



Radicalism and the Organization of Radical Movements

Author(s): Egon Bittner

Source: *American Sociological Review*, Dec., 1963, Vol. 28, No. 6 (Dec., 1963), pp. 928-940

Published by: American Sociological Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2090312>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



American Sociological Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Sociological Review*

JSTOR

of self-direction and aggression, while in the sex area mothers tend to move toward permissiveness regardless of class position or grandmother's degree of strictness. The findings in this area probably reflect a general societal trend toward a more permissive orientation toward sex.

Although many women with extremely strict mothers move toward permissiveness, this group appears to be the most strict, when comparisons are made within classes. That is, the strictest mothers tend to reproduce the child-rearing patterns of their own mothers. Whether or not other social characteristics are associated with this lack of change has not yet been determined.

Inconsistencies among different measures of maternal role could be attributed to the varying degrees of specificity of items measuring role-concept and role-performance. The more general the items the more the response distribution reflects permissive norms. We suspect that variation in generational change according to specificity of item indicates a

transitional period in which authoritatively supported permissive norms are superimposed upon relatively strict internalized norms. We expect, then to find an association between inconsistency among scales, strictness rating of grandmother, and social mobility. The pressures for conformity to authoritative norms are assumed to be greater for socially mobile women attempting to establish themselves in the middle-class milieu. The precise relationship among these variables will be reported in a subsequent paper.

In view of these findings, we suggest that it is extremely hazardous to generalize from one aspect of the maternal role to another. A prediction that a mother's handling of anger will be consistent with her handling of sex play would have failed miserably. Future research on child-rearing and maternal behavior will thus require more elaborate conceptualization than has characterized it to date.

RADICALISM AND THE ORGANIZATION OF RADICAL MOVEMENTS *

EGON BITTNER

Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute, San Francisco

This is an essay attempting a theoretically pure description of radicalism. On the basis of the writings of Max Weber radicalism is defined as differing in one crucial aspect from the socially sanctioned outlook of common sense. Because of this difference, radical beliefs have a polemic disadvantage vis-à-vis the outlook of common sense which jeopardizes the integrity and continuity of radical movements. To cope with this pernicious flow is the principal organizational task of such movements. A number of features commonly associated with radical, extremist, or totalitarian doctrines and actions are interpreted as solutions of this organizational problem. Previous sociological and psychological inquiries are related to the proposed argument.

SOCIOLOGICAL and psychological approaches to the study of radicalism tend to focus on one aspect of the problem and neglect another. Both take for granted, or find as an immediately given

datum, the existence of a form of opinion or belief which they variously identify as radicalism, totalitarianism, extremism or authoritarianism and beyond that find that such beliefs motivate the activities of select collectivities. Having found such groups and persuasions, these scholars attempt to determine what kinds of persons are suitably motivated to hold radical beliefs and engage in radical action. Thus, for example, Adorno and co-workers have shown how to account

* Revision of a paper read at the annual meetings of the Pacific Sociological Association, 1962. The work is part of the Conference on Ethnomethodology under the leadership of Harold Garfinkel. I have also received valuable suggestions from Robert A. Nisbet and Sheldon L. Messinger.

for the supply of psychologically suitable persons.¹ Similarly, Lipset accounts for the supply of interested participants by using one of the most important schemas of manifest self-interest, social class.² But the discovery of discriminable types or classes of persons who are appropriately motivated to accept some pattern of belief as true and some pattern of conduct that accords with this belief as right, does not yet constitute an adequate explanation for the existence of these patterns in the first place.³ This paper attempts to deal with this unsolved problem in the sociological study of radicalism.

It is important to emphasize that the following argument is not polemically opposed to, or even independent of, the fine researches cited in the foregoing remarks. We will seek to give an account of the rise of radicalism without regard for the question of motivation at the level of participating persons, but we insist that no pattern of belief or morality can effectively structure action unless there are persons who are disposed to accept it and comply with it.

RADICALISM AND THE COMMON SENSE OUTLOOK

In the following, radicalism will be discussed as a pure type of social event, with the aim of defining its constitutive property. What will be said will have to hold with equal force for beliefs and actions that find their primary expression in politics, religion,

economics, philosophy or any other major domain of human concern, regardless of their content. We will not set out with a definition of radicalism, or even sets of features commonly associated with radicalism in order to relate them to known properties of social systems. Only in a sense of vaguely anticipating the results of our reasoning are we at the onset informed that radicalism refers to:

1. "a conspicuously stressed attitude or frame of mind . . . which may envisage the entire complex of a society or a culture . . . [or] tends to expand in scope until [its] field is coincident with the entire setup of a society,"
2. "a distinct philosophy and program of social change looking toward systematic destruction of what is hated, and its replacement by an art, a faith, a science or a society logically demonstrated as true and good and beautiful and just. . . ." ⁴

We take from this reference that a definitive feature of radicalism is that it differs from the normal, ordinary, traditionally sanctioned world-view prevalent in any society and that this is not a difference of degree but a juxtaposition of opposites.

Within this framework we will now describe that feature of the normal, ordinary, traditionally sanctioned world-view which radicalism rejects, and we will interpret this rejection as the function that transforms any such outlook into a radical one. We intend to give a description of the normal, ordinary, traditionally sanctioned world-view—for short, the common-sense outlook—that is faithful to facts of observation even though we have no data that would satisfy the canons of scientific demonstration to support this description.⁵ But, our statement of the radical outlook is intended as a pure theoretical possibility, the assumption of which will then dictate the elaboration of the behavioral consequences associated with it.

One of the most widely accepted ideas

¹ T. W. Adorno, E. Frenkel-Brunswick, D. G. Levinson & R. N. Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Harper, 1950. See also Richard Christie and Marie Jahoda (eds.), *Studies in the Scope and Method of the 'Authoritarian Personality'*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954.

