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Stuchlík, Milan

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## Goals and Behaviour\*

MILAN STUČHLÍK

Cíle a chování

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**Abstract:** In the first part of this paper I intend to argue that anthropologists have a predominantly causal conception of explanation and that the only feasible way to avoid this is to apply consistently the assumption of goal-orientation of behaviour, that is to hold what could broadly be called a teleological conception of explanation – a view that developments are due to the purpose or design that is served by them. Further on I will try to show that groups and norms do not exist and act independently of people. They have no existence as “things” apart from forming a part of the relevant stock of knowledge of the members of society. They can be brought to bear on actions only by people invoking them. Thus we have to make a sharp distinction between the conceptual or notional level of phenomena, and the transactional or processual level, sometimes known as cultural and social respectively.

**Keywords:** goal orientation of behaviour, groups, norms, causal explanation of behaviour, individual strategies

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### I.

Most of the current theoretical and methodological discussions or disagreements in the social sciences probably stem from our uncertainty or confusion about the existential status of the phenomena we study, their facticity, and their relations both within and outside the social world. This uncertainty is in its turn at least partly due to our inability or refusal to treat seriously our own assumptions. Elsewhere [Stuchlik 1976: 3, *passim*] I have argued that although the assumption of culture (in the broadest Tylorian sense of the word) as man-made and a continuous product of human activities is generally accepted, it is rarely, if ever, seriously applied. It has a sort of oblivious existence and is considered at best a useful embellishing phrase in the introduction of a treatise on theory. Yet, when used as a basic methodological principle, it can have considerable implications [*cf. Holy 1976*]. In this paper, I intend to examine the related assumption that human behaviour is purposive, intentional, or goal-oriented. By “examining it”, I do not mean treating the assumption itself as a problem. I am not interested in the question of whether or not human behaviour is in some real or factual sense goal-oriented. In other words, I am not trying to demonstrate or prove the truth or facticity of this basic assumption (which is, as in the case of any basic assumption, a rather hopeless task), but to justify its use. And to justify such an assumption, one needs to show that it opens up hitherto ignored areas of problems and

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ways of solving them. Since my opening contention was that it is the uncertainty of the existential status of the phenomena we study which accounts for most of the current theoretical and methodological problems, I have to show the relevance and usefulness of the assumption of goal-orientation of human activities above all in this context.

Though I believe that the argumentation can in a broad sense be extended to social sciences in general, I am using as a case in point social anthropology, since my own training and experience is in this field. As the starting point of the discussion let us consider a hypothetical case of a sorcerer performing a ritual intended to kill somebody. The anthropologist can see the ritual, i.e. the actions of the sorcerer, and has therefore no problem in conceiving of it as existing, as real. On the other hand, he knows that such ritual cannot bring about the death. The sorcerer and other natives may believe it, it may be real or reasonable to them, but it is unreal (in the sense of unreasonable) and therefore, in the last instance, nonexistent “for him” [cf. *Stuchlik 1976: 1*]. Thus, anthropologists are presented with a contradiction between the “reality” of the action and the “unreality” of the goal or intention, which they have to solve. Predominantly, though no longer exclusively, the only acceptable solution consists in finding some cause or purpose of the action which would be equally “real”, i.e. which would have the same undoubtful existence. In the case of sorcery the usual solution lies in asserting that what sorcery really does, is to identify and release tensions in the society and thus in the last instance to function as an integrative force. What we are often unable to realize is that by accepting this view we have created another contradiction: we have found a “real” goal, but we have made the action, the ritual, unreal. It was a ritual performed to kill somebody; we have named it a ritual performed to release social tensions. However, this ritual does not “exist” in the sense that it cannot be observed as such; what can be observed is only the killing ritual. Moreover, what identifies the social tensions for us is, properly speaking, the sorcerer’s intention to kill somebody not the way he goes about it. The actions taken to attain this goal are irrelevant (doubly so, since we know that the goal is unattainable).

This is, of course, the crucial point. When the anthropologist starts to explain the sorcerer’s action, the performance of the ritual, by reasons other than that he is trying to kill somebody, he has to choose one of two equally erroneous ways: either he explains why the sorcerer wants to kill that particular man in terms of social tensions etc. that is, explains the goal and leaves the action practically out of consideration; or he explains the actions more or less as a series of movements performed by the sorcerer. In other words, he is in both cases defining out of existence the very dimension or property of behaviour he is supposed to study, that is, its social nature. By social nature we cannot understand simply the fact that the behaviour occurs among humans: the minimal requirement of the social nature of an activity is its comprehensibility and relevance to specific others. Intention, goal or purpose, not only accounts for the action, it also identifies it for others. If we deny the existence or reality of the sorcerer’s intention to kill somebody, we have no possibility of observing an action of “trying to kill somebody by sorcery”.

In the first section of this paper, I intend to argue that these errors derive from the fact that anthropologists have a predominantly causal conception of explanation and that the only feasible way to avoid this is to apply consistently the assumption of goal-orientation of behaviour, that is, to hold what could broadly be called a teleological conception of explanation (conceiving of teleology in its simplest form as a view “that developments are due to the purpose or design that is served by them”).

The first serious consequence of the assumption of goal-orientation purposiveness of human activities appears immediately when we start to define the subject matter of our study. Firth's dictum that, it is human behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, which is the raw material for study' [Firth 1951: 19–20] stands unchallenged, but at the same time there are obviously events related to people for which no intention, purpose or goal can meaningfully be stated. Catching cold, breaking one's leg, being surprised, and similar events, can be mentioned as typical examples. However, such events are things that happen to people and not things that people do. Stated on this level, the distinction seems rather obvious, though it is sometimes disputed. Some authors clearly distinguish between what they call "happenings" and "human activities" [cf. White 1968: 4]. Though the boundaries between happenings and activities might conceivably become blurred in some specific cases, usually they can be sufficiently distinguished by using the criterion of standards of performance. Whenever it can be used, we are dealing with an activity. There is the right way and the wrong way only of doing something, not of something happening to us. Since we are studying not whatever might happen to people but human behaviour, happenings as such do not interest us, unless directly related to some relevant context of activities.

One of the main objections to the assumption of intentionality of behaviour is the assertion that there is a large category of actions performed "without any effort of will, without resolving or deliberating whether to do them, unintentionally, nonvoluntarily, for no purpose, etc." [White 1968: 7]. I would suggest that this objection is based on a misunderstanding of the characteristics mentioned by White. If "without resolving or deliberation" is supposed to be identical with "unintentionally" or "for no purpose", or even with "unconsciously", then it is an untenable identification. Deliberation need not be a repetitive process: it can be done, for some actions, only once or a few times and then the action becomes automatic but it does not mean that it has no purpose or goal. I am perfectly able driving a car to negotiate a bend without going through an involved process of decision-making about it, but that does not make it an unintentional or no-purpose activity. I do not deliberate about brushing my teeth in the morning, nor do I state aloud to myself every morning that brushing teeth is good for dental hygiene. It has become a stereotyped part of my early morning activities, but again that does not mean that I see no purpose to it. The nonvoluntary action, mentioned by White, does not belong to the problematic category at all. The fact that the action is or is not voluntary does not say anything about its goal-orientation, intention etc. A schoolboy may do his homework quite involuntarily in the sense that he would prefer to do something else, yet he is perfectly aware what the purpose of his action is and what goal, when attained, will terminate it.

The case of White's last two characteristics, "unintentionally" and "to no purpose", is slightly different. Watkins stresses the same point: "behaviour often does not conform to the end-means pattern. I may tell the truth, or go fishing, simply from a desire to do so with no further end in mind ..." [Watkins 1973: 163]. Obviously, this cannot be taken at face value. The only possible equivalent to behaviour for no purpose would be completely random behaviour. Moreover we could not even recognise it as such because, as I have tried to argue above, it is the intention, purpose, or goal, which names the action: therefore, we would not even have a name for such behaviour; it would be unidentifiable as behaviour. I can certainly go fishing for no other reason than my desire to do so, but I can

hardly go fishing by putting on skis and climbing to the top of a mountain. So evidently this characteristic of actions cannot be taken literally. It seems to me that such behaviour can be seen as problematic, or, more specifically non-purposive, only when there is an *a priori* proposition that some projects for the future are important enough to be called goals or purposes, while others, such as to go fishing, are not. However, I doubt that such criteria of importance can be defined in any generally applicable way. What can be said about this category of behaviour and what the authors regarding it as having no purpose actually had in mind, is that it comprises actions that under normal circumstances are obviously self-explanatory and have no further consequences, so that they are unproblematic and are not taken into account in the study of social life. Any importance they might have for our study accrues to them from situational contexts only. Any attempt to explain them as actions would be trivial. I will return to this point later.

If on this level the distinction between activities and happenings based on the criteria of the standards of performance and hence in the last instance on goal-orientation, is especially helpful for the clear definition of the subject matter of our study, there is another less obvious level at which it acquires even more important methodological consequences. The authors I have mentioned treated both these categories as immutable: an event is either a human action or something which happens to someone. However, many, if not most events have in actual fact a double status: they are actions in the sense of being intentionally performed by an individual or plurality of individuals, and they are happenings in the sense of happening to another individual, or plurality of individuals without his intending it or without his assigning a particular goal to it. I suggest that social scientists tend to define such events as activities but treat them as happenings since such treatment lends itself more easily to causal explanations. Elsewhere [Stuchlik: 1976a] I have argued that a typical example of such treatment is the study of social change.

Social change is usually conceived of as something that happens to people, not something that people do – since it happens to them, the causes of its happening can be established. Colonial occupation, economic pressure, growing contact with the outside world etc. have repeatedly been mentioned as causes of social change in particular societies. Apart from the fact that such explanations are usually obviously true and therefore trivial, they contain two basic errors. The first is that any causal relation is never properly established and remains simply assumed; the second is that the reasoning behind the relating of cause to consequence (e.g. economic pressure to a particular instance of social change), can usually be reduced to a circular argument of the type, “this kind and intensity of economic pressure must have led to this particular social change because the change has occurred”. It is my contention that these errors can be avoided and a better understanding of social processes achieved, if we treat them as activities, that is as actions intentionally performed by specific individuals or groups trying to attain specific goals.

This argument can be made still clearer by examining the predominant use by anthropologists of two basic concepts: norms and groups.

## **Norms**

The term “norm” has been defined and used in anthropology in an almost unlimited variety of ways, but always with a common focal point. Norms, rules, or customs are

always conceived of as habitual and/or institutionalized prescriptions for behaviour, as “right ways” of behaving and doing things, and as more or less binding imperatives. Gibbs talks about norms as prescriptions governing conduct or specifying what people ought to do [Gibbs: 1965]; for Williams norms are “rules of conduct; they specify what should and should not be done by various kinds of social actors in various kinds of situations” [Williams 1960: 25]. Cancian states: “I assumed that norms were culturally specific conceptions of good and bad actions” [Cancian 1975: viii]. However the definitions are formulated, they always imply the notion of norms as an ideal, one-to-one model of desirable, and therefore sought after behaviour.

