

EDUARD URBÁNEK

## ON THE CONCEPTION OF GENERAL SOCIOLOGY

An essential condition for a successful development of sociology in Czechoslovakia after the enforced interruption of almost fifteen years when sociology had been suppressed as an alleged bourgeois pseudoscience has been the question of elucidating a certain fundamental conception of sociology as a modern social-science discipline. This is the question of a fundamental conception of sociology which includes a number of important problems that have been the object of disputes and discussions even in those countries where sociology has been developing without any interruption and where it has had a very long continuous tradition. It is concerned, above all, with the relationship between sociology and the other, particularly the closely related social sciences (philosophy, history, economics, etc.), with the relation between theory and empirical research as well as the basic problems of the relation of sociology to practice, to political power, to possible consequences of the use and abuse of sociology for the purposes of practice, whether industrial, political, military, or commercial.

One of the most significant questions is undoubtedly the relation between general sociological theory and concrete sociological researches. Any answer to this question is always bound to include a certain conception of sociology and it depends both on historical traditions, on the specific features of the development of sociology in the individual countries and on personal predilections and bends of the individual representatives of sociology whether stress is laid on general theoretic and methodological questions of the discipline, or whether sociology is conceived primarily only and predominantly as a concrete sociological research and the theory is either underestimated, or it is emphasized that sociological generalization is as yet impossible owing to a lack of maturity and elaboration of sociology as a relatively recent science.

Sociologists in Czechoslovakia had - at the very beginning or the process of the restoration of sociology - also been obliged to pose the question of how to conceive sociology and what the relation as between general sociological theory and concrete systematic sociology as a discipline and between actual empirical research which had been - and often still is in many countries - identified with the one and only possible exact conception of sociology in general.

There has been a certain possibility of carrying on the tradition of the development of sociology in Czechoslovakia despite the fact that this development had frequently been broken so that it is no exaggeration to say that sociology in Czechoslovakia has always had something to catch up with, and always had dealt in one way or another with, problems that had been posed elsewhere and also solved with differing results. Irrespective of the various periods of interruption and suppression of sociology, irrespective of the various complex and roundabout ways of development of sociology in Czechoslovakia we can say that in the past a certain tradition of sociological work as well as a certain conception of sociology had been created. Nor have been the individual partial results achieved in the past without significance, and they can serve as a basis for further development.

Already Gustav Adolf Lindner had laid certain foundations for social psychology in his work *Ideen zur Psychologie der Gesellschaft als Grundlage der Sozialwissenschaft* of 1877, nor is it without significance that Masaryk had concerned himself with the burning problem of modern times - suicide - earlier than E. Durkheim (as early as 1881, whereas Durkheim did not publish his work until 1897). Břetislav Foustka interested as he was in the problems of people on the margin of society and socially weak, approaches very closely those among contemporary sociological schools and authors who deal with the so-called marginal types. The works of Chalupný, Bláha, Král, Ulrych, Uhlíř, Mertl, Galla, Machotka and other representatives of pre-war sociology have also had their importance and bearing. It is certainly necessary to examine and evaluate all their important works and conceptions. However, it is only true to say that not a single of the outstanding representatives of Czech, and even less of Slovak, sociology, which had been even less developed than the Czech, has had any particular influence on moulding the contemporary conceptions of Czechoslovak sociology being restored in recent years.

A majority of those representatives of social sciences who have now passed over to work in sociology (philosophers, psychologists, economists, historians, and others) as well as those none too numerous sociologists with their own sociological university education had been objectively influenced by Marxism which they in an overwhelming majority also subjectively embraced and with which they had also identified themselves. That is why in its very beginnings the reborn Czechoslovak sociology had been consciously conceived and theoretically unambiguously declared as Marxist sociology. It is here, however, that a series of grave problems have had their beginning which cannot be concealed or eliminated by subjectively well-meant intentions and proclamations to build sociology in Czechoslovakia as a Marxist sociology. After the exposure of the so-called personality cult when at the same time the very external and ostensibly monolithic unity of Marxism in social sciences that had been maintained and also kept within certain limits by the official interpretation disappeared

it is very difficult to determine in an unambiguous and exact way what is Marxist sociology, and what is not. Nor does the contemporary state in Marxist social sciences and sociology in other countries give any unambiguous and exact reply. In the course of the more than a hundred years of the development of Marxism various schools of thought and trends have arisen within both Marxism and Marxist sociology that are far from being uniform or identical. There are a number of names, of movements and trends, individuals and their works who have embraced Marxism and declared themselves as Marxist, side by side with them a number of runners sympathizing, independent Marxists, crypto-marxists, various actual and imagined revisionists of Marxist theory.

