Social Symbolism – Forms and Functions.  
A Pragmatist Perspective

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A Pragmatist Perspective

1. Problems of Symbolization

There is no satisfactory theory of social symbolism.\(^1\) According to Raymond Boudon and François Bourricaud (1982: 547) the main reason 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 symbolizing process. Jürgen Habermas explores that conceptual legacy where the symbolic meanings extend between the meaningfull images and pure cognitive meanings (Habermas 2001: 18). This ambiguity is also resembled in the discussion whether symbolic is distinct from or identical with semiotic.

Another problem is bound up with the fact that in human sciences the study of symbolization content, or interpretation of meanings overwhelmed over the studies of symbolic forms and symbolization functions (Duncan 1968:7). In sociology Émile Durkheim’s thesis that social facts are actually symbolic still remains to be worked out in de-

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\(^1\) 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 its interpretation 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: 65).

\(^2\) On this and other obstacles to the development of sociological studies of social symbolism see Halas (2002).
tail, although today we know much more about, for instance, mutual dependencies between power relations and symbolic actions in society (Cohen 1976).

Some decade ago, in his study *Symbol, Reality and Society* (1962) 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 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 reality of everyday life, which is characterized phenomenologically and in Weberian terms of motives of acting actors, and to refer symbols to other realities transcending everyday life, is difficult to uphold although it proliferated in social sciences. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann have done a lot in favour 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: 292). 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. It is worth pointing out that fortunately

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Schutz is not able to distance himself completely from the pragmatic perspective. He as-
certains, 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: 294). He is inclined to believe that symbols have conven-
tional character, that the relation between a symbol and its meaning is arbitrary. Therefore Schutz can not but notice that the concept of convention assumes an existence of a society and communication for which those conventions are established. It belongs to the pragmatic level, the level of communicative action. Helas, as a social phenomenolo-
gist, Schutz does not embark on the study of social creation of meanings in communica-
tion processes but he investigates the structures of common-sense knowledge.

Contrary to Schutz, who – as I have shown – entangled himself into a contradiction narrowing the understanding of symbols to significations transcending everyday experi-
ence and, following the tradition of symbolic interactionism, the term symbol will be
used here in a very broad sense. Ernst Casirer (1944: 32–35), Suzanne K. Langer (1942)
and Raymond Firth (1973), among others, looked at it in a similar way. The symbol is a

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4 Symbol, however, is not a synonym of a sign and Schutz, in a way similar to U. Eco gives symbols a narrower sense. Eco’s concept of a 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: 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: 152).
part of the human world of meanings as a vehicle for concepts of objects of actions. 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. Contrary to Schutz, and according to symbolic interactionist orientation, the symbolic relations will not be considered as objects of knowledge, but as a part of system of action. Such, roughly characterized, was the approach of George H. Mead and Charles Morris.

Among questions put forward some decades ago by Schutz in his pertinent study *Symbol, Reality and Society* one is of fundamental nature and is particularly important for a sociologist: Does the symbol produce the society and the community, or is it produced by society? Schutz goes beyond this oversimplified alternative and divers for the possibility of complex, mutual relations between society and a system of symbols, where symbols, being produced in society, influence its structure (Schutz 1962: 292).

Such an objective, relational, 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 unveiling the complex structure of what Pierre Bourdieu calls a social symbolic system (Bourdieu 1991: 237). Instead, the followers of Schutz – Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1993) – eliminating the distinction between culture and the structure of society (Heiskala 2003: 278) or cultural system and socio-cultural interactions (Archer 1996: 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 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: 279)

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6 As Ivo Strecker pointed out in his theory of the social practice of symbolization (1988: 2), the ambiguity of symbolic representation assumes a univocal character of representation of signs.
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 20th century – was negatively influenced by the already signalled, 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 to the most fundamental reality of human action, but to other realities transcending everyday experience, and legitimizing the existing social practices.\(^8\) Berger and Luckmann, similarly to 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.

\(^7\) In a way similar to understanding religion according to Durkheim (Berger and Luckmann 1973: 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 common-sense knowledge. According to them „empirically, of course, these levels overlap” (Berger and Luckmann 1973: 112). The insistance on the concept of symbolism transcending practice is therefore inconsistent.
2. 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. Between the subjective experience of intentional, intersubjective meanings of phenomenologists and objectivized 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 in social psychology can be useful in many, variegated fields of research. Firstly, because it connects the symbolic perspective with research of social organization. Secondly, as Strauss believed, symbolic perspective could lead to the fusion of various theoretical approaches, creating new cognitive possibilities (Strauss 1969: 178). When it take place now, it is to early to announce the heuristic exhaustion of this orientation (Fine 1993: 61-87).

Strauss’s work confirms that G. H. Mead’s idea of adopting social processes of collective action as a starting point for further research is methodologically promising for sociology (Strauss 1991: 3, 4). In his last book *Continual Permutations of Action* (1993) he declares himself in favour 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

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"[…] 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: 6, 7).
last chapter of Mirrors and Masks, entitled Membership and History, we find ideas delineating the symbolic interactionist perspective on collective action (Strauss 1969: 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 it determines shared, collective meanings. More profoundly, groups exist only on the ground of common symbolization of their members.

Theses concerning origins and variability of meanings place the process of their formation and change also 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: 24-27, 151-155).

1. Symbols are generated through interacting.
2. Meanings explicite (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.

This triad of symbol attributes and their interrelations can be presented graphically as follows.