The second implicit notion that many anthropologists have about norms is that they somehow have an internal compelling force to summon behaviour. This is rather more difficult to detect, especially since it is sometimes explicitly denied: for example, Fortes writes “Custom is not inviolable in its own right. It is compelling because it is the legacy of the ancestors” [Fortes 1945: 25]. However, the point is not whether the custom is inviolable and indeed, anthropological literature is full of examples of people violating the norm. The point is that behaviour conforming to the norm is considered as having been caused by that norm and as needing no other explanation than the norm. On the other hand, behaviour violating the norms calls for an explanation by some strong contingent factors. In other words, there is no need to have any reason for obeying the norm apart from its existence, but there must be a reason for not obeying it. This, together with the assumption that norm describes “normal” (i.e. actual), albeit ideal, behaviour makes it possible for the anthropologist to distinguish between “what people say they do” and “what they actually do”. This is clearly illustrated in the following quotation:

(...) I noticed the same discrepancy in statements as to the change of residence upon marriage. The Lapps invariably state that at marriage, the woman should join her husband's band but an analysis of all marriages shows that about equally often, the man joins his wife's band and remains there. [Pehrson 1964: 292]

Pehrson solves this contradiction by deciding that Lapps have no rule of residence and that in every marriage the residence is decided on contingent factors. What Lapps “invariably state” cannot be taken as a norm, since it is not followed: the statement cannot be a norm because it does not compel behaviour. Thus the main problem to be studied is usually considered to be “what are norms” and “to what extent are they followed in actual behaviour”. The problem of the violation of norms is considered a secondary one and studied mostly in terms of contingent deviant behaviour. One of the most recent studies, “*What are Norms?*” by F. Cancian [1975], states the main problem in its title. In her very carefully researched book on Zinacatan norms, she sets out to study the relations between norms and actions in a small Mexican town. However, she is again mainly interested in what people consider as norms, to what extent they follow their norms in actual behaviour, and what consequences this has for social organization.

The validation of such studies rests only on our beliefs that norms are prescriptions for real behaviour and that, when they are violated, there is a contradiction or discrepancy involved. Pospisil, in his analysis of the legal rules of Kapauku Papuans, came to a different conclusion:

Of 176 cases, only 87 correspond to rule. In other words, in 89 cases which represent almost 51 per cent of the total, the actual results differ from the statements in the rules. [*Pospisil 1964: 250*]

The reasons for disregarding the rule may vary: alleviating circumstances, aggravating circumstances, pity taken on the defendant, weakness of the authority, necessity of political compromise, profit for the authority, etc. [*ibid.: 251*].

Instead of taking this as indicating deviance or non-conformity, Pospisil takes it as indicative of the nature of the rules:

Similarly, the one hundred and twenty one Kapauku rules presented in the preceding part of the monograph do not bind the native authority on his decision. Their role is comparable to that of the rules in China or in Old Rome – a help to the authority in settling disputes (...) However, when the authority felt that a decision satisfactory to all parties concerned would be one which did not comply with the appropriate rule, he would not hesitate to disregard it. [*ibid.: 251*]

Thus, the rules or norms are not seen here as prescriptions for behaviour, or even as ideal behaviour, something which “ought to” or “should” be done, but simply as guidelines to be taken into consideration, but with a specific purpose in mind: to satisfy all parties concerned.

A somewhat similar point is further elaborated in Scheffler’s excellent study of Choiseul. When talking about customs, he asserts:

(...) We are misled, however, if we assume that Choiseul feel any compulsion from “internal” sources in regard to these matters; there seem to be no strong feeling that the “straight way” is the way things “should” be done ... [*Scheffler 1965: 110*]

He even quotes informants as saying “Our customs are not firm. We look only for that which will help us to live well, and the rest is just talk” [*ibid.: 112*]. If I understand it correctly, this is also what Stanner means when he says: “If the Ndembu are governed by anything, then it is by their interests rather than, as Turner would have it, by their principles ...” [*Stanner 1959: 215*].

Now, what seems to emerge from this brief and admittedly simplified review is that norms have tended to be conceived of as causes of or reasons for actions, and as descriptions of what people actually do or should do. There is, however, growing evidence that people treat norms not as causes or reasons, but at best as guidelines for action [*cf. Pospisil 1958; Scheffler 1956*] at the same time, as Deutscher shows, the relation between stated behaviour, between assertions of what “one does under certain circumstances” and between actual behaviour, i.e. what actually occurs, is highly problematic [*Deutscher 1966*]. It seems that norms should be treated more as apart of the “relevant stock of knowledge” of the actors. They can be manipulated, applied, disregarded, but they have no internal compelling force to summon action. By themselves, they are simply cultural phenomena and can best be looked upon as inert. They can be brought to bear upon actions, either summoning them or restraining them, through some mediating motivational mechanism (*cf.*, for example, Nadel’s “tendency of individuals in proximity to conform spontaneously

to each other's behaviour" [*Nadel 1951: 348*]); this is, however, a psychological consideration. Sociologically, they can be made relevant only when people invoke or disregard them in their actions, explicitly or implicitly:

They (norms) become a social and sociological datum (...) only when they enter into transactions between persons and groups. I have assumed that they have no sociological meaning outside of those transactions. [*Scheffler 1965: 294*]

But to invoke or disregard a norm for the purpose of a transaction is an action in itself and must be treated as such. In other words, to invoke a norm has a specific purpose. A norm can be invoked to justify one's own action, to elicit actions from specific others, to claim a special status, or to sanction others.

The invocation of a norm may be illustrated with the case of a marriage bid in a Jordanian village. Ali al Husayn sent a friend to the house of Mahmoud al Ali to ask for Mahmoud's daughter for his son. Mahmoud referred the demand to the authorities of his lineage, one of whom was Shaykh Husayn:

Shaykh Husayn, in Sulayman's presence (the bidder) pencilled a written note and handed it to Mahmoud. In it he declared that he was unalterably opposed to the marriage of Mahmoud's daughter (his own sister-in-law) to Ali's son. He further said that if she was to be married to anyone, it should be either to his own younger brother Yusuf, who was the girl's fifth patrilineal cousin, or to Ybrahim al Hamad, a pious young man of the lineage. The Shaykh told me later that the reason he opposed the marriage was the lack of piety of Ali and his son. Neither attended mosque services regularly. This was also true, however, of the Shaykh's own brother. Later, the Shaykh told me the real reason for his animosity toward Ali al Husayn and his son; it was the result of an incident involving the two families that had taken place several years previously ... [*Antoun 1967: 298*]

Shaykh Husayn invoked a norm of preferential marriage and a norm of regular attendance at the mosque, to justify the refusal of a girl to the son of his enemy. Now, his position in itself might or might not have brought about the result, i.e. the refusal by Mahmoud al Ali; actually it was supported by other factors which we do not need to mention here. What is important, though, is that his bringing the norm into the situation was not the result of his personal commitment to it (or at least not unreservedly), but of his personal interest in sanctioning or shaming Ali al Husayn. This makes clear still another important point: it is irrelevant whether or not the person invoking the norm is actually committed to it, believes it is something which "ought" to be done, or simply manipulates it [*cf. Scheffler 1965: 294*].

Disregard of a norm can be illustrated with an example mentioned by Fortes:

An ambitious and none too scrupulous braggart of considerable intelligence and drive, Dinkaha, had been very useful to me and had made the most of his connexion with me. One of the objects of this ceremony (sacrifice to ancestors) was to show off his friendship with me to his clansmen, and his prestige among them to me. It was, therefore, a specially lavish occasion: In the middle of the ceremony Dinkaha's father-in-law called in. The old man was respectfully received and ushered into his daughter's room. Dinkaha finished the sacrifice and began to distribute the meat. Various member, of his lineage and clan received the portions due to them. And then intoxicated with conceit at having his white friend in his house and at the obvious appreciation of



his stock, in consequence, in the eyes of his clansmen, a rash impulse overcame him. Holding up a goat's foreleg – one of the ritually prescribed portions that should be reserved for those entitled by birth to share in the sacrifice – he launched out into a speech, the gist of which was that he desired his father-in-law to accept it in order to mark this special occasion ... [Fortes 1969: 17]

This can best be understood as Dinkaha's bid for special status, for a prestige so high that the intentional violation of a norm will be overlooked by others. In this case it was not, since his father-in-law refused the portion and invoked the same rule in the positive sense by saying that in-laws do not sacrifice together: "it is an unheard-of thing".

Both claiming special status and sanctioning others by violating a norm, can clearly be seen in the handling of the contributions to a man's payment for his bride by his kinsmen among the Kwaio on Malaita. According to Keesing, there are more or less specific rules for the size of contributions:

We have seen in the case of Kwaio marriage payments that appropriate contribution is defined in terms of kinship distance, economic strategies etc., which involve "rules" that have ramifications throughout the culture. [Keesing 1967: 14]

Now, the violation of these rules can take the form either of a lesser contribution or no contribution, or of a larger contribution or of a contribution when not obliged. In the first case, the norm is violated to express disapproval of the marriage, to assert social distance or hostility toward the groom because of a previous quarrel, to sanction the groom's previous failure to fulfil the obligations of kinship, and so on [*ibid.*: 12]. In the second case, the norm is violated to create a stronger obligation on the part of the groom and his group for future support, or to recruit new supporters for future help [*ibid.*: 13].

Thus, norms are brought to bear upon actions not by their mere existence, but by somebody invoking them. As we have seen from the examples, an individual invokes the norm for a specific reason, such as to attain a specific goal. It is his goal, in the sense that it is a future state defined by him; however, this does not necessarily mean that it is a goal for him, that is, his future state. An individual can have as his goal a specific future state of his group: for example, he may invoke the norm of incest prohibition because he is worried about the chastity of the members of his group. On the other hand, he may invoke it because he wants to get rid of a particular man. As I said earlier, it is irrelevant whether or not he invokes the norm because of his personal commitment to it or because it is convenient for him. What is important is that norms do not bring about behaviour by themselves, but by being brought into the situation as one of the possibly relevant factors. And since they do not summon behaviour by themselves, they cannot be used as explanations of particular behaviour. If we assume the goal-orientation of behaviour, we have to re-define what is problematic about the relations between norms and actions: it is not simply what the norms are and how often, with what percentage, they are followed in actual behaviour, but why, in particular situations, norms are either invoked or ignored, and either followed or violated. In other words, what becomes the main problem of our study in this context are the mechanisms whereby people decide about the invocation of norms.

## Groups

The second basic concept I wish to discuss in some detail is that of group. It has, like the concept of norm, been defined and used in many different ways: anthropological and sociological literature abounds with definitions of groups. It would be a redundant and moreover meaningless task to repeat them here or to try and sort them out. However, most of them are based on some or all of the following foci: group is conceived of as a physical or quasi-physical entity, as opposed to a strictly conceptual one, with boundaries set by membership criteria; it is seen as a unity by both members and specific others; there are specific norms ruling the recruitment of members, and their performance as members. Usually, a group is also considered a focus of moral commitment.

