

Social Ecological Work and Planning - Remarks on a Social-Ecological Theory of Action (SET)

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A. QUESTIONS

Do exist social problems, where a "Social-Ecological Theory of Action" may help to come to adequate answers? I will start with three questions, which are virulent in the debate about the future of social work and planning, as one leaves the very pragmatic level:

1. What is "quality of life"?
2. How would a holistic view of human and society look like?
3. How is it possible to act in a holistic way?

Everybody has a set of theories in mind, refers to some basic assumptions on reality. It is quite impossible to communicate without becoming aware of the differences between these sets of theories.

This matter of fact should be concerned especially within a stage of developing new theories, respectively when stepping towards a new field of research as it is the case, when a new "Ecosocial perspective" should be developed and established. What is actually on the agenda is the need for a more holistic, a more integrative and reflexive view of reality - in order to overcome reductionist perspectives like a mechanistic one or narrow biomedical ideas how societal processes and social change are working.

Insofar I view myself as a little bit removed of the burden for making very concrete proposals for "Community Participation", "Empowerment" and so on, but tackling the task of theory.

(1). This paper aims at a "social-ecological theory of action". This project can be broken into two connected questions (2) and (3):

(2) The search for a theory of social ecology. As most of you will suppose, such a theoretical approach will be more connected with structures, contexts, with the problem of how defining "systems" - and especially social systems -, their environments and the relations between.

(3) The second question is about the theory of action: What is "action" in different perspectives and wherein a social-ecological one would differ?

Both questions are strongly connected, because according to a social-ecological theory (social) systems are always constituted by action. It was Talcott Parsons¹, who first argued explicitly this way (Parsons, 1949; Parsons and Shils, 1951; cf. Münch,

1988). Nevertheless, Parsons' "voluntaristic theory of action" (cf. Münch, 1988) lacks in its basics - the relation between the different levels of action and of systems - a logical foundation (cf. Heinrichs, 1980), although Parsons grounds in Kantian perspective. I want to argue, that this lack of logic is of importance for the misunderstandings and confusion Parsons' "action-system"-theory has led to in the past decades (i.e. Habermas, 1980; Luhmann, 1981).

I will propose therefore a view of the relations between action and system and between the systems-levels (Micro/Macro) which is grounded in a "theory of reflection" in the tradition of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the logic-philosopher and cybernetician Gotthard Günther and the social-philosopher Johannes Heinrichs. On the logical level it is an effort to overcome the traditional classical Aristotelian "two-valued"-logic of the Being (which is only adequate for the objective reality) and to report of a "more-valued"-logic of reflection (Gotthard Günther), which seems to be the only way to conceptualize social and meta-social, spiritual levels of reality.

I hope, that this "logic of reflection" will help us to gain a holistic view of the different levels of life and of the relation of humans to their different contexts. Holism ("Ganzheitlichkeit") in this perspective is not an organicist or systemic-technicist view of reality, but a logical grounded "integration-by-differentiation" (J. Heinrichs).

In the last section of my paper I will draw some very preliminary conclusions of this theoretical approach for the question of "ecological decision-making" in social work and planning.

B. UNSATISFYING ANSWERS

Let me first summarize some usual but unsatisfying answers to the three introducing questions:

1. What is "Quality of Life"?

"Health is maintaining a productive labour force" (dualistic view: reduction of human onto exchange of labour force)

"Health is the absence of illness" (dualistic view: ill - healthy)

"Health is genetic optimality"

(dualistic view: normal - deviant)

All this current views of "health" are characterized by a "two-valued" logic: Healthy - Ill; Functional - Dysfunctional; Normal - Deviant

2. *How would a Holistic View of Human and Society Look Like?*

In the tradition of sociology we can distinguish two lines of theoretical perspectives:

1. the one starts from social action (i.e. Max Weber, Alfred Schütz, Jürgen Habermas et al.),
2. the other starts from the society as a structured whole (i.e. Herbert Spencer, Ötmar Spann, Niklas Luhmann et al.)

