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Bronisław Malinowski's Functional Anthropology and the Marxist Category of Practice

Antropologia funkcjonalna Bronisława Malinowskiego a marksistowska kategoria praktyki

Финкциональная антропология Бронислава Малиновского и маркистская категория практики

The controversies around Malinowski's functional anthropology also concern the philosophical interpretation of the foundations and consequences of his conception. Among the students of the problem there are some who tend to attribute the background of James's pragmatism to Malinowski's views — e.g. E. R. Leach [1]; others who see a mixture of positivism and Hegelianism in the these of classical functionalism — e.g. I. C. Jarvie [2]; and still others who tended to view Malinowski as an empiriocriticist who, while having gone very far beyond that current, derived nonetheless the essentials of his outlook from there — e.g. A. Paluch [3].

Such interpretations can be carried out in many ways: whether by finding similarities and comparing completed theoretical products, as practised by E. R. Leach and I. C. Jarvie; or by analyzing sources, which is *par excellence* a historical, method as can be found in A. Paluch and

[1] E. R. Leach: *The Epistemological Background to Malinowski's Empiricism*, in: *Man and Culture. An Evaluation of the Work of Bronisław Malinowski*, London 1957.

[2] I. C. Jarvie: *The Revolution in Anthropology*, London 1964.

[3] A. Paluch: *The Philosophical Background of Classical Functionalism in Social Anthropology*.

A. Flis.[4] The two approaches have their advantages and disadvantages and the value of neither should be rejected. However, I will adopt the former approach here because it is precisely the one that makes it possible to compare currents which do not have too many historically documented connections and are even opposed to one another. This approach creates the prospect of seeing further consequences of particular theses through a comparative analysis, which could enrich the self-consciousness of the students of both currents. That is the relation of Malinowski's functional anthropology and historical materialism. Because of the multitude of problems taken up by the two currents we shall want to concentrate only on the analysis of the role of one category, that of practice.

SCIENCE AND PRACTICE

One of Malinowski's main fields of interest, along with the theory of culture and methodological problems, was the relation of science towards practice. The problem appears on the three planes of his reflections. A) The first is the understanding of science and other forms of social consciousness like magic, myth, religion etc. as projections of cultural practice, as an extension of ways by which communities, especially primitive, cope with difficulties in realizing human needs. B) The second plane is that of verifying scientific theses. Practice is here a criterion of the validity of scientific theses, expressed in empiricism, partial inductionism, and in the effectiveness of prevision, which is possible with an adoption of definite theses. C) Finally, the third is the instrumental plane. Science, in Malinowski's view, is not a pure product and does not find in itself sufficient motivations for its actions. On the contrary, its ultimate value lies in the practical consequences of cognitive acts. It is thus not only in science alone but first of all in cultural activities that there are sources, criteria and objectives of science.

A) Practice as a Source of Science

In *A Scientific Theory of Culture* Malinowski formulated the following minimum definition of science: "However we may define the word *science* in some philosophical or epistemological system, it is clear that it begins with the use of previous observation for the prediction of the

[4] A. Flis: *Filozofia krakowska początku XX wieku i kształtowanie się poglądów naukowych Malinowskiego*, to appear in *Antropologia funkcjonalna B. Malinowskiego*, Kraków.

future."[5] Thus in his understanding of science Malinowski gives prominence to its prognostic functions. Then he includes in this broad concept of science certain elements of practical activities. "One of the simplest and most fundamental primitive crafts is that of fire-making. In this, over and above the manual ability of the craftsman, we find a definite scientific theory embodied in each performance and in the tribal tradition thereof. Such a tradition had to define in a general, that is abstract, manner the material and form of the two types of wood used. The tradition also had to define the principles of performance, the type of muscular movement, its speed, the capture of the spark, and the nourishment of the flame. The tradition was kept alive not in books nor yet in explicit physical theories. But it implied two pedagogical and theoretical elements. First and foremost, it was embodied in the manual skills of each generation, which, by example and precept, were handed over to the new growing members. Secondly, whether primitive symbolism was accomplished by verbal statement, by significant gesture, or by substantial performance, such as instructions where to find and how to store the materials and produce the forms, such symbolism must have been at work..."[6].