In a most general form it can be stated that in social sciences in general and in sociology in particular a Marxist is he who embraces Marxism subjectively, wishes internally to be a Marxist, and also in his own work endeavours to put into effect his idea of Marxism in conformity with the level of his own education, his erudition, and the cultural and historical specific features of the country and the environment in which he pursues his activities. This subjective will and desire or endeavour to be a Marxist and to work as a Marxist poses a number of questions and problems the solution of which gives only an indication of an answer. This is in the first place the question what it means to be a Marxist, or more exactly, to wish to be a Marxist. To be a Marxist also implies taking up certain stands towards the founders of Marxism, towards those who are unequivocally regarded as Marxist. Above all, it is the question of the attitude to Marx and his spiritual heritage as well as to those of his closest followers whom it is usual in Marxism to designate as classics of Marxism. These are, as it is well known, primarily Engels and Lenin. In recent times it is beginning to be generally acknowledged that it is impossible to identify Marx and Engels in all things, that there are certain differences and shades between them, that Engels differs from Marx's conception in many problems, or takes up an attitude to certain questions that Marx did not endeavour to solve, or did not state his point of view towards them (the dialectics of nature). In the same way it has become clear today that not all philosophical conceptions held by Lenin are identical with the conception of Marx. It is particularly his conception of materialism in his Materialism and Empiriocriticism that his conception differs from that of Marx. Thus it is, above all, the relation to Marx's work and Marx's heritage that matters. This question can also be formulated as a problem of the so-called orthodoxy in Marxism. This was the formulation put forward early enough by G. Lukacs in his well-known book „Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein“, and particularly in his study entitled „Was ist orthodoxer Marxismus?“ In keeping with his conception Lukacs also answers the question. It is necessary to add, however, that this question had been asked by Marxists before Lukacs, and that they all tried to answer it in a certain

way. In the personality cult period a certain conception of the orthodoxy of Marxism was also being enforced, this time rather in a practical way than in a theoretical form. What was considered as orthodoxy was a painstaking meticulous adherence to the text of the classics, and each deviation from the text was regarded as revision, as turning aside from, or as treason to, Marxism. This primitive conception reinforced by the official interpretation of texts and by determining what is orthodox and what is not, fell along with the most extreme phenomena of the system which is, in an abbreviated and inexact way, referred to as the cult of personality. Of course, it is necessary to point out that in the period of the personality cult it was primarily and particularly Stalin's works that were adhered to, Lenin, Engels and especially Marx being quoted only in a limited way. As part of the other, this time less primitive conception of orthodoxy in Marxism, we can classify those views which see orthodoxy in emphasizing the results, theories and theorems of the classics of Marxism as a basis the preservation of which is a proof of orthodoxy. In this case there is no question of a parrot-like repetition of quotations; this time certain of essential principles, theories and theorems of the classics of Marxism which the so-called classics have arrived at in their analyses. These theorems - results of a certain historical research in historically conditioned situations - are regarded as eternally unchangeable, solely correct and always valid. This applies e. g. to Marx's conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat which had been worked out in a certain period and based on certain theoretic and historical studies. Already in Lenin's work do we find a statement by the use of which we could refute Marx's conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a singled out isolated theorem. In fact Lenin states that „we could even do without dictatorship if we had really positive knowledge that the petty bourgeoisie would back the proletariat in carrying out its proletarian revolution“.<sup>1)</sup>

To conceive of orthodoxy in Marxism as an insistence on each historically conditioned theorem or thesis means to find oneself - while analyzing new situations and conditions — in conflict with reality which is constantly changing by applying a theorem that can prove to be incorrect or overcome. That is why Lukacs stresses the point that in his view the essence of the orthodoxy of Marxism consists, above all, in its method, in the application, development and deepening of this method.<sup>2)</sup>

I consider this conception to be relatively the most correct as it lays stress not on the importance of the individual theorems and their eternal validity but on the significance of the method as an instrument of analysis and reproduction of reality. At that time Lukacs had as yet no knowledge of Lenin's early writings. It is interesting to note, however, that his conception is almost identical with

1) V. I. Lenin, Collected Works 6, p. 45—46.

