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## **NOTES FOR UNIT IV**

### **Sociality**

## HUMAN SOCIALITY

### I. The Relation of Individuals and Society

#### A. Psychologism/Individualism

Understands individuals to be by nature autonomous and in principle self-sufficient. That is, individuals can live well without others and be adequately understood solely in terms of themselves without any necessary reference to other individuals or society. For psychologism, sociality is not essential to human existence; society is merely an aggregate of separate and in principle isolable individuals.

A classic example of psychologism is the social political philosophy of Western liberalism (which originates with Locke, Hobbes and others). The view posits the primal human condition as a state of nature which consists of separate, isolated individuals who, for reasons of survival, form society. Thus, society is fundamentally derivative and secondary in human existence.

Although psychologism can be deterministic, it generally affirms human individuality and freedom as essential to human existence. Also, there is a good deal of theoretical and empirical evidence against such a view. First, there is no historical or archeological evidence to support a state of nature theory. Archeological finds suggest that humans have always been found in social groups and that humans have evolved from life forms that are in principle social. Second, evidence from social psychology suggests that the development of human individuals can take place only in a social setting, in interaction with other people.

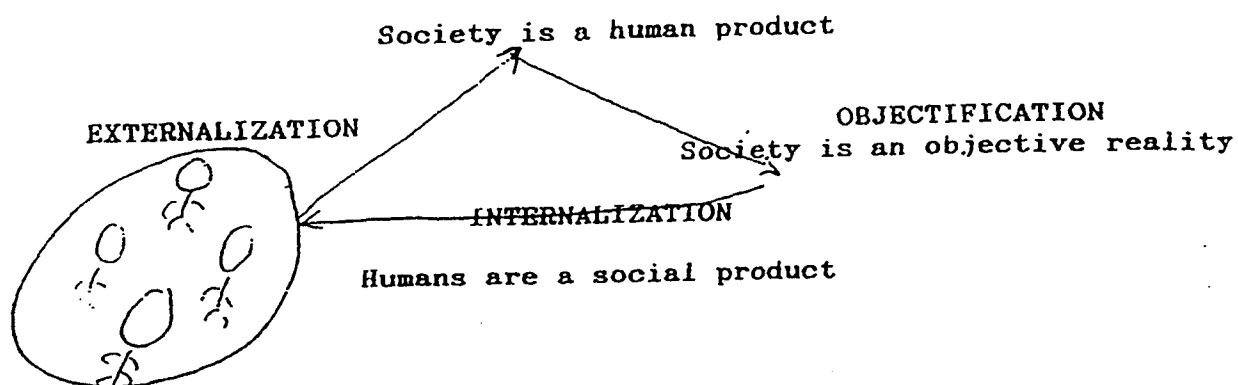
#### B. Sociologism/Collectivism

On this view individuals are the product of social forces which they neither create nor can control. People are quite literally viewed as cogs in a machine (as in *BNW*). Such views deny both freedom and individuality. This is the principle difficulty with such views, for if we grant freedom and individuality, then we must allow that the social world, in some respects at least, is created and maintained in existence through human agency.

#### C. Dialectical view of individuals and society.

On this view (Berger and Luckmann) individuals and society are correlative to one another. Neither can exist without the other or be fully understood except with reference to one another. Both mutually produce one another in historical fashion (ie., intergenerationally).

Berger and Luckmann hold that the dialectical relation has a three-fold structure which must be understood historically (and not statically).



### *Externalization:*

Humans are not instinctually driven in the way that other animals are. There is a world openness to human existence. Thus humans must create the social world in which meaning is sought for a fully human existence. This world is not prefabricated by nature. While our nature (our biology, for Berger and Luckmann) impels us to produce a social world, no particular social world can be deduced from our nature.

Human beings exist essentially in the world. In everyday existence our lives are dominated by a pragmatic motive--the ongoing formulation and realization of plans of action within the world to secure ourselves in the world--producing and creating things, establishing human relations, expressing ourselves, etc.

