

FUNCTIONALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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Table of Contents

	page
Preface	iii
1. Prologue to a functional analysis of change	1
2. The logic of functionalism	5
2.1 The use of the organismic model and its consequences	6
2.2 Dynamic analysis	14
2.3 The concept of system and functional autonomy	20
2.3.1 Normative and factual aspects of system analysis	20
2.3.2 System integration and functional autonomy	25
2.4 Recapitulation	30
3. Functionalism and social change	32
3.1 Change without progress?	32
3.2 The equilibrium theory of change	35
3.2.1 The evolutionary legacy	36
3.2.2 Evolution and differentiation	44
3.2.3 Changing equilibria: Functional requisites and social strains	51
3.2.4 Recapitulation	65
3.3 A general critique of the equilibrium approach	68
3.3.1 Its merits: What it does	68
3.3.2 Its shortcomings: What it does not do	73
Footnotes	78
Bibliography	101

Preface

It is a common experience that our everyday life organized as it is in some form is characterized by orderly persistence as much as by change. As man's biological life cycle (from childhood to old age) and various forms of conflict in political, economic, and social life (e.g., strikes, legal suits, demonstrations) and their implications for change suggest, small-scale changes may be considered as an important aspect of stability and persistence on a larger scale. Thus, changing patterns of social life seem to provide as much predictable continuity to societal organization as fixed patterns do. And there are those events such as social and political revolutions, massive immigration, war, conquest, bad harvest, technological and medical inventions, etc., that bring about basic changes on all levels of society. One is tempted to say that life is change; and yet most people believe in the constancy of aspects of our lives, be that our occupation, the organization in which we work, values we cherish, or the intellectual subject matter we study scientifically. In a recent book, Donald A. Schon (Beyond the stable state. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971) has aptly shown that the belief in stability is a device to maintain stability, or at least the illusion of it, hence protecting us from apprehension of the various threats inherent in change. Those who do not sustain belief in the stable state of one's affairs, inescapably face what Alvin Toffler (Future Shock. New York: Random House, 1970) has termed "future shock," namely, a social disease inflicted upon people who are unable to cope with the strain of permanent novelty in times when traditional patterns of behavior are too often inappropriate or dysfunctional.

Every theory of society has a built-in stability-change dimension. Some sociological theories take change in a

social item (e.g., industrialization, authority relations) as the phenomenon to be explained. To other theories stability or the re-establishment of some stable state, of a social item (e.g., industrialism, structure of social inequality) is the phenomenon to be explained. In the latter case, change is simply taken as a transition from one state of a social item to another. Still other theories do not stress either aspect. If all theories address themselves, in one way or another, to questions of stability and change, the crux of the matter is not which theoretical scheme deals with the change dimension, but rather which one explains more effectively social change, its origins, forms, and directions.

In the study that follows change may encompass small-scale changes (e.g., development of a leadership role in some group), cyclical patterns of change (e.g., on a temporal and/or organizational basis), and fundamental changes (change of some aspect of the social system that is considered constitutive of that system such as the economic order, the parliamentary system, value pluralism, etc.). Such definitions of change will refer to short-term as well as long-term changes (e.g., in the labor market and employment structures) and to continuous or discontinuous processes (e.g., bureaucratization vs. inventions). In the last analysis, all changes in the organization of social relations may be regarded as either the re-establishment of some state of equilibrium or the formation of a new system, to put it in functionalist terms. The functional approach to change phenomena which will be the topic of this study, holds that whether we deal with changes of systems or changes within systems, all that can be observed and verified is a change in the organization of social relations.

Given the reality of change in contemporary society, more people than ever before may, at a given point in time, be said to loose faith in the stable state and hence give up a bulwark against the threat of uncertainty and begin to suffer from the disease of change. This also means that these members of society are likely to regard the established institutions and norms of orientation as inadequate to the challenges they are confronted with. However, there are students of society whose efforts of describing and explaining change are based on such stability-oriented concepts as consensus, integration, differentiation, and equilibrium. Moreover, the unit of analysis they mostly use, namely, the social system, is depicted as characterized by the property of resistance to change in the sense of operating with self-regulatory mechanisms that tend to keep it in some state of equilibrium. The vocabulary of explanation they employ is commonly identified with functional analysis or structural-functional theory. The question that arises immediately is whether such an approach to the study of social change is adequate under empirical, conceptual, and methodological premises. Or to put it more pointedly: Is functional analysis of change more than an academic substitute for engaging in change?

The present study should therefore be considered to make an attempt to examine the explanatory power of the structural-functional theory of change. We assume that functional analysis differs from non-functional approaches in the kinds of research questions it raises. We will first offer a detailed account of the logic upon which functional analysis bases its assumptions, postulates, concepts, and hypotheses. Such a map of the logic of functionalism should enable us to uncover its principles for the study social change. By demonstrating its merits and possible shortcomings, we should then arrive at

conclusions concerning the heuristic import of a social theory based on the methodological and conceptual elements of functional analysis.

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Hermann Strasser

1. Prologue to a functional analysis of change

We consider the structural-functional approach to the study of social change the most prominent one with respect to its dissemination among sociologists and social anthropologists as well as the empirical and theoretical results that it produced.¹ However, its ascent to prominence has been accompanied by normative and methodological considerations, on the one hand, and conceptual refinements, on the other.

Most social theorists at the turn of the century developed their conceptual and analytical schemes out of a culturally nationalist experience as the examples of Spencer, Durkheim, Weber, Pareto, Tönnies, Spengler, Radcliffe-Brown and others demonstrate. As a consequence they often ignored relevant intellectual developments in other countries. However, they all seem to have tacitly attributed great importance to the facts of change in the sense that only a theory of society that was capable of explaining large-scale transformation and movement as well as small-scale variation and change in social life could claim to be scientifically adequate. Moreover, they were convinced that it was possible to order the array of observable changes in history into a single, i.e., coherent, conceptual framework and to provide a unified theory of all social change (cf. Smith 1973: 1).

The only internationally effective social theory was then Marxism which offered such a theory of social development by picturing 'the modern world system' (Wallerstein 1974) of capitalism as carrying the seeds of its own destruction. In that Marxists conceived of social reality as process they aimed at understanding, explaining and producing social development. The key to their dynamic conception of the 'unity of theory and practice' was the

notion of social class. Moreover, the Russian Revolution heightened the anxieties in Europe and North America, and with the Great Depression of the 1930's the popularity of Marxist social theory rose among intellectuals and ordinary people on both sides of the Atlantic.

Especially in the United States, therefore, the pressure mounted to develop theoretical alternatives to Marxism (cf. Parsons 1970). However, it was reserved to Talcott Parsons (1) to assimilate the thus far nationally fragmented outlines of European social theory within the framework of an American structure of sentiments and assumptions (cf. Gouldner 1970: 148); and (2) to oppose materialistic determinism and the Marxian emphasis on the variability of property and power arrangements for the further development of society. In this double effort, Parsons' thesis of the convergent drift toward a voluntaristic social theory was also meant to provide an answer to the social disorganization and demoralization caused by the Great Depression (cf. Strasser 1976: Ch. 6.2).² Beyond that, Parsonian functionalism must be considered the heir of a tradition of studies on social change that assumed the feasibility and desirability of a single theory of change (Parsons 1961). Although Parsons, as we shall try to demonstrate in later chapters, does admit that change is ubiquitous, he tends to relegate - as a consequence of the kind of questions he considered to be central to sociological inquiry³ - the study of change to a minor sociological preoccupation (cf. Parsons 1951: Ch. 11; 1954: Ch. 12). As functional analysis differs from non-functional analyses in the kind of questions it raises (cf. Kingsley Davis' Introduction to Goode 1951: 17), it is not surprising that 'Most primary theoretical and methodological debates in post war social science have centered on functionalism and alternatives to it' (Martindale 1965: ix).

In this study our goal is to justify structural-functionalism as a distinct approach to the study of social phenomena in the sense that it interprets and organizes sociological data into meaningful structures of an explanatory system. Above all, functional analysis is a specific method of theory construction that has important bearing on the way social phenomena are explained (Sztompka 1974: 44-45; Parsons 1954a). We do not aim at rigorously examining the idea that all social science is structural-functional and hence functionalism only another name for sociological analysis, although we shall be interested in functional analysis as a method as well as a theory (Davis 1959). Nor are we making an attempt to reconcile structural-functionalism with the conflict approach or to defend the latter as a theoretical alternative, although we shall take into consideration their potential for offering credible interpretations of facts of social change in terms of their respective sets of categories.⁴

In line with the main purpose of this volume to introduce the reader to the functional theory of social change we shall be less concerned with the differences between various sub-approaches within functional analysis (e.g., cf. Sztompka 1974; Demerath and Peterson 1967). Rather, the functional analysis of social change is taken as a more or less single theoretical stance in that we concentrate, though by far not exclusively, on the theoretical position of its most outstanding representative, Talcott Parsons. Such a working hypothesis permits us to survey and evaluate the functional approach in its entirety and the student to familiarize himself with a comprehensive system of describing and explaining social change.

In order to render the structural-functional approach to change phenomena a worthwhile learning experience, we suggest to test the following hypothesis: A social theory based on the concepts of order, equilibrium, and integration

is unrealistic. Two facts make it so: conflict and change. This statement seems to imply four distinct, though interrelated, questions: (1) How are social conflict and change defined and how do they occur in society? (2) What are the elements of an order vocabulary of social explanation upon which a theory of society may be based? (3) How does such a theory of society deal with conflict and change? (4) What are the criteria according to which sociological concepts are judged as adequate or inadequate, realistic or unrealistic?

In order to get to the core of the matter, we will first present a detailed account of the methodology upon which functional analysis bases its assumptions, postulates, basic concepts, and hypotheses. Such a map of the logic of functional analysis should enable us to uncover its principles for studying social conflict and social change. By demonstrating its merits and possible shortcomings, we should then arrive at conclusions concerning the heuristic import of a social theory based on methodological and conceptual elements of functional analysis. The concept of order will be used to refer to an image of society as a system of action unified by a shared culture or common value system and as a functionally integrated system, which is held in equilibrium by certain recurrent processes. The notion of functional analysis will be taken as focusing on society as 'a systemic whole with constituent parts in search of a mutually adjusted equilibrium' (Demerath and Peterson 1967: 2). In the context of this study, therefore, the order or integration vocabulary of social explanation will be regarded as a substantive requisite for functional analysis and as synonymous with equilibrium theory with respect to the study of change phenomena.

2. The logic of functionalism

The aim of the present section is to arrive at a definition of the concepts of order, integration, and differentiation, to discuss their role within the vocabulary of social explanation considered central to functional analysis, and, finally, to provide a methodo-logical base for the assessment of their heuristic value in subsequent sections. As suggested before, functionalism must be considered a research strategy that is guided by certain heuristic maxims or working hypotheses rather than a theory. It guides research in that it asks distinctive questions.⁵

A model or vocabulary of explanation is usually considered as consisting of a set of propositions which are logically connected with one another. These propositions are not assumed to be reflecting the facts within an area of inquiry. Rather, they are assumed 'because they refer to facts which are considered similar to those studied within an area of discourse' (Isajiw 1968: 115). May Brodbeck (1959: 374) has termed the similarity between the elements of the model and the elements of that area of knowledge of which it is a model as isomorphism. Applied to the study of social phenomena, and as the history of sociological theories amply demonstrates, the notion of model as isomorphism of laws (e.g., in physiology and sociology) is not at all a symmetrical one. That is, most of the models of society had been taken over from the natural sciences, from areas about which we have already known a good deal. Since grounded knowledge in sociology has always been scarce, not surprisingly therefore that it has witnessed an influx of speculative models or guesses about isomorphisms. Of course, these analogies did not always work on the same principles as the original. There are only few isomorphisms in sociology which could be called complete. Writers such as Schäffle, Spencer, and Spengler (cf. Stark 1963: 30 ff.

and 60 ff.) came probably closest to a complete isomorphism while, on the other hand, there is no such one-to-one correspondence between, say, the organismic model and the theories of sociologists such as Durkheim, Parsons, Levy, and Smelser.

These analogical as well as other 'domain assumptions'⁶ largely make up scientific models of society, and thus greatly influence what the sociologist 'looks for, what he sees, and what he does with his observations by way of fitting them, along with other facts, into a larger scheme of explanation' (Inkeles 1964: 28). A model therefore provides a 'general image of the main outline of some major phenomenon, including certain leading ideas about the nature of the units involved and the patterns of their relations' (Inkeles 1964: 28). In contrast to a theory, which can at least partially be verified or falsified, a model can usually only be judged complete or incomplete, misleading or not, productive or unproductive, or even realistic or unrealistic.⁷

2.1 The use of the organismic model and its consequences

Historically speaking, the concept of order is derived from an organic analogy. Its most important manifestation can be seen in the interrelated concepts of structure and function, which figure prominently in the works of Spencer, Durkheim, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and Parsons and his followers.

As we shall see later in this study, it is the idea of an 'organismic' system assumed by functionalism that makes it distinct from other forms of explanation in sociology. Social science literature has come up with two outstanding types of theoretical explanation, that of methodological individualism and that of functionalism (cf. Nagel 1961: 520 ff.). The former places the focus

of determinacy, that is the area in which a proper explanans of some explanandum can be found, in the social-psychological realm as theories of social behaviorism and symbolic interactionism do. Functionalism, by contrast, attempts to place the focus of determinacy in the attributes of collectivities. Not only is the focus of determinacy placed in the attributes of collective entities rather than individuals, but a functional explanation also implies the assumption that systems of relations between human actors, in their own right, are capable of exercising a determining influence upon their behavior (cf. Isajiw 1968: 6). It is this form of holism derived from physiology that became central to the structural-functional approach.

Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 178-179) explicitly invoked the analogy between organism and society by tracing their main points of similarity in that each (1) represents an integrated whole, (2) maintains a certain structural continuity in the face of transformations at the level of their parts, and (3) implies internal sub-processes that fulfill specific functions. Each one of these properties of organic life corresponds to a particular concept that is also at the center of traditional functionalism: (1) interdependence referring to the links among social actors and social relations that make up a social structure; (2) equilibrium referring to the continued attempt to preserve social-structural stability through such self-regulatory mechanisms as socialization and social control; and (3) differentiation referring to the process and the outcome of institutionalizing specific social roles and organizations performing certain functions in society. Radcliffe-Brown (1935: 396) clearly states:

'To turn from organic life to social life, if we examine such a community as an African or Australian tribe we can recognize the existence of a social structure. Individual human beings, the essential units in this instance are connected by a definite set of social relations into an integrated whole. The continuity of the social structure, like that of an organic structure, is not destroyed by changes in the units. Individuals may leave the society, by death or otherwise; others may enter it. The continuity of structure is maintained by the process of social life, which consists of the activities and interactions of the individual human beings and of the organized groups into which they are united. The social life of the community is here defined as the functioning of the social structure. The functions of any recurrent activity, such as the punishment of a crime, or a funeral ceremony, is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity'.

Accordingly, the analysis of the functions of various behavior patterns or of cultural items in relation to the total social system to which they belong should yield two crucial tasks of a science of society, namely, to show how social systems perpetuate themselves by maintaining their structural form and how social systems change by adjusting their structure (Radcliffe-Brown 1957: Part 2; cf. also Nagel 1961: 520-522). Radcliffe-Brown holds that any activity or sociocultural item is regarded as explained when it is demonstrated that it has the effect of maintaining the social structure. Moreover, he says, while in animal organism the organic structure can be observed to some extent independent of its operation, 'in human society the social structure as a whole can only be observed in its functioning'

(Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 180). Thus, the social structure is defined in terms of activities and the effect of these activities on units. At this point it is important to mention another element in biological organisms that is not in a one-to-one correspondence with social organisms. While in healthy biological organisms the activities of the organs and units are practically identical with those which have the effect of maintaining the life of the organism, in social organisms people do things invoking the cooperation or opposition of other people, although these activities do not necessarily maintain the social structure. The organismic model is therefore at best useful in explanations of some human actions.

In other words, an uncritical use of the organic analogy may be detrimental to the explanatory purpose in social science. As Sztompka (1974: 50-52) correctly notes, the first danger is that of reification when the methodological purpose of comparing society to an organism (as a guide for further inquiry) is turned into an ontological claim that society is an organism (cf. also Collins 1975: 93; Beattie 1964: 56). A second, more subtle danger consists in stressing only points of (relative) convergence between organic and social systems at the expense of recognizing fundamental differences and dissimilarities. First of all, the properties of the respective elements or elementary processes are fundamentally different as a comparison of, say, organic cells and people, respiration and economic production, or blood and money demonstrates. The same is true, secondly, with respect to the structural characteristics of organism as compared with society: The elements of an organic structure are as strongly integrated as their specialization is pronounced; by contrast, social systems are less integrated and their specialization of elements and process is less marked. And, finally, the latter neither have a common control agency as organisms

do. A third dissimilarity refers to the course of dynamic changes an organism takes as opposed to society: While an organism may undergo only internal changes such as growth, metabolism, or adaptation, a society may experience more or less radical changes, be they of intrasystemic or extrasystemic origin. These possible misapplications of organic analogy should also be taken as the major reason why a number of sociologists have reproached functionalism as having a static bias (e.g. Dahrendorf 1968; Homans 1971; Lockwood 1964).