There is a certain necessary interdependence between norms and groups. As I mentioned earlier, norms are often seen as having an internal compelling force, as causes of behaviour. At the same time, norms do not pertain to people as individuals, but to social types, i.e. to generalized members of categories or groups. Thus, norms can be seen as pertaining to members of groups, as being membership norms. If it is assumed that norms function automatically, we can say that people perform certain actions because they are members of certain groups; in other words, group membership is, again, often seen or interpreted as the cause of the behaviour. People perform specific actions as a function of their group membership, and groups can therefore be conceived of as collective performers of systems of actions. In fact, this is what is often considered as one of the important criteria of the corporateness of a group: that it appears, at least in some situations, as a whole. For instance, Schneider uses the possibility of acting together as a differential between what he calls corporate units, and corporate groups:

I have used the term corporate unit, since the definition of the word group and its associations and meanings are so problematic. A modern nation has a corporate identity, but it is not possible for it to act in unison and concert and as a physically corporate group in the sense, let us say, of a small village, assembling in its entirety for a religious ritual. [Schneider 1965: 79, note 3]

Groups, specifically corporate groups, are seen as real, visible concrete entities. Of course, even when the classical study of social structure as composed of discrete, real groups was at its height, anthropologists were aware that there must be, and are, some discrepancies between behaviour as expressed in group norms and behaviour as performed by living people. Thus, Fortes stresses that:

This is an architectural way of looking at the structure of Tale society (...) Our attention has been fixed mainly on the permanent edifice in which social relations and activities are congealed rather than on their emergence in process. We have been analyzing the product of social segmentation rather than the process itself. [Fortes 1945: 232]

In the same sense, Evans Pritchard, when describing the Nuer system and the opposition of segments, cautions that:

These combinations are not always as regular and simple as they were explained to me and as I have stated them. [*Evans-Pritchard 1940: 144*]

In a later article, Fortes takes up membership norms from still another angle:

It is now fairly evident that these (norms) are not absolute rules of conduct which men are apt to break through in an outburst of unruly instinct or rebellious self-assertion, as has commonly been thought. They are relatively obligatory in accordance with the structural relations of the parties. The Beduin of Cyrenaica regard homicide within the minimal agnatic lineage (...) as a grave sin, whereas slaying a member of a different tribal segment is an admirable deed of valour. The Tallensi consider sex relations with a near sister of the same lineage as incest but tacitly ignore the fact if the parties are very distant lineage kin (...) Such observations are indications of flexibility of primitive social structures. They give a clue to the way in which internal adjustments are made from time to time in those structures (...) They suggest how such societies can remain stable in the long run without being rigid. [*Fortes 1953: 273–274*]

Nevertheless, the idea that group membership and group norms explain actions, and that, therefore, the anthropologist by determining social structure and the nature of its component groups, is also explaining people's behaviour has remained, to a large extent, one of the basic theoretical assumptions. Since it allows for deviant behaviour, either through flexibility of rules or through the existence of possible contingent factors, it cannot be invalidated by introducing examples of people undoubtedly being members of specific groups and still behaving in ways incompatible with group membership (numerous examples of this can be found in any recent anthropological monograph). There are, however, two lines of argument which can, I believe, show the rather dubious status of this assumption. The first, which I will mention only briefly since it has no direct bearing on the main problem of this paper, was first raised in the study of societies with cognatic kinship systems and egocentric kindred. If we assume that people behave as a function of their group membership, then we have to assume the unambiguous existence of groups. Several anthropologists have argued that kindred cannot properly be viewed as a group but as a category, i.e. as a conceptual entity [*cf. Freedman 1961; Goodenough 1955*]. Just to illustrate this point, we can quote Appell's observation on the Rungus of Borneo:

The Rungus, thus, do not identify any set of cognates or distinguish any set from the total field of "all of one's cognates" by assigning to it any specific duties, other than the generalized prescription that cognates should help one another (...) Instead, the Rungus view of the field of one's cognates, as far as I have been able to ascertain, is that of a series of dyadic relationships between an individual and his various cognates. [*Appell 1976: 200*]

These studies have had, as their subject matter, societies which by definition lack unilineal, clearly defined, groups. Consequently, group membership and membership behaviour could not be used as explanations, and the analyses were necessarily more oriented towards the problems of individual choice and behavioural alternatives. However, once such problems were posed, they have led to several re-analyses of unilineal societies as well. These re-analyses have shown considerable discrepancies, especially in that often important rights and duties are allocated, in unilineal societies, on the basis of cognatic

descent or kinship. This led Keesing to the proposition that we should view societies not as either unilineal or cognatic, but as operating always on the basis of a cognatic charter, though in a specific way [Keesing 1970a].

The second line of argument, which will be of major interest to us, can be documented by Holy's [1976a] review of recent kin group studies. The main issues of this discussion are focussed on kin groups, but they can be extended to any kind of group. According to his view, recent studies, mostly of Melanesian and New Guinea societies, point to the necessity of making a sharp distinction between what could be called conceptual groups, or cultural categories, and between people organized to perform specific activities. For the first, particular membership criteria like agnatic descent, co-residence etc., and norms specifying appropriate membership behaviour, can be ascertained. However, they have no necessary or direct bearing on the actual behaviour of people. Such conceptual groups, or cultural categories, belong again to the relevant stock of knowledge of individuals: people know, not only how to behave, i.e. the norms, but also how their society is structured, that is, what are the perduring groups. To be made significant for activities, group membership must be made into a personal moral commitment, or it must be invoked in a particular situation. Of course, to invoke group membership is, again, an action in itself. Thus, we are faced here with a distinction similar to that we had to make for norms: norms as ideas about behaviour, or the conceptual level of phenomena, and norms-in-action, or the transactional level of phenomena. This can be seen as paralleled by the distinction between groups to which people know they belong on the basis of membership criteria and the sharing of norms, i.e. the conceptual or cultural level, and action groups or task groups, i.e. the transactional level.

It is, I believe, the lack of this distinction which makes much of the current kinship discussion so confusing. There seems to be slowly emerging an agreement that kinship, and especially unilineal descent, cannot be seen as a basic recruitment principle into real concrete groups. It is to be seen more as an idiom in which people are able to talk about the unity of groups [cf. *de Lepervanche* 1968: 181; *Barnes* 1967: 39; *Strathern* 1972: 213–214]. In other words, descent is already beginning to be seen as a conceptual construct of the people, without any internal compelling force [cf. *Scheffler* 1965: 42]. However, this has led, in most cases, to the question: if not descent, then what is the recruitment principle into these basic, really existing groups which are the only vehicle for understanding how people behave? That is, some anthropologists have agreed that when people talk about group boundaries and membership criteria, they do not use the concepts of agnation, descent etc. in the same analytically pure way that anthropologists do: there is something that can be called a "native group model". However, what seems, by and large, to be taken for granted is that when people talk about groups they talk about membership rights and duties, and therefore about actual behaviour:

Further, they (descent assertions) are assertions which mirror critical delimitations of rights and duties between clansmen ... [Strathern 1972: 220]

Bohannan puts it even more clearly:

A folk system is a systematization of ethnographic facts for purposes of action. It might well have been called an "action system" ... [Bohannan 1957: 5]

The next logical step, the assumption that our “group idiom” may have nothing or very little to do, not only with the ways in which people conceptualize their groups, but also with the ways in which they transact, in which they organize their behaviour, has so far been taken by very few authors [e.g. Scheffler 1965; Keesing 1967, 1970b].

This is not for lack of evidence. In many monographs there can be found data showing that people organize themselves both within and across any group boundaries the anthropologist is trying to set:

Among the Maring, there are no chiefs or other political authorities capable of commanding the support of a body of followers, and the decision to assist another group in warfare rests with each individual male. Allies are not recruited by appealing for help to other local groups as such. Rather, each member of the groups primarily involved in the hostilities appeals to his cognatic and affinal kinsmen in other local groups. These men, in turn, urge other of their co-residents and kinsmen to “help them fight”. The channels through which the invitations to dance are extended are precisely those through which appeals for military support are issued. The invitations go not from group to group, but from kinsman to kinsman, the recipients of invitations urging their co-residents to “help them dance”. [Rappaport 1976: 27]

This is only a random example, but it shows how a large area of problems can be, and is, simply glossed over in anthropological writing. It assumes, for instance, that the expression “groups involved in hostilities” is unproblematic; however, it seems that they are, at least partly, composed of individuals who had nothing to do with the hostilities and came simply to help their kinsmen. Are “groups involved in hostilities” those that actually fight, or those normatively supposed to have generated the hostilities? Of course, we all know that it is groups and not individuals who indulge in warfare; we know it, until we are pressed to explain exactly what we mean. Then our knowledge somehow starts to melt. Another point is that Rappaport says that non-members of groups are invited individually by members, and that they decide whether or not to assist the group. It would seem, rather, that they decide whether to help an individual kinsman, and the fact of their helping his group is a simple consequence that has nothing to do with their decisions. This might seem a minor point, but surely if we are to present models of action systems, then actions and how people come to perform them are what we must look for.

Strathern says that agnation is an ideology, a way in which people can talk about their groups. However, when he analyses the *moka* system of ritual exchange of pigs and shells, he does it in terms of alliances and enmities of real segments:

Here the most apposite formulation we can offer is in maussian terms: the *moka* is a system of total prestations, involving economic, religious, aesthetic, and political components. The prestations are made between groups which are in an unstable state of alliance with each other: the only way they can maintain their alliance is by continuing positive, ceremonial exchanges of valuables. This is literally the way in which they “come to terms” with each other. [Strathern 1971: 214]

Throughout his book there is ample evidence that, whether the “clan-idiom” or “segment-idiom” in which *moka* exchange is rendered is his own or Melpa, the actual organization of activities is taking place as transactions between people both within and across any group boundaries, or, more exactly, between people as individual partners. For example on

table 13, p. 239, the actual distribution of pigs is tabulated as occurring between Minembi Engambo clan and Tipuka Kitepi clan. This is then broken down into gifts from members of three different subgroups of Minembi to members of three different subgroups of Kitepi; and even this classification is further detailed by specifying whether receivers were friends, specific affines, or specific cognates. Now, if the obligation to give exists between the categories member of Minembi clan and member of Kitepi clan, the specification of subgroups is redundant; and if it exists between specific individuals, then specification in terms of kingroups might be redundant; or, we would need to know much more about the relationship between conceptual groups and action groups to see its relevance. Moreover, it seems that big-men, who are far more prominent in *moka* exchange than groups as such, depend on the support also of other people than members of their segments [*cf. op. cit.: 155*]; this is glossed over by the statement that “big men struggle to obtain and increase their influence and eminence within their clan and outside it” [*op. cit.: 214*].

