

Social Sanctions

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RÉSUMÉ

Depuis Malinowski et Radcliffe-Brown, le concept de sanction sociale semble avoir été délaissé. Les auteurs modernes en parlent peu ou ne font que répéter ces deux pionniers. Pourtant il existe encore beaucoup de confusion autour de ce concept et, surtout, on l'a trop utilisé de façon incomplète et ethnocentrique.

I

The concept of social sanction seems to be taken for granted, or even to have been abandoned, by current anthropological theory¹. Malinowski's *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (1926) and Radcliffe-Brown's "Social Sanctions" (1952), particularly the latter, remain the basic references for the idea of social sanctions. Apart from cursory and passing references in textbooks and in some other writings, since Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown little has been added in the anthropological discussion of social sanctions. Raymond Firth explicitly discusses sanctions in his introductory work *Human Types* (1958:114-9), and repeatedly refers to them in *Elements of Social Organization* (1961), but he does not go beyond Radcliffe-Brown's discussion. Nadel in *Foundations of Social Anthropology* (1951:110-111, 137) refers to social sanctions in discussing the perseverance of institutions, but does not seem to consider the concept of sanctions as particularly illuminating; in his later *Theory of Social Structure* (1957) he does not mention sanctions at all.² Goldschmidt (1959:99) in

¹ Portions of an earlier draft of this paper were read at the Southwestern Anthropological Association meeting at the University of California at Davis, on 7 April 1966. I am indebted to Dr. Harold Barclay and Mr. Bruce Cox of the University of Alberta for their comments on that same draft.

² Nadel does, however, refer several times to sanctions in his paper on "Social Control and Self-Regulation" (1953:265-273). This paper focusses on values and on conscience as important social controls, and not on social sanctions as such.

another introductory work sets sanctions in the context of authority systems, but otherwise adds no new ideas to the discussion. And outside, on the edge of the more strictly anthropological tradition, Parsons and Shils in *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1962: 154, 191) have tied sanctions to role theory, but their contribution has not been followed up. Beyond these few writers, I can find no one who has taken the concept of sanction beyond the point where Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown left it.³

This impression that current anthropology has ceased to regard social sanctions as significantly problematic is further borne out by the tenor of recent ethnography. If we examine an ethnographic description, we will find in it an account of normative practice and their attendant sanctions; but unless the work be an explicit study of legal processes (e.g., Gluckman 1955; Pospisil 1956), the concept of social sanctions is not likely to be mentioned. Ethnographic papers such as those of Schneider (1957) or Dewey (1962) which do use explicitly the concept of sanction are the exception rather than the rule.

I do not know why the concept of social sanction has been neglected in this way. Perhaps the idea of social sanctions was felt from the beginning to be relatively clear and unproblematic, and it was therefore so taken for granted as shortly to slip out from the forefront of anthropological concern. Perhaps concentration on social sanctions seemed to become theoretically fruitless, and this line of thought was therefore abandoned for more promising ones. Whatever may be the causes for this neglect or abandonment, it was, I think, somewhat hasty. The concept of social sanctions is still in an unsatisfactory condition, with a number of

³ These writers are but the highlights. To document my assertion that the concept of social sanctions has been taken for granted in recent anthropology, let me simply list such references to or discussions of the concept of sanction as I have been able to find since 1949: Beattie 1964:165-181; Firth 1957: *passim*; Firth 1958:114-119; Firth 1961: *passim*; Gluckman 1955:25, 78; Goldschmidt 1959:99; Goldschmidt 1966:114; Goodenough 1963-39, 328, 443; Herskovits 1955:425; Hoebel 1954:14-15 & *passim*; Homans 1950:123; Jacobs and Stern, 1952:323; MacIver and Page 1957:139-143; Mair 1965:130-1, 210, 263; Murdock 1949:82, 84, 288, 295; Nadel 1951: 110-11, 112, 117, 137-38; Nadel 1953; Parsons and Shils 1962:15, 154-55, 191, 431-32; Piddington 1952: 324-327; Pospisil 1956:751; Royal Anthropological Institute 1951:145-46; Whiting and Child 1953:29-30. Most of these take the discussion very little beyond where Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown left it.

unanalysed confusions. There is as yet no logically exhaustive classification of types of social sanctions, nor one that in fact does justice to the pressures and institutions that control social behaviour; the now-traditional division into penal, moral, and ritual or supernatural sanctions is both incomplete and ethnocentric.

This paper is an attempt to sort out some of these confusions, to outline an improved and culturally unbiased classification of social sanctions, and to suggest some uses of the concept of sanction in thinking about society.