The difference between the individualistic and the collectivist approach (cf. Vanberg, 1975), between the action- and the systems-theorists (cf. Schluchter, 1980), the Micro- and the Macro-perspective (cf. Alexander et al., 1987) seems for many theorists an unavoidable one, as two distinguishable perspectives on the complexity of social reality (i.e. Turner, 1988; see also Giddens and Turner, 1987). Others are more critical of this theoretical division. One can find authors arguing for a holistic view of society on both "sides" of the "individualism-holism"-debate. Let us look at some prototypical arguments.

As far as traditional academics and politicians talk about "holism" they say:

"Human and society are organized according to the maximization of individual utility: in a efficient way"

(Economical-behavioristic syllogism)

"Human and society are organized as nature: in a organicist way, like a tree, like >life<, like >nature< ..."

(Sociobiological analogism)

"Human and society are organized like autopoietic systems: in a self-referential way"

(Sociocybernetic isomorphism)

All these current views of human and society are characterized by a "two-valued" logic²: Utility and Exchange; Adaption to Environment; Systemic Self-organization.

3. *How is it Possible to Act in a Holistic Way?*

Most politicians, planners or scientists would agree - on an abstract level - that a holistic perception and idea of reality is important - and that they already act in this way:

"You have to collect as much data as possible, do a multi-level analysis and a multi-stage planning and implementation process!"

(dualistic view: input - output)

"You have to change the context in order to promote new adaption to a new environment"

(dualistic view: behaviour-environment-equilibrium)

"You have to fit into >autopoietic forms, starting from self-descriptive and self-correcting capacities of individuals and communities<"³

(dualistic view: constructing subject - constructed reality)

This answers can be mixed and are not always so ideally distinguishable (and, off course, not complete). They are, too, characterized by "two-valued" logic: the control model; the adaptive model; the subject-free model

Human Action in these views is conceptualized either as "behaviour" in more or less narrow sense ("Stimulus-Response"-model i.e. in some traditions of Human Ecology⁴). Human Action is therefore reduced onto "adaptation". Or action is perceived, as in the (eco-)systemic and cybernetical models, as "process" - without subjects.

C. SOME ASPECTS OF A SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL THEORY

A social-ecological theory tries to view "action" and "structure" (or "system") in their logical relations. As I have pointed out (without having argued very precisely), the mainstream ways of thinking are unsatisfactory: they view the social and the spiritual sphere fundamentally inadequate.

But what would an adequate way look like? I will start with the first of the introducing questions: "What is health?" My thesis is: Health is well-being balance of the human in his/her BODY-SOUL-SPIRIT-unity ("Körper-Seele-Geist"). As Immanuel Kant postulated in one version of his "categorical imperative", to view the human, "not only as means, but also always as an end to himself"⁵.

Speaking of the "Body-Soul-Spirit"-unity is not a new concept, but an extremely old one - although in modern thought it is mostly skipped by dualistic concepts like "body-soul", or "body-mind" or "mind and nature", between which a "unity" is postulated⁶. As it was shown by Johannes Heinrichs (Heinrichs, 1988) this trinitarian-anthropological perspective is grounded in very modern logic (with the additional differentiation between individual-soul and social-soul, and thereby with a four-level system) - as it can be found in many old traditions of wisdom (Chinese Philosophy/I Ging, Astrology, Kabbalah/Numerology, Harmonical science, at Rudolf Steiner, and

many other esoteric orientations).

Let us step for clarifying the basic assumptions behind the "Body-Soul-Spirit" idea to the next question, about the social-ecological concept of man and society. Where is their logic?

"Social ecology" means to view the social sphere in its relations to its environments, but what is "environment"? Different concepts exist in different theories. I will propose a certain concept - a social-ecological theory which is grounded in a "theory of reflection". This theoretical perspective may help us for our kind of analysis - concerning the individualistic-holistic question of "health" -, because it allows us to look in a logical, structured way onto such spheres of reality which are normally excluded from the analysis of social scientists: the sphere of nature and the spiritual sphere - and their relation to the social and individual.

