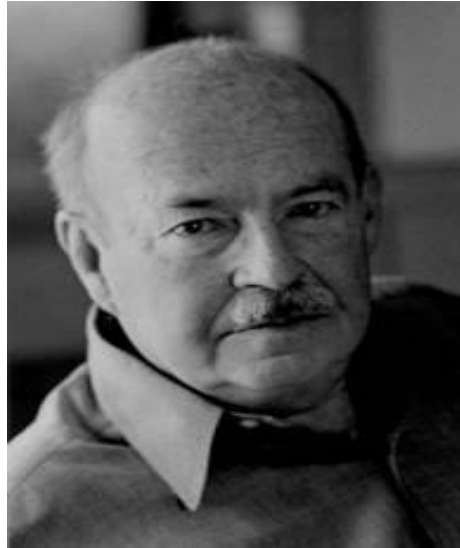


TALCOTT PARSONS



INTRODUCTION

TALCOTT PARSONS WAS AN AMERICAN SOCIOLOGIST WHO EXERTED A GREAT INFLUENCE ON POST SECOND WORLD WAR SOCIOLOGY.

PARSONS' MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS MAY BE SUMMARISED AS FOLLOWS:

- PARSONS CONTRIBUTED TO THE THEORY OF ACTION.
- PARSONS CONTRIBUTED TO MODERN UNCTIONALISM.
- PARSONS DEVELOPED MODERN SYSTEMS THEORY.

LIFE SKETCH OF TALCOTT PARSONS

BORN: DECEMBER 13, 1902

PLACE OF BIRTH: COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO, USA

DIED: MAY 8, 1979(AGED 76)

PLACE OF DEATH: HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY, WEST GERMANY

❖ EDUCATION:

AHMERST COLLEGE, MASSACHUSSETS ,1920

OPTED FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES.BA.1924

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, 1924-25

UNIVERSITY OF HEIDELBERG, 1926. DID PH.D.

❖ CAREER

JOINED AHMERST COLLEGE AS INSTRUCTOR OF ECONOMICS.TAUGHT FOR A YEAR (1926-27).

JOINED HARVARD UNIVERSITY AS INSTRUCTOR IN 1927.

JOINED NEWLY ESTABLISHED DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF PITRIM SOROKIN.

- FIRST MAJOR PUBLICATION:

THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL ACTION (1937)

- DURING SECOND WORLD WAR: WORKED AS CONSULTANT TO US GOVERNMENT ON POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF GERMANY.
- AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY: BECAME CHAIRMAN OF SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT ON RETIREMENT OF SOROKIN.
- FOUNDED NEW **INTERDISCIPLINARY** DEPARTMENT OF **SOCIAL RELATIONS** AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY IN 1946.DEPARTMENT HAD STRONG SOCIOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY BASE.
- ACHIEVEMENTS OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL RELATIONS : WITHIN 10 YEARS, 80 PH.D.S WERE AWARDED .
- AT AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION:TALCOTT PARSONS BECAME PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION IN 1949.
- RETIREMENT:RETIRED FROM HARVARD UNIVERSITY IN 1973. BUT HE CONTINUED TO ENGAGE IN ACADEMIC LECTURING AND WRITING TILL HIS DEATH.ONE OF HIS LAST MAJOR PUBLICATIONS WAS
- *THE HUMAN CONDITION*(1978)

THE THREE PHASES OF PARSONS

❖ **PETER HAMILTON** HAS IDENTIFIED THREE PHASES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF TALCOTT PARSONS

➤ **PHASE 1.** PUBLICATION OF *THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL ACTION* (1937) • THIS BOOK PROPAGATES THE VOLUNTARISTIC THEORY OF ACTION

➤ **PHASE 2.** MARKED BY MOVEMENT FROM SOCIAL ACTION TO STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM.

