

V. Rationality, symbol and language in the field
of tension of the social relation

1. Levels, forms and degrees of rationality

A. Preliminary remark

Talk of the levels, forms and degrees of rationality already shows 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. 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; all theories of rationality with a claim of (or to) exclusivity and loud or quiet normative ambitions, contained, in any case, such terms [in need of interpretation] 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) is, accordingly, not the setting up, formation or erection of a wider “philosophical” theory of rationality next to other (“philosophical” theories of rationality), which, incidentally, in many cases and frequently repeat one another, but is the establishment, investigation and determination of the reasons out of which rationality – always: in its various levels, forms and degrees – makes up a constitutive element of human living together, i.e. co-existence. Rationality does not constitute, seen thus, an Ought whose realisation needs a particular effort, endeavour and struggle 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. The change (Der Wechsel) of / in its (i.e. rationality's) 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 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. "Philosophical" and (in the ethical and technical sense) normative theories of rationality 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, which temporarily and transiently became realities; 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. The degrees of rationality are not put, classed or classified in [[and do not belong to]] a uniform, unitary, unified universal scale, whose summit serves as the yardstick and measure of the tiers, levels, stages or grades of the said degrees of rationality; they (i.e. the said degrees of rationality) 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 (i.e. such definitions) hide admonitions, exhortations and warnings, but through a series of conceptual distinctions, 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 and underpinned by the corresponding casuistry (i.e. 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 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”, talk of “rationality” is customary, normal, typical, usual and theoretically (i.e. in terms of theory) legitimate; 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, 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. As an anthropological and social-ontological constituent and constant, 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”, which comes up, arises and emerges only during the content-related use of rationality, and indicates or signals preferences of a content-related nature, that is to say, concretely normative fillings, i.e. arrangements (as

to content) 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 “rationalism” or of “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 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”. The apparent paradox in rationality lies 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], however, precisely because it is deprived of normification (i.e. standardisation as the formation of norms), 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 factⁱ. To someone acting in a concrete situation (and position), however, exactly this unreachableⁱⁱ normification (i.e. standardisation as the formation of norms) is needed, so that he, in the hour (i.e. at the time) of probation (i.e. testing), is basically (placed) on his own – 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 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 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)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.) constitute simple or more complicated re-descriptions and paraphrases (re-writings, re-brandings) 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 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 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). 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 of anthropology and of social ontology, which are technically and ethically blind. Whoever is on the lookout for content-related specifications of rationality in

¹ See under D in this section, below.

narrower fields – exactly in the fields of technique (technology) or of ethics – (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 the underpinning (backing-up and support) of such [content-related] 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.

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.