaptive . . . for the members of the society or for the society considered as a perduring unit."<sup>15</sup> This is a necessary first step in allowing for variation in the *unit* which is subserved by the imputed function. Compelled by the force of empirical observation, we shall have occasion to widen the range of variation in this unit even further.

It seems reasonably clear that the notion of functional unity is *not* a postulate beyond the reach of empirical test; quite the contrary. The

12. Radcliffe-Brown, "On the concept of function," *op. cit.*, 397 [italics supplied].

13. See Malinowski, "Anthropology," *op. cit.*, 132 and "The group and the individual in functional analysis," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1939, 44, 938-64, at 939.

14. Malinowski, "Anthropology," *op. cit.*, 135, Malinowski maintained this view, without essential change, in his later writings. Among these, consult, for example, "The group and the individual in functional analysis," *op. cit.*, at 962-3: ". . . we see that every institution contributes, on the one hand, toward the integral working of the community as a whole, but it also satisfies the derived and basic needs of the individual . . . everyone of the benefits just listed is enjoyed by every individual member." [italics supplied].

15. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, 46b [italics supplied].

degree of integration is an empirical variable,<sup>16</sup> changing for the same society from time to time and differing among various societies. That all human societies must have *some* degree of integration is a matter of definition—and begs the question. But not all societies have that *high* degree of integration in which *every* culturally standardized activity or belief is functional for the society as a whole and uniformly functional for the people living in it. Radcliffe-Brown need in fact have looked no further than to his favored realm of analogy in order to suspect the adequacy of his assumption of functional unity. For we find significant variations in the degree of integration even among individual biological organisms, although the commonsense assumption would tell us that here, surely, all the parts of the organism work toward a "unified" end. Consider only this:

One can readily see that there are *highly integrated organisms* under close control of the nervous system or of hormones, the loss of any major part of which will strongly affect the whole system, and frequently will cause death, but, on the other hand, there are the lower *organisms much more loosely correlated*, where the loss of even a major part of the body causes only temporary inconvenience pending the regeneration of replacement tissues. Many of these more loosely organized animals are *so poorly integrated that different parts may be in active opposition to each other*. Thus, when an ordinary starfish is placed on its back, part of the arms may attempt to turn the animal in one direction, while others work to turn it in the opposite way. . . . On account of its *loose integration*, the sea anemone may move off and leave a portion of its foot clinging tightly to a rock, so that the animal suffers serious rupture.<sup>17</sup>

If this is true of single organisms, it would seem *a fortiori* the case with complex social systems.

One need not go far afield to show that the assumption of the complete functional unity of human society is repeatedly contrary to fact. Social usages or sentiments may be functional for some groups and dysfunctional for others in the same society. Anthropologists often cite "increased solidarity of the community" and "increased family pride" as instances of functionally adaptive sentiments. Yet, as Bateson<sup>18</sup> among others has indicated, an increase of pride among individual families may often serve to disrupt the solidarity of a small local community. Not only is the postulate of functional unity often contrary to fact, but it has little heuristic value, since it diverts the analyst's attention from possible disparate consequences of a given social or cultural item (usage, belief,

16. It is the merit of Sorokin's early review of theories of social integration that he did not lose sight of this important fact. Cf. P. A. Sorokin, "Forms and problems of culture-integration," *Rural Sociology*, 1936, 1, 121-41; 344-74.

17. G. H. Parker, *The Elementary Nervous System*, quoted by W. C. Allee, *Animal Aggregation*, (University of Chicago Press, 1931), 81-82.

18. Gregory Bateson, *Naven*, (Cambridge [England] University Press, 1936), 31-32.

behavior pattern, institution) for diverse social groups and for the individual members of these groups.

If the body of observation and fact which negates the assumption of functional unity is as large and easily accessible as we have suggested, it is interesting to ask how it happens that Radcliffe-Brown and others who follow his lead have continued to abide by this assumption. A possible clue is provided by the fact that this conception, in its recent formulations, was developed by social *anthropologists*, that is, by men primarily concerned with the study of non-literate societies. In view of what Radin has described as "the highly integrated nature of the majority of aboriginal civilizations," this assumption may be tolerably suitable for some, if not all, non-literate societies. But one pays an excessive intellectual penalty for moving this possibly useful assumption from the realm of small non-literate societies to the realm of large, complex and highly differentiated literate societies. In no field, perhaps, do the dangers of such a transfer of assumption become more visible than in the functional analysis of religion. This deserves brief review, if only because it exhibits in bold relief the fallacies one falls heir to by sympathetically adopting this assumption without a thorough screening.

*The Functional Interpretation of Religion.* In examining the price paid for the transfer of this tacit assumption of functional unity from the field of relatively small and relatively tightknit non-literate groups to the field of more highly differentiated and perhaps more loosely integrated societies, it is useful to consider the work of sociologists, particularly of sociologists who are ordinarily sensitized to the assumptions on which they work. This has passing interest for its bearing on the more general question of seeking, without appropriate modification, to apply to the study of literate societies conceptions developed and matured in the study of non-literate societies. (Much the same question holds for the transfer of research procedures and techniques, but this is not at issue here.)

The large, spaceless and timeless generalizations about "the integrative functions of religion" are largely, though not of course wholly, derived from observations in non-literate societies. Not infrequently, the social scientist implicitly adopts the findings regarding such societies and goes on to expatiate upon the integrative functions of religion *generally*. From this, it is a short step to statements such as the following:

*The reason why religion is necessary* is apparently to be found in the fact that human society achieves its unity primarily through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values and ends in common. Although these values and ends are subjective, they influence behavior, and their integration enables this society to operate as a system.<sup>19</sup>

19. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, "Some principles of stratification," *American Sociological Review*, April 1945, 10, 242-49, at 244. [italics supplied].

In an extremely advanced society built on scientific technology, the priesthood tends to lose status, because sacred tradition and supernaturalism drop into the background . . . [but] *No society* has become so completely secularized as to liquidate *entirely* the belief in transcendental ends and supernatural entities. Even in a secularized society *some system* must exist for the integration of ultimate values, for their ritualistic expression, and for the emotional adjustments required by disappointment, death, and disaster.<sup>20</sup>

Deriving from the Durkheim orientation which was based largely upon the study of non-literate societies, these authors tend to single out *only* the apparently integrative consequences of religion and to neglect its possibly disintegrative consequences *in certain types of social structure*. Yet consider the following very well-known facts and queries. (1) When different religions co-exist in the same society, there often occurs deep conflict between the several religious groups (consider only the enormous literature on inter-religious conflict in European societies). In what sense, then, does religion make for integration of "the" society in the numerous multi-religion societies? (2) It is clearly the case that "human society achieves its unity [insofar as it exhibits such unity] primarily through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values and ends in common." But what is the evidence indicating that "non-religious" people, say, in our own society less often subscribe to certain common "values and ends" than those devoted to religious doctrines? (3) In what sense does religion make for integration of the larger society, if the content of its doctrine and values is at odds with the content of other, non-religious values held by many people in the same society? (Consider, for example, the conflict between the opposition of the Catholic Church to child-labor legislation and the secular values of preventing "exploitation of youthful dependents." Or the contrasting evaluations of birth control by diverse religious groups in our society.)

