

STUDIES IN SYMBOLIC INTERACTION

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STUDIES IN SYMBOLIC INTERACTION VOLUME 30

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SOCIAL SYMBOLISM: FORMS AND FUNCTIONS – A PRAGMATIST PERSPECTIVE

Elżbieta Hałas

ABSTRACT

Social theory contains contributions related to the processes of semiosis. Between the subjective experience of intentional meanings and objectified structure of meanings there is a sphere of meaningful interactions and collective actions. Arguments are presented that it is possible to integrate symbolic interactionist orientation and Durkheimian tradition in the study of social symbolism in the perspective of collective action approach and pragmatism. That allows going beyond the cognitive limitations inherited from phenomenological view on symbolism as manifested in the concepts of P. Berger and T. Luckmann about the social construction of reality. A model for a multidimensional analysis of social symbolism and its functions is proposed.

PROBLEMS OF SYMBOLIZATION

There is no satisfactory theory of social symbolism.¹ According to Raymond Boudon and Bourricaud (1982, p. 547) the main reasons are the diametrical differences in understanding symbolism. On the one hand,

a symbol refers to what is imagined, straying from reality, and on the other hand, a symbol is linked to the cognitive code provided by culture.² In the classical study of Ernst Cassirer, these two contrary tendencies are constitutive for the symbolization process. Jürgen Habermas explores that conceptual legacy where the symbolic meanings extend between the meaningful images and pure cognitive meanings (Habermas, 2001, p. 18). This ambiguity is also resembled in the discussion whether symbolic is distinct from or identical to semiotics.

Another problem is that in human sciences the study of symbolization content, or interpretation of meanings has overwhelmed the studies of symbolic forms and symbolization functions (Duncan, 1968, p. 7). In sociology, Émile Durkheim's thesis that social facts are actually symbolic still remains to be worked out in detail in terms of symbolic forms and functions; although, today we know much more about; for instance, mutual dependencies between power relations and symbolic actions in society (Cohen, 1976).

Some decades ago, in his text *Symbol, Reality and Society* (1962),³ Alfred Schutz summarized briefly the most important questions raised in studies of symbolization. One could refer to more contemporary authors, like Clifford Geertz or Mary Douglas, than those quoted by Schutz, but his accurate formulation of the pervading confusion over four fundamental questions is still valid.

There is a continuous debate on:

- various definitions of "sign" and "symbol";
- different ways of understanding the process of symbolization;
- differing views on the relation between the signifying and the signified, or symbol and meaning;
- various concepts of intersubjectivity of signs and symbols.

Schutz's suggestion to study signs in relation to the reality of everyday life, which is characterized phenomenologically and in Weberian terms as motives of acting actors; and, to refer symbols to other realities transcending everyday life, is difficult to uphold; although, it has proliferated in the social sciences till today. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann have done a lot in favor of that view. It can be methodologically useful in some cases of phenomenological analysis of creative experience; but, it is barely useful for a social scientist interested in a phenomenon of an individual transcended by society and not in his personal experience of transcendence. The former is immanently present in the experience of everyday group life. Schutz rightly

points out that individuals experience society, a group, or a community by means of symbols (Schutz, 1962, p. 292).

Nonetheless the concepts of Schutz will not be discussed here in detail except for a very brief account of different theories of signification and symbolic relations and for pointing out the inconsistency in his concept of signs and symbols originating in the idea of exclusion of symbols from a province governed by the pragmatic motive. However, it is worth pointing out that fortunately Schutz was not able to distance himself completely from the pragmatic perspective. He ascertained, naturally, that when one tries to single out the meaning common to different theories of signification and symbolic relations, one comes down to an elementary statement that "the object, fact, or event, called sign or symbol refers to something other than itself" (Schutz, 1962, p. 294).⁴ He was inclined to believe that symbols have conventional character and the relation between a symbol and its meaning is arbitrary.⁵ Therefore, Schutz could not have but noticed that the concept of convention assumes the existence of a society and communication for which those conventions are established. It belongs to the pragmatic level, the level of communicative action. Alas, as a social phenomenologist, Schutz does not embark on the study of social creation of meanings in communication processes; but, he investigates the structures of commonsense knowledge.

