Synoptics, Part IX: the six basic sentences for synoptic social analysis – theoretical and practical steps towards a psychosocial analysis of society

Herbert Rauch

Institute for Social Analysis,
Schottenfeldgasse 25-27/533, 1070 Vienna, Austria
Email: esd.rauch@outlook.com

Abstract: The following notes summarise the experience of three decades of synoptic social analysis (about 250 case studies were elaborated). I as the author of this article, was also responsible for all summaries (i.e., of all case studies), within these three decades (the team-participants did change more or less) – we never found any exception to the following six 'basic sentences', which are stated: 1) the introduction to Part V outlines in short the working procedures; 2) which led to the 'six basic sentences', the 'to-do-canon'; 3) lists the main working steps for the investigations in case studies. The six basic sentences (the foundation of a synoptical social theory), which so far had not been falsified, are explicitly; 4) formulated; ('falsification light' is the name in synoptics of the hermeneutic procedure to come close to the Popperian falsification demand, as explained in Part I). For comparison with other newer social theories the so-called 'bathtub' theory of James Coleman is shortly outlined.

Keywords: synoptics method; social analysis; hypotheses; psychoanalysis; social sciences; social systems; challenge principle; basic sentences.

Biographical notes: Herbert Rauch studied law and political science. He founded the 'Institute for Social Analysis' in Vienna in 1972 and directed over two dozen research projects using the new hermeneutic methodology 'synoptics', i.e., specific case study techniques within a systemic social analysis approach and one of the projects (1992–1994) dealt with the conflict in Kosovo. As Vice President of the NGO 'European Sustainable Development' (ESD) he organised several international conferences on 'Sustainability and Globalization' – the book *Die Wende der Titanic I*, (Rauch, H. and Strigl, A.), Munich, 2005, was rated among the top 10 of 2005 by the R. Jungk Library and promoted by the Zentralbibliothek, Berlin.

1 Introduction: how to arrive at 'basic sentences'

Usually we (i.e., in teamwork of 3 or 4) or I – the author – alone, when working on a case, began by starting to outline the case with a meticulous description of the scenario in question, i.e., time and space, acting persons and a description of the context (milieu,

overall situation…) (Schindler, 1957, 1958a, 1958b, 1959; Rauch, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020f; Toynbee, 1976; Trivers, 1971). Of course, according to our scheme, i.e., a list of points as parts of the concept (which became more and more refined and shortened with this 'learning by doing' (Merton, 1957; Montagu, 1980; Schjelderupp-Ebbe, 1998; Bader et al., 2013; Senghaas, 1994). These interviews with the agents of the specific scenario (a small or medium enterprise SME, a court, a street demonstration, etc.) as informants, – sometimes with one person sometimes a priori arranged as a group-interview (usually of one hours, and with about 5–9 persons participating) (Stinchcombe, 1968; Rosenthal, 2005; Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr, 2014; Duraković et al., 2012; Montagu, 1980) – these interviews provided usually a detailed enough description of the core point in question (a conflict, a heavy competition with rivals with respect to a market situation or with respect to 'politics' (in the local realm or as part of the overall realm within a (more or less) sovereign social system (a state, a rather autonomous regional setting, or even a core family or a larger family).

Soon – and with growing experience – we could delineate within a few hours finally – a first idea of a certain social pattern behind the specific scenario in question. It became visible to the researcher(s), and we could then start to formulate – often by inquiring and questioning each other within the team – to move towards more and more refined statements aiming at the 'social analysis' of the whole scenario (Reichertz, 2007; Van Hanen, 1992). Having done several dozens of such case studies in such a way and with the same basic concept for all investigated systems (thereby we started in analysing small groups and organisations (e.g., SMEs and hospitals) and found typical specific dynamics with respect to their outside and also inside behaviour). Finally, for all of the ten levels of social systems (these ten levels are enumerated down here in basic sentence number 5), a typical core-dynamic became visible. A few general social patterns showed up time and again, especially with respect to a certain context (i.e., a culture) (Wilson, 1978; Schubert, 1989; Somit, 1976). We called them finally basic sentences, formulating them as short as possible. If these structures were confirmed one day, the other independent social researchers some or all of them – could eventually be called the 'drafts for social laws'. In short, formulating these general patterns (found and formulated as a result of about 250 case studies so far) they will here be laid out and proposed as the 'Basic Sentences of synoptics' (which not are not yet falsified or corrected by further cases, as far as I know).

