

SUMMARIES

P. DONATI, *Multidimensional sociology in J. Alexander and beyond*

This essay reports J. Alexander's thought as synthesized in his latest work *Twenty Lectures*. In the Author's opinion, Alexander intends to feature a theoretical logic to found sociology scientifically, but not positively. Alexander's intention would be «reconstructive», aimed at putting an end to an irrational war between sociological schools. He places himself beyond the parsonian phase and the anti-parsonian one, in a phase of post-parsonian synthesis. This phase assumes an approach to social structure in a way as not to jeopardize subjectivity and freedom. According to the Author of this essay, Alexander's considerations do not lead to a fully relational sociology capable of effectively opposing individualism and utilitarianism as well as other more or less opportunistic mixtures of them.

R.K. MERTON, *Specified ignorance. Fragments from a sociologist's notebooks*

This occasionally biographical paper deals with three cognitive and social patterns in the practice of science (not 'the scientific method'). The first, «establishing the phenomenon», involves the doctrine (universally accepted in the abstract) that phenomena should of course be shown to exist or to occur before one explains why they exist or how come to be. The second pattern is the particular form of ignorance described as «specified ignorance»: the express recognition of what is not yet known but needs to be known in order to lay the foundation for still more knowledge. The two patterns of scientific practice are linked to a third: the use of «strategic research materials (SRMs)» i.e. strategic research sites, objects, or events that exhibit the phenomena to be explained or interpreted to such advantage and in such accessible form that they enable the fruitful investigation of previously stubborn problems and the *discovery of new problems for further inquiry*.

A. SCIVOLETTO, *Autonomy and interference of social forms in L. Sturzo's sociology*

Sturzo's thought has many aspects of permanent validity: one of these can be found in his conception of social forms by which he really contributes to scientific autonomy of sociology. Social forms are not an impersonal object but a direct manifestation of human action finalism, that emerges also in the most complex relations of contemporary society.

A. CAFORIO, *The circus as a living and working community*

This research still in progress deals with the circus as a living and working community and is aimed at looking into a reality which is so often misjudged. It has been a hard job to get in touch with this world owing to a kind of mistrust that circus people feel towards those who do not belong to their community. From the interviews had with those who work under the big top, clearly emerge the contradictions and problems of a socially closed environment.

M. JOHNSON, *Welfare pluralism: the role of the informal sector*

Within the informal sector, the family is identified as being much the most important source of care, especially in the provision of services calling for long-term commitment and considerable emotional involvement. The bulk of caring within families is provided by women. The contribution of friends and neighbours is restricted to the performance of simple tasks of a practical nature. Some of the assumptions on the capacity of the informal sector to absorb extra responsibilities are questioned in the light of social and demographic changes occurring in all advanced industrial nations.

M. LOMBARDI, *System theory and cybernetics. The meaning of «Artificial»*

The idea of «Artificial» doesn't affect the first System Thinking but appears later, between the lines, in Cybernetics and in the present studies of Artificial Intelligence. From a theoretical and methodological point of view it might be useful to get over the dichotomy «artificial-natural». Reassembling the two conceptions is possible by a theory which avoids anthropomorphisms. The scholar has to think again of both the systemic and cybernetics approach, specially referring to self-referential systems and AI application in social research.

F. SARTORI, *The working histories of women: some female career's models*

In this paper three workerwomen careers are analysed: those of the manual worker, the typist and the secretary-clerk.

The differences among these categories regarding the career opportunities, the actual occupational status with respect to the father's one and, moreover, the marital choices appear relevant and their specific distinction of group is already evident at the time of the first employment and in strict connection with educational level.

In spite of some scholar's opinion these results support the main thesis of this work, which back up the theory that sex is a basic variable in the study of occupational structure and, consequently, of social mobility.

E.M. TACCHI, *Urban parks: first results of a survey*

This compared empirical survey — carried out in three towns of Northern Italy — concerns the behaviour and attitudes observed in the users, considered by class, of urban public parks. In particular, the Author analyses the activities which are mainly performed in these areas, park's accessibility and safety, user's considerations concerning as well as their satisfaction for the characteristics and level of the equipment available.

F. VICHI, *Interview to R. Boudon*

In this interview R. Boudon clarifies his theoretical and methodological position, mainly for what relates to methodological individualism and the objective and subjective aspects of the analysis of the actor's behaviour. Boudon goes over his work starting from the *Inégalité des Chances* up to his last book on ideology (not published in Italy). Boudon repeatedly underlines the complexity of social relations and the need of choosing each time the most appropriate approach and method being at the same time aware that any analysis is in any case always relative and incomplete.