2) G. Lukacs, Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein, p. 13, Berlin 1923.

that of Lenin who also makes the point that „what the Marxists take over unconditionally from Marx's theory are only the invaluable methods.“<sup>3)</sup> Thus orthodox in Marxism, in the social sciences which proceed from Marxism and wish to pose and work as Marxist consists in fidelity to Marx's method. This therefore applies to sociology as well. Marxist sociology exists where and when its representatives succeed in employing and applying and developing Marx's dialectical method of concrete totality in investigating social problems. In Lenin's and Lukacs's conception Marx's method may not be the only possible method and the only one which can be used in examining social reality; however, both hold the opinion that hitherto no other methods that have been applied in social sciences have brought results bearing comparison with those achieved by Marx. This is the reason why for them Marx's method is synonymous with scientific method even though Lenin himself admits the theoretical possibility of Marx's method being surpassed in its application to the study of the capitalist formation in case someone surpassed Marx's analysis in a scientific way by another method. It is obvious that any decision as to which work is better or more fruitful that any decision as to which work is better or more fruitful scientifically is always bound to include evaluation, involving an element of choice. However, taking up an attitude to methodology and theory in social sciences is always a matter of choice, and thus of evaluation as well. Any opposite assumptions have always proved illusory in practice.

It can be urged against the above-mentioned conception that even in interpreting Marx's method in social sciences and subsequently in applying it no uniform conception can be arrived at, the interpretation of any author who is no longer alive and the application of this methods being subjective and individual. And this is a fact. Objectively a certain conception and application are always bound to differ individually, nor are they ever identical even with those who subjectively declare their allegiance to one theoretical and methodological school of thought. The result always depends on the individual theoretician's erudition, education and his measure of skill in applying the method and the conception he professes.

Marx's method is the method of concrete dialectics as interpreted in Czechoslovakia e. g. by Karel Kosík.<sup>4)</sup> It is clear that in terms of the conception referred to above — i. e. only the sociology which employs Marx's method and applies it in analyzing reality can be regarded as Marxist sociology — one cannot classify as Marxist sociology that sociology which acknowledges concrete research alone without both the preliminary methodological and theoretical presuppositions and without sufficient interpretation with regard to concepts and categories of data and findings obtained by various methods and

<sup>3)</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works (Spisy) 1, p. 205.

<sup>4)</sup> Karel Kosík, *Dialektika konkrétního* (The Dialectics of the Concrete), Prague 1966.

techniques which in themselves do not yet constitute a precondition for belonging to a certain school. However, merely to stick to concrete research can in itself be a certain theoretical approach, an approach which tends to confuse the ways of obtaining data on society with the scientific work itself.

Marx's dialectical method as a method of concrete totality, as a manner of actually reproducing reality as a concrete totality has been worked out and applied to examining social reality. This being so represents at the same time a definitive system of categories and basic concepts which permit us to approach social reality and to interpret this reality in a certain a priori way within a certain conceptual scheme of basic categories. This is Marx's well-known materialistic conception of history, later described as historical materialism though Marx himself never referred to his conception as historical materialism always describing it as a materialistic conception of history.

The materialistic conception of history as a definite theoretical system of categories and concepts enabling us to interpret and analyze social phenomena has been the subject of disputes and controversy in socialist countries. In its first stage in Czechoslovakia interest in sociology had primarily taken the form of a discussion concerning the relation between the so-called historical materialism and sociology and also concerning the relation between historical materialism, sociology and the so-called scientific communism. I regard the discussion concerning the relation between historical materialism and sociology as a useful one whereas that concerning the relation between sociology and the so-called scientific communism must be considered as rather sterile and superfluous. Scientific communism is a seasonal boom product of a certain stage of development of the Departments of Marxism-Leninism and of some of their workers. There does not, and cannot, exist an independent scientific branch of scientific communism in the same way as there is no scientific liberalism though both communism and liberalism can be subjected to scientific investigation, and socialism as a movement can be based on scientific principles of social sciences. In Marx and Engels their conception of socialism which they set up consciously as an opposite pole to Utopian Socialism cannot be divorced from the scientific principles of history, economy, and philosophy.