This list of commonplace facts regarding the role of religion in contemporary literate societies could be greatly extended, and they are of course very well known to those functional anthropologists and sociologists who describe religion as integrative, without limiting the range of social structures in which this is indeed the case. It is at least conceivable that a theoretic orientation derived from research on non-literate societies has served to obscure otherwise conspicuous data on the functional role of religion in multi-religion societies. Perhaps it is the transfer of the assumption of functional unity which results in blotting out the entire history of religious wars, of the Inquisition (which drove a wedge into society after society), of internecine conflicts among religious groups. For the fact remains that all this abundantly known material is ignored in favor of illustrations drawn from the study of religion in non-literate society. And it is a further striking fact that the same paper, cited above,

20. *Ibid.*, 246. [italics supplied].

that goes on to speak of "religion, which provides integration in terms of sentiments, beliefs and rituals," does not make a single reference to the possibly divisive role of religion.

Such functional analyses may, of course, mean that religion provides integration of those who believe in the *same* religious values, but it is unlikely that this is meant, since it would merely assert that integration is provided by any consensus on any set of values.

Moreover, this again illustrates the danger of taking the assumption of functional unity, which *may* be a reasonable approximation for some non-literate societies, as part of an implicit model for *generalized* functional analysis. Typically, in non-literate societies, there is but one prevailing religious system so that, apart from individual deviants, the membership of the total society and the membership of the religious community are virtually co-extensive. Obviously, in this type of social structure, a common set of religious values may have as *one* of its consequences the reinforcement of common sentiments and of social integration. But this does not easily lend itself to defensible generalization about other types of society.

We shall have occasion to return to other theoretic implications of current functional analyses of religion but, for the moment, this may illustrate the dangers which one inherits in adopting the unqualified postulate of functional unity. This unity of the total society cannot be usefully posited in advance of observation. It is a question of fact, and not a matter of opinion. The theoretic framework of functional analysis must expressly require that there be *specification* of the *units* for which a given social or cultural item is functional. It must expressly allow for a given item having diverse consequences, functional and dysfunctional, for individuals, for subgroups, and for the more inclusive social structure and culture.

### Postulate of Universal Functionalism

Most succinctly, this postulate holds that all standardized social or cultural forms have positive functions. As with other aspects of the functional conception, Malinowski advances this in its most extreme form:

The functional view of culture *insists* therefore upon the principle that in *every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfills some vital function*. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Although, as we have seen, Kluckhohn allows for variation in the unit subserved by a cultural form, he joins with Malinowski in postulating functional value for all surviving forms of culture. ("My basic postulate . . . is that *no* culture forms survive unless they constitute responses which

21. Malinowski, "Anthropology," *op. cit.*, 132 [The italics, though supplied, are perhaps superfluous in view of the forceful language of the original.]

are adjustive or adaptive, in some sense . . ."<sup>22</sup>) This universal functionalism may or may not be a heuristic postulate; that remains to be seen. But one should be prepared to find that it too diverts critical attention from a range of non-functional consequences of existing cultural forms.

In fact, when Kluckhohn seeks to illustrate his point by ascribing "functions" to seemingly functionless items, he falls back upon a type of function which would be found, *by definition* rather than by inquiry, served by all persisting items of culture. Thus, he suggests that

The at present mechanically useless buttons on the sleeve of a European man's suit subserve the "function" of preserving the familiar, of maintaining a tradition. People are, in general, more comfortable if they feel a continuity of behavior, if they feel themselves as following out the orthodox and socially approved forms of behavior.<sup>23</sup>

This would appear to represent the marginal case in which the imputation of function adds little or nothing to the direct description of the culture pattern or behavior form. It may well be assumed that all *established* elements of culture (which are loosely describable as 'tradition') have the minimum, though not exclusive, function of "preserving the familiar, of maintaining a tradition." This is equivalent to saying that the 'function' of conformity to *any* established practice is to enable the conformist to avoid the sanctions otherwise incurred by deviating from the established practice. This is no doubt true but hardly illuminating. It serves, however, to remind us that we shall want to explore the *types of functions* which the sociologist imputes. At the moment, it suggests the provisional assumption that, although any item of culture or social structure may have functions, it is premature to hold unequivocally that every such item must be functional.

The postulate of universal functionalism is of course the historical product of the fierce, barren and protracted controversy over "survivals" which raged among the anthropologists during the early part of the century. The notion of a social survival, that is, in the words of Rivers, of "a custom . . . [which] cannot be explained by its present utility but only becomes intelligible through its past history,"<sup>24</sup> dates back at least to Thucydides. But when the evolutionary theories of culture became prominent, the concept of survival seemed all the more strategically important for reconstructing "stages of development" of cultures, particularly for non-literate societies which possessed no written record. For

22. Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, 46. [italics supplied].

23. *Ibid.*, 47.

24. W. H. R. Rivers, "Survival in sociology," *The Sociological Review*, 1913, 6, 293-305. See also E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, (New York, 1874), esp. I, 70-159; and for a more recent review of the matter, Lowie, *The History of Ethnological Theory*, 44 ff., 81 f. For a sensible and restrained account of the problem, see Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, Chapter 5, esp. at 91.

the functionalists who wished to turn away from what they regarded as the usually fragmentary and often conjectural "history" of non-literate societies, the attack on the notion of survival took on all the symbolism of an attack on the entire and intellectually repugnant system of evolutionary thought. In consequence, perhaps, they over-reacted against this concept central to evolutionary theory and advanced an equally exaggerated "postulate" to the effect that "every custom [everywhere] . . . fulfills some vital function."

It would seem a pity to allow the polemics of the anthropological forefathers to create splendid exaggerations in the present. Once discovered, ticketed and studied, social survivals cannot be exorcized by a postulate. And if no specimens of these survivals can be produced, then the quarrel dwindles of its own accord. It can be said, furthermore, that even when such survivals are identified in contemporary literate societies, they seem to add little to our understanding of human behavior or the dynamics of social change. Not requiring their dubious role as poor substitutes for recorded history, the sociologist of literate societies may neglect survivals with no apparent loss. But he need not be driven, by an archaic and irrelevant controversy, to adopt the unqualified postulate that all culture items fulfill vital functions. For this, too, is a problem for investigation, not a conclusion in advance of investigation. Far more useful as a directive for research would seem the provisional assumption that persisting cultural forms have a net balance of functional consequences either for the society considered as a unit or for subgroups sufficiently powerful to retain these forms intact, by means of direct coercion or indirect persuasion. This formulation at once avoids the tendency of functional analysis to concentrate on positive functions and directs the attention of the research worker to other types of consequences as well.

### *Postulate of Indispensability*

The last of this trio of postulates common among functional social scientists is, in some respects, the most ambiguous. The ambiguity becomes evident in the aforementioned manifesto by Malinowski to the effect that

in every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea and belief fulfills some vital function, has some task to accomplish, represents an indispensable part within a working whole.<sup>25</sup>

From this passage, it is not at all clear whether he asserts the indispensability of the function, or of the item (custom, object, idea, belief) fulfilling the function, or both.

This ambiguity is quite common in the literature. Thus, the previously cited Davis and Moore account of the role of religion seems at

25. Malinowski, "Anthropology," *op. cit.*, 132 [italics supplied].

first to maintain that it is the *institution* which is indispensable: "The reason why religion is necessary . . ."; ". . . religion . . . plays a unique and indispensable part in society."<sup>26</sup> But it soon appears that it is not so much the institution of religion which is regarded as indispensable but rather the functions which religion is taken typically to perform. For Davis and Moore regard religion as indispensable only insofar as it functions to make the members of a society adopt "certain ultimate values and ends in common." These values and ends, it is said,

must . . . appear to the members of the society to have some reality, and it is the role of religious belief and ritual to supply and reinforce this appearance of reality. Through ritual and belief the common ends and values are connected with an imaginary world symbolized by concrete sacred objects, which world in turn is related in a meaningful way to the facts and trials of the individual's life. Through the worship of the sacred objects and the beings they symbolize, and the acceptance of *supernatural prescriptions* that are at the same time codes of behavior, a powerful control over human conduct is exercised, guiding it along lines sustaining the institutional structure and conforming to the ultimate ends and values.<sup>27</sup>

The alleged indispensability of religion, then, is based on the assumption of fact that it is through "worship" and "supernatural prescriptions" *alone* that the necessary minimum of "control over human conduct" and "integration in terms of sentiments and beliefs" can be achieved.