² Two of Lipset's papers are of primary interest here: "Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism," *American Sociological Review*, 24 (August, 1959), pp. 482-501; and "Social Stratification and Right Wing Extremism," *British Journal of Sociology*, 10 (December, 1959), pp. 346-382. Both of these papers are reprinted in slightly modified form in his *Political Man*, Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1960.

³ For a critique of all efforts to interpret normatively governed, socially structured action in terms of motivational states of actors, see Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (2nd ed.), Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949, especially Chapters II, III, and IV.

⁴ Horace M. Kallen, "Radicalism," in *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 13, pp. 51-52.

⁵ The reader may accept the statement on grounds of sheer plausibility, or he may accept it as consistent with experience on grounds recommended by the constitutive phenomenology of social life, as outlined in the work of Alfred Schutz. Cf. Aron Gurwitsch, "The Common-Sense World as Social Reality: A Discourse on Alfred Schutz," *Social Research*, 29 (Spring, 1962), pp. 50-72.

about culture and normatively governed conduct in complex social setups concerns the existence of a heterogeneity of enforceable cognitive and evaluative standards. The objects and events that an ordinary person encounters, recognizes, judges and acts upon in the course of his everyday life do not have unequivocally stable meanings. This is not to say that recognition, judgment and action are not normatively governed, but that the ordinarily competent person *is required* to use practical wisdom to interpret the relevance of a rule to a particular instance of the typified situation to which the rule presumably pertains. To use a trivial example, when inside a church one normally uncovers his head, but it would be distinctly foolish to attempt to remove one's cast if one's skull were recently fractured. To fail to exercise a tolerable minimum of practical wisdom is colloquially known as *naivete*.⁶

Under ordinary circumstances a person moves from situation to situation informed by a stock of knowledge that is adequate to the solution of his practical problems and for the protection of his interests as he sees them, and by and large he succeeds often enough to retain his faith in his practical judgment as an instrument of intuition and as a standard to recognize the meaning and judge the conduct of others around him. He is typically devoid of the scholar's urge to investigate discrepancies and clarify ambiguities, although he is by no means unaware of them. He takes for granted that his conduct has consequences that are in accord with the intended meaning of his actions; he expects others to recognize the intended meaning of his actions and respond to them appropriately, just as he recognizes and responds to the meaning of their action; and he finds this supposition generally confirmed in his experience. Of course, confirmation can only be guaranteed as long as the ordinarily competent person is willing to acknowledge in practice that his own actions and the actions of others do not have simply stable meanings. For example, he must know that what under some circumstances could

be a lie, may in the next context be a required expression of tact; and he must be able to live with such ambiguities in relative comfort.

A person recognized and treated as socially competent in a general sense, that is, a fully franchised member of his relevant community, is expected to move through such an ambiguous environment of objects and events with visible ease and to respect their existence as a condition of his conduct "until further notice." The stricture, "until further notice," means that, given a special motive, the taken for granted and generally respected world-view can be made the object of a critical revision. Although critical revisions are somewhat out of the usual routine, one must not think of them as rare; they are the interstitial stuff in the web of daily routines.⁷ For example, we go to a store to make some small purchase and, without giving much thought to it, treat the salesperson as a competent partner to an economic transaction in keeping with the prevalent rules of market exchange. But, we may revise our intentions and, upon consideration of "relevant evidence," recognize her as an eligible partner for a romantic affair and monitor our conduct accordingly. Dynamically this case differs from that in which we intuit the typical character of an object immediately, for here the originally preferred typification was subsequently revised. Characteristically, however, in all such cases respect for the underlying outlook of common sense remains intact; such actions merely further attenuate the lack of simple unity of meaning within it.⁸

⁷ This statement about every-day life is derived from the teachings of Alfred Schutz; see especially his "Common Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Action," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 14 (September, 1953), pp. 1-38.

⁸ One of the most prominent contemporary theorists who posited the existence of a stable underlying unity of meaning in culture is Talcott Parsons. It was this presupposition which led him to speak of culture as a *system* of values and norms. In his more recent writings he no longer speaks of culture as stably given with respect to systems of action, but as a system of action itself; cf. *Theories of Society*, New York: The Free Press, 1961, Vol. II, pp. 963-993. That he was actually never oblivious to the existence of heterogeneities of judgment is evident in his "A Revised Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification," *Essays in Socio-*

⁶ In his well-known work on the development of moral judgment, Jean Piaget assigns crucial significance to the acquisition of this kind of wisdom in older children and contrasts it with the *naivete* of younger children.

There exist, however, some forms of critical revision in which not only is the relevance of some select interpretative decisions suspended, but the validity of the entire corpus of common-sense knowledge and its method is *radically questioned*. For the sake of orientation we shall briefly discuss the closest example of this type of critique, namely the principled version of scientific inquiry.⁹

THE RADICAL CHARACTER OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

One prominent feature of scientific knowledge and method is the high premium placed on systematic clarity and freedom from internal contradiction. Garfinkel described this underlying tendency toward homogeneity in scientific reasoning and procedure in terms of four maxims of conduct which he finds unenforceable in common-sense rationale and conduct, namely that:

the 'means-end relationship' be construed in such a way (1) that they remain in full compatibility with rules that define scientifically correct decisions of grammar and procedure; (2) that all the elements be conceived in full clearness and distinctness; (3) that the clarification of both the body of knowledge as well as the rules of investigative and interpretative procedure be treated as a first priority project; and (4) that the projected steps contain only scientifically verifiable assumptions that have to be in full compatibility with the whole of scientific knowledge.¹⁰