Contrary to Schutz, who – as I have shown – entangled himself into a contradiction narrowing the understanding of symbols to significations transcending everyday experience; and, following the tradition of symbolic interactionism, the term symbol will be used here in a very broad sense. Ernst Cassirer (1944, pp. 32–35), Suzanne K. Langer (1942), and Raymond Firth (1973), among others, looked at it in a similar way. The symbol is a part of the human world of meanings as a vehicle for concepts of objects of actions that is why symbols have only a functional value. Unlike indications and signals (signs), symbols do not refer to things in some constant way; they are variable and equivocal, subject to interpretation.⁶ Contrary to Schutz, and according to symbolic interactionist orientation, symbolic relations are not to be considered as objects of knowledge; but, as a part of a system of action. Such, roughly characterized, was the approach of George H. Mead and Charles Morris.

Among questions put forward sometime ago by Schutz in his pertinent study, *Symbol, Reality and Society*, there is one of a fundamental nature and it is particularly important for the sociologist: Does the symbol produce the society and the community, or is it produced by society? Schutz goes beyond this oversimplified alternative and drives at the possibility of complex,

mutual relations between society and a system of symbols, where symbols, being produced in society, influence its structure (Schutz, 1962, p. 292).

Such an objective, relational, and systemic perspective, as opposed to the point of view of the individual actor who experiences meanings, when applied consistently to research on social symbolism leads to an unveiling of the complex structure of what Pierre Bourdieu calls a social symbolic system (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 237). Instead, the followers of Schutz – Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1973) – eliminating the distinction between culture and the structure of society (Heiskala, 2003, p. 278) or cultural system and socio-cultural interactions (Archer, 1996, p. 7) needlessly introduced into social theory, concentrated their attention only on one aspect of this process: social production of symbolic meanings of reality. This assumption is contained in the second part of the question – alternative posed above – whether the symbol is produced by society. The assumption of the first clause of that question – whether the symbol produces the society, points to the social labor of symbols in the construction of society. This issue implicates the symbolic constitution of society which, certainly, has not been completely ignored in sociological theory; but, it requires a much more systematic elaboration.

Risto Heiskala (2003, p. 279) suggests that Berger and Luckmann's work lacks such a semiotic approach. It seems rather that their work – very important to the sociology of the twentieth century – was negatively influenced by the already signaled, particular and narrow understanding of symbolism introduced by Schutz, and later adopted in their conception of symbolic universum.⁷ Thus, consequently, a symbolic universum refers not only to the most fundamental reality of human action; but also to other realities transcending everyday experience and legitimizing the existing social practices.⁸ Berger and Luckmann, like Schutz, and following the premises of phenomenological philosophy, have been attracted by the cognitive dimension of symbolism and the way it infuses reality with the comprehensive meaning or sense.

SYMBOLIZATION AND INTERACTION

Sociological theory (grosso modo it is possible to use singular form here) is full of inquiries and contributions related to the processes of semiosis – creating and functioning of meanings. Grouping them in only two orientations (Heiskala, 2003) – functionalism and phenomenology – neglects at least the third way marked by symbolic interactionist orientation based

on pragmatism as a philosophy of action and consciousness that takes the problem solving in social conduct as its starting point (Joas, 1993, pp. 18–24). In this perspective, meanings are products of social acts that are, as explicated by Robert S. Perinbanayagam, signifying acts. "Signifying is then the beginning of social acts, and meanings are the products of social acts, and when one signifies, one is in essence anticipating a meaning to emerge" (Perinbanayagam, 1985, p. 10).

Between the subjective experience of intentional, intersubjective meanings of phenomenologists and objectified structures of meanings of functionalists, there is a sphere of meaningful interactions and collective actions of various degree of organization. In this problematic context, one can see more sharply the relevance of the way of theorizing grounded in symbolic interactionism as developed by Anselm Strauss. He was reluctant to isolate this orientation as a distinct paradigm and regarded social symbolism not only as a bridge between different sociological orientations, but also as an interdisciplinary platform. He concludes his early book *Mirrors and Masks: The Search for Identity* (1969) with two important points. They are based on the conviction that the interactionist perspective can be useful in many, variegated fields of research. First, it connects the symbolic perspective with research of social organization. Second, symbolic perspective could lead to the fusion of various theoretical approaches, creating new cognitive possibilities (Strauss, 1969, p. 178). As it takes place now, it is too early to announce the heuristic exhaustion of this orientation (Fine, 1993, pp. 61–87).

