

PRAGMATISTIC ACTION THEORY – A THEORY OF COLLECTIVE ACTION AS RESULT OF INDIVIDUAL ADDICTION

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Abstract: Starting with the typology of action as conceived by *Max Weber* the explication of the terms introduced by him shows that these concepts are by far too crude and that he omitted several important types of action. On the one side, affective behaviour and emotional action have to be differentiated since the latter is by no means irrational. *Fritz Heider* for example spoke of a “logic of emotions” decades ago. On the other side, rationality in the sense of “*Zweckrationalität*” has to be conceived as a form of addictive behaviour. It is true, as *Gary S. Becker* has shown, that we can speak of “rational addiction”, but it is clear that if a person becomes totally dependent on a drug or an ideological goal, his behaviour becomes self-destructive and this can hardly be named “rational”. A third serious problem of Weber’s typology of action is, that he never made quite clear what a “value rational” (*wertrational*) action means. On the basis of the so called “pattern variables”, defined by *Talcott Parsons*, and his theory of socialisation an attempt is made in this article to deliver an explication of the term of “*Wertrationalität*” (*value-rationality*). On the basis of the 5 pattern variables, each being conceived as consisting of five dichotomies, 32 possible action orientations are derived, and some of these can be identified as different types of rationality.

If we conceive “*Wertrationalität*” and “*Zweckrationalität*” on this basis, we find that “value rationality” always implies a more complicated calculation than “*Zweckrationalität*”. Furthermore, it implies often enough, that not all the means should be used, even if a person could dispose of them. Seen on the short run, “value-rational” orientation therefore implies a handicap if a person has to compete with a “*zweckrational*” actor. Therefore one should expect an evolutionary process by which “value-rational” actors are omitted from the social system as “losers”. A detailed analysis shows, however, that persons with a universalistic value orientation have a superior chance to form common value systems with those who are also universalistically oriented, if they act in a value-rational way, and that they therefore have superior chances in the competition with “*zweckrational*” actors on the long run. A second very serious disadvantage of “*zweckrational*” actors was detected already by *Max Weber* himself: “*Zweckrationalität*” itself becomes in its purest form an addiction. Success is sought in this case only because it is successful. If success is the ultimate goal of “*zweckrational*” orientation for its own sake (as a thrill), action becomes totally irrational. This will be the consequence, because no material goals exist anymore, and the ultimate goal of action gets a formal character. Therefore the final result of “*zweckrational*” action is a basically nihilistic orientation.

Keywords: action theory, Max Weber, methodological individualism, addiction

ACTION AND BEHAVIOUR

Action is consciously oriented behaviour. If a scientific field, like sociology or economic theory, deals with action only, then it is heavily biased. One always has to remember that this weakness is inherent.

Even worse, if action is the exclusive object of social science, the resulting theory has a lot to do with ideology. Action theory and ideology both rely on face validity when they take the orientation of human action for granted and deal with them as if they were scientific facts.

One way to overcome this weakness is to follow the program of pragmatism as it was founded by *Charles S. Peirce*. Semiotic analysis of signs, the building blocks of human interaction, is one way to overcome this ideological bias of social theory, which defines itself as action theory (Peirce 1976).

It is interesting to note that *Max Weber* opted for action theory about 20–30 years after Peirce had founded the scientific analysis of meaningful behaviour. Max Weber based his approach on the argument that a scientific analysis of human behaviour may be possible in the future, but in the meantime we have to be content with the analysis of the conscious orientations of behaviour, namely with action.

Therefore this naive option for action theory was formulated and generally accepted in social sciences *after* a scientific *programme* for the analyses of signs and symbols was not only formulated but also commenced in practice. This fact can be regarded as an indicator of people's ideological unwillingness to overcome a bias, built into everyday life, while analysing human behaviour. By introducing the term "action" and "action orientation", factual behaviour could partially be neglected. By this conceptual shift, Max Weber and all the other "Geisteswissenschaftler" following his programme could maintain their ideological prejudices and sell them as "scientific propositions".