Such a broad understanding of science cannot, however, be admitted. The difference is lost here between a technical activity, which is directly practical, and a theoretical one. It is clear that Man's practical activities were always accompanied by a cognitive action, and that with practical activities becoming more and more complicated, greater requirements had to be met by cognition. Nevertheless, such a cognitive reflection which is directly connected with activity and directly controls it cannot have a scientific value. "(...) the elementary premise of the origin of science — says Z. Cackowski — was the birth of Man's interest in knowledge itself, the interest in the world around, independent of the immediate vital importance of information about this world. Thus, as if a superstructure over the practically useful informative activity of the organism — i.e. pseudocognitive — there began to emerge a purely cognitive activity, separated from fulfilling the immediate practical-regulative functions".[7] If we accepted Malinowski's definition of science given above, any effective regulation occurring in the organic world — e.g. animal behaviour — would have to have features of science. Yet later on he noticed this difficulty and wrote: "The main point I am attempting to make here

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[5] B. Malinowski: *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, Chapel Hill 1944, p. 8.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 8—9.

[7] Z. Cackowski: *Główne pojęcia materializmu historycznego*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 518—519.

is not so much that primitive man has his science, but first, rather, that the scientific attitude is as old as culture, and second, that the minimum definition of science is derived from any pragmatic performance".[8]

It follows that Malinowski identifies the scientific attitude with a rational, effective activity based on real premises. It is still too broad a concept of science or even scientific attitude where the pragmatic provenance of really cognitive activity has been treated too literally, without which, certainly, no pragmatic performance would be possible. A certain amount of real cognition is a condition of providing a minimum indispensable to maintain the existence of a primitive community but it is difficult to regard this as scientific attitude. Apart from the above reservations, it is a fact that Malinowski fully recognizes the pragmatic spheres of social life as the source of science, even to the point of exaggeration.

B) Practice as a Criterion of Validity of Knowledge

At this point we should go back to Malinowski's doctoral dissertation — *On the Principle of Economy of Thinking* — written at the Jagiellonian University under K. Pawlicki's supervision, which showed in its content the clear impact of the empiriocriticism of Mach and Avenarius. One of the problems of the dissertation is a discussion of the value of scientific theses. Says A. Paluch: "(...) the cognition by man of the reality around him, expressed whether in science, or arts, or in technical skills, is the result of pragmatic action and serves it (...) Such views can already be found in Malinowski's dissertation who saw in practical applications the criterion which differentiated science from a religious interpretation". Practical utility is "the decisive criterion of the value of strictly scientific research" and in the last resort a verification of scientific theses is the activity of man, who confronts himself with the external world".[9] It is man's confrontation with the environment that underlies science which is nothing but a "form of collective life". From this standpoint science does not differ in any significant way from other types of human activity based on experience and pragmatic recognition of reality.[10]

This too narrowly pragmatic formulation of science becomes more understandable in the global perspective, in longer time spans. Although we always stress a certain autonomy of science versus practice, we should realize that this autonomy is relative. Nonetheless, it appears that we

[8] Malinowski: *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[9] Paluch: *op. cit.*
[10] Paluch: *op. cit.*

cannot entirely reduce science to mere extension of practice and regard practical utility as the only criterion of the value of science. Z. Cackowski presents this problem in his conception of "redundant knowledge". "Man's activity", says Cackowski, "entails a production of certain redundance, not only in the sphere of material culture. This practical redundance (...) is also created in the field of cognitive activity. With respect to motives, man's cognitive dispositions, and to the manner in which the gained knowledge is used two aspects of human cognitive activity can be distinguished (...). First, pragmatic cognition, secondly, pure cognition. In the process of pragmatic cognitive activity the point is the accumulation of vital information, that is the information without which the life, growth, and security of the active subject, whether individual or collective, are in danger" [11] Cackowski goes on to stress that the degree of theoretical complication of pragmatic knowledge is not a criterion which would distinguish it from pure knowledge. At present pragmatic knowledge "must often be of a highly theoretical character". The criteria, however, are "(...) the sources of dynamics of pure cognition, independent of practical needs, and the lack of current (but only currently visible) possibilities and needs for the practical application of results of such cognition." [12]

The above distinction between practical knowledge and practically redundant or pure knowledge does not come from an all-embracing view of science as a closed element of social consciousness but is the effect of viewing science as a field of social life in constant development. It is not practical sources of dynamics that, in this view, give shape to evolution of science. Equally indispensable are its autodynamisms, without which most probably even practical knowledge would cease to develop. "The practical redundance of purely cognitive activity is not absolute: this redundance is relative" [13].