When discussing warfare, Strathern is far more conscious of the problems involved:

Throughout the discussion which follows, I deal with warfare as an affair between solidary groups of men. But it has to be remembered that there is a certain artificiality in this. In practice, on many occasions, only those men who had strong ties with the men of the principal combatant group (...) would actively go to their help as allies; and conversely men who had maternal kin or close affines in an enemy group so their own would either opt out of fighting that group or would at least avoid killing their close relatives in an engagement. [*ibid.: 64, note*]

In practical terms, this means that: “(...) structural analysis of alliances in warfare does not give much insight into its actual organization ...” [*ibid.: 70*]. In other words, a solidary group for warfare is not necessarily the same thing as a solidary group for economic help. By the same token, a group involved in a particular *moka* exchange might, again, be something different. And none of these have necessarily to be organized in accordance with, or taking into account, conceptual group boundaries.

I do not pretend that these quotations from several authors, taken very much at random, constitute any proof. I do believe though, that they show that in anthropological writings there are sufficient indications of important discrepancies between groups and group norm as spoken about, and actual transactions between people to legitimize questioning our own “group-idiom”. These discrepancies, when mentioned, are merely glossed over; they are seen, I suppose, more as a reminder that things are not so simple and therefore we have to choose important problems. And what is important still seems to be derived from Radcliffe Brown’s dictum that “science is not concerned with the particular, the unique, but only with the general, with kinds, with events which recur” [1952: 192]. This faith in generalization makes it necessary to assume that norms and groups must be “congealed systems of actions” because it is this assumption which makes it possible to translate the conceptual level of phenomena directly into the process of transactions.

However, the illustrative data I have mentioned and a growing body of evidence readily available in anthropological writings, would seem to indicate that such direct translation is not feasible. People do not behave in a certain way because they are members of specific groups, but because they have specific goals they intent to reach. If expected membership behaviour is instrumental, then the appropriate group membership will be invoked. If not, an individual will behave against a group norm. Again, group membership is simply

a factor to be considered in the process of making decisions about the activities. What we should be looking for are the mechanism directing this process and not the ways in which they are talked about.

As the last point in this preliminary analysis of the concepts of norm and group, I would like to discuss what I consider to be two rather important methodological errors which can be seen in the background of quite a number of anthropological interpretations. The first is the assumption that group membership somehow involves “the whole man” [cf. *Schneider 1965: 46–47*]. Or, formulated from a slightly different point of view, that group membership is an irreducible role; a primary non-composite role which it would be impossible or unimportant to divide into smaller components. This assumption was, I believe, satisfactorily proved invalid by Keesing on two different grounds. First, he shows, starting with Goodenough’s distinction of status and identity [1965], that among the Kwaio on Malaita the concept of a member of a descent group (the anthropologist’s, not a native’s concept) is a composite of several category-memberships. These may or may not be situationally relevant, according to the context. Thus, a man whose descent group membership is clear may be, in the context of land tenure, primary owner, secondary owner, steward, etc. [*Keesing 1970b: 130*]. Which of these identities becomes directly relevant will depend, to a large extent, on the partner in the interaction. In the context of funeral feasting, similar identities are those of feast sponsor, feast provider and primary contributor [*ibid.: 132*]. Thus, “member of a descent group” is in fact a term for the repository of a broad range of rights and duties, only a small part of which will be relevant in any actual context. On the other hand, in the same context there may appear as relevant other identities or role entailments of the same individual; consequently, at any given moment the identity assumed by any individual will be the result of a combination of his different sets of rights and duties.

Keesing’s second argument, again based on Goodenough’s propositions, is that our constructs of membership roles (in fact, he is speaking about kinship categories but, allowing for the differences in terminology, his argument can be extended to cover our problem as well) are built to cover central or focal members of that particular group, and are not necessarily equally valid for more marginal members:

When we think we are describing a role that corresponds to a kin term, we in fact are lumping together the composite of roles that usually converge on the focal members of the kin category (...) What is wrong with such a model is that the social identities that tend to coalesce for focal members of kin categories do not coalesce for more distant classificatory kin. [*Keesing 1969: 212–213*]

Keesing’s data and his argumentation show that unless the roles or identities are specified in contextual and performance terms, they will always be roles of category members, and, as such, composites of more specific identities which can be combined differently in a different context:

Appropriate action is defined by combining the role entailments (often partly contradictory) of the component social identities. [*Keesing 1970b: 129*]

I am not sure, however, whether in holding this view he is not partly returning to the same error he tries to criticize: namely, making a direct translation from the conceptual, or cultural, level to the transactional. Whether the one-to-one relation between group membership and actions is represented, on the side of group membership by one particular membership or by the intersection of several pertinent ones, is in the final analysis not so important. What is important is that again it is not the combination of an individual's group memberships, which by itself determines the course of his activities, but his invocation of them.

The second methodological error consists, similarly, in assuming that there is a one-to-one ratio between norms and actions. The norm is taken as fully describing or prescribing the complete action; the only behavioural alternative to it is to violate the norm. Fortes, in the above mentioned quote [see p. 13] tries to put it in more amenable terms, speaking about structural flexibility. However, the examples he introduces show more than anything else how a seemingly or *de facto* deviant behaviour can be made, ceremonially or otherwise, into a norm-conforming behaviour. What is made apparent in these examples is the flexibility of behaviour, and not the flexibility of norms.

Scheffler, in his analysis of Choiseul social structure, points out that:

The norms and rules (...) can be understood sociologically only by taking seriously the fact that they were and are meaningful only in their transactional contexts, the attributes of which were generally understood and usually left implicit. The "ideal" was, and still is, openness of the group to all legitimate descendants of the founder, and the implied context was "provided he is a good kinsman", "provided the group is not too full", "provided not too many generations have covered the link", "provided it is in our interest", and so on. These were shared understandings and mutual expectations which constrained claims which were made, and the reactions to them (...) They did not have to repudiate the norm that the group was always open, for they could question the legitimacy of any particular claim on genealogical grounds or upon other grounds as well (...) Therefore, in the final analysis there could be only a "working consensus" which defined the situation and the norms relevant to it for the moment ... [Scheffler 1965: 295]

In other words, norms can be taken as complete only at the conceptual level, only when considered as a part of the relevant stock of knowledge. When considered in relation to actions, norms represent only very general guidelines, only the visible pointers that exist against the broad background of taken-for-granted meanings, of limiting and specifying factors, which are left unmentioned since they do not relate to descriptions of generalized actions, but only to actual, contextually framed actions. It is the behavioural competence of a member of society that makes his manipulation of norms, i.e. his invocation of norms, and other specifying conditions, successful or unsuccessful. Again, there is ample evidence of this in the anthropological literature, but the data are usually glossed over without being given proper significance. Fortes mentions that:

A Tongo man has the right to seek the hand of the widow of a Yamoleg, a Sie, or a Biuk man; but in actual practice remarriage of widows is restricted by so many other conditions that this leviratic right is mainly significant as an ideological index of clanship. [Fortes 1945: 41]



This is again a case where there is a norm, but it has no direct bearing on what any individual might or might not do. For all practical purposes, invoking the norm of levirate can be seen not so much as demanding a wife, as establishing a claim for clan-membership. In the same sense:

(...) any Tongo man can pluck a handful of guinea corn or a bunch of groundnuts from a clansman's field at Tongo, if the two men are on good terms ... [*ibid.*: 94]

One could say that any man can pluck a handful of guinea corn from a friend's field; common clan-membership does not need to enter into it at all, except as the limiting factor that any friend who has a field around is likely to be a clansman as well. However, when expressed in clanship terms, it deals with the conceptual division of society, and has the limiting factor of friendship as its unspoken background.

We could continue analyzing the predominant anthropological use of concepts like norm and group still further, but I believe that the evidence I have presented so far is sufficient to allow us to draw a few simple conclusions. Anthropologists tend to use norms and groups to present a basically causal explanation of behaviour. Activities are "caused" by norms or group membership in the sense that the existence of norms or groups is considered sufficient to account for the behaviour. This presupposes the conception of groups, and norms, as somehow "real" entities, as things. This assumption became especially clear in the recent discussion of Melanesian and New Guinea data. It seems that membership criteria normally used to define kin groups are not very relevant for these societies: most anthropologists started, therefore, not to revise the concept of group, but to look for other criteria. The existence of a group as real "total" segment of a society has been, so far, questioned by very few of them. In the same sense, if the norms of a given society are found to be violated too often, it is usually seen as indication that they have been wrongly identified and that we must find the 'correct' ones. Again, the social change is conceived, for the purposes of explanation, as something happening to people and not something they do: social activities are explained as events caused by norms and somehow happening "through" people, rather than as their actions.

I have tried to show that groups and norms do not exist and act independently of people: they have no existence as "things", apart from forming a part of the relevant stock of knowledge of the members of society. They can be brought to bear on actions only by people invoking them. Thus, we have to make a sharp distinction between the conceptual or rational level of phenomena, and the transactional or processual level (some American anthropologists prefer to use, in this context, the terms cultural and social respectively; [*cf. Keesing 1970b*]). I am not implying that this distinction is not made, but that the relations between phenomena on both levels are treated as non-problematic. The transactional level, the activities of people, is usually seen as a direct translation, in terms of direct isomorphism. Once the anthropologist has established what are the relevant groups in the society in terms of membership criteria and the norms of behaviour of their members, he considers the actual transactions between people as being entailed by this model, or, conversely, he considers this model as being at the same time an action model. This is possible only because of the overall causal conception of social reality and of the deterministic conception of man, i.e. only at the cost of treating man as a "cultural dope", as it was aptly called.

In the first section of this paper, I have tried to show that both the relations between “happenings” and “actions” and between the conceptual (cultural) and transactional (social) levels of phenomena cannot be taken for granted and are, in fact, problematic. What we need is a bridging concept which would relate both levels, which would bring norms and group membership to bear upon actions. I consider as such a bridging concept the goal of an activity, that is the plan or project for the future to whose attainment people are committed. The intentionality, the tendency of people to attain goals through activities, is the compelling force of actions. Norms and group membership are, in this context, simply limiting factors to be taken into consideration, “the constraints and incentives that canalize choices” [Barth 1966: 1; Heath 1976: 25]. I would like to return in this context to Stanner’s remark that Nǀbembu are governed by their interests rather than by their principles. What it actually means is that until we understand why they apply such and such principles in such and such situations: we cannot understand what relations their principles have to their actions: and we can understand this only by taking into account their interests, i.e. their goals. However, before arguing the suitability of the concept of goal as a bridging concept between the conceptual level and the transactional level of phenomena, I would like to discuss in more general terms the problems related to causal and intentional explanations.

## II.

In the preceding section, I tried to show the interdependence between the confusion about the existential status of the phenomena which form the subject matter of our study, the causal conception of explanation and the use of some basic concepts. Following from this, I intend to argue, in the second section of this paper, three theses:

- (1) that true causal explanations or accounts of social reality can be formulated only by reduction *ad absurdum*;
- (2) that the causal explanations or accounts of social reality which are usually presented are made possible only because of the erroneous identification of events or because of the reification of analytical concepts;
- (3) that therefore, only explanations by purpose, or what could broadly be called teleological explanations, can present meaningful accounts or statements of the relationship between social events.

