Rationality, Social Science and Paul Diesing*

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"Rationality is out to define other
nonsense out of existence…"

David Schuman,
Bureaucracies, Organizations and Administration

Social science is like New York City. It looks bright and shiny from a distance, less impressive up close, and its core—like 42nd street—is soft, if not rotten. Sociologists are unable to define sociology; political scientists cannot agree on a definition of politics, and schools of economists battle like medieval warriors in suits of ideological armor.[1] In social science generally, there is little agreement as to how key terms should be defined and used. For example, there is great confusion as to meaning of rationality, which should be one of the key concepts of the social sciences.[2] M.I.T. economist Lester Thurow inadvertently illustrates the problem in his classic book, The Zero Sum Society. He writes:

> Environmentalism is not ethical values pitted against economic values. It is thoroughly economic. It is simply a case where a particular segment of the income distribution wants some economic goods and services (a clean environment) that cannot be achieved without collective action. A major part of the problem in the environmental area is that we are not used to thinking of a clean environment as a normal economic commodity.[3]

Thurow suggests that we imagine "an invisible, completely comfortable facemask" that would guarantee an individual clean air. Adding up the amount each individual would be willing to pay for such a mask, we would have what economists call the shadow price: of clean air for the society. (Shadow-pricing is necessary because air is not normally bought and sold on the open market.) Thurow argues that revenue to pay for environmental costs *should* (my emphasis) be based on the amount that each of us would be willing to pay for his/her clean-air mask.

…the basic problem in our national debate about pollution controls is that neither side is really willing to sit down and place a value on a clean environment and then do the necessary calculations to see if it can be had for less than this price.[4]

There is something very wrong with Thurow's argument. It illustrates the fragmentation of the social sciences, and in turn reflects our inadequate understanding of "rationality". A second example may highlight the problem:

Let us suppose that attending a quality private university costs students an average of $30,000 per year. (The exact amount does not matter here.) The federal government is cutting back on student loans, and the university cannot or will not fund an ever-increasing percentage of tuition, room and board. How are students whose parents are not rich going raise this kind of money? One possible solution would be for the students to take up part-time prostitution, a profession which pays very well indeed. Admittedly, this is an unusual suggestion, since prostitution is illegal in most areas of the United States. However, this difficulty could be avoided by carrying out such activities during the summers in areas of Europe or in parts of Nevada where it is legal. This would also protect parents and friends from any unpleasant associations. Summers would thus be educational and broadening, and might even contribute to that questioning of authority structures which is so much part of liberal education. Choice is, of course, the essence of freedom, and eliminating financial constraints in this manner could open new vistas to the enterprising undergraduate. In the past, moral/ethical inhibitions have closed such possibilities to students. However, such scruples should be a matter of individual choice. We are simply not used to realizing that sex is a normal economic commodity, something which can be bought, sold, and measured with a price. Indeed, this seems much clearer

than in the case of the environment. A market already exists and no shadow-pricing is necessary. Students should learn to think this way, to compare the value of monogamous relationships with the value of multiple sexual relationships, which may involve the possibilities of financial security, a college education, and subsequently an attractive career of one's choosing. This, of course, is not to argue that an individual *should* make one or the other choice, but only that the full range of possibilities should be available. The problem is that most of us have yet to sit down and put a value on our sexual favors and do the necessary calculations.

I hope it is obvious that something is very wrong with the argument of the above paragraph. However, the thesis that students should consider becoming part-time prostitutes is misleading and offensive for the same reason that Thurow's argument is misleading and troublesome. In both cases, "economic" rationality has been overextended. It is argued that something *is* a commodity and thus *should* be measured, priced, and treated as a morally neutral commodity. In fact, however, something like the environment, sex, or a crucifix is a commodity only to the extent that it is treated and thought of as one.[5] For the prostitute and his/her client, sex is thus a commodity; for most people, it is not. Measurement and exchange make it so, which is to say that measuring something may ultimately change its value. The meaning and value of a sexual experience is altered by assigning a price to it; doing so makes it a "choice" like any other – like choosing between chocolate and vanilla ice cream. To chose prostitution, however, is a fundamentally different type of decision. It may involve unpredictable changes in the self and in one's emotional ability to relate to others. Similarly, the value and meaning of "nature" or the environment is fundamentally

changed by making it a means to an end. A source of value becomes an object of value.[6]

And not-so-incidentally, the meaning of "freedom" also changes when it is considered to

refer to an endless smorgasbord of choices, the objective being to maximize your

"gusto," since your only go around once in life. In the absence of personal or social

integration, it becomes the freedom of the idle rich, a license to make choices which are

trivial because they have no ultimate meaning for an individual.