In this connection I am not out to examine the discussion concerning the relation between the materialistic conception of history and sociology. It is certain, however, that Marx worked out a definite system of concepts, of categories which conceives and interprets social phenomena in a certain way as being the most important and fundamental object of interest for sociology. Here I think it is possible to agree with R. König who distinguishes a general system of categories and concepts and a doctrine of concepts and categories without which there can be no sociology as a social science and a science dealing with social phenomena, and finally a general sociological theory which in König's view is almost non-existent and can only be created on the basis of

a certain system of concepts by generalizing the findings established by concrete sociological research. Furthermore, we can also concur in König's view that sociology cannot exist but as empirical social research.<sup>5)</sup> It is really impossible to create a Marxist sociology only on the basis of general deduction methods without actually examining social reality, a fact that applies to any science. Nor can sociology be set up as a science without certain basic concepts and categories which enable us to approach reality, and to interpret this reality within this conceptual scheme. Viewed in this light it is Marx's materialistic conception of history that constitutes such a doctrine on concepts and categories which interpret social phenomena and make it possible to analyse them in terms of concepts. Such concepts of Marx's as those of practice, labour, objective activity, productive forces, economic structure of society, production of consciousness and others are not immediately verifiable in the same way as no general theoretical system in social or in natural sciences can be directly verified. However, without this it is impossible to interpret reality and to examine it in actual research. Nor is it possible in the absence of such concepts to arrive at partial or allround generalizations. Even those attained on their basis bear the stamp of the degree of maturity achieved by the particular science and of the level reached by its individual representatives.

This set of basic categories or concepts can be described as a social teaching on categories or concepts (*Kategorienlehre*) — the way König does — or one can speak of a materialistic conception of history as one does in Marxism; however this may be, sociology, being as it is a concrete science dealing with concrete social reality, cannot do without this system of categories. Wherever it pretends it can do so or declares it does not require any general theoretical system of categories its results are necessarily very poor; then it essentially does not exceed the description level, or one establishing mere regularities.

Marx's materialistic conception of history can also be described as systematic sociology or general sociology if what we mean by systematic sociology is a system of categories and concepts that enable us to apprehend social phenomena. We can also accept König's conception who adds general sociological theory conceived by him as a certain high degree of sociological generalization and of sociological theory which has still to be worked out for the most part, since contemporary sociology in his view contains as yet no generalizations of a high degree of complexity, one exception being e. g. the general sociological theory of organization, or the sociological theory of groups. It can be added that this conception includes e. g. Marx's general sociological theory of both classes and the state, even though in Marx it does not appear in the form of a textbook, or in that of classical school-bench definitions, which in present-day

<sup>5)</sup> René König, *Handbuch der empirischen Sozialforschung, Einleitung* pp. 3—16, Stuttgart 1962.

sociology tend to be regarded as conclusive evidence of a scientific approach despite the fact that as early as in Hegel we find by no means isolated statements on the limited character of a definition which cannot cope with the whole wealth of definition of the subject under examination.

There are numerous objections that might be raised against the above mentioned materialistic conception of history as worked out by Marx. As a matter of fact, one of these does frequently appear: Can one, it asks, make do with a system of categories dealing with society which had arisen in the last century, considering that the development of thought as well as that of social sciences has been going on ever since? This objection is in the main justified, it is true that the store of thought contributed by a particular thinker in social sciences is not always the greatest asset where the contribution is the most recent. Though it must be admitted that Marx's teachings on categories, his general system of concepts regarding social phenomena, his method of spiritual reproduction of social totality must be supplemented, developed, and enriched by all categories evolved since his days which have contributed to a deeper and more perfect apprehension of social reality and to its more scientific analysis. This problem of incorporating some of the present-day categories and concepts of social phenomena into the Marxist network of concepts is one that I consider among the most significant and most difficult ones. This also appears to me to be the main problem which sociologists in Czechoslovakia have to contend with if they wish to develop sociology as a general theoretical discipline and in so far as they proceed from Marx's theoretical system of materialistic conception of history.