Strauss's work confirms that George H. Mead's idea⁹ of adopting social processes of collective action as a starting point for further research is methodologically promising for sociology (Strauss, 1991, p. 3, 4). In his last book, *Continual Permutations of Action* (1993), he declares himself in favor of collective action and symbolic perspective which turns out to attract research of social movements and, more broadly, of the "moving society" with the change as its main feature. However, much earlier, already in the last chapter of *Mirrors and Masks*, entitled *Membership and History*, we find ideas delineating the symbolic interactionist perspective on collective action (Strauss, 1969, p. 148 ff). Strauss's concepts are not outstandingly innovative, but they accurately and precisely summarize research assumptions of symbolic interactionists and they deserve attentive reflection. The theses articulated by Strauss can be grouped into four categories: statements on group communication; statements on group origin and variability of meanings; statements on interrelation of individual and group actions in communication; and statements on social worlds created in communicative actions.

Theses related to communication and the foundation of the group clarify that communicative action is a collective process. Basically the life of a group is organized around communication. Communication ultimately consists not only in transmitting ideas between human minds; but also, it determines shared, collective meanings. More profoundly, groups exist only on the grounds of common symbolization of their members.

Also theses concerning origins and variability of meanings place the process of their formation and change at a social or collective level. Primarily, terminology (shared meanings) originates in community actions and makes them possible. Next, symbols are pregnant with possibilities of convergence and divergence when in use. Further, interrelations of individual and group actions are anchored to communication. In particular, group members are able to participate in various coordinated actions because they share a common terminology. In sum, individual lines of convergence turn out to be a part of a broader, collective communicative action.

Social worlds are created in communicative action. Shared perspectives in communicative action produce social worlds. Social worlds are embedded in a temporal matrix (history, heritage, collective memory and production of tradition).

Continual Permutations of Action, Strauss's opus magnum, abounds with further important elaborations that protects against deviating from the interactionist way of analyzing social symbolism methodically at the collective level. The action theory perspective is well suited to deal with social processes by using such terms as interacting and symbolizing instead of interaction and symbolization. The next crucial set of proposals is contained in theses concerning the key issue of social symbolism (Strauss, 1993, pp. 24–27, 151–155).

1. Symbols are generated through interacting.
2. Meanings explicit (interpretations) constitute only a part of symbolizing inherent within action.
3. The results of earlier symbolizing (symbols) are carried over to subsequent interaction.
4. Symbols are of a systemic character – they create networks of meanings.
5. New symbolization and following actions generate social change.

All the above statements may be summarized in the theses about three interweaving qualities of symbols:

1. Symbols condition interaction.
2. Symbols are the fabric of interaction (as the symbolization process).
3. Symbols are products of interaction.

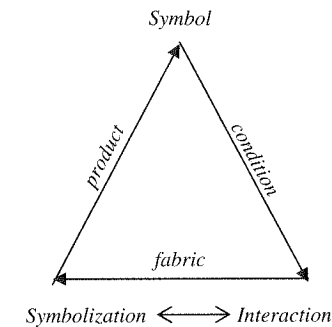


Fig. 1. The Triad of Symbol Attributes.

This triad of symbol attributes and their interrelations can be presented graphically as shown in Fig. 1.

Hans-Georg Soeffner was absolutely right when he said that Strauss expands the scope of questions from that of "What is a symbol?" to "Under what circumstances and with what intention something is turned into a symbol, and how is this socially constructed product confirmed and sustained as a symbol?" (Soeffner, 1991, p. 362). Strauss confirmed this interpretation (Strauss, 1993, p. 167) in almost the same wording "For a theory of action, three central and related questions about symbols are: (1) Under what conditions, and by whom, and with what purposes is some thing (act, event, object, person) made into a symbol – or used as a symbol? (2) How is this symbol confirmed and maintained? (3) With what range of significant consequences?" (Strauss, 1993, p. 151).

It should be stressed once again that Strauss's position is not completely unique; but, it precisely expresses the premises of symbolic interactionist orientation that far too often have been mistakenly regarded as a manifestation of methodological individualism and subjectivism (Alexander, 1985, p. 50).