Synoptics is the name which – as explained in detail in Part I – was chosen for the package of social methodology (as a certain hermeneutic approach) – and used in all the given case studies of Parts II, III, IV, etc. and now summarised in Part IX. They all describe cases along a vertical and a horizontal dimension. The vertical dimension – as described in more detail in Part I, and only listed down here – knows ten and only ten levels of social scenarios (compare fifth basic sentence below). And the horizontal dimension describes a certain 'characterisation of the social spaces alpha, beta, gamma, omega', considered here as the most essential structural forces for all social dynamics; these core points are also described in more detail in Part I).

Therefore, the following 'basic sentences' try to summarise what all analytic efforts within synoptics could finally come to conclude (Neubert, 1997; Lewin, 1926; Masters, 1989). They now state in simple language what can be found over and over again if analysing social arrangements and procedures intensively (Lorenz, 1973; Rapoport, 1958). And – as mentioned above – synoptic hypotheses as results of case studies can be submitted to a falsifying procedure as well, coming very close to the scientifically

acceptable procedures in general (compare the 'falsifiability demand by neutrally repeated experiments', as prescribed with respect to all hypotheses in 'natural sciences'). Similar procedures within the to-do-canon of synoptics allow 'correct-ability' – in a Popperian sense (Immelmann, 1983; Holzkamp, 1970; Ahamer, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Geertz, 1987): all specific hypotheses produced by 'synoptically analysed cases' (documented case studies) principally can thereby be 'corrected or falsified'. This, however, not by 'independently replicable experiments' (since social case studies have to move within historical time-spans, and human history moves much faster than natural history (where thesis as 'natural laws' can be accepted as laws time and again without taking into account the time passed in between). Within the synoptic work procedures, a growing number of case studies – documenting a similar topic – do accumulate over time (Flick, 2005; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1995; Falger, 1997). We can call this procedure in synoptics 'falsification light'.

This implies that hypotheses, even if they aspire to function as 'basic sentences' (for the researchers) have to be formulated as 'falsifiable hypotheses' (Derrida, 1967; Dawkins, 1974; Corning, 1983; Ahamer, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008a, 2008b; Ashley, 1980); and as such they can – as indicated – be corrected or even totally discarded; however, this did not happen so far within the realm of the given background of approximately 250 case studies in the development and application of synoptics.

2   The to-do-canon of synoptics for the elaboration of synoptic case studies

The goal of the diagnosing phase is, to obtain an overall picture of the social situation and its main component parts (Amann, 1987; Bohnsack, 2008; Grawitz and Pinto, 1964). Then one can proceed to formulate a prognosis, and an outline for 'therapeutic actions' (Rauch, 2014, 2017, 2018).

The following checklist for any synoptical analysis of concrete social systems with regard to diagnosing socio-political events – especially conflicts – was used – after the developing phase – in all case studies mentioned in all parts (I to VI):

a   Describing the focus event:
  - narrative
  - qualitative
  - quantitative, the latter as far as possible.

b   General description of the embedding sovereign social system especially with regard to:
  - main traditions
  - main institutions (first of all the constitution in power)
  - main content of the 'meta-polis' of the specific sovereign social system
  - characteristics of the population as political strata (elite – middle – basic)
  - characteristics of the respective 'elite' versus the respective 'establishment'
  - characteristics of the influence and authority pattern
  - characteristics of the circulation of information.

c   Location of focus event in the vertical dimension:

- with regard to the level of embedding social systems
- general characteristics of the embedding social systems.

d   'C' – analysis of the process of the focus event in the horizontal dimension:

- description of the clash of the conflicting agents, or of the typical scenario of the investigated focus event (process, incidents, direct and indirect participants)
- common challenge ('C')
- alpha space, beta space, gamma space and omega space.

e   Gestalt or specific pattern of the conflict or core dynamic of the focus event:

- social pattern of the focus event-scenario
- cleavages and clashes within the sovereign social system
- overt and covert agents (type, interconnection, position, main interests involved in the focus event)
- main issues in the conflict or the scenario of the focus event
- general conflict behind the focus event.

f   Cui bono:

- theoretical 'windfall profit' from the description and analysis of the specific focus event and the revealed (general) conflict behind the focus event, respective of the scenario of the focus event
- point of attention for therapeutic work, e.g., conflict work appropriate in a specific case
- points of attention for future cases of similar 'gestalt'.

