DR. J. VERHOEVEN

aspirant N.F.W.O.

DE SOCIOLOGISCHE VERKLARING

VAN DE

SOCIALE KONTROLE

SUMMARY

The sociological explanation of social control adopts the following outline : the putting forward of problems, the status quaestionis, the set of instruments concerning methodology, the sociological starting point, the scientific-critic analysis of some explanatory models of social control and finally an attempt to explain social control in a sociological way.

The first chapter consists of a rather extensive survey of the questions dealt with in the investigation. This allows us afterwards, to compare the results of the investigation with the aim we had in mind. The main questions of the investigation are : 1) Which are the methodological implications resulting from the explanation of social control by a number of authors ? 2) Which are the conditions that are in our opinion the basis for the explanation of social control ?

The second chapter deals with a status quaestionis. Here we have asked for the present situation of the investigation concerning social control. At the same time we have introduced within this developmental sketch the hypothesis put forward by H.C. Brearley in 1962 viz. that there are three main tendencies in the investigation of social control : (i) "those who, like Ross, discuss the number and complexity of the means by which the agents of social control attain uniformity of behaviour" and (ii)"those who, like Cooley, devote their efforts to explaining the effects of social control upon the development of personality". The third tendency is the one that runs parallel to Sumner's, but which can be reduced to the first because of its intrumental tendency. The investigation indicates that Brearley's classification doesn't hold. Gurvitch, Oppenheim, Hollingshead, Lemert, Nadel et.al. break through this frame. In the same investigation it has been established that the methodological approach has not yet been realised in studies on social control.

The next two chapters introduce the scientific-critic analysis. In the third chapter a number of concepts are described in the first place because they will be of use for the methodological analysis. This chapter describes what should be understood by the term 'explain' and it also describes what laws and theories are. Brief summaries are given of induction, functional explanation, genetic explanation, conceptual and dispositional explanation, and the phenomenological method. Special attention is drawn to the restrictions of the methods. In the second place the selection criteria of the works to be analysed are indicated, because it is practically impossible and scientifically insignificant to take all works into consideration. It has been decided to take six works which are integrally devoted to social control viz. the studies by E.A. Ross, P.H. Landis ; L.L. Bernard, G. Gurvitch, T.T. Segerstedt

and R.T. LaPiere. The general sociological studies have been chosen on the basis of a historical survey by Don Martindale because he constructs his work by means of the philosophy of science. G. Simmel has been chosen as the representative of formal sociology, P.A. Sorokin has been studied as an organicist, T. Parsons as a functionalist and R.M. MacIver and Page as theorists of social behaviour and R. Dahrendorf as a sociologist of conflicts. The methodological analysis of the explanation of social control will be given with respect to the above mentioned works.

However, before an answer is given to the question as to the procedure with the explanation, a description will be given of the sociological starting point of this work and the methodological consequences which result from it. (Chapter 4).

The description of the sociological point of view is the result of the confrontation with the problem of whether to start from the person or society in order to explain social reality. According to G. Gurvitch, A.C. Zijderveld, A. Schütz, and P.L. Berger both the persons and society are needed so as to explain social reality. Gurvitch and Zijderveld, talk in terms of a dialectic between persons and society. This dialectic opinion results in a number of difficulties. P.L. Berger does not give any methodological aspect of his sociological point of view. Schütz accepts the dialectic movement (used in the sense of Gurvitch) between persons and society in social reality but he does not draw any methodological conclusions from this. Methodologically he starts from the individual.

Schütz is a phenomenologically oriented sociologist. He proceeds from an evereyday knowledge of simple life to a scientific knowledge. The observer is only in the "Umwelt" capable of grasping in a direct way the behaviour of the other. For a sociologist, however, the "Mitwelt" is the frame of observation. He does not reach the direct experience of the other unless he gets rid of his scientific character. This can be prevented by referring to "ideal types" which form typical patterns of behavior. The postulate of the subjective interpretation is preserved.

With Schütz the attention is drawn to the understanding and explanation of social behaviour as he got it from Max Weber. The method referred to as "Verstehen" is, however, not generally accepted. It has been rejected by various sociologists as being unscientific on the one hand, or referred to the pre-scientific work as a sort of hypothesis formation on the other. For Schütz it is an important method which stands by itself.