- MAJOR WORKS OF THIS PERIOD INCLUDE • *THE SOCIAL SYSTEM* (1951),
- *TOWARDS A GENERAL THEORY OF ACTION* (1951) WHICH HE WROTE IN COLLABORATION WITH EDWARD SHILS,
- *ECONOMY AND SOCIETY* (1956) WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH NEIL J. SMELSER.

➤ **PHASE 3.** THIS PERIOD IS MARKED BY: 1. THE CYBERNETIC MODEL

2. A CONCERN WITH DEFINING AND EXPLAINING EMPIRICAL PROBLEMS OF DEFINING AND EXPLAINING SOCIAL CHANGE .

☐ MAJOR WORKS OF THIS PERIOD INCLUDE :

▪ *SOCIETIES :EVOLUTIONARY AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES* (1967) ▪ *THE SYSTEM OF MODERN SOCIETIES* (1971)

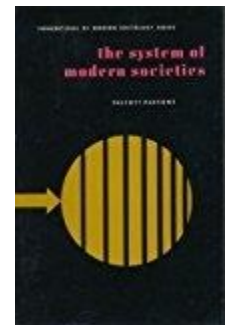
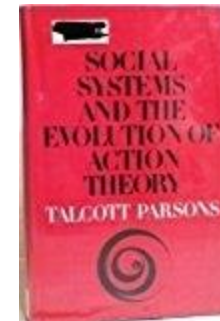
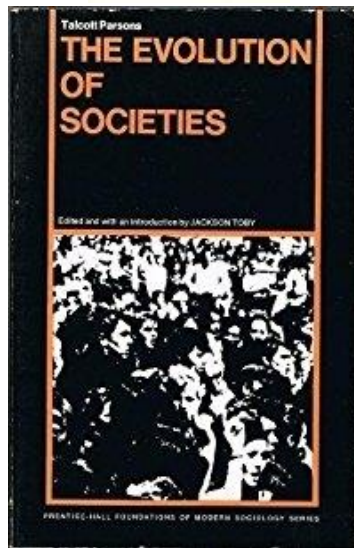
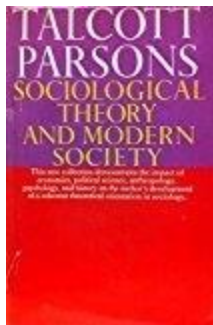
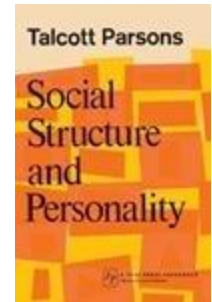
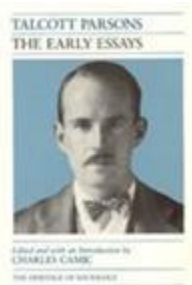
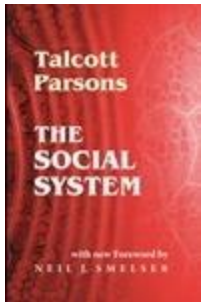
▪ *SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY AND MODERN SOCIETY* (1967) ▪ *POLITICS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE*

(1971)

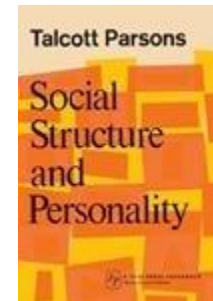
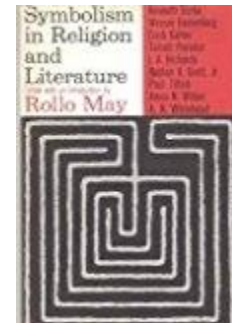
▪ *SOCIAL SYSTEM AND THE EVOLUTION OF ACTION THEORY* (1977) ▪ *THE HUMAN CONDITION* (1978)

(HAMILTON:1985:15-17)