My point is not that Thurow is a bad economist; on the contrary, my impression is

that he is a very good economist. This is precisely the problem: good economists—and

"running dogs" of economic imperialism in other disciplines – quite often make the type

of mistake described above.[7] Nor is this phenomenon hardly limited to the world of

academics. We live in a society in which people "spend" time, "invest" in a college

education, and "capitalize" on opportunities. In such a society, it is easy to believe that

economic progress is synonymous with progress and that economic rationality is

synonymous with rationality. After all, "the main characteristic of economic [as

distinguished from technological] progress is increasing alternativeness of ends, which

involves removal of moral limitations on ends and on the use of means, as they are turned

into commodities."[8] In this utilitarian world of ours, in which "happiness is something to

be pursed like an occupation,"[9] it is understandable that "rationality" has been defined in

these terms as well. Thus, for Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom, as for most social

scientists, "an action is rational to the extent that it is 'correctly' designed to maximize

goal achievement."[10] Nor is it accidental, to quote Nobel Laureate Kenneth Arrow, that

"an economist by training thinks of himself as the guardian of rationality, the ascriber of

rationality to others, and the prescriber of rationality to the social world".[11]

"Rationality" is most often defined in terms of economic, means-end reasoning. In this form, however, it cannot be used as the central concept of the social sciences. To make it so would be precisely equivalent to attempting to describe the history of philosophy in terms of utilitarianism. The part cannot describe the whole; Plato and Aquinas cannot be described in terms of Hobbes. However, there is that within us, within our society and within our language, which believes this to be possible. In everyday usage, rationality is good, irrationality is bad, and there is no middle ground. From here, it is only a step to a more sophisticated form of believing that technical-economic progress is synonymous with progress,[12] a belief which Ralph Waldo Emerson long since warned us against, writing that:

> Many facts concur to show that we must look far deeper for our salvation than to steam, photographs, balloons or astronomy. These tools have some questionable properties. They are regents. Machinery is aggressive. The weaver becomes a web, the machinist a machine.

What is both sad and puzzling is that a major alternative to the various partial conceptions of "rationality" has existed since 1962. It is formulated in Paul Diesing's Reason in Society: Five Types of Decisions and Their Social Conditions. This book constitutes an overall framework of the social sciences (as of its publication date). To my knowledge, such a framework exists nowhere else—at least not in a readily understandable and useful form.[13] Unfortunately, the Diesing framework has been largely ignored—not subjected to adverse criticism, but simply ignored.[14] This is particularly unfortunate because Reason in Society defines "rationality" in a relational fashion which has been rare outside the Marxian tradition.[15] The objective of this article is to persuade the reader to seriously consider this alternative formulation of "rationality".

"Reason is … a creature of the order it creates."[16]

Diesing defines "rationality" in terms of effectiveness—a broader concept than mere efficiency.[17] "Effectiveness" refers to the successful production of any kind of value. Diesing argues that there are (at least) five fundamental kinds of effectiveness in the social world. These are manifested as the outcomes of what S.C. Pepper calls "natural selective systems."[18] Culture traits—techniques, rules, beliefs, and values – are "chosen" through the largely unconscious decisions of millions of people. "Effective" cultural traits (not societies) are successful, are transmitted, and reappear, much in the way that biological evolution is said to occur. One trait might function to increase power, another to decrease anxiety. Ultimately, a selective system is manifested as a trend of development, a cumulative process through which certain characteristics appear in a culture—although the same mixture of characteristics will not appear in each culture. One such trend is technological progress, which gives rise to technical modes of thinking and technically rational forms of organization. The other major trends—which correspond respectively to economic, social, legal, and political rationality—are economic progress, integration, legalism-stratification, and differentiation/unification.[19] Each trend may be intellectualized in the form of principles for decision –making, and each produces its distinctive kind of value. The bulk of Diesing's book consists of an elaboration of the various trends of development, the type of organization each produces, the method of making decisions, the conditions under which the various methods of decision-making are appropriate, and the kind of value each produces.[20]

The major chapters in <u>Reason in Society</u> describe the five types of effectiveness

or rationality. To summarize, "technical" rationality has to do with the efficient

achievement of single goals; "economic" rationality is the efficient achievement of a

plurality of goals; "social" rationality refers to integrative forces in individuals and social

systems which generate meaning and allow action to occur; "legal" rationality is that of

fundamental rules or rule-following; and "political" rationality is concerned with the

rationality of decision-making structures (differentiation/unification), without which

other forms of effectiveness cannot function.[21] In Thomas Kuhn's terminology, this

scheme is equivalent to an interlocking framework of the disciplinary matrices of the

social sciences.[22] Each matrix is historically developed and institutionally maintained,

yet all are both interdependent and partially conflict with one another. For example, a

"rational" social system—one in which roles are internally consistent—is only possible if

the problem of resource allocation has been solved to some extent.