3   The six basic sentences of synoptics

The *first* basic sentence of 'synoptic social analysis' (concerning *mating and motion*):

> The life of homo sapiens as a sexual being with the "unavoidable drama" of mating – is always socially "in some kind of motion" involving bodily, emotional and cognitive strains (interacting, staying in place, behaving…).

The *second* basic sentence of 'synoptic social analysis' (concerning the *common-challenge orientation*):

> Being socially in motion leads to forms of social organisation (with the exception of Robinson-like life styles). These motions can be called successful (finally survival-ensuring) if intelligent goal-oriented cooperation happens (in dyads, small or large groups etc.); and this success is given if the organisation is at least somehow oriented towards the "common challenge" (where trial and error procedures usually help to reach the target sooner or later, but in time).

> (Today our main "challenge" to be met by our already "globally interdependent human society" is the orientation toward a global eco-social management; the most visible indicators for its necessity are climate change and life-endangering cleavages within and between several culturally sufficiently cohesive societies, organized as states, regions, tribes of all kinds or otherwise).

The *third* basic sentence of 'synoptic social analysis' (concerning context orientation):

> Challenge-orientation is always sufficiently somehow "context oriented" (i.e., realizing the essentials of the context); if the main context factors are then met sufficiently correct, this brings survival and eventually "buen vivir"; unsuccessfulness can bring decay, even extinction.

The *fourth* basic sentence of 'synoptic social analysis' (concerning the social backbone of cooperation):

> The internal structure of social organisation is always – on all ten levels of social organisation – in its core (backbone) a variation of the "alpha-gamma axis" given on the social chess-board of the investigated focus event in question, eventually also with a "beta and an omega space" (explained in detail in Part I). Within a successful "axis" – i.e., alpha represents sufficiently 'A' (and 'A' is a sufficiently intelligent strategic "answer" to the challenge), success is very probable. Usually in the "alpha space" resides the person mainly moderating – intuitively and verbally – and therefore responsible for the strategic answer ('A'). The people of the gamma space are a kind core people around 'alpha' or possibly exist as middle management, the rest of gammas and betas are depending on the guidance by alpha and the "middle management". The distribution between the alpha space (1%), the "middle management" (11%) and the rest (88% subaltern, i.e., depending on guidance) is always more or less around 1:11:88. (Some ideologies try to ignore these empirical facts, since they rather follow an ideology postulating a different (non-)structure – nevertheless all leftist groups I know simple fall – the interaction profiles show this – after a short time into a "backbone structure" as outlined above.)

The *fifth* basic sentence of 'synoptic social analysis' (concerning the ten levels of social systems, as elaborated in the Part I: Introduction of synoptics):

> The ten so far well-known levels of social units which demand a unique "dynamic structure" each (as outlined in Part II, III and IV) are:
>
> 1. the individual
>
> 2. the dyad (as co-operators or as opponents)
>
> 3. the small group (3–10 individuals, maximum 14)
>
> 4. the large group (15–50 individuals, maximum 80)
>
> 5. the mass formation (locally bounded (e.g. theatre-like), or in movement (e.g. demonstration-like).
>
> 6. the organisation (A can reach C also over B etc. in the given chain of communication)
>
> 7. the functional compound system (e.g. the health system within a society)
>
> 8. the territorial compound system (e.g. a community with different types of social systems as its components parts: households, companies, administration units….).
>
> 9. the sovereign social system (i.e., making one's own rules; today all such systems are only "semi"-sovereign, since the different societies on planet Earth have reached a high level of mutual interconnection).
>
> 10. the global social system (becoming nowadays more and more elaborated: homo sapiens has arrived in the era of globalisation; the specific constellation and configuration of such a globalized status is, however, an open question and "lavore in corso" [Italian for: work in progress]).