SOME BOOKS BY TALCOTT PARSONS



TALCOTT PARSONS



FEATURES OF PARSONIAN FUNCTIONALISM

❖ ANALYTICAL REALISM-



DEVELOPMENT OF ABSTRACT CONCEPTS FROM EMPIRICAL REALITY

❖ HOW TO EMPLOY CONCEPTS –ELABORATELY CLASSIFY PHENOMENA

□ VOLUNTARISTIC THEORY OF ACTION:SYNTHESIS OF

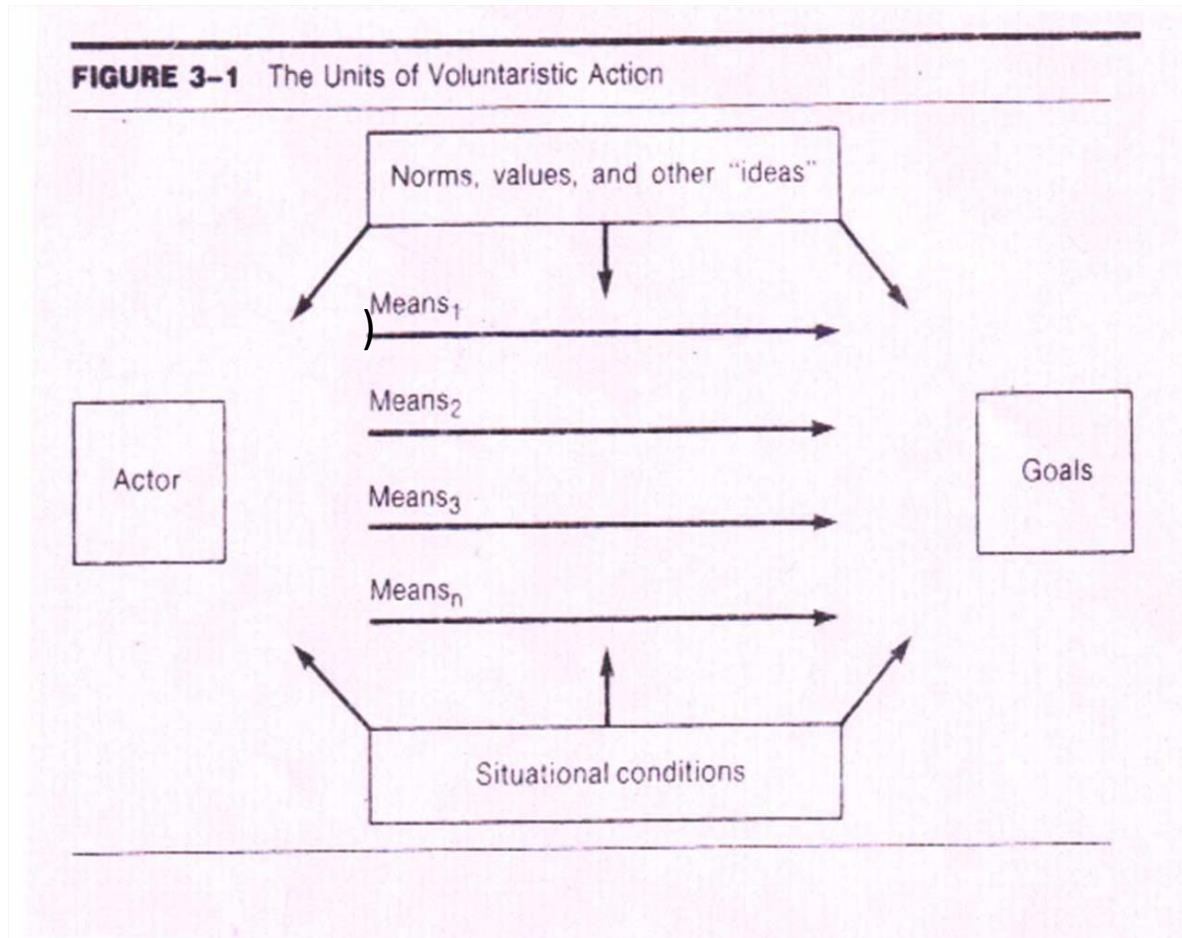
1. UTILITARIANISM
2. POSITIVISM
3. IDEALISM