Hugh Dalziel Duncan, on his part, trying to find out reasons of relatively undeveloped state of research on symbols functioning in society, has persuasively pointed out that the strongest barrier arose from the conflation of symbolism with subjective meanings, while actually a symbol "is used because it is public" (Duncan, 1968, p. 4). The intentionalistic semantics assumes as a subject matter only what a speaker means in a given situation (Habermas, 1992, p. 58). Interactionism, however, originating in pragmatism, contributed to the shift in the interpretive sociology from the

intentionalistic semantics, so influential in the theory of Max Weber¹⁰ as well as in the related social phenomenology of Schutz, to the use theory of meaning. The latter starts with the observed habitualization of interactions in which linguistic expressions; and, broadly speaking, symbolism serves practical functions in coordination of actions.¹¹ That theory was initiated by George H. Mead in no lesser a degree than that which was put forward by Ludwig Wittgenstein. The works of Jürgen Habermas (Habermas, 1999, p. 174), among others, imply the synthesis of symbolic interactionism with the tradition of social practice research. That possibility springs from the adoption of symbolic collective action perspective and it requires the departure from intentional semantics to a pragmatic approach to communication processes.¹² Some theorists; especially, those connected with the tradition of French sociological school, inspired both by Durkheim and Marx, speak of social imaginations – systems of representations consolidating symbolic norms and values that define social practices. Such an approach assumes an activity characterized by a close bond between significations, or symbolic relations, and practice, where meaning and action cannot be separated. As the result, the question how symbolic systems articulate social conflicts (Ansart, 1977, pp. 21–22) may be addressed more accurately.

FROM COGNITIVE TO PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO SYMBOLISM

In contrast to Habermas (1999, p. 486), the interactionists, whose point of view is shared here, do not separate communicative actions from the strategic ones.¹³ This is another differentiation based on methodological “intellectual fiction” that, similarly to Schutz’s concept of symbolic transcendence, separates the functioning of symbolism from the pragmatics of everyday life. The interactionists pay attention to pragmatic functions of symbolization in that sense, that these are “productive” for social processes. They cocreate those processes; and, therefore, a metaphor of social labor of symbols can be applied. Symbols by no means are autonomous (Hałas, 2002, p. 357). They do not belong exclusively to what Karl R. Popper called a third world of objective content of thinking (Popper, 1992, pp. 148–149). Such a concept, as Habermas profoundly describes it, is cognitively narrowed (Habermas, 1999, p. 149). Symbols primarily are instruments, or tools of action (Firth, 1973, p. 77; Znaniecki, 1934, p. 181).¹⁴ As

expressed by Ansart: “All manipulation of comprehensive symbolic equipment is therefore decisive for the renewal, or transformation of social relations and that task of a new symbolic record (*reécriture*) can by itself become a strategic and tactical place in the conflict between competing groups” (Ansart, 1977, p. 30).

Although – as argued above – collective actions, social groups and social worlds are all included in the research program of symbolic interactionists’, however, one has to admit that their research of symbolization was of a microsociological character to a large degree. It covered basically construction, transformation, negotiation of identities and social biographies. The parallel concept of identity can however be worked out for collective agents, as Pierre Bourdieu’s work has clearly demonstrated (Hałas, 2004). A model allowing a multidimensional analysis of forms and functions of social symbolism both for social collectivities and individuals would be desirable and it is attempted here.

Before the model will be exposed, it is necessary to recall that the analysis of functions of symbolism remained under the influence of linguistic theories focusing on the cognitive function of language as the primary one.¹⁵ Anticipating the model of forms and functions of symbolism in social processes it is worthwhile to review briefly the most important functions, as mentioned by many researchers, which were most often referred to the natural language – the basic symbolic system.

As it is widely known, in 1934 Karl Bühler distinguished three elementary functions: expressive, appellative, and representative related respectively to the sender, to the addressee of a message and to the reality to which the message refers. All three functions of communication operate on the level of mental processes. Another classic model of communication, elaborated by Roman Jakobson, was the joining of functions of the message with the elements of the communication act; and, despite its clarity and elegance, also assumed a mental concept of symbolization (Jakobson, 1989),¹⁶ i.e., a process taking place in the minds of participants. Although, social anthropologists, like Edward Sapir, paid more attention to the social usage of language and its functions in the context of communicating community, the categorizing, or modeling of relative cultural reality remained in the focus of their attention. The mental inclination is also visible in the search for linguistic categories structuring the experience of members of social groups.