II

The concept of social sanctions has been, at least since Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, part of a set of conceptions about the nature of society and the maintenance of social order. According to this perspective, a society is a system of *norms*, i.e. of patterns of behaviour considered by most members of the given society to be desirable and therefore to be practiced; and the institutions of society are clusters or complexes of norms within the total social system. Since the individuals who live in a society do not automatically or instinctively obey the norms, the maintenance of society requires that these individuals be rewarded for complying with the norms and punished for deviation from them. These rewards and punishments are the *sanctions* of the norms.

There are, however, some serious confusions in the idea of norm which impede our effective use of this idea. Most serious is the confusion between "norm" in the sense of the *expected* pattern of behaviour and "norm" in the sense of the *most frequent* pattern of behaviour. This confusion, for example, vitiates Hoebel's (1954:3-28) discussion of the nature of law and Nadel's (1951: 107-144) attempt to define institutions. "Norms" in the second sense of the term refers properly to the statistical norm or, as I prefer to call it, the *mode* of behaviour. Often, as Sumner (1960: 41) and Hoebel (1954:15) have noted, the most frequent pattern of behaviour is also the expected pattern of behaviour, and there is a definite tendency for "what most people do" to become "what

everyone ought to do". But it is also often true that the mode may deviate from the expected or desired pattern, especially if the latter be regarded as a "counsel of perfection" or "ideal" (Homans, 1950:124) which we may without blame fail to achieve.

Allied to this confusion between norm and mode is another, that between the norm and the enactment of that norm. A norm in its strictest sense is an idea in the minds of human beings, and the behaviour which we call "normative" is the partial enactment of that idea. Of those persons who have written on the concept of sanction, the only one whom I have been able to find who seems to recognize this distinction is Homans (1950:123-124), writing, "A norm, then, is an idea in the minds of the members of a group, an idea that can be put in the form of a statement specifying what the members or other men should do, ought to do, are expected to do, under given circumstances", and again, "One point must be made very clear: our norms are ideas. They are not behavior itself, but what people think behavior ought to be".

We must distinguish norms from modes and the *normative order* from the *behavioural order*. The normative order is the collection of norms or expectations concerning what people should do, and exists as ideas in the minds of the members of society. The behavioural order is the collection of the behaviours of these people, and is the partial enactment of the people's various expectations. If we conceive society as a normative system, therefore, we conceive it as a system of more or less complementary sets of expectations held in the minds of the people who carry that society. Social structure and social organization then may be correspondingly conceived as the networks and the types of relationships obtaining between these various expectation sets. Social change, finally, may be construed as change either in the content of these expectation sets or in the pattern of relationships between them; and the maintenance of society is likewise to be construed as the maintenance of the expectations in question.

In thinking about the maintenance of society, we should keep two facts in mind. First, change and not conservation of the status quo is primary and inevitable, and therefore the main-

tenance of a particular social order requires the constant suppression of tendencies to change and the constant attempt to return to the original state of affairs from the deviated states brought about by the ever-present pressures for change. Second, expectations are learned, not genetically inherited. The constant fight to maintain society therefore requires that these expectations be replicated in, i.e. learned by, the new members of society, and once learned these expectations must be constantly reinforced in the minds of societal members lest they be forgotten or even deliberately abandoned. In these two aspects of *replication* and *reinforcement* we have, respectively, the Malinowskian cultural imperatives of Education and Social Control (Malinowski 1944: 125). How then may such replication and reinforcement be achieved?

Three possible methods suggest themselves at once. (I) Ensure that the practices specified in the norms as desirable will in fact, whether or not the people are aware of it, satisfy most of the needs and desires of the societal members, and that the practices forbidden by the norms will in fact be dissatisfying to the persons practicing them. People will then by simple positive reinforcement come to do the required behaviour, will become accustomed to doing it, and will develop expectations that it ought to be done. (II) Repeat the norms constantly in stories, poems, plays, movies, myths, rituals, or whatever message-forms exist in society, in order that societal members may always have the norms in the forefront of their minds; this method may be coupled with the diminution or elimination of messages promoting alternative expectations. (III) Attach to the expectations rewards for adherence to them and punishments for deviance; these rewards and punishments are the sanctions of the norms whose maintenance is in question.

Describing social control in this way raises a question about the notion of sanction. Should we use the word "sanction" to refer to all consequences of an action that encourage or discourage its repetition, whether or not the actor perceives these consequences as so doing; or should we restrict the word "sanction" to cover only those consequences which are perceived by the actor as rewarding, or punishing his behaviour? Radcliffe-Brown's (1952:

205) usage, followed by the great majority of anthropologists, is closer to the second alternative. But there is a definite analogy of function between the consequences of behaviour referred to in method I and the sanctions referred to in method III. I should therefore like to extend the term "sanctions" to cover both alternatives, and to distinguish between them by calling the first type *natural sanctions* and the second *social sanctions* in the strict sense.