In short, the postulate of indispensability as it is ordinarily stated contains two related, but distinguishable, assertions. First, it is assumed that there are certain *functions* which are indispensable in the sense that, unless they are performed, the society (or group or individual) will not persist. This, then, sets forth a concept of functional prerequisites, or preconditions functionally necessary for a society, and we shall have occasion to examine this concept in some detail. Second, and this is quite another matter, it is assumed that *certain cultural or social forms* are indispensable for fulfilling each of these functions. This involves a concept of specialized and irreplaceable structures, and gives rise to all manner of theoretic difficulties. For not only can this be shown to be manifestly contrary to fact, but it entails several subsidiary assumptions which have plagued functional analysis from the very outset. It diverts attention from the fact that alternative social structures (and cultural forms) have served, under conditions to be examined, the functions necessary for the persistence of groups. Proceeding further, we must set forth a major theorem of functional analysis; just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled

26. Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, *op. cit.*, 244, 246. See the more recent review of this matter by Davis in his Introduction to W. J. Goode, *Religion Among the Primitive* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951) and the instructive functional interpretations of religion in that volume.

27. *Ibid.*, 244-245. [italics supplied].



by *alternative items*. Functional needs are here taken to be permissive, rather than determinant, of specific social structures. Or, in other words, there is a range of variation in the structures which fulfill the function in question. (The limits upon this range of variation involve the concept of structural constraint, of which more presently).

In contrast to this implied concept of indispensable cultural forms (institutions, standardized practices, belief-systems, etc.), there is, then, the concept of *functional alternatives*, or *functional equivalents*, or *functional substitutes*. This concept is widely recognized and used, but it should be noted that it cannot rest comfortably in the same theoretical system which entails the postulate of indispensability of particular cultural forms. Thus, after reviewing Malinowski's theory of "the functional necessity for such mechanisms as magic," Parsons is careful to make the following statement:

... wherever such uncertainty elements enter into the pursuit of emotionally important goals, if not magic, at least *functionally equivalent* phenomena could be expected to appear.<sup>28</sup>

This is a far cry from Malinowski's own insistence that

Thus magic fulfills an *indispensable function* within culture. It satisfies a definite need which cannot be satisfied by any other factors of primitive civilization.<sup>29</sup>

This twin concept of the indispensable function and the irreplaceable belief-and-action pattern flatly excludes the concept of functional alternatives.

In point of fact, the concept of functional alternatives or equivalents has repeatedly emerged in every discipline which has adopted a functional framework of analysis. It is, for example, widely utilized in the psychological sciences, as a paper by English admirably indicates.<sup>30</sup> And in neurology, Lashley has pointed out on the basis of experimental and clinical evidence, the inadequacy of the "assumption that individual neurons are specialized for particular functions," maintaining instead that a particular function may be fulfilled by a range of alternative structures.<sup>31</sup>

Sociology and social anthropology have all the more occasion for avoiding the postulate of indispensability of given structures, and for systematically operating with the concept of functional alternatives and functional substitutes. For just as laymen have long erred in assuming

28. Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory, Pure and Applied*, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1949), 58.

29. Malinowski, "Anthropology," *op. cit.*, 136. [italics supplied].

30. Horace B. English, "Symbolic versus functional equivalents in the neuroses of deprivation," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1937, 32, 392-94.

31. K. S. Lashley, "Basic neural mechanisms in behavior," *Psychological Review*, 1930, 37, 1-24.

that the "strange" customs and beliefs of other societies were "mere superstitions," so functional social scientists run the risk of erring in the other extreme, first, by being quick to find functional or adaptive value in these practices and beliefs, and second, by failing to see which alternative modes of action are ruled out by cleaving to these ostensibly functional practices. Thus, there is not seldom a readiness among some functionalists to conclude that magic or certain religious rites and beliefs are functional, because of their effect upon the state of mind or self-confidence of the believer. Yet it may well be in some instances, that these magical practices obscure and take the place of accessible secular and more adaptive practices. As F. L. Wells has observed,

To nail a horseshoe over the door in a smallpox epidemic may bolster the morale of the household but it will not keep out the smallpox; such beliefs and practices will not stand the secular tests to which they are susceptible, and the sense of security they give is preserved only while the real tests are evaded.<sup>32</sup>

Those functionalists who are constrained by their theory to attend to the effects of such symbolic practices *only* upon the individual's state of mind and who therefore conclude that the magical practice is functional, neglect the fact that these very practices may on occasion take the place of more effective alternatives.<sup>33</sup> And those theorists who refer to the indispensability of standardized practices or prevailing institutions because of their observed function in reinforcing common sentiments must look

32. F. L. Wells, "Social maladjustments: adaptive regression," in Carl A. Murchison, ed., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, (Clark University Press, 1935), 880. Wells's observation is far from being antiquarian. As late as the 1930's, smallpox was not "being kept out" in such states as Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana which, lacking compulsory vaccination laws, could boast some 4,300 cases of smallpox in a five-year period at the same time that the more populous states of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island, states with compulsory vaccination laws, had no cases of smallpox at all. On the shortcomings of 'common sense' in such matters, see Hugh Cabot, *The Patient's Dilemma* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1940), 166-167.

33. It should perhaps be noted that this statement is made with full cognizance of Malinowski's observation that the Trobrianders did not *substitute* their magical beliefs and practices for the application of rational technology. The problem remains of assessing the degree to which technological development is slackened by the semi-dependence on magic for dealing with the "range of uncertainty." This area of uncertainty is presumably not fixed, but is itself related to the available technology. Rituals designed to regulate the weather, for example, might readily absorb the energies of men who might otherwise be reducing that "area of uncertainty" by attending to the advancement of meteorological knowledge. Each case must be judged on its merits. We refer here only to the increasing tendency among social anthropologists and sociologists to confine themselves to the observed "morale" effects of rationally and empirically ungrounded practices, and to forego analysis of the alternatives which would be available in a given situation, did not the orientation toward "the transcendental" and "the symbolic" focus attention on other matters. Finally, it is to be hoped that all this will not be mistaken for a re-statement of the sometimes naive rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment.

first to functional substitutes before arriving at a conclusion, more often premature than confirmed.

Upon review of this trinity of functional postulates, several basic considerations emerge which must be caught up in our effort to codify this mode of analysis. In scrutinizing, first, *the postulate of functional unity*, we found that one cannot assume full integration of all societies, but that this is an empirical question of fact in which we should be prepared to find a range of degrees of integration. And in examining the special case of functional interpretations of religion, we were alerted to the possibility that, though human nature may be of a piece, it does not follow that the structure of non-literate societies is uniformly like that of highly differentiated, "literate" societies. A difference in degree between the two—say, the existence of several disparate religions in the one and not in the other—may make hazardous the passage between them. From critical scrutiny of this postulate, it developed that a theory of functional analysis must call for *specification* of the social units subserved by given social functions, and that items of culture must be recognized to have multiple consequences, some of them functional and others, perhaps, dysfunctional.

