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CHOOSING AMONG PROJECTS OF ACTION

THE CONCEPT OF ACTION

Our purpose is the analysis of the process by which an actor in daily life determines his future conduct after having considered several possible ways of action. The term "action" as used in this paper shall designate human conduct as an ongoing process which is devised by the actor in advance, that is, which is based upon a preconceived project. The term "act" shall designate the outcome of this ongoing process, that is, the accomplished action. Action, thus, may be covert—for example, the attempt to solve a scientific problem mentally—or overt, gearing into the outer world. But not all projected conduct is also purposive conduct. In order to transform the forethought into an aim and the project into a purpose, the intention to carry out the project, to bring about the projected state of affairs, must supervene. This distinction is of importance with respect to covert actions. My phantasying may be a projected one, and therefore, an action within the meaning of our definition. But it remains mere fancying unless what W. James called the voluntative "fiat" supervenes and transforms my project into a purpose. If a covert action is more than "mere fancying," namely purposive, it shall be called for the sake of convenience a "performance." In case of an overt action, which gears into the outer world and changes it, such a distinction is not necessary. An overt action is always both projected and purposive. It is projected by definition because otherwise it would be mere conduct and since it has become overt, that is, manifested in the outer world, the voluntative fiat which transfers the project into a purpose, the inner command "Let us start!" must have preceded.

Action may take place—purposively or not—by commission or omission. The case of purposively refraining from action deserves, however, special attention. I may bring about a future state of affairs by non-interference. Such a projected abstaining from acting may be considered in itself as an action and even as a performance within the meaning of our definition. If I project an action, then drop this project, say because I forget about it, no performance occurs. But if I oscillate between carrying out and not carrying out a project and decide for the latter, then my purposive refraining from acting is a performance. I may even interpret my deliberation whether or not to carry out a projected action as a choice between two

projects, two anticipated states of affairs, one to be brought about by the action projected, the other by refraining from it. The deliberation of the surgeon whether or not to operate upon a patient or of the businessman whether or not to sell under given circumstances are examples of situations of this kind.

THE TIME STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

According to Dewey's pregnant formulation, deliberation is "a dramatic rehearsal in imagination of various competing possible lines of action. . . . It is an experiment in making various combinations of selected elements of habits and impulses to see what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon."[1] This definition hits the point in many respects. All projecting consists in an anticipation of future conduct by way of phantasying. We have only to find out whether it is the future ongoing process of the action as it rolls on phase by phase or the outcome of this future action, the act imagined as having been accomplished, which is anticipated in the phantasying of projecting. It can easily be seen, that it is the latter, the act that will have been accomplished, which is the starting point of all of our projecting. I have to visualize the state of affairs to be brought about by my future action before I can draft the single steps of my future acting from which this state of affairs will result. Metaphorically speaking I have to have some idea of the structure to be erected before I can draft the blueprints. In order to project my future action as it will roll on I have to place myself in my phantasy at a future time when this action *will* already *have been* accomplished, when the resulting act *will* already *have been* materialized. Only then may I reconstruct the single steps which will have brought forth this future act. What is thus anticipated in the project is, in our terminology, not the future action, but the future act, and it is anticipated in the Future Perfect Tense, *modo futuri exacti*. This time perspective peculiar to the project has rather important consequences. First, I base my projecting of my forthcoming act in the Future Perfect Tense upon my knowledge of previously performed acts which are typically similar to the prescribed one, upon my knowledge of typically relevant features of the situation in which this projected action will occur, including my personal biographically determined situation. But this knowledge is my knowledge now at hand, now, at the time of projecting, and must needs be different from that which I shall have when the now merely projected act will have been materialized. Until then I shall have grown older and if nothing else has changed, at least the experiences I shall have had while carrying out my project will have enlarged my knowledge. In other words, projecting like any other anticipation carries along its empty

[1] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, III (Modern Library edit.), p. 190.

horizons which will be filled in merely by the materialization of the anticipated event. This constitutes the intrinsic uncertainty of all forms of projecting.

Secondly the particular time perspective of the project explains the relationship between the project and the various forms of motives.

IN-ORDER-TO AND BECAUSE MOTIVE

It is frequently stated that actions within the meaning of our definition are motivated behavior. Yet the term "motive" is equivocal and covers two different sets of concepts which have to be distinguished. We may say that the motive of the murderer was to obtain the money of the victim. Here "motive" means the state of affairs, the end, which the action has been undertaken to bring about. We shall call this kind of motive the "in-order-to motive." From the point of view of the actor this class of motives refers to his future. In the terminology suggested, we may say that the projected act, that is the pre-phantasied state of affairs to be brought about by the future action constitutes the in-order-to motive of the latter. What is, however, motivated by such an in-order-to motive? It is obviously not the projecting itself. I may project in my phantasy to commit a murder without any supervening intention to carry out such a project. Motivated by the way of in-order-to, therefore, is the "voluntative fiat," the decision: "Let's go!" which transforms the inner fancying into a performance or an action gearing into the outer world.

Over against the class of in-order-to motives we have to distinguish another one which we suggest calling the "because" motive. The murderer has been motivated to commit his acts because he grew up in an environment of such and such a kind, because, as psycho-analysis shows, he had in his infancy such and such experiences, etc. Thus, from the point of view of the actor, the because-motive refers to his past experiences. These experiences have determined him to act as he did. What is motivated in an action in the way of "because" is the project of the action itself. In order to satisfy his needs for money, the actor had the possibility of providing it in several other ways than by killing a man, say by earning it in a remunerative occupation. His idea of attaining this goal by killing a man was determined ("caused") by his personal situation or more precisely, by his life history, as sedimented in his personal circumstances.

The distinction between in-order-to motives and because motives is frequently disregarded in ordinary language which permits the expression of most of the "in-order-to" motives by "because" sentences, although not the other way around. It is common usage to say that the murderer killed his victim *because* he wanted to obtain his money. Logical analysis has to penetrate the cloak of language and to investigate how this curious translation of "in-order-to" relations into "because" sentences becomes possible.

