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Social organization, A general systems and role theory perspective, by Alvin I. Bertrand

Jiri Kolaja

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Another good classification is differentiation between roles according to their reciprocity such unilateral, multilateral or omnilateral. On page 109 the group is defined as having roles reciprocal with every other position. However, if one conceives of a communicative disease unit it appears that that group contained several roles in which occupants are non-reciprocally related to a patient. In my judgement, the author defines complex organization in a helpful manner by proposing that it is composed of at least two «elemental groups with socialized functions dedicated to a particular goal and linked by interstitial groups through reflexive reciprocal role relationships» (p. 132).

The interstitial group gains recognition by a proposition that the latter comes into existence to link two or more elemental groups. Several differences between social system and social institutions are helpfully spelled out especially on page 103. In the last chapter, phenomena of social disorganization are summarily reviewed. As stated above, Bertrand, is good in specifying additional differences between such phenomena as role conflict, role incongruity, role inadequency, role frustration, role superfluity, role non-reciprocity, role ambivalence, and role boredom. Generally, the author should be praised because of his endeavor to additionally structure some more or less established concepts.

How can the book be criticized? Let me say one more word in regard to influences on the author. The reviewer was pleased that several times the author quoted P.A. Sorokin. However, it appears that the most referred to author was Frederick L. Bates. While reading the book, it came to my mind another sociologist who is not listed by Bertrand, i.e., L. von Wiese and his extensive classification of social relations. A criticism of Bertrand's useful treatise is that in his categories of concepts one is possibly uncertain of his fundamentum divisionis, for example, in his section on Roles and Deviance. One could further ask if and how these and other subclassifications should and could be more organized into a system or systems? Generally, however, this is a good book.

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Signed articles express only the views of their author.

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