THE ORIENTATION OF ACTION AND THE NOTION OF RATIONALITY

Max Weber (1956: 1–42) differentiated four types of action:

1. *Zweckrationales Handeln*, rational action in the sense of rationality, as it is conceived in the framework of economic theory, i.e. action that maximises (or at least optimises) the utility with regard to the ultimate goal of action.

2. *Wertrationales Handeln*, rational action which cannot be reduced to a means-ends scheme, but which is based not only on utility, but also on "values".

3. *Traditional action*, which can be called "ratiomorph" (*Bertalanffy*). This means an action which was once basically rational, but whose rationale the actors forgot about a long time ago. In the meantime these actors adhere to the action pattern simply on the basis of conformity or laziness, i.e. the usual "inertia".

4. *Irrational action*, which cannot be understood on the basis of conscious orientation of behaviour, but which can only be analysed scientifically as a fact.

In practice, *Max Weber* and, following him, mainstream social science has only dealt with "zweckrational action". The majority of the adaptations of theories of

rational action forgot or never realised the fundamental limits of their approach and tried to explain human behaviour in general on this basis. Max Weber's typology has several weaknesses. *Weber* himself was not able to formulate a sound explication for the term "wertrational". Therefore, sociology in the first half of the 20th century faced the task of formulating a general theory of rational action that can be based on different types of value orientations. *Talcott Parsons* was the sociologist who tried to fill this gap.

The second weakness of *Max Weber's* typology is the conception of *irrational* behaviour. The reason for this is that *Max Weber* (just like *Talcott Parsons*) did not *differentiate* between *affective behaviour* and *emotional action*. This bias in their theory is caused by a bias in western culture. The *socialisation of affects* and their *differentiation* and *conscious control* in the form of "emotions" is not recognised by people who follow a one-sided "zweckrational" logic.

Therefore, the whole intellectual tradition from *Spinoza*¹ to *Alfred Heider* remains unnoticed in the dominating theories of rational action: *L'éducation sentimentale* is simply missing from these theories.

A third gap in this typology is the neglecting of an obvious phenomenon, namely of *addiction* and addictive behaviour. This omission is very strange, and it can be explained only by ideological self-defence. Addictive behaviour as a fact can be much better explained and predicted than rational action. If somebody is dependent on a drug, it is quite easy to predict what he will do and what his fate in future will be if he gets no help from others.

One would expect that a theory of human action begins with the analysis of addiction. Therefore, the reason why Weber, Parsons and all the other social scientists neglected addiction when they started to formulate their general theories of human action has to be explained. It is true that even the radical proponent of the "rational choice school", *Gary S. Becker* tried to deal with addiction and formulated a theory of "rational addiction". But he did this as one of his last efforts to fill in gaps in his approach, after having neglected the phenomenon for decades. Furthermore, if we analyse his approach, we find that he does not really deal with addiction but uses an old trick of the rational choice school. By *redefining* what is understood by the term "addiction", he simply ignores what he cannot explain.

Thus when we start with the typology of human action, we should enlarge and modify the approach of Max Weber in at least the following way:

1. "wertrational" action,
2. traditional action,
3. emotional action,
4. "zweckrational" action,
5. addiction,
6. irrational behaviour.

1 For the analysis of emotions "more geometrico" see *Antonio Negri* (1981).

THE ORIENTATION OF ACTION AND THE MEANING OF WERTRATIONALITÄT

Talcott Parsons tried to fill in the gap left open by the analysis of rational action elaborated by Max Weber.

He tried to formulate a theory of value orientations and the development of values in the process of socialisation before he gave up and withdrew to devise a purely functionalist theory.