If we now compare the foregoing two standpoints linking up science with practice, then it follows that Malinowski understands science only in the first sense formulated by Z. Cackowski, that is as practical knowledge, while entirely disregarding the autonomous sphere of its dynamisms. Therefore the accusation of a narrowly pragmatic approach to science seems to be well-grounded. Another point is that Malinowski, while not analyzing science itself but seeing it through the perspective of whole culture, may have indeed disregarded its internal structure, its autonomous dynamisms and concentrated only on the functions of

[11] Z. Cackowski: *Człowiek jako przedmiot działania praktycznego i poznawczego*, Warszawa 1979, p. 335.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 335—336.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 337.

science in relation to other elements of culture, and it is practical functions of knowledge that come into prominence at this point. Hence the accusation of narrow pragmatism would turn into a mere accusation of one-sided and external look upon science.

In his further consideration of the principles of validity of scientific theses Malinowski contends that wherever we deal with science "we find, first and foremost, the isolation of the real and relevant factors in a given process. The reality and relevancy of these factors are discovered by observation or experiment, which establishes their permanent recurrence. Constant empirical verification, as well as the original founding of scientific theory and experience are obviously of the very essence of science. A theory which fails must be amended by discovering why it has failed. Incessant cross-fertilization of experience and principles is, therefore, indispensable. Science really begins when general principles have to be put to the test of fact, and when practical problems and theoretical relations of relevant factors are used to manipulate reality in human action. The minimum definition of science, therefore, implies invariably the existence of general laws, a field for experiment or observation, and last but not least, a control of academic discourse by practical application."[14] Practice — as clearly follows from the above — is for Malinowski the ultimate criterion of validity of scientific theses. This is not just a declaration on his part, but has been corroborated by his work. Numerous objections were even raised against his undue care about complete material evidence for his theses and too much caution in formulating general conclusions.

C) Practice as the Ultimate Goal of Science

Science has sense when it is useful, insisted Malinowski, and its utility stems from its prognostic abilities which permit more effective, conscious, purposeful — in short — more humanized action. Departing from the non-political character of science Malinowski asked: "Shall we, therefore, mix politics with science? In one way, decidedly 'yes', because if knowledge gives foresight and foresight means power, it is a universal stultification of scientific results to insist that they can never be useful or used by those who have influence"[15]. Knowledge has thus clearly practical objectives. It can also influence politics and make it more humanized. By his studies of colonial populations Malinowski undoubtedly

[14] Malinowski: *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[15] B. Malinowski: *The Dynamics of Culture Change. An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa*, New Haven 1961 p. 4.

contributed to some relaxation of their situation through a theoretical justification of elements of the "indirect rule". It is for those practical objectives that Malinowski often abandoned historical analyses and reconstructions of previous states, while bringing to the foreground the problem of analysis of current states. "The functionalist is primarily interested in how institutions work, what they achieve, and how their various factors are related to one another. This in a way also implies the question of how institutions can be transformed".[16] In his analysis of cultural change he wrote: "To the student of culture change what really matters is not the objectively true past, scientifically reconstructed and all-important to the antiquarian, but the psychological reality of today. The former is an order of events dead and buried, even to the length of having disappeared from men's memories; the latter is a powerful psychological force determing the present-day behaviour of the Native African. People are swayed by errors of what they feel and not by the truth which they ignore."[17]

All those statements by Malinowski simply suggest his utilitarian treatment of science which is to perform only practical-cognitive functions, which stresses his one-sided outlook on science once again. But do we not really have to do here with some of James' pragmatism as E. R. Leach would have it?[18] Is this perhaps activism in broad sense, which understands science as a real force in its trend towards conscious transformation of reality, characteristic for example of historical materialism? If we accept the former solution, the only criterion of rationality of scientific theses would be their practical efficacy. The only one but the ultimate! Yet how can we reconcile this approach with Malinowski's endeavour to find out and determine the laws governing the current reality? He employed for this purpose detailed empirical investigations, complete material evidence for final theoretical generalizations and the observance of postulates of scientific accuracy. The discovery of mechanism governing culture is the main goal of the functional anthropologist. This is, in other words, the determination of conditions of human action and the boundaries within which this action is possible. It is only on the basis of such knowledge that reality can be transformed, provided the knowledge is valuable, that is true. The value of knowledge (science) is therefore a premise for effective action, not its effect. Hence a pragmatic interpretation of Malinowski's conception does not seem at this point justified. "Today we very much need to establish the balance between the hypertrophied influence of natural science and its applica-