Review of the second *postulate of universal functionalism*, which holds that all persisting forms of culture are inevitably functional, resulted in other considerations which must be met by a codified approach to functional interpretation. It appeared not only that we must be prepared to find dysfunctional as well as functional consequences of these forms but that the theorist will ultimately be confronted with the difficult problem of developing an organon for assessing the net balance of consequences if his research is to have bearing on social technology. Clearly, expert advice based only on the appraisal of a limited, and perhaps arbitrarily selected, range of consequences to be expected as a result of contemplated action, will be subject to frequent error and will be properly judged as having small merit.

*The postulate of indispensability*, we found, entailed two distinct propositions: the one alleging the indispensability of certain functions, and this gives rise to the concept of *functional necessity* or *functional prerequisites*; the other alleging the indispensability of existing social institutions, culture forms, or the like, and this when suitably questioned, gives rise to the concept of *functional alternatives, equivalents or substitutes*.

Moreover, the currency of these three postulates, singly and in concert, is the source of the common charge that functional analysis inevitably involves certain ideological commitments. Since this is a question which will repeatedly come to mind as one examines the further conceptions of functional analysis, it had best be considered now, if our

attention is not to be repeatedly drawn away from the analytical problems in hand by the spectre of a social science tainted with ideology.

## FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS AS IDEOLOGY

### *Functional Analysis as Conservative*

In many quarters and with rising insistence, it has been charged that, whatever the intellectual worth of functional analysis, it is inevitably committed to a "conservative" (even a "reactionary") perspective. For some of these critics, functional analysis is little more than a latter-day version of the eighteenth century doctrine of a basic and invariable identity of public and private interests. It is viewed as a secularized version of the doctrine set forth by Adam Smith, for example, when in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he wrote of the "harmonious order of nature, under divine guidance, which promotes the welfare of man through the operation of his individual propensities."<sup>34</sup> Thus, say these critics, functional theory is merely the orientation of the conservative social scientist who would defend the present order of things, just as it is, and who would attack the advisability of change, however moderate. On this view, the functional analyst systematically ignores Tocqueville's warning not to confound the familiar with the necessary: ". . . what we call necessary institutions are often no more than institutions to which we have grown accustomed. . . ." It remains yet to be shown that functional analysis inevitably falls prey to this engaging fallacy but, having reviewed the postulate of indispensability, we can well appreciate that this postulate, if adopted, might easily give rise to this ideological charge. Myrdal is one of the most recent and not the least typical among the critics who argue the inevitability of a conservative bias in functional analysis:

. . . if a thing has a "function" it is good or at least essential.\* The term "function" can have a meaning *only* in terms of an assumed *purpose*\*\*; if that purpose is left undefined or implied to be the "interest of society" which is not further defined,\*\* a considerable leeway for arbitrariness in practical implication is allowed but the main direction is given: *a description of social institutions in terms of their functions must lead to a conservative teleology.*<sup>35</sup>

Myrdal's remarks are instructive less for their conclusion than for their premises. For, as we have noted, he draws upon two of the postu-

34. Jacob Viner, "Adam Smith and Laissez Faire," *Journal of Political Economy*, 1937, 35, 206.

35. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944) II, 1056 [italics and parenthetical remarks supplied].

\* Here, be it noted, Myrdal gratuitously *accepts* the doctrine of indispensability as intrinsic to any functional analysis.

\*\* This, as we have seen, is not only gratuitous, but false.

\*\*\* Here, Myrdal properly notes the dubious and vague postulate of functional unity.

lates so often adopted by functional analysts to reach the unqualified charge that he who describes institutions in terms of functions is unavoidably committed to "a conservative teleology." But nowhere does Myrdal challenge the inevitability of the postulates themselves. It will be interesting to ask how ineluctable the commitment when one has escaped from the premises.

In point of fact, if functional analysis in sociology were committed to teleology, let alone a conservative teleology, it would soon be subjected, and properly so, to even more harsh indictments than these. As has so often happened with teleology in the history of human thought, it would be subjected to a *reductio ad absurdum*. The functional analyst might then meet the fate of Socrates (though not for the same reason) who suggested that God put our mouth just under our nose so that we might enjoy the smell of our food.<sup>36</sup> Or, like the Christian theologians devoted to the argument from design, he might be cozened by a Ben Franklin who demonstrated that God clearly "wants us to tipple, because He has made the joints of the arm just the right length to carry a glass to the mouth, without falling short of or overshooting the mark: 'Let us adore, then, glass in hand, this benevolent wisdom; let us adore and drink.'"<sup>37</sup> Or, he might find himself given to more serious utterances, like Michelet who remarked "how beautifully everything is arranged by nature. As soon as the child comes into the world, it finds a mother who is ready to care for it."<sup>38</sup> Like any other system of thought which borders on teleology, though it seeks to avoid crossing the frontier into that alien and unproductive territory, functional analysis in sociology is threatened with a reduction to absurdity, once it adopts the postulate of all existing social structures as indispensable for the fulfillment of salient functional needs.

### Functional Analysis as Radical

Interestingly enough, others have reached a conclusion precisely opposed to this charge that functional analysis is intrinsically committed to the view that whatever is, is right or that this is, indeed, the best of all possible worlds. These observers, LaPiere for example, suggest that functional analysis is an approach inherently critical in outlook and pragmatic in judgment:

There is . . . a deeper significance than might at first appear in the shift from structural description to functional analysis in the social sciences. This shift represents a break with the social absolutism and moralism of Christian

36. Farrington has some further interesting observations on pseudo-teleology in his *Science in Antiquity* (London: T. Butterworth, 1936), 160.

37. This, in a letter by Franklin to the Abbé Morellet, quoted from the latter's *mémoires* by Dixon Wecter, *The Hero in America*, (New York: Scribner, 1941), 53-54.

38. It is Sigmund Freud who picked up this remark in Michelet's *The Woman*.

theology. If the important aspect of any social structure is its functions, it follows that no structure can be judged in terms of structure alone. In practice this means, for example, that the patriarchal family system is collectively valuable *only if and to the extent that* it functions to the satisfaction of collective ends. As a social structure, *it has no inherent value*, since its functional value will vary from time to time and from place to place.

The functional approach to collective behavior will, undoubtedly, *affront all those who believe that specific sociopsychological structures have inherent values*. Thus, to those who believe that a church service is good because it is a church service, the statement that some church services are formal motions which are devoid of religious significance, that others are functionally comparable to theatrical performances, and that still others are a form of revelry and are therefore comparable to a drunken spree will be an affront to common sense, an attack upon the integrity of decent people, or, at the least, the ravings of a poor fool.<sup>39</sup>

The fact that functional analysis can be seen by some as inherently conservative and by others as inherently radical suggests that it may be *inherently* neither one nor the other. It suggests that functional analysis may involve no *intrinsic* ideological commitment although, like other forms of sociological analysis, it can be infused with any one of a wide range of ideological values. Now, this is not the first time that a theoretic orientation in social science or social philosophy has been assigned diametrically opposed ideological implications. It may be helpful, therefore, to examine one of the most notable prior instances in which a sociological and methodological conception has been the object of the most varied ideological imputations, and to compare this instance, so far as possible, with the case of functional analysis. The comparable case is that of dialectical materialism; the spokesmen for dialectical materialism are the nineteenth century economic historian, social philosopher and professional revolutionary, Karl Marx, and his close aide and collaborator, Friedrich Engels.

#### *The Ideological Orientations of Dialectical Materialism*

1. "The mystification which dialectic suffers at Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present *its general form* of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again if you would discover the *rational kernel* within the *mystical shell*."

2. "*In its mystified form* dialectic became the fashion in Germany, *because it seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things*."

#### *Comparative Ideological Orientations of Functional Analysis*

1. *Some* functional analysts have gratuitously *assumed* that *all* existing social structures fulfill indispensable social functions. This is sheer faith, mysticism, if you will, rather than the final product of sustained and systematic inquiry. The postulate must be earned, not inherited, if it is to gain the acceptance of men of social science.