According to his first approach – which we could name “Parsons I”, to distinguish it from his functionalist approach, which we could label “Parsons II” –, during the socialisation process the following binary differentiations of value orientation are learned by individuals within every social system:

1. affective – neutral,
2. self-oriented – collectively oriented,
3. universalistic – particularistic,
4. quality – achievement,
5. diffuse – specific.

On this basis we can differentiate $2^5 = 32$ different action orientations. Of these 32 different possible orientation patterns of action, one can be labelled as “zweckrational”, namely an action that can be characterised in the following way:

“Zweckrationalität”, defined by the pattern variables of Talcott Parsons

affectively neutral
self-oriented
particularistic
achievement oriented
specific

A specific behaviour, if characterised by these pattern variables, can be called “zweckrational”. The analysis that *Parsons* promotes always starts from the point of view of the actor himself. The pattern reproduced above can be called the purest form of an orientation based on individualistic utility calculations. Other possible patterns, for example, include:

Examples of different patterns of “wertrational” action orientation

affectively neutral
collectively oriented
particularistic
achievement-oriented
specific

affectively neutral
collectively oriented
particularistic
achievement-oriented
diffuse

These patterns define specific types of different “wertrational” orientations.

According to neo-classical economic theory, an individual acts in order to achieve his or her most important single goal. All other goals become means, which are more or less useful or useless for reaching this ultimate end. The individual acts “rationally” if (s)he behaves according to this pattern. We can call this pattern the logic of an oversimplified approach to problem solving. If the individual considers the utilities as the probabilities of all possible events which could lead to different outcomes with regard to his (or her) ultimate goal, (s)he is labelled “rational”.

For this rational calculation (s)he has to avoid affective impulses, has to take care only of his (or her) own interests and has to avoid any involvement in collective needs and goals. (S)he can’t rely on attributes and qualities only, but has to be prepared to achieve. At the same time (s)he has to be *specific* and to be interested only in the pursuit of the strategy which helps him or her reach the most important goal. Therefore, we can associate this pattern of value orientation with “zweckrational” action.

What does such a “wertrational” orientation imply? According to the pattern variables we can differentiate 32 different value orientations, of which only one can be called “zweckrational” in its purest sense. If we take other examples, we can explore the value-space. How do we, for example, describe the following pattern?

The orientation pattern of a “rational” racist

affectively neutral self-oriented particularistic quality-oriented specific

An actor who is characterised by such an orientation pattern can be, for example, a “rational racist”. In this case the quality (s)he appreciates most is a certain “race”, in the existence of which (s)he believes.

But if we analyse this pattern and compare it with the “zweckrational” orientation in its purest form, we find a basic difference. In the “zweckrational” case the only concrete actor who can benefit from rational action is the person him- or herself. All the substantive goals are only means to the ultimate goal of self-interest. In the case of the racist we can find at least two different actors who benefit from rational action.

The first of these two actors is the acting individual him- or herself, the second is a collective actor (in the imagination of the relevant individual), namely the “race” (whatever such a collective actor could be in reality). Aside from the end (“zweck”) of self-interest, in this case we find a second ultimate goal, namely the interest of the “race”. Only if someone is using a racist ideology to enhance his or her self-interests, can we speak of a “zweckrational” behaviour, which is not really oriented towards any value. “Wertrational” orientation as compared to “Zweckrational” orientation is

therefore *constituted by the relevance of the interest of at least two different beneficiaries to the action* as well as the achievement. Such a “wertrational” actor has to calculate and optimise at least two different utilities: the utilities of the actor him- or herself and the utilities of the actor, for whose interest (s)he acts. These two actors are only identical in the case of “zweckrational” orientation. In all other cases values are involved, and the *interests of at least two different actors* have to be optimised.

In social interactions the situation becomes very complicated if value-rational actors are involved. If two persons with “zweckrational” orientations interact with each other, the interests of only two actors are involved. If two persons with two different “wert-rational” orientations interact, then at least the interests of four actors are relevant. If these two people have identical value orientations, then only (and only then) the interests of three actors have to be taken into account. In Figure 1 these differences are made explicit.