Both terms, causality and teleology, or causal and teleological explanation, can be and have been defined with varying degrees of amplitude: some definitions of causality include even the principle of intentionality. Any definition can easily become so inclusive that it loses any distinguishing property and therefore any significance. Since I am interested here not in arguing causality as such, but in distinguishing between causality and teleology, I intend to use the orthodox Humean conception which defines causality as a relation between two events, A and B, such that the occurrence of A is a necessary and/or sufficient condition for the occurrence of B. Whenever A occurs, B will occur, and whenever B occurs, A has occurred. Both events must be identifiable independently, and their relation must be extrinsic and contingent, not intrinsic and logical [see Wright 1971: 134 ff; MacIntyre 1967: 50]. Any explanation in these terms, or which can be reduced to these terms without being reduction *ad absurdum*, is a causal explanation.

The principle of teleology can be defined as a relation between two events such that the occurrence of A brings about the occurrence of B, or that A occurs in order that B should or could occur [cf. Wright 1971: 83 ff]. Therefore, the relations between A and B are intrinsic and logical, and an independent identification of each of them, if possible at all, is always problematic. Moreover, since A occurs in order that B might occur, this means that the occurrence or accomplishment of B must be willed, intended, or in some other way envisaged. This presupposes the existence of some willing, intending or envisaging agent. Any explanation in these terms, or which can be reduced to these terms without being reduction *ad absurdum*, is a teleological explanation.

Given these two definitions, let us now consider the first thesis, that true causal explanations of social reality can only be formulated at the cost of implicit or explicit reduction *ad absurdum*. MacIntyre asserts that:

Because there is no human action which does not involve physical movement we may suppose that to explain the movement is to explain the action. And this leads easily back to the view that to explain actions is to assign to them Humean causes. For we do look for Humean causes for physical movement. What this view overlooks is that if we, on being asked for an explanation of what we have done, refer it to an antecedent condition of a Humean kind, we precisely remove it from the class of actions and assign it to some other class, most probably the class of physical movement. [MacIntyre 1967: 56–57]

There is a simple logical catch in it: if the action is performed to attain something, as it undoubtedly is, then an antecedent condition, however important, cannot be a Humean cause. And if we disregard the goal, then the event ceases to be human action. This is what MacIntyre means by assigning it to another class, and what I call reduction *ad absurdum*. Consider the case of A murdering B with a gun: the explanation of A's action is usually supplied by stating his reasons for wishing B dead, as for example, that B stole all his money. This reason is, in common sense language and often in scientific discussion as well, presented as the cause of A's action. This is, however, doubly fallacious: in the first place, to wish B dead might be a necessary condition of A's killing him, but it definitely is not a sufficient condition. Demonstrably, there have been many people wishing somebody dead and still not killing him. And in the second place, B stealing all A's money is not a necessary condition of A wishing B dead; again, there are demonstrably many cases of people having their money stolen without wishing the perpetrator dead. So, between the three events, i.e. B stealing A's money, A wishing B dead, and A murdering B, there can be found no true causal relation. The only event which can be causally explained is the actual killing of B and the explanation must run in terms of physical movements and physical reactions. This would be a true causal explanation, but it does not explain any action: it explains a happening. The action was A murdering B, and that is not explained. We could as well say that B was murdered by a bullet which entered his heart.

In a slightly different sense the same reduction *ad absurdum* occurs in cases like Harris's treatment of Bathonga lineage fission [Harris 1968: 610–612]. He explains that a Bathonga lineage splits when it reaches the size of 100–200 people, because of the growing demographic pressures of both men and cattle under the given techno-environmental conditions. What he actually explains is, at best, the movement of a certain number of people from one place to another, and that is reduction *ad absurdum* of a highly structured

social event of the fission of a lineage [cf. *Stuchlik 1976: 9 ff*]. I suggest that a closer look at any Humean causal explanation of human behaviour will enable us to discover a similar reduction *ad absurdum*.

In actual fact, the presentation of the type of causal explanation that uses causality in the Humean sense, occurs comparatively rarely in social science. Usually the explanations that are offered can be considered causal only because the events covered by them are erroneously or improperly identified, or because analytical concepts involved in them are reified. The first point, the improper identification of events, derives from the fact that causal explanations refer not to single events but to categories of events: otherwise the proposition that event A always leads to event B could not have been formulated. There are at least two possible errors involved; the first consists of the improperly general definition of categories. Wright argues more or less the same point:

(...) Louis XIV died unpopular, because he pursued policies detrimental to French national interests. How could a covering law theorist defend his claim that there is a law implicit in the explanation? A general law which tells us that all rulers who (...) (do this) become unpopular, would provide a covering model of the case under discussion only if so many limiting and qualifying conditions were added to it that, in the end, it would be equivalent to saying that all rulers who pursue exactly similar policies to those of Louis XIV under exactly similar conditions to those which prevailed in France and the other countries affected by Louis's policies, become unpopular (...) this statement is no "law" at all, since of necessity it has only one instance, viz that of Louis XIV. [*Wright 1971: 24–25*]

In the same sense, we can explain the participation of men in an inter-village war in New Guinea by their village membership: it is because they are members of the village that they participate. But we will find that there are village members who do not fight, and kinsmen and friends of village members who fight though they are member of other village. Thus, unless conditioned by other factors, membership of a village is not a cause of fighting; and if it does need such specification, then it cannot be a cause at all. The general expression of the relation of the events must be formulated more or less in the following way: event A, unless for some reasons disregarded, leads to event. B, but there are other events that also, unless disregarded, lead to event B. Consequently, it is impossible properly to identify events A and B and the causal relation between them.

The second error involved here is that of circular identification. Let us exemplify this with the normal anthropological approach to the study of witchcraft accusations.

Wherever belief in witchcraft was found to flourish, the hypothesis that accusations would tend to cluster in niches where social relations were ill defined and competitive could not fail to work, because competitiveness and ambiguity were identified by means of witchcraft accusation. [*Douglas 1970: xviii*]

In other words, witchcraft accusations have been taken as indications of social tensions, and social tensions have been known to exist because they have led to witchcraft accusations. This is a circular explanation, because the only possible reformulation on more specific level is that the conditions that always lead to witchcraft accusations led to a particular witchcraft accusation, which was proved by the fact that witchcraft accusation

occurred. In the same sense, the events of social change following an external influence are seen as its consequence because this influence was present, and it caused the change because the change subsequently occurred. Or, a specific type of social organization or belief can be explained as caused by given ecological conditions, because it occurs in these ecological conditions.

The basic circularity of this type of explanation is, naturally, far less obvious in most cases, but the principle of defining cause by consequence and consequence by cause can usually be discerned. And this makes it impossible to show the causal relation, the relation of necessary conditionship, independently. Moreover, the presentation of such an explanation as causal is improper for still another reason: it takes for granted that “what people usually do” is the same as “what people necessarily do”. I have already said that causal explanations of this type can be re-stated as follows: event A is the cause of event B, unless the occurrence of A is for some reason disregarded or unless event B occurs for some other reason. This means that there is an element of non-necessity or option involved, and option cannot be exercised by events, only by people.

The second point of this thesis is that seemingly causal explanations can be formulated by reifying analytical concepts. Though the terms “cause” or “causation” are comparatively seldom used in anthropological writing, they are always implicitly present when functional, structural, or evolutionary explanations are formulated. Earlier in this paper, analyzing the use of the concept of group or group membership, I tried to show that it is often used as a term referring to a “thing”, to an entity that somehow causes members to behave in a definable way. Members’ behaviour is thus seen as a consequence of their group membership, and at the same time as fulfilling a “function” as far as the group as a whole is concerned. Let us briefly consider activities related to establishing and maintaining social order in a given group or society. Though it is undoubtedly established and maintained by human activities, and is thus their product, it is at the same time seen as determining or causing these activities. For instance, maintenance of social order is a necessary condition for the continuing existence of the group or society, and the group or society must secure this continuing existence through the activities of its members. Though disguised, it is still an attempt at causal explanation. However, there are two problems related to it: firstly, the above mentioned problem of identification. Since social order is a necessary condition, it is supposed to be maintained whatever happens, and therefore any members’ activities can be interpreted as functioning towards this (Gluckman’s treatment of conflict would be an apt illustration). Secondly, a still more serious problem is posed by the question: to whom or to what does the necessity of maintaining social order pertain? It is not a contingent causal necessity; it is a permanent project for the future, a permanent goal, and as such, presupposes an agent. This position is ascribed to the group or society as a whole, which is conceived of as having an aim: to maintain its own existence. But a society or group is not a “thing” or phenomenon *per se*; it has to be inferred from the activities of the members. In fact, it is a concept which permits us to see the behaviour of a plurality of individuals as some sort of order. By ascribing aims to such a concept we are reifying it, and moreover, endowing it with intentionality. Thus, even such an explanation can pass as causal only because there is the basic teleological notion behind it.

Thus, apart from true causal explanations, which are irrelevant since they do not explain social actions but physical movements or happenings, explanations in anthropology can

be presented as causal only because of their basic circularity, or because they have taken-for-granted or hidden teleological notions behind them. This conclusion is not particularly new: some theoretical approaches; such as functional structuralism and evolutionism, have been criticized for their hidden teleological assumptions. However, such critiques were oriented against what could be called false teleology, based on the reification of concepts. If, as our third thesis, we want to argue that teleological explanations are meaningful accounts of social reality, we firstly have to separate them from these false teleologies. In the broadest sense of the word, teleological explanations consist of accounting for activities by events they are intended to bring about. These events are proposed or otherwise envisaged future states, i.e. goals. Now, undoubtedly the basic dimension of activity is its purpose; usually this purpose or goal even gives the activity its name. At the same time, such a goal presupposes the existence of an agent, which can only be a particular individual. Thus, by conceiving of people as actors, having goals or intentions and behaving so as to attain them, we are not adding anything. Moreover, this assumption can be shown to be generally valid, since people are able to make statements about their intentions and define future states envisaged by them.

I do not suppose it is necessary to argue the feasibility of presenting teleological explanations: undoubtedly they can be formulated and their usefulness in some limited cases is more or less accepted. What has to be shown is their general usefulness. This can best be achieved by demonstrating the invalidity of objections and critiques which are or can be formulated. I am limiting myself to the objections against what I have called true teleological explanations, since the false, or hidden teleology has been discussed already.