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[18] E. R. Leach: *op. cit.*

tions on the one hand, and the backwardness of social science, with the constant impotence of social engineering, on the other. The easy-going flippancy of many a humanist and historian concerning the scientific nature of his pursuits is not merely epistemologically despicable, but in a way immoral, in the pragmatic sense. History and sociology, as well as economics and jurisprudence, must lay their foundations carefully, consciously and deliberately, on the bedrock of scientific method. Social science must develop into the power of mind used for the control of mechanical power." [19]

Thus an appearance of utilitarism or pragmatism in his treatment of science stems rather from Malinowski's conviction of the previous weakness of the humanisties and from his attempts to deepen the links of this discipline with practice as the ultimate goal of research activity. We know from elsewhere that "purely cognitive reflection" occurred many times in Malinowski's passion for perfectionist descriptions and analyses and in his development of methodological self-consciousness of cultural anthropology, by incorporating functionalist methodology into its tradition.

PRACTICAL INSTRUMENTAL CHARACTER OF CULTURE

In his reflection on culture as a whole and in the analysis of its individual elements, Malinowski never forgets that these are not autonomous phenomena that can be explained by themselves. Malinowski views each event in close connection with other phenomena of that culture, in connection with the human organism and the environment of a given culture. Contrary to earlier ethnologists, who analysed selected elements of culture, he holds that only an analysis of the whole, a comprehensive grasp of all conditions of an event can produce a cognitively effective result.

Not all cultural phenomena are equally treated by Malinowski. He certainly attaches greater importance to that layer of culture which immediately conditions the organic survival of species, which is a necessary premise to preserve and develop all other spheres of culture. Malinowski is also aware of the dynamic character of relationships obtaining between the organism, culture, and the environment. These dynamisms do not, however, act one way. While admitting that culture, a huge apparatus ultimately serving to satisfy human needs, functions as a mediator between the organism and its environment, Malinowski stresses at the same time that culture itself is a source of qualitatively

[19] Malinowski: *A Scientific Theory of Culture...*, p. 42.

new dynamisms directed at transforming and developing the structure of human organic needs as well as producing new types of needs.

These assumptions imply a stratified conception of culture. Particular strata, even as embryos, occur in every culture, and although they have a different degree of development at various stages of cultural development, it need not equivocally decide on the superiority of some cultures over others. For such a comparison, we would have to establish additionally how the development of individual strata results from the specificity of conditions in which a given culture functions. We shall further try to consider a functional model of culture with mainly a methodological role.

The first step towards a description of the functional model of culture will be to indicate its natural roots. The are: the human *organism* determined by biological regularities and deeply rooted in Nature, on the one hand, and on the other, the environment in which the organism functions, and where the laws of Nature also obtain. These are certainly extra-cultural elements — natural but nonetheless culture-forming. Without considering them, there is no point in talking about culture. Between the organism and its environment there is an exchange of energy, indispensable for the existence of the latter. This exchange takes place in so much as the activity of the organism, its intensity, is sufficient to maintain a relative balance between itself and the environment. The limit of that situation is a state in which, although the organism has achieved maximum activity, it is not able to maintain balance, to cause up by the organism and not obtained from the environment — the immediate consequence of which will be the death of the organism. Situations that occur in an "easy" environment do not mobilize the organism to maximum activity because its very low consumption of energy can satisfy all its needs for energy. The organism existing in such an environment becomes stabilized on a certain level of balance until specified changes in either element of the relationship (organism or environment) disturb that balance.

In a "difficult" environment, especially where changes occur relatively frequently, the organism is mobilized to more and more intensified and diversified activity, which has a chance to mobilize as many potential abilities as possible or produce qualitatively new reactions essential in maintaining the balance with the environment that is vital for the organism's survival. Most probably it is in such an environment that the boundaries of Nature were once transcended. Striving to satisfy its biological needs or maintaining the energy balance of the organism and its environment, the active organic being begins to produce a new, artificial environment which is expressed in c u l t u r a l r e s p o n s e s