If we compare the three cases, it becomes immediately evident that there is no simple solution for case 2. The situation in which different value orientations are involved is, therefore, full of possible conflicts between incompatible interests, conflicts and uncertainties. These ambiguities are reduced only to the degree to which the value orientations of the different actors involved are identical.

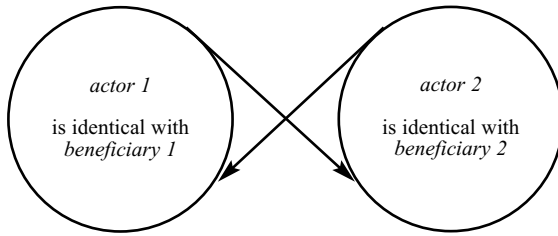
On the basis of this analysis we can conclude that “zweckrational” actors are at an *advantage* to the extent that the social interaction systems which they create are the simplest and the least complicated. The big disadvantage of such a primitive system is, however, that the number of possible solutions of conflicts arising from divergent interests among their members is very restricted. This type of rationality typically leads to “dead-end-situations”, one of which is described in game theory as the prisoners’ dilemma.

The *disadvantage* of “value-rational” action is, on the other hand, that it leads to complicated interaction systems in which the utilities cannot easily be calculated, and in which, therefore, complicated bargaining processes become necessary. The advantage of the systems of value-rational actions seems to be that in this framework it is easier to avoid unresolvable conflicts of interest, and they include the opportunity of solving conflicts by developing common value systems. This is an advantage, which is missing in the case of “zweckrational” action.

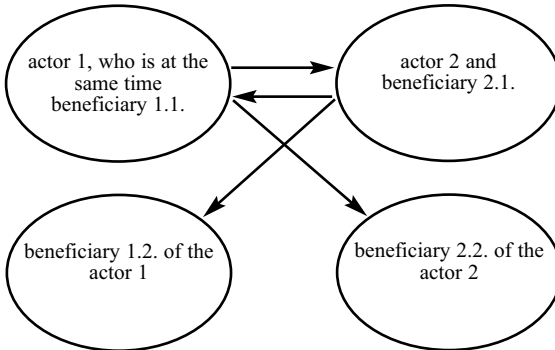
Therefore, a “value-rational” orientation of action seems to be a higher step in the evolution of social systems compared to “zweckrational” orientation. In saying this, however, one has to be aware of the fact that “value-rational” action can easily be exploited by a mimicry. In this case, value orientations are faked and used as ideological weapons by people who follow a “zweckrational” strategy. There is no doubt that the invention of value-rationality can be abused this way. In practice, this is the main problem of “open societies”.

On the other hand, different forms of “value rational” action differ with regard to the chances of developing common beneficiaries on the basis of common values. In our first example we have considered the value of race, for example. It is clear that this “value” excludes many people from a common value system and radicalises conflicts which emerge from interest-oriented actions. Therefore, we expect that only *universalistic orientations* lead to a value system, which has evolutionary advantages in the long run. Thus, there are important differences between different types of values of which we know very little at present.

Case 1: Two “zweckrational” actors with “zweckrational” orientations



Case 2: Two “wertrational” actors, each has two different beneficiaries



Case 3: Two actors with a common value system

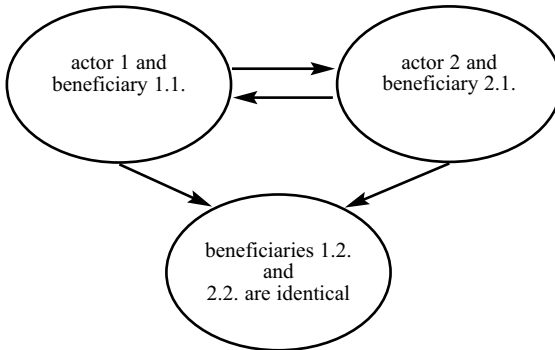


Figure 1. Actors and beneficiaries in the case of “zweckrational” and “wertrational” action