VOLUNTARISTIC THEORY OF ACTION

- ❖ ACTORS  ARE INDIVIDUAL PERSONS
- ❖ ACTORS  ARE GOAL SEEKING ENTITIES.
- ❖ ACTORS HAVE ALTERNATIVE MEANS TO ATTAIN GOALS
- ❖ ACTORS CONFRONT VARIETY OF INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS
- ❖ ACTORS GOVERNED BY VALUES
- ❖ ACTION INVOLVES TAKING SUBJECTIVE DECISION
- ❖ **GOAL OF ACTION THEORY:** TO SEE HOW ACTION IS CIRCUMSCRIBED BY NORMS, VALUES, ETC.

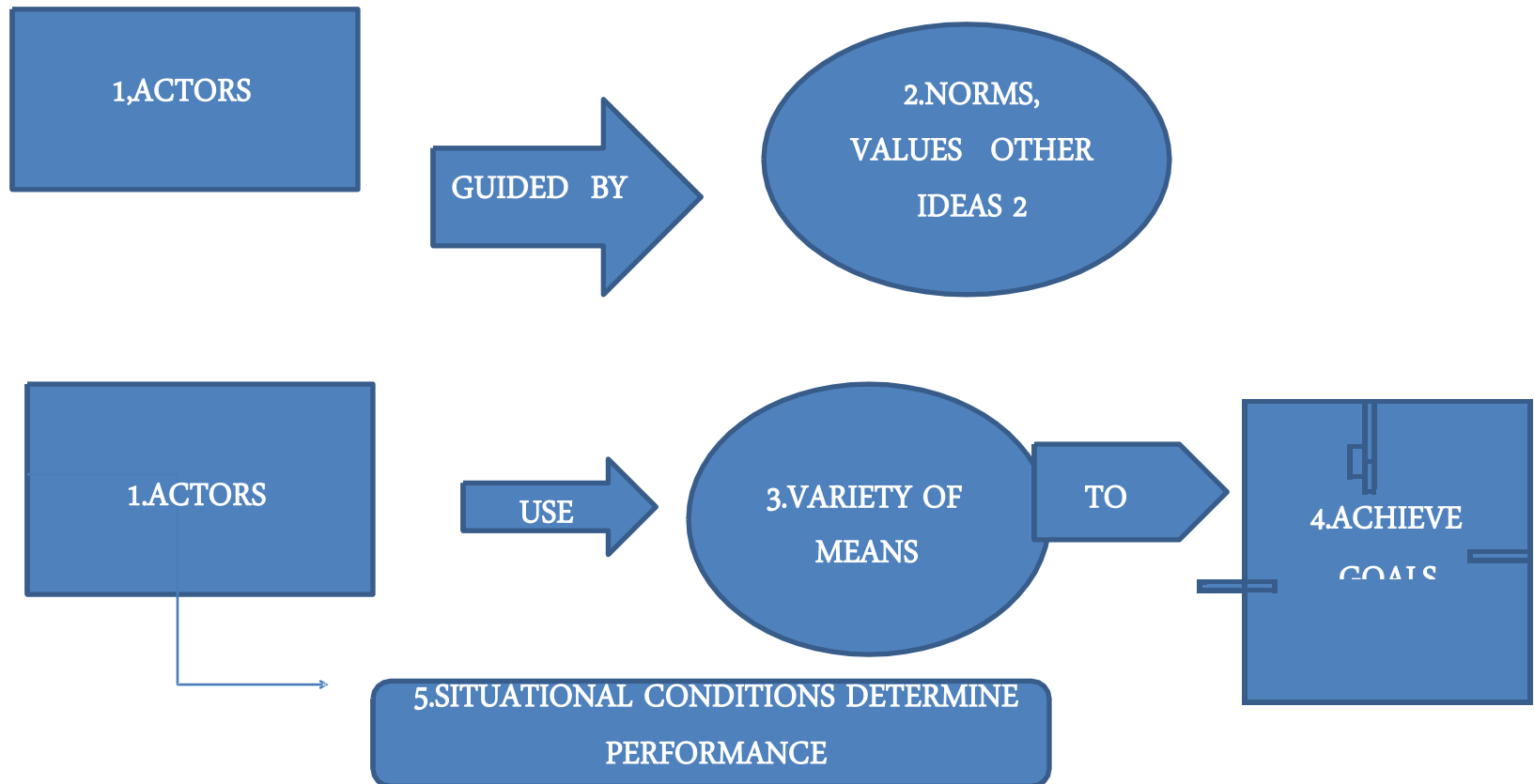
UNIT ACT(1)