According to Strasser there are three different ways of "verstehen", which might be of use to other methods. His opinion on the above mentioned dialectic is totally different from Gurvitch's and opens certain perspectives for sociology. This contact with A. Schütz's work results in our determining the objective of sociology. Both, dialectic and "verstehen" are very important instruments to understand and explain social behaviour. The restriction

extends. The sociologist must try to explain social behaviour from within the social structure and the social culture. The individual, who is a carrier of this social structure and culture, cannot be excluded.

After this rather comprehensive introduction, we ask for the methodological features of the explanation of social control in the eleven works mentioned above (Chapter 5).

It is rather strange that after this analysis we have to conclude that none of the authors under consideration are willing to explain *explicitly* social control. To find a reason for this is not always simple.

Among the eleven authors the works of whom have been previously analysed, there is not a single one who poses explicitly the problem as to the explanation of social control. Ross includes social control as a factor which is necessary to explain social behaviour. Landis connects social control with human nature and with the special interest this control has for the retention of social norms. Bernard, Simmel and Sorokin don't even touch upon the explanation of social control. Gurvitch thinks it sufficient to explain the different forms of appearance of social control. Segerstedt, LaPiere, Parsons, MacIver and Page, and R. Dahrendorf postulate social control. It can be seen that in those cases, where an implicit explanation of social control can be formulated, this explanation always relies on the need to introduce a new factor in order to explain social behaviour.

Let us first define the implicit explanations more acutely. In the first place we mention Ross. Edward A. Ross does not look for the explanation of social control in social reality but in the demands he makes to sociology. According to him sociology has to explain social order. This can not, however, be realized by the sympathy among human beings. In order to achieve that goal social control is indispensable. Hence social control results from a methodological necessity. Although culture and social structure have a meaning in Ross's work, they are not to be found in the implicit explanation which we had thought to find in his work.

According to Landis we can find an explanation in human nature combined with social order. Human behaviour is not exclusively the result of the instinct. The control power of the group lies in its important influence on human behaviour. Besides, society cannot go on without social control since it needs social order which cannot be but the result of social control. As a result we find that Landis assumes social control to make human nature human on the one hand, and that social order of the society needs social control in order to remain, on the other. Here, in our opinion Landis postulates social control in order to explain both human nature and social order rather than social control.

If however we consider Landis's reasoning to be an explanation of social control, or better as a dispositional explanation, then both used categories prove to be so broad that they lose their meaning. Essentially social

control assumes human nature, but not exclusively human nature. Human nature is a conditio sine qua non for all social behaviour. We should like to skip the term 'social order' because the meaning is strongly ideologically coloured. What's more it is quite possible that social control operates in a society without 'social order'.

With Segerstedt we find a progressive reduction. In the presence of social uniformity he finds social control to be a necessary condition for its existence. He deduces social control from the establishment of social uniformity. Symbolic interactionism has no direct significance with the explanation of social control. For Segerstedt it is however important to determine the efficiency of social control. Social norms can only be of real importance when they fit in a situation where the symbolic significance of the events is the same. In a study which has social control as a subject it is rather strange to find that social control ends in a emphasis on the significance of social control for the explanation of uniform behaviour. Social control can certainly not be understood or explained uless we put the phenomenon in its symbolic context. There are however some other conditions—on which social control is based—than the fact that social uniformity cannot be explained in an other way than by referring to social control.

According to LaPiere people's attention to the status is the only constant which we encounter in mankind. Genetically he explains this attention for status by the human growth towards psychological independence. Functionally he finds the reason for existence of the attention for status in the survival of society. Social control relies on this interest of men for status. That's why we can have the explanation of social control elapsed along the just mentioned ways of reasoning. LaPiere, however, reaches social control in another way. In his attempts to explain human behaviour he gets stuck because he only appeals to personality and situation. That's why he postulates social control which is determined by the 'regard for status'. We may implicitly assign the genetic and functional explanation of the social status to social control. LaPiere himself does not pay much attention to the problem of the explanation of social control. The attention for the social status is certainly important to understand social control, but it is equally important in order to understand all forms of social behaviour.