1. About Systems: Human and Society in a Reflection-theoretical View

Epistemological Aspects

A holistic view of human and society reconstructs reality by the means we have to perceive reality. It follows the tradition of the "theory of reflection", which can be traced back to the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the cybernetician Gotthard Günther and the social philosopher Johannes Heinrichs, who has developed and transferred this theoretical approach for the first time into social theory (Heinrichs, 1976, 1980, 1989; see for the following Opielka, 1990, 1996).

Theory of reflection as social theory acknowledges "reflection as such as constitutive for real systems" (Heinrichs, 1976, p. 10). Reflection as the "relation between the picture and the pictured" (Günther, 1978, p. XV) constitutes the ground for self-reference and reference-to-others of the self-consciousness of the subject. Therefore reflection constitutes the relation of individuals and society to nature, constitutes personalities as well as society, and the relation of nature, individual and social systems to spiritual-logical systems.

The starting point of the idea of "reflection" is the human capability to self-consciousness - the main concept of modern philosophy - and therewith to self-reflection: "The whole other reality is first imagination or something like that for us, in relation to us, who are thinking or in another way perceiving and acting humans." (Heinrichs, 1988, p. 33). The speciality of the approach discussed here is the reconstructive role of the process of reflection, as "reproduction of the accompanying consti-

tutive reflection." (Heinrichs, 1976a, p. 541) The reiteration ("Nachvollzug") of the constitutive, real-life reflexion is therewith a subsequent process of reflection. As Hegel has pointed out, the self-reference of the self-consciousness may be only thought in relation to another object, as dialectical "self-reference-in-reference-to-others" (Heinrichs, *ibid.*)⁷. Otherwise the reflection would be without content, just formal.

It is the reconstruction of the empirical outer sphere as belonging to the personal self-reference which consists dialectical thinking in the sense of Hegel. The other was understood basically as negation of the self, self-reference as "immanent negativity". The modern theory of reflection has revised this extremely portentous Hegelian identification of the otherness and negativity out of two reasons: first because of the logical critic of "two-valued", "Aristotelian" subject-object-logic. Second because of the social-philosophical argument, that the freedom of the other neither direct nor abstract speaking has to be viewed as the negation of my freedom (cf. Heinrichs, 1976a, p. 543).

How can the relations of the human to the world be reconstructed as a relation of reflection? Let us start with the four unreducible, same-primordial "elements of sense":

1. subject (S_s) and the three folded otherness:
2. object (O)
3. the other subjects (S_o) and the
4. medium of sense (M) (empirically: language and cultural grounded meanings).

These elements are levels of reflection, which constitute the wholeness of a dynamic system, that is open to the outside. Let us resume these levels (cf. Heinrichs, 1976, 1976a, 1980, p. 50ff.):

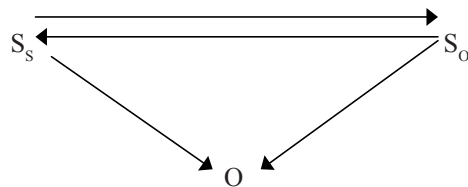
Level 1: The relation from subject (S_s) to O is not-reflected, one-sided intentionality, which characterizes on the societal level⁹ the technical-practical action, but also pure transmission of information or perception.

S $\longrightarrow$ O

Level 2: S has furthermore the ability, to reflect about him/herself. It is important, that the one-sided intentionality (level 1) does not stay apart, but is "aufgehoben" (integrated) in this second level of reflection, one-sided reflected intentionality. On the social level it means, that the intentions of others are reflected in respect to the interest of the Subject S_s : Behaviour-expectations and strategic action.



Level 3: On the next level the behaviour-expectations are conceded also to the other Subject (S_o), as expectations-expectations. This is a new level of reflection and not only a iteration of the first reflection (as it is realized in the traditional subject and action theories!): it is interpersonal reflection, which finds its social expression in communicative action, not only reciprocity of expectation by fact, but as explicitly conscious reciprocity which is ideally represented in the "I-Thou"-dialogue, described by Martin Buber and others.