Raymond Firth’s research, however, was a breakthrough. By referring to S. F. Nadel’s work on the meaning of symbols for social relations (Nadel, 1951), Firth tried to extend the pragmatic approach, clearly visible in the

latter's work. Going in this direction Nadel distinguished three functions of social symbolism:

- designating the group membership, types of social relations and expected behaviors;
- creating of social nomenclature;
- the dramatization of meanings (Nadel, 1951, p. 262).

Firth defined those functions much more extensively, distinguishing: expression, communication, knowledge, and control (Firth, 1973, p. 77 ff). The biggest change and innovation has consisted in stressing the function of control related to the fundamental phenomenon of power in social relations. Instead, the first three functions correspond to the original triad of language functions distinguished by linguists; but, Firth equipped them with the social content and presented them as functions of symbolism in collective practices. This anthropological approach to social symbolism, and not the linguistic one, led to the distinction of not only functions, but also modes of its manifestation, namely of discursive symbolism (with particular emphasis on the function of metaphor), symbolism of objects (symbolic vehicles), and behavioral symbolism (symbolic actions).¹⁷

Further research by social anthropologists has contributed to a stronger and broader pragmatic perspective in understanding the phenomena of social symbolism; because, such work "touches the fundamental dimensions of all symbolic equipment related to the whole of social life" (Ansart, 1977, p. 30). It was made possible on the grounds of research on rituals of social control, which regulate actions of members within the group, such as rituals of transition, rituals of intensification, interaction rituals, or rituals of conflict (Hałas, 1992, pp. 164–170). Obviously, no society is free from conflict, even a primitive one, where in an ideal-typical view, the homogeneity of a mythological vision of the world making everything clear (Ansart, 1977, p. 23), should guarantee harmonious social relations. The myth and ritual that actualize it not only give meaning to group experience, but also are simultaneously instruments for regulating social relations and sustaining, or reproducing stratification. Georges Balandier (1974, p. 164), speaking of "anthropo-logy," emphasized the duality of social relations system and the system of meanings.¹⁸ A particular dialectics of symbolism has to be put into relief here. In the light of functionalistic analyses done by anthropologists; especially, Edmund Leach, symbolism appears both as the instrument of integration and disintegration (Ansart, 1977, p. 30).

In the tradition of sociological thought, the achievements of Émile Durkheim's school are obviously very significant for looking at symbolism from the perspective of collective actions. Contrary to the anthropological concepts described above, the researchers from the Durkheimian school focused not only on functions; but also to a greater degree on the identification of symbolic forms. Albert Salomon (1955) showed that Durkheimian collective representations include three forms: symbolic collective representing, symbolic affecting, and symbolic recollecting (collective memory). It is once again worth remembering Strauss's encouragement to consider these phenomena in terms of actions, i.e., as forms of creating representations, creating emotions and creating of collective memory, and not only in terms of their results.

The fusion of symbolic interactionism with Durkheimian tradition renders the possible, and desirable; and, despite fears, is not extremely difficult. The common bridge between them is symbolism, as shown by Robert M. Farr and Serge Moscovici (Farr and Moscovici, 1984, p. X) who developed the concept of social representations.¹⁹ Social representations – ways of understanding and communicating that create reality and common sense (Moscovici, 2004, p. 19) are the basis of human interactions.²⁰

BASICS OF THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY

The initial model for the social labor of symbols proposed here is framed by the symbolic interactionist perspective, characterized above on the example of Strauss's concepts as the theory of collective communicative action. It is infused also with anthropological and Durkheimian inspirations. Its cornerstone is a dynamic system of collective action as communicative action, and not a nominalistic, linear model of communicative situation including an individual sender and receiver of a message. Analogically, the two types of social interactions distinguished by symbolic interactionists, i.e., interactions directed by an objective purpose, goal or interest, and interactions directed at constructing, sustaining, or changing the identity of participants, are proposed here in order to differentiate two types of collective actions. First are the collective actions that are oriented at an objective purpose that can be called institutional, and second are the collective actions that are oriented at the construction of collective identity.