As pointed out later, theories of social change that are based on organic analogy - especially classic evolutionism and neo-evolutionism as well as tendencies within functionalism - have always tended to emphasize man's attempt to maximize his control over a more or less adverse environment through the means of self-development and self-adjustment. That is to say, society as well as mankind is seen as evolving through the stages of increasing control over and adjustment to the environment, both physical and social.⁸ Two points should be emphasized here. On the one hand, common premises such as immanent sources of change, differentiation, genetic continuity, etc. testify to the affinity between organicism and functionalism with respect to both the analysis of structure and of change (for greater detail, see below under 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3). On the other hand, these considerations must not blur one's view of the fact that organic changes have a cyclical character whose starting and terminal points can easily be specified, while social changes do have a directive and, to a considerable extent, irreversible character which mostly lack any definite beginning as well as any conceivable end (Sztompka 1974: 52). Undoubtedly, the neglect of this fundamental difference has led to the factual and alleged a-historic bias of some trends of contemporary functionalism (e.g., Dahrendorf 1968: 107).

As stated earlier, the term function is used by Radcliffe-Brown to signify the contributions an item makes toward the maintenance of a certain state of the social system. This meaning of function points to the crucial problem of survival or paramount purpose of the organism which has given rise to an elaborate discussion on the 'functional prerequisites of a society' (e.g., Aberle et al. 1950; Parsons 1961; Parsons and Smelser 1956; Merton 1968). However, Radcliffe-Brown himself recognized that the endeavor in sociology to demonstrate that certain processes were necessary for societal survival was doubtful although such demonstration was possible in biology. He made it clear that societies do not cease to exist as physical organisms do; they rather become different societies, i.e., they change their structural type. Thus, the concept of function takes on a problematic significance. If it cannot demonstrate the fact of structural change as clearly as the facts of death or illness, it would be difficult to assign to it any significance with respect to 'survival value' or 'vital importance'.⁹ This not only forecasts a shadow on Parsons' and others' 'functional prerequisites,' but also questions a conception of change in toto which distinguishes between 'normal change' and 'structural change' (cf. Parsons 1951: 480 ff.; Parsons 1961: 70 ff.).

Common to early functionalists such as Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski is the notion of social change as change of structures and functions. In the case of Malinowski (1969) this meant that institutions change while they take care of unchanging needs. Just as function is seen as fulfillment of needs, so new cultural elements may lead to 'positive' social developments and social disorganization to 'negative' social change that results from doing away with old institutions without replacing them by new ones thus leaving certain 'basic needs' unfulfilled.¹⁰

Both Malinowski (who traced functions to natural human needs) and Radcliffe-Brown (who distinguished between functions and functional prerequisites and saw functions as elements of an integrated system whose parts are interdependent) were taken to task by Robert K. Merton (1968: 79-91) who was able to show that the postulates of 'universal functionalism', 'functional unity' and 'indispensability' of each element for the social whole only deflects (functional) analysis from taking into consideration the relationships among the elements of social action. To put it differently: Since it is assumed that some higher unit of reference exists, the analysis of conflict and change on all levels of societal organization is obstructed (Touraine 1974: 38; Hempel 1959). However, these classic functionalists seem to suggest a distinction between social change that refers to changing structural elements (Radcliffe-Brown) and societal change that implies changing functional prerequisites (Malinowski). Both work with the idea of some state of equilibrium for the maintenance of which each system element has specifiable functions. Elements are considered to be exchangeable as long as the new element has the same function. On the one hand, a system whose elements are always related to the same functions presupposes permanent change (cf. Luhmann's [1972] equivalence functionalism). On the other hand, the system remains identical with itself as long as the functions in the system must be preserved (cf. Parsons' [1961] functional imperativism). Here, change is automatic; it lies within the system, i.e., inseparable from the idea of the system defined by its interdependent parts - the very interdependence that produces change. So we are referred back, at least in part, to Western ethnocentrism that sees its fundamental characteristics and trends as a product of other features and trends within its states and societies - as much as traditional functionalism conceives of change as 'a function of relations between a set of interdependent parts' (Smith 1973: 155).

Moreover, in the light of various community studies this also calls for a reassessment of the concept of dysfunctionality. From studies such as those by Frank and Ruth Young (1962) about patterns of community growth, by Edward Spicer (1952), on the impact of technology on primitive communities, and Robert Redfield's (1930) and Oscar Lewis' (1951) study of the Mexican village Tepoztlán,¹¹ to name a few, we can infer that whenever certain traditional activities have been displaced because of contact with more articulated structures, their displacement has led to a period of rapid change and extensive instability in these and other areas. Assuming that the particular social system was in fact stable in the precontact period, we may even speak of the displaced activities 'as having had a function in promoting the survival of the earlier structural type' (Rex 1961: 71). Obviously, it would not make much sense to regard such a change in the pattern of social actions as necessarily dysfunctional. Dysfunctional for whom? Too often, social scientists, anthropologists in particular, have seen change negatively by contrasting the new social pattern with the old one - the traditional pattern representing the 'healthy' social organism.

In this context Merton's otherwise illuminating critique and defense of the functionalist method, in his essay on 'Manifest and Latent Functions,' does unfortunately not contribute to a clarification of these problems. Although he insists that some concept of the needs of the system is vital to sociological analysis, he is at great pains to establish such needs objectively (Merton 1968: 106). As John Rex (1961: 73) has remarked, Merton's actual cases of 'latent functions' seem 'to refer quite definitely not to the needs of the system but to the purpose of groups of individuals.'¹² We shall return to this point shortly.

The point is that functional statements could be regarded as appropriate only in connection with systems possessing self-maintaining mechanisms for certain of their traits. They seem to be pointless or even misleading, particularly in view of a general theory of change, 'when used with reference to systems lacking such self-regulatory devices.'¹³ What social anthropology's and sociology's heavy reliance on the organic analogy does teach us, that, toward the turn of the century, these disciplines were considerably influenced by similar trends in other scientific fields, which contributed to their adoption of a holistic image of society.

'We may state as characteristic of modern science that the scheme of isolable units acting in one-way causality has proved to be insufficient. Hence, the appearance in all fields of science of notions like wholeness, holistic, organismic, Gestalt, etc., which all signify that in the last resort we must think in terms of elements in mutual interaction' (Bertalanffy 1968: 45; cf. also Rombach 1965, II: 11-25).

The systemic model of society turns out to be the core of functionalism on which the use of the organic analogy had important methodological and conceptual bearings. However, this is not to deny that as early functional analysis was applied to isolated, mostly primitive communities, the organic analogy worked well in spite of its static, a-historic, and at times teleological bias.

2.2 Dynamic analysis

We have seen that social scientists who used the organic analogy were led to posit a structural and processual similarity between society and an exemplar of a system, the biological organism. By assuming that the function of any recurrent (physiological/social) process implies a correspondence between it and the needs (i.e.,

the necessary conditions for existence) of the (organic/social) system under consideration (Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 179), these authors attributed to its elements 'survival value' for the particular system. In other words, as systems change through time, relevant patterns of action or forms of social organization are selected and persist, while dysfunctional patterns are dropped. Only in the sense that such a selective process of functionalization was conceived of taking place over a considerable span of time, this type of functional theory became a dynamic one (Moore 1963: 9). As indicated above, the idea of survival led functionalism to an elaborate attempt to identify the 'functional prerequisites' of any society (Aberle et al. 1950; Parsons 1951; Parsons and Smelser 1956; Levy 1952) which will be further discussed below.

All types of functional analysis agree to treat 'the consequences of some behavior or social arrangement' as 'essential elements of the causes of that behavior' (Stinchcombe 1968: 80). Since social phenomena tend to exhibit the characteristic of 'equifinality' (Heider 1958), namely, that there is usually a number of means rather than only one which reaches the same end, we concur with Stinchcombe (1968: 80; *italics in the original*) that

'Whenever we find uniformity of the consequences of action but great variety of the behavior causing those consequences, a functional explanation in which the consequence serves as a cause is suggested.'¹⁴

The postulate to consider social phenomena as dynamically interdependent variables, to which Parsons referred in his discussion of the 'dynamic interest of theory' that would result in 'dynamic knowledge', directs our attention to the central concern of functionalism:

'The essential feature of dynamic analysis in the fullest sense is the treatment of a body of interdependent phenomena simultaneously, in the mathematical sense. The simplest case is the analysis of the effect of variation in one antecedent factor, but this ignores the reciprocal effect of these changes on this factor' (Parsons 1954a: 215-216; italics in the original).

Functionalism's foremost representatives, Parsons and Merton, seem to agree that in the present state of the sociological discipline 'dynamic analysis in the fullest sense' cannot be realized and that structural-functional theory is the best substitute for dynamic analysis (cf. Parsons 1954a: 216-217; 1951: 20; Merton 1968: 75-76). Merton (1968:75) notes that the ideal, dynamic, conception has been expressed in a more extended but also more imprecise form by such notions as 'functional interdependence,' 'mutually dependent variations,' and 'functional relations.' However, Parsons' major concern with functional theory lies on an analytical level different from that of Merton. As indicated, he offers an analysis that views all social phenomena as variables of one all-inclusive (and empirical) system. Merton (1968: 55 ff.), on the other hand, is preoccupied with specifications of functional analysis in order to employ it in empirical research. He focuses on 'the practice of interpreting data by establishing their consequences for larger structures in which they are implicated...' (Merton 1968: 101). Despite Merton's exercised theoretical restraint with respect to systemic assumptions, his theoretical position is no less questionable.

By contrast, for Parsons who stresses the systemic reference point and hence the explanatory power of systemically imposed imperatives, it is the most essential condition of successful dynamic analysis to refer

continually and systematically 'every problem to the state of the system as a whole' (Parsons 1954a:216). Parsons constructs his alternative to the ideal of dynamic analysis by following three methodical steps. First, one treats groups of interrelated variables as structural categories, that is, as constants, in order to reduce the complexity of interdependent factors (e.g., the institutionalized order of norms and values). In other words, these categories are not defined in terms of other variables, but independently, and may thus provide adequate description of the empirical social system.

In a second step, once these structural categories are defined, they must be linked to the variable elements of the system. This is done by establishing the relevance of the structural categories to the total social system through the concept of function. Thus, Parsons' concept of function, closely related to that of Radcliffe-Brown, serves to provide a criterion for determining the importance of dynamic factors and processes within a given system. The functional relevance of some socio-cultural item will be found in the differential consequences for the total social system: maintaining its stability or producing change in it, promoting integration and order or disruption and change of the system in some sense. It is the assessment of systemic relevance from which the notion of functional analysis is derived.¹⁵

According to Parsons, functional analysis would not be complete, if it did not, in a third step, include a set of 'dynamic functional categories.' They 'must describe processes by which these particular structures are maintained or upset, and the relations of the system to its environment are mediated' (Parsons 1954a: 218). On this analytical level the problem of explaining social change is supposedly taken care of.¹⁶

What Parsons' dynamic analysis amounts to is the assumption (1) that some preferred state of a given system is defined in terms of a particular configuration of elements and their interrelationships (e.g., a common normative structure that is properly internalized by the members of the given society). (2) It is further assumed that this particular structure of the system tends to be preserved by self-regulatory mechanism which, so-to-speak, automatically counteract deviations from that structure arising from extrasystemic sources (e.g., socialization and social control operating by means of various types of sanctions).¹⁷ Of course, it is true that within Parsonian functionalism the tendency to preserve a given structure of the system (or at least to establish and stabilize some normative order) is 'very generally expressed in the concept of equilibrium' (Parsons and Shils 1951: 180). However, as Merton (1968: 79-91) has shown, the postulates of functional unity, of universal functionalism, and of indispensability of each element for the whole assume that some higher level, global unit exists, virtually preventing the analysis of conflict and change. On the other hand, it is important to keep in mind that interdependent relations between the elements of a social system can only be conceptualized if it is assumed that social mechanisms operate to guarantee the systemness and functioning of action systems of any kind. This therefore suggests that the analysis of change in and of systems cannot be separated from a study of equilibrium states and equilibrating mechanisms, of the integration of roles within personality systems, the formation of consensus within collectivities, and the organization of cultural orientation systems. In short, the reproach against functionalism to focus on equilibrium, stability, and integration at the expense of conflict and change would be justified only, if it claimed to be capable of coming to grips with social reality in its totality (Touraine 1974: 39; cf. also Dahrendorf 1958: 175).

What we have just said does not invalidate another critique, however. In that functional analysis places emphasis on the interdependence of a system's parts and their role in producing change, it seems to have the (desired) effect of excluding the randomness of change sources located outside the system. It thus renders change automatic and the idea of the system inseparably tied to the idea of change produced by its (definitional) property of interdependency. In other words, change can be deduced from the properties of any system (Smith 1973: 155; cf., e.g. Parsons 1951: 177-178). Furthermore, the self-regulating mechanism is said to take effect with respect to the system's (changing) preferred state whenever changes occur in the system's environment or inside the system which alter the relation of the system to its environment. It is with the assumption of a moving equilibrium or even an eternal disequilibrium that functional analysis comes close to accepting Robert A. Nisbet's (1969: 236) and S.N. Eisenstadt's (1964a: 235) postulate that change is inherent in all social systems

'because of basic problems to which there is no overall continuous solution. These problems include uncertainties of socialization, perennial scarcity of resources relative to individual aspirations, and contrasting types of social organization (e.g., Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft) within the society' (Eisenstadt 1964a: 235).

True that functionalists had more often than not dismissed the research implications of such a postulate as residual - in spite of Parsons' (1951: 522) claim that 'There are serious strains and inconsistencies in the value-implementation of any complex social system.'¹⁸

In conclusion we may state that the crucial problem with dynamic functional analysis is that it deals with internal disturbances and outside pressures for change

in terms of the given system's response to them without regard to the transition between equilibrium states or to 'the influences generated by the actual process of readjustment to a new equilibrium state upon the nature of that state' (Smith 1973: 137). Its central question to be answered does not so much concern the source, the timing, and the intensity of change as the extent to which it penetrates the system, i.e., how change affects the movement of the presupposed equilibrium system and its various components (cf. Dahrendorf 1958; Rex 1961: 131-135; Cohen 1968: 174-207, especially 191-194).

2.3 The concept of system and functional autonomy

2.3.1 Normative and factual aspects of system analysis

In a now famous presidential address, Kingsley Davis (1959) has gone so far as to deny that functionalism is any special method or theoretical approach in sociology. He contends that social scientists in general and sociologists in particular use much the same analytical framework. Davis holds that any scientific discipline assumes 'a system of reasoning which presumably bears a relation to a corresponding system in nature,' and goes on to ask:

'How else can data be interpreted except in relation to the larger structures in which they are implicated? How can data on the earth's orbit, for example, be understood except in relation to a system in which they are involved - in this case, the solar system or the earth's climatic system? Since in science some kind of system is being dealt with, an analysis of the effect of one factor must always be made with the possibility in mind of a possible return effect ("feedback") on that factor itself. If, for example, the

increase of fish (y) in a pond has the effect of increasing the toxicity (x) of the water, the growth of the fish population (y again) will eventually cease unless other factors intervene. This is not explaining things solely by their consequences, but rather by the way their consequences react upon them' (Davis 1959: 759).

To be sure, all science studies the relation of parts to some systemic whole. However, this does not mean that all science follows the same procedure as functionalism, especially not since there are different types of systems.¹⁹ This study primarily purports to show that functionalism is not a myth, which will be dispelled with time, as Davis believes, 'but an important though fragmentary approach to social reality' (van den Berghe 1963: 696).

Let us return for a moment to the divergent conceptions of functionalism in Parsons and Merton. We have documented that Merton's orientation is to interpret data 'by establishing their consequences for larger structures....,' while Parsons considers the 'systematic reference of every problem to the state of the system as a whole...' to be of central importance. That is to say, Parsons places great emphasis on the notion of 'system', while Merton directs our attention to 'units' or 'items' and avoids explicit use of the system concept.²⁰ Alvin W. Gouldner (1959: 243) has noted that in comparison to Merton's 'strategy of minimal commitment' Parsons' commitment to a system model could be called a maximal one. However, the two leading functionalists agree to explain any social pattern or item only in the context it occurs, that is, to analyze it in its relation to other patterns. In short, Merton postulates implicitly, and Parsons explicitly, a system model in dealing with social phenomena.

In order to understand the analysis of change in functional terms, it is important to keep in mind Parsons'

assumption that 'the whole system must be conceptually constituted prior to the investigation and analysis of specific patterns' (Gouldner 1959: 244-245). Traditional functionalism defined the social system in analogical, mostly organic, terms; modern functionalism, on the other hand, uses the method of abstraction in the sense of explicitly stating 'the most generalized dimensions in terms of which systems, formally construed, may vary and then to stipulate the conjunction of formal system dimensions which are to be applied to social behavior' (Gouldner 1959: 242). On the one hand, the adoption of the systemic frame of reference seems to indicate that 'in the last resort we must think in terms of elements in mutual interaction' (von Bertalanffy 1968: 45). That fundamental structural properties characteristic of any (social) system are generalized and a particular set of which is applied to the scope of social reality under consideration, appears to have led to a number of theoretical and methodological problems, if not dilemmas, on the other hand.