The answer seems to be a twofold one and opens still other aspects of the implications involved in the concept of motives. Motive may have a subjective and an objective meaning. Subjectively it refers to the experience of the actor who lives in his ongoing process of activity. To him, motive means what he has actually in view as bestowing meaning upon his ongoing action, and this is always the in-order-to motive, the intention to bring about a projected state of affairs, to attain a pre-conceived goal. As long as the actor lives in his ongoing action, he does not have in view its because motives. Only when the action has been accomplished, when in the suggested terminology it has become an act, he may turn back to his past action as an observer of himself and investigate by what circumstances he has been determined to do what he did. The same holds good if the actor grasps in retrospection the past initial phases of his still ongoing action. This retrospection may even be merely anticipated *modo futuri exacti*. Having, in my projecting phantasy, anticipated what I shall have done when carrying out my project, I may ask myself why I was determined to take this and no other decision. In all these cases the genuine because motive refers to past or future perfect experiences. It reveals itself by its very temporal structure only to the retrospective glance. This "mirror-effect" of temporal projection explains why, on the one hand, a linguistic "because form" may and is frequently used for expressing genuine "in-order-to relations" and why, on the other hand, it is impossible to express genuine because relations by an "in-order-to" sentence. In using the linguistic form "in-order-to", I am looking at the ongoing process of action which is still in the making and appears therefore in the time perspective of the future. In using the linguistic "because" form for expressing a genuine in-order-to relationship, I am looking at the preceding project and the therein *modo futuri exacti* anticipated act. The genuine because motive, however, involves, as we have seen, the time perspective of the past and refers to the genesis of the projecting itself.

So far we have analyzed the subjective aspect of the two categories of motives that is the aspect from the point of view of the actor. It has been shown that the in-order-to motive refers to the attitude of the actor living in the process of his ongoing action. It is, therefore, an essentially subjective category and is revealed to the observer only if he asks what meaning the actor bestows upon his action. The genuine because motive, however, as we have found, is an objective category, accessible to the observer who has to reconstruct from the accomplished act, namely from the state of affairs brought about in the outer world by the actor's action, the attitude of the actor to his action. Only insofar as the actor turns to his past and, thus, becomes an observer of his own acts, can he succeed in grasping the genuine because motives of his own acts.

The mixing-up of the subjective and objective point of view as well as of the different temporal structures inherent in the concept of motives has created many difficulties in understanding the process by which we determine our future conduct. Especially has the problem of genuine because motives its age-old metaphysical connotations. It refers to the controversy between determinists and indeterminists, the problem of free will and "*librum arbitrium.*" This controversy is to us here of no concern although we hope to learn from the treatment it has received from some philosophers such as Bergson and Leibniz important insights for our main problem, the process of choosing between projects and the determination of our future actions. Yet the time structure of all projecting is of highest importance to us: Our analysis has shown that it always refers to a certain set of knowledge of the actor at hand at the time of projecting and nevertheless, carries along its horizon of empty anticipations, namely that the projected act will go on in a typically similar way as had all the typically similar past acts known to him at the time of projecting. This knowledge is an exclusively subjective element and for this very reason the actor, as long as he lives in his projecting and acting, feels himself exclusively motivated by the projected act in the way of in-order-to.

FANCYING AND PROJECTING

It is also the reference of projecting to a stock of knowledge at hand which distinguishes projecting from mere fancying. If I fancy to be superman or to be endowed with magic powers and dream what I will then perform, this is not projecting. In pure phantasy I am not hampered by any limits imposed by reality. It is in my discretion to ascertain what is within my reach, and to determine what is within my power. At my good pleasure I may fancy that all or some or none of the conditions upon which the attaining of my fancied goal by fancied means in a fancied situation depends, will have been fulfilled. In such a pure phantasying my mere wish defines my possible chances. It is a thinking in the optative mode.

Projecting of performances or overt actions, however, is a motivated phantasying, motivated namely by the anticipated supervening intention to carry out the project. The practicability of the project is a condition of all projecting which could be translated into a purpose. Projecting of this kind is, thus, phantasying within a given or better within an imposed frame, imposed namely by the reality within which the projected action will have to be carried out. It is not, as mere phantasying is, a thinking in the optative mode but a thinking in the potential one. This potentiality, this possibility of executing the project requires, for instance, that only ends and means believed by me to be within my actual or potential reach may be taken into account by my projecting in fancy; that I am not allowed

to vary fictitiously in my phantasying those elements of the situation which are beyond my control; that all chances and risks have to be weighed in accordance with my present knowledge of possible occurrences of this kind in the real world; briefly that according to my present knowledge the projected action, *at least as to its type*, would have been feasible, its means and ends, *at least as to their types*, would have been available if the action had occurred in the past. The italicized restriction is important. It is not necessary that the "same" projected action in its individual uniqueness, with its unique ends and unique means has to be pre-experienced and, therefore, known. If this were the case nothing novel could ever be projected. But it is implied in the notion of such a project that the projected action, its end and its means remain compatible and consistent with these typical elements of the situation which according to our experience at hand at the time of projecting have warranted so far, the practicability, if not the success, of *typically* similar actions in the past.

THE FOUNDATION OF PRACTICABILITY

What are, however, these elements of the situation with which the projected action has to remain consistent and compatible in order to be anticipated as feasible and what constitutes their typicality? Without entering into the detailed analysis of this highly complicated problem, we may, very roughly, distinguish two sets of experiences upon which the assumption of the practicability of the projected action is founded.

(a) The world as taken for granted.

The first set consists of the actor's experiences and his opinions, beliefs, assumptions, referring to the world, the physical and the social one, which he takes for granted beyond question at the moment of his projecting. This set of experiences has stood the test so far and is, therefore, without question accepted as given, although as given merely "until further notice." This does not mean that the experiences, beliefs, etc., taken for granted are themselves consistent and compatible with one another. But their intrinsic inconsistency and incompatibility is discovered and they themselves put into question only if a novel experience not subsumable under the so far unquestioned frame of reference turns up. Yet, even without being questioned, the realm of the world as taken for granted is the domain within which alone doubt and questioning becomes possible and, in this sense, it is at the foundation of any possible doubt.

The unquestioned experiences are from the outset experienced as typical ones, that is, as carrying along open horizons of anticipated similar experiences. For example, the unquestioned outer world is from the outset experienced not as an arrangement of individual unique objects dispersed

in space and time, but as "mountains," "trees," "animals," "fellow men." I may have never seen an animal of the kind I am seeing now but I know that this is an animal and in particular a dog. I may reasonably ask "What kind of dog is this?" The question presupposes that I have grasped the newly experienced object as a dog showing all the typical features and the typical behavior of a dog and not, say, of a cat. In other words, the dissimilarity of this particular dog from all other kinds of dogs which I know stands out and becomes questionable merely by reference to the similarity it has to my unquestioned experiences of typical dogs.