Parsons explicitly calls social control a postulate. He does not search for possible causes of social control. To him social control is a necessary mechanism to have the social system function. Hence, we may consider the term 'social control' in Parsons'work as functionally explained. The poor interest in the explanation of social control, which Parsons expresses in his general theoretical works, is to be understood from the intention he had in mind with these works. We would have expected, however, that a concept such as social control, which is of the utmost importance to the social system, would have been investigated with regards to the reason for its existence.

The explanation of social control is as simple to both MacIver and Page as it is to Parsons. They describe the phenomenon in its different facets because the sociologist needs clearly defined terms in order to understand functional behaviour. We thought implicitly of finding an explanation in the function which social control has in the maintainance of the institution.

We probably find the reason why both authors did not continue along the same lines in the specific significance of their method of imaginary reconstruction. Although our sociological point of view took other facts as a starting point (Schütz) and the explanation of social control was tackled indeed, our method has something to do with the one used by MacIver and Page, even though this explanation was deduced from the combination of different opinions.

Finally it seems to be slightly unauthorized to look for an explanation of social control in *Homo Sociologicus*. The lack of explicit explanations of social control is acceptable since Dahrendorf wanted the role in the first place. We consider the postulation of social control to be equally suitable here as it is in Parsons' work.

The question occurs as to whether we have to do with a process that can be explained or that has any sense in being explained. Assuming that the sociologist tries to trace the causes of social behaviour, then social control, a form of social behaviour, certainly falls in his sphere of interest. Social control imerges from the works that have just been investigated as a phenomenon that was as a matter of fact distinguished in its different facets. The question 'why' has however not been asked. Hence, we may consider social control to be a sociological category which cannot be further analysed. However we do not regard the absence of an explicit explanation of social control to be a reason to conclude that it is impossible to come to an explana-tion. Social control as a form of social behaviour ought to be equally amenable to a social explanation as other forms of social behaviour. No one of the authors studied did pose the problem of the sociological explanation of social control explicitly. Most works which mainly stick to social control, restrict their attention either to the description and explanation of the different forms and instruments of social control or to the ways in which social control determines society. In general works on sociology attention is focused on the explanation of social behaviour and in a somewhat smaller extent (in our case only with both R.M. MacIver and C.H. Page) on the different instruments and forms of social control. In our putting forward of problems there is no room to use the explanation of social control as a explanatory factor of social behaviour.

Finally we reach the last question of this work : which conditions are to be considered as basic for our opinion of social control ? An attempt to answer this question is to be found in chapter six.

In first instance we define the thing to be explained i.e. social control.

*Social control is the process in which the social actor, group or collectivity
exercises a certain pressure on a social actor, group or collectivity by means of
socio–cultural instruments. This pressure accounts for the fact that
deviations from a certain institution are prevented and/or removed or/and
that a particular institution is introduced and/or strenghtened.*

Up to now, however, the main question has remained unanswered. The
definition only offers a means to recognize the process of social control in
social reality. The conditions that ought to be fulfilled in order to set to work
the control process, have still to be found. Those conditions, however, do link
up with the definition.

If it is assumed that social control only exists when it accounts for the
fact that deviations from a certain institution are prevented or/and removed
or/and that a particular institution is introduced and/or strenghtened, then it
supposes an appraisal of this institution on the side of both the object and the
actor, because this is the point of reference in relation to which the deviation
is measured or, simply, that has been put forward as the aim to be realized. If
the appraisal of the institution is the same with both object and actor, then
there is no need for any pressure because no deviation appears from the
appraisal of the institution by both actor and object. However, if there is a
discrepancy in the appraisal of the institution, social control will come into
existence because a different appraisal will result in a different behaviour. The
deviations from the institution which result from this can only be removed by
exercising pressure on those persons that appreciate the institution in a quite
different way.

It is quite clear that social control can not directly be explained from
the discrepancy in the appraisal of an institution by those that exercise
control and those that undergo control. There are some intermediate links to
be added to reach the conclusion as to the *why* of social control. Here the
discrepancy between the appraisals of a certain institution appears ultimately
as a necessary condition for social control.

The previous reasoning only concerns a way that has to be followed
when social control in general is to be explained ; for a concrete appearance
of social control, however, some additional problems have to be solved. It is a
fact though, that an explanation only operates within the frame that
is—according to the investigator—considered to be relevant regarding certain
problems. This is so because the facts are observed by the investigator only
according to a predetermined opinion concerning the elements necessary to
explain the particular phenomenon.