Thus, conceived institutional actions (they do not have to be institutionalized in the sense of formal regulation) are intended to result in achieving particular values or aims, e.g., wage strike or gaining customers. The typology of these collective, institutional actions could follow, similarly to actions of individual agents, the differentiation of types of achieved values, as suggested for example by Florian Znaniecki (1952) (hedonistic, economic, esthetic, religious, cognitive, social) or as proposed by Bourdieu – different fields of practice. Instead, identity oriented collective actions aim at the definition of a collective subject – “we” as the value. They cover various collective practices that allow a symbolic objectivation of a group’s (collective agent) existence.

The model attempted here excludes any discrepancy between microsocial and macrosocial phenomena. On the one hand, the objectivation of social reality in interaction processes (Luckmann, Berger), or the structuration (Giddens) and its subjectivation on the other constitute two poles of processual phenomena with symbolism as their fabric. Collective institutional actions and collective identity actions constitute the objective aspect of social phenomena. Individual actions and interactions oriented at tasks, and identity oriented individual actions and interactions produce a subjective side of social phenomena. They are closely connected to one another in the process of creating social structure and social biographies of individuals.

Social theory, however, has not been and still is not free from dualistic differentiations, such as: individual–society, order–conflict, justification–opposition or domination–transformation. Referring to Bourdieu’s analysis of constituting rituals which are responsible for the group formation and to Victor Turner’s analysis of transformation rituals, I suggest overcoming this dualism and examining three functions of symbolism: constitutive, conservative, and transformative, both in individual and collective dimension. These functions of symbolism manifest themselves both in task-oriented actions and actions oriented at identity.

The functions of social symbolism as distinguished above (constitutive, conservative, and transformative) are realized by the means of the three forms of symbolism: symbolic representing, symbolic affecting, and symbolic recollecting, as well as three modes in which symbolism manifests itself: discursive symbolism, symbolic vehicles (objects), and symbolic actions.

Symbolic constructing is a process constitutive both for – what has been named – the “individual” and the “society.” Thus, the functions, forms, and modes of symbolization discussed so far can be applied in the analysis of the individual as the agent and the interactant in symbolic interactions and

collective actions – the self. As expressed by Robert S. Perinbanayagam “... the structure of the self reflects, or perhaps one should say is constituted by, the structure of the symbolic systems with which it is implicated” (Perinbanayagam, 1985, p. 88).

Pragmatism as articulated in the works of Charles S. Peirce, George H. Mead and others, including its cultural variant presented by Florian Znaniecki (Znaniecki, 1983 [1919]) has given origins to the study of the symbolic self or semiotic self.²¹ The attribution of meanings to interactants has been analyzed in the theory of symbolic interaction (Turner, 2001; Stryker, 1994; Hewitt, 2000; Gordon, 1994). Although linguistic communication cannot be overestimated, the forms of symbolization discussed above preclude the new danger of reductionism of the symbolic self to the dialogical self or even the triological self (Wiley, 2005, pp. 9, 13, 158–159) in the interplay of “I,” “you,” and “me.” Processes of symbolization in their constitutive, conservative, and transformative functions in the construction of the self take on not only discursive forms, but also symbolic vehicles or embodied symbols and symbolic movements or gestures. Symbolic representing, symbolic affecting, and symbolic recollecting are in use in communication and interaction of self with others and open the systematic analysis of meanings, emotions, and time in the construction of the self as already explored, among others by Norman K. Denzin (1984).

The subjectivation and objectivation processes also take place on the very individual or self level because the use of signs “...by human agents to *objectify* their respective selves to others, as to themselves...” (Perinbanayagam, 2000, p. 86) is in fact something different when it is for the others and when it is for themselves, or public and private. It also differentiates along with interaction processes aiming at some purposes or tasks in contrast to those interactions that are oriented to the interactants themselves. Roles and identities respectively are the classic and proper concepts to deal with these questions.

From now on, the suggested concepts will only be referred to as the dimension of objectivation, i.e., institutional collective actions and collective actions oriented at identity to move forward in their elaboration.