Natural sanctions may be formally defined as those consequences of an item of behaviour which serve either to favour the survival of the actor and so cause the perpetuation of the behaviour pattern (positive natural sanctions), or to hinder the actor's survival and so eventually cause the extinction also of the behaviour pattern (negative natural sanctions). The pattern may cease to exist either because its practitioners die without replicating it, or because they abandon it for new ones. Natural sanctions operate in the behavioural order and not in the normative order. They are called into operation only by actual behaviour, and are so evoked whether or not the actor is aware that he has so behaved. It is worth noting, however, that while human perception of the natural sanctions does not affect their being called into effect, it does make a difference to the responses given in turn to these sanctions.

Natural sanctions operate at a fundamental level in biological evolution as well as in human behaviour. They are the pressures through which natural selection takes place: those forms adapted to their environment, i.e. whose needs and dispositions can be met by the environment, will be rewarded for their adaptation, i.e. will continue to exist and perpetuate their type. Those who do not fit their environment, or who do not make their environment fit them, will die and not pass on their particular propensities to behaviour.

The concept of natural sanctions may also help us to comprehend why some societies persist and others do not. No society will long endure with the same form in the same locale unless the natural sanctions of its actual behaviour are pro-survival or positive. If a society's norms recommend behaviours whose natural sanctions are negative, either the society and its members will

dwindle and die out, or they will migrate to a new environment where the natural sanctions are positive, or the norms will be widely disobeyed and extensive social change will result.

The second method of replicating and reinforcing the normative order may be called the method of *propaganda*. Nadel (1951: 137-138) hints at this method when he refers to what he calls "dramatizations", i.e. "the demonstration of desired modes of action in the context of ceremonial and aesthetic performances". The range of propaganda, however, is far wider than that of dramatizations. It extends from such things as primers and textbooks, whose ostensible purpose is "teaching", to the further ends of literature, art, and all the products of the communication media whose overt purpose is not instruction but "entertainment". Under propaganda we must also include advertising in industrial market society: having the overt purpose or manifest function of maintaining the economy, advertising with its massive repetition also has the effect of reinforcing certain of the values of society and drowning out others (Potter 1954:166-188). As such, advertising is an important institution of social control.

When such propaganda emanates from sources considered by the members of society as worth listening to and even obeying, the descriptions of behaviour and the judgments of approval or disapproval contained therein constitute a kind of moral social sanction.

The third method of reinforcing the normative order is that of *social sanctions*. This is the provision of rewards for compliance with the norms (positive social sanctions) and of punishments for deviance therefrom (negative social sanctions). As already insisted, an event is not a social sanction unless it is perceived by the sanctioned individual as relevant to what he ought not to do. There is therefore a close connection between the concept of social sanction and the concept of norm, the existence of norms being a necessary condition for the existence of social sanctions. The question may be raised whether or not norms can exist without sanctions, i.e. whether or not ought-expectations can really be said to exist without those who comply with them receiving some verbal approval at least, or those who deviate from them receiving some verbal disapproval. Homans

(1950:124) has restricted the word "norms" to those expectations which are supported by sanctions, and has used the word "ideals" to refer to unsanctioned ought-expectations. But what makes an "ideal" an ideal? Is it not that it is held in some manner to be "desirable", if not necessarily obligatory or even often possible? And how can it be upheld as desirable if this expectation is not expressed in judgments of approval for those persons who in some measure achieve the ideal? Such a consideration as this leads me to suggest that if an expectation isn't sanctioned in some way, it isn't an expectation. That is to say, social sanctions are the behavioural correlates of ought-expectations, and the existence of a social sanction is the outward expression of the norm.

We must also distinguish between the social sanction itself and the expectation or anticipation of that sanction. The sanction itself is the actual event which rewards or penalizes a given behaviour. The actual occurrence of the sanction depends on the prior actual occurrence of the behaviour thus sanctioned. What immediately determines whether or not the particular behaviour will be carried out, however, is the potential behavior's *expectation* of the sanction. As Firth (1958:115) put it, "The action of any individual in respect of a rule is governed not only by his immediate personal interests and the degree of temptation which he has at the moment felt, but by his recognition of what a variety of people will say, think, feel, and believe, and by what he knows them to have done in the past". Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 205) also describes the sanctions as being the actual reactions by the members of society to behaviours which are thereby approved or disapproved, and indicates that these sanctions often operate through the behavior's anticipations of their application.