There is one serious problem with the framework of five types of rationality

described in <u>Reason in Society</u>. In a 1984 interview, Diesing told me that the book would

have been different had he written it a decade later. He would have added ecological

rationality, a framework which was not fully developed until 1971, the year which saw

the publication of Barry Commoner's <u>The Closing Circle</u>.[23] Ecological rationality, I

surmise, would refer to the effectiveness of ecosystems. Ecosystems, according to

Ophuls (1977, p. 20), mean "the community of organisms living in a specific locale,

along with the non-biological factors in the environment—air, water, rock, and so on—

that support them . . ." The largest ecosystem is the biosphere. The crucial trends of

development would be homeostasis in the stable state and ecological succession in the

long run. "The general direction of evolution is toward complexity, co-operative symbiosis of species, longer life cycles of more complex organisms with slower reproduction rates, adaptation of the inorganic environment to life, and more efficient use of energy throughput (Ophuls, 1977, p. 36).[24]

Diesing describes "Rationality" in general (with a capital "R") as both order and the creation of order. In a distinction derived from Mannheim and Weber, he talks of "substantial" and "functional" aspects of each type of rationality. The first is the rationality of organizations and the second is the rationality of decisions.

> A decision or action is substantially rational when it takes account of the possibilities and limitations of a given situation and reorganizes it so as to produce, or increase, or preserve, some good…. An organization is functionally rational … when it … [does so] in a consistent, dependable fashion.[25]

Substantial rationality may be considered the making of order, or creativity. Substantially rational decisions thus ultimately create the different orders of functional rationality. The increasing efficiency of productive techniques creates technological progress; economic order results from the continual measurement and comparison of values; social decisions create social order by integrating or stabilizing conflicting forces in interpersonal relationships; legal order arises as a result of the continual application of rules to cases; and political order is created as decision-making structures are progressively differentiated and unified. Reason, Diesing writes, "is in a sense itself a creature of the order it creates".[26]

Functional rationality is simply order; rational norms are principles of order. Technical rationality is an order of production. Raw materials enter a system, are processed, and become products. Economic order is an order of measurement and

comparison of value. Commodities are measured and exchanged in order to maximize value. Social rationality is an order of interdependence or solidarity, which exists when people understand one another, act together, and share common experience. Legal (or moral) order is an order of availability. It specifies which resources are available to each legal entity and which persons correspond to which actions and roles. Legal order exists when each person knows what he can do and must do. Finally, there is the "political" order of discussion and decision. Decision-making structures are rational to the extent that they facilitate information gathering and processing, the taking of decisions, and monitoring the effectiveness of such decisions.[27]

Paul Diesing was trained in philosophy at the University of Chicago. Philosophy gave him an outsider's perspective on social science; a comprehensive world view; and systematic analytical training. Such a background seems to lead academics either to professional lives of practical irrelevancy or—occasionally--to startling discoveries and accomplishments. Diesing's success in dealing with the "rationality" problem may be related to his academic background. The conception of reason as creativity, he writes, is one of the three major conceptions of practical reason in the history of philosophy, found in some of the writings of Plato, Hegel and Whitehead. Having said this, however, he does not ignore the other major formulations: reason as the application of rules (Aquinas, Locke, Kant) and reason as calculating – adding and subtracting (Hobbes, Bentham and the utilitarians).[28] On the contrary, he takes these conceptions into consideration by moving from the formal study of philosophy to the world of historical change and development. Thus, technical, economic, social, legal and political rationality represent neither a systematization of common usage, nor primarily a logical analysis of the

conditions of effective actions. Rather, they are seen as the interrelated, but often conflicting, outcomes of historic trends.

The above is not a new social science. It is the old social science systematically described and interrelated. Note, however that it is interrelated rather than integrated. This is important because it allows for and reflects conflicts among developmental trends and the values they produce. Elaborate sets of rules in a bureaucracy may reduce conflict, but they are also likely to be inefficient. Integrated social systems, like close-knit families, are characterized by particularism, ascription and loyalty, values normally not condusive to means-end rationality. (A lazy son is not "fired" and replaced by a hard-working adopted child.) In fact, the means-end framework is essentially irrelevant to the ideal-type social decision-making situation. Nor is it easily applicable to legal or political rationality. In social or integrative decision-making, ends are treated as symbols of hidden values, fears, and strains. There are no definite ends, means, or predictable outcomes, "because the desires and interests that could serve as ends are subject to unpredictable change in the course of a decision."[29] Whether or not I want to go to a movie may depend on whether or not my date wants to go to a movie; if she doesn't want to, I don't want to. In this sort of situation, only very general goals such as increase in problem-solving ability or improvement of communication may be relevant—and these are not homogeneous, quantifiable goals.[30] Theoretically, it is possible to expand one's definitions of "ends" and "means" enough to encompass anything. However, the "environment" and "prostitution" examples at the beginning of this paper indicate that this is ill-advised. This is all the more true because most economists are poorly equipped to deal with social-psychological types of problems.