From among its numerous variations, sociologists have given the most attention to the discursive symbolism and its particular form as manifested by political ideology in modern societies.²² One can agree with Pierre Ansart’s statement, that nothing has confirmed the hypothesis of the end of ideologies in the twentieth century which might result from multiple opposing symbolic representations related to social organization and political life (Ansart, 1977, pp. 7–8). In the twenty first century, rather the

globalization of ideological conflicts comes to the fore as liberal democracy and market economy face antagonistic and fundamentalistic social worlds.

The three main functions of symbolism mentioned above (constitution, conservation, and transformation) in institutional and identity-oriented collective actions can be examined more precisely by means of the more complex analysis of symbolic labor going on within each of them. Here the categories relating to symbolic forms, as described by Albert Salomon, can be helpful again. Symbolic collective representing, symbolic affecting, and symbolic recollecting also require further and more thorough investigation. Collective representing, for instance, have been divided into religious and secular, inclusive and exclusive (us/them), horizontal and vertical (the division of labor and social hierarchies), center/peripheries, and others. Collective symbolic affecting can be negative or positive. Symbolic recollecting could be generally divided into historic and mythical (of time, place, processes, objects, subjects, or agents).²³

These distinguished functions are not inherent in symbolism itself but result from producing symbolism and its use in collective actions. Modes of this strategic use can be tentatively indicated here. And thus, the function of constitution of meanings of social reality in institutional actions is the result of strategies of legitimation²⁴ and coordination of actions. The function of conserving the meanings of social reality in institutional actions is related to strategies of apology (justification) and control. The function of transforming meanings of reality in institutional action is connected to strategies of delegitimation of purposes, and mobilization for new tasks.

Respectively, the function of constitution in actions oriented at collective identity results from the strategies of creating the genealogy and the canon of specific meanings differentiating social collectivities. The function of conservation in actions oriented at collective identity is the result of strategies aimed at creating boundaries (distinctions) and their manifestations by means of symbolism. The function of transforming actions oriented at collective identity is connected with using the strategies of liminalization and conversion (Hałas, 1992, p. 199ff).

It should be reminded once again that there are three forms of symbolism in use (symbolic representing, symbolic affecting, and symbolic recollecting), as well as three modes of symbolism (discursive, embodied, and behavioral), and three functions of symbolism (constitutive, conservative, and transformative). The distinguished orders of collective institutional actions and collective actions oriented at identity are regarded as two aspects of collective actions. In the proposed basics for a model of functions of symbolism, its forms, modes, and strategies of use in collective actions,

various empirical analyses might be invoked to support this view. The purpose of this analysis however was limited to the formulation of a theoretical model that systematizes various contributions.

In conclusion, the relevance of pragmatic analysis of functions of symbolization in collective actions should be emphasized. It leads to the "denaturalization," so boldly claimed in Znaniecki's cultural sociology (Hałas, 2006), or in reflexive sociology of Bourdieu, and the expansion of the space of human liberty since nothing is determined beforehand in collective actions constructing institutions and identities given the mastery of symbols in labor.

NOTES

1. Umberto Eco's radical opinion should be regarded as a rhetorical evasion: "Semiosis is a phenomenon typical of human beings (according to some, also of angels and animals), in which – says Peirce – a sign, its object (or meaning) and interpretant come into play. Semiotics is a theoretical reflection on semiosis. Therefore, a semiotician is someone who never knows what semiosis is, but he is willing to bet his life that it exists" (Eco, 1999, p. 65).

2. On this and other obstacles to the development of sociological studies of social symbolism see Hałas (2002).

3. It was presented during a symposium in 1954 and first published in Salomon (1955, pp. 287–356).

4. Symbol, however, is not a synonym of a sign and Schutz, in a way similar to U. Eco gives symbols a narrower meaning. Eco's concept of the symbolic mode does not settle anything about the relation of symbol to reality in contrast to ontological views of Schutz. "Thus, a symbolic mode does not necessarily constitute a process of production, but always and invariably a process of text use, and can be applied to every text and every sign type through a pragmatic decision ("I want to interpret symbolically") which on a semantic level produces a new function of signs, ascribing the designates having codified meaning new portions of meaning, the least definite and separated by an addressee. Characteristic of symbolic mode is a fact that if we decide not to activate it, the text will not be devoid of independent meaning on the literal and rhetorical level" (Eco, 1999, p. 204).