We can neither enter here into a more detailed investigation of the typicality of our pre-predicative experience which Husserl has outlined in such a masterful way nor into the social foundation of these types—which are either socially derived or socially approved or both and which are handed down by the typifying medium *par excellence*, namely, common language. It must suffice to point out that all knowledge taken for granted has a highly socialized structure, that is, it is assumed to be taken for granted not only by *me* but by *us*, by "*everyone*" (meaning "every one who belongs to us"). This socialized structure gives this kind of knowledge an objective and anonymous character: it is conceived as being independent of my personal biographical circumstances. The typicalness and the objective character of our unquestioned experiences and beliefs also inheres in those dealing with relations of causality and finality, of means and ends, and, therefore, with the practicability of human actions (ours and those of our fellow men), within the domain of things taken for granted. For this very reason there is an objective chance taken for granted that future actions typically similar to those which have been proved as practicable in the past will also be practicable in the future.

We said before that our experiences, beliefs, and opinions taken for granted might be inconsistent and incompatible with one another. We now have to amplify this statement by saying that each element of the realm taken for granted beyond question has necessarily an equivocal character of indeterminateness. To give again a simple example: Let us suppose that one of the beliefs unquestionably taken for granted could be formulated by the proposition "S is p." Now S, taken without question, as it appears to be given to us, is not only p but also q, r, and many other things. As long as this interrelationship is not put into question the expression "S is p" is elliptical in the sense that the full statement should read: "S is, among many other things such as q and r, also p." In other words, within the unquestionably given world the propositions "S is p" and "S is q" are until counterproof both open possibilities, not contradicting each other, either having its equal right and its equal weight. If I, with respect to an element S of the world taken for granted, assert: "S is p," I do so because

for my purpose at hand at this particular moment I am interested only in the p-being of S and am disregarding as not relevant to such purpose the fact that S is also q and r. The famous principle discovered by Spinoza "*Omnis definitio est negatio*" points, of course on another level, in the same direction.

(b) The biographically determined situation.

What, however, constitutes my purpose at hand at this particular moment? This question leads us to the second set of our experiences upon which the practicability of future actions is founded. It consists of the experiences which I, the actor, have of my biographically determined situation at the moment of any projecting. To this biographically determined situation belongs not only my position in space, time, and society but also my experience that some of the elements of the world taken for granted are imposed upon me, while others are either within my control or capable of being brought within my control and, thus principally modifiable. For instance these things are within my reach, those things outside of it, be it that they were formerly within my reach and might be brought into it again, or that they never have been within my reach but are in yours, my fellowman's reach and might be brought within mine if I, being here, change places with you, being there. This factor is of great importance for our problem because all my projecting is based upon the assumption that any action occurring within the sector of the world under my actual or potential control will be practicable. But that is not all. At any given moment of my biographically determined situation I am merely concerned with some elements, or some aspects of both sectors of the world taken for granted, that within and that outside my control. My prevailing interest—or more precisely the prevailing system of my interests, since there is no such thing as an isolated interest—determines the nature of such a selection. This statement holds good independently of the precise meaning given to the term "interest" and independently also of the assumption made as to the origin of the system of interests.[2] At any rate there is such a selection of things and aspects of things relevant to me at any given moment whereas other things and other aspects are for the time being of no concern to me

[2] Because what is commonly called interest is one of the basic features of human nature, the term will necessarily mean different things to different philosophers in accordance with their basic conception of human existence in the world. We venture to suggest that the various solutions offered for the explanation of the origin of the interests might be grouped into two types: One which is concerned with the because motives, the other with the in-order-to motives constituting the so-called interests. Leibniz with his theory of the "small perceptions" determining all of our activities, might be considered as a representative of the first one, Bergson's view that all of our perceptions are determined by our activities as an example of the second one.

or even out of view. All this is biographically determined, that is, the actor's actual situation has its history; it is the sedimentation of all his previous subjective experiences. These experiences are not experienced by the actor as being anonymous but as unique and subjectively given to him and to him alone.

DOUBTING AND QUESTIONING

The subjectively determined selection of elements relevant to the purpose at hand out of the objectively given totality of the world taken for granted gives rise to a decisive new experience: the experience of doubt, of questioning, of choosing and deciding, in short, of deliberation. Doubt might come from various sources; only one case important for our problem at hand will be discussed here. We said that there is no such thing as an isolated interest, that interests are from the outset interrelated with one another into systems. Yet interrelation does not necessarily lead to complete integration. There is always the possibility of overlapping and even conflicting interests and consequently of doubt whether the elements selected from our surrounding world taken for granted beyond question are really relevant to our purpose at hand. Is it indeed the p-being of S which I have to take into consideration and not its being q? Both are open possibilities within the general frame of the world taken for granted without question until counterproof. But now my biographically determined situation compels me to select either the p-being or the q-being of S as relevant for my purpose at hand. What has been unquestioned so far has now to be put into question, a situation of doubt occurs, a true alternative has been created. This situation of doubt, created by the selection of the actor in his biographically determined situation from the world taken for granted is what alone makes deliberation and choice possible. The fact that all choosing between projects refers to the situation of doubt has been acknowledged explicitly or implicitly by the greater number of the philosophers dealing with this problem. We quote the following passage from Dewey who has formulated the question in his masterful plastic language as follows: In deliberation, Dewey says, "each conflicting habit and impulse takes its turn in projecting itself upon the screen of imagination. It unrolls a picture of its future history, of the career it would have if it were given head. Although overt exhibition is checked by the pressure of contrary propulsive tendencies, this very inhibition gives habit a chance at manifestation in thought. . . . "In thought as well as in overt action the objects experienced in following out a course of action attract, repel, satisfy, annoy, promote and retard. Thus deliberation proceeds. To say that at last it ceases is to say that choice, decision, takes place. What then is choice? Simply hitting in imagination upon an object which furnishes an adequate

stimulus to the recovery of overt action. "Choice is not the emergence of preference out of indifference. It is the emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences".[3]

This analysis is in substance entirely acceptable also to those who are unable to share Dewey's fundamental view of interpreting human conduct in terms of habit and stimulus. Yet behind the problem discussed by Dewey another one emerges. What makes (in his terminology) habits and impulses conflict? What causes the pressure of contrary propulsive tendencies inhibiting one another? Which among our many preferences are competing and capable of being unified by the decision? In other words: I can choose only between projects which stand to choice. I am in a dilemma before an alternative. But what is the origin of such an alternative? It seems to us that Husserl has, although on another level, made a significant contribution to answering these questions.