Why Bother?

Why bother with the Diesing framework? Why should you spend a lot of time and effort learning new meanings of terms in order to better understand the old social science? And how can I expect everyone to start using the word "rationality" differently? I admit the impossibility of getting everyone to change their language. However, I would settle for getting a few social scientists to do so, and it is not necessary to make a total break with customary usage. For example, one may continue to use "rationality" in the normal fashion, but make it clear that this means "technical-economic" rationality (more carefully defined). Alternatively, one may substitute the terms order or effectiveness for "rationality." It is the same thing. It should be stressed, however, that the issue is more than the choice of terminology.   Those like von Mises (or many rational choice theorists), who argue that "the economic principle is the fundamental principle of all rational action,"[31] will not be convinced of the error of their ways by mere rhetoric. Such statements generally reflect deeply imbedded belief systems. These are implanted, ironically, by complex processes of learning and socialization which are intelligible only in terms of social-psychological, rather than "rational," explanations.

To my mind, the Diesing framework is worth bothering with because it allows us to transcend the typical "worms-eye" view of the Big Apple that is social science. In the absence of some such global perspective, we almost inevitably come to believe that our particular slice of reality comprehends the whole and that our particular definitions of, and solutions to, problems are the only intelligent ones. Diesing's model is not the only way of conceptualizing social science; it may contain structural flaws; and in amoebic

fashion, the social sciences have changed their contours since <u>Reason in Society</u> was published. Nevertheless, even partial relevance after the passage of more than four decades is a tribute to the conceptual strength and generality of the enterprise. The types and aspects of rationality may thus represent lasting components—like DNA—out of which new theories and formulations may be constructed.[32]

One of the advantages of a global framework is that it allows one to see the limitations of less general theories. It is the difference between trying to understand the pattern of a maze of garden hedges from within, and looking at the same maze from a hot-air balloon. I have argued elsewhere that the confusing history of Public Administration theory can be understood in these terms. In Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management school, organizations were seen as machines, the implicit paradigm thus being that of technical rationality. Human Relations theorists introduced substantial elements of social rationality, as they dealt with questions of morale and informal organization. Herbert Simon's <u>Administrative Behavior</u> can be seen in terms of a transition from technical to economic rationality (see footnote seven for this distinction). Weber's contributions lay in stressing the virtues and dangers of the bureaucratic bond between technical and legal modes of reason. Finally, the incremental theories of Lindblom and Wildavsky represent attempts to simultaneously relate economic and political varieties of rationality.[33]

The multiple rationality framework has practical implications because it helps to maintain distinctions when partial approaches begin to exceed their limits. For example, consider the economic or planning approach to the issue of living standards in a poor country. From this perspective, higher living standards would be considered an obvious

goal. The specialist would thus go to work measuring average caloric intake of individuals, productivity rates of various sectors of the economy, and resource distribution, in order to see how matters might be improved. This is well and good unless it is considered the only possible approach. The paradigm of "social" rationality calls our attention to another perspective:

> An anthropologist… would see consumption patterns as symbols of social statuses and roles, and regard changes in consumption as symptomatic of status changes, or even of drastic cultural reorganization. He would insist on uncovering the system of statuses, beliefs, and values to which consumption is related before deciding on possible changes in consumption; and any changes he suggested would probably not be designed to improve living standards, but would more likely be designed to reduce the conflicts and strains involved in particular consumption habits.[34]

Diesing wrote the above paragraph in 1955, citing the anthropologist Sol Tax. However, this insight seems fresh even today, reminding us of the extent to which economic development may be politically destabilizing (as in Iran in 1979), and of the extent to which "economic progress" may make people unhappy as it disrupts patterns of social solidarity and produces alienation.

Since the framework of 5-6 types of rationality is perfectly general, the range of possible applications is virtually unlimited. For example, it may be used to criticize positivist voting literature in political science as reflecting an excessively "economic" understanding of "rationality." One may similarly criticize much of the literature of policy analysis for overstating the applicability of the means-end approach.[35] The conception of multiple, interrelated forms of rationality is also helpful in dealing with the phenomenon of cultural conflict, as in the example that follows.