The first objection which is, or can be, formulated is that teleological explanations, though possibly true, are trivial. Their triviality stems from the fact that they either (a) deal with a closed action-goal dyad, of the type “a man cultivates his plot in order to, or with the intention of, getting a harvest”, which does not have any additional explanatory value beyond the terms of the statement themselves; or (b) relate anything a man does to some sort of general goal or intention, taking for granted the relation between any particular activity and this goal. Thus, “B helps his neighbour with the harvest in order to maintain, or with the intention of maintaining, good relations and his position in the community” might be a typical example. Since B’s position in the community is important in most aspects of his life, presumably he will try to maintain it through different activities. Again, no added explanatory value can be found in this statement. These objections can be sustained only by ignoring the indexical properties of verbal expressions and the puzzle-solving properties of an explanation. As I have mentioned, the statement of the goal usually names or implicitly denotes the activity; the relation between them is intrinsic and logical. There is no social activity that could be called running: there is running to keep fit, running to catch the train, etc. Therefore, the question “Why is he running?” and the answer “To catch the train” is not properly an explanation, but the identification of the activity. Once this is established, the question “why is he running?” actually reads “why is he running to catch the train” and the puzzle to be solved is not why such and such physical activity is performed, but why the man needs, wants, or intends to catch the train, to what end is catching the train a means. In the same sense, the question “why does this man cultivate the land?”, taken at face value, is nonsensical. Either it should be: “What does he do?” which calls for the identification “he cultivates the land”, or it should be understood as

“why does he want the harvest?”, since to cultivate land is the name of the activity which brings the harvest. And even such a question is nonsensical unless there are some other problems involved, such as, for example, the knowledge that the man who is cultivating will not profit from the harvest, or the knowledge that he does not normally gain his living by cultivating land.

Thus, teleological explanations are not necessarily trivial, since they are not statements of “what a person does” but of “why a person does what he does”. They permit us to link continuously the goals people in the means-ends process and thus provide us with new information. I would like to discuss this briefly in the case of the payment of blood-compensation, *dia*, among the Berti of Darfur [see Holy 1967].

Blood-feud is usually presented as an activity pertaining to a corporate descent group, as is a possible alternative to blood-feud, the payment of compensation by the guilty group to the family of the dead man. Every member should participate in payment as a normative duty following from his membership. “A lineage member would never refuse to participate in the *dia* (the payment of compensation) (...) Attitudes to the culprit and his behaviour are of secondary importance compared with the obligations of lineage kinship and with the responsibility of each lineage member for the behaviour of all the others” [*ibid.*: 471]. However, Berti live in villages, which are genealogically homogenous only in very exceptional cases. Though members of the same lineage, which is the *dia*-paying unit, form a majority of inhabitants, there are also some individuals who do not belong to the lineage. Nevertheless, when the lineage has to pay *dia*, these non-members also participate. For lineage members, there is no problem involved; the intentionality of their behaviour is clear: “The payment of *dia* has its precisely defined social end with the Berti: to settle definitively and to bring to an end conflict between the members of two different maximal lineages” [*ibid.*: 473]. But, as Holy points out, since the non-members do not belong to either of these, their participation can hardly be accounted for by this purpose, and it remains problematic. On the other hand: “The only activity in which the maximal lineages of the Berti appear corporately is the payment of *dia* and therefore this is the only way a man can proclaim his membership. It is also the most significant factor in the integration of maximal lineages as social groups, and often the decisive criterion of lineage membership” [*ibid.*: 473]. When a non-member participates in paying *dia*, he is not proclaiming membership, as he does not have the right to do so. But he is making a bid for membership, which can be, and usually is, approved by members, though it might be a lengthy process. The approval is formally expressed in an arrangement of genealogy such as to prove that this man is a rightful member of the lineage [see examples in Holy 1967: 476].

In this situation, the question “why do members of the maximal lineage participate?” is trivial, unless understood as a question either about the importance of maximal lineage membership or about the broader social context. On the other hand, the question “why do non-members of the lineage participate?” is not trivial, since it cannot be answered by stating the obvious goal. At the same time, it cannot be answered in a causal way which has to postulate payment of *dia* as a function of lineage membership and payment by non-members as a contingent deviation. Also, it is not trivial for yet another reason. It is an example of a case in which the statement of goal by the actor, could be detrimental to its attainment: it can never be presented as contributing to the *dia* of the lineage to gain membership, but to establish the *status quo* with the damaged lineage.

Thus, I suggest that the objections about the triviality and obviousness of teleological explanations can be sustained only when the asking of trivial questions is assumed, or, more exactly, when activities are taken as isolated events outside their social context.

The second objection to teleological explanations is that it is supposed to conceive and interpret social life in terms of individuals' activities and goals, that necessarily means to atomize it and to give minimal and platitudinous accounts. Actually, both the objection and the answer to it partially overlap with the first objection and answer. It can be sustained only against an extremely reductionist viewpoint which would treat activities as isolated events (possibly a rigid version of behaviourism would be the best example), or if the critic fallaciously treats society "as if it is somehow a separate level of existence, outside of the hearts and minds of live-and-breathing human beings" [Douglas 1971: 9]. However, if it can be shown that, even assuming the goal-orientation of human behaviour, there are legitimate ways of postulating the existence of intersubjective reality and analyzing it, the second objection also becomes invalid.

When teleological explanations or explanations by intention are treated in strictly philosophical discussions of action, they are supposed to be based on a nomic relation between events somewhat similar to that in causal explanation. Though it is "more complex, so to say oblique", it is still seen as "a relation of necessary conditionship" [see Wright 1971: 83]. This does not take into account that there are "right" and "wrong" ways of reaching a goal not only from the viewpoint of the individual effectivity of the action, but also from the viewpoint of the acceptability of that action by relevant others. Thus, of the two actions described as: "in order to have money he printed some", and "in order to have money he cashed a cheque", the first could possibly be seen as immediately more effective, but the second is more "right" in the sense that it does not imply any unwanted consequences for the actor. Or, to use a more anthropological example, when a member of a tertiary section among the Cyrenaica Bedouins, involved in a blood feud, wants to take his revenge, the most effective way would seem to be to kill any member of the guilty section. However, this would be a "wrong", and therefore not effective action, if that member happened to be his matrilineal relative or in-law [see Peters 1967]. Thus, the action or ways of attaining goals have unstated limiting conditions. These have been given different names in different anthropological theories, such as, for example, "structural patterns", "moral injunctions", "norms" etc, and often taken as external forces causing or determining behaviour [cf. section I of this paper]. However, as Berger and Luckmann have demonstrated, they grow from what can be called habitualization and institutionalization of activities [cf. Berger - Luckmann 1972: 70 ff]. Every performed activity that accomplishes its goal has, as its consequence, a limitation of options for any similar subsequent activity. If this consequence is relevant for several or many people, this limitation of options can be called an institutionalization of the activity. And since this relevance is shared by all of them, it leads to the emergence of intersubjectively valid institutions. This point can be illustrated with Barth's treatment of social order among the Swat Pathans. Disagreeing with Radcliffe Brown, who sees social order very much as a structural prerequisite for society, Barth considers it as "an unsought product of the way in which smaller groups meet in interaction and opposition" [Barth 1959: 1]. In other words, it is a consequence of the intentional activities of individual members of society. They plan their actions according to their individual strategies, to reach their specific goals, and, by doing so, are limiting



their own and others' choices in how to reach similar goals in the future. Thereby, they are defining limiting conditions, or, more specifically, rules under which the game of accomplishing political and other goals has to be played. The resulting set of rules, that is, social order, is vested with a kind of facticity and may be studied in its own right, but has no other source of existence than individual human activities.

As we can see, the assumption of the intentionality of behaviour does not preclude us from studying the social consequences of this behaviour. On the contrary, it enables us to give meaningful accounts of how they emerge, how they are combined into a set of limiting conditions for subsequent actions, and how they are ascribed a quasi-independent existence. This, I believe, demonstrates that in teleological explanations there is no necessary limitation to isolated human activities and no necessary break in continuity of explanation from a single human activity to large social constructs.

The second point in my argument is also related to the assumption of a nomic tie, of the necessary conditionship of an event occurring in order that another event should or could occur. This is, I believe, erroneous in yet another way, namely, in assuming that the basic pattern of one action to one goal obtains. If this were so, we could obtain long and involved explanatory chains, but these would be lineal and would not account for the combined patterns of social life. In actual fact, the same action can often be seen as a means to two or more ends. Consider, for example, the behaviour of a worker in a car factory: it is oriented towards the goal of producing cars, but at the same time towards the goal of maintaining his family. This means that his actions can be seen as having two different settings, two different sets of limiting conditions. Both, however, can be separated only analytically. In actual fact, both settings form a part of the same social reality and combine to limit the worker's actions in specific ways. He is expected to work with enough intensity to ensure that an adequate quota of cars will be produced, but also to ensure a sufficient amount of money for his family. He should work as much as possible, so as to gain as much money as possible, but not so much as to incur the disapproval of his co-workers, and not so much as to debilitate his other actions within the family (such as, for example, not to be so tired as to have to refuse to play football with his son on Sunday), and so on. The possibility of activities having multiple goals is another legitimate way of making the assumption of the intentionality of behaviour a methodological principle for the analysis of intersubjective reality along the whole continuum between a single activity and a broad social setting.

The third and final point in this argument refers to the assumption that the relation between action and goal necessarily involves only one individual and, therefore, that only single actions, or lineal chains of actions of the same actor, can be accounted for teleologically. This assumption ignores two facts: firstly, that a man can define as his goal the future state of other people; thus, his goal may be to get rich quick, but also to defend orphans and fair maidens, or to raise his society from poverty or oppression. And secondly, that most human actions are interactions, i.e. actions with or toward other people. Unless an individual's goal is accepted, partially or completely by others, no meaningful interaction is possible. For instance, when a farmer in Galicia invites a number of people to help him with the cleaning of stables and fertilizing the fields, they do not come in order to do it for themselves. The purpose of their actions is to get the work done for the organizer. Conceivably, they personally could not care less whether he will have enough manure on the fields, but they have to come in order to maintain stable relations with him and to be able to count

on his future help. Moreover, while they are working, their activities must be understood as leading to the goal of fertilizing as much land as possible for the organizer. This goal is again intersubjectively shared and the behaviour of people may legitimately be studied in relation to both their personal goals and the intersubjectively shared ones.

Thus, the teleological approach instead of limiting the possibilities of explanation to single actions or single actors makes it possible to study the emergence of intersubjective reality and thus turns our attention to social processes instead of social forms. There are, I suppose, other objections against explanation by goals which have been raised or could be raised, but I believe that they can be reduced so as to fall into one of the two types I have discussed here and tried to demonstrate as invalid.

### III.

In the third and final section of this paper, I intend to argue that to assume the intentionality or goal-orientation of behaviour leads to a reformulation of what are problematic and non-problematic areas of social reality. Positivist social science, by implicitly denying the purposefulness of activities (i.e. by not taking into account, in the explanatory schemes, the meaning that activities have for people), defines activities themselves as problematic. Since the action is analytically separated from its goal, it becomes unexplicated and the starting problem is seen as “why does this activity occur”? Thus, a dance in honour of the ancestors, though continuing to be called so, is conceived of simply as a dance, with the ensuing problem: why is it performed? The answer to this problem is usually formulated as follows: to reinforce the ancestor-cult, which is the ideological expression of the agnatic charter, which maintains the structural equilibrium of the society. Or possibly: because at this stage of evolution the society is characterized by an agnatic charter which necessarily expresses itself in ancestor-cults. Such a formulation of the question further leads to conceiving of activities as functions of membership of societies and/or groups, seen as composed of unambiguous and exclusively defined membership roles. Since the pluralities of physical actors, that is groups or societies, are thought to be directly observable or quasi-observable, their existence is unproblematic. The general problem is exactly what form they have in terms of quasi-physical properties, of membership criteria and membership activities. The relation between activities and social structure, or simply the social whole being studied, is assumed to be a functional one, that is, for explanatory purposes, a causal one. Since a causal relation is basically unproblematic in the sense that it does not need to be explained but needs only to be discovered or stated, the main problem area is that of social forms. Once the pertinent groups or segments of the society are properly identified, and the systems of activities they normatively perform are established, the society is satisfactorily accounted for.