PROBLEMATIC AND OPEN POSSIBILITIES ACCORDING TO HUSSERL

We owe to Husserl's investigation on the origin of the so-called modalizations of predicative judgments (such as certainty, possibility, probability) in the pre-predicative sphere the important distinction between what he calls problematic and open possibilities. This distinction is vital for the understanding of the problem of choice.

According to Husserl, any object of our experiences is originarily pregiven to our passive reception; it affects us, imposing itself upon the ego. Thus, it stimulates the ego to turn to the object, to attend to it, and this turning to the object is the lowest form of activity emanating from the ego. Philosophers have frequently described this phenomenon as the receptivity of the ego, and psychologists have analyzed it under the heading of attention. Attention is first of all the tending of the ego toward the intentional object, but this tending is merely the starting point of a series of active *cogitationes* in the broadest sense: the initial phase of the starting activity carries along an intentional horizon of later phases of activity which will fulfill or not fulfill what has been anticipated in an empty way in a continuous synthetic process until the activity reaches its end or is interrupted, eventually in the form: "and so on." Taking as an example our actual belief in the existence of an outer object perceived we find that the ego's interest in this object induces it to manifold other activities, for instance to compare the image it has of the appearance of the perceptional object with other images of the same object, or to make accessible its back side if it appears from the front side, and so on. Each single phase of all these tendencies and activities carries along its specific horizon of protentional expectations, of anticipations, that is, of what may occur in the later

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 190f.

phases of the fulfilling activity. If these expectations are not fulfilled there are several alternatives: (1) It may happen that the process is hampered for one reason or another either because the object disappears from the perceptional field or is covered by another object or because the original interest is superseded by another, stronger one. In these cases the process stops with the constitution of one single image of the object; (2) It may also happen that our interest in the perceptual object continues but that our anticipations are not fulfilled but disappointed by the supervening phases of the process. Here again two cases have to be distinguished: (a) the disappointment of our expectations is a complete one, for instance, the back side of this object which we expected to be an evenly red-colored sphere turns out to be not red but green and not spherical but deformed. This "not . . . but otherwise," this superimposition of a new meaning of the object over the pre-constituted meaning of the same object, whereby the new meaning supersedes the old one, leads in our example to the complete annihilation of the anticipating intention. The first impression ("this is an evenly red-colored sphere") is "stricken out," negated. (b) Yet it is possible that the first impression, instead of being completely annihilated, becomes merely doubtful in the course of the ongoing process. Is this something in the store window, a human being, say an employee occupied with window dressing, or a clothed dummy? There is a conflict between belief and belief, and for a certain time both perceptual apperceptions may coexist. While we doubt, neither of these two beliefs is cancelled; either of them continues in its own right; either is motivated, nay, even postulated, by the perceptual situation; but postulate stands against postulate, one contests the other and is contested by the other. Only our resolution of this doubt will annihilate one or the other. In case of a doubtful situation both beliefs of the alternative have the character of being "questionable," and that which is questionable is always contested in its being, namely, contested by something else. The ego oscillates between two tendencies to believe. Both beliefs are merely suggested as possibilities. The ego is in conflict with itself: it is inclined to believe now this, now that. This inclination means not merely the affective tendency of suggested possibilities, but these possibilities, says Husserl, are suggested to *me* as being, *I* follow now this, now that possibility in the process of taking a decision, bestow now on the one, now on the other validity in an act of "taking sides" although always hampered in carrying it through. This following of the ego is motivated by the weight of the possibilities themselves. Following actively one of the possibilities over at least a certain period I make so to speak an instantaneous decision, deciding for this possibility. But, then, I cannot proceed further because of the exigency of the counterpossibility which, too, will obtain its fair trial and makes me inclined to believe it.

The decision is reached in a process of clarification of the contesting tendencies by which either the weakness of the counterpossibilities becomes more and more visible or by which new motives arise which reinforce the prevailing weight of the first.

Possibilities and counterpossibilities, contesting with one another, and originating in the situation of doubt are called by Husserl *problematic or questionable possibilities*, questionable, because the intention to decide in favor of one of them is a questioning intention. Only in the case of possibilities of this kind, that is of possibilities "for which something speaks," can we speak of likelihood. It is more likely that this is a man means: more circumstances speak for the possibility that this is a man than for the possibility that this is a dummy. Likelihood is, thus, a weight which belongs to the suggested beliefs in the existence of the intentional objects. From this class of problematic possibilities, originating in doubt, has to be distinguished the class of *open possibilities* originating in the unhampered course of empty anticipations. If I anticipate the color of the unseen side of an object of which I know only the front side that shows some pattern or patches, any specific color I anticipate is merely contingent, but not, that the unseen side will show "some" color. All anticipation has the character of indeterminacy, and this general indeterminacy constitutes a frame of free variability; what falls within the frame is one element among other elements of possibly *nearer* determination, of which I merely know that they will fit in the frame but which are otherwise entirely undetermined. This exactly is the concept of open possibilities.

The difference between problematic and open possibilities is first one of their origin. The problematic possibilities presuppose tendencies of belief which are motivated by the situation and in contest with one another; for each of them speaks something, each has a certain weight. None of the open possibilities has any weight whatsoever, they are all equally possible. There is no alternative preconstituted, but within a frame of generality all possible specifications are equally open. Nothing speaks for one which would speak against the other. An undetermined general intention, which itself shows the modality of certainty—although of an empirical or presumptive certainty—"until further notice"—carries along an implicit modalization of the certainty peculiar to its implicit specifications. On the other hand the field of problematic possibilities is unified: In the unity of contest and of being apprehended by disjunctive oscillation A, B, and C become known as being in opposition and, therefore, united. To be sure, it is quite possible that only one of these contesting possibilities stands out consciously whereas the others remain unnoticed in the background as empty and thematically unperformed representations. But this fact does not invalidate the pregivenness of a true alternative.

So far Husserl. His theory of choosing between alternatives is the more important for our problem as we will remember that any project leads to a true problematic alternative. Each project to do something carries with it the problematic counterpossibility of not doing it.