Each type of rationality produces its own distinctive value. The product of legal rationality is "justice"—not ultimate, but formal justice: clear, consistent, detailed and technical systems of rules. Formal justice, however, has been defined in two distinct ways:

> First, justice has frequently been defined as impartiality, or fairness, or equality… Impartiality is part of the universalist-utilitarian value system associated with economic progress… When a system of law has been strongly influenced by economic development, as Western systems have, it moves toward impartiality in treatment of persons…

> Justice, in a socially oriented legal order, is reciprocity (Malinowski, 1926; Gouldner, 1960)…. A legal code is just when all its rights and duties are so arranged that duties of Status A to status B are matched equivalent duties of Status B to status A. An individual is just if he consistently pays back with equivalent actions all the things done for him.[36]

In much of the world, the two conceptions will uneasily coexist in the same country. For   decades, modern commercial or industrial sectors will have existed alongside traditional, subsistence-oriented agrarian sectors—with cultural dualism as the result. Participants in the more pragmatic, industrial sector are more likely to think of justice in terms of impartiality; participants in the traditional system will tend to believe in the "social" conception of justice, based on reciprocity. The potential for conflict between these two standards is illustrated in the experience of Don Carlos, the "modern and impatient" chief agronomist of the Colombian National Agricultural Institute:

> "When I come into some of those veredas [small villages], it's just as if I were the cacique," Don Carlos commented. "They kill a chicken or sometimes a pig, bring out the aguardiente, they say 'doctor this' and 'doctor that' and 'we're very grateful to you doctor.'" They think I'm helping them with their problems as a favor; they feel very strongly that they must reciprocate by feeding me and by humoring me and by agreeing with everything that I say. It's just all wrong. I remember one vereda where we developed some experimental projects with poultry [and] the people were so upset when they discovered we planned to do the same in another place nearby. "We've always been good with you doctor, why

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are you mad at us now?" said one old man. "I don't want to be their <u>patron</u>, but they just keep on treating me as if I were."[37]

If agricultural policies are to be successfully implemented in situations such as that described above, they must be legitimated in terms of both impartiality and recriprocity. They must be "effective" and "just" in terms of the worldview of both extension agent and <u>campesino</u> [peasant]—which may require different or multiple policies.

Finally, I would like to anticipate a possible counter-argument to the effect that the Diesing framework is inherently conservative, that it is an a-historical scheme which has nothing to say about power, domination, dialectics, or the state.

Imagine, if you will, an isolated, "primitive" society, in which "culturally determined ends were relatively satiable by available resources and modes of production."[38] It is thus conceivable that there could be almost no scarcity. This society would thus have no significant economy, in Diesing's sense, but only a series of separate productive techniques. [An economy, to Diesing, involves exchange and allocation. It thus requires multiple, alternative ends; common means; scarcity (which in part is culturally determined), and neutral media of measurement (prices).][39] There would, however, be some level of differentiation or stratification, which seems to be inherent in all human and primate communities.[40] This particular society (of the Kmas, let us say) has long had a stable existence, but it suddenly comes into contact with a warlike people, the Mawies. A need for more effective weapons thus arises, and over a period of time, technological progress occurs. A better Mawi-trap is invented. The warfare may well affect the social structure, giving greater prestige to Kama warriors, for example.

Economic effects would follow as well. Defeating the Mawies would bring plunder and perhaps material tribute from the vanquished. These items might be exchanged for goods of other peoples. Desire for goods could thus increase, leading to perceived scarcity. The development of symbols, rather than mere objects of value, would be the next step, leading to a monetary system. Measurement and comparison would be facilitated and a rudimentary economy would exist. Trade and conquest would create wealth. But inevitably, given the rapidity of change, the distribution of wealth would be uneven. Most likely, it would be concentrated at the top of the stratification system. And should economic progress outrun cultural adaptation—as seems likely in this instance—conflict would develop along the reinforcing lines of social stratification and wealth. In the absence of adequate cultural or social integration, rules would be required to stabilize the conflict. Such rules might be moral, religious, or ultimately "legal." A "legal" order would thus develop. However, the legal or moral order would almost inevitably be used—consciously or not –to justify and maintain the status of the privileged. A structure of power and domination would thus come into existence. Ultimately, a state would also appear. And at some point, depending upon historical conditions and upon one's definitions of key terms, the system of stratification might interact with the forces of technological and economic progress to create the spiral vortex of forces known to many as Marxian class conflict.

The above is a primitive example of developmental social science theory. My point is not to argue that this is accurate. It is rather to demonstrate the possibility of forging theories of historical change, development, and state power out of the materials available in <u>Reason in Society</u>. This should not be surprising, however, since the book is

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largely a compendium of pre-existing knowledge and theory. The originality lies in its conception of political rationality and in its imaginative arrangement and means of interrelating the five modes and two aspects of practical reason—to which, ecological rationality should now be added.

What is to be Done?

One offshoot of policy analysis has to do with why so little social science research is used in public policy making. The two reasons suggested for this phenomenon are: 1) the inadequacy of social science, and 2) the fact that social scientists do not present their work in a relevant fashion, which is to say, in a fashion which would contribute to the maintenance and enhancement needs of the government bureaucracies involved.[41] This would suggest that my proposal is incomplete. I have addressed a central problem of social science theory, but what is to prevent this proposal, like a thousand others, from being filed in libraries and wastepaper baskets and then forgotten? After all, this is ultimately what happened to Reason to Society. So, I need an implementation strategy.