Unlike traditional functionalism's conceptualization of global societies as social organisms, modern functionalism uses the system concept not only to describe global societies and less inclusive entities such as social groups and communities, but also to identify networks of social relations such as the economy and the polity or different types of action systems such as culture, society, and personality. Although the distinction between macrofunctionalism and microfunctionalism has been introduced to denote the different reference systems (cf. Martindale 1960), contemporary functionalism is nevertheless left with the problem of employing the system concept as an analytical, and often merely as a classificatory, instrument rather than as a theoretical representation of some empirical entity based on theoretically deduced problems and hypothetically formulated explanations. Functionalists have indeed dealt with social systems

almost exclusively on an analytical level focusing on variables, relations, roles, statuses, subsystems, etc., rather than in concrete terms such as people, their interactions, collectivities, groups, classes, needs, and the like (Sztompka 1974: 54).

Too often, functionalists have manoevered themselves into a scientific dilemma by converting the methodological necessity of employing the system concept into a theoretical virtue supposedly resulting in social knowledge with immediate empirical reference. The failure to distinguish between the analytical and the concrete level in the study of social systems is closely linked with the functionalists' tendency to focus on normative (consensual) elements at the expense of factual (coercive) power elements. Norms and power are not understood as alternative modes of institutionalizing social relationships, but rather society is viewed as consisting of social institutions primarily defined as moral entities, thus resulting in an emphatic emphasis on common value elements in an attempt to explain the integration of social action.²¹ However, Merton did draw attention to the ubiquitous tension between consensual and coercive elements of the social structure as well as to the ever present possibility of the use of power to maintain institutions and of the de-institutionalization of power:

'It is not enough to refer to "the institutions" as though they were all uniformly supported by all groups and strata in the society. Unless systematic consideration is given the degree of support of particular "institutions" by specific groups, we shall overlook the important place of power in society. To speak of "legitimate power" or authority is often to use an elliptical and misleading phrase. Power may be legitimized for some without being legitimized for all groups in a society. It may, therefore, be misleading

to describe non-conformity with particular social institutions merely as deviant behavior; it may represent the beginning of a new alternative pattern, with its own distinctive claims to moral validity' (Merton 1968: 176; italics in the original).

For the present purpose it suffices to say that functionalists have tended to ignore the propensity to social conflict and change which arises from some degree of functional incompatibility between institutional patterns (the defining characteristics of relevant parts of a social system) and their material substructure (that facilitates social relationships which, if actualized, would threaten the existing institutional order). Or more specifically and simply stated: While the legitimation of authority as institutionalized power takes the form of general principles, acts of authority are always specific. In the words of Lockwood (1964: 247 n.), 'authority is never given, but is always contingent upon its exercise.' Functionalists, in other words, are more concerned with the theme of norms-consensus-order, i.e., the moral aspects of social integration, rather than with the possible lack of fit between the (normative) presence or absence of a claim to legitimacy and the (factual) sentiments of those who are subject to authority suggesting the theme of power-alienation-conflict as a sociological alternative.²²

Undoubtedly, most functionalists have indulged in focusing on the normative mechanisms of social integration. Lockwood's (1956) reproach against Parsons that there is no place for the 'factual substratum' of social structures in the latter's systemic model of society is, considering the former's premises, justified. Lockwood's answer to the question of where one finds the real authority relations in such a conception is worth mentioning: The cultural system may provide norms that limit the exercise of power; however, in Parsons' view the exercise of power

appears as a social mechanisms designed to guarantee a minimum of functional harmony (cf., e.g., Parsons 1961: 60-79). The lack of fit between the normative realm and the factual substratum, between the strategies of social integration and system integration, point to the question of how functional analysis takes into account the antagonistic tendencies prevalent in any society, namely, that its parts strive for autonomy while they must be integrated as well.

2.3.2 System integration and functional autonomy

As we have seen earlier, the concept of system implies the notion of interdependence, which, in turn, refers to three aspects of the very definition of a social system. To assume systemic interdependence means, first of all, that there are parts of the system engaged in mutual exchanges. Secondly, if each element is interrelated with all the others, no element can in principle exist outside the system (cf. Parsons and Shils 1951: 107). However, the idea that each element of a social system is related to every other element seems to be an exception rather than the rule. In other words, thirdly, the notion of interdependence implies the principle of reciprocity as the type of interrelation is left unspecified. This leads to the further assumption that the exchanges and interactions among system parts, be they individuals, groups, or institutions, are symmetrical and hence equitable (cf., e.g., Malinowski 1926: 25, 46; Lenski 1966: Ch. 3).

There can be no doubt that a certain degree of reciprocity is a precondition of any society's persistence:

'Any one structure is more likely to persist if it is engaged in reciprocally functional interchanges with some others;... the less reciprocal the functional interchange between

structures, the less likely is either structure, or the patterned relation between them, to persist, ... unless compensatory mechanisms are present' (Gouldner 1959: 249; italics in the original).

A number of compensatory mechanisms are conceivable to create social imbalances, most importantly various kinds of social norms that sanction unequal exchanges (cf. Randall and Strasser 1976: Chs. 3 and 4) and power arrangements which may compel continued extraction of services for which there is little functional reciprocity (Gouldner 1959: 249-250). Given the universality of norms and power differentials, we may state that only a part of the relationships and exchange processes in a social system are of a symmetrical nature. Furthermore, in complex social systems there is 'generalized exchange' to a considerable extent, that is, indirect exchange in the sense that A fulfills the needs of B, B those of C and C those of A, etc. Since we cannot assume symmetrical exchange and complete interdependence in social life, functional analysis is confronted with the task to find out which element is connected with which other element(s) with respect to which function (Bühl 1975: 24).

The concept of functional reciprocity, nay, of varying degrees of reciprocity and functional autonomy also conveys the idea that it is not sufficient to provide an explanation of the persistence of some social phenomenon in terms of its consequences for the larger structures in which it is implicated. For instance, in his analysis of the latent functions of political machines in the United States, Merton (1968: 126-136) failed to trace explicitly 'the manner in which the groups or structures, whose needs have been satisfied, in turn "reciprocate" and repay the political machine for the gains it provides them' (Gouldner 1959: 249). To cite yet another example, a functional analysis of, say, the German system of higher education to be complete requires

to uncover not only the consequences of what universities (A) do for the state, society, or some specific group (B) but also in what way, say, the state (B) reciprocates the university system (A) (e.g., the state grants self-governing mechanisms to universities such as self-recruitment, some degree of financial autonomy, publicity).²³ Here again we see that a functional analysis that does not cease before it has attempted to establish empirically the reciprocal functionality, conceives of the parts of the system as existing in and for themselves and not merely in their system character.

We may therefore postulate that the notion of interdependence of the parts of the social system which is so central to the system approach, must be taken as problematic rather than as given. That this has not been systematically done, may be partially attributed to the fact that Parsons distinguishes between a 'theoretical' and an 'empirical' system (cf. Gouldner 1959: 252). The empirical system which 'has to do with the criteria for coherence and harmony to be applied to some specific body of subject matter,' remains in the Parsonian scheme largely unexplored and is, in contrast to the theoretical system, analytically unproblematical. It seems to set the terms according to which the theoretical system must develop. Since different, often alternative, elements (consensus vs. conflict, interdependence vs. functional autonomy, etc.) are involved in the conception of an empirical system and hence interrelated and interpreted in distinctive ways, it is more likely that they actually constitute different types of empirical systems. As a consequence, conceptual models of system organization and system change become rallying grounds for competing types of sociological theory. It is our task as social scientists to identify those models or vocabularies of social explanation which are best suited to be applied to relevant data. Change phenomena are transformed into

data (of the sociological discipline) by adopting a vocabulary of social explanation.²⁴

In conclusion, from the principle of reciprocity may be inferred that among the parts of a social system there are varying degrees of interdependence. Consequently, 'if there are degrees of interdependence, there must also be degrees of independence or functional autonomy' (Gouldner 1970: 226). Society as an ongoing concern presupposes system parts with relative functional autonomy as much as most system parts need, to some extent, to be integrated into the whole system, if they are likely to realize their objectives. Otherwise there would be only annihilation or total structural change possible.

In the light of the fact that different system parts contribute differently to any (goal) state of the system and hence both to changes and to the stabilization of the system, Parsons' stress on the 'web of interdependence' ('everything influences everything else') within the system comes close to substituting postulation for research. The problem of functional autonomy of the parts, as pointed out earlier, enters into the functional analysis of social systems when strain, tension, contradiction, or discrepancy between the component elements of the social and cultural structure have to be dealt with. Regardless of whether strains are dysfunctional for the existing social system or instrumental in leading to changes in that system, they always exert pressure for change, thus putting to test the more or less effective operation of social mechanisms for keeping these strains within limiting bounds (Merton 1968: 176).²⁵

The notion of functional autonomy, we have said, focuses not primarily on the 'whole' or on relations between parts, but rather on the parts themselves in

spite of their relations to each other. However, inasmuch as integrating pressures are exerted by a system part (i.e., by the managerial element that identifies with the system and interprets requirements of the system for integration), these pressures lead not only to integration proper but also to the mobilization of power to maintain some measure of autonomy on the part of the system managers. In other words, these tendencies toward system integration are inherently geared toward oligarchic centralization which, in turn, threaten the autonomy of the other parts of the system thus generating opposition, conflict, and continued power reassessments (Gouldner 1970: 216). By attending to the possibility that the mutual needs of the parts need not be, and most likely are not, symmetrical and that any part may be more or less dependent on another part of the social system, the concept of functional autonomy directs sociological analysis to social structures and developments that are productive of tensions.

Finally, there is another key element in the system concept that we should mention here. For structural-functional theory to have relevance, says Parsons (1951: 483), 'it must apply to a boundary-maintaining type of system,' that is, to a system in which the co-existence of counteracting forces results in a state of equilibrium. In this sense, Norbert Elias (1976, I: xxi) is correct when he notes that the Parsonian notion of social change refers to 'a state of transition between two normal states of changelessness produced by disturbances.' However, it is precisely these balanced states of the system(s) that are to be explained. They are explained by dwelling on the assumption that a social system not only tends to maintain its boundaries, but also that it is self-regulative to the effect that forces are generated which restore a displaced equilibrium (cf. Parsons and Smelser 1956: 247-248; Merton 1968: 176). For Parsons, it is the equilibrium assumption, that is to say,

the system containing social and cultural patterns that tend to be maintained, hence advancing to the principle of determinacy or causality.²⁶

Apart from the critique in terms of asymmetrical interdependence, reciprocation, and functional autonomy, Parsons' alleged multiple causation model, despite its claim that all social and cultural phenomena are generated by many factors rather than one, clearly attributes a paramount place to one variable: shared moral beliefs or value elements institutionalized in the social system and internalized by role players and designed to insure social integration through system equilibrium. In this respect, Parsons followed the tradition of Comte and Durkheim. Similar to Karl Marx, his attention is fixed on establishing that certain elements within the social system have ultimate control over it.²⁷ The opposing arguments that in any society forces may operate to protect some measure of functional autonomy of system parts and to strive for more integration, gave rise to alternative ways of understanding and explaining social change: the functional approach and its more or less radical critiques.

2.4 Recapitulation

Before we go on to discuss the question of how a sociological theory based on the concepts of system, order, and integration deals with the problem and facts of social change, we should summarize the basic principles of the functional approach by deriving them from the logical and partially substantive considerations presented thus far.

- (1) Societies are seen as systems of interdependent parts.
- (2) A system is assumed to be self-persistent and self-regulating, thus fundamentally in a state of equilibrium.

- (a) The different social forces are viewed as parts of a more or less integrated whole and hence explained in relation to the integration of the system, that is, as more or less contributing to it.
 - (b) Accordingly, dysfunctions, strains, and conflicts do exist, but they tend to resolve 'themselves' or become 'institutionalized' in the long run.
 - (c) Social change is generally conceived of as occurring in a gradual and adjustive manner through differentiation and adaptation to extra-systemic pressures.
- (3) Social integration is achieved through value consensus, that is, through goals and principles which most members of a given social system agree on, and which is implemented through the mechanisms of institutionalization, socialization, and social control.

In the sections 1-4 of this chapter, we have outlined the logical structure of the functional approach to social change phenomena. Since, as Parsons (1968, I: 8) says, a 'theoretical system does not merely state facts which have been observed and their logically deducible relations to other facts' but also 'what empirical facts it should be possible to observe in a given set of circumstances,' we are now ready to substantively examine the explanatory potential of the structural-functional theory of social change. We should then be able to state whether functionalism is only a myth or rather a fragmentary approach to social reality.

3. Functionalism and social change

3.1 Change without progress?

Paradoxically, the social sciences that deal with man's action and products have tended to stress 'orderly interdependence and static continuity,' as the rate of social change has accelerated in social reality (Moore 1968: 365; Zimmerman 1961: 6 ff.). There is some evidence that difficulties in analytically coming to grips with short-term and long-term changes, small-scale and large-scale developments, etc., are only partially responsible for that state of affairs. Rather, the primacy of certain ideals to which the dominant representatives of twentieth-century sociology feel attached seem to have played a crucial role why they no longer considered the study of social development and human progress at the center of their scientific activities.

Contrary to their colleagues of the 18th and 19th centuries, they have adopted a conception of the social development of mankind as 'a chain of static types of society concentrating, though, on the structural-functional context of the present, rather than past or future, society (cf. Chodak 1973). Social scientists have always sought to affirm their desires and hopes by studying and becoming part of the forces and direction of the development of society up to their own time. In the 19th century they closely identified either with one of the rising industrial classes (bourgeoisie and workers) or, as in some cases, with the aristocratic-military elites whose power was to steadily subside. However, in the 19th century the bourgeoisie, and later the working class as well, had still to struggle for its rise to power which also means that, to them, development, progress, and a better future represented not only hard facts but also an ideal of great emotional importance (Elias 1976, I: xxxiii; Strasser 1976: 7). Saint-Simon, Comte, Spencer, and Marx may be

mentioned as notable examples of this kind of sociological theorizing.

In the course of the 20th century, the bourgeoisie and laboring classes and their representatives have been able to establish themselves institutionally and ideologically as the ruling groups. As a consequence, one's nation, that is national consciousness, besides class ideals, began to play an increasing role as an ideal and supreme social value for the bourgeoisie and later also for the labor movement. When sociologists of the 18th and 19th centuries spoke of society they meant 'civil society,' a human society that usually transcended all state limits. Ever since the representatives of the two major industrial classes had access to the power positions in state and society, the nation organized within state boundaries began almost necessarily to represent the supreme value - once fought for, now attained, and to be defended in the future. No wonder, therefore, that many sociologists of the 20th century do not envision a 'human society' beyond state boundaries but increasingly refer to the ideal image of a national state (Elias 1976, I: xxxvi).

Of course, a number of other external factors contributed to these developments in the study of social phenomena, which we cannot discuss here at length. However, mention should be made of the fact that in eighteenth and nineteenth-century sociology the study of social change was closely related to the ideal of progress, that is, in times when social progress had been felt, although its pace was still slow and its scope limited. Although today more people seem to profit from the advancements in the sciences, in technology and medicine as well as from a rising standard of living to a much greater extent than ever before, for many people progress has ceased to be an ideal. One reason for dropping the idea of progress as an ideal and a concept may be seen in recurrent wars, the permanent danger of war, the threat of nuclear weapons, and in the worldwide

disaster of technologically induced pollution; another reason is the declining leadership role of the traditional industrial nations of the West along with the continuing population explosion and the persisting gap in material wealth between industrialized and developing countries. Rather, as industrial societies become increasingly complex, we observe a growing demand for functional analyses on organizational as well as societal levels. With the ascent of formal and substantive system analyses to political appreciation, the possibility of sudden and drastic changes has been increasingly swept under the methodological rug (cf. Bühl 1975: 34; Gouldner 1970: 362 ff., 455 ff.; Böhret 1972). The exploration of functional requirements apparently replaced the scientific concern with progress and development.

Auguste Comte regarded as the foremost task of the sociologist to uncover the trends underlying the shift from the old agrarian to the new industrial order of society, so that men could set up their institutions and beliefs on realistic and harmonious foundations. Although Parsons also claimed that the mission of sociology was to culminate in a 'dynamic theory of institutional change' (Parsons 1949: 12), based on a theory of social structure and a theory of the motivational processes within the social system, he nevertheless declared pontifically that 'a general theory of the processes of change of social systems is not possible in the present state of knowledge' (Parsons 1951: 486). And added prophetically: 'When such a theory is available the millenium for social science will have arrived. This will not come in our time and most probably never' (Parsons 1951: 534).²⁸

Most sociologists will agree that we do not have such a theory of social change. Parsons himself listed two reasons: (1) a theory of change 'requires a synthesis of all other branches of the overall theoretical system' (Parsons 1948: 11) which we are not yet capable of dealing

with; and (2) the limitations stemming from structural-functional theory itself as it uses the system concept 'without a complete knowledge of the laws which determine processes within the system' (Parsons 1951: 483). Parsons offers instead some empirical generalizations and a factor analysis of limited scope by substituting for reason (1) the methodological postulate that there must be at least an initial and a terminal pattern to be used as points of reference, and for reason (2) a more modest definition of the system to which such a theory is applied in terms of any boundary-maintaining type of system (cf. Parsons 1951: Ch. 11). In a sense, Parsons seems to concede to the long disputed, though legitimate, question of whether the difficulties which a theory of social change encounters render all attempts toward its formulation impossible.²⁹

3.2 The equilibrium theory of change

We have presented a few arguments to support the view that the functional approach 'was developed partly in reaction to the preoccupation of much nineteenth-century social inquiry with questions concerning the origins of social institutions' (Nagel 1961: 520). On the other hand, there is reason to believe that modern functionalism is in many ways the twentieth-century legacy of early evolutionary theory, among other things because of its receptiveness of the organic analogy, that is, organism being the paradigmatic case of a system (cf. Applebaum 1970: 131; Gouldner 1959: 241). Functional system theory and evolutionary theory basically agree that social systems change as a consequence of altered requirements on the part of the system's environment, manifested in terms of adaptation of the system to that environment (Münch 1973: 168; Luhmann 1971: 113-136). The influence of the evolutionary idea in sociological theorizing about history and social change remains considerable (Smith 1973: Ch. 2). In order to further examine the thesis that the difference

between much of modern functionalism and nineteenth-century evolutionism is primarily a matter of emphasis, as intimated in the introduction to this chapter, we should now attend to the question of what the substance of this legacy is and who its heirs are.