#### **MATERIALISTIC CONCEPTION OF HISTORY AND THE CATEGORIES OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY**

Marxist sociologists (i. e. those who desire, or declare themselves, to be such) having Marx's theoretical system of categories to draw upon are turning to those among present-day sociologists who have tried to work out, or have already succeeded in working out — at least in some sort of definite shape — a general theoretical system of categories that are to serve as a basis for research in contemporary sociology, i. e. to serve as an effective tool of empirical research. It is therefore by no means a matter of accident that it is Parsons's attempt at setting up an up-to-date modern theoretical system of categories and concepts that has attracted a great measure of attention among sociologists in Czechoslovakia. Of special appeal has been the structural and functional basis of this system, the use of concepts current in a number of modern sciences, ranging from chemistry to linguistics and aesthetics. The concepts of structure, function, system and equilibrium seem to possess a kind of



magic power, and a great deal of interest has been aroused in interpreting these categories and incorporating them into Marxism.

The structuralist conceptions in contemporary sociology are highly differentiated depending both on their country of origin and even on the person of their creator. Of all the well-known and outstanding representatives of today's structural and functionalist school it is T. Parsons whose work has aroused greatest attention in Czechoslovakia. It has been frequently commented upon, and the basic concepts of his general theory of action such as action, social and cultural system or structure, function and equilibrium have flooded sociological studies, articles and lectures. The great interest taken in the problems of structure is exemplified by for instance the large publication about social structure dating from 1966.<sup>6)</sup>

How is it possible to account for so wide an interest taken by Czechoslovak sociologists primarily in Parsons's conception when most of these sociologists embrace both the theoretical assumptions of Marxism and its revolutionary consequences? As a matter of fact, Parsons had been criticized on many occasions in Western sociological literature, his theoretic system being accused - the charge being, in my view, fully, justified - of potential conservative consequences and of subservience to an objectively apologetic ideological function.

The appeal of Parsons' conception may have stemmed from the way he stresses the importance and necessity of having a general theoretical system, the requirement of combining empirical research with general theory, and the stress he lays on the importance and necessity of co-operation between the individual, or to be more precise, between some social science disciplines. As a matter of fact, Parsons intentionally works out his general theory of action to cover all social sciences. Another important feature is his way of utilizing and elaborating some basic concepts of contemporary modern sciences in sociology. This applies in particular to such concepts as structure, system, function and equilibrium. These concepts are among those most frequently employed in modern disciplines connected with cybernetics; structuralism in linguistics, aesthetics or cultural and social anthropology having acquired considerable prestige, these concepts are associated in the minds of those working in sociology with many successful analyses carried out in the above disciplines.

It goes without saying that the reception of the structural and functionalist conception in general and of Parsons's conception in particular has been by no means unequivocal. Rather the necessity is being emphasized for a certain flexible and creative synthesis of the basic concepts of social dynamics in Marx's conception where there commonly appear such concepts as antagonism, conflict, contradictions, class struggle, evolution, revolution, with the basic notions

<sup>6)</sup> Social Structure of Socialist Society. Sociological Problems of Contemporary Society, Prague 1966.

of Parsons's conception whose use of the concepts of function, equilibrium, consensus is more like a recent edition of the old conceptions of social statics.

As compared with Parsons's one-sided conception Marxists generally emphasize — and are fully justified in doing so — certain significant deviations in the way certain notions which have been taken over into the open system of categories of Marxist sociology are being conceived. Particularly in the concept of structure the genetic and the historical aspects are emphasized, nor is it possible to ignore the rise and development of structures, or even the obliteration of the old social structures and the rise of new ones. Any neglect of the genetic and historical aspects inevitably results in making one lose historical sense and the time dimensions of human history. Structuralism conceived in the static and non-genetic way objectively constitutes a perpetuation of the category of the present, evolution ceasing to be evolution in time and being acknowledged merely as innovations and changes within the structure. Actually only changes in the sphere of production, science and technology are acknowledged as such while social changes are taken into account only insofar as they do not exceed the given structure which is also conceived as the limits of the system.