THE UNIT ACT IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS ANALYZING ACTION



UNIT ACT(2)

UNIT ACT. CONSISTS OF A NUMBER OF COMPONENTS



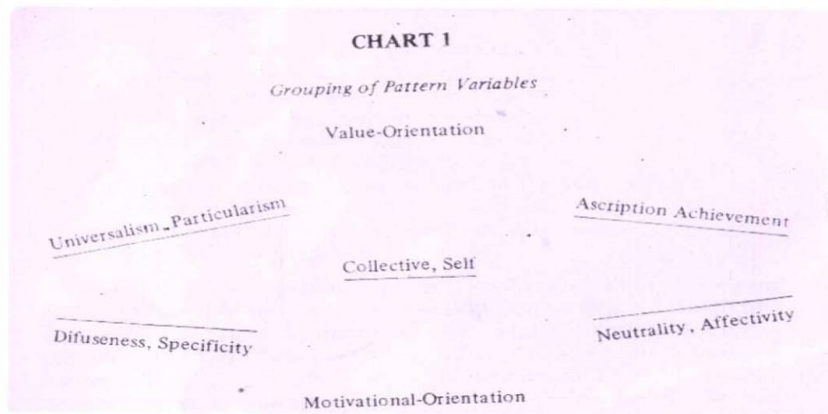
MODES OF ORIENTATION	TYPES OF ACTION	INTERACTION AMONG ACTORS	INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF INTERACTION
1) MOTIVATIONAL A) COGNITIVE B) CATHECTIVE C) EVALUATIVE	1) INSTRUMENTAL 2) EXPRESSIVE 3) MORAL		
2) VALUE A) COGNITIVE B) APPRECIATIVE C) MORAL			
SOURCE :TURNER	(1987)		

❖ **PATTERN VARIABLES**

❖ **PATTERN VARIABLES DENOTE COMMON PROPERTIES OF ACTION SYSTEMS.**

❖ **FIVE PATTERN VARIABLES :**

1. **AFFECTIVITY-AFFECTIVE NEUTRALITY**
2. **DIFFUSENESS-SPECIFICITY**
3. **UNIVERSALISM-PARTICULARISM**
4. **ACHIEVEMENT-ASCRPTION**
5. **SELF-COLLECTIVITY(DROPPED LATER)**



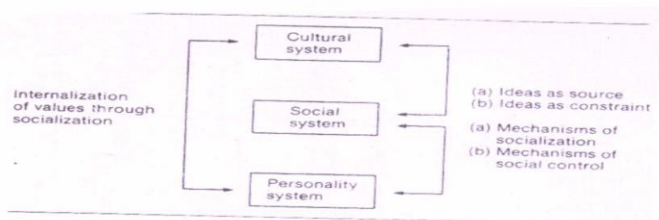
	UNIVERSALISM	PARTICULARISM
Achievement	A. Universalistic Achievement Pattern	B. Particularistic Achievement Pattern
	Expectation of active achievement in accord with universalized standards and generalized rules relative to other actors.	Expectation of active achievements relative to and/or on behalf of the particular relational context in which the actor is involved.
Ascription	C. Universalistic Ascription Pattern	D. Particularistic Ascription Pattern
	Expectation of orientation of action to a universalistic norm defined either as an ideal state or as embodied in the status-structure of the existing society.	Expectation of orientation of action to an ascribed status within a given relational context.