The key to any implementation strategy is to understand the environment in which it is to operate—in this case, the academic world. Now academics, as all insiders know, runs on status and prestige. To consider the prospects for successful innovation is thus to consider how the change in question will relate to the status system. This is particularly complicated because the status hierarchies of the various disciplines are relatively autonomous. An anthropologist may know nothing of a prominent historian and economists tend to think that there are no outstanding political scientists.[42] Moreover, in

the best institutions, the status system is organized by discipline rather than by institution. The upwardly mobile professor wants to be affiliated with a prestigious institution, but subsequently does not aspire to be Chairman and then Dean. Rather, he/she wants to become famous in his/her field. In this type of corporate-feudal structure, how is one to induce professors in the various social sciences—who have "so much to do and so little time to do it"—to read a complicated book? (A complicated book may be defined as one which cannot easily be understood by reading the first and last chapters.)

The secret to successful innovation in this instance may be the fact that academics hate to be embarrassed. This is why professors tend to ask direct, substantive questions of their colleagues only when sure that they are sure that the individual in question knows the answer. This is also why students are often so annoying: they have yet to learn this convention and tend to ask questions such as: "Have you read such and such book?" But this may be the answer! If you, gentle reader, would be so good as to ask your colleagues what they think of <u>Reason in Society</u>, they might ultimately become embarrassed enough to read it! This would seem preferable to writing more articles for professional journals, which often take two years to appear, relate only to particular disciplines, and can be safely ignored by those not working on related topics. However, it must be admitted that journal articles serve one's own maintenance and enhancement needs and it is important that <u>Reason in Society</u> appear in footnotes and bibliographies, from whence subsequent references will be taken. So perhaps a combined strategy is best. Nevertheless, the ultimate solution is to acquire dedicated disciples to carry the torch and help them become ensconced in their own universities and colleges.

A Final Word

Some would argue that the core of the Big Apple is Wall Street rather than 42nd street. But it really doesn't matter. To the extent that New York City is corrupt, it is because everything is for sale. If all of life were to consist of neutral means to alternative ends, there would be no scope for right and wrong. The only law would be that of supply and demand, the only value, price. This would be a "rational" world, but not one in which most of us would care to live. Should we not expand our understanding of "rationality"?

Endnotes

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[1] Raymond Aron writes that "on one point and perhaps only one, all sociologists are agreed : the difficulty of defining sociology." Cited in Raymond Boudon, The Crisis in Sociology: Problems of Sociological Epistemology, trans. Howard H. Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.3. "A casual survey of political science texts finds Karl Deutsch defining politics as '… the making of decisions by public means…'; Nimmo and Ungs defining it as '… the most inclusive process by which social conflict is regulated in the community'; and C.P. Sohner describing politics as referring to '… government action and anything designed to affect it.'" Cited in Thomas Halper and Richard Hartwig, "'Politics' and 'Politicization': An Exercise in Definitional Bridge-Building," Political Studies 23 (March 1975), p. 71. For conflicts between schools of economists, see Paul Diesing, Science and Ideology in the Policy Sciences (New York: Aldine, 1982; reprint, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2005). The "Introduction to the AldineTransaction Edition," pp. ix-xxiii, reviews all six of Diesing's books.

[2] The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, by Gordon Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) contains no overall definition of "rationality, rational action". It simply refers the reader to headings for "action theory; bounded rationality; critical theory; ethnomethodology; exchange theory; formal rationality; interpretation; magic, witchcraft, and sorcery; meaning; phenomenology; rationalization; Weber, Max (sic)".

[3] Lester C. Thurow, The Zero-Sum Society (New York: Basic Books, 1980; Penguin Books, 1981), p.105.

[4] Ibid., p. 108.

[5] "The difference between production and consumption, economic and non-economic activity, is not physical but valuational. … Those activities whose occurrence needs to be justified by its results are economic, while those activities whose occurrence provides a justification for other activities but does not itself need justification are non-economic. Eating, learning, and exercising are productive activities if they are justified by their effect on the productivity of labor; they constitute consumption if they are regarded as the maintenance of a standard of living. Production is the creation of an instrumental value, while consumption is the achievement of an intrinsic value." Paul Diesing, Reason in Society (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962; reprint ed., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1975) , p. 15."

[6] For readable, but not rigorously defined, accounts of the differences between "economic" and non-economic perspectives on the environment, see John McPhee, Encounters with the Archdruid (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972); and Aldo Leopold, A Sand Country Almanac (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966). See also William Leiss, The Domination of Nature (New York: George Braziller, 1972); John Passmore, Man's Responsibility for Nature (New York: Charles Scribner, 1974); and Herman Daley's Toward a Steady-State Economy (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1973). For a classic critique of admonitions to "follow nature," see John Stuart Mill's article, "Nature" in Nature and Utility of Religion (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958).