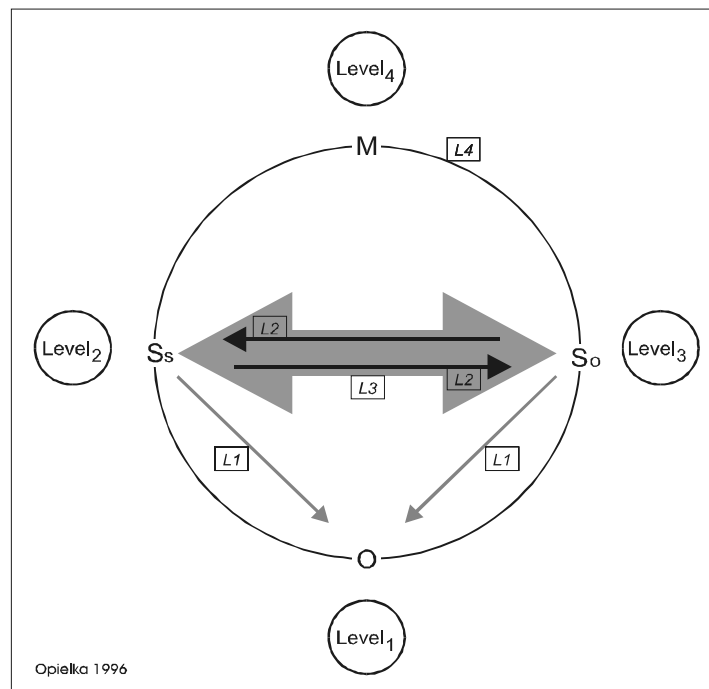
Level 4: In the final reflection happens the agreement about the mutuality of expectations-expectations and about the medium of sense (M). The individual reflection of this more or less a priori common medium is called medial reflection, or, according to the social level: meta-communicative action, which results in a common construction of the medium of sense M, especially in norms and values.

Just one remark about the logical levels: Level 1 and 2 are the basics of the classical, "Aristotelian" logic of the logic of Being (cf. Günther, 1978) - a "two-valued" logic of true/false, object or not-object etc. As Gotthard Günther argued, this logic is not valid for social communication as well as for spiritual-logical meta-communication. Here a "more-valued" logic has to be developed, which needs formalizing, because of the logical limitations of our ("two-valued", object-oriented) language (cf. Hejl, 1982).

Nevertheless, what we can point out is not, that we have no ways to communicate about social or spiritual levels. Communication (verbal and by experience etc.) and (spiritual-based) meta-communication is the adequate method of these levels. But it explicates the limitations of quantitative empirical research (and respective social planning!), which is - as long as it follows the formalizing methodologies of mathematics - until now bound to limitations of a two-valued logic. Research activists try to overcome the problem by complicated "multi-variant" or "multi-level" models (cf. Esser, 1988), but this seems to be only a iteration of the "two-valued" basic assumption - and not a realization of the complexity of the "poly-contextuality" (Günther) of life!

What are the consequences of this - rather short - theoretical-epistemological examination?

Scheme 1. Reflective Relations (according to Johannes Heinrichs) (cf. Opielka 1996)



- * First, we should promote putting this relevant questions onto the scientific-political agenda: there is a need for investment in research for a holistic methodology for the social-cultural and spiritual-philosophical levels of life.
- * Secondly, beside the formalized level all scientific, political and social efforts have to be supported, which actually are "many-valued" by praxis: communication/dialogues - and systems of information distribution, which give access to meaningful contexts. As Carolyn Merchant said: "The exchange and flow of information through the human community is the basis for decision-making" (Merchant, 1986, p. 230) - information, too, about alternatives, old ones and new ones, connecting old wisdom with modern thinking and communication. With respect to sociological empirical research it means an empowerment of qualitative research methodologies, which by reconstructing the multi-valued process of communicative and meta-communicative epistemology and action throughout the research process - emphasize the multi-valued stage of their respective research object.