As opposed to the element of uniformity, stability and harmony in the conception of structure it is the internal, natural contradictory character of the structure that is emphasized by Marxism, conflicts, contradictions and encounters being a natural phenomenon in any social structure. It is in the spirit of the classical conception of dialectics as a principle of negativity and contradiction and change that conflicts, contradictions and the struggle of contradictions are conceived as the driving force of development, of changes and modifications of structures and of the possibility, or its perishing or passing into a new structure.

In this conception we are obviously concerned with structure as one endowed with objective existence, here structure holds an ontological status. A certain shortcoming lies in the fact that in Parsons's conception as much as in Marxist descriptions and interpretations of structure it is not always clearly stated what the concept of structure is meant to signify. Also the fact that the concept of structure is contained in Marx's work (e. g. as early as in his *German Ideology*) and that it is subsequently applied by Marx primarily in terms of economic structure as a system, as a set of economic production relations of a certain society. It is in Marx where — in harmony with his whole conception of objective human practice — a major aspect in the conception of structure could be found which has been entirely neglected. In Marx's way of thinking the concept of structure is always understood as not being something self-supporting and independent but a product. The economic structure of a society has always been an objective result of substantive human historical activities. Structure, therefore, is not self-supporting, nor is it absolutely independent of

human activity. Its objectively substantive character and — in a society of alienation — an objectively substantive existence and one ostensibly independent of man cannot veil the derived nature of structure and its dependence on human activity. Social structure in its objectively substantive existence provides a certain external determining space and a limit of human activities; however, being a historical and man-made creation it can be altered, modified, or liquidated, and a new structure can be established. This conception of structure as a product and at the same time as a space limiting and canalizing human activity is more profound and more dynamic than the one that conceives structure as a given entity, as a certain limiting factor confronting man, which is separated from activity and set against it as something extraneous and independent of it. Structure is not only borne along by human substantive activity: it is at the same time a certain foundation which, in its turn, supports certain social phenomena as a kind of superstructure which is conditioned and determined by it. What we are, therefore, concerned with is to differentiate elements of structure from non-structure elements, and structure-generating activities from such activities as are not structurized. This differentiation is made possible by structure being conceived in a genetic and historical way as a product, as a result of activity, and at the same time as a factor structurizing and determining historical activity. This potential conception of structure is pointed out e. g. by H. Lefèbvre, while certain elements of such a conception can be found in the conception of structure propounded by G. Gurvitch.

In addition to this, structure can be conceived above all as a certain type of model, as a tool for analyzing reality, some authors even going so far as to associate the conception of structure as a model with notions concerning the possibility of measuring social phenomena. The conception of structure as a model for the analysis of reality can be found in C. Lévi-Strauss who for his own part, of course, rejects in express terms any necessary connexion between the model of structure and the possibility of measuring social phenomena.<sup>7)</sup>

Among the varied — and internally very different — conceptions of structure there is one that conceives structure rather as a substance. This interpretation is congenial to those authors who lay stress upon stability, uniformity of, and the possibility of reproducing, social structures while neglecting or denying the genetic, historical aspect. Certain signs of this conception are to be found in the work of Parsons who, in my opinion, vacillates between the model conception of structure „structure is a static aspect of the description of the system“) and the essentialistic conception in which the element of equilibrium, stability and duration has been overestimated.

The conception of structure as a product of activity, as a phenomenon end-

7) H. Lefèbvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, Vol. II, pp. 161—162, Paris, 1961.

owed with ontological status, does not exclude the conception of structure as a model and as a tool of analysis. If reality is objectively structurized it is only logical to conclude that it can be described and analyzed by using structural models as an instrument of cognition.

