

## *Market vs Society?*

### *Human principles and economic rationale in changing times*

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#### **Sociology versus Economics, Early Parsons versus the Positivists**

The early essays of Talcott Parsons, defined before *The Structure of Social Action*, attempt a critical review of the main postulates of “the proto- sociologists” while trying to define the theoretical interests of sociology in contrast to those of the orthodox economics. Positivism, as the dominant methodology of social sciences, thus established in the curriculum of the American Universities at the beginning of the twentieth century, deflects, according to Parsons, the possibility for the development of a “real” social science, as it subsumes the terms for the theoretical understanding of an action under those of economic exchange and utility, leading to the obliteration of the historical and broader social features of action.

It will be argued that the parsonian theory, in part following the German Historicism, aims at integrating the value factor as an element that demonstrates the relational and evaluative nature of society. Therefore, all analyses of the classical theorists which Parsons attempts to conduct in his early essays aim at making clear that human action itself and consequently social phenomena produced by this action, are interdependent and define one another. Thus, we will try to demonstrate that Parsons, using the factor of value, attempted to flee the methodological problems facing the orthodox economics. Moreover, Parsons himself has thereby placed sociology on a different scientific basis than the positivists, elevating the essential conditions for the development of a “grand” science of the social.

Finally, it will be argued that Parsons’ early essays consider economic theory as a special case of a more general social theory, but this early programme of methodological unification of the multiple social sciences and especially of sociology with economics has failed.