When Parsons, and Shils (1962:191) placed sanctions in the context of role theory, however, they failed to distinguish between the sanctions themselves and the sanctions-expectations. We may improve Parsons and Shils by saying that a role is a set of norms specifying the behaviour to be enacted on a particular occasion or kind of occasion, and that this set is accompanied by expectations specifying the ways in which the performers of complementary roles will respond to the enactment of the first role. Some of the sanction-expectations of the performer of the first

role will coincide with some of the role-expectations of the performers of the complementary roles. But if we are to think clearly about the ways in which roles are locked with other roles, we must nevertheless draw a sharp distinction between behaviours, on the one hand, and expectations concerning behaviour, on the other, and we must maintain this distinction throughout our conceptual scheme.

Since it is the sanction-expectations that immediately govern behaviour, the sanctions themselves need not always occur. But if the sanctions do not occur (or do not seem to the actors to occur) often enough to make profitable the actors' taking the sanctions into consideration when making decisions, the expectations will lose their force and will cease to govern the actors' behaviour.

If the responses, actual or anticipated, of other people to one's behaviour are to be interpreted by him as sanctions, he must see these responses as being made in defense of norms held by these other people and which they desire him also to abide by. But unless he values as rewards what they offer as rewards, and as punishments what they offer as punishments, the sanctions will not be effective — they may, indeed, even achieve the opposite of the sanctioners' intentions. The death penalty, for instance, will not dissuade a would-be martyr for whom death is but the gateway to a bliss beyond earthly possibilities. Sanctions cannot achieve their end without the consent of the person against whom they are applied; this consent must be arranged by other means.

What makes a response (whether actual or merely anticipated) a sanction is not any feature of the response itself, but rather the way it is connected to other events. This is especially true of social sanctions: a change in the actor's expectations, in other words a change in the definition of the situation, may be enough to turn a sanction into the very opposite. A study of social sanctions is therefore *ipso facto* a study of social relationships. By the same token, if a response may, connected in one way, serve to maintain the social order, it may in other connections serve to disrupt or transform the social order. The concept of social sanction needs therefore to be balanced by the concept of *social contrasanctions*: the contrasancion being those con-

sequences of an action which serve to reward and reinforce deviation from the relevant norms and to penalize and inhibit compliance therewith, and so act counter to the system of social sanction of the society.⁴

Finally, the sanction does not necessarily always have to follow the behaviour supposed to provoke it. Not infrequently, *prophylactic procedures* may be undertaken to avoid the effects that normally make up the sanction. For example, where the blood feud operates, a murderer and his group may pay blood-money to the group of the murdered man in order to avoid the retaliation of the latter.⁵ Of course, prophylactic procedures may themselves be regarded as sanctions.

III

The classification of social sanctions has not been developed beyond the distinctions made by Radcliffe-Brown. In his essay on social sanctions (1952:205-211) he classifies them along two parameters, "positive/negative" and "diffuse/organized". The positive/negative differentiation is simply that between rewards for compliance and punishments for deviance. The "diffuse" social sanctions are "spontaneous expressions of approval or disapproval by members of the community acting as individuals", and the "organized" are "social actions carried out according to some traditional and recognized procedure". We might re-

⁴ This terminology is awkward. Perhaps it might be better to change the meaning of "positive social sanctions" from "rewards for compliance with norms" to "rewards for compliance and punishments for deviance", and change "negative social sanctions" correspondingly from "punishments for deviance" to "rewards for deviance and punishments for compliance". Since we already have the words "reward" and "punishment" it is not strictly necessary to use "positive" and "negative" as synonyms. If we made such a change, we should also have to expand the meaning of "social sanction" to cover any event seen by members of a society as rewarding (or punishing) either compliance or deviance, and thus being relevant to the maintenance of a norm. Such an extension of the concept of social sanction would align it with Bierstedt's (1950: 733) linking of power and sanctions. But then again such a change of terminology might be simply confusing. It does depart quite considerably from the conceptions held by Radcliffe-Brown about sanctions and the nature of society.

⁵ Another example of prophylactic procedures is the use, among Trobrianders, of various spells and rites to ward off the sores, disease and death supposed to follow clan incest (Malinowski 1926:79-80).

express this by describing the "organized" sanctions as being more institutionalized than the "diffuse". This second classification overlaps with a distinction between "moral" and "penal" sanctions, the moral sanctions tending to be diffuse and the penal sanctions organized.

In the same essay, Radcliffe-Brown also distinguishes between "primary" and "secondary" sanctions. Primary sanctions are the action of the community upon individuals, and secondary sanctions are, dependent upon the primary sanctions, "concerned with the actions of persons or groups in their effects upon other persons or groups" (1952:209). He instances retaliation, indemnification, and duelling as secondary sanctions, and points out that behind these lies the force of the community which supports them as institutions. But it seems to me that this distinction reifies the community and fails to make clear that *all* direct social sanctions are the actions of individuals upon other individuals. The sanction-agent may be viewed as the agent of a "community" or he may not: in either case, if the sanction is to reaffirm the norm effectively, he must be viewed as having the right to act as he does. The distinction is not, I think, very useful. It also overlaps with the diffuse/organized dichotomy, the primary sanctions tending to be more organized or institutionalized than the secondary.