As I have tried to show in the preceding two sections, such an account can be produced only at the cost of committing two fallacies. One is the reification of concepts and therefore the ascription of a causal character to notional constructs, and the second is the failure to distinguish between activities and happenings, between processes planned and performed by individuals, and processes seen as occurring somewhat independently of individuals, in the “objective” social world. When we try to evade the fallacies, we will find ourselves faced with different types of problems and with the necessity of presenting different types

of accounts. Though categorization always simplifies, I believe that these problems can usefully be considered as falling into three main types: the choice or manipulation of goals, the recruitment of actors into interactional situations, and the emergence of intersubjectively shared social reality. All of them are, of course, interrelated, and the explanations will usually cover problems belonging to all three categories. Let us now consider these categories in more detail.

As I have mentioned before, when we are asking, “why does a man (or a group of men) perform such and such an activity” we are not demanding information about the immediate goal, as such information is entailed by the activity itself. Thus, the question is not: “why do the people dance?” but “why do they dance in honour of their common ancestor?” And the answer ought to be in terms of why they consider it useful or necessary to honour their ancestor, or why specifically by dancing. The activity itself, observable and named as it is, is nonproblematic; the problem lies in discerning why it is important to honour the common ancestor, to what ends honouring the ancestor is a means. Now, goals have been defined here as projected or planned future states of affairs, to be accomplished by specific activities. Any individual has, theoretically speaking, at any time an almost unlimited choice of possible future states of affairs. He could, literally, tell the truth, go fishing, or shoot at the moon. In practical terms, however, there are two main limiting factors to his choice: the first is his actual, already accomplished state, and the second is that his goals must be acceptable or understandable to specific others, since his activities are performed in a social setting. So, the definition can be reformulated in the following way: goals are intersubjectively approved or permitted, or at least understandable future states. Even so, there is a considerable element of choice: people do not simply perform activities as agents of external forces, but opt for specific goals. The analysis of their options, of what goals are chosen, and how they are decided upon, should reveal generalizable criteria in terms of the structures of relevancies of goals, and of unstated limiting conditions for their choice. When, for instance, a Mapuche Indian has a field of wheat which is too large to be harvested by him alone, he has three possible alternatives to choose from (that is, socio-cultural alternatives, or culturally perceived alternatives, [cf. Howard 1963: 409]): he can hire a labourer, or a harvesting machine, or organize *mingaco*, a half-festive working party. Which of these alternatives will be chosen depends on the exact definition of the goal and on the differing relevance he will ascribe to different limiting conditions. In the case of one particular individual who finally decided for *mingaco*, the following factors entered: firstly, his already accomplished state; he was one of the most influential members of the community and could therefore count on a large number of helpers. Secondly, he refused the alternative of hiring a labourer, since it would have meant a high cost in ready cash. At the same time, hiring a harvesting machine would have meant paying in kind, thus spending too large an amount of wheat; moreover, the machine cuts wheat too high and he would lose almost all the straw. He also believed that the action of the machine caused the grain to fall from the ears. Therefore, he decided for *mingaco*, which cost him only food and wine for helpers [see Stuchlik 1976b: 113 ff].

In such situation, we are still dealing with direct goals and more or less simple choices; therefore, the explanations will be rather obvious and will not contain any, or much, new information. However, the same principle may also be applied in complex social situations. Let us consider the case of a Central European country, in which, during the

period between 1948 and approximately 1955, about 90% of agricultural lands were converted into cooperatives and state farms. The agricultural produce from these cooperatives dropped during these and immediately following years, and was lower than would have been the sum total of the produce from all the individual farms comprising the collective enterprises, had they remained in private hands. Though no detailed and professional research was done, explanations were usually presented in terms of the deviant ethics of individuals, rather graphically illustrated by the then current slogan, "Who does not steal, robs his family". That is, the relative failure of the cooperatives was ascribed to the fact that individual members were not only performing inadequately, but also trying to seek illegitimate gains or advantages. This was presented, though not on a fully professional level, as the irreducible explanation. People are stealing because they are bad, and because they are stealing, the cooperative is failing. Such an explanation is on the one hand naive, on the other hand obviously true and therefore trivial. The problem can be accounted for on a different level, namely in terms of goal-orientation and the hierarchy of goals of the individuals involved. Before a cooperative was formed, every farm was owned, and usually worked, by one family. The production activities of its members were oriented towards a specific goal, the highest possible produce. But this goal was identical with, or more exactly subsumed under the goal of maintaining the family. The personnel of the situations of production and situations of consumption was identical, and the performance of production activities immediately and directly influenced the consumption within the family. Also, there was no alternative to maintaining the family save working on the farm. When a cooperative was formed, the fields and equipment of all farms were put together to form one complex of means of production, and a stable personnel for the collective production situation was formed, composed of one or more members of every family. However, the families remained as consumption groups. The goal of the highest possible produce for the production situation in the cooperative ceased to be for any individual member identical with, or directly subsumed under the goal of the family as a consumption group. Theoretically, any member's production activities should have been oriented towards attaining both of them. However, since the personnel of the cooperative was a new group, and moreover, not entirely favourably inclined towards collective agriculture, while families were long established and fixed groups, the people started to measure the effectiveness of their work by the accomplishment of the family goals. In other words, they were choosing and performing their activities so as to add in the best way to the consumption of the family, regardless of whether or not the goals of the production situation were being attained to the same degree, or even satisfactorily. Moreover, every family had retained a small plot for its own use and during their free-time they were performing competitive activities which represented alternative means to attain the family goals. This ultimately led to putting time and equipment destined for cooperative use to this competitive individual use, that is, in legal terms, stealing. However, they were not stealing because they were ethically bad, but because they were aware of the duplicity of the goal-orientation of their activities. They were expected to attain through the same activities goals, which over a very short period of time ceased to be identical and became not only separated, but often opposed.

Thus, the choice of goals is made by applying criteria of relevance or importance. These criteria are intersubjectively shared within a given social setting. Upon analysis and comparison, they can be formulated in general terms and inform the formulation of principles

of organization of that social setting. This is one of the problems treated by McFarlane. Analyzing gossip in a Northern Ireland community, he argues that people are using gossip both to attain specific goals, and continually to redefine their relations with others. Instead of being a “tension-releasing” or “conflict-containing”, self-maintenance mechanism of the society, as it has been interpreted elsewhere, the significance of gossip in this setting lies in the fact that it is directly manipulated by individuals; therefore understanding this manipulation can lead to the ways in which people conceptualize their social reality.

Another set of problems related to the analysis of goals is discussed in D. Riches’s paper. Specifically, he is concerned with procedures used in the identification of goals. Since goals are non-observable, notional phenomena, they can be ascertained only by inference. Riches points out that the observer’s logic, ethnocentrism, and his taking at face value of some of the actors’ statements, may lead to the false identification of goals in the same way as the ascription of functions to activities. His paper raises a question which is slightly different from those we have dealt with so far: since goals or intentions are basically subjective, should they not be treated as psychological phenomena? In other words, how can they be made available for sociological analysis? To put it still more bluntly, how do we know that the goal stated by the actor or inferred by the anthropologist is the “real” intention or goal? There is, I believe, an answer to this question. The reality of the goal consists in the meaningfulness of action. That is, if the action or system of actions is meaningful to the actors and specific others, given their relevant knowledge, then the goal is real in the sense of attainable, regardless of whether or not it is attainable according to the knowledge of anybody else. It is somewhat like the problem of believing in God: if a man says he believes, and in all relevant instances acts as if he believes, how can I be sure that he really believes? Sociologically, the reality of his believing is contained in his actions as believer: his actions are meaningful as those of a believer.

We can return here to the example of a marriage bid in a Jordanian village: Shaykh Husayn refused the proposal because the prospective groom and his father were lacking in piety, since they were not attending mosque services regularly. Their position as not “true” believers was seen as demonstrated by their activities. At the same time Shaykh Husayn’s position as a “true” believer was demonstrated by his refusal of the marriage on the grounds of the lack of piety of the bidders. And there is still another conclusion that we can draw from this example. Shaykh Husayn later told the anthropologist that his real reason for refusal was a past quarrel between his and the bidders’ family. This does not diminish the “reality” of his religious reason, unless we assume that there exists a strictly one-goal-one-action ratio, and that discovering the “true” goal makes all the other mentioned or known goals invalid. A man in New Guinea helps his cognate in war; evidently, his goal is to try and ensure the victory of his cognate, or his cognate’s village, because otherwise his action would have no meaning. At the same time, he is also investing in an obligation for future return, specified or unspecified. He may also be trying to get rid of an enemy who happens to be, at the same time, his cognate’s enemy, and so on. Since all these intentions can be fulfilled by the same action, they are all “real” in the sense of attainable. It would be difficult to see how the reality of one would make all the rest unreal or false. The importance of Riches’s paper in this context is that it points out that some goals may be more readily available for sociological analysis than the others, and that the process of identifying them is, in itself, problematic.

The second area of problems that necessarily emerge when we assume the goal-orientation of human behaviour to be its most important property is the recruitment of actors. As I have argued before, questions of why people do something cannot be questions about causes and consequences, but about intentions and conditions. Activities, or more exactly, people behaving, are the only directly observable phenomena in our field. However, activities are conceived as such, as meaningful procedures for attaining goals not only by the actor but necessarily by specific others. Thus, the subject matter of our study is not a single action of a single individual, but a social action, an action performed with, towards, or with respect to, other people. The lowest possible unit in which an individual's action can be related to the actions and intentions of others may be called an interactional situation, which therefore represents a useful basic unit for our analysis. An interactional situation may be conceived of as composed of two or more actors (personnel) and their activities, and defined or delimited by the nearest goal (in time or complexity) to which all of them can relate their actions. This goal does not necessarily have to be the projected future state of all of them: it is simply the nearest point to which all component activities can be referred so as to make a meaningful whole [cf. Stuchlik 1976b: 8 ff]. Every participant may have his own goal or goals, which he wishes to attain by his actions, but if there is no shared definition of the goal of the situation, then no interactional situation exists, even though individuals may seemingly act towards each other. This can be illustrated by Garfinkel's experiments [cf. Garfinkel 1967: 38 ff] in which students were given the task of coming home and, without stating it, trying to behave as lodgers. Since there was no shared definition of the situation, these experiments usually ended with parents refusing to continue in interaction to which they could put no purpose, or ascribing to the students the purpose of trying to annoy them [cf. Holy 1976a: 38 ff].