APPLIED THEORY OF REFLECTION

In the following this scheme of the theory of reflection should be applied to the relation of nature and society, to the human anthropology and to the system of society. The methodological principle is a holistic one: the "dialectical subsumtion"¹⁰ (a general is caught under one qualification in a way, that all qualifications of the whole return in every qualification). Because of scarcity of space I will only list some of the relevant four-level systems:

Scheme 2: Human and Nature

- Level 1: Reflection of nature in S (physiology/behaviour-organism)
- Level 2: One-sided self-reflection, self-constitution of the personality
- Level 3: Intersubjectivity (as "social nature") constitutes society
- Level 4: Medial reflection of the world as logic of the wholeness of world: spirit ("Geist")

Scheme 3: Logic of the science system

- Level 1: Natural Sciences
 - Level 2: Psychology/Anthropology
 - Level 3: Social Sciences¹¹
 - Level 4: Philosophy/Religion
- Obviously it is interesting and fruitful to integrate

the question of "health" into this model. Let us use the reflection-theoretical approach to look at different logical levels of health - and therefore of a "science of health", too:

Scheme 4: Logic of Human ("Body-Soul-Spirit"-unity)¹²

- | | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------|----------|
| Level 4: | | Spirit | |
| Level 2/3: | (Individual) | Soul | (Social) |
| Level 1: | | Body | |

A holistic, social-ecological idea of "health" as to integrate the logical-structural levels:

1. physiological health
2. psychic health
3. social health (social-psychical, communicative)
4. spiritual health (sense and meanings, norms and values)

It is obvious, that a concept of "health" has to be a pluralistic one - the more we climb up the "levels". This makes it clear, too, that a notion of "health" and "normality", which may be sensible at the physiological level, is inadequate for the upper levels of the human condition.¹³ This scheme makes obvious, too, that "psychosomatic", "psychosocial" and other approaches would do well, if they distinguish clearly between their respective levels of reference - in order not to confuse themselves and get into fights with the scientists "responsible" for the bio-physiological dimensions. What has to be developed is a knowledge of "integration-by-differentiation" - not confusion of levels.

If we take now a look at the level of social/societal systems, we have to realize, that here exists a complementarity of the basic levels of social action and the levels of social systems:

Scheme 5: Society in the perspective of a theory of reflection (types of action)

- | | |
|---|--|
| (4) Legitimative System
(meta-communicative action) | |
| (2) Political System
(strategic action) | (3) Community System
(communicative action) |
| (1) Economical-ecological System
(technical-adaptive action) | |

The four levels of society have to be understood as "structural subsystems" of society, in difference to groups or institutions, which could be called "corporate subsystems" (cf. Heinrichs, 1976, p. 85; Opielka, 1988). The structural subsystems "interpenetrate" (Parsons) themselves. In the perspective of "dialectical subsumtion" the view onto "interpenetra-

tion" is possible without a loss of differentiation.

These distinctions fulfill two important needs for a holistic, social-ecological theory of society and action:

1. they guarantee a systematical connection of social theory with the environments of the social: with nature (also as body-nature!) as well as with the sphere of the spiritual (ontological and methodological) - without undergoing the loss of the actor in cybernetical systems theory.
2. This view offers a fundamental reformulation of the relation between action and systems: the crossing between the subsystems can be theoretically reconstructed - the logical system corresponds with the ontological structure of reality itself.

A holistic view of human, society and their environments does not need therefore naturalistic categories, analogies, homologies or isomorphies which are taken from biology, physics or cybernetics.

2. *Action in Holistic (Social-ecological) Perspective*

For many social scientist "action" is the basic category of the social world. Max Weber saw in this perspective sociology as science of action ("Handlungswissenschaft"). As I have demonstrated above - referring to Hegel, Günther, Parsons and Heinrichs - "systems" should be viewed as constituted by action.

If we look a little bit closer at the theoretical frame - which is roughly contained in scheme (1) - we realize, that the social level is constructed not alone by individual action but by interaction, or more precisely: by communicative action. Social life needs communicative action, at its best, it needs the "dialogic" situation (cf. Heinrichs, 1976; too: Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig et al.). The ground of communicative action is the "I-thou"-Relation, as Martin Buber called it, the "expectation-expectation" towards the other (not only observing the other subject as functionalist environment!).