THE LOGIC OF EMOTIONAL ACTION AND THE IRRATIONALITY OF AFFECTS

A basic problem of *Parsonian* sociology is that *Parsons*, influenced by the physiological research of the 2nd decade of the 20th century, did not make a clear distinction between *affects* and *emotions*. The interdisciplinary group of scientists at

Harvard to which Parsons belonged was brought together by the physiologist *Henderson* and, as a result, even the concept of “social system” itself is an analogy to the physiological paradigm.

Parsons has to be critiqued because emotions should be distinguished from affects. Emotions are affects that are already socialised, personalised, and modified by culture. First of all, the energy of the living organism, made available for action by affects can be partially controlled and, therefore, be used for conscious behaviour if the affects themselves can be differentiated, and different affects can be connected with different objects and goals. Emotions are affects that can be socialised and culturally transformed. They help channel an organism’s energy into social, personal and cultural action systems. Since all these systems consist of dynamic processes, they all rely on the affectual energy of the organism.

Although Parsons developed a theory of socialisation on the basis of a physiological approach and, therefore, dealt with the transformation of energy and introduced the term “cathexis” as a label for this process, nevertheless, he did not consistently differentiate between affects and emotions in his approach. This weakness was one of the underlying causes why *Casper David Homans* could attack the Parsonian theory successfully through his reductionist program.

Homans himself tried to go back from action to behaviour by taking into account emotions and their relations to behaviour. At the same time, he tried to build an axiomatic theory with clear-cut propositions that could empirically be tested and, if proven wrong, rejected. For this reason, he thought he had “to bring men back in”, which to him meant a reductionist program with a theory that dealt with individuals and their behaviour and not with abstract entities like *social systems*, *pattern variables* and *culture*. For example, he formulated propositions concerning the relation between the interaction of individuals and whether they liked each other or not. At the same time, he tried to formulate general propositions about human behaviour that could be valid under all circumstances and conditions.

Here is an example he proposed:

“The more people interact with each other, the more they like each other.”

And:

“The more people like each other, the more they interact with each other.”

In these propositions there is an underlying assumption, namely, that emotions are connected with behaviour in a systematic way, and that this relationship between emotions and behaviour follows the general logic of predicates, so that properties of the empirical social reality can be deduced from general axioms by this logic.

In other words, Homans tried to rationalise emotions. The problem with such general propositions is, however, that they are sometimes true but sometimes false. Furthermore, it is difficult to figure out the conditions under which these sets of general linear propositions, connecting only two variables, are valid or not.

Homans attacked Parsons for an “oversocialised conception” of human being, but the problem of his own approach is that he subscribes to a specific “overrationalised conception” of humans, according to which emotions are not basically different from cognition. Societies – as he and many of his followers believed – consist of individuals according to the logic of the general systems of linear equations.

If we examine the biography of Homans, it is easy to understand the roots of his worldview and theoretical approach. Coming from a typical “WASP” (white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant) background he was an officer on a warship during the Second World War. His reductionist approach to sociology seems to be analogous to the strict order of a warship. Homans himself wrote a short article about this social order. As a well-integrated member of the WASP upper-class, he never questioned this order, and he never cared about the macro-structure in which his battleship was situated. He did his duty and learned the dynamics of this micro world. His program “to bring men back in” meant, therefore, that society had to be modelled according to this logic. People do not have very well socialised personalities according to his view, instead they have to be controlled by external sanctions of total institutions. Here we find an interesting parallel to the central role of the “prisoner’s dilemma” within game theory.