As mentioned before, the aim of Husserl's theory of open and problematic possibilities was the investigation of the origin of the so-called modalizations of judgment in the pre-predicative sphere and for this very reason he took as examples of cogitations the perceiving of objects in the outer world. He frequently stresses, however, the general character of this theory which refers to activities of all kinds.

We think that our analysis of the two sets of experiences warranting the practicability of projected actions converges with the outcome of Husserl's distinction. The world as taken for granted is the general frame of open possibilities, none of them having its specific weight, none of them as long as believed beyond question, contesting the others. All are believed to be of empirical or presumptive certainty until further notice, that is, until counterproof. It is the selection made from things taken for granted by the individual in his biographically determined situation that transforms a selected set of these open possibilities into problematic ones which stand from now on to choice: Each of them has its weight, requires its fair trial, shows the conflicting tendencies of which Dewey speaks. How can this procedure of choosing be more precisely described?

CHOOSING AMONG OBJECTS WITHIN REACH

To simplify the problem let us first consider the case in which I do not have to choose between two or more future states of affairs to be brought forth by my own future actions but between two objects, A and B, both actually and equally within my reach. I oscillate between A and B as between two equally available possibilities. A as well as B has a certain appeal to me. I am now inclined to take A, which inclination is then overpowered by an inclination to take B, this is again replaced by the first one, which finally prevails: I decide to take A and to leave B.

In this case everything takes place as described so far. A true alternative, preconstituted by our previous experiences, stands to choice: The objects A and B are equally within our reach, that is obtainable with the same effort. My total biographical situation, that is, my previous experiences as integrated into my actually prevailing system of interests, creates the principally problematic possibilities of conflicting preferences, as Dewey expresses it. This is the situation which most of the modern social sciences assume to be the normal one underlying human action. It is assumed that man finds himself at any time placed among more or less well-defined problematic alternatives or that a set of preferences enables him to deter-

mine the course of his future conduct. Even more, it is a methodological postulate of modern social science that the conduct of man has to be explained *as if* occurring in the form of choosing among problematic possibilities. Without entering here into details we want to give two illustrations:

Man acting in the social world among and upon his fellow men finds that the pre-constituted social world imposes upon him at any moment several alternatives among which he has to choose. According to modern sociology the actor has "to define the situation." By doing so he transforms his social environment of "open possibilities" into a unified field of "problematic possibilities" within which choice and decision—especially so-called "rational" choice and decision—becomes possible. The sociologist's assumption that the actor in the social world starts with the definition of the situation is, therefore, equivalent to the methodological postulate, that the sociologist has to describe the observed social actions *as if* they occurred within a unified field of true alternatives that is of problematic and not of open possibilities. Likewise the so-called "marginal principle," so important for modern economics, can be interpreted as the scientific postulate to deal with the actions of the observed economic subjects *as if* they had to choose between pregiven problematic possibilities.

CHOOSING AMONG PROJECTS

We have studied so far the process of choosing between two objects actually within my reach, both equally obtainable. At first glance it might appear that the choice between two projects, between two courses of future action occurs in exactly the same manner. As a matter of fact most of the students of the problem of choice have failed to make any distinction. Perhaps the old distinction between τεχνή ποιητική and τεχνή κτητική, between the art of producing and the art of acquiring, taken over by Plato and Aristotle from the Sophists, refers to this problem. The chief differences between the two situations seem to be as follows: In the case of choosing between two or more objects, all of them actually within my reach and equally available, the problematic possibilities are, so to speak, ready made and well circumscribed. As such their constitution is beyond my control, I have to take one of them or to leave both of them as they are. Projecting, however, is of my own making and in this sense within my control. But before I have rehearsed in my imagination the future courses of my actions, the outcome of my projecting action has not been brought within my reach and, strictly speaking, there are at the time of my projecting no problematic alternatives between which to choose. Anything that will later on stand to choice in the way of a problematic alternative has to be produced by me and in the course of producing it, I may modify it at my will within the limits of practicability. Moreover—and this point

seems to be decisive—in the first case the alternatives which stand to my choice coexist in simultaneity in outer time: here are the two objects A and B, I may turn away from one of them and return to it; here it is still and unchanged. In the second case the several projects of my own future actions do not coexist in the simultaneity of outer time: The mind by its phantasying acts creates in succession in inner time the various projects, dropping one in favor of the other and returning to, or more precisely, re-creating, the first. But by and in the transition from one to the succeeding states of consciousness I have grown older, I have enlarged my experience, I am, returning to the first, no longer the "same" as I was when originally drafting it and consequently the project to which I return is no longer the same as that which I dropped; or, perhaps more exactly; it is the same, but modified. In the first case what stands to choice are problematic possibilities coexistent in outer time; in the second case the possibilities to choose between are produced successively and exclusively in inner time, within the *durée*.

BERGSON'S THEORY OF CHOICE

Bergson, who has emphasized more than any other philosopher the importance of the two time dimensions—the inner *durée* and the spatialized time for the structure of our conscious life, investigated, in his first book, the *Essais sur les données immediates de la conscience* (1899), the problem of choice under this aspect. He handles it in connection with his criticism of the deterministic and indeterministic doctrines. Both determinists and indeterminists, so his argument runs, base their conclusions upon an associationistic psychology. They substitute for the inner *durée* with its continuous succession and the interconnected stream of consciousness the spatialized time in which there is juxtaposition of seemingly isolated experiences. They show us an ego hesitating between two opposite sentiments going from one to the other and finally deciding for one of them. The ego and the sentiments by which it is moved are, thus, assimilated to well-defined things which remain unchanged through the whole course of the operation. However the ego by the very fact that it has experienced the first sentiment has changed before it experiences the second one. Hence it modifies, at any moment in the course of deliberation not only itself but also the sentiments which act (*agite*) upon it. Thus, a dynamic series of interpenetrating states of consciousness is created which enforce one another and lead to a free act by a natural evolution. If I am choosing between two possible actions X and Y and go in turn from one to the other, this means, says Bergson, that I am living through a series of states of mind which can be referred to two groups according to my prevailing inclinations to X or to its opposite. But even these opposite inclinations have merely one single