Space considerations preclude a detailed discussion of the radical character of the scientific outlook, but it may be pointed out that the difference between it and common-sense procedure is only obscured, not oblit-

erated, by the definition of some elements of the scientist's attitude as public virtues, by the practice of judging lay rationality by standards of scientific rationality, and by the assimilation of some scientific findings into the empirical lore of practical life. The fact remains that strict application of scientific rationale to the solution of existential problems in the mundane realm of every-day life has, as Garfinkel pointed out, distinctly anomicising effects.¹¹ The institutionalized segregation of the two realms is well known, of course, but generally valued only insofar as it protects the integrity of scientific inquiry.¹²

As a radical revision of the socially sanctioned common-sense outlook, science is unique in at least two related aspects which make comparison with other forms of such revision difficult. In the first place, its appeal has always been directed to educated persons only; second, its pursuit has long been institutionalized as a territorially and temporarily segregated vocation practiced "on the side." It may be conjectured that these two conditions have put the radicalism in the scientific outlook on ice by defining it as morally neutral. "Morally neutral" means that the canons of scientific method and the propositions arrived at through their use cannot be construed, of and by themselves, as morally binding maxims of conduct, except by deliberate election in the institutionally segregated occasions of inquiry. Of course, the pursuit of scientific objectives can be, and in most cases actually is, governed by a professional code of ethics composed of such maxims as, for example, that no procedure be

logical Theory (2nd ed.), Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954, pp. 386-439.

⁹ The term, principled version, is used by Harold Garfinkel to indicate that pattern of conduct which gives evaluative primacy to deliberate conformity with the normative rule governing it. For a definitive statement of the difference between standards of rationality in the domain of practical affairs of every-day life and in the domain of scientific inquiry, see his "The Rational Properties of Scientific and Common Sense Activities," *Behavioral Science*, 5 (January, 1960), pp. 72-83.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76. Note that it is only in this sense that one can speak of any domain of scientific inquiry as a discipline, namely, as the rigorous elimination of biases that arise through the association between unexplicable but socially sanctioned plausibility and formal truth.

¹¹ The anomic consequences of principled conduct involving the deliberate suspension of the relevance of practical judgment by the bureaucratic virtuoso have been clearly described by Robert K. Merton in his classic paper "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," *Social Theory and Social Structure*, (rev. ed.), Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957, pp. 195-206.

¹² Segregation from the point of view of common sense is expressed in the depreciation of "book-learning" and the appraisal of scientific inquiry as impractical. Scientists themselves often subscribe to this view under the guise of being anti-doctrinaire. A formal expression of preference for segregation can be found in forensic rules of procedure; see Trautman, "Logical or Legal Relevancy; a Conflict in Theory," *Vanderbilt Law Review*, 5 (1952), pp. 385-413.

employed that inflicts pain, but none of these can be axiologically derived from the scientific outlook itself, not even the injunction of moral neutrality. The validity of this statement can be easily seen by considering that a violation of the professional code of ethics jeopardizes the civic standing of the scientist but is totally irrelevant in the evaluation of his findings for inclusion in or exclusion from the corpus of science. Compare this with forensic procedure, where the ethical character of the inquiry is regarded as relevant to the acceptability of proof.

PROPHECY AND RATIONAL CONSISTENCY OF MEANING

Not all radical critiques are, however, shored off against the realm of common sense by the injunction of moral neutrality, and it is to those that we now turn. These critiques share only one, but a critically important, feature with science, namely, *they seek a unified and internally consistent interpretation of the meaning of the world*. In a narrow reading of Max Weber such revisions are called prophecies.¹³ Weber stated that

prophecy always means, in the first place for the prophet himself, and then for his helpmates: a unitary view of life won by taking a deliberately *unified meaningful* position to it. Life and the world, the social and the cosmic events, have for the prophet a decidedly systematic unity of meaning, and the conduct of men must, in order to bring salvation, be oriented toward it and must be formed by this relationship to produce a sense of meaningful unity . . . [prophecy] always involves, only in various degrees and with various results, the synthesis of all practical conduct into a *way-of-life* (*Lebensfuehrung*), no matter what the appearance of the individual case may be.¹⁴

¹³ By narrow reading we mean that we will disregard the voluminous historical qualifications that Weber attaches to the defining characteristic of prophecy. Extensive discussions of this problem can be found in at least four places in Weber's work: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (4th ed. by Johannes Winkelmann), Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1956, Zweiter Teil, Kapitel V; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1923, Vol. 1, pp. 237–275, and 323–359; and *ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 281–400. A superb summary of Weber's major points can be found in Parsons' *The Structure of Social Action*, pp. 563–575.

¹⁴ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, p. 275 (p. 257 in 1st, 2nd and 3rd editions, emphases in original, translation by the author of this paper).

Weber discussed one other feature of prophecy with equal emphasis, namely the personal charisma of the prophet. Since we are at this point interested in the outlook rather than the person who promulgates it, we will disregard this feature now and return to it later. The crucial characteristic of prophecy which in our argument defines it as a radical outlook, is not to be found in its contents, nor in its emotionalism, nor in its intolerance, nor even in the fact that it presents a new rationalization of the past, present and future, but in the fact that it juxtaposes to a traditionally sanctioned, heterogeneous interpretation of meaning a rationally consistent interpretation.¹⁵

Weber repeatedly insisted that although prophetic rationalizations have their focus of appeal at the level of the lower classes as doctrines of redemption from meaningless suffering, they are not indigenous to these strata. Long before Ortega y Gasset, he taught that the masses are, even when suffering, culturally inert.¹⁶ Prophecy itself is the demand "that *the world order in its totality* is, could, and should somehow be a 'meaningful' cosmos. This quest, the core of *genuine religious rationalism*, has been borne precisely by the strata of intellectuals."¹⁷ To be sure, a prophetically inspired *movement* re-

¹⁵ Weber's argument on the principled character of prophecy has been confirmed in the researches of a scholar of an entirely different bent. Ronald A. Knox in his tart but illuminating history of enthusiastic heresy proposed that the heretic prophet selects one element of the creed and expands it into a universal principle. In his appraisal of Tertullian as the principal spokesman for Montanism he stated: "He was incurably a logician, his whole temper was impatient of compromises, of half-way houses . . . his intellectual bias impelled him towards the party of consistency." Concerning a heresy that occurred 1500 years later, he writes "It is the vice of Quietism, that it cannot leave these half-resolved antinomies alone; it must always be trying to tidy up the situation." *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 46 and 270 respectively.