The problem with such a program is twofold. On the one hand, it is impossible to describe complex statistical interactions of a great number of variables by a set of linear equations. Therefore, aside from interaction and attraction, so called “unit relations” and different kinds of *attributional processes* also have to be considered if we want to understand the logic of everyday-life. So, for example, we have to consider unit relations if we want to predict the effects of interaction on attraction. According to the logic of action as Heider conceived of it, we typically find dilemmas like in *Figure 2*.

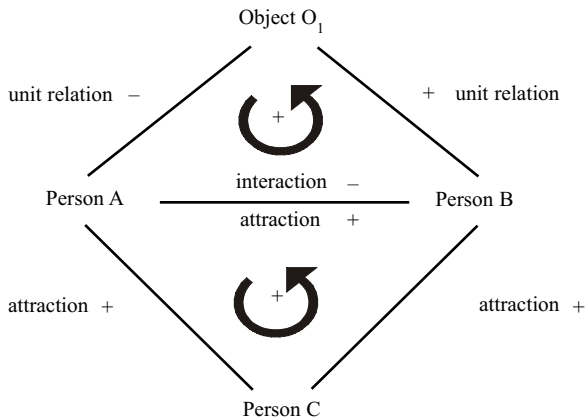


Figure 2. Social interaction, emotions and unit formation according to the “psychology of affiliation” of Fritz Heider

According to Heider’s logic of emotions we always have to consider three elements of a situation at the same time and have to multiply the values of the three relations with each other. In our example there is a valuable object to which person *A* has no access, but person *B* does. Both of them like a third person *C*. We can predict that in the case that person *A* and person *B* only know of each other but do *not* interact, person *A* will like person *B*.

At the same time *A* and *B* differ concerning their access to the relevant object *O1* and person *B* is not willing or able to transfer his access to *O1* to the person *A*. Thus

they will avoid interaction, or their interaction, if enforced by the circumstances, will be negative (hostile). Therefore, in this case persons *A* and *B* like each other only if they can avoid direct interaction. If they are forced into direct interaction, their relation will not be positive but *ambivalent*. Ambivalence, however, implies an unstable situation, and thus further objects, persons and developments in the social environment of these three persons *A*, *B*, *C* have to be considered, if we want to predict how the resulting *cross pressure* will be resolved, or if it will be enduring.²

If we now consider a “zweckrational” action of a person in a situation in which several other people also have control over the possible outcome of the action, it would be irrational not to consider the emotional ties between the relevant actors and also the emotional significance of the relevant objects to them.

Therefore, the analyst has at first the task to decide *who and what is relevant in a given situation*. After having solved this task, he or she has to ask what kind of emotional balance or imbalance exists between the relevant persons and objects, and how the actions which should be considered with respect to possible future development will fit this balanced or imbalanced constellation, and whether these future actions will change or reinforce the whole constellation.

Only if all this can be estimated (or even better, calculated) on an empirical basis, can we predict the costs and benefits of certain strategies. At the same time, the outcome will depend on the probabilities of all these possible constellations and processes. Except in prison and on battleships in war, such calculations are simply impossible, and rational choice proves to be a utopian program. At the beginning of the 1990's, *D. P. Green* and *I. Shapiro* have shown in their review *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory* that 30 years' of work in *Rational Choice Theory* has “not produced novel, empirically sustainable findings about politics” (Green and Shapiro 1996). Now, after nearly forty years, it seems that this statement is not only still true, but it is necessarily true. As the well-known social psychologist *Robert P. Abelson* put it: “Rational choice theorists have tried to reinvent psychology without a genuine commitment to the empirical study of behaviour” (Abelson 1996: 34).

The total bankruptcy of rational choice as an *empirical theory* can be demonstrated by the fact that there is not a single piece of research during the past four decades in which a game was explicated in an *extensive form* in such a way that it could be empirically tested in a real-life situation. A typical piece of so called “research” in the field of game theory introduces global values for total strategies and calculates possible outcomes on this basis. Limiting itself this way, the approach remains a branch of speculative philosophy.³ Certainly, there is a branch of rational

2 Concerning ambivalence see also Andrew J. Weigert (1991). Fritz Heider did not consider these more complicated constellations.

