Another sociology

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Another Sociology
- the future of sociology
from a critical
theoretical perspective

During the second half of the 20th century, sociology
as a social technology in service of the welfare state
has been the predominant form, especially in
Scandinavia. The crisis of the welfare state has led
this form of sociology into a crisis as well. Instead,
I argue for a critical sociology contributing dianostics
of the social pathologies of the modern state. Such an
approach can find inspiration in classical sociology,
but it is also important to realize that, today, we are
living in another modernity. A liberation from social
technology must thus include a liberation from
objectivistic methods.

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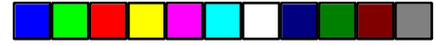Columbia University, New York.
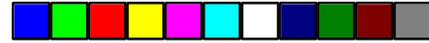
1. Introduction

In Alvin Gouldner's almost-classic study of academic sociology from 1970, *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology,* we find a section titled "A note on the future of sociology" (Gouldner 1970:443ff). Gouldner predicts there - in view of the then rising New Left and psychedelic culture - the decline of the overwhelming influence of Parsons' functionalism on post-war American sociology, and the growing significance of Marxism. He also anticipates the important role of an expanding welfare state in the coming crisis of Western sociology. Parsonian functionalism cannot, he argues, adapt to the influences and requirements of the welfare state. We should instead expect the appearance of a kind of "Keynesian functionalism" and thus a growth of an instrumental orientation in sociology.

> This growing instrumentalism, accelerated by the increasing role of the state, finds its expression in 'theoryless' theories, a kind of methodological empiricism in which there is a neglect of *substantive* concepts and assumptions concerning specifically human behaviour and social relations, and a corresponding emphasis upon seemingly neutral methods, mathematical models, investigational techniques, and research technologies of all kinds.... Such a conceptually uncommitted and empty methodological empiricism is particularly well adapted to service the research needs of the Welfare state. (Gouldner 1970:444-445).

Gouldner describes sociologists of this kind as "the market researchers of the welfare state" (Gouldner 1970:445). In Western Europe and especially Scandinavia, however, this was in 1970 not the future of sociology, it *was* sociology. In Germany, Jürgen Habermas had already in 1962 talked about sociology as being instrumentalised as a "Hilfswissenschaft im Dienste von Verwaltungen" (Habermas 1971:299). In Sweden, sociology had existed primarily as such a "Hilfswissenschaft" since the discipline's institutionalisation soon after the Second World War (see, for example, Olsson 1997 and Thörnquist 1997). However, this kind of sociology is originally American. As Zygmunt Bauman once bluntly put it: "The two great bureaucracies in America - the Warfare and the Welfare bureaucracy - were behind the spectacular development of empirical sociology" (Bauman 1992: 143). Today, just before the end of the first whole century of sociology, it is not especially controversial to claim that the most influential form of sociology during the second half of this century has been what we might call social technology in service of the welfare state. During this time, sociology has to a great extent been, in Ralf Dahrendorf's words, 'a bureaucratic discipline' (Dahrendorf 1996). Compared to that of social technology, the influence of the theories of both Parsons and Marx has been limited and temporary. This means that it is wrong to talk about sociology - at least until quite recently - as multiparadigmatic or fragmented. It might be true for social theory, but theory is - at the most - of secondary importance for social technology. Most kinds of sociologies during the second half of the 20th century - sociology of work, sociology of addiction, sociology of the family etc. - did have a common paradigm: social technology in service of the welfare state.

It is obvious that the point of depar-

ture for talking about the future of 'Western sociology' today must be different from that of Gouldner's. From our perspective, Gouldner gave too much importance to both Parsons and Marx. Secondly, he could not see the coming crisis of the welfare state. Today there can be no doubt that the welfare state is in serious trouble, and some even talk about its end. This situation must of course be a deadly threat to mainstream sociology, which has founded its self-identity and legitimacy on its role as a servant to this state. It is thus not surprising when we again not only hear talk about the coming crisis of sociology, but also about its ongoing 'decomposition' (Horowitz 1993), 'decline' (Wagner 1991; Dettling 1996) and 'end' (Sennett 1994). My general claim in this article will be that such statements about the future of sociology are overreactions to the present critical situation. If it is true that the crisis of sociology today is closely connected to the crisis of the welfare state, then it is not sociology in general that faces its end, but sociology as social technology. A quick look at classic sociology is enough to show us that sociology in general cannot be reduced to 'methodological empiricism' and 'theoryless theories'.

So if we are not witnessing the end of sociology, what can be said about its future? I believe that there are four important points to be made in connection with this question.

The *first* is that we are not necessarily - nor, I will even claim, are we probably - seeing the end of the welfare state. What we are seeing is a crisis, that depends primarily on two developments. (*a*). The globalisation of market economy has led to an economic crisis in the nation-bound welfare state. This crisis does not necessarily imply the end of the welfare state, but rather its globali-

sation. (*b*). The welfare state also suffers from an escalating legitimation crisis. This state has always been embedded in a paternalistic form of politics - so-called social engineering - which is closely connected to sociology as social technology. Such politics stand in opposition to a new form of modernity - including, for instance, radicalised individualism - which has begun to appear in the late 20th century. As with the economic side of the crisis, the legitimation side might lead us to hasty predictions about the end of the welfare state. My claim will rather be that the overcoming of the legitimation crisis presupposes the democratisation of the welfare state, which excludes both politics as social engineering and social science as social technology.

The *second* point is that sociology - being in the process of losing its most important foundation for identity formation, that is, the technocratic welfare state - must once again look back on classic sociology in order to develop a new cognitive identity and thus the conditions necessary to abandon the sinking ship. I believe that from a critical theoretical perspective - I am primarily relying on the Habermas of *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (TkH) and Habermas' successor in Frankfurt, Axel Honneth - it is possible to track down such an identity in classic sociology. It suggests that sociology should be the diagnostics of the social pathologies of modern society. This suggestion would enable us to develop a sociology which is not institutionalised as a servant, but rather as a critic of the welfare state[1]. I will argue that such a critical sociology fit for the 21st century must be able to free itself from a Marxian philosophy of history, which classic critical theory never managed to do, without wandering away to political theory and politi-

cal philosophy to justify its existence, which Habermas tends to[2].