3.2.1 The evolutionary legacy

According to Comte, (Western) civilization develops in an evolutionary way, that is to say, it progresses uniformly toward human perfection and thus changes continuously. He simply considered the laws of social change as a

'form of the great principle, which of the two great constituent elements of Positive Sociology - Order and Progress - makes the second the result and consequence of the first, according to the maxim: Progress is the development of Order' (Comte 1875: 152).

In his organic view of society, its structure of functional interdependence, and his analysis of the development and consequences of functional differentiation (Comte 1875: 329 ff.), he not only paved the way for Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim, but also for system theorists like Parsons and structuralists like Marion Levy.

Because of their emphasis of an ever-increasing societal complexity and interrelatedness, Spencer and Durkheim can be classified as major contributors to the evolutionary legacy. Spencer's (1958: 394) central argument was that both society and living organisms increase, in the course of their life cycle, in mass or size as well as in structural complexity from a few uniform parts to numerous interrelated unlike parts. In other words, growth is accompanied by a substantial increase in complexity. Although Spencer had used a different vocabulary, Durkheim (especially 1964) employed and reformulated many Spencerian concepts, though with a

rather distinctive methodological concern. In that Durkheim identified social facts (e.g., the division of labor) and established the efficient cause (i.e., increased moral density) and its function (i.e., the need it fulfills in society), we may regard him as the father of modern functionalism (cf. Strasser 1976: 113-122). For him, increasing moral density, which he defines as the result of an ever-increasing number of people in interaction with each other brought about by population growth, urbanization, and improved means of transportation and communication, determines the nature of social relationships, thus generating the dynamic of social change.

As urbanization and technological developments force previously separated members and groups of society to interact with one another, conflict over scarce resources inevitably ensues as individuals with similar needs and interests can exist harmoniously only in separation from each other (Durkheim 1964: 267). According to Durkheim, the increasing individuation of man tends to be reflected in a tangle of social pathologies because contemporary man lacks a collectivity with which he can identify. For example, the legal system of a highly differentiated society tends to protect individual rather than collective interests, that is to say, above all private property (cf. Dreitzel 1967: 48-49). In Durkheim's explanatory scheme, the division of labor emerges as the social sheet-anchor against the prospects of a Hobbesian war of all against all. Indeed, the social division of labor permits more people to survive and co-exist than under conditions of universal rivalry in which the opponents would be obliged to fight to a finish (Durkheim 1964: 266-270).

The awareness of, and approach to, the crisis of his age was typical of Durkheim's preoccupation with the problem of order, that is, with the conditions of French society of his time. Durkheim develops a theory

of social change based upon a careful macrosociological analysis of differentiation through strains resulting from greater density of social interaction. However, for Durkheim, the division of labor in society is not only a consequence of these developments, but is also a self-regulatory mechanism in the sense that it serves to establish organic solidarity based upon the value of meritocracy and the normative potential of occupational associations. To be sure, Durkheim (1964: 266) sees members of society 'in rivalry everywhere' as they compete for scarce resources. Just as normal forms of the division of labor are the result of, and a solution to, the struggle for existence, so abnormal forms of the division of labor come into being not 'because of a necessity of its own nature,' but rather because of the impact of 'external forces.' By pointing out that, once these abnormal forms take effect in society, attempts at coerced conformity by those with political power and attempts by the oppressed to (re-)establish the 'natural state' of the social system ensue, Durkheim clearly invokes the concepts of equilibrium, differentiation, and strains so central to his theory of social change (cf., e.g., Durkheim 1964: 270, 372-388).

Unlike Marx, Durkheim believes that in the history of the social division of labor economic factors played a less important role than the changes in law, values, and morality. The guaranty that individual capacities can develop freely serves to motivate individuals to specialize to the greatest extent possible in order to promote societal development through the exploitation of all talents. Such a social order is characterized by a situation in which one's position is dependent upon possessed skills and in which social inequalities express natural differences. An opposite tendency is viewed by Durkheim as pathological which may cause organic solidarity to break down and be replaced by constraint:

'In accordance with these transformations, the agreement between the aptitudes of individuals and the kind of activity assigned to them is found to be broken in every region of society; constraint alone, more or less violent and more or less direct, links them to their functions. Consequently, only an imperfect and troubled solidarity is possible' (Durkheim 1964: 376).

There can be no doubt that Durkheim did recognize the ubiquity of conflict and the importance of constraint in a society where only imperfect solidarity is possible; but these considerations follow from his fundamental concern for a normative foundation of solidarity,³⁰ although the evolutionary frame of reference is more pronounced in Durkheim's early writings than in his later works. For Durkheim, coerced rather than spontaneous solidarity must result in disaffection among the oppressed groups which will eventually lead to a reorganization of society along more equitable lines. He therefore pins great hopes on occupational decentralization, since the differentiation of society proceeds along occupational lines (Durkheim 1951: 389-391).³¹ That he sought to avert the threat of normlessness through occupational decentralization and organization, must be understood as a consequence of his morphological approach which made him refrain from attributing a reality sui generis to antagonistic subgroups in modern society. In his mind, classes were always antagonistic groupings, whereas occupational associations were not. Following his tendency to think in terms of the 'whole' and to ignore struggles between 'parts', Durkheim concluded The Division of Labor in Society (1964) by affirming that, in a society characterized by organic solidarity, social inequality would diminish and hence class differentiation be less pronounced. Not surprisingly, therefore, he rejected socialism not so much on economic grounds, but

rather on the ground that it was the program of a conflict group designed to benefit a part of society and not the whole (Durkheim 1928: viii).³²

For Comte, we have seen, sociology primarily purported to formulate a theory of change within patterned behavior and institutional development. Accordingly, change proceeds in a regular, predictable fashion. Change is development or growth in which order can be discerned. Fundamental to this approach is the concept of system that views social phenomena, including change processes, to be of a systemic nature which influences and delineates the direction (and perception) of change; equally important, however, is the concept of equilibrium that helps to account for the growth of a given system in terms of the process of differentiation. Anticipating a proposition to be discussed later it may be said that the fusion of evolutionism's systemic underpinnings with the equilibrium concept eventually led to the functional approach that, in turn, recurred to an evolutionary frame of reference within which social equilibria are thought to operate and develop (Smith 1973: 130).

In order to fully understand the close relationship between evolutionism and functionalism the following considerations should be kept in mind. Just as nineteenth-century social scientists, and evolutionists in particular, were puzzled by the farreaching changes that had taken place in their epoch and respective society, so functionalists, from Malinowski to Parsons, were fascinated by the relative stability and persistence that pervaded social life inspite of concomitantly observable changes, strains, conflicts, dissensus, violence, and deviance. For Comte and Spencer, Lewis H. Morgan and Edward B. Tylor, and to some extent also for Marx and Durkheim, the study of these social transformations represented a means of discovering the true foundations of social order (Bock 1963: 229). Far

from unanimously praising the unending social improvement as the social philosophers of the Enlightenment had done, they were generally distressed by the disruptive consequences of change inducing them to envision ways and means by which the fundamental social order could be restored. Of course, each one of them saw the coming of social redemption in a distinctive way: Comte through a humanitarian religion, Spencer through liberalism perfecting evolution, Marx through communism, and Durkheim through an occupational estate system.

These evolutionists accepted change as a natural and hence necessary phenomenon in the sense that the moving force and unilinear direction of change were attributed to the unfolding of what is potential in the nature of societies and cultures. If change is an unfolding of a potential, it follows (1) that change is immanent in the social phenomenon that changes; (2) that it is gradual, continuous, and ubiquitous manifesting itself in sequential stages cumulatively related to each other; (3) that it reveals directionality as it points to a process moving from one point in time to another; (4) that, as this directed process shows a characteristic pattern from the homogeneous to the heterogenous, change in society may be equated with differentiation; and (5) that, as change is natural to, necessary for, and immanent in a social entity, it proceeds in a uniform manner through time and space (Bock 1963: 234; Nisbet 1969: 212; Spencer 1899, I: 265-307). Assumptions (1) and (5) clearly imply that events - the substance of social life which are to be explained despite and because of their uniqueness - must be regarded as the product of forces operative in society. When evolutionists did observe developmental discrepancies within the same society or developmental differences between societies, they assumed that these inconsistencies were due to differing stages in a universal and uniform process of growth. Where such an explanation was not possible, variations in the rate of change, including the absence

of change, were accounted for by citing extraneous or exceptional circumstances.

Although evolutionism did not include a theory of social persistence, its notion of unfolding the potential of some phenomenon implied some conception of what was being unfolded (Bock 1956: Part 1). If we follow the evolutionary postulate that the key to an understanding of change can be found in discovering what society is, we enter directly the functionalist domain which stipulates that structural analysis should precede any social inquiry into (evolutionary) change (Bock 1963: 231-232; Levy 1952: 43-45; Parsons 1951: 483 et passim; Moore 1960: 817).³³ In their critique of classic evolutionism, early functionalists, more than present-day functionalists, stated bluntly that the reason why evolutionists had failed to give an adequate account of social and cultural change was their neglect for, and sometimes inability of, describing what society and culture is.³⁴ Perhaps Radcliffe-Brown (1957: 71-89) stated most succinctly, and not unlike Comte, that dealing with the 'diachronic' problem of how societies and social systems change their types presupposes that the 'synchronic' problem of classification and persistence of social systems be addressed (cf. also Gluckman 1968). His distinction between changes within a social system and change of (the structure of) the social system makes sense only if put as a problem within his natural theory of the social system suggesting that change of the system may also result from external forces and that within-changes eventually, but not necessarily, lead to of-changes by way of genetic cumulation (Nisbet 1969: 232-233).³⁵

Nevertheless, functional change analysis has taken over two central elements from classic evolutionism: the first is more of a metatheoretical nature, the second implies important conceptual consequences, though both are rooted in a philosophy of history commonly accepted

by evolutionists. (1) Common to all evolutionists of the nineteenth century was the concern for the true foundations of social order having realized that the fabric of their societies had been torn in the wake of the vast transformations generated by the rise of capitalism and that a return to the institutions of the ancien régime was not possible. From these concerns for what was required of a new, integrated, society there was only a small step to what functionalists considered central to any inquiry into what happens in society, namely, to know the functional requisites of any society (cf. Martineau 1855: Book VI, Chs. 5 and 6; Aberle et al. 1950; Bock 1963: 230). (2) In finding those fundamentals of society, evolutionists hoped to establish a new, lasting, state of equilibrium which was conceived of, though vaguely, as an equilibrium that oscillated along the continuous path of change prescribed by its sources immanent in the social system. Instead of searching for some evolving potential, functionalists demystified the principle of immanence by bashfully attending to the question of why change occurs at all in terms of structural differentiation and functional specialization as well as immanent strains and dysfunctions (e.g., imperfect socialization, role conflicts, competition).

However, while these flexibilities and strains appear to tend to change a given social structure, other items are said to maintain or strengthen it. This has been taken to mean either that the balance of those forces is an empirical question suggesting a moving, but precarious, equilibrium (Merton 1968: 105-107; Moore 1960) or that the stabilizing and pattern-maintaining tendencies clearly dominate the equilibration process thus directing attention to tracing the repercussions of given changes within some systemic web of interdependence rather than to discovering initial factors in change processes (Parsons 1951: 494, 533, 535). 'At the most general levels, there is no difference between processes which serve to

maintain a system and those which serve to change it' (Parsons 1966: 21). Just as evolutionism saw order arising out of (ordered) change, so functionalism may be identified as a theory of change-within-order. As we shall see below, the theory of order becomes a theory of change in that it refers to the forces which threaten to disturb a given equilibrium as well as to those which contribute to preserve it (cf. Smith 1973: 131).

3.2.2 Evolution and differentiation

The evolutionary elements of modern functionalism may also be represented by referring to theories of modernization which are concerned with correlates of industrialization. These theories are said to be diachronic, that is, they tend to infer process from a methodology of comparative statistics; the direction of change is believed to be unilinear in that all societies are supposedly undergoing parallel series of transformations in the course of industrialization (Applebaum 1970: 36). As pointed out by neo-evolutionist theorists, modernization is usually defined in terms of technology or viewed as being conceptually and empirically related to economic development (Smelser 1966: 111; Moore 1963: 89-92). In that opposing values, pattern variables, and other structures of traditional and present societies are contrasted, industrialization is seen as resulting in a growing societal systemness.

'What results from the changes described in such theories [of industrialization and modernization] is not so much a higher stage but a more complex social structure, containing more structural differentiation and functional specialization, albeit in greater societal interdependence and cohesion' (Chodak 1973: 10).

As social systems modernize, new social structures emerge to fulfill the functions of those that are no longer performing adequately. Neil J. Smelser (1959) has shown that modernization may be understood as an uneven process of structural differentiation that creates tensions (e.g., specialization leading to ambiguous role definitions subjecting men to strains of anxiety that result in some episode of collective behavior). Even if the mechanism of social reintegration fails to keep abreast of rapid differentiation within a given time span, new integrative mechanisms will eventually develop (cf. Merton 1968: 135; Smith 1973: 97; Smelser 1959).³⁶

Above we have singled out differentiation, i.e., the development of functionally specialized societal structures, as the central concept that links classic evolutionism and (neo-evolutionary) functionalism (Applebaum 1970: 54; Parsons 1967; 1966: 22 et passim). It is not only a link in the sense that both approaches emphasize the same explanatory principles (e.g., immanence, continuity, uniformitarianism) but also a sign of cognitive reorientation in the sense that a narrowing of interest from the total society or civilization to a specific social system or culture was to take shape. One no longer speaks of stages of development of societies but instead of tensions and segmental disharmonies within a social system (Nisbet 1969: 229). The development of Durkheim's work may be cited as the prime example of such a transition in focus. In his first major work The Division of Labor in Society, published in 1893, he described in evolutionary terms the stages according to which social solidarity developed in human society. With the publication of The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (1912), Durkheim set the stage for modern functionalism by focusing on the forms and elements of social structure and change located within the social system. The beginning of his methodological breviary was then to read as follows: 'The first origins of all social processes of any

importance should be sought in the internal constitution of the social group' (Durkheim 1950: 113; italicized in the original).

Specifically, in his study of religion he selects the elements of one religion, namely, the cults and rites and prayers of the Australian Aborigines and in doing so he actually treats the elements of all religion. Furthermore, in dealing with one culture rather than with civilization as a whole he draws conclusions with regard to other cultures by implication. Finally, functionalist epigones should find Durkheim's focus on a single social system and its parts most worthy of imitation as it did contain all necessary elements of social integration and change alike (Nisbet 1969: 231-232).³⁷

We have seen that the concept of differentiation refers to the source, the way, and the direction of societal change: the source is immanence, the way is adaptation to environmental conditions, and the direction is the movement from homogeneity to heterogeneity. Adaptive differentiation and (re-)integration represent the structural brackets of the evolutionary process toward greater heterogeneity, in Spencer's days just as much as in the bulk of modern functionalism (cf. Schneider 1976: 1-12; Spencer 1958: 554; Parsons 1964a). Contrary to Parsons' (1968, I: 3) early intellectual banishment of Spencer, in functional analysis of social change Spencer is not dead. In a more recent publication, Parsons (1966) integrated the adaptive and directive aspects of social change through differentiation into the notion of adaptive upgrading:

'If differentiation is to yield a balanced, more evolved system, each newly differentiated sub-structure (e.g., the producing organization ...) must have increased adaptive capacity for performing its primary function, as compared to the performance of that function in the

previous, more diffuse structure. Thus economic production is typically more efficient in factories than in households. We may call this process the adaptive upgrading aspect of the evolutionary change cycle' (Parsons 1966: 22; italics in the original).

The neo-evolutionary Parsons (1967;1966) views history as a process that generates more complex and general normative codes. Since these codes consist of societal values and norms (e.g., law) as well as symbols (e.g., language) which function to control man's actions, their differentiation and generalization tends to maximize the cybernetic control upon those systems that environ the social system (i.e., organisms, personalities, and cultures). Evolution, in this sense, is the type of process that changes (rather than maintains) social structures in the direction of greater effectiveness in controlling the environment or, in Parsons' (1966: 21) words, that leads to 'the enhancement of adaptive capacity.' Not surprisingly, therefore, the (evolutionary) criterion for distinguishing the three main stages of civilization (primitive, intermediate, and modern) that Parsons traces is the use of certain systems of normative codes.³⁸ Parsons does mention that each stage shows great institutional variety, but the multilinear path of evolution narrows visibly as we approach modernity. One gets the impression that, although his overall scheme of evolution may be called multilinear, the routes to contemporary (Western) society he envisions were few, possibly only one, that tend(s) to converge or narrow toward the end. Smith (1973: 34,33) summarizes this point well:

'A central "stem" leads from the primitive stage through the [intermediate] archaic societies of the ancient Near East, through Rome and Islam, and more especially through Greece and Israel, to the modern stage of the West today. Around this central continuity the evolutionary stream

radiated adaptively into separate branches, many of which turned out to be adaptive failures. Primitive societies too are treated as "dead-end" cases.... What Parsons seems to be asserting here is that, as the series develops, so evolution becomes more unilinear. Translated into chronological terms, this means that the nearer we come to contemporary society, the greater the number of societies which are "nonevolutionary survivals"... [that] found social "niches" which allowed them to exist despite the development of more advanced societies around them.... These range from the tribes of Papua or East Africa to great imperial civilisations like China, Russia and Islam... [However,] his interpretation of Weber, and his application of the scheme of pattern-variables to historical societies, lead him to emphasize the uniqueness of Western development and to treat it as normative for other civilisations.'