directed at the natural environment (e.g. the use of the first tools, construction of shelter, clothing). In this way the relationship between the organic being and the environment becomes enriched and more mediated. "Human beings are an animal species", says Malinowski, "They are subject to elemental conditions which have to be fulfilled so that individuals may survive, the race continue and organisms one and all be maintained in working order. Again, in his whole outfit of artifacts and his ability to produce them and to appreciate them, man creates a secondary environment." [20] And further: "This environment, which is neither more nor less than culture itself, has to be permanently reproduced, maintained and managed".[21] Elsewhere we also find the following: "To the functionalist, culture, that is, the whole body of implements, the charters of its social groups, human ideas, beliefs, and customs, constitutes a vast apparatus by which man is put in a position the better to cope with the concrete, specific problems which face him in his adaptation to his environment in the course of the satisfaction of his needs. It has to be accepted as an axiom that human beings have to be nourished; that they have to reproduce; that they must be provided with shelter, personal comforts, the elements of cleanliness, a suitable range of temperature. Anthropological theory must take its stand on biological fact. After all, human beings are an animal species. They have to conform to the elementary conditions which have to be fulfilled so that the race may continue, the individual may survive, and the organism be maintained in its working order." [22] The last statement about m a n c o n f o r m i n g t o c o n d i t i o n s should be interpreted in a rather loose way — it should also include the fact of man's transformation of the environment, the fact of his active attitude.

Cultural responses are stimulated by o r g a n i c n e e d s and directed at the transformation of natural environment in such a way that exchange of energy between the environment and the organism should be of maximum advantage to the latter. This secondary environment (culture) is not, however, entirely instrumental with respect to the biological needs of the organism. It has its autodynamics, which makes the active being widen his current system of needs to cover with it not only the ultimate values — biologically essential, but also instrumental values (e.g. the need for a mace, bow, knife, fire etc.). The preservation and relative independence of the new needs — the needs of cultural necessities — permits us to talk of the emergence of another stratum — strictly cultural. There we have to do with a new type of c u l t u r e u n i v e r s a l s —

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[22] M a l i n o w s k i: *The Dynamics of Culture Change...*, p. 42.

or certain regularities of activity specific for each culture and expressed on this level with typical cultural responses. Malinowski enumerates the following: commissariat, kinship, shelter, protection, activities, training, and hygiene. The equivalents of these universals on the previous, natural level are the basic laws of nature and biological needs of the organism. The student of culture must be aware of such thing although he need not analyze them, leaving this to natural scientists.

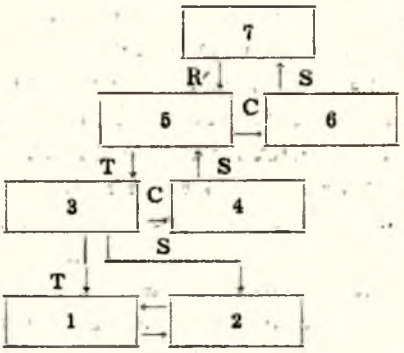
The needs of cultural necessities, strenthened and to some degree emancipated from their previous dependence of biological needs, stimulate definite instrumental imperatives. These are to transform cultural responses hitherto spontaneous and rather accidental into organized wholes. The instrumental imperative must therefore be closely tied up with now emerging integrative needs. That stratum of culture where universals are instrumental imperatives (economics, social control, education, political organization) forms a basis for the emregence of central elements of culture, which are social institutions. They are stimulated by integrative needs, derivative to cultural needs, but to a degree emancipated. The activity of social institutions is directly aimed at the realization of instrumental imperatives. Social institutions constituting the last stratum of culure also have a universal character. This stratum completes the description of the anatomy of the life of culture and along with the stratum of instrumental imperatives and integrative needs it forms an expanded secondary environment. In analyzing this description we must remember that all its elements occur at the same time and it was not Malinowski's intention to reconstruct the history of how individual strata emerged.

DESCRIPTION OF SCHEME

Elements of the Scheme: 1. natural environment 2. basic needs (metabolism, reproduction, bodily comforts, safety, movement, growth, health)[23] 3. cultural responses (commissariat, kinship, shelter, protection, activities, training, hygiene)[24] 4. derived needs (for implements and consumers' goods, to maintain some order in technical, customary, legal, and moral spheres, the need for education, for a definition of the range of authority)[25] 5. instrumental imperatives (economics, social control, education, political organization) 6. integrative needs (integrating the behaviour of the groups, integration inside of the so-called

[23] Malinowski: *A Scientific Theory of Culture...*, p. 91.
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

"life-sequences", symbol's systems). 7. cultural institution or "(...) groups of people united for the pursuit of a simple or complex activity; always in possession of a material endowment and a technical outfit; organized on a definite legal or customary charter, linguistically formulated in myth, legend, rule, and maxim, and trained or prepared for the carrying out of its task." [26]



Relations in the Scheme: E — exchange of energy; S — stimulation; C — causation; R — realization; T — transformation, change.