¹⁶ "By themselves, the masses have everywhere remained engulfed in the massive and archaic growth of magic—unless a prophecy that holds out specific promises has swept them into a religious movement of an ethical character." Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 277.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 281. (emphases supplied)

quires the presence of persons who are systematically deprived of their share of good fortune, that is, groups that Lipset calls "displaced."¹⁸ The presence of such groups is not in itself, however, a sufficient condition for the appearance of prophecy or prophetically inspired movements.

Weber's argument is in the context of his study of religion but there is no reason why it should not be extrapolated to the secular realm.¹⁹ If the heterogeneous beliefs, judgments, maxims and pieties that characterize archaic forms of religion are recognized as cognate with the realm of every-day life, consisting largely of heterogeneous but traditionally stereotyped and sanctioned domains of meaning in empirical lore and in practical morality, then religious prophecy is cognate with radical secular doctrines.

In studies of radical, revisionist, totalitarian and extremist movements, the importance of underlying doctrines has been both affirmed and denied.²⁰ Some scholars, guided by the radical's strong concern with purity of belief, have proposed that radical movements cultivate the appearance of doctrinal consistency without necessarily being in fact restrained by the implied discipline.²¹ This view suffers from a difficulty inherent in much current work concerning rationality. Failure to recognize rational consistency in radical doctrines and practices goes back to

the work of Vilfredo Pareto. Pareto proposed that thought and conduct may be considered rational if, and only if, the means-end relations involved are construed in accordance with formal logic and science. This conception of rationality throws error, mistake, intuition, sentiment and visceral whim into the undifferentiated category of the irrational. Instead, we use the term rational in accordance with the teachings of Max Weber, that is, as pertaining to the grasp of meaning, and with full recognition of the difference between formal and substantive rationality.²²

By speaking of rational unity of meaning, we do not *ipso facto* submit it to the jurisdiction of standards that are relevant to the thought and work of the scientist. We merely propose that the radical gives *unity of meaning* evaluative primacy, that he tends to think, argue and act on grounds of an overriding principle, even if the way in which he expands the relevance of the principle is utterly absurd in the light of formal logic. Thus, we propose that it is incorrect to deny unity of meaning to the expressions of Hitler because his writings and speeches contain elements that the political scientist recognizes as contradictory or obscure. The whole import of Hitler's thought and action denies the validity of *formalized* reasoning and derives from the non-logical presuppositions of *Rasse und Volkgeist*. Similarly, logically coherent rationalizations of the theological doctrine of Charity either impoverish it to the limit of oblivion or are imponderable, but this did not prevent the movement of Port Royal, because the coherence of its radical beliefs rested on what its greatest exponent, Pascal, called a *logique de coeur*.

In short, by making the unity of meaning the defining characteristic of an outlook and way of life called radicalism, we indicate that an adherent adopts as morally binding an internally consistent schema of interpretation and that he is, therefore, obliged to reason from a rigidly supreme principle to all occasions of actual conduct. In practice this means that the relevance of a single principle can never be justifiably denied and that a principled justification of action can always

¹⁸ "Social Stratification and Right-Wing Extremism," *op. cit.*, p. 352.

¹⁹ We cannot here go into Weber's discussion of the historical circumstances that gave rise to prophetic rationality nor the importance he attributes to the phenomenon for the development of the Western tradition. These points are fully recognized and lucidly discussed in Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1960.

²⁰ Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956, pp. 9, 118ff, 130ff; similarly Joseph M. Bochenski and Gerhard Neumeyer, *Handbuch des Weltkommunismus*, Freiburg-München: Alber, 1958, p. 13; but cf. C. W. Casinelli, "Totalitarianism, Ideology and Propaganda," *Journal of Politics*, 22 (February, 1960), pp. 68-95.

²¹ Alex Inkeles, "The Totalitarian Mystique: Some Impressions of the Dynamics of Totalitarian Society," in Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *Totalitarianism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, pp. 88-108; see also the discussion of Ketman in Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, New York: Vintage Books, 1959.

²² Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1947, pp. 89ff, 184ff.

be demanded and obtained under the threat of sanction. In the following we should like to demonstrate that all the other well known features of radical action groups can be derived from this single characteristic.²³

RADICALISM AND THE ORGANIZATION OF ACTION

If we consider that we must so order our practical affairs as not to run afoul of a very considerable variety of standards of judgment that are not fully compatible with each other, do not have a clear-cut hierarchy of primacy and are regarded as binding and enforceable only in the light of additional vaguely denied information; if we consider that for every maxim of conduct we can think of a situation to which it does not apply or in which it can be overruled by a superior maxim; if we consider that unmitigated adherence to principle is regarded as vice or at least folly; and if we finally consider that this knowledge orients our behavior in its course, then it is clear that all efforts to live by an internally consistent schema of interpretation are necessarily doomed to fail. This must be true for any doctrinally pure outlook, regardless of its superior virtue, empirical adequacy, economic efficiency, or logical coherence. As with so many other things, this was first seen by great poets who have provided us with many examples showing that uncompromising moral rectitude leads to tragedy in an "imperfect" world. The heroes of classical tragedy are victims not of villains but of reasonable men.