Fig. 1

The triad of symbol attributes

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: 362). Strauss
confirmed this interpretation (Strauss 1993: 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? and 3. With what range of significant consequences?” (Strauss 1993: 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: 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 arouse from the conflation of symbolism with subjective meanings while actually a symbol „is used because it is public” (Duncan 1968: 4). The intentionalistic semantics assumes as a subject-matter only what a speaker means in a given situation (Habermas: 1995: 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 serve practical functions in coordination of actions.11 That theory was ini-

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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 can not 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: 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: claims, directives, commitments, self-expressions and declarations communicated by language users. However, they limited attention to linguistic symbolism and the perspective of individual users only and did not include the perspec-
ated by G. H. Mead in no lesser degree than by Ludwig Wittgenstein. The works of Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1995: 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. 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 sense and action cannot be separated. As the result, the question how symbolic systems articulate social conflicts (Ansart 1977: 21–22) may be addressed more accurately.

3. From Cognitive to Pragmatic Approach to Symbolism

In contrast to Habermas (1999: 486), the interactionists, whose point of view is shared here, do not separate communicative actions from the strategic ones. 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 co-create those processes and therefore a metaphor of social labor of symbols can be applied. Symbols by no means are autonomous (Halas 2001: 23). They do not belong to group practice.

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

13 Habermas has defined communicative actions as such linguistically mediated interactions in which all participants aims 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: 486-487).
exclusively to what Karl R. Popper called a third world of objective content of thinking (Popper 1992: 148–149). Such a concept, as Habermas profoundly describes it, is cognitively narrowed (Habermas: 1999: 149). Symbols primarily are instruments, or tools of action (Firth 1973: 77; Znaniecki 1934: 181). 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: 30).

Although – as argued above – collective actions, social groups and social worlds are all included in the research program of symbolic interactionists, one but has to admit that their research of symbolization was of microsociological character to a large degree. It covered basically constructing, transforming, negotiating of identities and social biographies. Parallel concept of identity can be however worked out for collective agents, as Pierre Bourdieu’s work has clearly demonstrated (Halas 2003). 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. Anticipating the model of forms and functions of symbolism in social processes it is worthwhile to review briefly the most important functions, and mentioned by many researchers, which were most often referred to the natural language – the basic symbolic system.

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14 It is not a matter of coincidence that the approach presented here has a lot in common with Victor 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 Halas 2003).
As it is widely known, in 1934 Karl Bühler distinguished three basic functions: emotive, evocative and cognitive 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 Jacobson, was joining functions of the message with elements of the communication act, and despite its clarity and elegance, assumed also a mental concept of symbolization (Jakobson 1989), i.e., a process taking place in the minds of participants. Although the 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 modelling, of relative cultural reality remained in the focus of their attention. The mental leaning is there also visible in the search for linguistic categories structuralizing 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: 262).

Firth defined those functions much more extensively, distinguishing: expression, communication, knowledge and control (Firth 1973: 77 ff). The biggest change and innovation 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

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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).
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 of social anthropologists contributed to the stronger and broader pragmatic perspective in understanding the phenomena of social symbolism, because that work „[…] touches the fundamental dimensions of all symbolic equipment related to the whole of social life” (Ansart 1977: 30). It was possible on the ground 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 (Halas 1992: 164–170). Obviously, no society is free from conflict, even a primitive one, where in ideal-typical view the homogeneity of a mythological vision of the world making everything clear (Ansart 1977: 23), should guarantee harmonious social relations. Myth and the ritual that actualizes it give meaning not only to group experience but are simultaneously instruments regulating social relations and sustaining, or reproducing stratification. Georges Balandier (1974: 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 the anthropologists, especially Edmund Leach, symbolism appears both as the instrument of integration and disintegration (Ansart 1977: 30).

In the tradition of sociological thought the achievements of Émile Durkheim 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, to a greater degree, on the identification of symbolic forms. Albert Salomon (1955) showed that

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

^{18} Similarly, Bourdieu in his socio-logy presents social differences and corresponding visions of the world: di/visions.
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 of feelings and creating of collective memory, and not only in terms of their results.

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

4. Basics of the Symbolic Construction of Society

The initial model of 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

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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 (Moscovici 1984: 16 ff).

20 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: 202–223).
action as communicative action, and not a nominalistic, linear model of communicative situation including an individual sender and receiver of a message. Analogically to 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, it is proposed here to differentiate two types of collective actions. First, the collective actions oriented at an objective purpose that can be called institutional, and second, the collective actions oriented at 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 subjectivization 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 symbol-
ism: 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 means of the three forms of symbolism: symbolic representing, symbolic affecting and symbolic recollecting, as well as three modes in which symbolism manifests itself: discoursive symbolism, symbolic vehicles (objects), and symbolic actions. From now on the suggested concepts will be referred only to the dimension of objectivation, i.e., institutional collective actions and collective actions oriented at identity.

From among its numerous variations, sociologists have given the most attention to the discoursive symbolism and its particular form as manifested by political ideology in modern societies. One can agree with Pierre Ansart’s statement, that nothing has confirmed the hypothesis of the end of ideologies in the 20th century which might result from multiple opposing symbolic representations related to social organization and political life (Ansart 1977: 7–8). In the 21st 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 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).

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22 It is worth noting here that these collective representations can be subordinated
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 legitimation and coordination of actions. The function of conservating 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 deligitimation of purposes, and to 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 a result of strategies aimed at creating boundaries (distinctions) and their manifestations by means of symbolism. The function of transforming in actions oriented at collective identity is connected with using the strategies of liminalization and conversion (Halas 1992: 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 (discoursive, embodied and behavioral), and three functions of symbolism (constitutive, conservative and transformative). The distinguished orders of 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.

23 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.
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 quoted that 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 culturalistic sociology, 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.
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Social theory contains contributions related to the processes of semiosis. Between the subjective experience of intentional meanings and objectivized 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.