real existence, X and Y being symbols merely for different tendencies of my personality at successive moments of my *durée*. There are not in the strict sense two opposite states but a series of successive and different states which the ego runs through, growing and expanding continuously as it passes between the imaginary tendencies which change during the process of deliberation as the ego changes itself. Thus the way of speaking of two tendencies or two directions is purely a metaphorical one: In reality there are neither two tendencies, nor two directions but just an ego which lives and develops by its very hesitations until the free action detaches itself from it like too ripe a fruit. Associationistic psychology, used equally by both determinists and indeterminists, assumes, however, that the ego in the state of deliberation oscillates between two—we would add: problematic—possibilities which they conceive as if these two possibilities were two coexisting points in space, as if the road run through by the consciousness of the ego so far bifurcated at a certain point and as if the ego, placed at the crossroad, had to take its decision which way to follow. He who makes such an assumption commits the fallacy of placing himself at a moment when the action has already been accomplished but of looking nevertheless at the process of the actor's activity as if the bifurcation of the road had existed before the deliberation took place and the decision was made. Onrolling time and time past, *durée* and spatialized time, are thus confused and the irreversibility and irretrievability of time disregarded. There was no bifurcation, no traced ways before the action was accomplished, there was even no direction and no question of a way; and only the accomplished action has traced the way. Deliberation cannot be conceived as an oscillation in space; it consists rather in a dynamic process in which the ego as well as its motives are in a continuous stage of becoming. The ego, infallible in its immediate findings, feels itself free and declares this; but in any attempt to explain its freedom it succumbs by necessity to a spatial symbolism with all its fallacies.

So far Bergson. Translated into the terminology of the present paper, his criticism is directed against the assumption that problematic possibilities existed with respect to projects at a time when all possibilities were still open ones. The ego living in its acts knows merely open possibilities; genuine alternatives become visible only in interpretative retrospection, that is, when the acts have been already accomplished, and thus the becoming has been translated into existence. Remembering our terminological distinction between action and act, we may say that, according to Bergson, all actions occur within open possibilities and that problematic possibilities are restricted to past acts.

We have no issue with this theory (although it is obviously modelled after a special class of actions, namely actions gearing in the outer world),

except that it tells only half the story. To be sure Bergson, too, points out that the ego in self-interpretation of its past acts has the illusion of having chosen between problematic possibilities. But he fails to add, that it is the accomplished act and not the action which is anticipated *modo futuri exacti* in the project. Projecting as we have seen is retrospection anticipated in phantasy. In this anticipated retrospection, and only in it, the projected action is phantasied as accomplished; the ways after the bifurcation—to keep to Bergson's metaphor—have been traced, although merely as pencil strokes on a map and not as trails in the landscape. The ego phantasying one project after the other, runs, growing and expanding, through a series of successive states and behaves, while doing so, exactly as described by Bergson, dealing merely within the open possibilities inherent to each projecting as explained before. But what has been projected in such a projecting (or better: in such a series of successive phantasying activities), is the *modo futuri exacti* anticipated accomplished acts, the outcome, therefore, of the actions to be performed, not the actions themselves as they will go on. These various anticipated acts are now problematic alternatives within a unified field *modo potentiali*, they have their quasi-coexistence and stand now to choice. But their coexistence is merely a quasi-coexistence, that is, the projected acts are merely imagined as coexistent; they are not ready made and equally available within my reach. Still they are all within my control and they remain in their quasi-existence until my decision to carry one of them out has been reached. This decision consists in the supervening intention to turn one of these projects into my purpose. As we have seen this transition requires a voluntative "fiat" which is motivated by the in-order-to motive of the chosen project.

Motives, says Leibniz,[4] induce man to act but do not necessitate him. He is free to choose to follow or not to follow his inclinations or even to suspend such a choice. He has the freedom of reasonable deliberation; reason will be his guide in weighing the pros and cons of each possibility. We may translate this statement into the language used herein before as follows: As soon as the possibilities of my future action have been constituted as problematic possibilities within a unified field, that is, as soon as two or more projects stand to choice, the weight of each of them can be ascertained by operations of judgment. The "art of deliberation," the procedure by which conflicting motives after having past the scrutiny of reason lead finally to an act of volition, has been carefully analyzed by Leibniz. As will be seen presently, he comes very close to Husserl's concept of an instantaneous decision and Bergson's concept of the free act which detaches itself from the ego like too ripe a fruit.

[4] And according to him motives are always founded upon "perceptions" in the broad sense in which he uses this term, that is, including the "small perceptions."

LEIBNIZ'S THEORY OF VOLITION

Leibniz handles this problem in his "Theodizee" within a moral-theological setting. In presenting his theory in the following we have in order to detach his general analysis from this context replaced the terms "good" and "evil" as used by Leibniz by "positive" and "negative weight" (of the problematic possibilities involved), leaving it for the time being intentionally open what should be understood by "positive" and "negative weight."

Like most of the problems handled in the Theodizee Leibniz's analysis of volition too, originates in a polemic with Bayle. Bayle compared the soul to a balance where the reasons and inclinations of action take the place of weights. According to him we may explain what happens in acts of decision by the hypothesis that the balance is in equilibrium as long as the weights in both scales are equal but inclines to one or the other side if the content of one of the two scales is heavier than the other. An emerging argument gives additional weight, a new idea shines more brilliantly than an old one, the fear of a heavy displeasure may outweigh several expected pleasures. One has the greater difficulties in arriving at a decision the more the opposite arguments approach an equal weight. This simile seems to Leibniz inadequate for several reasons. First, not only two but mostly more eventualities stand to choice; secondly, volitive intentions are present in every phase of deliberation and decision; thirdly there is no such thing as an equilibrium from which to start. It is for these reasons that Leibniz takes over from the Schoolmen the notions of "antecedent" and "subsequent" volitions which he uses, after having introduced his own concept of an "intermediate" volition, in a very original way for explaining the mechanism of choice.