In only two ways could radical revisions of traditionally sanctioned heterogeneous interpretations of meaning effectively govern conduct in organized collectivities. The first way abandons the purity of the doctrine through a slow assimilation of casuistic inter-

pretations, the development of dogma and bureaucratization. This process is best known in the transformation of cults into churches and has been described by Weber as the process of routinization of charisma.²⁴ There can be no doubt that, save for the rarest of exceptions, this is the course of development encountered in prophetically inspired movements that remain active for protracted periods of time.²⁵

The alternative to this development is to impose upon the believers conditions that would make doctrinal impurity as difficult and unattractive as possible. This cannot be done by discouraging and penalizing the attitude of skepticism alone. Nor is it sufficient to continue to furnish proof of the merits of the doctrine because contradictory evidence will be unavoidable in practical experience. The task can only be accomplished by eliminating the possibility that believers will assign to any experience the significance of counterevidence discrediting the professed faith. Inasmuch as strict adherence to a fully integrated doctrine inevitably leads, in a rich and varied life, to reversals that will reflect unfavorably upon the creed, radical action groups must have some way to reduce the horizon of possible encounters and cause the remaining contingencies of potential embarrassment to be seen as either not pertaining or, when "correctly" seen, further boosting the doctrine.

One might say that the radical is in a position of peculiar polemic disadvantage with respect to the person using the socially sanc-

²⁴ Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, pp. 367-373. About the world of secular politics he says, "the crusading leader and the faith itself fade away, or, what is even more effective, the faith becomes part of the conventional phraseology of political Philistines and banal technicians." See "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, p. 125. Similarly, Lipset observed, "The history of most leftist parties has been largely an evolution from a conscious internationalist Marxist position to an 'opportunistic' appeal in which large segments of the population are wooed." *Agrarian Socialism*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950, p. 156.

²⁵ Interestingly, however, the seed of radicalism remains viable in them, for such dogmatized creeds continue to produce radical prophetic apostasies, as Ronald Knox has demonstrated for Christianity.

²³ In a similar way, Martin Drath speaks about a "Primärphänomen des Totalitarismus, das seine Eigenart bestimmt und bis ins einzelne durchformt." "Einleitung," in Ernst Richard, *Macht ohne Mandat*. Schriften des Instituts für Politische Wissenschaft, No. 11, Köln-Opladen, 1958: He defines the "Primärphänomen," without much elaboration, "das dieser (Totalitarismus) gegenüber den in der Gesellschaft herrschenden Wertungen ein ganz anderes Wertungssystem durchsetzen will."

tioned outlook of common sense. On the one hand, he has an initial advantage, in part because his opponent will tend to accept the validity of the premise from which the radical can argue cogently to conclusions that his opponent never envisioned and will not accept, and in part because the radical's deliberate concern with doctrine makes him a superior polemicist.²⁶ On the other hand, the radical can never win an argument in the long run if experience is defined as the relevant test of validity, as it must be if the creed pertains to existential and moral matters.

If radical movements can retain their purity only as long as they manage to discredit all possible counterevidence peremptorily, then coping with reversals cannot be left to the occasion of their actual occurrence, and life in radical movements must contain norms of conduct and belief that blanket a maximum of future contingencies. Of course it must not be thought that such norms have the deliberately intended effect of enhancing the loyalty of the believers and the integrity of the movement. From the member's point of view, they are usually seen as integral to the substantive content of the doctrine. Regardless, however, of how they are seen, these normative features of radicalism are at a different level of analysis than the rule of internal coherence and unity of the schema of interpretation. Whereas the latter defines an outlook as radical, the former occur only if the outlook is used as a principle governing a paramount way of life.

These normative features organize the loyalties of the members to generate the movement's impetus and power from within.²⁷

²⁶ The radical's opponent is here seen as a normal, wide awake, generally competent adult using the outlook of common sense, who will tend to grant the validity of the premise *inter alia*, a restriction which the radical never intended to respect.

²⁷ Talcott Parsons recently defined the sociological analysis of power to consist of two problems. The first, traditionally recognized as the principal, concerns the allocation of power within the system, the second concerns the mobilization of existing facilities and resources to generate power for the system as a whole. See "The Distribution of Power in American Society," in *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960, pp. 199-225. Elsewhere, in a more restricted framework, he speaks of the second problem of power as "organization in the technical sense of

We can, therefore, speak of the task of eliminating the possibility that derogatory significance will be attached to experience as the organizational task of the movement, and of various features of belief and actions often encountered in such movements as the preferred solutions of this task.

Arguing from the standpoint of Parsons' theory of system analysis, three mechanisms are involved here.

1. The members' cathectic drives must be so directed as to make gratification instrumental in, or at least compatible with, promoting the system's movement toward its goals. Participation in the movement must contain some psychologically satisfying pay-offs in return for its very considerable claims on the members' energy and devotion.

2. There must exist a stable solution of internal system problems to minimize the amount of energy required to maintain internal harmony. This pertains particularly to allocation of authority and distribution of inequality. The solution must leave as little as possible to negotiation between potentially competent claims.

3. Relatively rigid boundaries against the system's environment must exist to prevent energy leaks. This is done primarily by reducing the members' contributions to outside causes and monopolizing his interests for the movement.²⁸

It is important to emphasize that the functional focus of these mechanisms is to protect the validity of the doctrine as a code of conduct for its adherent, to enhance his disposition to comply with its tenets, and through this, to contribute to the viability, integrity and continuity of the movement. They must be retained and cultivated even if their implementation increases hostility and resistance to the movement and thus impedes its progress toward its goals.

the term." See "A Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organization," *ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

²⁸ The *first* mechanism operates on the boundary of hierarchical control exerted from the social system to the personality as a system, and the *latter two* differentiate along the axis of internal-external significance of system function. Although these mechanisms operate in all social systems to some extent, they receive in radical movements a monotonous emphasis that justifies their characterization as extreme.