The *third* point is - and here I partly depend on sociologists like Beck, Giddens and Bauman - that the form of modernity which was the subject of classic sociology is only one possible form of modernity. If we use substantial terms and refer to concrete societies, we should not speak of modernity but of modernities. A fundamental trait of modernity is that incentives to change are built into its formal structure. This formal structure, however, cannot in itself supply the material of which concrete modern societies are made. Every modern society or culture is therefore modern in its own special way. Thus, if we want to investigate current social pathologies, we will be dealing with another modernity than social theory from Marx to Parsons did. Radicalised globalisation and individualism, which I mentioned in the first point, are only two aspects of the emergence of 'another modernity'[3].

Unlike the other three, the *fourth* and final point does not primarily concern our changing society and the role which sociology can or should play there. It concerns theory of science, that is, the normative logic of theory development and empirical research and the relationship of the two. In another sociology (a) there has to be another relationship between theory and empirical research and (b) the methods of empirical research must change.

(*a*) I agree with Niklas Luhmann that the one-sided concentration on empirical methods in post-war sociology has led to what he calls, with a strange mixture of German and English, a 'Theoriedesaster' (Luhmann 1990:410). Since Parsons there have not been any - to use Luhmann's words again - 'fachuniversalen' theories (Luhmann 1984:10)[4].

This is probably why many sociology teachers have been standing more or less awkwardly silent before students asking the most elementary question of them all: What is sociology? I believe that a science with such a theoretical weakness is only possible under the condition of some external force holding it together - in our case, the demands of a technocratic welfare state[5]. Sociology is thus today standing at a crossroad. Either it will manage to develop some convincing and consistent, albeit fallible, answers to the question "What is sociology?", or sooner or later its cognitive decomposition will be followed by an institutional one - something which we already have seen signs of in the USA (see Horowitz 1993 and Sennett 1994). This problem cannot be solved without sociological theory development - and I am talking about 'grand theory'[6].

(*b*) The reifying methods of sociology as social technology fit a special - to use the early Habermas' term - 'interest of knowledge', namely the institutionalised interest of the technocratic welfare state to implement its plans[7]. Sociology as the diagnostics of the pathologies of modern society needs of course to develop other research methods. Current critical theory has not very much to say on this point (compare, however, Dryzek 1995). We can find in the writings of Habermas, however, an undeveloped idea of what might be called communicative research methods.

These four points all need to be worked out carefully and at length. If this could be done successfully, the result would be a program for a future critical sociology. Of course, I cannot do that here in this article. I can only give some further arguments to support and explain each of the four points. One last preparatory remark before I start: There
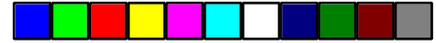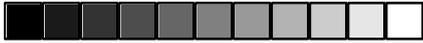
is a mixture of predictions and prescriptions in my picture of the future of sociology. I am thus working in the same way that critical theorists usually do. The distinction between predictions, which are founded on facts, and prescriptions, which are founded on normative arguments of different kinds (logical, moral, ethical, aesthetical), is only meaningful if it is understood as an analytical distinction. In actual research there is never a question of pure facts or pure normativity. What characterises critical theory is the idea of a kind of dialectic between the 'is' and the 'ought' which precludes objectivism, relativism and utopianism. Normative arguments are thus seen as situated in facticity, while factual situations are seen, to some degree, as both a result of normatively motivated action and something that can be changed by such action - for instance by critical sociology. Critical theorists are therefore looking for possibilities in situations to solve problems developed in situations. So let us now turn to the situation of sociology today[8].

2. The crisis of the welfare state and its consequences for sociology

In introducing the first point I claimed that the crisis of the welfare state is the crisis of the (a) nation-bound and (b) paternalistic welfare state. I will say something more about both of these sides of the crisis.

(*a*) The concept of globalisation is in the process of becoming the most-discussed concept in social science today. Both Beck and Giddens regard globalisation as one of the most important traits of late or - to use their new terminology - 'second modernity'[9]. I will not discuss here the meaning of the concept of globalisation, or its advantages and disadvantages. What I want to say is

this: In line with the post-Marxist tradition of thought, we should regard the welfare state as the solution to the conflict between labour and capital. The welfare state compensates and protects, outside the market economy, people who have no means of production. The market economy can thus continue to operate according to its immanent logic, without necessarily leading to misery and want for the weak. As long as this solution can be maintained, the most important conflicts in society are no longer economical, but political (see for instance Habermas 1985b). At a pinch, the solution can still work as long as only the production and the circulation of goods are globalised. When, however, capital itself is globalised, when capital liberates itself from a specific place in space, then the means for the nation-bound state to protect and compensate the people without means of production, through taxation and financial politics in general, is drastically weakened. The welfare state is then in crisis.

In a globalised world we continue, however, to live under conditions of capitalism. There are still people who possess means of production and people who do not. This division does not change with globalisation, but rather, it receives global significance. It follows that if we today are witnessing the end of the welfare state, then we are also witnessing the return of the disintegrating conflict between labour and capital. This conflict is internal to every capitalistic society, and thus, every capitalistic society has to find a solution to it. Now - and this is the conclusion I want to reach in this section - under conditions of globalisation it is very hard to see any other solution to this conflict than something like the one - with all its shortcomings, failures and mistakes - which we
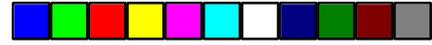
see slowly and hesitantly developing in Europe today, that is, the globalisation - or perhaps better the transnationalisation - of the state. I believe that we are not witnessing the end of the welfare state but the beginning of its transnationalisation.
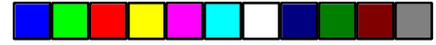
But does it not follow from such an argument that we must - as soon as a welfare state has re-established itself on a transnational level - expect a revival of sociology as social technology? My answer would be that this is one of three possible developments[10]. Another possibility is the decline of the welfare state without any new solution to the conflict between labour and capital. We could call such a situation postmodern, and it would lead to radical social disintegration. A third possible development would be the emergence of a transnational, non-paternalistic welfare state. What speaks for this second form of modernity and against the development of a paternalistic state on a transnational level is that already the national paternalistic welfare state (first modernity) suffers from a legitimation crisis. The globalisation of the welfare state cannot in itself be a solution to this part of the crisis. We are here dealing with another kind of welfare state crisis[11].