The possibility of conceiving and interpreting structure in differing ways makes it imperative for anyone who employs the conception of structure or system to explain his own interpretation and the meaning he ascribes to the concept. It is certainly justified to receive — and to incorporate into a certain system of categories — new categories or concepts, the necessary condition being a certain logical purity and clarity, a deep knowledge of the sources used, and, last but not least, knowledge of the history of the concept or category, and of what they may convey to, and how they are likely to be interpreted by, various schools and individuals. Lack of critical approach and of reserved attitude to various interpretations and the onesided reduction of the structural conception primarily to that advanced by T. Parsons is what I consider to be one of the main shortcomings of contemporary Czechoslovak sociology in taking over some of the basic concepts of structural and functionalist school. Apart from Parsons there are by far more profound and more critical authors such as R. Merton. The work of M. Levy also deserves attention. The French structuralist school can boast of a number of finer, deeper, and more dialectical conceptions than those put forward by American structuralism. The work of G. Gurvitch has hitherto evoked far less interest in the ranks of Czechoslovak sociologists, little use is being made of suggestions made by C. Lévi-Strauss, H. Lefèbvre, or of contributions made by the younger representatives of structuralist conceptions (Althusser). It is to be regretted that the suggestions and contributions made by the Czech linguistic structuralist school and the works of those authors who, inspired by R. Jakobson and Trubetzkoy, had as early as before the Second World War - developed a very original conception of structuralism in literary science and esthetics (J. Mukařovský) seems to have fallen on an entirely barren ground. For it is to Jakobson and Trubetzkoy that C. Lévi-Strauss expressly refers in his account of the conception of the structuralists method.<sup>8)</sup>

The only attempt so far at formulating a synthetic and a more profound conception of the concept of structure, system and function - while drawing upon extensive literature, both French and American, has been made by Z. Strmiska in his hitherto unpublished work<sup>10)</sup> in which he has also made an attempt at giving his own interpretation based on Marxism of these fundamental categories.

<sup>8)</sup> C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, p. 283, New York, 1963.

<sup>9)</sup> C. Lévi-Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>10)</sup> Z. Strmiska, *Otázky marxistické sociologické teorie (Problems of Marxist Sociological Theory)*, MS. of a Thesis, Prague, 1967.

The manner in which stimuli from other world sociologists both of the past and of the present are made use of in Czechoslovak sociology is far from satisfactory. The impression one gathers is as if there were almost no other conceptions and other schools than the structural functionalist one. Only isolated studies bear witness to the fact that some Czechoslovak sociologists draw upon the work of M. Weber whose conception of ideal types I consider to be one of the most valuable aspects of Weber's sociological heritage. At the same time the fact that it was Weber himself who pointed out that the ideal types had been used as a tool of analysis in Marx's *Capital* is very little known.<sup>11)</sup> Who else but Marxists could, and should, study the interesting connections between Marx and the conceptions of Max Weber who not only criticized Marx and Marxism (and particularly Marxism as interpreted by Marx's disciples) but on whom the impact of Marxism exercised a very strong influence. A certain interest has also been aroused by F. Tönnies whose well-known dichotomy *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* had its predecessors not only among German romanticists but was commonly employed by Marx whose terminological peculiarities in describing the differences between types of community in the pre-class society (*Gemeinschaft, Gemeinwesen*) and in class society (*ökonomische Gesellschaftsformation*) have escaped the attention of Marxists as well as of numerous marxologues distinguished by a critical attitude to Marx.

Another man who after M. Weber had been discovered in the last two decades in particular by American sociology and who is little known among Czechoslovak sociologists is Georg Simmel. It is rather curious to note that American sociology which had revived interest in social conflict and begun to investigate both its integrating and its negative functions approached the problems of antagonism and conflict through Simmel (Cosser) and not through Marx in whose work the problems of conflict, antagonism and the struggle of contradictions form an immanent part of his conceptions of dialectics as a principle of negativity. In any case, however, it is incontestable that outstanding works and studies in contemporary sociology tend to revert, in a greater or lesser extent, to the classics of sociology, to the original sources from which a great many of the concepts and categories used by sociology today have been derived. Not even sociology that professes Marxism can limit its conception of the system of categories to Marx's own system alone. Wherever in Marxist sociology, the theoretical system of categories and concepts enabling us to analyse and interpret social phenomena is conceived as an open system there it is necessary to accept all valuable and useful contributions made by the sociological authors of the past. In this connection it is possible to agree with C. W. Mills and the stress he lays upon tradition in sociology.<sup>12)</sup> For it is a ge-

11) M. Weber, *Soziologie, Weltgeschichtliche Analysen*, pp. 250—251, Stuttgart, 1964.

