Marilyn Josefsson

Grasping Reality and Understanding Behaviour

A study of how to understand emotional behaviour based on a sociological definition of reality

Sociology
C-level thesis

Supervisor: Åsa Wettergren
Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to reach an understanding of emotional behaviour through the construction of an analytical root metaphor that communicates what meta-theoretical discourse that structures the thesis’s conceptualisation of reality and demonstrates how micro and macro features of reality are postulated to be linked together.

In sum the thesis’s understanding of reality stipulates the existence of an objective and independent reality. Therefore, reality is appraised analytically in terms of an intransitive and a transitive dimension, where the intransitive dimension encompasses the whole ontological sphere of reality while the transitive dimension only encompasses the epistemological sphere. Reality is also perceived as being differentiated, structured, and stratified. The distinction of reality’s three domains of empirical facts, surface-structures and deep-structures capture this differentiation more intelligibly and these three fundamental spheres of reality substantially coincide with Bhaskar’s ontological domains of the real, the actual, and the empirical. This since these domains distinguish in a similar manner between what we register, what actually happens, and what ultimately produce these events and phenomena in reality.

The structuration of reality, on the other hand, is seen to assert the inherent powers and mechanisms of all objects in reality that stem from the underlying structures that fundamentally constitute each object’s specific nature. While the stratification of reality is perceived to emanate from the fact that the fundamental structures and mechanisms of objects spring from different hierarchically organised strata in reality. In this thesis the psychological and social strata are given the greatest importance. In simplistic terms it is possible to conclude that the stratification of reality is embedded in the real domain while the structuration of reality is entrenched in the actual domain.

Furthermore, the thesis’s recognition of the social construction of reality, society is delineated as both an objective reality and a human product, and man is similarly delineated as a natural as well as a social product. Moreover, the fact that both reality and man are, in part, products of social activity draws attention to the hermeneutic premises of social science, which settle the necessity to always consider the ideas, intentions, and actions of individuals, so as to accurately capture the true essence of the socially produced reality of man and science. Thus the hermeneutic premises of social sciences hereby acknowledge that the inherent meaning of the social world springs directly from the fact that individuals are thinking, intentional, and reflexive, and rational agents. Hence, in order to comprehend and explain the social reality of
humans it is essential to identify and understand the intentions and presuppositions that precede individual action and interaction.

**Abduction** and **Retroduction** are the two methods that in this thesis have been identified to provide with the adequate strategies to address the **differentiation**, **structuration**, and **stratification** of reality, as well as with the hermeneutic premises of social science. This since these methods recognise and handle in a relevant manner the trans-empirical activity of the actual domain and the non-empirical mechanisms and powers of the real domain. Hence, in this thesis *abduction* is seen to be able to foresee how the external context and actors’ own intentions and interpretations of meaning condition and sanction emotional behaviour, -from the outside. While *Retroduction*, on the other hand, is perceived to be able to reach an understanding of what real causal mechanisms that sustain behaviour –from the inside. This by being able to transcend, in a psychoanalysis-like analysis and questioning of the actors own interpreted intentions and motives for their behaviour. Thus, by being able to recognise both the social and natural construction of reality retroduction contributes to identifying and locating what specific mechanisms in society and what social properties that individuals must possess in order for their behaviour to substantially be what it is.

The figure below demonstrates how the thesis’s theory of reality dispositions the thesis’s sociological understanding of study emotional behaviours.

**Figure 1.3: General Analytical Approach and Methodical Strategy**

**The Theory of reality: The Stage**

Reality’s Transitive dimension

**Theory of Subjectivity:**

*The roles, Actors, and, properties,*

**Analysis**

Deep-structures -Retroduction

**Ontological gap**

**Theory of Society:**

*The coulisse, drama, manuscript, and roles*

**Emotional behaviour**

Surface-structures -Abduction

**Data/facts**

Empirical data

Induction/Deduction

Reality’s transitive dimension