

V. Rationality, symbol (sign, icon) and language
(speech, tongue) in the field of tension (stress,
strain) (tension field) of the social relation
(Rationalität, Symbol und Sprache im
Spannungsfeld der sozialen Beziehung)

1. Levels, forms (shapes, guises, figures) and degrees (grades, stages, extents) of rationality (Ebenen, Gestalten und Grade der Rationalität)

A. Preliminary remark (comment, note) (introduction) (Vorbemerkung)

Talk of the levels, forms and degrees of rationality already shows, reveals or suggests that rationality in itself and as such, that is, irrespective of its bearer and its (field of) coming into being or of its field of unfolding and development cannot make up and constitute the object of a handling and treatment which suffices for strict objective and factual examination, testing and proving (also ungeachtet ihres Trägers und ihres Entstehungs- oder Entfaltungsgebietes nicht den Gegenstand einer Behandlung abgeben kann, die strenger sachlicher Prüfung genügt). Whoever wants to treat and deal with “rationality” absolutely (per se or as such), must take a definition of the same (“rationality”) as a basis, which does not make do, and does not manage, without terms in need of interpretation (ohne interpretationsbedürftige Termini); all theories of rationality with (a) claim of (or to) exclusivity and loud or quiet (faint, soft) normative ambitions contained, in any case, such terms and, through that, got involved and tangled up in a vicious circle whose logical troubles, difficulties and inconveniences, though, have not been able to cool down (their) ethical zeal and eagerness. The task of a social ontology as (a) theoretical dimension of depths (or in-depth dimension) (Aufgabe einer Sozialontologie als theoretischer Tiefendimension) is, accordingly, not the setting up, formation or erection of a

wider “philosophical” theory of rationality („philosophischen“ Rationalitätstheorie) next to other(s) (“philosophical” theories of rationality), which, incidentally, in many cases and frequently repeat one another, but the establishment, investigation and determination of the reasons (grounds), out of which rationality (Rationalität) – always: in its various levels, forms and degrees – makes up a constitutive element of human living together, i.e. co-existence (ein konstitutives Element menschlichen Zusammenlebens ausmacht). Rationality does not constitute, seen thus, an Ought whose realisation needs a particular or especial effort, endeavour and struggle going over and above, exceeding and passing beyond the present human situation, but a reality which originally belongs together with the rest of the realities of the social and or of the human (Rationalität bildet, so gesehen, kein Sollen, dessen Realisierung einer besonderen, über die gegenwärtige menschliche Situation hinausgehenden Anstrengung bedarf, sondern eine Realität, die mit den übrigen Realitäten des Sozialen bzw. des Menschlichen ursprünglich zusammengehört). The change (Der Wechsel) of / in its levels, forms and degrees does not yield or result in any linear progress, rather it (i.e. the said change) is executed and carried out asymmetrically and underlies stark, i.e. strong fluctuations (variations and deviations), whereby and in relation to which these levels, forms and degrees combine with one another in various or in the same collective or individual actors on each and every respective occasion, having an effect differently on one another (jeweils anders miteinander kombinieren, anders aufeinander wirken). “Philosophical” and (in (the) ethical and technical sense) normative theories of rationality („Philosophische“ und (im ethischen und technischen Sinne) normative Rationalitätstheorien) are symptoms and indicators of this eternal, everlasting and perpetual change; they register and record objectively, i.e. without knowing it and (without) wanting (it), social-ontological possibilities (sozialontologische Möglichkeiten), which temporarily and transiently became realities (die vorübergehend Wirklichkeiten wurden); but