In another article Radcliffe-Brown (1940: xvi-xvii) simplifies this classification into three types: "moral", "penal", and "ritual or supernatural" sanctions. This simpler distinction appears to be the one most commonly followed in anthropological usage. "Moral" and "penal" sanctions appear to be opposite ends of a continuum; Radcliffe-Brown instances boycott as intermediate between them. Moral sanctions he sums up in the words, "the individual who does wrong is subjected to open expressions of reprobation or ridicule by his fellows and thus is shamed". Behind the penal sanctions appears to be the idea of physical force, but this is not explicitly stated.

The most unsatisfactory part of Radcliffe-Brown's classification is his discussion of what he calls "religious", "supernatural" or "mystic" (1952:206-207), and "ritual or supernatural" (1940: xvi) sanctions. From his accounts it is clear that Radcliffe-Brown

considered these sanctions as a special sub-class within the diffuse sanctions, but at the same time special enough to warrant a fair degree of attention. That they are a distinct class of sanctions I think we will agree. But there are three points on which I feel constrained to modify Radcliffe-Brown's theory:

(1) These sanctions are too different in character from both the moral and penal sanctions to be put with the moral sanctions into the same class of diffuse sanctions.

(2) By confining his discussion to "religion" and "magic", Radcliffe-Brown did not bring out clearly the way in which these sanctions operate as sanctions, and he missed certain significant similarities between these "religious sanctions" and some other social phenomena we do not ordinarily class under the same heading.

(3) The terms "religious" or "supernatural" or "mystic" or "ritual" sanctions are not satisfactory, and fail to indicate why this class of sanctions is significant. In fact, the associations of these terms befog the issue.

Of the four names applied by Radcliffe-Brown to this class of sanctions, "religious" is the least objectionable. It can be given a fairly precise meaning if we follow his reference to "gods or spirits" and understand the word "religion" to mean a complex of human beliefs and activities concerned with gods and other spiritual beings whose wills may affect human affairs. But there is in fact no consensus in anthropology as to the meaning of "religion", and the term "religious sanctions" is apt to be drawn into this same confusion.⁶

The term "supernatural" is more unsatisfactory. It suggests that the societies described as having "supernatural sanctions" recognize a distinction between the "natural" and the "supernatural"; if the ethnographer does not so imply, then use of the

⁶ See Cohn (1962), Geertz (1966), Goody (1961), Horton (1960), Spiro (1966) for further discussion of this issue. But as documentation for the lack of consensus on the meaning of "religion" in anthropology let me just point to seven different definitions picked more or less at random from the anthropological literature: Durkheim 1961:62; Herskovits 1955:233; Howells 1962:21; Lessa and Vogt 1958:1; Radin 1957:3; Sapir 1951:347; Tylor 1958:8.

term represents an imposition of the ethnographer's own cultural categories on those of the people studied, with a consequent partial falsification of the data. Contrary to some common assertions, the concept of the supernatural is *not* found in all human societies.⁷ The word "mystic" is no better; it has a precise meaning for students of mysticism and mystical theology, but as anthropologists have used it, it seems to mean little more than "supernatural" or "ritual" or even "superstitious", namely, pertaining to powers invisible to the anthropologist and not believed by him to exist. Describing such sanctions as "supernatural" or "mystic" commonly also implies a judgment concerning the truth or falsity of the beliefs held by the people being studied concerning the sanctions so named by the observer. But in making judgments about the truth or falsity of people's beliefs, except when these are beliefs about culture or society, the anthropologist ceases to be strictly an anthropologist and becomes, depending on the subject matter of the beliefs, a physicist or theologian or biologist or magician or practitioner of some art other than anthropology.

The term "ritual sanctions" is unsatisfactory for a different reason. It draws attention to *rites*. In what way, however, does a rite act as a reward or punishment relative to a particular norm? Rites are, properly speaking, not sanctions at all but are dramatizations serving like other forms of propaganda to reinforce the ideas and sentiments in the minds of those watching or participating in the rite.