(*b*) If we take as our point of departure Weber's well-known concept 'legitime Herrschaft', power presupposes legitimacy and legitimacy in turn presupposes validity (Weber 1980). In a modern society, validity has to emerge under increasingly radicalised conditions of secularisation, pluralism, individualism and post-traditionalism. Radicalised modernity forces us to reconstruct Weber's theory of legitimacy. Such a reconstruction is one of Habermas' most important sociological accomplishments. He argues that if the political power in a fully modernised society is not radically democratised, it is going to suffer from a legitimation crisis (Habermas 1973, 1981, 1992; compare Carleheden 1996:168ff).

I will try to lend some support to this argument from another angle than Habermas' own. In early modernity the logic of science, technology and the rule of law (and thus of the bureaucracy) dominated politics in a similar way to the way the logic of religion did in premodern societies. With reference to Weber's famous study *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* it is possible to claim that once capitalism was institutionalised, faith in positive law, science and technology took over the legitimating role that the Protestant ethic had during the emergence of capitalism. With the rise of the welfare state, the importance of this mixture of instrumental reason and politics - that is, social engineering - increased dramatically. It is in this context that sociology as social technology emerged. One important outcome of social engineering is that the moral dimension of politics also becomes technicalised. Morality then takes the form of utilitarianism[12]. In Sweden there was, in 1997, an intense debate over one evident example of the negative consequences of such politics.

In Sweden from 1935 to 1976 over 60,000 persons - more than 90% of them women - were legally sterilised[13]. A great majority of the sterilisations were executed by force (Runsic 1998). Most western countries have, as far as I know, had sterilisation programs during some part of the 20th century. But the once-celebrated Swedish welfare state - the so-called Swedish model - was probably, with exception of Nazi Germany, the most effective also in this case. Eugenics played a crucial role in these programs. In Swedish social democratic ideology - which totally dominated Swedish po-

litics during the period we are talking about - the welfare state was called 'the home of the people'. The metaphor suggests that the state was understood as the responsible father and the citizens his children. In this good and safe home, every child was taken care of. This meant, however, that also the less healthy, successful and conscientious children obtained a level of welfare which enabled them to have and raise children. This side effect of welfare politics was seen as a threat to the future health of the Swedish race. The 'bad' part of the population bred. This is the background of the sterilisation program. I cannot go deeper into this example, but I see it as a clear example of how a utilitarian social policy, relying on medical science and sociology as social technology[14], with the intention of creating a good society, created not welfare for all, but deprivation for some[15].

The legitimacy of this kind of politics presupposes faith in science, social technology and law. My main point in this section is that in the late 20th century we have been witnessing a disenchantment with not only science, but also technology and positive law. (Castoriadis 1995:62; Beck 1986:256)[16]. Politicians can no longer just refer to scientific expertise and reduce politics to a question of technique. Different kinds of social movements, civil disobedience and the general mistrust of politicians illustrate this new political situation. Democracy no longer means that we choose our representatives every fourth year to do what they want, and otherwise simply obey them. That would be what Beck calls 'democratic monarchy' (Beck 1986: 312). Radical democracy means participation and influence of citizens.

Modernity is, to use Hans Blumenberg's term, 'Kontingenzkultur' (cited in Isenberg 1996) - that is, we have lost every possibility to found anything with reference to something absolute. It is precisely this that gives us, however, the deepest meaning of democracy. Democracy is, according to Castoriadis, 'the rule of self-reflection' (Castoriadis 1995: 80) and the self-creation of society out of nothingness. To found society on something absolute means to found it on something outside of this social self-creation (Castoriadis 1995:176). Democracy is the only legitimate form of this social, that is, co-operative self-creation of society. After the disenchantment of first religion and then positive law, science and technique, truth cannot exist outside of the social, and validity thus depends on the participation of citizens in the act of societal self-creation. All this puts much higher demands on a 'legitime Herrschaft' than Weber had imagined. Under conditions of second modernity, legitimate power presupposes radical democracy. This rules out social engineering and thus also sociology as social technology.

The conclusion of this first point is now evident. If there is going to be a future sociology, it has to detach itself from the idea of social technology. Sociology has to radically and rapidly renew itself. This renewal cannot go in any direction. Another sociology has to keep pace with the development of second modernity and not be dragging behind[17].

3. Sociology as diagnostics of the social pathologies of modern society

If a renewal of sociology is going to be worthwhile, there has to be something in the tradition of sociology that points beyond social technology and can be used as point of departure. I agree with those who claim that already classic sociology was to some extent technocratic.
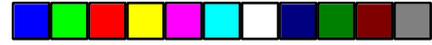
However, my argument in this section only presupposes that classic sociology as a whole, in contrast to sociology as social technology, cannot be reduced to technocratic thinking. There are other important ideas in classic sociology that can be used to renew contemporary sociology[18]. One of these ideas has recently been made visible by Axel Honneth.

We have to start even further back than classic sociology. We have to go to its roots in social philosophy. According to Honneth, social philosophy must be distinguished from both moral and political philosophy. The imperative for social philosophy is "to find a determination and discussion of those developmental processes of society that can be conceived as processes of decline (Fehlentwicklungen), distortions, or even as social pathologies" (Honneth 1994:10, 1996:370). It is clear that such a philosophy demands a normative standard, and if it is going to be distinct from moral and political philosophy, that standard has to be something other than justice (the right). We need instead a theory of the good (ethics), that is, of human self-realisation[19]. Social philosophy investigates the social conditions of human self-realisation. This is clearly another question than the one moral and political philosophy is working with. It is not about the meaning of and conditions for *just* relations between humans, but about the meaning of and the conditions for becoming a human being. The conditions we are then talking about are not biological or psychological conditions, but *social* conditions. It concerns social life as a whole.

Honneth sees Rousseau *(Discourse on the Origin of Inequality)* as the first social philosopher. His most important early followers were Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. Social philosophy is thus a reflection on modern society, a reflection on the possibilities of self-realisation after the political, capitalistic and industrial revolutions. Its central question is what consequences the legalisation, commercialisation and industrialisation of social relations have for the possibility of human self-realisation. In this pre-sociological phase of social reflection we find primarily two different forms of normative foundation, based on either philosophical anthropology or a philosophy of history. Both orientations form the basis for a criticism of modern society as - at least from the perspective of human self-realisation - a process of decline. The general claim is that modernity in some sense is a hindrance to human self-realisation or even makes it impossible.