5. According to the tradition started by Aristotle and confirmed by Charles S. Peirce's definition. Eco, however, points out that "for Peirce no sign is exclusively a symbol, an icon, or an index but it contains – in various proportions – elements of all three (types)" (Eco, 1999, p. 152).

6. As Ivo Strecker pointed out in his theory of the social practice of symbolization Strecker (1988, p. 2), the ambiguity of symbolic representation assumes a univocal character of representation of signs.

7. In a way similar to understanding religion according to Durkheim (Berger & Luckmann, 1973, p. 113).

8. Berger and Luckmann claim that symbolic universe is the so-called fourth level of legitimation and distinguish three lower levels. They are: language categorizations, explanatory schemes related to specific actions, and commonsense knowledge. According to them "empirically, of course, these levels overlap" (1973, p. 112). The insistence on the concept of symbolism transcending practice is therefore inconsistent.

9. "[...] the behavior of an individual can be understood only in terms of behavior of the whole social group of which he/she is a member, since his/her individual acts are included in larger social acts [...]" (Mead, 1934, p. 6, 7).

10. It does not mean that in the concept of social action Weber formulated with the help of the subjective meaning, broader structures of meaning cannot be found. It is an actor and his relation to actions of others that gives sense to social action. Thus, the Weberian concept of social action can be read as a part of social practice based on codes of meanings (Ansart, 1977, p. 21).

11. An analysis of linguistics acts presented by John Austin and John Searle can serve as an example of pragmatic approach. They analyzed speech, acts and their functions in human communication: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, declarations, verdictives, exercitives, behabitives, and expositives communicated by language users. However, they limited attention to linguistic symbolism and the perspective of individual users only and did not include the perspective of group practice.

12. It is a matter of broader sense of communication as a process of sign use (Ziółkowski, 1998, p. 370).

13. Habermas has defined communicative actions as such linguistically mediated interactions in which all participants aim at the realization of illocutionary goals. By strategic actions he understands such interactions in which at least one participant aims at perlocutionary effects (Habermas, 1999, pp. 486–487).

14. It is not a matter of coincidence that the approach presented here has a lot in common with Turner's (1974) processual analysis of symbolism. Turner adopts deliberately Florian Znaniecki's assumptions: neither social knowledge nor cognition, but the dynamic system of action is the starting point for research of symbolism in the context of temporal, socio-cultural processes.

15. The penetrating analysis of linguism was presented by Bourdieu (see Hałas, 2004).

16. Besides the "triad" of basic functions – cognitive, emotive, and evocative – Jakobson distinguished also a poetic function (a reference to the message) and, following Alfred Tarski, a metalinguistic one (a reference to a code), as well as, following Bronisław Malinowski, a phatic function (sustaining the act of communication).

17. Cf. for example, important works of Pitirim Sorokin (1937) and Gilbert Durand (1986).

18. Similarly, Bourdieu in his sociology presents social differences and corresponding visions of the world: di/visions.

19. The term, introduced by Durkheim and translated as "collective imaginations," is better rendered by "collective representations."

20. Serge Moscovici speaks of social representations and not of collective representations in order to stress that these phenomena are objects of research and

not explanatory factors, as well as to emphasize their pragmatic formulation (1984, p. 16 ff).

21. In the wording of Robert S. Perinbanayagam, "The phenomenal self of any given human then is a symbolic self, an assembled opus of names and attitudes elicited by these names, and an activity of orderly categories and predictive relationships that he, along with his companions, must take account of, deal with, live with, and die with. Such a symbolic self is not "internalized" in any useful sense of that term but is used in conversation with self and between self and other and is manifest as words, utterances, images, and activities" (1985, p. 100).

22. Distinguishing the characteristic features of ideal type of ideology as an integrated and systematized pattern of beliefs allows also to distinguish quasi- and proto-ideological phenomena (Shils, 1982, p. 202–223).

23. It is worth noting here that these collective representations can be subordinated to main metaphors creating, sustaining, or changing the vision of social order, for example temporal metaphor of communism and Marxist "eschatology" of proletarian revolution, or spatial metaphor of European integration and globalization.

24. Legitimation in a broad sense of making meanings "objectively available and subjectively plausible" is for Berger and Luckmann a foundation of society as objective reality. In a model of symbolic construction of social reality presented here legitimation is understood as only one of many functions of symbolism.

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