The significant fact masked by this unsatisfactory terminology is surely that these sanctions are conceived as being applied by agencies other than living human beings. Such agencies need not be limited in conception to God, spiritual beings, deceased ancestors, or occult forces: they may also include such things as the laws of nature, archetypal ideas, electromagnetic fields, germs, air masses, or even vitamins. If, for example, cleanliness is valued among a people, and they believe that uncleanness leads to unpleasant diseases by encouraging disease germs, the sanction here is *referred* to a non-human agency: the consequences

⁷ Compare Cohn (1962), Goody (1961). Also worth noting is Lewis (1960:24-74) on the history of the meanings of the word "nature", including reference to the supernatural.

for maintaining the norm of cleanliness will be much the same as if the people believed that uncleanness provokes the displeasure of the gods, with consequent misfortune. In either instance, rules of interpretation are required to determine whether a particular disease or misfortune is really linked by germs or displeased gods to the violation of the norm. And in both instances, likewise, disbelief in the existence of the sanctioning agent will undermine the norm and require more direct sanctions for its maintenance. Because of this referral to agencies other than living human beings, I propose that this class of sanctions be known as *referred* social sanctions. Sanctions supposed to be applied by living human beings may be known as *direct* social sanctions.

Referred sanctions may be further subdivided into two main classes, depending on whether the sanction is conceived to be applied automatically by the sanction agents without human initiative, or whether the sanction agent must first be set in motion by some living human being other than the person to be sanctioned. I call these two classes *self-initiating* and *human-initiated* respectively.

As I have already suggested, an important requirement of a system of referred social sanctions is a set of *rules of interpretation* (or *divination procedures*) for deciding when a given happening constitutes the sanction for the norm believed to be so sanctioned. Between the act that upholds or breaks the norm and the event that supplies the reward or punishment for the act there is a gap in time or space or logical continuity so that it is by no means obvious to the uninstructed that the event in question is the sanction for the enjoined or prohibited action. If the event is to be interpreted as a sanction, this gap must be bridged, and it is the beliefs concerning the connection between act and sanctioning event that supply the required explanation and thereby also provide rules for deciding when a given event occurs as a sanction for some norm. The intervening causes between act and consequent sanction are the agencies to which the application of the sanction is referred. So long as these beliefs are held, the event as interpreted can act as a social sanction and uphold the norms of the society; when the beliefs are challenged, the event may cease to serve any longer as a social sanction.

The types of beliefs and belief-systems involved in referred sanctions may be characterized as either *open* or *closed*, i.e. as capable of being falsified by experience or as incapable of being falsified by experience.⁸ Belief systems which are not falsifiable by experience thereby render themselves impregnable to a great many challenges that must be faced by the open, falsifiable systems, and may therefore be reasonably expected to promote social conservatism. On the other hand, the possession of closed systems might reduce their holders' capacity to respond to changes induced by causes other than falsification. In any event, such considerations as these suggest that knowing whether a society's referred sanction system is open or closed may be of considerable importance in understanding that society.

Another important aspect of referred sanctions is the extent to which their sanction agents are *personified*, i.e. conceived as having motives similar to human motives and as being subject to similar sorts of influences. Where such agents are conceived as persons, it becomes possible for a member of society to apply to their prediction and control the same concepts and techniques that he has learned by living in society. This possibility would seem to be a likely explanation for such personifications being as widespread as they are. Since in his attempt to comprehend the unknown, the personifier is applying concepts derived from his social experience, the chances are also excellent that such a personified referred sanction system will also be a projective system reflecting that social experience onto the rest of the world.

Direct social sanctions are applied by living human beings. Following Radcliffe-Brown, we may distinguish a moral and a physical aspect to these sanctions, and may classify them as *moral* or *physical* sanctions according to which aspect is dominant. Moral sanctions operate through their effect on the sanctioned person's self-image or his concern for what other people think of him, and are associated with such sentiments as pride and shame or anxieties about being different. Physical sanctions, on the other hand, make their effect by expanding or restricting the sanctioned individual's power and freedom of action.

⁸ Azande witchcraft provides a classic example of a set of referred sanctions based on *closed* beliefs (Evans-Pritchard 1937).

We may also distinguish a third class of social sanctions, viz. the *self-imposed*. Whereas the referred social sanctions are applied (supposedly) by non-human or non-living human agents and the direct social sanctions are applied by other living human beings, the *self-imposed*, as the name implies, are applied by the actor upon himself. The component within the psychic structure of the actor which imposes the sanction may be called the "super-ego" or "social conscience". The sanctions imposed include such things as guilt-feelings, psychosomatic illnesses, obsessions and fears, and the like.