This marks a very difference to theoretical perspectives, which neglect either the unreducability of i.e. social systems onto individual action ("methodological individualism" and its way of reducing social reality onto economic and behaviour-psychological categories). It makes it also distinct from traditional "holistic" perspective of organicism, simple idealism or social cybernetics in a technicist view. The latter traditions view human action mostly as "behaviour" (cf. Graumann, 1980). So define most "human ecologists" their theory as one of "space-

behaviour-relation" (e.g. Hawley, 1986; cf. Musil, 1988; Hamm, 1984). This reductionism of Human Ecology was often criticized: "Stated in these terms, human ecology is not a synthetic, macroscopic theoretical perspective on the total process of social organization; nor formulation that explicitly omits the normative and the social-psychological could hope to be." (London, 1979, p. 497) Action is thereby conceptualized as adaptive behaviour: adaption to space, nature, technology or culture. Behind this view lies a psychological-anthropological concept of human, which is taken from behaviorism: The "Stimulus-Response"-model, partially expanded with cognition theory. But human action is, as I wanted to show, much more.

It is not a very new view. Its most prominent representative was Talcott Parsons. Its "General Theory of Action" (Parsons, 1947; Parsons and Shils, 1951) is until now the most precise model in social science for theorizing human action (cf. Lenk, 1977).

The difference between the Parsonian model and the social-ecological model which is grounded in a theory of reflection is a logical one: between "two-valued" complication and "more-valued" complexity.

I will summarize the reflection approach with a description of a typology of action in respect to the process of decision-making (see Heinrichs, 1988, p. 150f.):

Scheme 6: Reflection levels of action

Level 1:	Recognition
Level 2:	Valuation
Level 3:	Volition
Level 4:	Action

A logical concept of action like the proposed one could be a helpful frame-work for (health) policy planning and implementation processes and it should be tested in practice. I am convinced that "good" and "successful" practice - which acts holistically (maybe without naming it) - can be analyzed as following exactly this logic.

Combining the social-ecological logic of action with the proposed structural logic of society makes obvious, that the important sequence of action has to take place on all levels of societal action. Concerning social work and planning: not only political institutions should be enabled to act this way, but economical one, and - with the need to gain support - "communities" ("Gemeinschaften") and: the world of ideas. The logical order underlines the equal-value of the level of ideas: values, norms, spiritual essentials.

D. SOME CONCLUSIONS FOR A PARTICIPATORY AND EMPOWERING POLICY OF SOCIAL WORK AND PLANNING

- What does it mean politically,
- * if action always happens not only in "context" but in "poly-contextuality" (G. Günther)? What are social implications therefore from the problem of "more-valued" logic?
 - * if systems are built by action?
- Let me give some preliminary thoughts about the possible impacts:
1. If social action is logically to describe as communicative action - with the "dialogue" as its ideal type -, a postulate of the kind, that "health should be integrated into the GNP" does not seem to be helpful. The economical, financial logic of a GNP is the wrong logic for the social-cultural (and for the spiritual) sphere. Neither the market-logic (level 1) nor the state-logic (level 2) can really guarantee communication and meaning (although they contain this logic, too). We should better think about new logical, social institutions for the social-cultural and the spiritual-philosophical, which are able to foster their specific communicative and meta-communicative meanings.
 2. We have to foster types of ecological decision-making, which include the different levels of action as well as the different levels of societal organization. It is neither sufficient to accumulate lots of information, i.e. about "healthy" lifestyles etc., without having the opportunity to find adequate ways of reframing the concrete life on the different levels (economy, politics, community, spirituality). Nor is it helpful to neglect the tremendous role of information as a basis for every holistic decision-making. Ecological decision-making is an original task for social scientists (cf. Beck, 1988) - becoming social ecologists!
 3. We have to be aware, that social action can be logically differentiated - but it has to become integrated as well. This means, that we have always to cope with all the different types of societal spheres at the same time, with their different levels of action (technical-adaptive, power-strategic, communicative, meta-communicative). It makes no sense to devaluate one level (i.e. power or market/money), because they have their certain sense and meaning in the whole. The question is, whether the "lower" levels, economy and politics, dominate the whole society - or whether it will possible, that the "upper" levels will gain the same respect, the same institutional fostering and the same competence than market and state. "Empowerment" in a holistic view should

be more than political power - it should postulate for economic power (i.e. social security, equality), but especially it should care for cultural power and the power of ideas.