they are incapable of ever performing, achieving and accomplishing that which they – according to what they think they know – want to perform, achieve and accomplish: namely, to put an end to the (great) variety and multiformity of (the) social-ontological possibilities in (the) name (of) and in favour of the sole wished-for “rational” reality (der einzig erwünschten „rationalen“ Wirklichkeit). The degrees of rationality are not put, classed or classified in a uniform, unitary, unified universal scale (Die Grade der Rationalität stufen sich nicht in eine einheitliche universelle Skala ein), whose summit, peak or height serves as (the) yardstick and measure of the tiers, levels, stages or grades (rungs or ranks) (deren Gipfel als Gradmesser der Stufen dient) [of the said degrees of rationality]; they are (the) functions of the levels at which rationality unfolds and develops, and of the form, which it (i.e. rationality) assumes and adopts on each and every respective occasion. Theoretically (i.e. in terms of theory), one cannot get on top of this situation and position (i.e. get this situation under control) through final, conclusive and definitive definitions; behind them are (lodged, hiding, stuck) / hide admonitions, exhortations and warnings, but through a row / series of conceptual distinctions (sondern durch eine Reihe von begrifflichen Unterscheidungen), which are supposed to relate, render, reflect and convey (the) levels, forms and degrees of rationality in their great contours and outlines and with descriptive intent. From the standpoint of general methodology, conceptual distinctions, supported, propped up and underpinned by the corresponding casuistry (i.e. a sophistry or a complete case-by-case list of cases), offer the sole available theoretical way out when definitions can neither be maintained and kept to for long, nor help along / (any) further – something which applies to most cases; and they (i.e. the said conceptual distinctions) typically (enough) arise precisely during (the) proving of the inadequacies, deficiencies, shortcoming and failings of this or that definition.

Although there is and cannot be – in its content – binding and conclusively

defined “rationality” (Obwohl es „die“ in ihrem Inhalt verbindlich und endgültig definierte Rationalität nicht gibt und nicht geben kann), talk of “rationality” is customary, normal, typical, conventional, standard, usual and theoretically (i.e. in terms of theory) legitimate (ist die Rede von „der“ Rationalität üblich and auch theoretisch legitim); one, in fact, may or should not speak of (the) levels, forms and degrees of the same (rationality), when the reference to something is lacking / missing, which can be expressed at least conventionally in the singular (i.e. when the said levels, forms and degrees of rationality do not refer to something which cannot be expressed at least conventionally in the singular). This singular, nonetheless, does not point to any content, but to a form-related (i.e. formal) anthropological and social-ontological factor, which, like all anthropological and social-ontological factors can be connected (and combined) with all humanly and socially conceivable, imaginable and thinkable content(s). Like “the” social relation or “language”, from which it (i.e. rationality) can hardly be separated genetically and functionally, “rationality” updates and refreshes its potential (or brings its potential up to date, making that potential topical) in the most different positionings, attitudes, evaluations, assessments, ratings, ends/goals and activities (in den unterschiedlichsten Einstellungen, Wertungen, Zwecken und Tätigkeiten). As (an) anthropological and social-ontological constituent and constant (Als anthropologische und sozialontologische Konstituente und Konstante), it (i.e. rationality) finds itself or is found on the other side of, i.e. beyond the common and familiar contrast and opposition between “rationalism” and “irrationalism” („Rationalismus“ und „Irrationalismus“), which comes up, crops up, arises and emerges only during (the) content-related use/usage of rationality, and indicates or signals preferences of (a) content-related nature, that is, concretely normative fillings, i.e. arrangements (as to content) (konkrete normative Besetzungen) of those positionings, attitudes, evaluations, assessments, ratings, ends/goals and activities; (the) level, form and degree of

rationality does not necessarily depend, in any case, on the decision in favour of (the) “rationalism” or of (the) “irrationalism”, and the sense in which the anthropological and social-ontological way of looking at things ascribes and attributes the predicate “rational” to an action (und der Sinn, in dem die anthropologische und sozialontologische Betrachtung einem Handeln das Prädikat „rational“ zuschreiben) can differ considerably from that (sense) in which the actors themselves may or like and want to apostrophise (i.e. mention and refer to) an action as “rational” or “irrational” (als „rational“ oder „irrational“ apostrophieren mögen). The apparent paradox in (the) rationality lies therein (in the fact)(,) that it – thanks to its each and every respective level and form, as well as its each and every degree – is to be found, in practice, everywhere in the human-social [sphere, field, dimension, realm] (praktisch überall im Menschlich-Sozialen zu finden ist), however(,) precisely because it is deprived of normification (i.e. standardisation as the formation of norms) (aber sich gerade deshalb jeder Normierung entzieht), which goes way beyond what the anthropological and social-ontological formalities (i.e. formal/form-related (not with regard to content) starting points, as pertaining to forms, or, form-related lines of thought (formal constructs)) contain or imply already as (a) fact (die über das hinausgeht, was die anthropologischen und sozialontologischen Formalien schon als Faktum beinhalten oder implizieren)ⁱ. To someone acting in a concrete situation (and position), however, exactly this unreachableⁱⁱ normification (i.e. standardisation as the formation of norms) is needed (Dem in einer konkreten Lage Handelnden tut jedoch eben diese unerreichbare Normierung not), so that he, in the hour (i.e. at the time) of probation (i.e. testing), is basically (placed, put, posited) on his own (so daß er in der Stunde der praktischen Bewährung im Grunde auf sich allein gestellt ist) – endowed, equipped and provided, though, with the aforementioned formalities (i.e. formal / form-related (not with regard to content) starting points, as pertaining to forms, or, form-related lines of thought (formal constructs)), and with that which he