3 Games in extensive form usually reduce strategies at best to three or four moves of both players. In most cases only two moves of each are considered. If one compares a simple game of chess (and chess is simple if compared with everyday life) with such a reduced and oversimplified reality, we recognize the big distance between game theory and social reality. A good chess player considers at last 6 to 8 moves of both players and each move includes about 10 possibilities, not only two as in game theory. At the beginning of a game up to 12–15 moves including thousands of possibilities are calculated in advance. For this opening there exist many strategies, and each strategy has several variants, so it is not enough to indicate that somebody has chosen the “Sicilian opening”, but one has also to specify which version. On games in detail see, for example, James D. Morrow (1994).

choice which uses experiments. Within this tradition we find interesting investigations, but all these experimental situations are based on forced choices and remind me of Homans' battle ship.

To summarise, emotional action is empirically and theoretically well-founded. It cannot at all be reduced to a type of rational behaviour. Emotional action is of greatest importance not only on the micro-level but also in politics and on the macro-level of society. In addition to traditional investigations of emotions in social psychology based on models of balance or cognitive consistency, new approaches have been formulated, which elaborated a fractal logic of affects. (See, for example, *Luc Ciompi* [1997].) At the same time empirical and experimental knowledge about the formation of emotions is rapidly growing. (As an example: *Gerald Hüther* [1997].) Therefore, we have to accept the fact that there are several alternatives to rational choice that explain human action, and that "zweckrational" action is only one special case at best.

ADDICTION AND THE LOGIC OF DELUSION

Drug addiction is widespread and a form of normal behaviour if we include legal drugs like alcohol, tobacco and the abuse of medical drugs. In spite of the fact that this is widely known, such behaviours have not systematically been included in general sociological theory, but are dealt with as a special case of deviant behaviour. This was, and still is, one of the basic problems of theoretical sociology.

The point of view advocated in this approach is that addiction represents a general form of human behaviour and human action, and that it is much more widespread and common than drug addiction alone is. We know, for example, that gambling can become addictive, or that obsessions and passions occur in that form, and that people and/or objects become irreplaceable for a large number of people and so forth. But even more generally, nearly all forms of behaviour and objects can be addictive under certain circumstances. For example, we can speak of "*workaholics*" not only by analogy, but also as a form of addiction. In the same way, cars and their possession and use became one of the most dangerous and widespread addictions in our civilisation. In Germany alone about half a million of people were killed and nearly five million heavily injured by cars in the past forty years. In Europe millions of people were killed by cars in the same period. This reminds one of a world war, but "normal" people look at it as if it were proper and peaceful interaction. Therefore, we will distinguish two forms of addiction, namely *drug addiction* and *insubstantial addiction or passion*.

What do these two forms have in common?

First, an addiction implies a growing dependency, and this dependency is self-reinforcing. The more one depends on a drug or a passion, the more one needs it, and the greater quantities are necessary to reach the same satisfaction or happiness. Second, if someone becomes an addict, he or she needs the drug or the addictive behaviour. If a person who is dependent on a drug cannot get access to it, he or she becomes motivated by this need, and his or her action becomes a function of the goal to get the stuff. The actor does not decide him- or herself self what his (or her) goals

are. Rather, his (or her) physiological state “decides” for him (or her) what (s)he has to do first. In the language of rational choice: the utility of the possible outcomes of action are decided by the addiction and the physiological state of the body it caused and *not* by the actor him- or herself!