[7] Milton Friedman is the prototypical example of a good economist who regularly exceeds the culturally and politically fixed boundaries of economic rationality in the United States—although admittedly, those boundaries shift over time. In Capitalism and Freedom, for example, he writes that "it is difficult to see that discrimination can have any meaning other than a 'taste' of others that one does not share" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p.110. Particularly blatant examples of "economic imperialism" are found in Richard Posner, Economic Analysis of Law (Boston: Little, Brown, 2nd ed., 1977); and Gary Becker, The Economic Approach to Human Behavior (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). For cogent critiques of Becker and Posner, see Richard P. Adelstein, "Institutional Function and Evolution in the Criminal Process, " Northwestern University Law Review 76, No. 1 (March 1981): 1-99. Also see C. Edwin Baker, "The Ideology of the Economic Analysis of Law," Philosophy and Public Affairs 5, No. 1 (Fall 1975): 3-48. In The Economics of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), Posner attempts to defend himself against the argument that the economic approach to law is a version of utilitarianism by attacking utilitarianism, narrowly defined as maximized happiness (pleasure) rather than wealth. However, he admits in a footnote (ft. 3, p. 48) that his claim that efficiency is an adequate concept of justice is a consequentialist ethical theory. In this sense of the term—as defined by Diesing, pp. 37-38— Posner's argument is utilitarian and thus represents a particular, limited value position. It is no longer unusual to argue that neoclassical microeconomics is value-laden. For arguments along this line, see Robert A. Solo and Charles W. Anderson, eds., Value Judgment and Income Distribution (New York:

Praeger, 1981), especially the articles by Solo, Gunnar Myrdal, and Warren Samuels. It should go without saying that "economic imperialism" may be committed by non-economists as well. Numerous examples of this phenomenon are found in management science, "positive" political science, psychological attribution theory, exchange theory in sociology, and location theory in geography. Each of these areas may be considered a colony of economics. See Richard Hartwig, "Rationality and Voting," Journal of Political Science, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Fall 1981): 1-16; Shelley E. Taylor, "The Interface of Cognitive and Social Psychology," in Cognition, Social Behavior, and the Environment, ed. John H, Harvey (Hillsdale, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum,, 1981), pp. 189-212; William Skidmore, Theoretical Thinking in Sociology, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 67-113; and David Harvey, Social Justice and the City (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1973).

[8] Diesing, pp. 46-47. Defined as an increase in productivity per man-hour, economic progress results from both technical and economic changes. It requires both increased efficiency of specific productive processes and the increasing alternativeness of ends, as means of measurement and comparison are developed and moral limitations on ends and means are progressively removed.

The economic factor makes it possible to compare productive processes with each other and determine the amount of resources to allocate to each in order to achieve a maximum product with given resources. Without a fair degree of substitutability among ends a society might achieve technical virtuosity in specific activities without necessarily increasing total productivity. Increased total productivity, therefore, is dependent on an increased alternativeness of ends, and this is economic progress in the narrower sense (Diesing, pp. 23-24).

[9] Ibid., p.35.

[10] Politics, Economics and Welfare (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), p. 38.
For a summary discussion of the "rational-choice" paradigm, see J. Donald Moon, "The Logic of Political Injury: A Synthesis of Opposed Perspectives," in Handbook of Political Science, Vol. I: Political Science: Scope and Theory (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), esp. pp. 195-206. Obviously, all social scientists do not accept the definition of rationality as goal maximization. For discussions of this question, see Ross Harrison, ed., Rational Action: Studies in Philosophy and Social Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Bryan R. Wilson, ed., Rationality (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977); and NOMOS VII: Rational Decision (New York: Atherton, 1964), edited by Carl J. Friedrich. Useful discussions of the related terms "reason" and "rationalism" are found in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

[11] The Limits of Organization (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974, 1974), p. 16.

[12] As enlightened people, we reject the crass pursuit of wealth, but we continue to aspire to greater numbers and varieties of experience—thus threatening to turn experiences into commodities as well.

[13] Although writers such as Talcott Parsons and Jurgen Habermas are less accessible to the present writer, there are parallels to be found here. For example, the distinction Habermas makes between purposive-rational action and communication action (symbolic interaction governed by binding consensual norms) is similar to Diesing's distinction between technical/economic and social rationality. See Habermas, Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), esp. pp. 90-94 and 118-119.

