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Social Order, Reform and Revolution

A power, exchange and institutionalisation
perspective

BOB JESSOP

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Cambridge

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To Lesley

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Preface

In this monograph I present a new perspective in sociological theory and apply it to the analysis of social order, reform and revolution. This perspective is based on a critical examination of three major contemporary sociological approaches to macro-social analysis – consensus theory, conflict theory and exchange theory. In examining these approaches I have been particularly concerned with their emergent themes and joint emphases and with their different advantages and disadvantages for the study of social order. With these criticisms in mind a new analytical framework is presented and a theoretical model is then generated with the aid of several realistic and mutually consistent assumptions. Although this model is based on existing theoretical approaches it goes beyond them in its demonstration of the complexity – even at the most general theoretical level – of the conditions of social order and their variation across types of social structure. I have also illustrated the model through reference to a wide range of cases – extending from primitive band society to historical bureaucratic empires and contemporary Western capitalist societies. The book concludes with a critical appraisal of the model in its present state of development and suggests new lines of empirical research and theoretical inquiry.

The analysis presented in these pages is part of a more extensive project on the nature of sociological theory and its relevance to the analysis of social order, reform and revolution. It is thus very much a presentation of work in progress and, although the basic framework is obviously felt to be fundamentally correct, the precise formulation must necessarily be treated as provisional. I am currently engaged in further developments in the areas outlined in the concluding chapter and hope to publish the results of these investigations at a later date.

The original insight into the significance of exchange theory for the synthesis of consensus and conflict theories was first formulated more than five years ago at the University of Exeter. It has since been developed intermittently as time permitted and particularly under the stimulus of two events. The first of these

was the series of seminars and the International Conference on Twentieth-Century Political Revolutions held at King's College, Cambridge, during 1968 and 1969. For these seminars I prepared a number of working papers on theories of social order, reform and revolution as well as papers on Indian Independence and the Kemalist Revolution in Turkey. The second major stimulus behind the present work was the need to formulate a general theoretical framework within which to fit my empirical research on English political culture. An earlier version of this framework was outlined in my paper on 'Exchange and Power in Structural Analysis' in 'Sociological Review' (1969). It is a revised version of this framework that provides the conceptual infrastructure of the present monograph. Further reflections on inherent and emergent contradictions will be found in a paper to be published in 'Social Change', edited by John Jackson and published by the Cambridge University Press, later this year.

Finally I would like to acknowledge several intellectual debts that cannot be adequately reciprocated or expressed in more personal form – those to authors on whose work I have drawn and who have inspired my approach and its formulation. These debts are greatest for those whose views I have examined in the second and third chapters of this book and also for the historical sociology and theoretical work of Samuel Eisenstadt. At the same time I should also like to emphasise that I bear sole responsibility for the analysis that is presented in these pages and for any errors that it may contain.

There is one last debt that I wish to acknowledge – this time of a more personal kind. My wife, Lesley, has given me constant encouragement in this as in other tasks. It is to her that I have dedicated this book.

Cambridge
November 1971

BOB JESSOP