There are roughly speaking two degrees of dependency: one is called “psychic” dependence, the second “somatic”. At least at the higher level of dependency the body needs the “drug” to re-establish a balance of its physiological processes. In the case of drug addiction, an external material is necessary for the somatic steady state. Typically this steady state breaks down after a while, and more drugs are necessary to rebalance the physiological processes. The steady state reached by a drug or a mania differs from the equilibrium which is produced and reproduced by a sane body, and the addict is not able to re-establish his (or her) normal physiological balance without heavy intervention and help by other people, which has to be consciously forced upon the body.

Second, in the case of insubstantial addiction, endorphins, upon which the actor becomes dependent, are produced by the body itself. These endorphins are produced in a state of arousal of the body by certain forms of behaviour or by certain external stimuli, may they be people or objects.

Third, in both forms of addiction action and behaviour are very close to each other, they are more identical than in any other forms of action.

If the state of somatic dependency is reached, the goal and *the utility of actions are decided by the body and not by the conscious calculations of the actor*. Only the means, how to get the stuff or how to reach a certain physiological state in which endorphins are produced, can be influenced by “rational” action. So an actor who is a heroin addict may decide to become a prostitute or (s)he may prefer to become a dealer, but (s)he cannot decide to need or not to need heroin. Even the choices about how to get the drug are largely dependent on the opportunities afforded by the situation and not on the free decisions of the actor, since (s)he cannot plan far ahead. Thus in both forms of addiction the central elements of rational choice is missing: there is no individual decision about the utilities of the possible outcomes of behaviour and the cognitive expectations concerning the future have no real influence on the behaviour.

By this fact, however, the difference between action and behaviour will be erased. A typical consequence in the first phases of somatic dependency is that the individual tries to escape his or her addiction, (s)he speaks about it, dreams about it, but he or she returns to the addiction with a very high probability unless there is external help. Even in the latter case, the chances of the dependent individual of getting rid of the addiction are not too high.

Fourth, only certain forms of addiction are illegal or even recognised in everyday life. What drug is accepted and what is forbidden depends on the cultural tradition and on the policy of the state. For example, several members of the Soviet Politburo were heavy drinkers and yet could stay in their positions for many years. *Göring*, as another example, was rumoured to be dependent on morphine and yet was one of the most influential men in Germany for at least twelve years. These are exceptions. But the normal behaviour of hundreds of millions of ordinary people is dependent not only on alcohol, marihuana, cocaine or the new synthetic drugs but also on gadgets and devices which are sold by big companies as well as by political ideologies. Televisions, cars, holiday trips, all sorts of mass consumption items are self

reinforcing and cause dependency. A scientist who does not investigate human behaviour empirically, who does not consider the question of what a great extent these dependencies represent addiction, and who argues that people act rationally on the basis of their own free will and rational understanding of the world is a sort of juggler, a high priest of common sense, who reinforces ordinary behaviour instead of distinguishing addiction from action based on personal decisions. To declare that all people act rationally as an axiom is like a salvation formula, which hinders empirical research about more fundamental questions.

At the moment, nobody really knows what forms of behaviour and what objects, valued by millions of people in our society, are addictive. For example, it is highly probable that cars became addictive devices in our society, and they are not bought and not used by many people on the basis of individual rational choice but on the basis of individual addiction. The same may be true for television, fast food, coca-cola and other blessings of our civilisation.

Fifths, the main reason why the majority of people who are dependent on a drug or on a device or a mania became addicts is that they could not find a satisfying goal in their life. Because their life remained meaningless and senseless to them, they accepted the dependency caused by an addiction. By this act they gave up their free choice and accepted their dependence on an addiction. They did this because they could not find any meaning or purpose in their lives. Having accepted some sort of addiction, they got rid of this problem. By becoming dependent, one gets rid of the problem of decision making. In this case there is no question about what has to be done, because "it" – namely the addiction – decides for the dependent what to do.

Without being aware of it, *Max Weber* himself described this process of becoming a drug addict in his famous work on the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. If one re-reads his classical analysis on the basis of the hypothesis that he analysed the history of a collective addiction, one finds a sound analysis of a mania.

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