2. The three postulates of functional unity, universality and indispensability comprise a system of premises which must inevitably lead to a glorification of the existing state of things.

39. Richard LaPiere, *Collective Behavior*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1938), 55-56 [italics supplied].

*The Ideological Orientations of  
Dialectical Materialism*

3. "In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehensive and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state [of affairs], of its inevitable breaking up;

4. "because it regards every historically developed form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary."<sup>40</sup>

5. "... all successive historical situations are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society from the lower to the higher. Each stage is necessary, therefore just-

40. The passage to this point is quoted, without deletion or addition but only with the introduction of italics for appropriate emphasis, from that fount of dialectical materialism, Karl Marx, *Capital*, (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1906), I, 25-26.

*Comparative Ideological Orientations  
of Functional Analysis*

3. In its more empirically oriented and analytically precise forms, functional analysis is often regarded with suspicion by those who consider an existing social structure as eternally fixed and beyond change. This more exacting form of functional analysis includes, not only a study of the functions of existing social structures, but also a study of their dysfunctions for diversely situated individuals, subgroups or social strata, and the more inclusive society. It provisionally assumes, as we shall see, that when the net balance of the aggregate of consequences of an existing social structure is clearly dysfunctional, there develops a strong and insistent pressure for change. It is possible, though this remains to be established, that beyond a given point, this pressure will inevitably result in more or less predetermined directions of social change.

4. Though functional analysis has often focused on the *statics* of social structure rather than the *dynamics* of social change, this is not intrinsic to that system of analysis. By focusing on dysfunctions as well as on functions, this mode of analysis can assess not only the bases of social stability but the potential sources of social change. The phrase "historically developed forms" may be a useful reminder that social structures are typically undergoing discernible change. It remains to discover the pressures making for various types of change. To the extent that functional analysis focuses wholly on functional consequences, it leans toward an ultraconservative ideology; to the extent that it focuses wholly on dysfunctional consequences, it leans toward an ultra-radical utopia. "In its essence," it is neither one nor the other.

5. Recognizing, as they must, that social structures are forever changing, functional analysts must nevertheless explore the interdependent and often mutually supporting elements of social

*The Ideological Orientations of  
Dialectical Materialism*

fixed for the time and conditions to which it owes its origin.

6. "But in the newer and higher conditions which gradually develop in its own bosom, each loses its validity and justification. It must give way to a higher form which will also in its turn decay and perish . . .

7. "It [dialectical materialism] reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away . . . It [dialectic] has, of course, also a conservative side: it recognizes that definite stages of knowledge and society are justified for their time and circumstances; but only so far. The conservatism of this mode of outlook is relative; its revolutionary character is absolute—the only absolute it admits."<sup>41</sup>

41. Similarly, the subsequent passage is quoted, with deletion only of irrelevant material and again with italics supplied, from Friedrich Engels, in *Karl Marx, Selected Works*, (Moscow: Cooperative Publishing Society, 1935), I, 422.

42. It is recognized that this paraphrase does violence to the original intent of the bard, but it is hoped that the occasion justifies the offense.

*Comparative Ideological Orientations  
of Functional Analysis*

structure. In general, it seems that most societies are integrated to the extent that many, if not all, of their several elements are reciprocally adjusted. Social structures do not have a random assortment of attributes, but these are variously interconnected and often mutually sustaining. To recognize this, is not to adopt an uncritical affirmation of every *status quo*; to fail to recognize this, is to succumb to the temptations of radical utopianism.

6. The strains and stresses in a social structure which accumulate as dysfunctional consequences of existing elements are not cabin'd, cribb'd and confined by appropriate social planning and will in due course lead to institutional breakdown and basic social change. When this change has passed beyond a given and not easily identifiable point, it is customary to say that a new social system has emerged.

7. But again, it must be reiterated: neither change alone nor fixity alone can be the proper object of study by the functional analyst. As we survey the course of history, it seems reasonably clear that all major social structures have in due course been cumulatively modified or abruptly terminated. In either event, they have not been eternally fixed and unyielding to change. But, at a given moment of observation, any such social structure may be tolerably well accommodated both to the subjective values of many or most of the population, and to the objective conditions with which it is confronted. To recognize this is to be true to the facts, not faithful to a pre-established ideology. And by the same token, when the structure is observed to be out of joint with the wants of the people or with the equally solid conditions of action, this too must be recognized. Who dares do all that, may become a functional analyst, who dares do less is none.<sup>42</sup>

This systematic comparison may be enough to suggest that functional analysis does not, any more than the dialectic, necessarily entail a specific ideological commitment. This is not to say that such commitments are not often implicit in the works of functional analysts. But this seems extraneous rather than intrinsic to functional theory. Here, as in other departments of intellectual activity, abuse does not gainsay the possibility of use. *Critically* revised, functional analysis is neutral to the major ideological systems. To this extent, and only in this limited sense,<sup>43</sup> it is like those theories or instruments of the physical sciences which lend themselves indifferently to use by opposed groups for purposes which are often no part of the scientists' intent.

### *Ideology and the Functional Analysis of Religion*

Again, it is instructive to turn, however briefly, to discussions of the functions of religion to show how the *logic* of functional analysis is adopted by people otherwise opposed in their ideological stance.

The social role of religion has of course been repeatedly observed and interpreted over the long span of many centuries. The hard core of continuity in these observations consists in an emphasis on religion as an institutional means of social control, whether this be in Plato's concept of "noble lies," or in Aristotle's opinion that it operates "with a view to the persuasion of the multitude" or in the comparable judgment by Polybius that "the masses . . . can be controlled only by mysterious terrors and tragic fears." If Montesquieu remarks of the Roman lawmakers that they sought "to inspire a people that feared nothing with fear of the gods, and to use that fear to lead it whithersoever they pleased," then Jawaharlal Nehru observes, on the basis of his own experience, that "the only books that British officials heartily recommended [to political prisoners in India] were religious books or novels. It is wonderful how dear to the heart of the British Government is the subject of religion and how impartially it encourages all brands of it."<sup>44</sup> It would appear that there is an ancient and abiding tradition holding, in one form or another, that religion has served to control the masses. It appears, also, that the language in which this proposition is couched usually gives a clue to the ideological commitment of the author.

How is it, then, with some of the current functional analyses of religion? In his critical consolidation of several major theories in the sociology of religion, Parsons summarizes some of the basic conclusions

43. This should not be taken to deny the important fact that the values, implicit and openly acknowledged, of the social scientist may help fix his choice of problems for investigation, his formulation of these problems and, consequently, the utility of his findings for certain purposes, and not for others. The statement intends only what it affirms: functional analysis had no *intrinsic* commitment to any ideological camp, as the foregoing discussion at least illustrates.

44. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, (New York: John Day, 1941), 7.

which have emerged regarding the "functional significance of religion":

. . . if moral norms and the sentiments supporting them are of such primary importance, what are the mechanisms by which they are maintained *other than external processes of enforcement*? It was Durkheim's view that religious ritual was of primary significance as a mechanism for *expressing and reinforcing the sentiments* most essential to the *institutional integration* of the society. It can readily be seen that this is clearly linked to Malinowski's views of the significance of funeral ceremonies as a *mechanism for reasserting the solidarity of the group* on the occasion of severe emotional strain. Thus Durkheim worked out certain aspects of the specific relations between *religion and social structure* more sharply than did Malinowski, and in addition put the problem in a different functional perspective in that he applied it to the society as a whole in abstraction from particular situations of tension and strain for the individual.<sup>45</sup>

And again, summarizing an essential finding of the major comparative study in the sociology of religion, Parsons observes that "perhaps the most striking feature of Weber's analysis is the demonstration of the extent to which precisely the variations in socially sanctioned values and goals in secular life correspond to the variations in the dominant religious philosophy of the great civilizations."<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, in exploring the role of religion among racial and ethnic subgroups in the United States, Donald Young in effect remarks the close correspondence between their "socially sanctioned values and goals in secular life" and their "dominant religious philosophy":

One function which a minority religion may serve is that of *reconciliation with inferior status and its discriminatory consequences*. Evidence of religious service of this function may be found among all American minority peoples. On the other hand, religious institutions may also develop in such a way as to be an *incitement and support of revolt against inferior status*. Thus, the Christianized Indian, with due allowance for exceptions, has tended to be *more submissive* than the pagan. Special cults such as those associated with the use of peyote, the Indian Shaker Church, and the Ghost Dance, all three containing both Christian and native elements, were foredoomed attempts to develop *modes of religious expression adapted to individual and group circumstances*. The latter, with its emphasis on an assured millennium of freedom from the white man, encouraged forceful revolt. The Christianity of the Negro, in spite of appreciable encouragement of verbal criticism of the existing order, *has emphasized acceptance of present troubles in the knowledge of better times to come in the life hereafter*. The numerous varieties of Christianity and the Judaism brought by immigrants from Europe and Mexico, in spite of common nationalistic elements, also *stressed later rewards rather than immediate direct action*.<sup>47</sup>

45. Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory*, 61 [italics supplied].

46. *Ibid.*, 63.

47. Donald Young, *American Minority Peoples*, (New York: Harper, 1937), 204 [italics supplied]. For a functional analysis of the Negro church in the United States, see George Eaton Simpson and J. Milton Yinger, *Racial and Cultural Minorities* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 522-530.

These diverse and scattered observations, with their notably varied ideological provenience, exhibit some basic similarities. First, they are all given over to the consequences of specific religious systems for prevailing sentiments, definitions of situations and action. These consequences are rather consistently observed to be those of reinforcement of prevailing moral norms, docile acceptance of these norms, postponement of ambitions and gratifications (if the religious doctrine so demands), and the like. However, as Young observes, religions have also served, under determinate conditions, to provoke rebellion, or as Weber has shown, religions have served to motivate or to canalize the behavior of great numbers of men and women toward the modification of social structures. It would seem premature, therefore, to conclude that all religion everywhere has only the one consequence of making for mass apathy.

Second, the Marxist view implicitly and the functionalist view explicitly affirm the central point that systems of religion *do affect behavior*, that they are *not merely* epiphenomena but partially independent determinants of behavior. For presumably, it makes a difference if "the masses" do or do not accept a particular religion just as it makes a difference if an individual does or does not take opium.

Third, the more ancient as well as the Marxist theories deal with the *differential* consequences of religious beliefs and rituals for various subgroups and strata in the society—e.g., "the masses"—as, for that matter, does the non-Marxist Donald Young. The functionalist is not confined, as we have seen, to exploring the consequences of religion for "society as a whole."

Fourth, the suspicion begins to emerge that the functionalists, with their emphasis on religion as a *social mechanism* for "reinforcing the sentiments most essential to the institutional integration of the society," may not differ materially in their *analytical framework* from the Marxists who, if their metaphor of "opium of the masses" is converted into a neutral statement of social fact, also assert that religion operates as a social mechanism for reinforcing certain secular as well as sacred sentiments among its believers.

The point of difference appears only when *evaluations* of this commonly accepted fact come into question. Insofar as the functionalists refer only to "institutional integration" without exploring the diverse consequences of integration about very different types of values and interests, they confine themselves to purely *formal* interpretation. For integration is a plainly formal concept. A society may be integrated around norms of strict caste, regimentation, and docility of subordinated social strata, just as it may be integrated around norms of open mobility, wide areas of self-expression and independence of judgment among temporarily lower strata. And insofar as the Marxists assert, without qualification, that all religion everywhere, whatever its doctrinal content

and its organizational form, involves "an opiate" for the masses, they too shift to purely formal interpretations, without allowing, as the excerpt from Young shows to be the case, for particular religions in particular social structures serving to activate rather than to lethargize mass action. It is in the *evaluation* of these functions of religion, rather than in the logic of analysis, then, that the functionalists and the Marxists part company. And it is the *evaluations* which permit the pouring of ideological content into the bottles of *functionalism*.<sup>48</sup> The bottles themselves are

48. This type of talking-past-each-other is perhaps more common than one is wont to suspect. Often, the basic agreement in the *analysis* of a situation is plentifully obscured by the basic disagreement in the *evaluation* of that situation. As a result, it is erroneously assumed that the opponents differ in their cognitive procedures and findings, whereas they differ only in their sets of values. Consider, for example, the recent striking case of the public debates and conflicts between Winston Churchill and Harold Laski, where it was generally assumed, among others by Churchill himself, that the two disagreed on the substantive premise that social change is more readily accepted in time of war than in time of peace. Yet compare the following excerpts from the writings of the two men.

"The former peace-time structure of society had for more than four years been superseded and life had been raised to a strange intensity by the war spell. Under that mysterious influence, men and women had been appreciably exalted above death and pain and toil. *Unities and comradeships had become possible* between men and classes and nations and grown stronger while the hostile pressure and the common cause endured. But now the spell was broken: too late for some purposes, too soon for others, and too suddenly for all! *Every victorious country subsided to its old levels and its previous arrangements*; but these latter were found to have fallen into much disrepair, their fabric was weakened and disjointed, they seemed narrow and out of date."

"With the passing of the spell there passed also, just as the new difficulties were at their height, *much of the exceptional powers of guidance and control*. . . . To the faithful, toil-burdened masses the victory was so complete that no further effort seemed required. . . . *A vast fatigue dominated collective action*. Though every subversive element endeavored to assert itself, *revolutionary rage like every other form of psychic energy burnt low*."

"The atmosphere of war permits, and even compels, innovations and experiments that are not possible when peace returns. The invasion of our wonted routine of life accustoms us to what William James called the vital habit of breaking habits. . . . *We find ourselves stimulated to exertions, even sacrifices*, we did not know we had it in us to make. *Common danger builds a basis for a new fellowship* the future of which is dependent wholly upon whether its foundations are temporary or permanent. If they are temporary, then the end of the war sees the resumption of all our previous differences exacerbated tenfold by the grave problems it will have left." "I am, therefore, arguing that the changes which we require we can make by consent in a period in which, as now, conditions make men remember their identities and not their differences."

"We can begin those changes now because the atmosphere is prepared for their reception. It is highly doubtful whether we can make them by consent when that atmosphere is absent. It is the more doubtful because the effort the war requires will induce in many, above all in those who have agreed to the suspension of privilege, *a fatigue, a hunger for the ancient ways, which it will be difficult to resist*."

neutral to their contents, and may serve equally well as containers for ideological poison or for ideological nectar.

## THE LOGIC OF PROCEDURE

### *Prevalence of the Functional Orientation*

The functional orientation is of course neither new nor confined to the social sciences. It came, in fact, relatively late on the sociological scene, if one may judge by its earlier and extended use in a great variety of other disciplines.<sup>49</sup> The central orientation of functionalism—expressed

"The intensity of the exertions evoked by the national danger far exceeded the ordinary capacities of human beings. All were geared up to an abnormal pitch. Once the supreme incentive had disappeared, everyone became conscious of the severity of the strain. A vast and general relaxation and descent to the standards of ordinary life was imminent. No community could have gone on using up treasure and life energy at such a pace. Most of all was the strain apparent in the higher ranks of the brain workers. They had carried on uplifted by the psychological stimulus which was now to be removed. 'I can work until I drop' was sufficient while the cannon thundered and armies marched. But now it was peace: and on every side exhaustion, nervous and physical, unfelt or unheeded before, became evident."