ORGANIZATIONAL SOLUTIONS OF RADICAL
MOVEMENTS

On the basis of these formal considerations, and on the basis of descriptions of existing movements that have been characterized as radical, totalitarian, authoritarian, extremist and the like,²⁹ the following list of substantive features of belief and conduct is proposed as an inventory of efficient solutions of a radical movement's organizational tasks. The inventory is encumbered with all the deficiencies and risks involved in ideal-type constructions;³⁰ it is admittedly incomplete, and it cannot be said that its component parts are necessary in the way in which they are outlined here. Because it would be unrealistic to attempt to relate the proposed solutions preferentially to the three organizational tasks outlined above, it is suggested that all of them overdetermine the outcome to which they seem to be functionally related, thus serving the three requirements more or less indiscriminately.

1. *A sense of charisma must attach to the movement and its creed.* According to Weber, this quality is invested in the person of the prophet and bestowed through him on his followers. But this is not the only way it can be perceived. Not all leaders say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in me has everlasting life. I am that bread of life."³¹ Many great reformers were overpowering personalities, unhesitatingly followed as captains of policy and interpreters of the faith without claiming to be, or being seen as incumbents of special statuses in the divine cosmos.

Charisma may find its most excellent expression, its most competent exegete, its strategically salient symbol in the leader, without being located in his person. A good example is the German *Führerprinzip*. In Nazi radicalism, charisma resided in *Blut*,

Boden, Rasse und Volkstum and whatever else went to make up the Nazi myth, which was its doctrine proper.³²

What matters is that seeing the truth of the myth and partaking in the power which it lends are inseparable in experience. From the believer's point of view, believing in the truth of the creed and participating in the movement *saves*. Durkheim emphasized this point when he proposed that religious belief, more than revealing truth, gives strength. It does not matter whether the agency of a personal prophet is involved in the promise of redemption or not. Even if fulfillment is placed in the distant future, or in the after-life, the true believer participates in it now. The radical Marxist, even when exposed to persecution and humiliation enjoys the dignity and self-respect for which he presumably fights. He personally partakes in the power of the laws of history. It is the vision and assurance of charisma that produces the strong emotional involvement in the movement and the often baffling expressions of arrogant self-righteousness and superiority on the part of radicals. Of course, the sense of charisma is continuously threatened, not by skepticism concerning the major tenets of the doctrine, but by "petty vexations engendered in daily life."³³ Therefore, this sense has to be continuously reaffirmed and strengthened by ceremonial reiteration and other outward signs.

2. *The doctrine that inspires the movement should contain information from outside the realm of every-day life.* This condition is most obviously fulfilled in the hierophancy of the religious prophet; he announces the mystical origin of his teachings. To assure that his pronouncements are in fact accepted as a way in which God makes

²⁹ The source to which the following presentation is most indebted, aside from the earlier cited book by Ronald A. Knox, is Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon*, Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1952.

³⁰ There is no need to consult the critics of Weber for the limitations of ideal-type constructions; see *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, pp. 89ff, 108ff, and *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949, pp. 89ff.

³¹ St. John, 6:47, 48.

³² The term myth is used here as "the closest approach to an immediate intuition of reality, . . . to the believer myth is actually identical with truth." Murray Fowler, "Myth," in Joseph T. Shipley (ed.), *Dictionary of World Literature*, New York: The Philosophical Library, 1943, p. 391. The term is used in the same sense by Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955, Chapter 1, where he defines it as a "fundamentally principled belief."

³³ Charles Gide sees them as the principal risk for the continuity of the movement, see his *Communist and Co-operative Colonies*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, no date (French original published in 1928), pp. 11-12.

himself known, it seems to be necessary that he receive his command under the most unusual circumstances. Men become prophets on high mountains, in remote deserts, or, at any rate, after they have given up their ordinary life. The *Mysterium Tremendum* is typically not revealed where all live, but only where some survive in extremes.

In a different way, this seems to hold for leaders of secular movements as well. Many of them come from life circumstances which differ radically from the life circumstances of those who believe their teachings. Leaders of proletarian movements are often aristocrats or intellectuals; on the other hand, radical leaders often discover or formulate their doctrines in prisons, in exiles or in fringe circumstances such as in bohémias. The doctrine thus acquires a particularistic aspect, namely, it is maintained that the leader "knows better" because of his unique experiences. To reinforce unquestioned respect for the leader, his personal life and conduct must be known as a paradigmatic example of the right way of life; not only the source of his inspiration, but his daily existence must be mythologized. He may withdraw from all but managed appearances and depute an inner circle of interpreters to handle the routine tasks of homiletics, but this expedient always contains the risk of schisms in the movement through conspiracy and independent empire-building. Thus, it is the hallmark of true apostles that they are truly faithful believers, not that they are independently competent interpreters.³⁴

These out-of-the-ordinary, particularistic features of radical doctrines provide for the need of authoritative interpretation, and beyond that they furnish grounds for discrediting outside sources of information and outside tests of validity of the creed. Others simply do not understand. Thus, radicals are often rigid in their convictions, unwilling to learn, and unwilling to engage outsiders in polemics on equal terms. No Nazi ever attempted to convince a Jew or Gypsy of his inferiority, for they were essentially barred from knowing; neither has a capitalist, in the eyes of an orthodox Marxist, the capacity

to envision the inevitable character of his doom. A Roman Catholic prelate recently stated that not to believe is not a personal shortcoming, it is a misfortune.