The social world, with its complex of institutions, systems, social roles, legitimation systems, etc. is a human product. For Berger and Luckmann, it can have no origin other than human agency.

### *Objectification:*

By objective reality Berger and Luckmann refer to what exists independently of our will; we cannot simply wish away or alter at will what is objective.

Although a human product, the social world is objective *vis a vis* individuals within it. People are born into a social world which they have not personally created; that social world will outlast them; it resists their attempts to change and control it; it has meanings which are not simply the creation of the individual. However, the social world is not objective *vis a vis* collective human agency as such, for it comes into existence and is maintained in existence only through human agency; thus it can be changed through human agency.

### *Internalization:*

Humans are a social product. The social world establishes the essential context within which individuals exist and make sense out of their lives. It provides the context for individual possibilities; for how these possibilities are understood and pursued. Our own personal identity is always integrally connected with a given determinate

social world.

## II. Institutionalization

For Berger and Luckmann, institutions are mutually reciprocal typifications. That is they are the social forms and structures created by humans through collective activity which serve to order and control human existence. Institutionalization pervades human life and is indispensable to it, just as habituation is inevitable in the life of the individual.

Since we are not instinctually driven to act in prefabricated routines and patterns, we must create the routines and patterns for our existence. Institutionalization is precisely this collective routinization of human life.

This process must be understood historically, especially regarding our relation to the institutional order. That is, as people establish institutions and are conscious of doing so, they apprehend institutions as "this is the way we do things." As these institutions become transmitted to new generations or new members they tend to crystallize and become something reified--"this is how things are done."

Institutions thus serve as a fundamental controlling force of human life not just in the sense that social sanctions may be imposed on people for not conforming to institutions, but in the more fundamental sense that they direct our actions towards some possibilities and away from others, often without our being aware that this is happening.

## III. Social Roles:

Social roles serve to mediate the relation between individuals with themselves, with the social order and with other people. Within a given social world, they specify the types of actions that are to be performed or avoided and the types of people who are to perform those actions.

As with institutions social roles are subjected to the general dialectical relation between individuals and society. They are produced by people, assume an objectivity over against people and, in turn, produce people. As we work out our own existence and talk about ourselves we do so with reference to a wide variety of social roles. Yet as individuals we cannot be reduced to those roles (see Berger and Luckmann's distinction between the total self and the social self). For, we retain the ability to interpret those roles, conform to them, challenge them, reject them modify them, etc.

## IV. Reification

Reification literally means res (thing)+ facere (to make); reification involves two aspects:

(1) The social world is reified when its human origins are forgotten or denied. Thus it appears not as a human product but as a product of nature or the gods or as something with a mind and life of its own. In either case, the reification of the social world dehumanizes us for we fail to recognize our own collective products and thus lose sight of our ability to change and alter that social world.

(2) People are reified when they are reduced or reduce themselves to the social roles they play. As such they become "nothing but" those roles, severed from any individuality and freedom.

## V. Legitimation

Legitimation refers to the production, in language, of meanings and symbol systems which serve to explain and justify the social order and integrate individuals and the social order with one another.

By "explain" is meant: to tell what and why things are; to "justify" is to give normative dignity (or deny same), i.e., make positive or negative evaluation.

Legitimation provides two basic integrative functions:

- (a) it integrates people with various institutional order and with others in those institutions;
- (b) it helps integrate people with various domains of the social world as they pass through various stages of their lives.

### Levels of legitimation

Incipient-refers to the words that signify people, social roles, activities and aspects of the social order;

Pretheoretical: refers to the legends, myths, stories etc. which people tell to make sense of their lives.

Theoretical: various systematic, rational inquiries which serve to legitimate specific domains of the social world.

World-view: the most comprehensive symbol systems that locate the social order in a broader cosmic and, typically, theological context.