According to Rousseau, the process of civilisation forces man to abandon his natural way of life. Honneth notices that Rousseau turns Hobbes upside down. It is the state of nature which allows human self-realisation and the state of civil society which prevents it. Already in the works of Rousseau we find one of the most important ideas of social philosophy, alienation. The conditions of modernity alienate man from himself, from his natural form of life. The consequence is both a 'loss of freedom' and a 'loss of virtues' - examples of social pathology.

In Hegel's work, another social pathology is central, 'loss of community'. According to Hegel, the development of modern subjective rights leads to social isolation. This in turn prevents self-realisation, because he - in contrast to Rousseau - sees non-instrumental social relations as conditions for a fully human life (compare contemporary communitarianism). Hegel claims that some kind of social unity, which would connect atomistic bourgeois life, is needed. In Marx's early work, self-determined
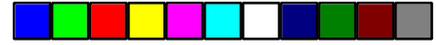
work is the condition for self-realisation. Capitalistic and industrial forms of division of labour prevent this. The result is alienation. In the later Marx, the idea of reification has replaced alienation. Reification has since become a more powerful concept than alienation because, unlike the latter, it is not bound to a romantic idea of work.

Nietzsche, in contrast to Marx, concentrates on the cultural conditions of modernity. Modernity makes it impossible, he claims, to live according to values which are conditions for self-realisation. He sees nihilism - 'loss of meaning' - as the most important form of modern pathology.

My intention is only to remind you of these social philosophers and their well-known ideas. The important point for my argument is that these ways of thinking had a big influence on the founding fathers of sociology. In a way, classic sociology can be described as social philosophy transformed into science. The founding fathers of sociology, Honneth writes -

were without exception deeply convinced that modern society was threatened by a moral impotence, which necessarily led to massive disturbances in social reproduction. With the institutional transition from a traditional to a modern social order, so claimed the general diagnosis, the social value structure had lost that ethical power of formation which had up until now allowed the individual to interpret its life as meaningful relative to a social aim. Sociology could now be conceived as an answer to the resulting pathology .... (Honneth 1996: 380, 1994:29).

This statement is easy to support. Just think about Weber's theory of modernisation as rationalisation which leads to a general disenchantment of the world. Weber conceptualises modernity as a loss of both freedom and meaning and talks about modernity as an iron cage. Think about Durkheim's central concept of anomie. Think about Simmel's talk about modernity as the 'tragedy of culture'. Think about Tönnies' worries about what social bounds keep modern society together, etc. The influence of Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche on the founding fathers of sociology is also a well-known story. I hope it is enough just to mention these central concepts of classic sociology to support the thesis that sociology was - at least in part - a normative and critical science. I believe that it is precisely this part which made sociology an interesting and exciting science, that is, precisely the part which is the first victim of sociology as social technology. Even more importantly, sociology as social technology does not only neglect social pathologies, it takes part in the production of such pathologies[20].

Classic sociology was different from the one which has dominated the second half of the 20th century. It seems even possible to find support for a critical sociology in classic sociology. One of the main problems with such a sociology is, however, the validity of the normative standards which are the point of departure for the criticism. As I mentioned earlier, pre-sociological social philosophy depended either on philosophical anthropology or a philosophy of history. Both these forms seem today to be undermined by the philosophical criticism of metaphysics. It is, however, essential for an advocacy of sociology as diagnostics of the social pathologies of modern society, that distinctions be-

tween pathological and non-pathological life forms can be made in a non-arbitrary way. Such a sociology must, in other words, be able to answer the difficult question of how it is at all possible to defend normative standards of what a good or successful life is[21]. The classic sociologists never solved this problem, which explains why it was so important for them to try to develop 'scientific' research methods, and why the normative part of classic sociology was often implicit or even concealed.

I agree with Honneth that the only way to solve this problem is to leave the substantial approach of social philosophy behind and develop a formal theory of the good (compare Carleheden 1996: chap. 8). However, in comparison with Aristotelian ethics, Rousseau's social philosophy is already a formalisation. Rousseau did not speak about the goals of human self-realisation, but about the conditions for its possibility. He did, however, use a normative concept of nature similarly to the way theories of natural rights do. Such references to human nature are just as problematic as Hegelian ideas of an immanent logic in history, in which an anticipated end-state is used as normative foundation. In the article by Honneth which I have been referring to, he does not really help us much further than stating our problem very clearly. He ends by saying that the approach he has developed "depends on the success with which the claims of a weak formalistic anthropology may be justified in the future" (Honneth 1996: 394, 1994:60). Let us see if Habermas can help us further.

Habermas criticises the early critical theory because, although its members knew that a philosophy of history cannot be defended, they never worked out another normative foundation for their critique of modern society. Habermas claims to have found such a foundation in the formal structures of linguistic communication. In the second volume of TkH he explains the social pathologies of modern society as resulting from disturbances of the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld. Symbolic reproduction depends, Habermas continues, on communicative action. Through this form of speech act, meaning, social integration and personal identity are produced. Without it, human life cannot be upheld[22]. The general characteristic of the human being is its ability to communicate. Communication is a universal condition for human life. As for early critical theory reification is the most important kind of social pathology for Habermas. In his theory, reification means that communicative action is made impossible. Reification is here translated to the well-known thesis about the colonisation of the lifeworld by the system (see Carleheden 1996: chap. 2).

It is thus evident that Honneth in many ways relies on Habermas. His argument is a continuation of critical theory. However, in TkH, Habermas does not relate social pathology, as Honneth does, to human self-realisation in any direct way[23]. After TkH, he furthermore concentrates his efforts on moral and political philosophy, on political science and law. Eventually he does develop a beginning of a theory of self-realisation. Self-realisation is then seen as the criteria of the good (ethics) in contrast to the right (justice and morality). In this approach, however, self-realisation still isn't connected with a theory of social pathology. Self-realisation is either understood existentially (the self-realisation of a person) or politically (the self-realisation of a group or community of some kind)[24]. As a matter of fact, nowhere in Habermas' work can we find
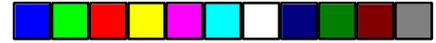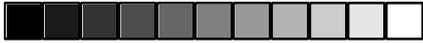
social philosophy in Honneth's sense, that is, a combination of the concepts of self-realisation and social pathology. The advantage of this combination is - as I see it - its ability to give sociology a normative point of departure of its own. Habermas' theory of communication is too general for our purposes. Let me give some arguments for this claim before we go on.