According to Parsons, then, it is nature's way to generate a complex of structures and associated processes (i.e., 'evolutionary universals') that 'increase the long-run adaptive capacity of living systems,' so 'that only systems that develop the complex can attain certain higher levels of general adaptive capacity' (Parsons 1967: 493). Organisms have increased their adaptability through eye and brain, while societies evolved due to their incorporation of religion, language, stratification, bureaucratic organization, money and market, and democratic association. Although combinations of universals by and large determine the stage of civilization to which given units belong, the distance of these universals from ascriptive, particularistic bases takes care, so to speak, of the evolutionary fine-tuning. We may now better understand Parsons' account of his emphasis on Western

development:

'In developmental terms, it became clear that, with the exception of the organization of the French state, the fundamental structural contributions of seventeenth-century society were of the associational-pluralistic character, notably ascetic Protestantism, common law, and parliamentarism as well as science and the rapid development of a market economy. In its capitalistic form, the industrial revolution certainly moved society farther in this direction, as did the democratic revolution. From this perspective it became clear, perhaps especially under the influence of Tocqueville, that the modern society emerging in North America was beginning to play a role in the total modern system of the twentieth century somewhat parallel to that of the European northwest corner of the seventeenth. This society owed its primary distinctive features to an associational-pluralistic emphasis and not to the sharpness and rigidity of its class discriminations nor to its especially high bureaucratization. In addition to decentralized governmental democracy, examples would be its federalism and separation of powers, the religious constitution of separation of church and state, denominational pluralism, and the capacity to absorb, in the sense of integration by inclusion, large immigrant religions and ethnic groups, though this absorption is far from being complete' (Parsons 1970: 857).

Of course, the reproach of cultural bias is justified only on the ground that Parsons readily assumes that not only some general function but also its corresponding evolutionary form or structure is a universal requisite of social development. As a case in point, the family is

a necessary condition for further enhancement of societal adaptatation, because the functions of socialization are universal; likewise democracy, because societies must take care of the need for freedom under the condition of consensus (Smith 1973: 36-37).

In conclusion, Parsons' neo-evolutionary stance views 'evolution as largely a process by which culture comes to control the social structure, after first gaining autonomy from it' (Smith 1973: 39). Ever since he has assigned priority to the normative order, particularly to a legal system that puts emphasis on formal rationality, in accounting for the transition to modernity, norms were seen as being ever more independent of political and economic interests though reflecting the dominant conceptions of reality as they are linked to symbolic representations through societal values. Thus, culture represents a system high in information (but low in energy) that regulates other systems higher in energy but lower in information (such as the social system, the personality system, and the organic system). However, in this 'cybernetic hierarchy', those systems that are not easily amenable to cybernetic control (through information) such as the physical environment (particularly as it relates to the organism), rank highest in their conditioning effect on action. This is well exemplified by our dependence on air to breathe, food to eat, tolerable temperature, shelter, and clothes for protection. Nevertheless, because of the overwhelming importance Parsons attributes to the normative order in its function to collectively organize the life of a population, culture is accorded a central role in determining long-term evolutionary trends just as much as universalism, achievement, and pluralism triumph in the modern stage of Western civilization.

'... I believe that, within the social system, the normative elements are more important for social change than the "material interests" of constitutive units. The longer the time

perspective, and the broader the system involved, the greater is the relative importance of higher rather than lower factors in the control hierarchy, regardless of whether it is a pattern maintenance or pattern change that requires explanation' (Parsons 1966: 113; italics in the original).³⁹

3.2.3 Changing equilibria: Functional requisites and social strains

The preceding discussion was intended to demonstrate, by way of examining the neo-evolutionary aspects of Parsons' change analysis, the importance of the concept of differentiation in linking evolutionism and contemporary functionalism. Of course, this is not to deny that the issue under consideration has not become rather complicated by Parsonian conceptualism, especially in his reference to the idea that societies, as they evolve, differentiate first along AGIL lines and then into subsystems of each AGIL function (adaptive-economy, goal-attainment-polity, integration-societal community, pattern maintenance-family/education/religion).⁴⁰ Parsons (1961: 44) calls differentiation in relation to functional exigency 'the master concept for the analysis of social structure.' Similar to early functionalists, he contends that 'structural analysis must take a certain priority over the analysis of process and change... One need not develop a truly advanced general analysis of the main processes of social change in order to make general claims about the structural patterning of evolutionary development' (Parsons 1966: 111; italics in the original).⁴¹ However, the concept of differentiation alone, Parsons says, is not sufficient; the principles of 'segmentation' and 'normative specification' are also needed. The latter refers to the normative culture institutionalized in the social system in which norms are differentiated on the basis of functional specification of units and subunits.

In other words, there is 'a hierarchy of generality of the patterns of normative culture institutionalized in a social system, one that corresponds to the general hierarchical relations of its structural components' (Parsons 1961: 45). The concept of segmentation, on the other hand, denotes 'the development of subcollectivities, within a larger collectivity system, in which some of the members of the larger system participate more intimately than in others' (Parsons 1961: 45). Segmentation, in this sense, is independent of the differentiation of function among subcollectivities; as the example of the thousands of nuclear families in a society shows, such a social structure is highly segmented but not necessarily highly differentiated. Although all processes change something, hence also those of segmentation (e.g., in terms of changing rates of marriage and divorce), functionalists (as opposed to, say, demographers) in discussing change usually refer to those processes which change social structures defined in normative terms (cf. Parsons 1966: 21).

In line with his initial definition of function in terms of a given socio-cultural item's relation to the state of the whole social system (Parsons 1954a), Parsons (1961: 60 ff.; 1966: 22-24) now renders dynamic the social processes discussed above by operationalizing them as, and coupling them with, functional 'input-output-exchanges.' Each differentiated substructure is then conceived of as producing goods or services that become resources for other substructures (outputs) and as receiving the exchange products of other units as its own resources (inputs). These processes of generation and utilization of resources are regulated by certain types of exchange media such as money and power.⁴² Processes of expanding deviations and of delaying interactions lead to altered exchange movements and in many cases to changes in the social structure. This is so because the structural units of the system, namely, membership roles and their composite products, i.e., institutions, control more or less influence, power, and money, resulting in differing capacities to effect

innovations and hence to generate change (cf. Ridder 1974: 9).

These exchanges and normative specifications interlocking the units of a social system also serve to prevent the process of differentiation from leading to the total independence or functional autonomy of some parts. However, as functionalists conceptualize systems in terms of their interdependence, they tend to focus on the whole and the close interrelatedness of its parts, 'the oneness of the whole' (Gouldner 1970: 215). Differentiated and specified interrelationships between subsystems of society, it is inferred, continuously fulfill requirements institutionalized in order to preserve the social system as an ongoing concern. For Parsons, the processes of socialization and social control play a crucial role in meeting the systemic requirement of minimum integration of individual and collective goals in that the internalization of society's norms and values in its members and their continuous motivational effect on individual action is assured.

'The integration of a set of common value patterns with the internalized need-disposition structure of the constituent personalities is the core phenomenon of the dynamics of social systems. That the stability of any social system except the most evanescent interaction process is dependent on a degree of such integration may be said to be the fundamental dynamic theorem of sociology' (Parsons 1951: 42; italics added).

In posing the question which structural arrangements or (evolutionary) forms meet those systemic prerequisites of social development and what these imperatives mean in a concrete societal context, functionalists are again confronted with the problem of invoking either impermissible tautologies or unwary ethnocentrism by unwarranted identification of the functions of a system of social

relationships with the internal requirements of the corresponding social structure (cf. Touraine 1974: 51; Smith 1973: 36-37).⁴³ According to Parsons, however, functional considerations mediate between the exigency of the relative stability of a structure and the exigency of the given environment of the system.

'The functional categories of social systems concern, then, those features in terms of which systematically ordered modes of adjustment operate in the changing relations between a given set of patterns of institutionally established structure in the system and a given set of properties of the relevant environing systems' (Parsons 1961: 36-37).

The statement shows that Parsons tends to assume that functional requirements remain constant in the sense that they are fixed and that they may be specified without regard to the particular situation in time and space. Although some representatives of modern functionalism have hesitatingly recognized the possible validity of assuming changing requirements (e.g., Levy 1952: 40), a number of critics have convincingly argued that the attainment of a system's preferred global states is dependent on the changing environment in which the system is situated (Sztompka 1974: 109-110).

With the insistence on uncovering the functional requirements of society, also in the context of a theory of change, modern functionalists seem to redeem the interest of nineteenth-century sociologists in the fundamentals of social order. At last, functionalists deliver a theory of societal persistence what their evolutionist colleagues failed to do. To repeat it, functional requisite analysis

'consists of distinguishing certain elements (institutions, modes of social action, norms, values, social relationships, etc.) within an entity conceived of as a whole (society, culture)

and examining to what extent these elements contribute to some preferred partial state (requirement, requisite, imperative, need) of the system as a whole. The analyst is not interested in the states of particular elements (the values of variables characterizing them) for their own sake, but only in terms of their systemic relevance' (Sztompka 1974: 99).

Needless to say that the preferred partial states expressed in terms of functional requirements or system needs have been regarded as indispensable for the realization of the global preferred states of the system as a whole (survival, adaptation, structural continuity, etc.). Already Malinowski (1969) presented a detailed catalogue of functional requirements which took the form of 'cultural answers' to particular individual and social needs and ranged from 'basic needs' (e.g., food and safety satisfied by the cultural means of nutritive system and weapons, fortifications, and army organization respectively) to 'derived needs' (e.g., transmission of cultural heritage by the cultural means of the educational system or codification and regulation of human behavior through sanctions satisfied by social control mechanisms).

In a more recent attempt, Parsons and Smelser (1956: 17) demonstrate how 'every social system functions in a situation defined as external to it' and in what way interchanges between system and situation occur. It is assumed that 'process in any social system is subject to four independent functional imperatives or "problems" which must be met adequately if equilibrium and/or continuing existence of the system is to be maintained' (Parsons and Smelser 1956: 16; cf. also Parsons et al. 1953: Chs. 3 and 5). With respect to the interchange concerning the situation's significance as a source of consummatory interests of the social system, Parsons and Smelser (1956: 17) put forward stability as the criterion for satisfying the prerequisite of (consummatory) goal

attainment:

'A goal state, for an individual actor or for a social system, is a relation between the system of reference and one or more situational objects which (given the value system and its institutionalization) maximizes the stability of the system. Other things equal, such a state, once present, tends to be maintained, and if absent, tends to be 'sought' by the action of one or more units of the system. The latter case is necessary because only in limiting cases are processes in the situation closely "synchronized" with processes in the system of action; hence the system must "seek" goal states by controlling elements of the situation. Goal states may be negative, i.e., noxious situational conditions, or positive, i.e., a maximization of favourable or "gratifying" conditions.'

Furthermore, it is argued that the second, consummatory, imperative of system integration 'is to "maintain solidarity" in the relations between the units in the interest of effective functioning' (Parsons and Smelser 1956: 18). Note that the criteria of stability and effective functioning on the basis of an integrated whole can be - analogously - treated as a 'uniform state' which is begot or maintained by homeostatic mechanisms. The study of social change clearly proceeds along the line of functional prerequisite analysis:

'Any system of action can be described and its processes analysed in terms of these four fundamental categories. The aim of analysing a system is to assess the effects of changes in the data of the system, the situation and the properties of its units, on changes in the state of the system and the states of its component units; statements about the effects

on the system and its units are framed in terms of these four dimensions. For instance, we say a system "adapts" to certain situational disturbances. Furthermore, if these categories formulate "directions" in which process can move, certain constraints prevent processes from moving equally in all directions at once, at least unless very specific conditions are fulfilled. Indeed, the idea of system itself implies such constraints' (Parsons and Smelser 1956: 18-19; italics added).

In structural analysis, we have seen, Parsons (1964a: 84) regards the 'concept of stability ... as a defining characteristic of structure ... equivalent to the more specific concept of stable equilibrium - which in another reference may be either "static" or "moving".' In locating structures in larger systems, he singles out boundary positions where social change unfolds:

'A system ... is stable or (relatively) in equilibrium when the relation between its structure and the processes which go on within it and between it and its environment are such as to maintain those properties and relations, which for the purposes in hand have been called its structure, relatively unchanged. Very generally, always in "dynamic" systems, this maintenance is dependent on continuously varying processes, which "neutralize" either endogenous or exogenous sources of variability which, if they went far enough, would change the structure. A classic example of equilibrium in this sense is the maintenance of nearly constant body temperature and through mechanisms which operate either to produce heat, including slowing up its loss, or to slow down the rate of heat production or accelerate its dissipation.

Contrasted then with stability or equilibrating processes are those processes which operate to bring about structural change. That such processes exist and that they are of fundamental scientific importance is nowhere in question' (Parsons 1964a: 84).

Parsons seems to suggest a distinction between substructural change as part and parcel of the processes productive of structural stability and those processes productive of structural change. For him, 'structural change in subsystems is an inevitable part of the equilibrating process in larger systems' (Parsons 1961: 71). It is thus important to separate processes of equilibration and processes of structural change, since such a difference 'seems inherent in the conception of a social system as cybernetic system of control over behavior' (Parsons 1961: 71). Other authors such as Touraine (1974: 56-57) have proposed to distinguish between differentiation (instead of adaptation) referring to organizational processes and change (instead of altered goal attainment) referring to political processes. However, the point is that structural change is seen as resulting from changes in the environment of the system or from changes within the system that modify the relation of the system to its environment (cf. Parsons 1964a: 85; Parsons and Smelser 1956: 16-17; Sztompka 1974: 95).

Parsons, in other words, does recognize two major sources of structural change: exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous sources can be located in tendencies toward change in the environing systems: the organisms, the personalities, and the cultural systems. For example, changes in the genetic components within a population may affect future role performance and the social system's capacity for proper socialization thus altering individual behavior and its social patterns. Quite naturally, another source of external change is change that originates in other

social systems. We mention here only the potential impact of societies with different political orders on each other in addition to exogenous cultural borrowing and diffusion mediated by interrelations among societies.

'A social system is always characterized by an institutionalized value system. The social system's first functional imperative is to maintain the integrity of that value system and its institutionalization. This process of maintenance means stabilization against pressures to change the value system, pressures which spring from two primary sources:

(1) Cultural sources of change. Certain imperatives of cultural consistency may mean that cultural changes taking place outside the value system relevant to the social system in question (e.g., changes in the belief system) may generate pressures to change important values within the social system. The tendency to stabilize the system in the face of pressures to change institutionalized values through cultural channels may be called the "pattern maintenance" function. (2) Motivational sources of change. Motivational "tensions," arising from "strains" in any part of the social situation or from organic or other intra-personal sources, may threaten individual motivation to conformity with institutionalized role expectations. Stabilization against this potential source of change may be called "tension management" ' (Parsons and Smelser 1956: 16-17; only second and third italics in the original).

What these authors are saying is that two types of changes affect the social system, namely, those that arise from cultural diffusion (exogenous) and those that spring from the articulation of roles and norms

constituting the social system and leading to strains (endogenous). By introducing the concept of strain that supposedly precedes change, functional analysis, at least that of Parsonian persuasion, relativizes the static implication of the equilibrium assumption. On the one hand, it is postulated that societies respond to change pressures by adjustments designed to maintain 'a relatively precarious state of moving equilibrium' (Parsons 1951: 520). On the other hand, strain is understood as being inherent in the various processes of systemic differentiation and reintegration. At this point, significant aspects of the disequilibrium assumption are invoked in that the actual structure of the system is assumed to be 'constantly lagging behind the changing goal states of the system. There is a constant strain between the actual configuration that would be functional for the actual preferred states of the system' (Sztompka 1974:158; cf. also Moore 1963: 18; Eisenstadt 1964a: 235; Merton 1968: Chs. 6 and 7). This point must be emphasized since the adjustment postulate entailed by the equilibrium assumption practically precludes the conceptualization of endogenous change, which, in turn, would suggest that all changes had to be initiated outside the system. Such a conclusion also follows from the functionalist principle of interdependence according to which all elements of the system depend on each other as well as on the whole system and cannot exist outside the system which again suggests that a stimulus for internal change is hardly conceivable. Similarly, to assume that the satisfaction of different functional requirements is mutually independent or mutually supportive, is to intimate that no strain will be produced by the process of systemic need satisfaction (cf. Sztompka 1974: 156-158). However, if actual social systems are characterized by strains, and if strains are used to account for change, 'they would seem to account only for continuous or timeless change. This constitutes a return to the evolutionist position' (Bock 1963: 236). Before formulating conclusions as to the range and direction of

change accounted for by strains, we should further elaborate upon the concept of strain.