Cultural strata: I. pre-cultural stratum — relations obtaining therein have a culture-forming character. Laws of Nature are universals carry out comparative investigations on various cultures.[27]
here; II. the stratum of immediate cultural responses, which play the part of universals; III and IV strata where there is organization of social life and which form an expanded secondary cultural environment. Instrumental imperatives and institutions with their types function as universals here. The distinction of those universals makes it possible to

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In the foregoing discussion three spheres can be distinguished: α the sphere of natural environment, β the sphere of needs which covers basic needs, derived needs, and integrative needs. ν the sphere of artificial environment consisting of cultural responses, instrumental imperatives, and social institutions. The analysis of each sphere requires a different theory. These are: theories of natural sciences, theories of needs, and theories of

[26] Malinowski: *The Dynamics of Culture Change...*, p. 50.

[27] Malinowski: *A Scientific Theory of Culture...*, p. 39. By universals I mean factors occuring in every culture.

organized action, respectively. It appears, however, that the essence of Malinowski's functionalism is a conviction that in order to apply adequately specific theories of needs or of action, these must contain general statements concerning the relationship of the domain of a given theory to the other two domains. This assumption is supposed to guarantee a total and comprehensive picture of culture, which will on the one hand show the specificity, separateness and qualitative otherness of culture against the world of nature, while on the other hand, it will not allow us to forget a number of genetic and current connections that take place between culture and its natural background. "We shall attempt to show that a theory can be developed in which the basic needs and their cultural satisfaction can be linked up with the derivation of new cultural needs; that these new needs impose upon man and society a secondary type of determinism" and Malinowski goes on "The analysis (...), in which we attempt to define the relation between a cultural performance and a human need, basic or derived, may be termed functional. For function cannot be defined in any other way than the satisfaction of a need by an activity in which human beings cooperate, use artifacts, and consume goods." [28]

As we have shown, in the instrumental understanding of culture the category of action is given prominence. Culture is here understood as a vast apparatus that in general realizes the existing human needs and generates new ones. It grows out of simple actions aimed at the preservation of organic life as their extension and leads to the preservation and development of human life in its various manifestations. Culture is thus derived from practice in broad sense, it is a manifestation of practice and can be reduced to it.

PRACTICE AS A CATEGORY OF DEGREE

With the above broad sense of practice we could question the distinction of this category which is in fact identified here with the category of action. It is dubious, though, whether Malinowski indeed employs such a diversified concept of practice where both the immediate production activities and for example religious practice lie side by side. An illustration of the diversified concept of practice is Malinowski's conception of myth, magic, and religion.

In all human actions Malinowski distinguishes two types: action based on magical and religious images and action based on the

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 38—39.

"scientific attitude" discussed earlier. The first type of action covers rites, rules of conduct, and symbolic actions. The other type is practical-vital action which is to transform the natural environment and thereby to preserve the existence of a group.[29]

The two types of action co-exist under such conditions as when the result of human action cannot be fully predicted and the action faces singular difficulties. Malinowski demonstrates this on the example of Trobriander gardening. "(...) Thus there is a clear-cut division: there is first the well-known set of conditions, the natural course of growth, as well as the ordinary pests and dangers to be warded off by fencing and weeding. On the other hand there is a domain of the unaccountable and adverse influences, as well as the great unearned increment of fortunate coincidence. The first conditions are coped with by knowledge, the second by magic." [30]

Thus for Malinowski, religion and magic are forms of practice, contrary to science, because he measures the value of these phenomena with the possibilities of their effective application. Nevertheless, practice or, to be precise, deficiencies in practical activity are the source of those phenomena. Science, on the other hand, is an element of practice because the development of practical forms of transforming the reality would not be possible without it. Moreover, without science or even scientific attitude, communities would not be able to preserve their existence. "Were the scientific attitude and the valuation of it to become extinct even for one generation in a primitive community, such a community would either lapse into an animal status or, more likely, become extinct." [31]

In Malinowski's view practice is therefore a category of degree. The immediate production activities are definitely of a practical character. Science, which is connected with them, is also a form of practice for him. Malinowski can treat it like that on account of his global, external understanding of science even though he does not analyze the problems which we termed after Cackowski as "redundant knowledge". Magic, derived from practice and closely tied up with it, realizes practical function only in part, by affecting the participants of practical acts, but generally it is an expression of the relative impotence of man who encounters difficulties in his activity. Finally, religion is the "embodiment of hopelessness" and, though it stems from practice i.e. practical difficulties and can produce certain practical effects, in itself it is decidedly not practice.[32]

[29] K. Judenko: *Bronisław Malinowski*, in: *Euhemer*, No. 4, 1959, p. 401.