In TkH, sociology plays a very important role for the critical theory of society because in it we have, Habermas claims, a social science which is internally related to questions about rationality and validity. The argument seems to be, that if we can reflect on such questions within the framework of a science, then we can work out a theory of normative foundation without exposing ourselves to the criticism of metaphysics, which otherwise seems to undermine all forms of critical thinking. Normativity is, according to Habermas, inherent in key sociological concepts like social action and social order. The basic theme of sociology is, he claims, social integration (TkH vol.1: 19, Eng. vol.1: 4). However, in the works after TkH it becomes increasingly clear that the normative foundation of a modern society's social integration is to be worked out by a theory of the right. A theory of the good can only play a minor role. In *Faktizität und Geltung* (FG), political science and jurisprudence seem to have taken over the key role that sociology played in TkH[25]. I believe this is mistaken. I think it is true that sociology cannot claim to be the meta-science of the social sciences, but neither can political science or law. The good and the right are equally important concepts for social science. The one cannot be reduced to the other. Both the logic of justice and of human self-realisation pose fundamental demands on

society as a whole, and these two demands need not - and should not - stand in contradiction of each other, as the debate between liberals and communitarians might suggest[26].

The problem with Habermas' critical theory from a sociological point of view is that his concept of the good is too weak. It cannot give sociology a normative foundation of its own. I agree with the general claim in his later theory of self-realisation, that the procedural presuppositions of practical discourse about both the good and the right are similar universal. The problem lies in his way of distinguishing the good from the right. Like Rawls, Habermas argues that while human rights are characterised by being generalisable, conceptions of the good are thoroughly contextual. But if we do not develop a formal theory of the general characteristics of the good, self-realisation could be anything. This means that a practical discourse about the good immediately must be caught up by relativism. We thus need a theory of human self-realisation. Just an application of discourse theory is not enough. The difference between a theory of the right and a theory of the good cannot be how far their normative conceptions can be generalised. It is rather a question of different kinds of normativity.

The perhaps somewhat surprising conclusion of this quick look into the work of Habermas is that he does not really give us the theoretical material we need to formulate a conception of a critical sociology. He formulates a general framework for a critical theory of society, but he does not give sociology - as a distinct discipline - a clear and consistent role within this general framework. Social integration seems to have become a subject matter for political science, law and political theory, and
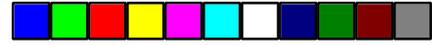
the concept of communicative action or discourse is too general for our purposes. We are thus back where we left Honneth. Luckily he, in a earlier book called *Kampf um Annerkenung*, has gone a bit further than in the article I referred to previously.

Honneth's purpose in this book is precisely to work out "the universals of a successful (gelungenen) life" (Honneth 1992:285). Such a theory, he writes, must be formal enough not to violate the plurality of concrete forms of life. On the other hand, it must be able to offer more than a theory of justice.

Honneth starts - with the help of Hegel and Mead (and tacitly, Habermas) - by making a distinction between self-preservation and recognition. Economic and political theories in the tradition of Machiavelli and Hobbes always have self-preservation as their fundamental point of departure. Recognition, however, has in its primary sense nothing to do with self-preservation. While self-preservation concerns physical survival, recognition takes place in the symbolic and social dimension of life; it is intersubjective. This means also that Honneth takes Hegel's part against Rousseau. With his general critique of civilisation, Rousseau argues that human self-realisation is a monological self-relationship. Hegel and Mead see instead a special kind of non-instrumental social relation as fundamental to becoming a human being. Self-realisation presupposes intersubjective recognition. Human beings are social beings, which explains why 'loss of community' and 'anomie' must be seen as social pathologies. I believe that with this assertion something other is said than what can be said with the help of moral and political theory, that is, with concepts like freedom, autonomy, respect and justice. We are dealing with two dif-
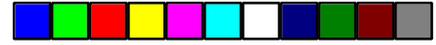
ferent kinds of normativity. Human beings need recognition just as much as justice.

Honneth does not, however, confine himself to a general concept of recognition. He differentiates between three forms of recognition which a good life presupposes: Love, rights and solidarity[27]. In the first case recognition is expressed through emotional devotion (Zuwendung), in the second case through cognitive respect and in the third case through social esteem (Wertschätzung) (Honneth 1992:211). These forms of recognition corresponds further to three forms of disrespect (Mißachtung). Such distinctions could be used as points of departure for working out the different tasks and fields of a critical sociology. Another way would be to take the different models of social pathologies in classic sociology - alienation, reification, anomie, loss of meaning, loss of freedom and loss of community etc. - as points of departure. I cannot, however, go further into this matter here.

To conclude this point, the concept of 'intersubjective recognition' seems to be what we have been looking for. It is the core of a weak formalistic anthropology that can be defended against the relativist critique of universals, because it is - as Habermas' concept of communication is - not just philosophical, but can rely on social theories (like Mead's), and it is formal enough to allow for a plurality of life forms. In addition, it is more substantial than the theory of discourse and distinct from a theory of justice. It gives us thus a normative foundation for sociology as diagnostics of the pathologies of modern society.

4. Another modernity
My third point is that it is wrong to speak of the modern society in the sin-

gular. This mistake is made on both sides of the modernity-postmodernity debate. The mistake lies in identifying the first concrete form of modernity with modernity in general. Contemporary society cannot be understood in this way, because it is neither a simple continuation of first modernity nor something quite different. Sociology should instead be a study of modernities. This is a more concrete task than just writing the history of the emergence of modernity's general features. Furthermore, we wouldn't be forced to understand modernity as something in the process of freeing itself from all pre-modern elements. Such an understanding might allow us to speak of modernities, but only in the sense of more and less pure stages. It implies that the history of modernity is going to end in one global form of pure modernity. Instead sociology as a study of modernities suggests that modernity is going to produce different kinds of modern societies, for instance a second Western form of modernity. This form is not purer that the classic Western form or, for instance, some Eastern form of modernity - it is only different (compare Taylor 1995: xi-xii). Let me give some examples to support this claim.