"In all revolutions there comes a period of inertia when the fatigue of the effort compels a pause in the process of innovation. That period is bound to come with the cessation of hostilities. After a life on the heights the human constitution seems to demand tranquility and relaxation. To insist, in the period of pause, that we gird up our loins for a new and difficult journey, above all for a journey into the unknown, is to ask the impossible. . . . When hostilities against Nazism cease, men will want, more than anything, a routine of thought and habit which does not compel the painful adaptation of their minds to disturbing excitement."

The Gibbonesque passages in the first column are, of course, by Churchill, the Winston Churchill between the Great Wars, writing in retrospect about the aftermath of the first of these: *The World Crises: Volume 4, The Aftermath*, (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1928), 30, 31, 33. The observations in the second column are those of Harold Laski, writing during the Second Great War to say that it is the policy of Mr. Churchill to make "the conscious postponement of any issue deemed 'controversial' until the victory is won [and] this means . . . that the relations of production are to remain unchanged until peace comes, and that, accordingly, none of the instruments for social change on a large scale, will be at the national disposal for agreed purposes." *Revolution of Our Time*, (New York: Viking Press, 1943), 185, 187, 193, 227-8, 309. Unless Churchill had forgotten his analysis of the aftermath of the first war, it is plain that he and Laski were agreed on the diagnosis that significant and deliberately enacted social change was unlikely in the immediate post-war era. The difference clearly lay in the appraisal of the desirability of instituting designated changes at all. (The italics in both columns were by neither author.)

It may be noted, in passing, that the very expectation on which both Churchill and Laski were agreed—i.e. that the post-war period in England would be one of mass lethargy and indifference to planned institutional change—was not altogether borne out by the actual course of events. England after the second great war did not exactly repudiate the notion of planned change.

<sup>49</sup> The currency of a functionalist outlook has been repeatedly noted. For example: "The fact that in all fields of thinking the same tendency is noticeable, proves that there is now a general trend toward interpreting the world in terms of inter-connection of operation rather than in terms of separate substantial units. Albert

in the practice of interpreting data by establishing their consequences for larger structures in which they are implicated—has been found in virtually all the sciences of man—biology and physiology, psychology, economics and law, anthropology and sociology.<sup>50</sup> The prevalence of the

Einstein in physics, Claude Bernard in physiology, Alexis Carrel in biology, Frank Lloyd Wright in architecture, A. N. Whitehead in philosophy, W. Koehler in psychology, Theodor Litt in sociology, Hermann Heller in political science, B. Cardozo in law: these are men representing different cultures, different countries, different aspects of human life and the human spirit, and yet all approaching their problems with a sense of 'reality' which is looking not to material substance but to functional interaction for a comprehension of phenomena." G. Niemeyer, *Law Without Force*, (Princeton University Press, 1941), 300. This motley company suggests anew that agreement on the functional outlook need not imply identity of political or social philosophy.

<sup>50</sup> The literature commenting on the trend toward functionalism is almost as large and considerably more sprawling than the diverse scientific literatures exemplifying the trend. Limitations of space and concern for immediate relevance limit the number of such references which must here take the place of an extended review and discussion of these collateral developments in scientific thought.

For *biology*, a general, now classical, source is J. H. Woodger, *Biological Principles: A Critical Study*, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1929), esp. 327 ff. For correlative materials, at least the following are indicated: Bertalanffy, *Modern Theories of Development*, op. cit., particularly 1-46, 64 ff., 179 ff.; E. S. Russell, *The Interpretation of Development and Heredity: A Study in Biological Method*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), esp. 166-280. Foreshadowing discussions will be found in the less instructive writings of W. E. Ritter, E. B. Wilson, E. Ungerer, J. Schaxel, J. von Uexküll, etc. The papers of J. Needham—e.g., "Thoughts on the problem of biological organization," *Scientia*, August 1932, 84-92—can be consulted with profit. For *physiology*, consider the writings of C. S. Sherrington, W. B. Cannon, G. E. Coghill, Joseph Barcroft, and especially the following: C. S. Sherrington, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923); W. B. Cannon, *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage*, chapter 12, and *The Wisdom of the Body*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932), all but the unhappy epilogue on "social homeostasis"; G. E. Coghill, *Anatomy and the Problem of Behavior*, (Cambridge University Press, 1929); Joseph Barcroft, *Features in the Architecture of Physiological Function*, (Cambridge University Press, 1934).

For *psychology*, virtually any of the basic contributions to dynamic psychology are in point. It would not only be low wit but entirely true to say that Freudian conceptions are instinct with functionalism, since the major concepts are invariably referred to a functional (or dysfunctional) framework. For a different order of conception, see Harvey Carr, "Functionalism," in Carl Murchison, ed. *Psychologies of 1930*, (Clark University Press, 1930); and as one among many articles dealing with substantially this set of conceptions, see J. M. Fletcher, "Homeostasis as an explanatory principle in psychology," *Psychological Review*, 1942, 49, 80-87. For a statement of application of the functional approach to personality, see chapter I in Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry A. Murray, ed. *Personality in Nature, Society and Culture*, (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948), 3-32. The important respects in which the Lewin group is oriented toward functionalism have been widely recognized.

For *law*, see the critical paper by Felix S. Cohen, "Transcendental nonsense and the functional approach," *Columbia Law Review*, 1935, XXXV, 809-849, and the numerous annotated references therein.

For *sociology and anthropology*, see the brief sampling of references throughout this chapter. The volume edited by Robert Redfield provides a useful bridge across the chasm too often separating the biological from the social sciences. Levels of Integration in Biological and Social Systems, *Biological Symposia*, 1943, VIII. For an important effort to set out the conceptual framework of functional analysis, see Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1951).

functional outlook is in itself no warrant for its scientific value, but it does suggest that cumulative experience has forced this orientation upon the disciplined observers of man as biological organism, psychological actor, member of society and bearer of culture.

More immediately relevant is the possibility that prior experience in other disciplines may provide useful methodological models for functional analysis in sociology. To learn from the canons of analytical procedure in these often more exacting disciplines is not, however, to adopt their specific conceptions and techniques, lock, stock and barrel. To profit from the logic of procedure successfully employed in the biological sciences, for example, is not to backslide into accepting the largely irrelevant analogies and homologies which have so long fascinated the devotees of organismic sociology. To examine the *methodological* framework of biological researches is not to adopt their *substantive* concepts.

The *logical structure* of experiment, for example, does not differ in physics, or chemistry or psychology, although the substantive hypotheses, the technical tools, the basic concepts and the practical difficulties may differ enormously. Nor do the near-substitutes for experiment—controlled observation, comparative study and the method of 'discerning'—differ in their *logical structure* in anthropology, sociology or biology.

In turning briefly to Cannon's logic of procedure in physiology, then, we are looking for a methodological model which might possibly be derived for sociology, without adopting Cannon's unfortunate homologies between the structure of biological organisms and of society.<sup>51</sup> His procedures shape up somewhat as follows. Adopting the orientation of Claude Bernard, Cannon first indicates that the organism *requires* a relatively constant and stable state. One task of the physiologist, then, is to provide "a concrete and detailed account of the modes of assuring steady states." In reviewing the numerous "concrete and detailed" accounts provided by Cannon, we find that the *general mode of formulation* is invariable, irrespective of the specific problem in hand. A typical formulation is as follows: "In order that the blood shall . . . serve as a circulating medium, fulfilling the various *functions* of a common carrier of nutriment and waste . . . , there must be provision for holding it back whenever there is danger of escape." Or, to take another statement: "If the life of the cell is to continue . . . , the blood . . . must flow with sufficient speed to deliver to the living cells the (necessary) supply of oxygen."