Strain may be defined as a disturbance of the expectation system of society, the latter being an essential part of relevant actor's articulation of need-dispositions with a set of cultural patterns. To put it in Parsonian terms: 'A strain is a tendency to disequilibrium in the input-output balance between two or more units of the system' (Parsons 1961: 71). As the case of institutionalizing roles in the social system shows, 'vested interests' in one form or another will always resist the change inherent in the institutionalization process (cf. Parsons 1951: 491-492). Parsons' notion of strain clearly points to a conflict situation generated by, for example, imperfect socialization and looseness of role specification in the (established) system of role-expectations. These situations constitute endogenous sources of change; however, as Parsons remarks, 'change is never just "alteration of pattern" but alteration by the overcoming of resistance' (Parsons 1951: 491; italics in the original).

However, Parsons tells us only half the story in so far as he sees 'vested interests' involved only in resisting change by maintaining the gratifications provided in an established system of role expectations. For example, once the middle class American values of egalitarianism, professionalism, and scientism had been successfully translated into material well-being, it became virtually impossible to overcome subsequent class privileges in the face of their political power on the one hand and of needed change on the other (cf. Thrall and Starr 1972). Their vested interest were clearly directed toward keeping the system intact rather than changing it. Nevertheless, in cases where the expectation system had been previously disturbed, that is, the equilibrium displaced, interests can be thought of as being vested in the promotion of change,

in the institutionalization of a new status-role system (e.g., socialized medicine, employer-employee relationships, teacher-student relationships, educational and welfare programs). The implicit assumption, of course, is that the mutual needs of system elements need not be symmetrical; rather, attention is focused on exchange relations whose functional reciprocity is likely to be asymmetrical and thus productive of tensions among system parts (Gouldner 1959: 265).⁴⁴

In sum, the process of institutionalization plays a central role in Parsons' attempt to explain at the same time order and stability and conflict and change as it involves the development of a normative bond among actors that regulates their interaction; however, since actors' 'motivational structures' are only imperfectly interlocked, strains within social systems are created a consequence of which may be change (cf., e.g., Parsons 1954a: 231). According to Parsons (1961: 70-79), the tension that results from a violation of the expectation system will subsequently lead to one or more of three types of action to remove it: (1) resolution, i.e., restoration of full conformity with normative expectations; (2) isolation, i.e., less than normal performance by the deficient units is accepted as other parts assume their residual function; and (3) change in the structure itself. Parsons goes on to describe the conditions under which strain is likely to engender structural change rather than alternative (1) or (2). To be sure, 'a change in the structure of a social system is a change in its normative culture,' which is at the most general level 'a change in the paramount value system' (Parsons 1961: 73). Structural change tends to occur (1) when the forces of control in the lower order of the cybernetic hierarchy fail to contain the strain; (2) when the forces of change succeed in enlisting 'allies' to their cause within the system; (3) when the forces of change develop a full-fledged ideology or model of the new system that change will bring

about; (4) when the forces of change can provide sanctions for conformity to their new system; and (5) when the forces of change can overcome the forces of resistance against change (cf. Paternoster 1976).

Other functionalists with strong neo-evolutionary inclinations such as S.N. Eisenstadt contribute to a further specification of the causal status of the concept of differentiation by elaborating upon the conditions that account for the genesis of social structures and the conditions that serve to maintain them. For example, to establish centralized bureaucratic empires not only resources sufficient in quantity and free from ascriptive ties are required but also men with ambition to rule and to preserve that rule - in short, it is assumed that the conditions permitting the use of resources by political leadership and the motivation of rulers obtain when a certain level of structural differentiation is given (Eisenstadt 1963; cf. also Parsons 1967: especially 496-500 and Lenski 1966: Ch. 2). Our discussion thus far has also shown, though at times only implicitly, that the institutionalization of norms, values, and roles contributes not only to social (re-)integration but also, and always, breeds normative ambiguity, opposition of interests, and hence tensions and strains as there will be always groups and individuals who oppose or reinterpret norms, totally or partially, which had been set up by elites with more or less public consensus. Therefore, we can say that

'... the possibility of conflict and potential change is always present, rooted in the very process of crystallization and maintenance of institutional systems. The direction and occurrence of change depend heavily on the nature of this process.

Just as the predeliction for change is necessarily built into any institutional system, so the direction and scope of change

are not random. Rather they depend on the nature of the system...' (Eisenstadt 1970: 12).

In conclusion, it may be said that in accounting for social change both orthodox (e.g., Parsons) and unorthodox functionalists (e.g., Eisenstadt and W.E. Moore) focus on internal problems that spring from a social system's attempt to establish a normative order (cf. Smith 1973: 52). Merton's (1968: Ch. 6) discussion of the contradictory relations between approved cultural goals and institutionalized, though for some members of society restricted, means exemplifies particularly well why and in what way a normative means-ends scheme gives rise to a variety of strains that foster change on various levels of the system (e.g., individual role adaptations, educational institutions) and in varying degrees (e.g., cultural goals and/or institutional avenues to attain them).

Specifically, stratification systems may be viewed as continually generating pressure on individuals and groups to deviate systematically from, and eventually to change, the cultural prescriptions of society (cf. Lipset 1975: 186). Functionalists account for structured social inequality in terms of the needs of social systems for positions of varying functional importance. The rewards that men and positions enjoy are a function of the degree to which their qualities, performance, and possessions measure up to the standards allegedly set by their society (cf. Davis and Moore 1945; Parsons 1953: 94). By contrast, conflict theorists of different persuasion explain inequality and class conflict by referring to interests of those in power and in control of the means of appropriation and reward that contradict the interests of those who are subject to power and have little control over sanctions. They integrate the analysis of inequality into the theory of social conflict and change (cf. Dahrendorf 1958; 1959; Coser 1956; 1967; Gouldner 1970; Wright 1976).⁴⁵

3.2.4 - Recapitulation

Before we conclude with a general critique, we shall briefly recapitulate the central elements of a functional analysis of social change.

The structural-functional theory consists of a system of structural categories which is held to be logically and substantively adequate for describing the essential elements of relations within a social system. This approach also includes a set of dynamic functional categories, which supposedly articulate directly with the structural elements. Functional categories are charged with the task to describe the processes by which social structures are maintained or disrupted, and the relations of the system to its environment. Structures are given, while functions are considered to be problematic in the sense (1) that the sociologist looks for specific functions of those structures, especially with respect to self-regulatory mechanisms or negative feed-back effects that serve to equilibrate deviations from and to secure the maintenance of the desired state of the system (structural-functionalism); (2) that certain conditions are assumed to be given for the system to function normally (positively put) or to prevent the total destruction or the change of structural characteristics of the system (negatively put); functional requisites held to be universal serve as reference points for phenomena that change over time (requisite functionalism); (3) that alternative structural arrangements are found to be equivalent in fulfilling a given function with respect to the solution of limited social problems (equivalence functionalism); and, finally, (4) that the analytical focus on the stabilizing, pattern-maintaining, and boundary-defining processes of social life also reveals structural strains and functional flexibilities inherent in the social system and operating as immanent sources of change; the principles of differentiation, immanence,

continuity, and uniformity are designed to unravel the specific forms of the underlying evolutionary tendency toward increasing 'the long-run adaptive capacity' or toward increasing 'the complexity of society' (evolutionary functionalism).⁴⁶

In using the functional method to ask research questions causal imputation is generally accepted, whereas the functional theory of society, which provides the reference points for functional analysis, is continually subject to heated debate as also documented by the various forms of functionalism mentioned before (cf. Ridder 1972; Merton 1968: 73-138; Luhmann 1971: 9-30; Habermas and Luhmann 1971). In that the reference point of functional analysis represents the criterion of abstraction for functionalist statements, it links functional method and theory. We have seen that the reference points are derived from theory and selected under certain aspects (Ridder 1972: 336). While Durkheim referred to societal health, Malinowski to the satisfaction of individual and social needs, Radcliffe-Brown to social integration, Parsons to the realization of a relatively stable structure of the social system through integrative mechanisms, Merton, by contrast, put forth a series of reference points depending on cognitive interests and implying different consequences for individuals groups, organizations, and the whole society. Functional analysis can be understood as including structures and processes that are apt to maintain as well as to suspend stability. Thus, the fundamental reference problem of any functional analysis, and hence also that of change, is stabilization permitting statements about the identity and limits of social systems and suggesting that structural analysis must precede evolutionary inquiry.⁴⁷

The point is that the identification of conditions of change with those of stability, or more precisely, that preservation and change of a given state of the system do

not preclude each other is, at any rate in functional terms, conceivable only if we assume that a moving equilibrium is operative in social contexts allowing only for continuous, relatively predictable and controllable processes of change (Parsons 1961: 31; Devereux 1961: 51-59).⁴⁸ Only in this sense social change is regarded as part and parcel of social systems; only in this sense change processes are not only imputed with structure forming and structure dissolving effects but also recognized as a structured phenomenon (cf. Waldmann 1975: 138).

Of course, by focusing on the specification of mechanisms by which stability is preserved or re-established after social disturbances have occurred, functional analysis tends either to ignore or to de-emphasize sources and patterns of social conflict by acknowledging the endemic nature of conflict and/or that it is pathological to the functioning of the social system to be contained by extending social control. Such a position undoubtedly reflects what a number of sociologists have called the conservative bias of functionalism:

'Functional analysis is conservative only if the cultural goals are defined as functional requirements of the social system and identified with the society as the source of these values. The most important progress that sociologists of functionalist persuasion after Durkheim have realized is the separation of cultural values and social organization, although such a separation has not often been successfully achieved ... But it is possible now to analyze the organization not in terms of a system of coercion but in terms of organized structuring of the orientations of the historical subject' (Touraine 1974: 59).

Gunnar Myrdal and his associates (1944, II: 1056) go even as far as to suggest that 'a description of social

institutions in terms of their functions must lead to a conservative ideology,' and impute to the equilibrium concept the metaphysical quality of a deus ex machina that prompts the social scientist to substitute postulation for research:

'... the terminology found throughout the writings of many sociologists, such as "balance," "harmony," "equilibrium," "adjustment," "maladjustment," "organization," "disorganization," "accommodation," "function," "social process," and "cultural lag" ... carry within them the tendency to give a do-nothing (laissez-faire) valuation of those situations... When we speak of a social situation being in harmony, or having equilibrium, or its forces organized, accommodated, or adjusted to each other, there is the almost inevitable implication that some sort of ideal has been attained, whether in terms of "individual happiness" or the "common welfare." Such a situation is, therefore, evaluated as "good" and a movement in the direction is "desirable" ' (Myrdal et al. 1944, II: 1055).⁴⁹

3.3 A general critique of the equilibrium approach

3.3.1 Its merits: What it does

If we were to believe Kingsley Davis and George C. Homans, the pervasive use of equilibrium models, not only in sociology but in practically all social sciences, would speak for itself, especially for their explanatory value. Davis (1948: 634-635) writes:

'It is only in terms of equilibrium that most sociological concepts make sense. Either tacitly or explicitly anyone who thinks about society tends to use the notion. The functional-structural approach to sociological analysis is basically

an equilibrium theory.... The various elements which may be employed for sociological purposes turn out to be not single items but whole congeries of variables within themselves - what we might call subequilibria.... Since the variables are mutually dependent, an examination of change in one variable will inevitably lead to an examination of changes in other variables. If, for example, one starts with technology one soon finds oneself discussing related economic changes, because business firms either foster or withhold inventions according to which is profitable. Asking how withholding is possible, one next gets involved in the patent laws and hence in the political structure. And so on. In the end, in order to explain the total change in a society, one would have to consider the main variables constituting the social equilibrium.'⁵⁰

Homans (1950: 450), also envisioning the possibility of a moving equilibrium, declares that

'In studying social change, as in studying social control, we discovered nothing new in the relationship between the elements of behavior... What we did was watch how a change in the value of one of the elements effected changes in the values of the others. When we say that a decrease in the number of activities a group performs brings about a decrease in the frequency of interaction between the members of the group, we are stating no new hypothesis; we are studying changes in the values of elements entering a hypothesis we already know. We are studying dynamics.'

Consequently, he defines equilibrium as follows:

'A social system is in equilibrium and control is effective when the state of the elements that enter the system and of the mutual

relationships between them is such that any small change in one of the elements will be followed by changes in the other elements tending to reduce the amount of that change' (Homans 1950: 303-304; italics added).

We have pointed out that the equilibrium approach essentially attempts to reveal the conditions for maintaining a society in a stable equilibrium. In order to do so the mechanisms are determined and specified by means of which relative stability is preserved or restored. In other words, functional explanations are related to systems which maintain and establish their equilibrium vis-a-vis their environment. A latent causality is assumed in the sense that within the system there are causes which become effective in the case of disturbances in order to bring back the system into a stable state (cf. Luhmann 1971: 11). Thus, such a theory does not describe what actually happens in most societies, but rather outlines 'what society would be like if it were to function as an equilibrium system' (Guessous 1967: 24). As stated above, because of its stabilization or system-maintenance point of reference, Durkheim's, Parsons', and others' functionalism that demonstrates the 'interdependence between different elements of social structure came to mean the search for self-equilibrating mechanisms in society' (Moore 1968: 367).⁵¹

Concerning causes of social change, the functionalist principle of interdependence seems to suggest a cyclical rather than a multiple causation model by looking upon all variables as being both dependent and independent. Although functionalists in the tradition of Comte, Durkheim, and Parsons claim to assume an amorphous rather than stratified interdependence among system parts, they have always assigned a special role to the variable of shared moral beliefs (cf. Gouldner 1970: 226-231). Parsons' cybernetic condition-control hierarchy clearly

testifies to his preference of a specific variable. Whatever the functionalist position in the debate between single factor, multiple causation, and cyclical causation models, the functional analysis of change has put more emphasis on the distinction between exogenous and endogenous sources of change. Exogenous changes that stem from factors such as cultural diffusion or genetic influences, are seen as random disturbances of structural arrangements whose definitional criterion is that of system delineation (i.e., physical, psychic, cultural, international system vs. social system). Endogenous change, on the other hand, is viewed as being characteristic of social systems and as originating from inherent disturbances of the system that find expression in continuous processes of structural differentiation and normative specification. The criterion of definition is here the built-in tendency toward stabilization (which leads to internal processes of adaptation). Although Parsons (1951: 493) hastens to say that 'strain is not itself a "prime-mover,"' but 'a mode of the impingement of other factors on an interaction system,' other functionalists regard the concept of strain, tension, or discrepancy between preferred, culturally defined states of the system and (old) social-structural arrangements as the key notion 'bridging the gap between statics and dynamics in functional theory' (Merton 1968: 176; cf. also Moore 1963: 8-21; Sztompka 1974: 95; Davis 1948: 634; Eisenstadt 1964a: 235; Bock 1963). As we have seen thus far, the idea that change is built into society in terms of strains leads to a conception of continuous, gradual, timeless change.

We may therefore conclude that the functional theory of change, as discussed here, is, at least logically, capable of explaining three types of changes in social life: (1) necessary changes; that is to say, functional imperatives make certain changes, adaptations, or adjustments necessary as the realization of social stability is viewed to depend on their satisfaction;

(2) compatible changes; that is to say, in order to attain optimally and most effectively the diverse goals set by the polity, changes that are compatible with the maintenance of social stability may be effected;

(3) oscillatory changes; that is to say, because of the strains and frictions inherent in the processes of equilibration involving substructural changes, social stability will temporarily, and to a limited extent, oscillate around the state of equilibrium of the social system.

With the preceding discussion in mind, we hypothesize that according to the equilibrium approach to the study of change a society will maintain or establish stability over a long period of time only when it is capable of undergoing necessary changes. These changes in societal components usually proceed in two kinds of patterns. The first involves periodic sequences of structural differentiation, by means of which new specialized sub-units are built up supposedly enabling the social system to cope with particular problem areas. We have dealt with that point already extensively. The second major change pattern refers to the occurrence of periodic 'phase-movements' in the sense of shifting concern of a given collectivity with one set of functional problems to another. Under the influence of Robert F. Bales (1950), Parsons came to reformulate the equilibrium laws and problems in terms of phases. Bales who studied small, face-to-face groups, found that their interaction processes were permanently shifting and not in equilibrium. Thus, Parsons saw the chance to introduce 'process' into his own line of thinking. He began to point out that no single stage in time and space provides optimal satisfaction to all functional imperatives. In other words, each stage satisfies one imperative more than others, and there is a (revolving) cycle in which only one imperative enjoys its momentum at a given problem point.⁵²

The processes of differentiation and phase-movement underscore the importance of conceiving of the maintenance of social stability as continuous and dynamic and of society as being in a dynamic, rather than static, equilibrium. The social equilibrium is maintained by intrasystemic changes, which makes, somewhat contrary to neo-evolutionary functionalism, the understanding of change a prerequisite of that of the social structure. If change is considered normal, because it is immanent, and continuous, because it is gradual, the problem of (studying) change is one of the source and the rate of change rather than of its absence or presence (cf. Lauer 1973: 4-5).