[14] It is typical that an excellent book such as Brian Fay's Social Theory and Political Science (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975) will have no reference to Reason in Society, published in 1962. The sixteen articles in NOMOS VI: Rational Decision, published in 1964, contain only one citation to Diesing. The twenty-page bibliography of James Coleman's massive Foundations of Social Theory (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990) lists none of Diesing's books, although Coleman deals extensively with rationality.. To my knowledge, the only systematic attempt to build on Reason in Society is Richard Hartwig's Roads to Reason (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983).

[15] For a study in which concepts are defined in relation to multiple paradigms, see Social Justice and the City, by David Harvey.

[16] Much of the material in this and the next section ("Why Bother?") also appears in the Epilogue to Richard Hartwig, Roads to Reason: Transportation, Administration and Rationality in Colombia (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), pp. 215-223. It is used by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

[17] Diesing, p. 3.

[18] Ibid., p. 6, citing S.C. Pepper, The Sources of Value (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958).

[19] Diesing wrote that, as of 1962, scientists had not yet identified developmental trends for decision-making structures (p. 176), which is to say political rationality. He provisionally described these trends as differentiation and unification, both of which are required for rational decision-making structures.

[20] This general approach is described in Diesing, Ch. I, pp. 1-13.

[21] It might be possible, Diesing notes, to consider political decisions as a special class of techniques appropriate for maintaining decision structures:

> If a person gets into a central position in a decision structure and wishes to do a good job there, he must use these techniques. But here again, as in the case of law, we are dealing with public 'techniques.' They are public because they serve a public goal. The goal is public in the sense that it belongs to a structure rather than to an individual, and is rationally prior to the aims of group members…. If an increase of central authority is called for and achieved, the results accrue to a role, not to a private person, and can be used for personal ends to a very limited extent (Diesing, p. 217).

[22] Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed., revised (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1970). The discussion of disciplinary matrices is contained in the Postscript. A disciplinary matrix is said to consist of symbolic generalizations, beliefs in particular models, related values, and exemplars [approved, concrete problem-solutions].

[23] Personal interview. Buffalo, New York, August 25, 1985.

[24] Diesing, Science & Ideology in the Policy Sciences, Ch. 10, "Schumacher and Appropriate Technology," pp. 289-90.

[25] Diesing, pp. 3-4.

[26] Reason in Society, pp. 235-243.

[27] Ibid..

[28] Ibid., pp. 244-247

[29] Paul Diesing, "Socioeconomic Decisions," Ethics 69 (October 1958): 2.

[30] Ibid., pp. 2-3

[31] Ludwig von Mises, Epistemological Problems of Economics (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1960), p. 148.

[32] For useful supplements to the material in the original Diesing text, see: Paul Diesing and Glenn H. Synder, Conflict Among Nations (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); Alexander George, "The Case for Multiple Advocacy in Making Foreign Policy," American Political Science Review 66 (December 1972): 751-795; and William Gore, Administrative Decision-Making (New York: John Wiley, 1964). The term "rationality" is used in the traditional sense in the Diesing and Synder book. However, their attempts to integrate systems theory, bargaining theory, and decision-making theory may be used to elaborate what Diesing called "political rationality".

[33] See Richard Hartwig, "Rationality and the Problems of Administrative Theory," Public Administration 56 (Summer 1978): 159-180; Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," Public Administration Review 19 (Spring 1959): 1-17; and Aaron Wildavasky, "The Political Economy of Efficiency: Cost Benefit Analysis, Systems Analysis, and Program Budgeting," Public Administration Review 26 (December 1966): 292-310.

[34] Diesing, "Socioeconomic Decisions," p.3.

[35] See Richard Hartwig, "Rationality and Voting," Journal of Political Science IX, No.1 (Fall 1981): 1-16.

[36] Diesing, Reason in Society, p. 165.

[37] Steffen W. Schmidt, "Bureaucrats as Modernizing Brokers?: Clientelism in Colombia," Comparative Politics 6 (April 1974): 437-438.

[38] Diesing, Reason in Society, p.18.

[39] Ibid., pp. 16-18.

[40] Diesing argues that this is the case with respect to human societies in his chapter on social rationality. For the broader argument, see Fred Willhoite, "Primates and Political Authority: A Biobehavioral Perspective," American Political Science Review LXX (December 1976): 1110-1126.

[41] James Q. Wilson, "Social Science and Public Policy: A Personal Note," in Knowledge and Policy: The Uncertain Connection, ed. Laurence E. Lynn (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1978), pp. 82-83.

[42] If compliments are criticism in disguise, as is authoritatively argued in The Inner Game of Tennis, a critique may also be a compliment incognito. Economics has been the most successful of the social science

disciplines (although, in part, this is because "success" is evaluated in terms of the instrumental values of the larger society). However, none of us thinks that such "success" entitles <u>them</u> to Nobel Prizes, while we political scientists suffer and toil in the grey cloak of anonymity.