The *sixth* basic sentence of 'synoptic social analysis' (*concerning micro-macro correspondence*):

> Any scenario (focus event), however small does(!) mirror the given macro system; and the more so, the more the specific scenario is representing and staging political significant actors. (Therefore, e.g., any scenario of a marriage mirrors the "overall situation" of the marital situation; any scenario of a trial before a court mirrors the "overall situation" of the trial opponents, and even of the juridical system of the embedding social system; finally that means any courtroom situation mirrors the juridical standards of the given status of the juridical institution within the respective social system in general etc.).

Addendum to basic sentences: *two hypotheses* (eventually becoming basic sentences):

The following two hypotheses are not yet sufficiently empirically-based, but – if so one day – they could become the seventh and eighth basic sentence of 'synoptic social analysis' (concerning the distribution of power, and concerning the need for social stimuli) (Harris, 1977; Hitzler et al., 1999; Rauch, 1983, 1985, 2013):

The power hypothesis:

The sum of all power within(!) a given social system is always 1 (meaning 100%), i.e., taking any concrete example of the ten social systems as listed in the fifth basic sentence (i.e., within a dyad, a small group, a large group, etc.) if one participating agency has more power (e.g., more 'say' on what to realise and how…), the other participant(s) have proportionally less power; and the like is to be seen within any concrete social case. One can take again as example all marriages one knows (since marital configurations are well known by almost all people) and draw conclusions: either a lot of power is with him, or is with her. However, some more power is with one person, the smaller the rest of power left for the other participant(s); however, the sum of power within the given system is always 1 (or 100%). Taking all small groups that you know well: the power is with a kind of accepted team leader, the rest is with different members, the sum total is always 1. And so on, one can do this exercise at all levels of social systems one knows well enough. (Nevertheless, this sentence is still a hypothesis, for which I have not enough empirically documented material of a number of cases on all levels, but in my view, it is very probable, that this 'power hypothesis' can soon also be proven as correct.)

The stimuli hypothesis:

Men are used to stimuli: For many centuries in human history, survival was the general main common stimulus, since life was never secure enough, everywhere and always – danger was always nearby. However, civilisation in whatever form, could – and today can – in many places provide longer periods for its inhabitants without real danger for survival. Men, however, are used to, want and need this kind of stimuli nevertheless. Then all kinds of drugs, like alcohol, games (with a built-in 'kick' for oneself or for representatives of 'oneself' (avatars) … or any other variations) – can become a surrogate for real-danger stimulus. Furthermore, there are always new stimuli and dangers welcome by many within this species (as probably by all species, living in exchange with their context, where life is rarely without danger, but often enough also with severe danger for survival.) – some stimuli and dangers bring people closer together (war or catastrophes of

any kind usually do, if they happen close enough to one's own course of life); and all men or women in general do want to protect their families, especially their offspring.

Catastrophes function also to bring about concentration and actions towards a main 'common goal'; usually all main forces within the individual and within a smaller or larger or very large group become then centred towards mastering the very catastrophe given. However, stimuli which in 'heavy times' are more or less given by working together to master the challenge, by helping each other, supporting each other – foremost within the family and neighbours but also with new comrades or total strangers, i.e., cooperation emanates automatically from the self-understood common goal given (becoming a common challenge, 'G') to survive in 'heavy times'. What, however, will happen in 'easy times', times of peace and only minor daily activities (which need not to be taken too seriously, if occurring, since survival for most people of a population in a stable civilisation is not really in danger). Can art, sports, and all kinds of entertainment satisfy this human restlessness from the 'inside', since the 'outside' provides no 'real-life-endangering stress', neither negative nor positive. How many are really able to live towards a kind of meditation, of 'buen vivir' (i.e., good living) in dignity and beauty for oneself and all? Or will drugs, sexual abnormities, even spiritual outrageousness, paranoid specifics or newly invented delusions and extravagances fill the vacuum, eventually not really spectacular one by one – but en masse possibly degenerating whole generations? In the 21st century, something new to human history will have to evolve – to come to good solutions for 'a culture of peace'.