himself has willingly or unwillingly made out of them. Precisely the ubiquity of (the) rationality lends, confers to, bestows upon and gives, therefore, the theory of rationality such a general character that every specification in the direction of normification (i.e. standardisation as the formation of norms) cannot go out of and above (i.e. beyond) beginnings which must buy and purchase (i.e. obtain and secure) their general objective validity, soundness and conclusiveness with the staying and remaining in unbinding (i.e. non-binding) formulae (and set phrases) (in unverbindlichen Formeln)¹. In short: the concept of rationality is theoretically (i.e. as regards theory) fruitful and fertile, i.e. helpful and of assistance during the investigation, establishment and determination of and inquiry into anthropological and social-ontological facts and circumstances, to the extent it remains, in practice, vague. And conversely: every definition or normification (i.e. standardisation as the formation of norms) of rationality, which wants to be, in practice, (technically or ethically) useful, loses in (its) theoretical depth and breadth without gaining and winning much in another respect. As can, incidentally, be shown, the terms, which normative theories of rationality must make use of (e.g. consistency, (the) adequate correlation of the goal/end and means with each other etc.) (die Termini, deren sich normative Rationalitätstheorien bedienen müssen (z. B. Konsistenz, adäquate Korrelierung von Zweck und Mitteln miteinander etc.)) constitute simple or more complicated re-descriptions and paraphrases (re-writings, re-brandings) (Umschreibungen) of the formalities (i.e. formal/form-related (not with regard to content) starting points, as pertaining to forms, or, form-related lines of thought (formal constructs)) having an effect anthropologically and social-ontologically, and they only get and obtain, maintain and preserve a sense (i.e. meaning) when they are understood (in respect) of these (formalities (i.e. formal/form-related (not with regard to content) starting points, as pertaining to

¹ See under D in this section, below.

forms, or, form-related lines of thought (formal constructs)) having an effect anthropologically and social-ontologically). This indicates in itself the objective impossibility of being able to leave behind these formalities (i.e. formal/form-related (not with regard to content) starting points, as pertaining to forms, or, form-related lines of thought (formal constructs)) [[to move]] in the direction of normatively binding content(s) (in Richtung auf normativ verbindliche Inhalte). Consequently, the treatment and handling of the examination of the problem of rationality remains in (an) eminent (i.e. exceptional and extreme (as total)) sense (a) matter (thing, cause, issue, affair, business, case) of (the) anthropology and of (the) social ontology, which are technically and ethically blind. Whoever is on the lookout for content-related specifications of rationality in narrower fields – exactly in the fields of (the) technique (technology) or of (the) ethics (eben den Gebieten der Technik oder der Ethik) – (will) necessarily get tangled up in, entangled, embroiled and involved in new unsolvable paralogisms. The smuggling in of anthropological and social-ontological factors or concepts for / towards (the) underpinning (backing-up and support) of such specifications yields, brings, provides little [which is] tangible and moreover betrays (i.e. reveals) an ideational power claim, namely, that of gaining authority for partial preferences in part-fields (i.e. sub-fields or sub-sectors), which aim for and set their sights on an Ought through and by means of the whole weight of (the) human-social Is (einen ideellen Machtanspruch, nämlich den, partiellen Präferenzen auf Teilgebieten, die ein Sollen anvisieren, durch das ganze Gewicht des menschlich-sozialen Seins Autorität zu verschaffen).

TRANSLATOR'S ENDNOTES (ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH P.K.)

ⁱ The fact e.g. that all humans relate to world-views, good vs. evil, the urge-drive-impulse of self-preservation and the extension of one's own power, death, the mechanism and (friend-foe) spectrum of the social relation, society as a political collective, the political (social order, social cohesion, social disciplining), ideology, culture, nature, identity, power, rationality-understanding-language, etc. etc. etc..

ⁱⁱ From the point of view of the individual who must act, but who must act in relation to an already ordered society of culture, the political, dominant values etc., which he had no say in shaping, though he does have a say in how he will act.