KEY WORDS Social Ecology. Social Work. Health. Society. Environment

ABSTRACT This paper discusses the idea of a social-ecological theory of action in respect to the debate of social work and planning. The line of arguments follows three questions:

1. What is "social health"?
 2. How would a holistic view of human and society look like?
 3. How is it possible to act in a holistic way?
- In the first section the unsatisfactory answers by the current and leading social (and general) theories are presented (Behaviorism, Human Ecology, Systems Theory, Socio-biology). They are criticized because of their reductionist, "two-valued" (Göthard Günther) logic: right/wrong, yes/no. This logical approach is adequate for the reality of things/objects ("Being"), but not for the social reality.
- As an alternative approach it is argued for a social-ecological approach to action and (social) systems, which grounds in the tradition of a "theory of reflection" (G.W.F. Hegel, G. Günther and especially J. Heinrichs). This perspective is based on
- a reconstructive epistemology: reality is explained by the way it is perceived; logically this perspective makes use of the method of "dialectical subsumption" (the part contains the logic of the whole)
 - on the distinction between four levels of reflection (1. subject - object/2. reflexive subject/3. subject - subject/4. medial reflection)
 - therefore on a distinction between four levels of action (1. adaptive behaviour/2. strategic action/3. communicative action/4. meta-communicative action, respectively: 1. recognition/2. valuation/3. volition/4. action)
 - and on the building of systems through action. With respect to society this means the differentiation between: 1. the economical-ecological system/2. the political system/3. the community system and 4. the legitimization system.

This effort towards social-ecological theory tries to offer a logical and structural framework, which differentiates between different logical levels of reality. Beyond the first two levels, which follow a "two-valued"-logic, it makes obvious, that there are levels of reality, which cannot be described in this classical, "Aristotelian" (G. Günther) logic. If they should become empirically studied and (mathematically) formalized, it is only possible by a "more-valued"-logic, which is not yet available for practical use. Research on the basics of a holistic methodology, theory and practice should be supported as well as research, which fosters the holistic ways already existing.

The implications of this social-ecological theory of action for social work and planning are further-more discussed with respect

1. to the idea of "health" as centerpoint of "quality of life", which in the goal of social work and planning: as well-being of the human unity of "Body-Soul-Spirit". This old concept of the human, which has its roots in Chinese philosophy (I Ging), Astrology and other esoteric-spiritual traditions, can be viewed as grounded in a modern logic of reflection. "Health" in this holistic sense is the personal and many-folded balance within and between the levels of life.
2. to a holistic idea of society and its environment: as impossibility to look onto parts of reality without taking into account, that every social phenomena contains the logic of the whole. It means further, that every level of the general "action-system" (T. Parsons) has its unreducible aspects: You cannot reduce the spiritual-philosophical sphere onto society (or the "material basis"), nor the social level to the sum of individu-

als, neither society onto nature.

3. to a holistic view onto (political) action: action always happens in "poly-contextuality" (Gotthard Günther). Because we are not yet able to offer adequate (mathematical) formulas for "more-valued" aspects of reality - the social and spiritual level we have to foster the "original" and logical ways of societal -, action: communication and meta-communication, social dialogues and spiritual experience. Otherwise the two "lower" levels of societal action will dominate: economic action (exchange-action in the logic of the market) and strategic action (power-action in the logic of the state).

For social work and planning this leads to a perspective, which values the different levels of action and society in their necessity - and in their limits. A "healthy" society with healthy humans cannot be reached by a technological-differentiating attitude neither by a nebulous "holism" in a biologicistic or systemic manner. It needs "integration-by-differenciation" (J. Heinrichs).