In the first point I mentioned globalisation. In many ways, globalisation is only a continuation of trends in classic modernity. It is for instance by no means a break with capitalism. However, one of the main characteristics of a society in the period of classic modernity was that it could more or less be equated with a nation state society. Today, globalisation has gone so far that it in many ways stands in opposition to the nation state. With continued globalisation, we should expect that societies with borders other than national ones are going to be more important to modern peop-

le's lives than nation state societies[28]. Such societies are thus different from societies of classic modernity, but they can still very well build on typically modern qualities such as individualism, pluralism, secularisation etc. Individualisation can also be used to support my argument. An individualistic self-understanding - which for instance was expressed in the American and French revolutions - was one of the most important features of classic modernity. But just as in the case of globalisation, things start to happen when individualism becomes radicalised. We are dealing with changes in degree which at a certain level become changes in kind. One side of this is the legitimation crisis I talked about in the first point. The radicalised individualistic self-understanding threatens not only the paternalistic and technocratic welfare state, but also representative democracy as we know it. Another side of this radicalised individualism is the consequences it has for the paternalistic family (Beck 1986). Beck has argued that while the family in many ways was the smallest unit of classic modernity, we are now entering a period where the family is replaced by the individual. This development can easily be confirmed by looking at increasing divorce rates and the increasing number of people living alone. Other examples of the development of another modernity are post-industrial capitalism, multiculturalism, the change from more instrumental to more aesthetical forms of life (Schulze 1992), the disappearance of class as a kind of 'Gemeinschaft' (Beck 1986).

Now, it would not be surprising if the writings of classic social philosophers and sociologists are bound to a great degree to the specific case of classic modernity. Obviously, the kind of work Marx was criticising when he

wrote about alienation is different from the kind we find in a post-industrial society. Clearly Weber had very little experience of the possibilities of radical democracy when he wrote about modernity as an iron cage. Hegel or Durkheim could not reflect on the declining importance of nation, class or family when they wrote about loss of community, anomie and social integration. Weber did not know about the increasing possibilities for aesthetic forms of life as a response to secularisation and loss of meaning etc. When another sociology uses the concept of social pathology and takes as its point of departure classic sociology, it will have to take into account how the development of another modernity changes the content and the conditions of social pathologies in contemporary society.

## 5. In search of non-reifying empirical methods

Critical theorists have over and over again pointed out that the empirical methods of mainstream sociology are closely connected to an objectivistic world view and well suited to a technocratic society (see for instance Adorno et al. 1972). Thus a critical sociology has to develop another methodology, which will also overcome the idea of a dualistic relationship between theoretical and empirical research[29]. This is the background for the last point I want to make.

To be able to outline another methodology we have to be very careful, because the objectivism of 'scientific' empirical research is as old as the discipline itself. There are few non-objectivist attempts in the sociological tradition to fall back on[30]. This results from the unfortunate idea that the social sciences should copy the methods of the natural sciences in order to gain the status of a 'real' science. Our problem, however,

goes even deeper. The objectivistic understanding of knowledge in general has dominated epistemology and the theory of science ever since Descartes. This is true to such a degree that critics of objectivism often see themselves forced to do away with methodology and epistemology altogether[31]. One reason for this is that epistemology seems to be inevitably intertwined with a dualistic understanding of the relationship between the scientist and the world which he or she is seeking knowledge about. The relation is thus construed as a subject-object relation. Objectification of the world and its inhabitants becomes in this view a precondition of knowledge. Today - after the pioneering work of Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein - it is quite clear that epistemology in this sense is not just a theory of knowledge, but that it implies a whole world view - a deceptive one. Charles Taylor mentions three often-criticised notions related to epistemology (Taylor 1995:7):

1. The possibility of a free and rational subject outside of both the natural and the social world.
2. An instrumental relation between subject and object.
3. An atomistic understanding of society.

The first notion follows from the conception of knowledge as representation, that is, the idea that knowledge is the subject's inner pictures of an outer reality. Here we once again encounter the early modern idea that science should and could take over the position that God had in the pre-modern world, that is, a position from above, from where it is possible to observe the world as something disparate and external. The critics of epistemology have, however, convincingly argued that the scientist
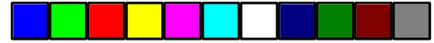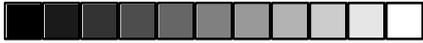
is rather a product of the same world that he or she is studying. Rather than he or she being here and the world there, the scientist is a 'being-in-the-world', to use Heidegger's terminology.

The second notion follows from the first. A subject outside the world can only relate to it in an instrumental way, that is, treat it as a physical object. This includes the subject's relation to its own body and to every other subject.

The third notion is this epistemological world view applied to social theory[32]. The last two notions explain why this kind of epistemology fits a technocratic society so well. I cannot here, however, go further into the by-now, even without including critical theory, overwhelming criticism of these notions - from Heidegger's concept of 'being-in-the-world' and the later Wittgenstein's concept of 'language-game' to Kuhn's paradigm theory of science and postmodern criticism of the autonomous subject. The notions have been disputed on an anthropological, moral, political, sociological, historical and logical level. Let me instead try to say something about the theoretical conditions of another methodology.

The fact that scientists no longer can be seen as gods, but as human beings living in a natural and social world, means - at least in the case of social science - that they lose their privileged position in relation to their objects of research. It may seem strange that I need to emphasise this, but in view of the history of methodology it is not. Social scientists are not another kind of people and scientific methods are not magic flutes. Their knowledge and their methods do not differ in kind from the knowledge of other people and their 'methods'. Normal people can in fact acquire knowledge and reflect upon themselves without scientific methods

and a grade in statistics or formal logic. Scientists are influenced, just as are normal people, by the fact that they are situated in a specific social and historic context with specific values and beliefs. If they were not, they would not be able to know anything at all.