[30] B. Malinowski: *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, printed by The Free Press, 1954, p. 29.

[31] Malinowski: *A Scientific Theory of Culture...*, p. 10.

[32] See Z. Czarnecki: *Filozoficzny rodowód marksistowskiej teorii religii*,

The presented understanding of practice is close to historical materialism. The derivation of cultural phenomena from the practice of social life is doubtlessly that trait of historical materialism which distinguishes Marxism in a very clear-cut way from the philosophical reflection of classical German idealism which immediately preceded Marx's and Engels' view, as well as from Feuerbach who still thought in terms of the Renaissance.

Marx expressed most briefly his attitude towards the contemplative philosophical tradition in theses I and XI on Feuerbach.[33] Thesis I stipulates that the only way to understand the real world is to conceive it not only as the object of human cognition but, first and foremost, to demonstrate that it is also the object of human activity, which is the key to and the necessary condition of all cognitive activity. Human activity itself also has an objective character, which is distinctly expressed by the unity of cognitive process and activity. Thesis XI, also based on the conviction of the unity of cognition and activity, lays emphasis on the fact that some theoretical problems can be continued only in practical solutions, while most attempts of theoretical solutions are doomed to fail. Only practice can remove the barriers which make it impossible for theory to develop further. In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engles stress that the basic premise of their conception is constitution by the effects of the analysis of the "whole sensous world that there is now" and which is a product of all human generations creating and transforming reality. "The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity." "(...) the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence they are indirectly producing their actual material life"[34]. In discussing this passage T. Jaroszewski

Warszawa 1971, p. 323. Malinowski's conception is basically identical with that of historical materialism, where religion is said to be "the ideal and mystified result of human practice realized in a situation when man does not yet control the conditions and product of his activity" and (...) "an unintended product of man's productive activity".

[33] K. Marx: *Theses on Feuerbach* in: K. Marx, F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Moscow 1977, vol. 1, pp. 5—7.

[34] K. Marx, F. Engels: *German Ideology*, in: Marx, Engels: *Selected Works*, vol. 1, pp. 19—20.

adds: "They can produce it only collectively, by co-operating and exchanging products of their work with one another" [35]. The premises of the Marxist conception can thus be reduced to the following: 1. man transforms his environment according to his dynamic needs; 2. the cognition of reality is a function of activity; 3. by changing the reality and themselves men produce history; 4. the foundation of social life is production; 5. all problems which men face have a practical character. Also, the unity of theory and practice is stressed, as two sides of the same process, although it is admitted that practice ultimately defines theory. The basic task of the broadly conceived humanities, therefore, is t h e a n a l y s i s o f t h e m a t e r i a l a c t i v i t y o f m e n, t h a t i s p r a c t i c e. This is the outline of the Marxist conception of practice in brief. This does not mean that it does not give rise to a number of problems. Defining the range of this category is especially difficult. Divergent views on the problem range from the conception of practice as mere material productive and social activity, to a view which regards the whole of human existence as practice.[36]

As could be seen, Malinowski's conception fulfilled nearly all postulates of the Marxist conception. Moreover, on the basis of his theory and vast empirical material Malinowski formulates concrete directives for research, which co-form his functional method.[37] Malinowski's attitude towards historical materialism is the following, "The economist (...) sometimes is apt to underrate the fact that while systems of production and of property do unquestionably determine the whole range of manifestations of human life, they in turn are determined by systems of knowledge and of ethics. In other words, the extreme Marxian position, which would regard the economic organization of a system as the final determinant of culture, seems to underestimate two cardinal points (...): first, the concept of charter, by which we find that any system of production depends upon the knowledge, the standard of living defined by the whole range of cultural factors, and the system of law and political power; second, the concept of function by which we see that distribution and consumption are as much dependent upon the total character of a culture as on the productive organization itself. In other words, the analysis here propounded (i.e. functional analysis — K. B.) would definitely urge that within each specific universe of discourse of any social discipline, a considerable degree of cross-fertilization with other aspects of cultural

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[35] T. J a r o s z e w s k i: *Rozważania o praktyce*, Warszawa 1974, pp. 97—98.

[36] See *Ibid.*, pp. 96—128.