3. *On all rungs of membership, there must be an intensive concern for the purity of belief.* The value sought must be purity, not clarity, of belief. Soul-searching on the level of the individual believer and purges on the level of the collectivity continuously cleanse the doctrine of foreign elements. Yet, purity is only vaguely defined, and the decisions concerning desirable levels of orthodoxy are left to the leader's discretion. Public disclosure of heresy is one of the most powerful weapons that a leader has to bring his flock into line. An intellectual search for clarity alone can always be defined as evidence of bad faith and disloyalty, and the authoritative interpreter gains polemic advantage by defining inquiries as insults. To question the leader's pronouncements is to challenge his exalted status.

Thus, purity is important, not only for its own sake but also because it offers the leader a weapon of control which he can use arbitrarily because of his imponderably greater competence and the air of mystique that attaches to it. To maintain purity is a difficult task, however; the ideal is that of naive faithfulness, which is always threatened by the possibility of the orthodox zealotry so well expressed in the neophyte's propensity to be *plus catholique que le pape*.

4. *No part of a member's life can be defined as lying outside the scope of the doctrine or the movement.* That is, nothing is so private as to be merely a matter of personal choice or preference. Members are obliged to carry the burden of their convictions into every nook and cranny of their personal lives, to eliminate as far as possible any source of distraction. Since any new experiences can turn into nuclei of schism, the atmosphere of austere discipline often observed in radical movements is an economical way of reducing the likelihood of distractions in which personal preference might come into play. One potent device to keep the entire round of life in check is to render the member's life as conventional as possible in all minor matters. Another is the obvious expedient of saturating his time with group-relevant

³⁴ A rich source of information on authoritative knowledge and discipleship is in Florian Znaniecki, *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1940.

activities of instrumental or symbolic significance.

Conventionalism in mundane matters, among radicals, is only one way of deprivatising life and reducing autonomy. The other is antinomianism in all matters of convention: all that is not made a matter of strict discipline in the movement is totally anomic. Obviously, one can eliminate the significance of moral choice either by submitting all situations to a solution by rigidly enforced rule or by establishing the rule that visceral whim must prevail. Some degree of antinomianism is almost inevitable in radical movements because no doctrine could be so comprehensive as to permit consistent legislation in all areas of life. The important thing is that members must be released from the authority of external convention; nothing may remain "normal" that is not normalized by the doctrine and through the movement. Thus, in some movements we find ascetical conduct mixed with fantastic excesses.

5. Since disappointments, reversals and failure are commonplace in the lives of radicals, *suffering must be made an integral part of the conception of the progress of the movement* in order to minimize its effects on the morale of the members. To express this conception symbolically, the official portraits of the leaders should contain elements of martyrdom. No reversals of fortune may be passed over; all must be exploited to increase the members' devotion. To increase their tolerance for suffering and sacrifice, it is worth while that members actually rehearse brutality on each other. Of course, the believers must value pain and humiliation in such a way that indifference or actual appreciation of it is possible. Although suffering can be merely an element in the path towards salvation, as in the Donatist heresy, it is efficient to channel the accruing counter-aggressive tendencies towards some outside adversary. For tactical reasons it is advantageous to select a vulnerable adversary, but the principal point is to select one who can be succinctly pre-judged as evil, wrong and damned.

The usefulness of an adversary's image is not exhausted by making him the recipient of all blame and hostility. He also makes it possible to moralize by counter-example. As-

saulting him means to deal him the fate that he deserves, which is precisely the opposite of what is in store for the believer. Because the radical can think of the movement as an instrument of fate, he can engage in acts of violence that imply no personal relation between assailant and victim. The adversary's misfortunes actually validate and celebrate the creed under whose auspices they were designed; he epitomizes life outside the movement and provides a concrete program for fighting it. Because of its concreteness, the fight against the adversary may represent the only version of the doctrine accessible to believers who lack the intellectual capacity to appreciate its loftier aspects.

6. *All traditional extra-group ties must be suspended*; the member owes nothing to the outside, regardless of the nature of the pre-existing bond.³⁵ Restrictions on personal feelings are not limited to persons on the outside. The command, "Bear ye one another's burden,"³⁶ which at any rate pertains to members only, is a moral absolute that implies no personal relations. The Perfectionists of Oneida who strongly and explicitly disapproved of "exclusive and idolatrous attachments" between individuals, had a derogatory term for a person who could not restrain his regard and affection for others. He was called the "respector of persons."³⁷

Internal loyalties must be strong and unquestioned, to be sure, but they do not consist of ties between individual human beings with intransigently unique qualities. Rather, they are based on the notion that members are a select group, having a mission, being more deserving on moral or ritual grounds than other common social types. Of course, not all affective attachments will be rooted out, but a member cannot under any circumstances contest the movement's demand by citing a conflicting personal obligation. To make this possible, it is necessary to preclude the formation of strong personal attachments even among members. Thus, either complete license in sexual conduct or puritanical regu-

³⁵ Consider the dictum: "Follow thou me and let the dead bury their dead." St. Matt. 8:22.

³⁶ Galatians, 6:2.

³⁷ Charles Nordhoff, *Communitistic Societies in the United States*, New York: Harper, 1875, pp. 276 and 291.

lation, typically prevails in radical movements. The only personal relation that is highly valued and severely enforced is a completely asymmetrical attitude of devoted attachment to the leader, accompanied by a cultivated incapacity for an individualized sentiment for a fellow human being.

7. *The movement should exploit outside sentiment against it for its own organizational advantage.* We have already noted that the member must sacrifice his position in the outside world. Beyond that, he should be publicly compromised by his participation in the movement, so that his return to the world is unacceptable to his former associates and incompatible with his feelings of self-respect. The member can put himself and his resources at the disposal of the movement with much less hesitation if he knows that all alternatives are practically closed to him.