Another consequence of the critique of epistemology points in the same direction. Along with the idea of knowledge as representation, we have to leave the correspondence theory of truth behind (Habermas 1997). It is impossible to compare inner pictures or concepts with an outer world. Such a comparison would presuppose some kind of pure contact with this world which is not mediated through inner pictures or concepts. This is as unconvincing as the idea that the outer world, through perception, causes true inner pictures of this world, as long as the observation is made in the right way. It is more convincing to argue that every contact with an outer world must be mediated or interpreted through language. Knowledge of something presupposes that this something can be placed in a symbolic universe or - to use Wittgenstein's terminology - become a part of a language game[33]. Such a language game could for instance be a social theory, which shows why theory is crucial to empirical research. Wittgenstein, however, goes further. He understands language in a performative way, which leads him to see a language game as a form of life. Language is a way of acting and living that includes, of course, performative knowledge[34]. Thus, living and acting people always already have knowledge, which is not different in kind from scientific knowledge. Objectivistic science is, in a way, just another language game. It implies, however, a technocratic form of life.

We can use the theory of language

game as a theory of knowledge. It says that to know something is to place this something in an already existing symbolic universe. Of course new knowledge can change this universe to some extent, but some pre-existing symbolic universe is a necessary precondition for knowledge. To place something in a symbolic universe is to interpret it. Human beings - that is, both scientists and normal people - are, to use Taylor's phrase, 'interpreting animals' (Taylor 1985:45ff).

We are now prepared to take a look at the methodological considerations which are to be found in Habermas' writings[35]. The term 'social' means a relationship between at least two human beings. Habermas' theory of communicative action says that this relation cannot be understood in its primary sense as a subject-object relation. In accordance with what has just been argued, if we understand the scientist as a human being, social science also has to be understood as a social relation. Habermas can accordingly use his findings in social theory to develop a methodology. The relation between the scientist and the inhabitants of the social world that he or she is examining cannot primarily be a subject-object relationship. It is on a fundamental level, like all other social relations, a subject-subject relation, an intersubjective relation. The reason for this lies in the logic of understanding. To be able to understand the meaning of another subject's actions (including speech acts), we have to have access to this person's symbolic universe, a universe which to a great extent is shared with other people living in the same society.

Now in the case of sociology this is not so hard as it sounds, because sociologists mostly study their own society, that is, a language game/form of life (or lifeworld) which the sociologists and their objects of research already to a great extent share. In comparison to social anthropologists, sociologists in this respect have an easier task. In principle, however, they have to solve the same problem (a problem scientists share with normal people), the problem of mutual understanding. Access to another person's symbolic universe presupposes a process of reaching mutual understanding ('Verständigung'). Such a understanding is not possible if we treat our objects of research as pure objects. The process of mutual understanding presupposes that we meet the other as another subject, that is, as a person with intentions of his/her own. To explain this in detail would take too much time, unfortunately. The crucial claim to make here is Habermas' argument for a necessary connection between meaning and validity. We cannot understand meaning, he asserts, without taking a position on the rightness of certain validity claims which are involved in every speech act (primarily claims about truth and normative rightness). Thus a social scientist cannot treat the claims inherent in the speech acts of the inhabitants of the social world he or she is studying as mere facts, so long as he or she wants to understand them. A process of reaching mutual understanding can only begin if the persons involved take positions towards the validity claims of one another. This is only possible if scientists abandon - at least for a while - their lonely positions as observers and take the positions of participants.

If a process of reaching mutual understanding does not precede the construction of social facts, this construction is only going to be the result of the scientist's personal symbolic universe, that is, it is going to be subjective. In
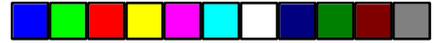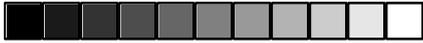
this case the scientist lacks access to the symbolic dimension of the social world he or she is studying. The meaning he or she attributes to the actions of the inhabitants of this world can therefore only be the scientist's own subjective meaning. This is what happens in the case of objectivistic science. In using objectivistic methods, social scientists force the objectivistic world view implied by these methods on the society they are studying. Objectivism thus turns out to be a form of subjectivism.

The question which emerges at this stage is whether or not there is any difference between the scientist and the normal person at all. The answer is that a scientist cannot be a participant all the time. This is of course also true for the normal person. We must all be able to take the position of a third person observing other people interact. The social scientist, however, specialises in such observation. The social scientist is an expert at observing some specific part of the social world. He or she collects observations in a systematic way and tries to find connections between them with the help of social theory. A scientist is an expert at producing specialised knowledge, similar to the way someone may be an expert at doing business on the stock market, playing football or repairing old cars. Habermas tries to capture the special form of the social scientist's expertise with the phrase 'virtual participant'. In contrast to normal people, the social scientist does not "pursue any aims *of his own* within the observed context" (TkH Vol.1:168, Eng. Vol.1: 14). For normal people, knowledge is first and foremost the 'instruments' of living and acting. Even a critical sociologist can be distinguished from normal people through his or her theoretical attitude towards knowledge.

I cannot here develop these preparatory remarks about the preconditions for non-reifying methods further. Perhaps we could call them communicative research methods. The problem with such methods is that they could be criticised for hermeneutic idealism similar to the way Habermas criticises interpretative sociology in general (TkH vol.2: 182ff, Eng. vol.2:119ff). It is at this point that he introduces systems theory. People's actions cannot always be explained by their intentions and motives, not even after a process of mutual understanding. Society is not only lifeworld. But Habermas makes these points only on a social-theoretical level. Which are the consequences for methodology? Habermas does not ask himself this question[36]. It is obvious that external forces - and we do not have to understand them in a system-theoretical way - do play an important role in society. It is also obvious that such external forces might be responsible for social pathologies. Such is the claim of Habermas' theory of colonisation. The question then is how sociology can grasp these forces in empirical research and how methods for this are to be related to communicative methods. This question I have to leave open without even a single preparatory remark.

Noter

1. I am not primarily talking about a critique of the welfare state as such, but rather a critique of what the welfare state does and how it works. The welfare state should, however, only be seen as one, although one of the most important, possible objects of critique. Another important object is of course the market and its consequences for social life.

2. I am using the term 'critical theory' as a more general term than 'critical sociology'. The former term is synonymous with 'the Frankfurt school' and is a perspective which can be used in the social sciences and the humanities in general.
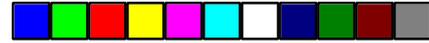
3. 'Another modernity', and not 'New modernity', is the correct English translation of the subtitle to Beck's book *Risikogesellschaft* (1986).