3.3.2 Its shortcomings: What it does not do

We have seen that much of functional change analysis relies on the equilibrium concept as its most fundamental heuristic device. In our discussion of the equilibrium model we arrived at the conclusion that on the basis of its premises change analysis is capable only of accounting for some of the changes and transformations which occur more or less regularly in social life. It does not provide a comprehensive framework for a general theory of change in and of social systems. The point is not that the results, i.e., the kind of change explained, render the functional theory of change questionable, but rather its underlying premises. The functional approach is primarily concerned with the question of how the elements of society are combined into a functioning whole (cf. Lockwood 1956; Dahrendorf 1958). The equilibrium model is based on postulates such as stability (in the sense of coordinated processes within the system), functional teleology (cf. Levy 1952: 52-53; Buckley 1957: 246-248), and that society rests on the consensus of its members (cf. Merton 1968: Ch. 3; Dahrendorf 1958; 1959: Ch. 5; Moore 1963: 5-11). Rather, the explanatory potential of the concepts of moving equilibrium, differentiation, and strains is

limited to continuous and relatively controllable processes of change. This is precisely the point which Ralf Dahrendorf (1958: 175; *italics added*) attempted to get across when he states

'that the criticism of the structural-functional theory for the analysis of conflict is directed only against a claim of generality of this theory, but it leaves untouched its competence with respect to the problem of integration.'

What is the scope of change phenomena of which the equilibrium model does not or cannot give a reasonably adequate account? Let us, for a moment, consider the class of changes Parsons labels 'structural,' that is to say, changes involving a transformation of the fundamental elements of society. First, he presented his own reasons why his theoretical scheme was not capable of yielding explanations of all processes of change be they of extra- or intra-systemic origin. 'The reason is very simply that such a theory would imply complete knowledge of the laws of process of the system and this knowledge we do not possess' (Parsons 1951: 486). Parsons seems to suggest that explanations of change of the system, or social revolutions, can only be inferred from all the processes, or more accurately, from a complete knowledge of their laws operating in a social system and mediating two system states. In the meantime, he intimates, we better concentrate on coming to terms with normal changes within the system which would allow us to formulate a theory of the social system's responses to given disturbances (cf. Guessous 1967: 31). The pattern of systemic reaction to social disturbances is that of movement to a new position of equilibrium. Change is thus not part of the social system but rather a residual category that results from a comparison between two or more system states fixed in structural cross-sections.

Apart from the fact that the notion of equilibrium represents only a partial and normatively infused conception of social life (cf. Strasser 1976), how does this theory account for a system state in which the range of social equilibrium has been displaced? Numerous examples from the political, economic, and technological spheres could be cited to demonstrate that the movement from the old to the new equilibrium state does not always proceed in terms of an infinitesimal number of steps (cf. Schumpeter 1951; Pigou 1935; Spicer 1952; Brinton 1965). Since, Parsons would reason, processes within a social system that generate, affect, and are affected by conflict and change, are neither on the factual nor on the theoretical level transparent, the occurrence of structural change might still be analyzed in terms of powerful exogenous forces. There is a wide range of external sources apt to contribute to the transformation of social systems - from biological factors and demographic variables such as immigration or population growth, psychological variables such as motivation or aggressiveness, to cultural ones such as diffusion, acculturation, international subversion, and charismatic leadership, etc.⁵³

This is not to say that descriptive-historical, psychological, or chance variables are not important. However, if it could be shown that certain types of changes stem from structural arrangements within the social system whose basis of legitimation is regarded as coercive-problematic rather than consensual-given, then to relegate these sources of change to merely internal inconsistencies and/or to external variables would mean not only to distort reality but also to abdicate analytical responsibility. On the other hand, the question must still be raised whether, assuming that we possessed complete knowledge of the laws of processes operating within a system in equilibrium, this would allow us to explain and predict the occurrence and the

repercussions of external disturbances. Is it sufficient and reasonable to explain events and changes such as the French Revolution, the rise of capitalism, the occurrence of a general strike, or the emergence of a revolutionary movement by referring to the motivational states of individuals, diffuse historical developments, the dictates of a 'prime mover,' or other dei ex machina? Does not the idea come close to the assertion that sequences of structural change are only abnormal phenomena and thus merely

'exceptions to the smooth course of events postulated by the equilibrium model - exceptions which are brought about by single, individual, nonrepetitive events that may be amenable to historical analysis but not to theoretical generalization?' (Guessous 1967: 31; cf. also Dahrendorf 1958: 171-173).

For methodological and theoretical reasons functionalists are not capable of redeeming their claim to offer a unified theory of order and change by deriving the mechanisms of change from the same conditions from which they draw those of social order. Societies are delineated by various kinds of boundaries from their environment but not isolated; it is therefore unrealistic to assume that their properties can escape external influence. It would be utterly misleading to deny the influence of conquest, migration, war, trade, and cultural borrowing on the development of a given society. The preoccupation with differentiation, strains, and re-integration limits their scope of explanation to conditions of societal breakdown or system impairment, and system re-integration.⁵⁴ If functionalists were to stick closely with the evolutionary principle that change is by and large the realization of a unit's potentialities, they would have to deny the emergence of novelties altogether (Smith 1973: 57-58).

In sum, the outline of the structural-functional approach has demonstrated that it includes an elaborate vocabulary of social explanation. It provides an explanatory device for a limited range of determinate changes only and stops short in its capacity to explain radical changes in society and to locate structural origins of persisting social conflicts that generate small-scale or large-scale changes or both. As the central concepts of equilibrium, differentiation, strains, and re-integration ignore important properties of social life, the functional approach to social change must be regarded as, in part at least, unrealistic and, if it claims to offer a general theory of change, false and misleading. Various considerations suggest that functional analysis should drop the postulates of value consensus and perhaps of equilibrium as they depict social structures and processes not as they actually operate but what they would be like if they functioned within a system in equilibrium on a consensual basis. We presented some evidence that there is no necessary relationship between consensus and equilibrium or between conformity with a given moral code and integration. We therefore suggest that functional analysis integrate other key concepts such as functional autonomy, functional alternatives, degree of functional reciprocity, and disequilibrium. Most importantly, perhaps, functionalists should not follow the evolutionary fallacy in trying to rescue their analytical framework by arguing that it is applicable in the long run, during the indefinite period of which the system under study will have adjusted to given circumstances. Only in this sense, we suggest, Spencer should be declared dead.

Footnotes

- ¹ Two recent books on the subject concur with this proposition. Anthony D. Smith (1973: vii) states that, 'if America remains the most dynamic and influential centre of sociological activity, ... the functionalist theory of social change ... represents the single most pervasive and dominant approach to change in America today' (italics added).

In a provocative and comprehensive analysis of functionalism as a research methodology, Piotr Sztompka (1974: xii) believes that

'the conceptualization of social reality in systemic-functional terms makes up the most fruitful approach to both questions that are central for the theory of society: the question of order and persistence, as well as that of conflict and change' (italics added).

The present author readily acknowledges his great indebtedness to the excellent work by Smith (1973) and Sztompka (1974) in preparing what is contained in the present study.

- ² The solution that Parsons offered was a call for cementing moral values. In order to fully grasp the nature of social life, i.e., its structure, the nexus between the individual and the social order, and not the time-course of society, came to be postulated as the fundamental problem to be solved by a science of society. Sociology turned from a study of society in time to one of the forms and the mechanisms of societal organization that keep it in some state of equilibrium. The individual is accorded a 'status-role set' that places him in various institutions while the mechanism of institutionalization continually provides for the integration of the social system that is surrounded

and kept in boundaries by the cultural system, the personality systems, organic systems and other social systems.

- 3 Namely, how any sort of equilibrium and stability is achieved at all in most societies, most of the time, in view of the fact that each of these societies represents a 'veritable powder keg of conflicting forces' (Devereux 1961: 33).
- 4 See for attempts at integrating these divergent approaches van den Berghe 1963; Sztompka 1974; in a special sense also Coser 1956. As leading spokesmen of these approaches as theoretical alternatives mention should be made of Lockwood 1956; Dahrendorf 1958; 1959; Rex 1961; for recent studies in this direction, see Collins 1975; Duke 1976. In Strasser (1976) the present author distinguishes between structural-functionalism, on the one hand, and conservative and radical conflict theories, on the other hand, on normative and conceptual grounds.
- 5 Consequently,
 'the core of functional analysis is the conceptual model of society which informs the propositions incorporated into functionalist theory and generates the specific explanatory structures characteristic of such a theory' (Sztompka 1974: 45).
- 6 Gouldner (1970: 29 ff.) distinguishes between 'background assumptions' - explicit and unlabelled postulations - and 'domain assumptions' which are background assumptions applied only to members of a single domain. He states:

'Domain assumptions about man and society might include, for example, dispositions to believe that men are rational or irrational; that society is precarious or fundamentally stable; that social problems will correct themselves without planned intervention; that human behavior is unpredictable; that man's true humanity resides in his feelings and sentiments' (Gouldner 1970: 31).

- 7 For a more elaborate discussion on the relationship between assumptions, models, and theories, see Strasser 1976: Ch. 1.
- 8 Smith 1973: 146-147; Nisbet 1969: 211-239. A specific example of how the social character evolves through the stages of religious evolution is presented by Bellah (1964); a general, grand-scale attempt is made by Parsons (1967; 1966) and (1971).
- 9 For example, as Parsons, following Max Weber (cf. Gerth and Mills 1958) and his own pattern-variables scheme (Parsons 1951: 58-67, 180-200), emphasizes the uniqueness of Western development and treats it as normative for other civilizations, he orders institutional structures into hierarchy which is also a sequence and consequently can hardly avoid 'survival' hypotheses (Smith 1973: 34).
- 10 Malinowski's (1969) conceived of needs and functional requirements of some system as an indispensable condition for maintaining or promoting the system as a whole in terms of some preferred state(s) such as survival, adaptation, structural continuity, or an increased standard of life chances. As he links particular needs, basic and derived ones, with certain cultural responses to them, he anticipates Parsons'

(1957b: 65 ff.) scheme of functional imperatives of social systems. See also below Ch. 3.2.3.

- ¹¹ For a critical discussion of Redfield's and Lewis' divergent views of Tepoztlán, see Paddock 1961.
- ¹² Johan Galtung (quoted in Zetterberg 1963: 18) points out that the crux of the functionalist position lies in the notions of 'adaptation' and 'adjustment' as used by Merton. (Merton [1968: 105] defines function as follows: 'Functions are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system; and dysfunctions, those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation of the system.') Galtung goes on to say:

'But "adaptation" and "adjustment" to what? The answer "to S (the system) as it is, to status quo," can be discarded at once - this would make all consequences implying social change dysfunctional by definition. The answer "to a social change in or of S" can be likewise discarded, as we do not believe today that consequences implying social change are necessarily beneficial for the system.'

It boils down to the question 'Functional for whom?', and Galtung proposes to give the answer in terms of some shared values within a social subsystem. Functionality and dysfunctionality thus depend on the values in the social system or subsystem taken as a point of departure. Cf. also Münch 1973: especially 71-76.

- ¹³ Nagel 1956: 251-252. For an extended discussion of these questions, see Nagel 1953.

- 14 For illustrative examples and further elaboration of the concepts of equifinality and functional equivalence, see Stinchcombe 1968: 80-101; Luhmann 1971: 9-30; Merton 1968: 106, 114-136.
- 15 Parsons (1954a: 217-218) states:
'Functional significance in this context is inherently teleological. A process or set of conditions either "contributes" to the maintenance (or development) of the system or it is "dysfunctional" in that it detracts from the integration, effectiveness, etc., of the system. It is thus the functional reference of all particular conditions and processes to the state of the total system as a going concern which provides the logical equivalent of simultaneous equations in a fully developed system of analytical theory. This appears to be the only way in which dynamic interdependence of variable factors in a system can be explicitly analyzed...'
- 16 In his attempt to more effectively counter the reproach by his critics that the structural-functional theory was not capable of explaining social change, he first replaced the concept of function by that of process (Parsons 1964b) and then included the evolutionary principle in his theoretical system by construing 'evolutionary universals' that explained the continuity and change of social systems (Parsons 1967; 1966; cf. also Eisenstadt 1964b; Bellah 1964). He designates as an evolutionary universal
'any organizational development sufficiently important to further evolution that, rather than emerging only once, it is likely to be "hit upon" by various systems operating

under different conditions,'
thus representing

'a complex of structures and associated processes the development of which so increases the long-run adaptive capacity of living systems in a given class that only systems that develop the complex can attain certain higher levels of general adaptive capacity' (Parsons 1967: 493).

- 17 Nowhere Parsons has claimed that the preferred state for a given system was predetermined once and for all and could not change. As will be shown later in this study (3.1.1 and 3.1.2), Parsons' neo-evolutionary stance of modern functionalism links the morphostatic and morphogenetic aspects of social processes since the efficacy of self-regulatory mechanisms always depends on the particular type of relationship or exchanges between the system and its environments. This can either mean to maintain a system's given form or state or to elaborate or change it (cf. Cancian 1960; for a different view, see Buckley 1967: 58; Sztompka 1974: 92-93).

- 18 Using the analysis of prevailing norms and values of different types as an illustrative example, Piotr Sztompka (1974: 95) succinctly dispelled the theoretical consequences of the assumption of disequilibrium:

'If one applies the assumptions of disequilibrium to the analysis of the institutionalized normative structure of a social system, it will appear much less homogeneous and consistent. All elements will be seen to be in a continuous process of change, and so, at any given moment there will be some elements that remain

from the former structure, some that are proper to the present preferred state of the system, and some that anticipate the future restructuring of the system. Various strains, contradictions, and conflicts on the normative level are the natural results of this situation' (italics added).

- 19 This position comes close to the one entertained by Ernest Nagel (1956: 251-252) who regards functional statements as appropriate only
- 'in connection with systems possessing self-maintaining mechanisms for certain of their traits, but seem pointless and even misleading when used with reference to systems lacking such self-regulatory devices.'
- Sociological functionalism of this persuasion makes sense only if self-regulatory mechanisms can be discovered which involve the maintenance of a narrow range or goal state of a given variable. Accordingly, the difference between a functional and a non-functional statement becomes a matter of emphasis that is comparable to the difference between stating that B is the effect of A, and saying that A is the condition or cause of B (Nagel 1956: 251).
- 20 See his 'Paradigm for Functional Analysis in Sociology,' in Merton 1968: 104-109.
- 21 We are not concerned here with David Lockwoods (1964) critique of the 'coercion theory of society' and the 'conflict model of society' (cf. Dahrendorf 1959; Rex 1961) for concentrating their fire on a special version of functionalism, namely, 'normative functionalism.' In doing so, Lockwood holds, they have become overly involved with the problems of 'social integration' thus ignoring 'what is just as

relevant to their central interests in conflict and social change, namely, the problem of "system integration," for the solution of which

'general functionalism would still seem to be the most useful instrument... Whereas the problem of social integration focuses attention upon the orderly or conflictful relationships between the actors, the problem of system integration focuses on the orderly or conflictful relationships between the parts, of a social system' (Lockwood 1964: 244-245).

- 22 Parsons (1964b: 173) who rejects those themes as viable sociological alternatives is also quoted by Lockwood (1964: 247 n.):

'I do not think it is useful to postulate a deep dichotomy between theories which give importance to beliefs and values on the one hand, to allegedly "realistic" interests, e.g., economic, on the other. Beliefs and values are actualized, partially and imperfectly, in realistic situations of social interaction and the outcomes are always codetermined by the values and realistic exigencies; conversely what on concrete levels are called "interests" are by no means independent of the values which have been institutionalized in the relevant groups.'

- 23 It has been said that German universities after 1810 had been characterized by a reciprocal 'structural compromise between the state bureaucracy and the oligarchy of professors' (Nitsch 1967: 29). Research and higher education were possible only in state controlled universities. Their organizational structure

was set up as to provide scientific training for occupations and regulated by the state and managed by privileged Fachordinariate. On the other hand, professors were de facto able to devote themselves primarily to research, although they were employed in an institution whose official objective was professionally oriented education. The truly occupational training, though, had been completed, at least in some academic areas, only in various types of subsequent apprenticeship years (e.g., medical internship, courtroom praxis, temporary teaching appointment). Without exaggeration one can state that such an institutional ossification of the historical compromise between ordinarii and political leadership has prevented a progressive functional differentiation and de-hierarchization of the German university system up to the mid-1960's.

- 24 For example, see Strasser 1976: Ch. 1; Horton 1966; Inkeles 1964: 28 ff.
- 25 This is to say that social systems tolerating a great deal of role-strains, status-discrepancies, racial tensions, and normative ambiguities and even basic contradictions over long periods of time do not necessarily undergo more or less drastic changes. The weakening of social structures or setting up of institutions to deal with these conflicts always implies some sort of intrasystemic adjustments, i.e., re-formation of social relations (even if this only means getting used to less rigidly defined norms as abortion and pornography laws demonstrate).
- 26 Cf. Nadel 1957: 144-145; Isajiw 1968: 66 f.; Gouldner 1970: 231. To quote Parsons (1951: 482):
'[The] elements of the constancy of pattern must constitute a fundamental point of

reference for the analysis of process in the [social] system. From a certain point of view these processes are to be defined as the processes of maintenance of the constant pattern. But of course these are empirical constancies, so we do not assume any inherent reason why they have to be maintained. It is simply a fact that, as described in terms of a given frame of reference, these constancies are often found to exist, and theory can thus be focused on the problems presented by their existence. They may cease to exist, by the dissolution of the distinctive boundary-maintaining system and its assimilation to the environment, or by transformation into other patterns. But the fact that they do exist, at given times and places, still serves as the theoretical focus for analysis.'