The interactional situation is an event structured on two levels. The first one is that of actions; actions have to be performed in determined temporal and/or spatial sequences in order to accomplish or lead to the accomplishment of the goal. Given the logical and intrinsic relation of action and goal, this level is unproblematic. The second level is that of actors: unless the actions necessary for goal-attainment are specific to individuals (which would be exceptional), they define not particular persons but performers of activities. Therefore, individuals are interchangeable and their recruitment into the situation is not entailed by its goal. The relation between individuals and their participation is not intrinsic and logical, and is, consequently, problematic. Again, this can best be shown with an actual case, that of the already mentioned *mingaco*, economic help in wheat-harvesting among the Mapuche Indians [for more detailed data see Stuchlik 1976b]. As a structure of actions, *mingaco* is organized in clear sequences (preparation, cutting of wheat with sickles, gathering of ears in small heaps, etc.). However, this organization makes no specific demands as far as personnel is concerned. Every adult Mapuche (over 14 years of age) is more or less equally qualified to perform any of the necessary operations, there is no special training involved, no unusual physical endurance required, only a minimum of experience. This means that the man organizing *mingaco* could invite anybody, or that anybody could come. Such situations of mutual help are rather commonplace in anthropological literature; the participation of people, i.e. the recruitment of personnel, is often defined as a membership duty in a specific group (local community, lineage, etc.), that is, causally determined and unproblematic. However, further analysis of *mingaco* shows that there is no automatic

membership duty to help; in fact, there is no corporate group which could be shown to have a mutual obligation to help each other, as every individual has to make a series of decisions whom to invite, and conversely, everyone invited has to choose whether or not to participate. Thus, the obligation is not contained in group membership but in direct interpersonal relationships based on reciprocity. And reciprocity is an emergent property that derives its existence from continuing interactivities.

In the present volume, two papers are dedicated to this problem. Holy, analyzing economic help among the Toka in Zambia, and Iturra, treating the same subject in a Galician village, both show that a group-centered analysis cannot formulate a satisfactory account of any particular case. The composition of personnel in any case of help is the emergent result of the strategies of people involved in it, and these strategies have to be understood, in the broadest sense of the word, as means-to-end processes of individuals.

Both papers raise still another problematic point, that of the relation between the notional (cultural) and the interactional (social) level of phenomena [*see here, p. 20*]. The nonproblematic causal interpretation of activities is often strengthened by the fact that people themselves formulate statements about membership duties as explanations. Economic help is seen, by people themselves, as the duty related to village membership, blood revenge as a duty related to lineage membership etc. Thus, the people have model of a more or less permanent distribution of individuals into groups, and of activities as pertaining to these groups. However, since any such duty can be disregarded, this model is not a causative but an instrumental one; and it can be instrumental only in goal attainment. In other words, it remains on the conceptual level unless or until invoked, and it is not invoked just because it exists, but only if it is useful. Thus, by analyzing individuals' strategies in interactional situations, we are able to discern whether group membership is invoked, and of which particular groups. However, this should not be seen as a comment on the existential status of groups and segments. Interactional situations are, by their very nature, passing and unrepeatable events; the folk model of structure gives people a means for talking about social reality as something perduring. The fallacy begins only when we assume that this idiom is also an action idiom.

Finally, the third important area of problems is that of the relation between acting individuals and what is usually called the structure of society, or simply society. Again, this is not, properly speaking, problematic for positivistic social science. Social facts are defined as having an existence independent of individuals. The relation between both levels is unidirectional: social structure causes individuals to behave in a specific way so as to secure its continuing existence, or its necessary change. We have assumed, on the contrary, that the existence of social facts depends uniquely and exclusively on individuals, i.e. on their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Since individuals are at the same time assumed to behave so as to attain their specific goals, the problem is how the goal-attaining activities of individuals can lead to the emergence and existence (continuous re-creation) of a social, that is, intersub- jectively shared, world. Moreover, since the relation between social facts and individuals' actions is not that of direct causality, it also becomes problematic, in the sense of needing to be explained.

Both problems can be re-stated in the following way: the assumption of the goal-orientation of behaviour, and of principles of methodological individualism in general, does not entail, as some objections would seem to imply, the denial of the social world; it merely

means that it is not conceived of as an “objective” reality, as composed of “things”, but as a set of intersubjectively shared notions. However, the burden of proof is upon ourselves in the sense that we should be able to formulate explanations which can account, in an uninterrupted line, for the whole range of phenomena, from single actions of individuals to the existence of ordered social life. This is, of course, an extremely complex task and one which cannot be discussed, even in a comparatively long paper, in any but a most cursory way. However, there are, I believe, a few points that can be made to indicate how it might be accomplished. In a sense, these points have already been discussed in this paper; what is necessary now is to show their consequences for the present problem.

In the first place, let us return once more to the distinction the philosophers of action make between activities and happenings [see *here*, p. 3 ff]. As I said earlier, these are not necessarily discrete categories: an event which “happens” to an individual may be the result of the activities of another individual. The phenomena with which people are faced may be constructed by the activities of others. Since these phenomena do not cause behaviour, but act as limiting conditions to be reckoned with, there are two problems related to their existence and maintenance: firstly, how they came into being, which is in principle explicable by presenting an historical account of their emergence (it may be impossible, in many cases, to trace the actual process, but that does not invalidate the principle); and secondly, how they are continually maintained and re-created by people taking them into account in their behaviour. This can be illustrated with reference to Barth’s study of political leadership among Swat Pathans. His main contention is that social order is not an inherent property of a society, but an emergent consequence of the strategic transactions of the members. His study, which is itself a critique of the structural-functional approach, was in its criticized for disregarding some determinant “objectively” existing conditions, such as the power structure [cf. *Paine 1974*]. But Barth does account for the existing power structure: he shows briefly how it came into being and is maintained as a result of the specific activities of Pathan groups (the invasion of Swat valley, occupation and division of lands, armed and peaceful manoeuvring of competing individuals, etc.) He also shows how non-Pathans cope with it; how they take it into account in formulating their strategies, how they exchange their support (necessary for maintaining the landlords’ positions and thus for maintaining the power structure), for landlords’ services (necessary for sustaining their families), etc. Therefore, such objections are invalid unless understood in one of the two following ways: (a) he is being criticized for not conceiving of the power structure, or any other aspect of social structure, as an “objective” external force which directly causes the behaviour of people. Since this is exactly what he set out to disprove, this objection would amount simply to a *petitio principii*, or, (b) he is being criticized for speaking of transactions and strategic behaviour even when people are limited in their options and forced to enter into transactions under circumstances over which they have no control, such as the power structure. Again, since he set out to show how power structure is continually re-created by people enacting it, it would be difficult to argue that they have no control over it. Moreover, this might be a valid point if we were discussing practical ethics, but not when we are discussing methodology. Sociologically, a transaction is a situation in which each partner, under limiting conditions known to both and agreed by them, tries to attain his own goal with the help of the other. Whether the transaction is entered into willingly or unwillingly, whether the limiting conditions are accepted with a smile or with



a gnashing of teeth, is irrelevant. Demonstrably, at least some, if not most peasant rebellions in European history started not because peasants intended to destroy the existing power structure, though this goal may have emerged later on, but because landlords started to impose unknown, hitherto non-existent, limiting conditions on peasants' strategic behaviour. Known and accepted limiting conditions, severe as they might have been, did not necessarily lead to a rebellion: they were simply "calculated into" the behaviour.

The historical process of the emergence of a social phenomenon, such as a structured group, is the subject of my own paper later in this volume. Though on a far smaller scale than the above examples, it applies the same principle: I am trying to show how a structured group of members of a sportsclub in a Mapuche community emerges through repeated performances of particular individuals. Another point that follows from this paper is the importance of the continuing maintenance of one's position by acting in a definable way. Once an individual has attained a certain position, and assuming that one of his goals is to retain it, he has to fulfil the expectations of others, which he himself might have created, as to his performance. This is the only way in which they can include him in their strategic considerations. Thus, his "obligations", or his position as defined for him and others, acquires a level of non-psychological facticity in the sense that this definition is intersubjectively shared and he is conceived of as its incumbent. The same attitudes can be seen not only towards individual roles or positions, but also towards conceptual groups: thus a "lineage", a "state", or a "government", is expected by relevant others to behave in a specific way, because some individuals seen as members of these groups have already behaved so, or because it would be consistent with the ways in which they already have behaved. This consistency, based on previous transactions, makes it possible for people to take into account, in their strategic considerations, any phenomenon, from a single direct partner in transaction to a complex social form.

This is, of course, only a very brief and simplified sketch of the problems involved in using the goal-orientation of behaviour as a basic principle for explaining complex social phenomena. What it shows clearly is, I believe, that social phenomena can be studied as "things", i.e. as having an independent existence, only at the cost of "defining away" that which is the proper subject matter of social science, the ways in which people create their social world and live in it. In a sense, this is also the point Milton makes in her paper about the study of myth. Myth, if anything, has been studied above all as a thing which "does" something for a society as a whole, such as reinforcing values. Even if the difference between myth as a form and myth in use is sometimes mentioned, the use is again conceived of socially, i.e. it is the use by incumbents of social roles, not by people invoking myths as a part of their stock of relevant knowledge, which is used for transactions. And yet myths, as any other conceptual (cultural) phenomena, emerge as human creations and have no direct relevance for people's behaviour unless invoked.

I have said at the beginning of this paper that much of our present theoretical and methodological discussion stems from our confusion as to the existential status of the phenomena and events we study. The Durkheimian dictum about social facts being things and therefore external to and independent of individuals is still very much present in social science, though in a "more sophisticated form" [*cf. Douglas 1971: 9*]. In this introductory paper I have tried to show that to postulate the existence of social reality as "objectively" factual, and therefore as a causal explanans of behaviour, leads to an erroneous definition

of problematic areas and consequently to erroneous explanations, or, more exactly, to explanations not of human activities but of “happenings” [see a similar argument in Barth 1966: 1 ff]. I have argued that, if we take the assumption of the goal-orientation of human behaviour seriously and consistently, it will provide us with a basic methodological principle for constructing meaningful accounts of social reality.

The papers gathered in this volume try to present such accounts, though admittedly dealing with comparatively limited problems. The limitation springs from practical considerations and not from the principles of explanation.

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*At the time of his premature death Dr Milan Stuchlik (1932–1980) was a lecturer in Anthropology at Queen's University Belfast. Previously he held the post of Visiting Fellow at St John's College Cambridge having moved there from Chile where he had been head of the department of Anthropology at the Catholic University in Temuco. During the course of his career which began at the Naprstek Museum of Ethnology in Prague, Dr Stuchlik published many articles relating to social theory and methodology. He also published several monographs including Life on a Half-Share, The Structure of Folk Models and his last work, Actions, Norms and Representations. Dr Stuchlik was an enthusiastic lecturer who inspired and motivated his students wherever he taught.*