CONCLUSION

It goes without saying that the here-described features of life and belief in radical movements are no more likely to be found in complete and pure form in any concrete movements than the ideal-type features of bureaucracy are to be found in any functioning structure of authority, and no more than the real distance traveled by any actually falling object can be determined by using the formula $D=1/2\ gt^2$ alone. Obviously, situational factors, the substantive content of the doctrine, and the makeup of the group, will influence the choice of solutions of its organizational tasks. Unique exigencies must be met topically, and all movements must engage in contingently justified tactics. Further, all groups must develop symbolic expressions to emphasize their distinctiveness and to celebrate their cause, and they will tend to select them from the existing symbolism peculiar to the society within which they occur.

If, however, we postulate that the definitive characteristic of radical movements is that they are inspired by doctrines and beliefs that seek to impose a unified, internally consistent schema of interpretation upon a world of heterogeneous meanings, a schema necessarily disconfirmed in practical experience, and if we assume that the cited organ-

izational solutions discredit the disconfirmation and thus protect the validity of the doctrine in the eyes of the believers as well as the unity and continuity of the movement, then we must consider the contingent problem of finding persons most suited to participate in it. This question arises necessarily because no socially structured order of interaction will remain stable over time unless the persons whose activities produce it find it compatible with their psychological needs and the pursuit of self-interest as they see it. Earlier we pointed out that previous researches on radicalism have gone a long way toward solving this problem.

A variety of characteristics commonly associated with participation in radical movements, such as origin in a socially displaced stratum of the society and the personality traits of dependence, rigidity, sado-masochism, and others, appear to fit the solution of organizational tasks of the movement. It may well be that such movements could never get started or gather momentum were it not for the presence of suitably disposed adherents in the larger society. In this sense only is radicalism in movements a function of personality traits and social position. Movements and their characteristics as such are not the product of the presence of these persons: to say that some social order benefits the perceived interests and cathectic drives of some persons is only half the explanation of its structure. Irrational moods and inclinations produce chaos, not order. It is necessary to show that personal attitudes are socially sanctioned and that these sanctions are social facts precisely in the sense Durkheim gave the term; that they are not felt by many is no reason to disregard their existence.³⁸ That we are not merely guessing at the existence of social restraints is evident in the many testimonials of apostate members of radical movements, for they show that wherever the right psychological disposition is absent the desired attitudes are enforced as a matter of bitter discipline.

When considered not as a person's way of

³⁸ In an inimitable sentence, which I am unable to locate in his work again, Durkheim said, "If to a certain extent sensibility has the same end as reason, it cannot be humbled by submitting to the latter."

relating to his environment, but as a group's organized response to its peculiar disadvantage, the features of radicalism appear as calculated and efficient mechanisms. That they must be compatible with or even feed on the emotional life of the persons who implement them is almost a foregone conclusion. It was Karl Mannheim who remarked about the revolutionary proletariat: "Here

then we are confronted with the combination of the most extreme rationalism with some of the most extreme irrational elements; this shows that the 'irrational' proves on closer observation more complex than we are at first inclined to imagine."³⁹

³⁹ Karl Mannheim, "Conservative Thought," in *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953, p. 92.

CHARISMA AND RELIGIOUS INNOVATION: THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF ISRAELITE PROPHECY *

PETER L. BERGER

New School for Social Research

One of the building blocks of Weber's theory of charisma was his understanding of Israelite prophecy. This understanding was based on the Old Testament scholarship of Weber's time and has to be considerably modified in terms of new insights gained since then. Of special importance in this connection is the new view of the relation of the prophets to the cultic institutions of Israel. It is no longer possible to understand the prophets as isolated individuals opposed to the established religion of the priesthood. Rather it is likely that they were themselves closely related to certain cultic offices. This suggests a modification of the theory of charisma that would de-emphasize the latter's non-institutional character.

WHILE there may be a certain solidarity-generating feeling to the not-impossible prospect that sociologists will end up talking to nobody except themselves (or, at most, to other social scientists), it is well to recollect that the most fruitful developments in classical sociological theory occurred in close association with historical data. This is true not only of the work of Weber but, in varying degrees, of the Marxian, Durkheimian and Paretian traditions. Such an association with historical data is readily evident in Weber's theory of charisma. It is hardly necessary to elaborate on the decisive importance of this theory, not only for the sociology of religion but for political sociology and the sociology of institutions in general. One of the building blocks of this theory is Weber's work on the sociology of ancient Israel, especially his understanding of the role of the prophetic movement in the period preceding the Babylonian

exile.¹ It may, then, be of some significance to sociological theory to see how historical scholarship since then affects Weber's interpretation of these Israelite developments.

Our concern is particularly with Weber's understanding of the social location of pre-exilic prophecy. After briefly sketching Weber's position, we shall look at some relevant developments in Old Testament scholarship since the time of Weber's work and then ask whether these developments have a bearing on the theory of charisma in general. And we shall argue that, like Molière's character who spoke prose without knowing it, a number of Old Testament scholars writing in recent decades have made an interesting contribution to sociological theory.

Weber's interpretation of Israelite prophecy is a penetrating sociological exposition based on the latest historical scholarship of that time.² Weber recognized that canonical or classical prophecy (that is, the material that now constitutes the prophetic books of the Old Testament) is based on earlier phe-

* The writer gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Brevard Childs, of the Yale Divinity School, who was kind enough to read the manuscript and make some useful suggestions, though he is not to be held responsible for either its conclusions or its shortcomings.

¹ Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 90ff; pp. 267ff.