51. As previously implied, Cannon's epilogue to his *Wisdom of the Body* remains unexcelled as an example of the fruitless extremes to which even a distinguished mind is driven once he sets about to draw *substantive* analogies and homologies between biological organisms and social systems. Consider, for example, his comparison between the fluid matrix of the body and the canals, rivers and railroads on which "the products of farm and factory, of mine and forest, are borne to and fro." This kind of analogy, earlier developed in copious volumes by René Worms, Schaeffle, Vincent, Small, and Spencer among others, does not represent the distinctive value of Cannon's writings for the sociologist.

Having established the *requirements* of the organic system, Cannon then proceeds to describe *in detail* the various *mechanisms* which operate to meet these requirements (e.g., the complicated changes which lead to clotting, the local contraction of injured blood vessels that lessen the severity of bleeding; accelerated clot formation through the secretion of adrenin and the action of adrenin upon the liver, etc.). Or again, he describes the various biochemical arrangements which ensure a proper supply of oxygen to the normal organism and the compensating changes which occur when some of these arrangements do not operate adequately.

If the logic of this approach is stated in its more general terms, the following interrelated sequence of steps becomes evident. First of all, certain functional requirements of the organisms are established, requirements which must be satisfied if the organism is to survive, or to operate with some degree of effectiveness. Second, there is a concrete and detailed description of the arrangements (structures and processes) through which these requirements are typically met in "normal" cases. Third, if some of the typical mechanisms for meeting these requirements are destroyed, or are found to be functioning inadequately, the observer is sensitized to the need for detecting compensating mechanisms (if any) which fulfill the necessary function. Fourth, and implicit in all that precedes, there is a detailed account of the structure *for which* the functional requirements hold, as well as a detailed account of the arrangements *through which* the function is fulfilled.

So well established is the logic of functional analysis in the biological sciences that these requirements for an adequate analysis come to be met almost as a matter of course. Not so with sociology. Here, we find extraordinarily varied conceptions of the appropriate design of studies in functional analysis. For some, it consists largely (or even exclusively) in establishing empirical interrelations between "parts" of a social system; for others, it consists in showing the "value for society" of a socially standardized practice or a social organization; for still others, it consists in elaborate accounts of the purposes of formal social organizations.

As one examines the varied array of functional analyses in sociology, it becomes evident that sociologists in contrast, say, to physiologists, do not typically carry through operationally intelligible procedures, do not systematically assemble needed types of data, do not employ a common body of concepts and do not utilize the same criteria of validity. In other words, we find in physiology, a body of standard concepts, procedures and design of analysis and in sociology, a variegated selection of concepts, procedures and designs, depending, it would seem, on the interests and tastes of the individual sociologist. To be sure, this difference between the two disciplines has *something*—perhaps, a good deal—to do with differences in the character of the data examined by the physiologist and the sociologist. The relatively large opportunities for experimental



work in physiology are, to be trite about it, scarcely matched in sociology. But this scarcely accounts for the systematic ordering of procedure and concepts in the one instance and the disparate, often uncoordinated and not infrequently defective character of procedure and concepts in functional sociology.

## A PARADIGM FOR FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS IN SOCIOLOGY

As an initial and admittedly tentative step in the direction of codifying functional analysis in sociology, we set forth a paradigm of the concepts and problems central to this approach. It will soon become evident that the chief components of this paradigm have progressively emerged in the foregoing pages as we have critically examined the vocabularies, postulates, concepts and ideological imputations now current in the field. The paradigm brings these together in compact form, thus permitting simultaneous inspection of the major requirements of functional analysis and serving as an aid to self-correction of provisional interpretations, a result difficult to achieve when concepts are scattered and hidden in page after page of discursive exposition.<sup>52</sup> The paradigm presents the hard core of concept, procedure and inference in functional analysis.

Above all, it should be noted that the paradigm does not represent a set of categories introduced *de novo*, but rather a *codification* of those concepts and problems which have been forced upon our attention by critical scrutiny of current research and theory in functional analysis. (Reference to the preceding sections of this chapter will show that the groundwork has been prepared for every one of the categories embodied in the paradigm.)

### 1. The item(s) to which functions are imputed

The entire range of sociological data can be, and much of it has been, subjected to functional analysis. The basic requirement is that the object of analysis represent a *standardized* (i.e. patterned and repetitive) item, such as social roles, institutional patterns, social processes, cultural pattern, culturally patterned emotions, social norms, group organization, social structure, devices for social control, etc.

**BASIC QUERY:** What must enter into the protocol of observation of the given item if it is to be amenable to systematic functional analysis?

### 2. Concepts of subjective dispositions (motives, purposes)

At some point, functional analysis invariably assumes or explicitly operates with some conception of the motivation of individuals involved in a social system. As the foregoing discussion has shown, these concepts of subjective disposition are often and erroneously merged with the related, but different, concepts of objective consequences of attitude, belief and behavior.

52. For a brief statement of the purpose of analytical paradigms such as this, see the note on paradigms elsewhere in this volume.

**BASIC QUERY:** In which types of analysis is it sufficient to take observed motivations as *data*, as given, and in which are they properly considered as *problematical*, as derivable from other data?

### 3. Concepts of objective consequences (functions, dysfunctions)

We have observed two prevailing types of confusion enveloping the several current conceptions of "function":

(1) The tendency to confine sociological observations to the *positive* contributions of a sociological item to the social or cultural system in which it is implicated; and

(2) The tendency to confuse the subjective category of *motive* with the objective category of *function*.

Appropriate conceptual distinctions are required to eliminate these confusions.

The first problem calls for a concept of *multiple consequences* and a *net balance of an aggregate of consequences*.

*Functions* are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system; and *dysfunctions*, those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system. There is also the empirical possibility of *nonfunctional* consequences, which are simply irrelevant to the system under consideration.

In any given instance, an item may have both functional and dysfunctional consequences, giving rise to the difficult and important problem of evolving canons for assessing the net balance of the aggregate of consequences. (This is, of course, most important in the use of functional analysis for guiding the formation and enactment of policy.)

The second problem (arising from the easy confusion of motives and functions) requires us to introduce a conceptual distinction between the cases in which the subjective aim-in-view coincides with the objective consequence, and the cases in which they diverge.

*Manifest functions* are those objective consequences contributing to the adjustment or adaptation of the system which are intended and recognized by participants in the system;

*Latent functions*, correlatively, being those which are neither intended nor recognized.\*

**BASIC QUERY:** What are the effects of the transformation of a previously latent function into a manifest function (involving the problem of the role of knowledge in human behavior and the problems of "manipulation" of human behavior)?

\* The relations between the "unanticipated consequences" of action and "latent functions" can be clearly defined, since they are implicit in the foregoing section of the paradigm. The unintended consequences of action are of three types:

- (1) those which are functional for a designated system, and these comprise the latent functions;
- (2) those which are dysfunctional for a designated system, and these comprise the latent dysfunctions; and
- (3) those which are irrelevant to the system which they affect neither functionally nor dysfunctionally, i.e., the pragmatically unimportant class of non-functional consequences.

For a preliminary statement, see R. K. Merton, "The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action," *American Sociological Review* 1936, 1, 894-904; for a tabulation of these types of consequences see Goode, *Religion Among the Primitives*, 32-33.