According to this theory will has various phases. Generally speaking, it can be said that will consists in the inclination to bring about some action in proportion with its inherent positive weight. This kind of will may be called antecedent will (*volonté antecedente*) because it is unconnected and considers each positive weight separately as positive without proceeding to combinations. This will would produce its effect if there were not some stronger counterarguments which would bar it from becoming effective. The intermediate will (*volonté moyenne*) originates in such counterarguments. It proceeds to combinations such as attaching a negative weight to the positive one, and if the latter still outweighs the former, the will will continue to tend toward this combination. With respect to the final will, the decretory and decisive one, the intermediate will may be considered as an antecedent one although it follows the pure and primitive antecedent will. The final and decisive volition results from the conflict of all the antecedent wills and their combinations, those which respond to the positive as

well as those which respond to the negative weights. It is by the concourse of all these particular wills that the total volition originates, as in mechanics the composed movement results from all tendencies which concur in one and the same mobile body and satisfies equally each of them by realizing all of them simultaneously. It is this consequent final volition which determines the direction of the act and of which it is said that everyone performs what he is willing to perform provided he can perform it. Reasoning has, thus, its function in determining our choice and in transforming the *volontées antecedentes* into the *volonté finale.* But this function is limited in various respects. To begin with, choice of the preferable always takes place within the limits of the state of our knowledge (and this knowledge consists in the totality of our pre-experiences). But this knowledge is not homogeneous, it is either distinct or confused. Only distinct knowledge is the realm of Reason, our senses and our passions furnish merely confused thoughts and we are in their bondage as long as we do not succeed in basing our actions on distinct knowledge. This situation is frequently complicated by the fact that our confused thoughts are felt clearly whereas our distinct thoughts are only potentially clear: they could be clear if we were willing to make the necessary efforts to explicate their implications, for instance by penetrating into the meaning of words or symbols, etc. Secondly—and here Leibniz shares Locke's point of view—man's mind is inclined to make misjudgments in comparing present pleasures and displeasures with future ones, disregarding that this future will become a present and then appear in full proximity. Leibniz compares this phenomenon with the spatial perspective: a small distance in time may deprive us completely of the sense of the future, as if the future object had disappeared entirely. What, then, is left of future things is frequently merely a name or a blind thought (*cogitationes caecae*). In such a case it may occur that we even do not raise the question whether future goods should be preferred but act according to our vague impressions. But even if we do, if we entertain the question, it may be that we anticipate future events in the wrong way or doubt that our decision will lead to the anticipated consequences. Thirdly, the perfect balancing of the reasons which determine our choice may be compared with the procedure of an accountant in establishing a balance sheet. No item must be omitted, each has to receive its appropriate evaluation, all of them have to be arranged correctly and finally summed up exactly. In each of these activities of reasoning errors can be committed. Fourthly in order to come to a correct estimate of the consequences of our choice (modern social scientists would say: to a "perfectly rational decision") we would need the mastery of several techniques today not less undeveloped than at the time of Leibniz. We would need a technique for availing ourselves of what we know (*l'art de s'aviser au besoin ce qu'on sait*); a technique

for estimating the likelihood of future events, namely the consequences of our decisions; and finally a technique for ascertaining the positive and negative weights of the problematic possibilities to choose between or as Leibniz calls them: the values of goods and evils. Only then could we hope to master what Leibniz calls the art of consequences.

As in Husserl's and Bergson's theories, it is also here the ego which in the living process of its stream of consciousness creates the possibilities that stand to choice and it is the same ego which makes the final decision in the course of this process. The "perceptions" which are to Leibniz nothing else than changes of the mind itself create by their solicitations the inclinations, that is, the various "*volontées antecedentes*," which as soon as the scrutinizing reason interferes, are partially counterbalanced by the "*volontées moyennes*." Tendency is, thus, succeeded by countertendency until the "in-order-to motive" of the prevailing project leads to the "*volonté consequente, decretoire et definitive*," to the voluntative fiat: "Let us start!" To Bergson choice is merely a series of events in the inner *durée* and never an oscillating between two sets of factors which coexist in spatialized time; deliberation with all its contesting tendencies can only be conceived as a dynamic process in which the ego, its sentiments, its motives and goals are in a state of continuous becoming until this development leads to the free act. To Husserl the situation of doubt in which the ego is in conflict with itself creates the unified field of problematic possibilities; in a series of successive instantaneous but not final decisions the ego takes the side of one of the competing possibilities and counterpossibilities and ascertains what might be in favor of each of them. This process continues until the situation of doubt ceases, either, as Husserl says, because a decision has been made with a bad logical conscience or because doubt has been transformed into empirical certainty, which, as merely empirical, he calls a "certainty good until further notice." Husserl studies in terms of modalization the constitution of problematic possibilities as the precondition of all possible choice; Bergson describes, in an analysis of the time perspectives involved, the process of choosing itself; Leibniz follows the interplay of volitive intentions which leads to the final "fiat" of decision. All three theories converge because all of them place themselves in the midst of the ongoing flux of consciousness of the actor who is about to make his choice and do not retrospectively reconstruct what has happened if once a decision has been reached, a reconstruction which appertains to the so-called objective point of view of the observer or of the ego that turns in self-interpretation back to its past experiences as an observer of itself.

But still, and for good reasons, the actor's experiences of the past are taken into account. To Bergson the actual state of mind of an individual is as it is merely because it has lived through all its past experiences in their

peculiar intensity and their peculiar sequence. In a passage of the same work not reported by us he demonstrates the impossibility of the scientist Peter's deciding how Paul will act in a concrete situation. The assumption that Peter is able to make any such prediction would presuppose that he has lived through every experience of Paul's and exactly with the same intensity and with the same sequence as Paul did, that consequently, Peter's stream of consciousness has to be exactly the same as Paul's, in a word: that Peter has to be identical with Paul. Husserl's theory presupposes the whole sphere of prepredicative experiences in which alone the situation of doubt with its constitution of problematic possibilities originates and in which alone each possibility receives its "weight." And also the certitude into which doubt is transformed is merely an empirical one, a certitude consistent and compatible with our previous experiences. To Leibniz the "good" and the "evil," terms which we have translated by "positive and negative weight," refer to previous experiences of the actor as well as the scrutinizing activity of reason by which the different "*volontées antecedentes*" are transformed into "*volontées moyennes*."

THE PROBLEM OF WEIGHT

We now have to examine the origin of the "weight" of possibilities and counterpossibilities, of Leibniz' "good" and "evil" as the inherent positive weight of "*volontée antecedente*" or negative of a "*volontée moyenne*." Let us keep to our example of choosing between two different projects. Can it be said that the "weight," the "good" or "evil," attributed to either of them is inherent to the specific project? It seems that such a statement is meaningless. The standards of weights, of good and evil, of positive and negative, briefly of evaluation, are not created by the projecting itself, but the project is evaluated according to a pre-existent frame of reference. Any student of ethics is familiar with the age-old controversy on values and valuation here involved. For our problem, however, we need not embark upon discussing it. It is sufficient for us to point out that the problem of positive and negative weights transcends the actual situation of a concrete choice and decision and to give an indication how this fact can be explained without having recourse to the metaphysical question of the existence and nature of absolute values.