NOTES

- 1 concerning its famous connotations, above all Talcott Parsons' "The structure of social action" (1937)
- 2 although I have to concede, that from all of these "holistic" approaches - especially from the cybernetic-systemic one - exist important departure points for a truly "realistic" view of reality!
- 3 citation from Ingrosso 1989, p. 10.; it would be possible to cite a lot of other authors arguing in a similar, often explicitly "subject-free" manner, who are responsible for the theoretical orientation of the so-called "radical constructivism" (cf. Schmidt 1988), like Varela, Maturana, von Foerster et al.. Insofar Gregory Bateson (or Marco Ingrosso) may start with a problematic logic - but by practice and by practical considerations they compensate and have important contributions for a holistic social theory (see Fn. 6).
- 4 cf. London 1979, Hamm 1982, Musil 1988; for the difference between "Behaviour" and "Action" in social-psychological perspective see Graumann 1980.
- 5 Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten* - all translations from German by M.O.
- 6 i.e. 1988; most of Batesons' work has the promising and basically positive holistic approach - but in their effort to transcend the dualisms, they used dualistic key concepts. As it was shown, these dualistic anthropology is logically not valid - so in order to get an idea of the whole it makes no sense to postulate a "unity" of less than the whole: "A simple two-foldedness alternates always between dualism and monism." (Heinrichs 1988, p. 41)
- 7 Hegel describes the double meaning of object-related "reflection-in-self" and the second, "total" situation of reflection, which is the consciousness about the two-valued difference between thinking and object as "reflection-in-self-and-others" in clear words: "Unser gewöhnliches Wissen stellt sich nur den Gegenstand vor, den es weiß; nicht aber zugleich sich, nämlich das Wissen selbst; das Ganze aber, was im Wissen vorhanden ist, ist nicht nur der Gegenstand, sondern auch das Ich, der weiß, und die Beziehung meiner und des Gegenstandes aufeinander, das Bewußtsein." (Hegel, 1970, S. 291; § 1 von "Ein Blatt zur Geisteslehre", Fragment zu den "Texten zu einer philosophischen Propädeutik")
- 8 "Negation ist ... nichts anderes als ein einfaches und ganz mechanisches Umtauschverhältnis zwischen zwei Werten. Dieses Umtauschverhältnis erweist sich aber als indifferent gegenüber reflexiven Unterschieden in dem, was negiert wird. Folglich muß die Negation der Negation immer eine Rückkehr zum Positiven darstellen." (Günther 1978, S. 384) This logic hindered, according to Günther, a formal (mathematical) theory of the "doubled reflection-in-self".
- 9 I integrate into these schemes two distinguishable levels of the action-system: the general systems view and the systems view of

the societal level. Because of the method of the "dialectical subsumption" - the four-level-logic of the whole exists on every level - it is possible, but nevertheless one should point out the difference between general (life) systems and social systems.

- 10 cf. Heinrichs 1988; this method is grounded in ancient traditions (I Ging, Kabbalah, Mystic of numbers etc.) - and in the structure of the AGIL-scheme, which is basic for the action-system theory of Talcott Parsons (1901-1979) (cf. Münch 1988).
- 11 "Die logische Differenz zwischen Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften ist, wenn sie überhaupt noch anerkannt werden soll, auf die Differenz zwischen struktureller Komplikation und struktureller Komplexität reduziert. Da aber beides schon im Bereiche der sogenannten Natur auftritt, kann man bestenfalls sagen, daß der Grad von Komplikation und Komplexität auf dem Wege von der "Natur" zum "Geiste" hin entweder steigt oder fällt. Er steigt für die Komplexität, und er fällt für die Komplikation. Natur und Geist sind also nichts weiter als Sammelworte für inverse, unbalancierte Systemzustände. Zwischen denselben gibt es aber ein Zwischengebiet, wo, strukturtheoretisch betrachtet, eine prekäre Balance der sich widersprechenden Struktureigenschaften erreicht wird. Das ist das Gebiet der Sozialwissenschaften." (Günther 1979, S. 164).
- 12 see, too, Talcott Parsons concept of the "human condition".
- 13 again a clarifying remark: naturally the "individual-psychic"-level is not only "two-valued" and "non-social" - it can be graduated in itself (by "dialectical subsumption") and it can "interpenetrate" with other levels. But reflection of myself belongs obviously to another level as communication with others.

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