[37] Cf. K. B r o z i: *Metoda funkcjonalna Bronisława Malinowskiego w badaniu zjawisk społeczno kulturowych*, "Studia Filologiczne", 11, 1979.

reality ought to be practiced, in order to avoid hypostasis and a search for first or true causes." [38]

At the time of sharp polemics historical materialism did indeed raise and give undue prominence to the economic element, which Engels himself admitted in the famous letter to J. Bloch.[39] Deviations towards economism also took place at a later time. It is with such historical materialism that Malinowski disagress. Nonetheless, from the present-day standpoint we cannot speak of fundamnetal divergances between Marxism and functionalism with respect to the question under discussion. Malinowski's objections concern economism only. The two conceptions are on the whole founded on two common premises: activism and materialism. Activism is directly connected here with the actual application of the category of practice by the two trends. Materialism stems from the adoption of a directed interpretation of phenomena: from practice to consciousness, but not directly and equivocally, yet, as Engels holds, ultimately. In such a conception, Malinowski's functionalism is best defined by F. Gross's words: "The essence of Malinowski's conception is — in short — a study of human creativity".[40]

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule autor przedstawia trzy zagadnienia. Po pierwsze relację nauki i praktyki w koncepcji Malinowskiego. Po drugie funkcjonalną koncepcję kultury i jej instrumentalny charakter. Po trzecie porównanie funkcjonalistycznej interpretacji kategorii praktyki w badaniach antropologicznych z osiągnięciami materializmu historycznego.

W części pierwszej praktyka jest przedstawiona jako źródło, kryterium ważności i cel nauki. Bliższa analiza koncepcji Malinowskiego pozwala stwierdzić, że u jej podstaw leży szeroko pojęty aktywizm, ujmujący naukę jako realną siłę w dążeniu do świadomego przekształcania rzeczywistości, tak charakterystyczny dla materializmu historycznego.

W części drugiej po przedstawieniu synchronicznego modelu kultury, autor wyróżnia trzy elementarne obszary mające znaczenie dla badań nad kulturą, wiążąc ich analizę kolejno z 1) teorią nauk przyrodniczych, 2) teorią potrzeb i 3) teorią zorganizowanego działania. Wynika stąd sugestia, że istotą funkcjonalizmu Malinowskiego jest przekonanie, że aby właściwie można było zawierać twierdzenia ogólne, dotyczące stosunku obszaru, na którym dana teoria obowiązuje, do pozostałych dwóch obszarów.

W części trzeciej praktyka przedstawiona jest jako kategoria stopniowalna, określająca różne poziomy twórczości kulturowej. Zestawienie tej koncepcji z przesłankami materializmu historycznego Marksa i Engelsa, pozwala stwierdzić zasad-

[38] Malinowski: *A Scientific Theory of Culture...*, p. 49—50.

[39] F. Engels: *Letter to J. Bloch, 21—22* September 1890, in: Marx, Engels: *Selected Works*, vol. 2, p. 481.

niczą niesprzeczność obu tych koncepcji opartych na aktywiźmie i materialiźmie. W tym ujęciu funkcjonalizm Malinowskiego pojawia się jako studium twórczości ludzkiej.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье автор представляет три проблемы. Во-первых, реляцию науки и практики в концепции Малиновского. Во-вторых, функциональную концепцию культуры и ее инструментальный характер. В-третьих, сравнение функционалистической интерпретации категории практики в антропологических исследованиях с достижениями исторического материализма.

В первой части практика представлена как источник, критерий важности и цель науки. Ближайший анализ концпции Малиновского позволяет установить, что у ее основ лежит широко понимаемая активность, трактующая науку как реальную силу в стремлении к сознательному преобразованию действительности, характерная для исторического материализма.

В другой части автор, представив синхроническую модель культуры, выделяет три элементарные области, имеющие значение для исследований над культурой, связывая их по очереди с I. теорией естественных наук, 2. теорией потребностей и 3. теорией организованного действия. Отсюда следует мысль, что существом функционализма Малиновского является убеждение, что для правильного применения теории потребностей или теории действия они должны содержать общие утверждения, касающиеся отношения области, в которой действует данная теория, к двум остальным областям.

В третьей части практика представлена как ступенчатая категория, определяющая различные уровни культурной деятельности. Сопоставление этой концепции с предпосылками исторического материализма Маркса и Энгельса позволяет установить, что обе эти концепции, опирающиеся на активности и материализме, в принципе, не противоречат друг другу. В этом плане функционализм Малиновского представляет собой изучение человеческого творчества.