It is the self-imposed social sanctions which tie the concept of social sanctions most firmly with the problem of how social structures become internalized or anchored within the individual. In fact, we could arrange physical sanctions, moral sanctions, and self-imposed sanctions along a continuum of increasing internalization (cf. Goodenough 1963:349-351). But so far as I know there has been no real study of character and social sanctions along these lines. The closest that comes to such are Nadel (1953) on values and their internalization as a means of social control, Gerth's and Mill's (1964) discussion of character and social structure, Riesman's, Glazer's and Denney's (1954) classification of "tradition-directed", "other-directed", and "inner-directed" characters, and, more remotely, some aspects of Fromm's (1941) study of social character, Kardiner's (1945) "psycho-dynamics" and Wallace's (1961) notion of "mazeways". There is much on character formation, but little of it is tied in to sanctions as such. A major question concerns the extent to which norms are internalized so that the actor comes to judge himself and to sanction himself for compliance or deviance. Cultures may be expected to differ in the degree of internalization accomplished during socialization: clearly such differences may be expected to have further consequences for the society.

Up to this point I have described social sanctions as being applied against the person whose behaviour is to be controlled. This need not always be what happens. If the sanctions are threatened or actually applied against persons to whom the actor is attached by some sentiment of solidarity, the actor's behaviour may be controlled just as firmly, and sometimes even more so,

as if the sanction were applied against himself. Since I have already used the word "direct" for a different use, let me appropriate the words *primary* and *secondary* to denote, respectively, sanctions applied to the person whose behaviour is to be controlled and sanctions applied against persons to whom he is attached.

Secondary social sanctions are very widespread in society. They are, I suspect, at least as important in controlling human behaviour as the primary social sanctions. The idea of collective responsibility (e.g., in feuds) and the use of hostages and of various forms of emotional blackmail are, after all, very old phenomena in human history. Marriage (to take another example) has often been observed to be a stabilizing influence in society: one reason is surely that in marriage persons who otherwise would be uncontrollable except by primary sanctions develop sentiments attaching them to other persons whose sufferings (actual or threatened) thereby become means of influencing the persons whose acts are in question. Many men have put up with unpleasant and dispiriting work in order to get the wherewithal to feed, not themselves, but the families dependent on them; left to themselves, they would simply have run away. Anonymity protects not only the anonymous actor himself, but also those individuals with whom he feels sentiments of solidarity. By the same token, many human beings have done things not for the rewards accruing to themselves as such, but for the benefit of other human beings whose welfare they felt in one way or another to be rightfully dependent upon them. This theme could be pursued further, but for now I think these brief notes on secondary sanctions will be enough to hint at their importance in maintaining society.

Before I leave this attempt to classify social sanctions, let me point out that this classification (and also the classification of social control mechanisms in the preceding section) is a classification according to function or the part played by the sanction-event in maintaining society. Consequently, it is quite possible that a given empirical event will fall into more than one class simultaneously. But since I am classifying according to relationships, no confusion of categories is thereby implied.

IV

The concept of social sanction is part of a larger view about the nature of society and of its maintenance. If the considerations in the previous sections are correct, however, neither the resources of the wider theory nor the particular implications of the concept of social sanction have been fully exploited. Both society and its continuance have, I think, tended to be taken for granted, and the focus of analysis has been on relating the parts of society to one another or on explaining social change. Consequently the existence of social sanctions has been taken as obvious or unproblematic, and the issues involved have been largely missed or else barely touched on in passing in a number of scattered references. But when we view change as inevitable and societal survival as problematic, the notion of social sanctions immediately becomes of appreciable importance in explaining how societies may be maintained. The study of the sanction systems of particular societies, furthermore, is a direct entry to the description and understanding of these societies as organized or structured sets of more or less complementary expectations in the minds of the members of these societies, an approach which I venture to aver will prove a most fruitful approach in comprehending human social behaviour.

The concept of social sanction, however, may also act as a bridge between such an expectations-theory of the nature of society and a number of other important perspectives. One of the most promising viewpoints of current social theory is that which regards societies and cultures as self-regulating systems having negative and positive feedback. Now, quite simply, social sanctions in a stable system are a kind of negative feedback and social contra-sanctions are a kind of positive feedback. Like feedbacks, also, social sanctions and contra-sanctions are such not because of their inherent properties, but because of the way they are connected with other parts of the social system. A description of the sanction-system of a society is thus immediately also a partial description of the society as a self-regulating system.

Social sanctions, though their effects are directly upon the normative order and indirectly upon the behavioural order of social life, are themselves within the behavioural order and are thus directly observable events (though their *connections* as social sanctions are matters of inference rather than of simple observation). As such, they are a bridge between society conceived as a body of ordered behaviours and society as a body of ordered norms or expectations.

A simple behaviourist approach to social phenomena, of course, is ruled out by sanction theory. Social sanctions affect the behavioural order through the minds of individuals, who respond or not according to their perceptions of the sanction-situation. Put another way, it is the minds of societal members which determine whether or not events are to be regarded as social sanctions. This "mentalist" reference in sanctions theory is integral to the whole approach and contradicts the restricted viewpoint of behaviourism. But since sanctions (whether natural or social) are observable events sanction theory has at the same time the behavioural referents so insisted upon by behaviourist approaches.