4   Comparison with newer theories on social systems

For comparison with newer theories on social systems (the core of the sypnotics theory is condensed in the six basic sentences above), one can mention the: 'Foundations of social theory' by James Coleman (Coleman, 1990)[1]:

To outline of Coleman's social theory, one can cite as follows: Coleman starts with the individuals as the main relevant agents (micro-phenomena) (Almond and Powell, 1966; Brüsemeister, 2000; Duverger, 1959; Habermas, 1970; Flick et al., 2000). This means that he explains society through interactions, i.e., the behaviour of their parts, the agents. Thereby he distinguishes between two types of agents: the individuals and the corporations (finally also composed of individuals). The latter, i.e., the corporations, are large(r) social entities, i.e., enterprises, trade-unions, also states and NGOs. In his conceptualisation he uses both types of agents in a similar(!) way (Girtler, 2001; Gould, 1977). However, he concedes that there is a remarkable 'power' difference between the agents; to the disadvantage of the individuals, resulting from their difference with respect to resources. In the end there are less options to act for the individuals (Diamond, 1992, 2005). Therefore, it is rational for the individuals to hand over some options to act to the large(r) social entities (Berg-Schlosser and Müller-Rommel, 1987; Foucault, 1966; Holweg, 2005; Lamnek, 2005; Müller et al., 2013; König, 1967). Basis for this concept of Coleman is the rationale to minimise costs and maximise utility. And then there are definitely less options to act for the individual agents then for the corporate agents. All this is based on the theory of the model of the 'homo oeconomicus', well known

from the theoretical concepts of economics (nowadays always understood (somehow self-understood) in the framework of neo-liberalism (Mayring, 2002; Popper, 1959). Now, Coleman includes all possibilities given in economics, i.e., possibilities of trade and barter – also for the individual as a social agent. In this way Coleman proposes that all included agents (all kinds of corporations and all individuals) participate in society not only by trading goods but also by trading rights (the right to control, the right to behave, to act, to intervene, etc.). This model is then called a 'macro-micro-macro scheme' (nicknamed 'Colemans' bathtub', since the graphic outline he adds in his book for imagining this scheme looking like a bathtub). This model is supposed to explain the effects of societal phenomena (at the macro level) upon the behaviour of the individuals (obviously here representing the micro level), and then he conceptualises these effects of many of such individual behaviours onto the society. In such a way a macro-phenomenon reacts or engenders other macro-phenomena, by touching (making react, behave, intervene, etc.) thereby the individuals. All these reactions produce more or less remarkable side-effects for the corporate agents, which in sum produce change in the behaviour of the macro-agents:

a   The effect of all these changes has to be made understandable by 'the logic of the situation'.

b   The specific acts (behavioural acts) of the agents are determined by theoretically understandable steps of decision-making. The latter (decision-making) can be underlined by the 'logic of selection'.

c   Finally, the step back to the corporation (from the individual agents effecting corporate agents, i.e., from the micro-level back to the macro-level) can be understood as a 'logic of aggregation'.

These logical functions again are framed and regulated via a set of rules. This model (macro-micro-macro scheme) has predecessors; but it remains now known as 'Coleman's bathtub'.

5   Conclusions

This Part IX summarised the six basic theoretical sentences of synoptics (as a result of the experience of about 250 case studies elaborated in three decades, 1970 to 2000). It also outlined roughly another theoretical conception of society as a whole (namely J. Coleman's 'Foundation of Society').

Synoptics wanted to present the foundations and the applicational possibilities of synoptics as a rather precise path towards a psychosocial-analysis of society. It includes social factors (variables) as well as psychic factors, – and wants to show that finally, also society, i.e., a collective, is rooted at least as much within the mental sphere (as far as we today can grasp it) as well as in the social web, which is intertwining psychic and social factors (as far as we today can grasp them in their intertwinedness).

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Notes

1   James Coleman in 1991 became President of the American Political Science Association. By chance James Coleman happened – in July 1971 – to be participant of the one-week-long IHS (Vienna Institute for Advanced Studies) conference: together with two dozen social scientists of several countries, the meetings were held in Weißenbach am Attersee, Austria, organized by the author; the results were two dozen papers pre-published by the IHS.