PATTERN VARIABLES (MEANING)

1. **AFFECTIVITY-AFFECTIVE NEUTRALITY**-DENOTES HOW MUCH AFFECT(EMOTION) SHOULD AN ACTOR DISPLAY IN A SITUATION.
2. **DIFFUSENESS-SPECIFICITY**-DENOTES WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A PARTICULAR SOCIAL ROLE.IS IT DIFFUSE OR IS IT SPECIFIC?
3. **UNIVERSALISM-PARTICULARISM**-WHAT TYPE OF ACTION SHOULD AN ACTOR DISPLAY IN A SITUATION-SHOULD THE ACTOR GO BY UNIVERSAL NORMS OR MAINTAIN A PARTICULARISTIC ATTITUDE?
4. **ACHIEVEMENT-ASCRPTION**-HOW TO EVALUATE A SOCIAL ACTOR?SHALL WE USE BASES OF ASCRPTION, SUCH AS GENDER, CASTE, ETC.OR SHALL WE ASSESS AN ACTOR BY ACHIEVEMENTS LIKE MARKS SECURED IN AN EXAMINATION?
5. **SELF-COLLECTIVITY**-HOW MUCH SHOULD AN ACTOR'S ACTIONS SHOULD BE GUIDED BY **SELF** INTEREST OR THE COLECTIVE INTEREST?

THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

- THE SOCIAL SYSTEM= INSTITUTIONALIZED PATTERNS OF INTERACTION
- ACTION =CULTURAL SYSTEM+ SOCIAL SYSTEM+PERSONALITY SYSTEM
- GOAL OF ACTION THEORY———TO SEE HOW ACTION IS CIRCUMSCRIBED BY NORMS, VALUES, ETC.



REQUISITE FUNCTIONALISM

❖ IN *WORKING PAPERS ON THE THEORY OF ACTION* (1953) AND *ECONOMY AND SOCIETY* (1956) PARSONS THE FUNCTIONS FOR MEETING SYSTEM REQUISITES WERE WELL INSTITUTIONALIZED INTO ACTION THEORY.

❖ **FOUR FUNCTIONAL REQUISITES:** □ADAPTATION □GOAL ATTAINMENT □INTEGRATION □LATENCY

- FUNCTIONS OF REQUISITES

1. **ADAPTATION:** SECURING SUFFICIENT FACILITIES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND DISTRIBUTING THEM THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM.

2. **GOAL ATTAINMENT:**

- a. PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES.

- b. MOBILIZING RESOURCES

3. **INTEGRATION** –ESTABLISHES INTERRELATIONSHIP AMONG SYSTEM UNITS.

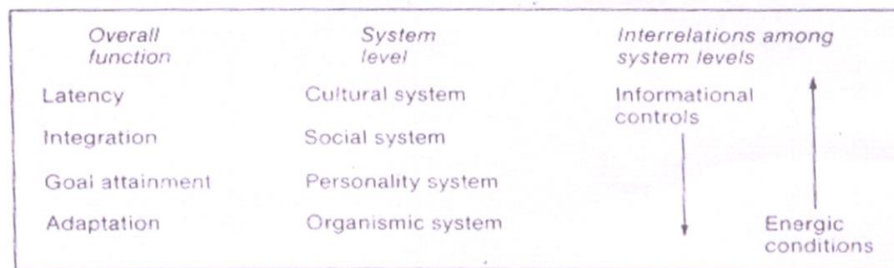
4. **LATENCY**-TWO COMPONENTS

1. **PATTERN MAINTAINENCE**-ENSURES THAT ACTORS DISPLAY APPROPRIATE CHARACTERISTICS:MOTIVES, ROLE PLAYING , ETC.

2. **TENSION MANAGEMENT**-DEALS WITH INTERNAL TENSIONS AND STRAINS OF ACTORS IN THE SOCIAL SYSTEM.