4. The only exception, besides Luhmann's own systems theory, is Habermas' theory of communicative action.

5. Such a hypothesis could explain why American sociology today seems to be in a weaker position than European sociology (see Horowitz (1993) and Sennett (1994)). The welfare state is, after all, more developed in Europe than in the USA.

6. An answer to the question "What is sociology?" does of course not exclude theoretical pluralism. Theoretical pluralism presupposes rather several competing answers to this question.

7. It is possible to say a lot about the special logic of this implementation without using the mystifying language of Luhmann's systems theory. I believe Habermas goes too far in Luhmann's direction, but I cannot develop that here.

8. There are several contemporary attempts to develop a 'post-empiricist' or 'post-positivist' sociology, which do not take their point of departure in critical theory. For an account, see for instance Bryant (1995) or Pleasants (1997). I cannot explicitly challenge these alternatives to my own attempt here.

9. See the recently started Suhrkamp book series edited by Beck called 'Edition Zweite Moderne'.

10. There are already today undeniable signs of a technocratic approach in European research politics.

11. This is what makes me more optimistic than Dahrendorf (1997), who believes that globalisation is going to make the 21st century an 'authoritarian century'.

12. This corresponds to Gouldner's term 'Keynsian functionalism'. The aim of social engineering is the survival of society as a whole.

13. A majority of the sterilisations were executed before 1955 (Runcis 1998).

14. Two of the most important Swedish social democratic 'legislators' - to use Bauman's concept (1987) - Alva and Gunnar Myrdal - did a lot of their most important work before sociology was institutionalised in Sweden. They were, however, to a great extent inspired by American sociology and even sometimes called themselves sociologists. Gunnar Myrdal (1954:191ff) named his political program "a technology of economies". See Nilsson (1994).

15. Swedish media was, in 1997, full of interviews with mostly elderly women who tearfully tell stories about how their lives were destroyed because of sterilisation, and how they until now had told almost nobody about the true cause of their childlessness because they were ashamed of it. These repeated stories about shame show how strong the technocratic welfare state ideology once was.

16. These two authors do not mention positive law. I see faith in positive law as at least as important for an understanding of cmassic modernity as faith in science and technology. We can use Weber's theory of legitimacy to argue for this.

17. However, such a renewal might not necessarily imply a complete disconnection of social research and politics. Giddens suggests instead a new model, which he calls dialogical: "A dialogical model introduces the notion that the most effective forms of connection between social research and policy-making are forged through an extended process of communication between researchers, policy-makers and those affected by whatever issues are under consideration." (Giddens 1987:44). See also Bryant (1995: chap. 5).

18. In criticising an earlier version of this article, Bauman writes: "To encompass the logic of *all* sociology (...) one needs to take enlightenment and not service as a frame. I believe that the story would look then much less discontinuous ..." (personal correspondence, January 30, 1998). This criticism made me change some earlier formulations.

19. Concerning the distinction between the right and the good, see Rawls (1993) or Habermas (1991, 1992).

20. Compare Wagner (1991:14), who writes: "While the classic social sciences tried to uncover the institutional structures which threatened to discipline the individual and undermine his autonomy, the modern social sciences reified exactly these structures and became therefore rather one more bar in the 'iron cage of modernity' instead of becoming the instrument to break this cage open."

21. It is problematic enough to claim universal validity for concepts of what is morally right.
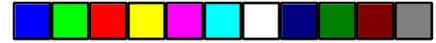
22. We are here actually dealing with a weak formal anthropology. In TkH (vol.2:561f, Eng. vol.2:383), even Habermas sometimes talks about "anthropologically deep-seated structures" with reference to communicative action.

23. Habermas does in TkH use the concept of authenticity a few times, but there he relates it to aesthetics. This approach is already abandoned in Habermas (1985a). Compare Carleheden (1996:231ff).

24. The first way is developed in Habermas (1991:100ff), the second in Habermas (1992).

25. The role of sociology in FG seems primarily to be a correction of purely normative approaches (like Rawls'), that is, the role of a 'objectivistic disenchanter' (like Luhmann).

26. It seems to me that while Habermas - like liberals - tends to let the concept of the right overrule the concept of the good, Honneth - like communitarians - tends to let the concept of the good overrule the concept of the right. I am critical of both the approaches.

27. Instead of seeing the good and the right as two different and equally important normative concepts, Honneth thus in a communitarian manner understands the right as a part of the good. In Carleheden (1996:234ff), I argue that even from the perspective of self-realisation, we need to develop a concept of morality that in a way supports a concept of the right, which is developed from the perspective of justice. In contrast to Honneth, however, I believe that such an idea of the moral aspect of the good can only support - not replace - a Kantian, deontological theory of the right.

28. It is often observed that globalisation does not exclude decentralisation. There seem to be better possibilities for regional and local communities in a globalised world than in a nation state.

29. This dualistic idea we find just as much in 'qualitative' as in 'quantitative' empirical research.

30. Compare, however, the so-called interpretative sociology.

31. Compare post-positivistic relativism and postmodern contextualism (Rorty), but also for instance Gadamer (1986) who argues that we have to choose between truth and method or Taylor (1995), who talks about 'overcoming epistemology'.

32. Hobbes' social theory is the first clear example.

33. This concept should be understood in contrast to a physical universe. We should remember that Wittgenstein emphasises that such a universe cannot be private.

34. Habermas uses Husserl's term 'lifeworld' in a similar sense.

35. Habermas himself rejects his methodologically and epistemologically oriented theories before TkH (see Habermas 1982:10). Since then, however, he has had little to say about methodological questions. We have only section 4 of the introduction to TkH (vol.1: 152ff, Eng. vol.1:102ff) and an article included in Habermas (1983:29ff), which to some extent only repeats the arguments in TkH, to rely on.

36. He does have things to say about this in his earlier period of thinking (Habermas 1968, 1982:313ff). But this was when he used Freud's theory as a model for the social sciences, and these ideas cannot easily be used in connection with his later period.

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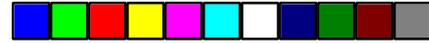
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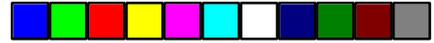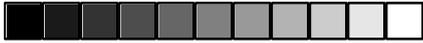
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