As already mentioned in section two, roles and social sanctions are intimately connected. A role being essentially a set of expectations, social sanctions are evidences of roles-in-play. Sanction-expectations are motivations in the minds of role-players and, from the observer's point of view, constitute explanations or parts of explanations for why the roles are played as they are played. The complex of role-expectations, sanction-expectations, role performances, and social sanctions which occurs in every human activity thus constitutes the basis for both the description of that activity and a partial explanation of that activity, and is the place, at least on the micro-social level, where theories about society must finally be tested. Roles are seen by some authorities (e.g., Nadel 1957; Banton 1965) as the basic units of social structure. This implies a close linkage between social structure and social sanctions, sanctions being in fact one way by which the structure is maintained. Hence a description of the sanction system of society is both a way of beginning the study of the society's structure and a way of making a description of the structure empirically concrete.

The concepts of social sanction and of sanction-expectation further cast light on the nature and operation of power in society. An individual in society has power when he can get other people to do things for him even when they don't want to. But he gains this power over them only through the social sanctions (or, sometimes, psychological manipulations — but this is another topic) which he can bring to bear on them. But when they say "No!" and mean it, even to death, he has no power over them. The absence of effective sanctions implies the absence of power (Bierstedt 1950:733). Perhaps seeing social sanctions as a correlate of social power extends the concept of sanction beyond the idea of its being merely a support of norms, for power can be used to change as well as to maintain; we could, however, apply the term "contra-sanctions" where power was exerted to change society. But certainly sanctions and power are very closely related, and the sanction-analysis of any social situation exposes very clearly the strengths and weaknesses of whatever power relationship are involved in that situation.

Finally, sanction analysis also helps us to understand why people so often put up with societies they find irksome and oppressive, and against which they would otherwise revolt. The weak points in a society's sanction system are those places where change is most likely to come, either as the places where revolt is most likely to start or as the places where new social controls will be imposed to remedy the lack thereof. In the latter eventuality, change will occur in the attempt to prevent change.

V

In summary, I have tried in this paper to clear up some of the confusions afflicting our current conceptions of social sanctions, to provide an improved classification of social sanctions, and to suggest some of the ways in which the concept of sanction may prove useful. I have not presented any hypotheses about sanctions or sanction-systems as such, but have simply attempted to sort out the variables that should be studied. I have also tried to indicate where I think our lines of categorization may most fruit-

TABLE SHOWING, WITH EXAMPLES,
THE REVISED CLASSIFICATION OF SOCIAL SANCTIONS

I. *Referred Sanctions*: agent is other than a living human being.

A. *Self-Initiating*:

Events interpreted as

- natural sanctions,
- operation of natural laws.
- good or bad luck.
- due to God's will, or the action of gods or spirits.
- favour or disfavour of the ancestors.
- effects of breaking a taboo.

Such events commonly include

- health or sickness.
- favourable or unfavourable coincidences.
- good or bad weather.

Rewards and penalties given in a presumed next life for one's behaviour in this.

B. *Human-Initiated*:

Events interpreted as due to the action of entities such as in I-A, when set in motion by some human being other than the doer of the sanctioned behaviour.

Curses.

Sorcery, and the casting of spells, which affect the sanctioned person.

Being killed by magical weapons such as an Australian aborigine's "pointing bone".

In some instances, effects of breaking a taboo.

Rewards and penalties given in a presumed next life for one's behaviour in this.

II. *Direct Sanctions*: agent is a living human being.

A. *Moral*:

Judgments of approval or disapproval. Granting or withdrawal of esteem and prestige.

Public eulogies or public ridicule.

Withdrawal of communication or co-operation or both ("sending to Coventry", shunning, boycott, strikes, excommunication).

This particular sanction is on the borderline between moral and physical sanctions.

B. *Physical*:

Granting of social membership or withdrawal (excommunication, exile, ostracism) of same.

Granting or deprivation of social status (promotion or degradation).

Granting or deprivation of liberty (special liberties and immunities, or imprisonment).

Granting of property (pensions) or deprivation of same (fines).

Forcible public exposure to ridicule (pillory, branding).

Deprivation of life and limb (executions and mutilations).

III. *Self-Imposed Sanctions*: agent is the person himself.

Feelings of shame, guilt, remorse. Some neuroses and psychosomatic illnesses.

fully be put. The concept of social sanctions can also, I think, act as a bridge concept, drawing together several different and useful ways of looking at society, and I have sought to point out some of these linkages. Looking at societies as systems of sanctions should therefore be an enlightening way of looking at societies. All I have done in this paper, however, is to raise such possibilities, not to explore them. That would be a major treatise.

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