In discussing earlier the notion of interest we observed that there is no such thing for the actor as an isolated interest. Interests have from the outset the character of being interrelated with other interests in a system. It is merely a corollary of this statement that also actions, motives, ends and means, and, therefore, projects and purposes are only elements among other elements forming a system. Any end is merely a means for another end; any project is projected within a system of higher order. For this

very reason any choosing between projects refers to a previously chosen system of connected projects of a higher order. In our daily life our projected ends are means within a preconceived particular plan—for the hour or the year, for work or for leisure—and all these particular plans are subject to our plan for life as the most universal one which determines the subordinate ones even if the latter conflict with one another. Thus, any choice refers to pre-experienced decisions of a higher order, upon which the alternative at hand is founded—as any doubt refers to a pre-experienced empirical certainty which becomes questionable in the process of doubting. It is our pre-experience of this higher organization of projects which is at the foundation of the problematic possibilities standing to choice and which determines the weight of either possibility: Its positive or negative character is positive or negative merely with reference to this system of higher order. For the purpose of this purely formal description, no assumption whatsoever is needed either as to the specific content of the higher system involved or as to the existence of so-called "absolute values," nor is any assumption needed as to the structure of our pre-knowledge, that is, as to its degree of clarity, explicitness, vagueness, etc. On the contrary, on any level of vagueness the phenomenon of choice can be repeated. As seen from the point of view of the actor in daily life, full clarity of all the elements involved in the process of choosing, that is, a "*perfectly*" rational action, is impossible. This is so because first, the system of plans upon which the constitution of alternatives is founded belongs to the because motives of his action and is disclosed merely to the retrospective observation, but hidden to the actor who lives in his acts oriented merely to his in-order-to motives which he has in view; secondly, because his knowledge, if our analysis is correct, is founded upon his biographically determined situation which selects the elements relevant to his purpose at hand from the world simply taken for granted and this biographically determined situation as prevailing at the time of the projecting changes in the course of oscillating between the alternatives, if for no other reason than because of the experience of this oscillating itself.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Our analysis, which we have intentionally restricted to the daily life situation of choosing between projects, started from the world taken for granted beyond question as the general field of our open possibilities. Our biographically determined situation selects certain elements of this field as relevant for our purpose at hand. If this selection meets with no obstacle the project is simply transformed into a purpose and the action is carried out as a matter of course. If, by the very vagueness of our knowledge at hand at the time of projecting, a situation of doubt arises, then some of the

formerly open possibilities become questionable, problematic. Some part of the world formerly taken for granted beyond question and therefore unquestioned has now been put into question. The decision re-transforms what has been made questionable, into a certainty, but an empirical certainty, that is again an unquestioned element of our knowledge, taken for granted until further notice.

Our analysis, in spite of its length, has had to remain very sketchy. The notions of "interest," "systems of interest," "relevance," and, first of all the concept of the world taken for granted and of the biographically determined situation are rather headings for groups of problems to be investigated. In concluding we might be permitted to indicate just two questions important especially for the social sciences, to which the results of the preceding analysis might possibly be applied advantageously.

The first refers to the fellow man's understanding of the actor's action, that is, to the observer of the ongoing or accomplished action within the social world. There is no warranty that the world as taken for granted subjectively by the actor is in the same way beyond question for the observer. The actor may suppose that what he takes for granted is beyond question also for "everyone belonging to us" but whether this assumption holds good for the particular fellow man depends upon whether a genuine we-relation has been pre-established between both. Yet even if this is the case the biographically determined situation and therewith the selection of the relevant elements among the open possibilities of the actor and the observer must needs be a different one. In addition, the observer does not participate in immediacy in the process of the actor's choice and decision even if some of its phases were communicated to him. He has to reconstruct from the accomplished overt behavior, from the act, the underlying in-order-to or because motives of the actor. Nevertheless, to a certain extent at least, man is capable of understanding his fellow man. How is this possible?

The second question refers to the nature of idealization and generalization made by the social scientist in describing the actions occurring within the social world. On the one hand the social scientist is not permitted to take the social world for granted, that is, as merely given. His "general plan" consists in putting this world into question, to inquire into its structure. On the other hand, *qua* scientist, not as man among fellow men which he certainly also is, it is not his biographically determined situation or at least not in the same sense as in the case of the actor in daily life, which ascertains what is relevant for his scientific performance. Can and does the social scientist refer to the same reality of the social world that appears to the actor? And if so, how is this possible?

Answering either question would require detailed investigations far beyond the limits of the present paper.

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EXTRACTO

El propósito de este trabajo es analizar el proceso mediante el cual el sujeto activo en la vida cotidiana determina su conducta futura después de haber considerado varias lineas posibles de acción. El término "acción" se define como conducta basada en un proyecto preconcebido. Al proyectar, la acción futura se representa imaginativamente como si ya hubiera sido ejecutada (*modo futuri exacti*). Sin embargo, el proyecto no es una mera fantasía; de una manera particular, está motivado por la viabilidad de la acción proyectada en el mundo real. El supuesto de la viabilidad de las acciones futuras lo hacen plausible, por lo menos en cuanto a su tipo, dos grupos de experiencias: Las experiencias que tenemos del mundo, tal como éste se presenta y tal como lo damos por descontado, hasta que surja el problema; y las experiencias de nuestra situación, biográficamente determinada, las cuales a su vez determinan las cosas que se encuentran a mi alcance y, por ello mismo, bajo mi dominio. Intereses opuestos pueden crear situaciones de duda, la cual se proyecta sobre lo que antes dábamos por descontado. Toda elección, ya sea que verse sobre objetos a mi alcance, ya sobre futuros proyectos de acción, surge de semejante situación de duda en la esfera prepredicativa. Sólo puedo elegir entre cosas elegibles. La teoría husserliana de las posibilidades problemáticas y abiertas, lo mismo que el análisis bergsoniano de la opción, y la descripción que hace Leibniz de las fases de la volición, parecen corroborar esta teoría; la cual pudiera contribuir a que se aclarasen ciertos problemas fundamentales de la acción humana que tienen especial importancia para las ciencias humanas.