INFORMATIONAL HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

FIGURE 3-7 Parsons' Cybernetic Hierarchy of Control

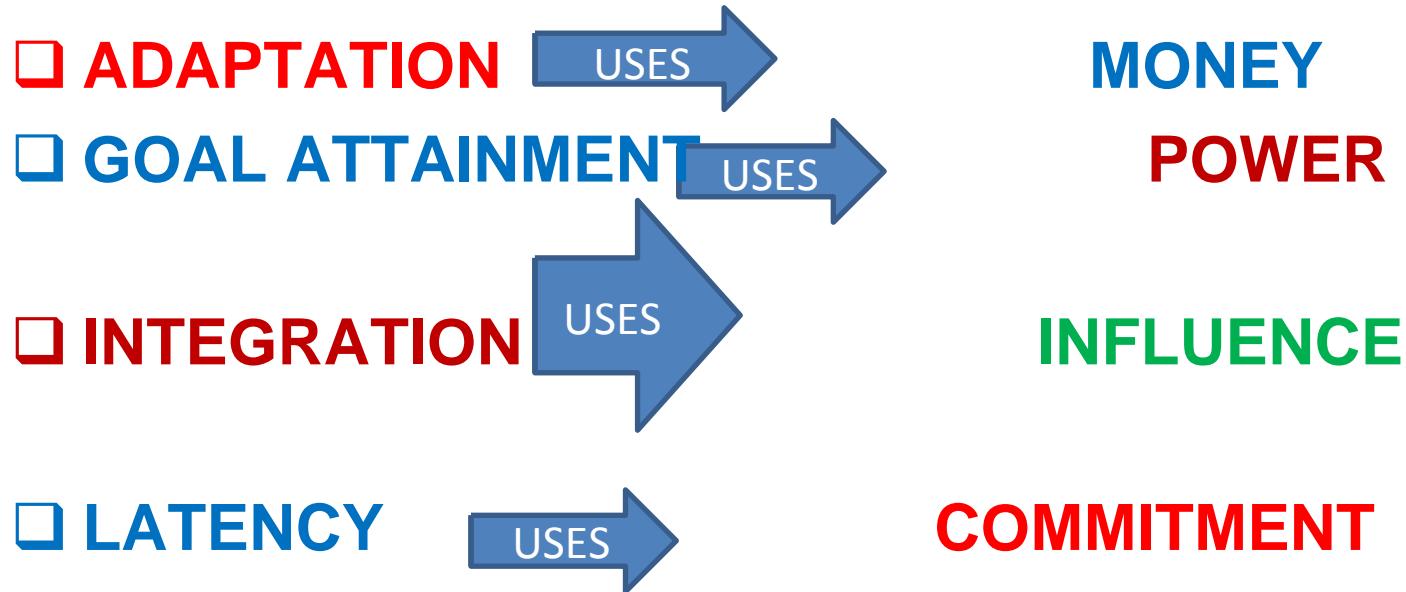


INFORMATIONAL HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

- ❖ EACH ELEMENT OF UNIT ACT IS A FULL FLEDGED ACTION SYSTEM.
- ❖ EACH ACTION SYSTEM CONFRONTS FOUR PROBLEMS:
 - ADAPTATION ➤ GOAL ATTAINMENT
 - INTEGRATION ➤ LATENCY
- ❖ ANALYTICAL SYSTEM SHIFTS TO INPUT-OUTPUT CONNECTIONS.

GENERALIZED MEDIA OF EXCHANGE

❖ **INTERCHANGE AMONG FOUR ACTION SUBSYSTEMS ARE CARRIED OUT BY DIFFERENT TYPES OF SYMBOLIC MEDIA:**



SOCIAL CHANGE

❖ PARSONS ON THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

□ STAGE 1. INCREASING DIFFERENTIATION OF SYSTEM UNITS INTO PATTERNS OF FUNCTIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE.

□ STAGE 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PRINCIPLES AND MECHANISMS OF INTEGRATION IN DIFFERENTIATING SYSTEMS

□ STAGE 3. INCREASING ADAPTABILITY OF DIFFERENTIATED SYSTEMS IN THEIR ENVIRONMENTS.