12) C. W. Mills, *Images of Man*, New York, 1960.

nerally well-known fact that there is perhaps no other social science than sociology that has to contend with greater lack of unity, with greater ambiguity and confusion in apprehending, interpreting and applying general concepts and categories. Knowledge of history of sociological categories, research into their origins and primary meaning can contribute at least in part to bringing about a higher degree of accuracy, clarity and unambiguity in interpreting the individual categories though it is to be expected that this lack of uniformity and this ambiguity will always tend to be invigorated by the impact of world outlook, of ideology and of social influences.

So far we have been concerned with the problem of incorporating important categories and sociological concepts into the framework of the general theoretical system of Marxism. I suggest it would be exaggerated modesty on the part of representatives of Marxist sociology should they content themselves with just taking over suggestions, categories and concepts from the great figures of sociological theory of the past, or from contemporary influential trends. Apart from critical and selective choice of categories, concepts and results generalizing sociological theory it is possible to make a contribution - within the framework of Marxist sociology - to the study of a number of important problems for which basic concepts and categories are to be found in Marx's system of categories. This refers, above all, to such problems as the conception of social phenomena, the basic conception of society as the sum total of relations of individuals, of questions concerning the relationship between the biological and the social, between the natural and the historical. Marx's stimulating reflections on social roles and masks and character have remained practically untapped until quite recent days. In one of my studies I tried to demonstrate the significance and possible utilization of Marx's concept of social role and of mask and character.<sup>13)</sup> This conception forms a suitable theoretical and methodological point of departure for investigating non-adequate roles when individuals represent and personify alien social forces as those of their own personality and character.

A great deal has been written about the various points of contact between Marx and Freud. Marx's conception contains (not infrequently, of course, in embryonic form only) various theoretical points of departure which could be utilized for a fertile examination of human personality, such as the category of wants, of human nature, of interest, of substantive human activity, and the like. Valuable reflections on these problems are given by J. Cvekl in his treatise on „Marx and Psychology“.<sup>14)</sup>

Marx is one of the thinkers who in analyzing capitalist formation applied the

<sup>13)</sup> Roles, Masks and Character: A Contribution to Marx's Idea of the Social Role, *Social Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3., Autumn 1967.

<sup>14)</sup> J. Cvekl, *Marx a psychologie, Marx a dnešek* (Marx and Psychology, Marx and the Present), Svoboda, Praha, 1968.

typological method and did so successfully. For Marx it was quite common to examine reality in an ideal cross-section, or to evaluate it from the point of view of how it approaches, or corresponds to, its ideal conceptual type.

It is obvious that the extent to which these stimuli will be utilized depends on the abilities, erudition, and qualifications of those sociologists who have embraced Marxism. Furthermore Marxist sociology in Czechoslovakia has a certain chance to solve, or to try to solve successfully, the problem of relationship between the general theoretical system and concrete actual sociological research. In this connection it is, of course, necessary to stress the point that the claims of those who being influenced by positivism declare that a general theoretical system cannot be directly verified, and that these categories are in fact metaphysical and thus even unscientific, are nonsensical. It is really true that a general theoretical system cannot be directly verified, which applies to all sciences, not to sociology alone. A general theoretical system of categories can be used and applied, it can constitute a point of departure in an approach to the study of society where it can be subsequently verified as effective or ineffective, as fertile or sterile, useful or useless. This is also the view held by T. Parsons, and in this one cannot but absolutely agree with him.

Marxist sociology is not represented by Marx and Engels alone. It has passed through more than a hundred years of development when a number of more or less successful, of more or less creative minds have endeavoured to take their contribution within the framework of Marxism to the enrichment of sociological theory. The significance of these individual thinkers varies in the same way as do their contributions and their respective levels. However, such names as Lenin, Plechanov, Kautský, Cunow, M. Adler, Renner, Labriola, or Gramsci, Lukacs or Bucharin are well-known even to the wider public and their work is esteemed not only by Marxists but by non-Marxists as well.

Marxist sociology in Czechoslovakia, and general sociology in particular, has therefore certain possibilities and prerequisites of further development in which it can apply its own theoretical and methodological departure points. There are, of course, a great many other problems that are being discussed by Czechoslovak sociologists. To work out and to solve these problems is a task which must primarily be accomplished by proper professional activities of sociologists. Clarification of certain important conceptual questions, and particularly of the basic conception of both general sociology and general sociological theory, is a necessary precondition for these professional activities of Czechoslovak sociologists to be pursued successfully.