Many authors have objected to Parsons' 'conceptualism' (Timasheff 1959: 148) on the grounds that it tends to abstract one variable aspect of concrete social reality to the exclusion of other aspects; that its scope is inadequately specified and functionalist key terms such as 'need,' 'functional requirement,' and 'adaptation' are used non-empirically (Hempel 1959); that given social phenomena are conceptualized as if they are normally in a state of rest and serve as frame of reference for describing and explaining changes (Elias 1969, I and II; Sztompka 1974); that there is no reason to attribute to functional analysis a character sui generis not found in the hypotheses and theories of the natural sciences (Hempel 1959; Nagel 1961: Ch. 14); and that functionalism reasons tautologically since functional statements are always statements after the fact (Buckley 1957).

- 27 Parsons' 'An Outline of the Social System' (1961: 30-79) is particularly informative with respect to the role of values and norms, of socialization and internalization, in society. See also Parsons (1951); Parsons and Shils (1951); Gouldner (1970: 226 ff.); and Strasser (1976: Ch. 6).
- 28 In the two decades that have passed since the publication of The Social System, Parsons did not modify this assessment (cf. Parsons 1968: ix ff., 319-355; Parsons 1965: 3-38). However, he did begin to see 'new possibilities for dealing with the vexing problems of stability and change in action systems' (Parsons 1970: 850) as he was able to attend more satisfactorily to the question of control in action systems the basic form of which is, according to Parsons (1970; 1961; 1966), cybernetic. For a good summary statement of his view on social change, see Parsons 1961: 70-79.
- 29 This dilemma was also expressed in a survey of American sociologists by Gouldner and Sprehe (1965) in which the great majority was found to favor functional analysis while at the same time they recognized the need for being oriented toward 'basic change in structure and value' which was considered to be necessary to solve the major problems of American society.
- 30 Durkheim (1964: emphasis added) makes this point perfectly clear:
'Constraint only begins when regulation, no longer corresponding to the true nature of things, and, accordingly, no longer having any basis in customs, can only be validated through force.... Inversely, we may say that

the division of labor produces solidarity only if it is spontaneous and in proportion as it is spontaneous. But by spontaneity we must understand not simply the absence of all express violence, but also of everything that can even indirectly shackle the free unfolding of the social force that each carries in himself. It supposes, not only that individuals are not relegated to determinate functions by force, but also that no obstacle, of whatever nature, prevents them from occupying the place in the social framework which is compatible with their faculties. In short, labor is divided spontaneously only if society is constituted in such a way that social inequalities exactly express natural inequalities. But, for that, it is necessary and sufficient that the latter be neither enhanced nor lowered by some external cause. Perfect spontaneity is ... a consequence and another form of ... absolute equality in the external conditions of the conflict. It consists ... in a subtle organization in which each social value, being neither overestimated nor underestimated by anything foreign to it, would be judged at its true worth.'

- 31 Without going into greater detail, it is interesting to note that the analytical axis of so different sociologists as Durkheim and Dahrendorf originates in the same structural realm. The former sees the basis for a resurgence of mechanical solidarity in the acquisition of a moral individuality by the corporation, the labor union, and the professional association. The latter, on the other hand, locates the structural origin of group conflicts 'in the arrangement of social roles endowed with expectation of domination and subjection' (Dahrendorf 1959: 165). In other words,

wherever there are such roles, especially occupational roles, group conflicts are to be expected as well. The groups engaged in conflict are formed along the lines of the differentiation of roles that are relevant from the vantage point of exercising authority. Whereas Dahrendorf regards sanctionable norms as the overriding principle that makes social organizations cohere and thus the formation of conflict groups as an ultimate guaranty of societal integration and individual freedom in industrial society, Durkheim stresses the establishment of new communal solidarities based on occupational activity as a solution of the manifest problem of integration in a highly differentiated society (cf. also Rex 1961: 99). It is interesting to compare Durkheim's ideas on this subject with Louis Wirth's concepts in On Cities and Social Life (1964: especially Ch. 4).

32 According to Durkheim, then, central social norms and values express the sentiments of the total collectivity. He therefore never entertained the idea that certain social strata might be superordinated to a moral code. His idea that the division of labor is but a milder, peaceful solution of the struggle for survival which enables a greater number of people to live and survive, could have made him aware of the fact that the sentiments, or at least an important part, of the total society are a genuine expression of the 'stronger' moral sentiments of a superordinate stratum (cf. Aron 1970, II: 23-24; Coser 1967: 164; for a more elaborate discussion of Durkheim's theoretical position, see Strasser 1976: 113-122).

33 This is what Parsons (1968, I: 450) hinted at when he stated in his first major work that to have a theory of social change 'it is necessary to know what it is that changes.'

34 Of course, most statements about forms and functions of socio-cultural items and societies that, for example, Comte, Spencer, and Marx offered, appeared implicitly or explicitly in the normative guise of domain assumptions (cf. Strasser 1976: Chs. 4 and 5).

35 To put the same point in a later language, we quote Merton (1968: 94-95):

'By focusing on dysfunctions as well as on functions, this mode of analysis can assess not only the bases of social stability but the potential sources of social change.... The strains and stresses in a social structure which accumulate as dysfunctional consequences of existing elements ... will in due course lead to institutional breakdown and basic social change. When this change has passed beyond a given and not easily identifiable point, it is customary to say that a new social system has emerged.'

The idea of genetic cumulation of changes within a system into change of a system may be further illustrated by drawing on two recent analyses of how sciences change: The first example refers to Nicholas C. Mullins' (1975) contention that doing 'normal science' always involves a number of small changes which eventually add up to major, revolutionary changes. The second case concerns Thomas S. Kuhn's (1970) thesis that mounting 'anomalies' within a paradigm contributes to the adoption of a new paradigm by the scientific community.

36 See also Smelser's (1962) theory of collective change. We are not concerned here with the strength and possible weakness of Smelser's approach, especially in view of the fact that for functionalists

every social system is characterized by tensions. The question why certain tensions generate a particular sequence of change will be addressed below and, in greater detail, in Smelser (1962).

- 37 The following statement bears witness of Durkheim's turning to a functionalist position without really dropping his interest in social evolution:

'Everytime we undertake to explain something human, taken at a given moment in history - be it a religious belief, a moral precept, a legal principle, an esthetic style, or an economic system - it is necessary to go back to its most primitive and simple form, to try to account for the characterization by which it was marked at that time, and then to show how it developed and became complicated little by little, and how it became that which it is at the moment in question' (Durkheim 1947: 3).

- 38 For example, writing through language and literacy is seen as crucial for the emergence of the intermediate level as it permits, above all, knowledge to be transmitted and stored more easily. It also means that, specifically, education, contacts, and contracts were facilitated and, generally, culture's influence on society was enhanced. Societies of the intermediate category range from the ancient civilization in Egypt and Mesopotamia to the late-medieval societies of Europe. The modern level did not come into being until a legal system had appeared that furthered the independence of norms from the exigencies of political and economic interests. Its organization is highly generalized according to universalistic principles enforced by procedural primacy enabling the system to cope with changing circumstances and various types of cases

without prior commitment to specific solutions
(Parsons 1966: 26-27).

- 39 To put it in yet other terms: In correspondence with Parsons' conception of social systems and their sub-systems as being located on a cybernetic condition-control hierarchy, change is expected to occur within the given conditions, on the one hand, and to be governed by the control systems, on the other. The hypothesis is suggested that the more generalized the value or cultural pattern, or the higher a phenomenon located on the hierarchy of control, the less likely it is to change. Change on the cultural level is change of the system. The lower structures are located on the control hierarchy, the more readily they will adjust to changing conditions and their environments. However, these changes tend to lose force as they ramify through the system. For instance, changes in the economic sphere, which is highest on the hierarchy of conditions but lowest on controls, are relatively common. Some of these changes will affect the polity, still fewer the societal community, and probably none the institutionalized cultural patterns. Parsons (1960: 295 ff.) confirms this illustration in one of his essays by concluding that those values which integrate American society, i.e., instrumental activism, etc., have not changed in any fundamental way in American history. For a critical evaluation of Parsons' neo-evolutionary macro-analysis of change, the interested reader is referred to Smith 1973: especially Chs. 2, 3, and 6.

- 40 For an authentic introduction to Parsons' scheme of action, system, and change, see Parsons 1966: Ch. 2; 1961.

- 41 Considering that this statement is part of his conclusions Parsons arrives at in his Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives (1966), it is hardly unfair to comment that his concern with change analysis is ambivalent but his abstract-evolutionary perspective shines brightest.
- 42 For an illuminating elaboration on this subject, see Parsons 1961; Parsons and Smelser 1956; Ridder 1974; Cadwallader 1959. Studies that illustrate exchange relations between different subsystems on different levels, although not necessarily written in the same perspective, are the following: Bronfenbrenner 1955; Rostow 1964; Deutsch 1961; Hagen 1963; Luhmann 1975: 170-192.
- 43 The following table may also be used to derive examples that cast doubt on the functionalist assumption that the elements of the system strictly correspond to the functional requirements they satisfy.

Table 1: Relation between elements and functional requirements

Type of structural element (classes of elements <i>E</i> specialized in satisfying a given requirement)	Functional requirements (<i>N</i> states of the system)
1. Socialization, social control	1. Pattern maintenance: maintenance of conformity to the prescriptions of the normative system
2. Economic sectors of a social system; both in macroscale and in microscale (e.g., in the household)	2. Adaptation: activities that provide mobilizable resources
3. Political sectors of a social system; both in macroscale and in microscale	3. Goal attainment: maintenance of desired relationships with the environment. Organization and manipulation of actions for that objective
4. Symbolic, ritualistic, expressive forms of providing for identity feelings	4. Integration: maintaining the identity of the system and the attractiveness of its goals for the participants

Source: Sztompka 1974: 106.

Such a structural - functional isomorphism entails the assumption that one and the same requirement may be met by several system elements but at the same time each element is oriented toward only one requirement. The opposite assumption of multifunctionality claims that each element not only has several functions but also satisfies various functional requirements (Sztompka 1974: 105-107; Merton 1968: 86-91; cf. also Parsons and Smelser 1956: 15).

- 44 The question that should be raised is whether institutionalization is 'implemented' by an undefined collectivity such as society in order to bring individuals in line with the 'core' of the value system of society, as Parsons wants to make us believe. Or is it 'carried out' by organized groups against some individuals and groups and interests and for other individuals and groups and interests. As Coser (1956: 121-137), following Georg Simmel, has demonstrated, social conflict may create new norms and promote change of common social norms which is necessary for the readjustment of the relationship between contenders.
- 45 Parsons' (1957a) objection against Mills' (1956) grand indictment of the American distributive system is, to some extent, misdirected as he, Parsons, hardly analyzes the conditions under which certain norms and values develop or the function they serve beyond that of harmonizing Ego's and Alter's actions. Like Mills, Gouldner (1970: 235) poses the question why any kind of moral code should be necessary 'except that one party wants something from another whom he sees as unwilling to provide it.' In his review of Mills' The Power Elite (1956), Parsons (1957: 139) hit the nail on his head:
- 'The essential point is that, to Mills, power is not a facility for the performance of

function in and on behalf of the society as a system, but is interpreted exclusively as a facility for getting what one group, the holders of power, wants by preventing another group, the "outs", from getting what it wants.' Power, in other words, is always struggled for but never given and people will always try to legitimize their power.

Obviously, Comte, Durkheim, and Parsons are particularly concerned with the shared moral code if for no other reason as, in many ways, it tends to increase the motivation of actors to conform with their mutual expectations and hence stabilizes the social system. What they generally ignore, as pointed out earlier, is that to the extent conformity is imposed upon an Alter by his moral code, Ego will tend to reward such conformity less than he will under voluntary circumstances. Because of the fundamental 'double contingency' of conformity with norms, it is therefore possible to state that a moral code not only harmonizes a society but also produces conflict and change.

Finally, mention should be made that Parsons, on several occasions, has employed a medical analogy in analyzing social conflict. Class conflicts are 'endemic' like a disease; important factors in group antagonism - specifically, he refers to racial and religious conflicts - can be dealt with therapeutically as in the control of sickness (Parsons 1945); no wonder, then, that he also parallels a physician who treats a sick patient with a propaganda specialist who applies ideological treatments to a sick society (Parsons 1954b). The author tends to equate antagonistic behavior with deviant behavior 'which is seen as a disease in need of treatment' (Coser 1956: 23). Social changes that might be generated by these

conflicts are then likely be labelled 'stressful' at best and 'contagious' at worst; at any rate, tendencies that have to be confined and localized.

- 46 Cf. Parsons 1967: 493 and Luhmann 1971: 151 respectively. Recent attempts to avoid some of the pitfalls of these functionalisms led to additional types of functional analysis that have not been discussed here in detail although casual references have been made. Above all, we have in mind historical functionalism (e.g., Ridder 1972), subjective functionalism (e.g., Luhmann 1971), and processual functionalism (e.g., Buckley 1967). For an excellent survey of these developments, see Bühl 1975: 9-35.

- 47 Luhmann (1971: 27), for example, points out that 'All functional analyses are ultimately conducted in reference to problems of stabilization as guidelines. The functional interpretation of action clearly points to the fact that given the network of alternative possibilities social actions are always in need of stabilization.'

- 48 Following Parsons' (1951: 535; cf. also 1966: 21) dictum that good theory is equally applicable to the problems of change as well as to problems of process within a stabilized system, Nisbet (1969: 228) remarks: 'The whole objective of functionalism, one can scarcely avoid concluding as he reads the principal works in this body of theory from Durkheim down to Talcott Parsons, is to present a unified theory of order and change. To be able to draw the motivational mechanisms of change from the same conditions from which are drawn the concepts of social order, this is the main and overriding objective of functionalism.'

- 49 However, for other observers such as Richard LaPiere (1938: 55-56) functional analysis is inherently critical in perspective; still others have pointed to the emancipatory role of early studies of the coming of civil society (e.g., by Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson) which used functional analysis (Strasser 1976: 3, 44-63); finally, Merton (1968: 91-100; here 98-100) holds that as long as functionalists 'confine themselves to purely formal interpretation' (for example, by referring 'only to "institutional integration" without exploring the diverse consequences of integration about very different types of values and interests'), the functionalist 'bottles themselves are neutral to their contents, and may serve equally well as containers for ideological poison or for ideological nectar' (e.g., evaluations to be controlled by political restraint supposedly 'permit the pouring of ideological content into the bottles of functionalism').
- 50 Similarly, Parsons tries to analyze the 'repercussions of the changes introduced by scientific and technological advance' by considering their effect first on particular roles, second on the character of instrumental organizations, and third on the composition of the system of facilities and through it on the power structure (Parsons 1951: 505-520, here 505).
- 51 For further references, see Homans 1950: 307-308; Parsons 1951: 383-384; Hempel 1959: 293-297. Part of the following discussion draws heavily on Guessous 1967.
- 52 For instance, from 8 to 12 a.m. a man works and serves goal attainment and adaptation, neglecting tension management; from 12 to 2 p.m. he may suspend the former and concentrate on tension management; from 2 to 5 p.m. he returns to goal attainment at the expense of tension management; after 5 p.m. he manages tension to the

exclusion of goal attainment. Of course, at no time can we completely forget one need, or prolong the satisfaction of any one over a period of time while jeopardizing others. Although there is no neat delineation possible, it is legitimate to say that a tendency can be found in society to institutionalize these phases (e.g., daily phase with work from 9 to 5 and then relaxation, or weekly phase with work from Monday through Friday and then rest period). From a system perspective one can easily arrive at a classification of social structures in terms of their respective problem-concerns and corresponding phase-movements. For example, the economy, national defence, and education (as an agency preparing for future role performance) deal with adaptive problems; the state and certain legal institutions concentrate on integrative problems; the family, informal groups, and education (as an agency transmitting culture) are primarily involved in problems of pattern maintenance and tension management (cf. especially Parsons and Smelser 1956).

- 53 Cf. Parsons 1961: 71 ff. For an early statement on this topic, see Parsons 1951: 486-496. For further references, see Guessous 1967: 28.
- 54 Parsons, for example, invested considerable effort into analyzing the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany, and in doing so he singled out 'four major broad sets of conditions which must be present if such a movement is to spread widely and gain ascendancy in the social system' (Parsons 1951: 521; cf. also pp. 520-534; 1954c: 104-123). In the last analysis, the seizing of power by the Nazi party is accounted for in terms of 'the existence of a widespread alienative motivation' as a consequence of a 'rapid process of industrialization,' which, it seems, accidentally met a 'highly unstable... power structure in postwar Germany' (Parsons 1951:

523-524). As an alternative explanation, one could contend that the social cleavages persisting in the Weimar Republic originated in the antagonistic authority relations prevailing after the fall of the German monarchy and resulting in a massive usurpation and redistribution of social and political power by the Nazi regime; and that the fundamental, and eventually self-destructive, conflict was a struggle between groups which emerged from the confrontation of the new authority structure with the traditional, though still effective and spiritually present, power structure of pre-war Germany. Having identified the pertinent factors that generate conflict and change, one could proceed to set up a model of change analysis, for instance, along the lines marked by Dahrendorf (1958: 178):

'... interest groups (for example, parties) are a function of conditions of organization if an imperatively coordinated group is given; specific forms of conflict (e.g., parliamentary debates) are a function of the conditions of conflict if the interest groups are given; specific forms of change (e.g., revolutions) are a function of the conditions of change if the conflict among interest groups is given.'

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