

Inventory of the Standard of Living.

By

Otto Neurath.

1. Standard of Living (Lebenslage).

Certain comprehensive systematic studies of economics state that their subject is really concerned, in the last analysis, with the „wealth of the nation“, the general welfare, the good of the people, and similar concepts. After according such high honor to these concepts, however, they proceed to make little or no use of them. Would it not be better to avoid such ideas in the first place, as has often been suggested, or to develop them in such a way that they can constantly be applied? The latter approach is proposed in this paper.

In every day speech one might say that the standard of living of a group has been reduced, and mean thereby not only that their income is lower, so that they are able to buy less food and clothing, but also that, for example their working hours have been lengthened, that their leisure time has thus been shortened and also that there are thus more conflicts within this group, and that the incidence of disease and mortality has increased.

This colloquial usage can be made more precise and fruitful through scientific procedure. We refer to the „standards of living“ of a group, to the variations in kind, in scale, and in distribution of these standards. Insofar as this term is not used merely „decoratively“, as above, it is usually narrowed considerably. Ordinarily, the point of departure is the monetary income and the goods that can be bought with this income; other things which are obtained without purchase are then taken into account in order to include a monetary value for them in the computation. This procedure, however, does not touch upon working hours, leisure time, morbidity and other factors which cannot be included in the concept of „consumption“, but which we wish to consider when we speak of standards of living.

A theory of the standard of living can only be established and developed within the framework of an analysis of society if one defines the concept „standard of living“ very broadly. Previously, scientists in delimiting this concept have been drawn too much in the direction of the theory of income and prices, principally because in that field the „unit of money“ could be used as the basis for all calculations. We shall treat the problem as concretely and directly as possible, in order to see how methods may be established which will enable one to study standards of living as the result of social processes.

We wish, for example, to be able to answer the following question : how do various institutions operate within a given social order and how do different social systems affect the scale and distribution of standards of living ? We must be able to study the way in which the human standard of living is influenced by a market economy based on money, as well as by primitive or complicated non-monetary systems. One can also study such problems as the way in which the distribution of standards of living affects human relationships, particularly their market relationships. In short, standards of living can in every way be fitted into social diagnoses and prognoses. We can regard them as the effects as well as the prerequisites of social processes.

If „consumption“, in the traditional sense indicated above, is taken as the point of departure, so many elements which characterize living conditions are missing, that some authors have introduced the broader concept of „satisfaction of needs“. This enables them to include attendance at the theater, household services, and housing in addition to the consumption of bread, meat, etc. But even this extension fails to take into consideration sickness, leisure time, labor fatigue, and so forth, as elements of the standard of living.

The customary approach tends to consider only those elements which raise the standard of living, but not those which lower it. This is understandable, for „demand“ exists only for that which benefits us, and attention has usually been centered on „demand“, even when the formulation of the problem seemed to aim toward something else.

Of those elements which we mentioned as not taken into consideration, labor is accounted for in so far as it is paid for. This is due to the fact that wages are entered as „costs“, that is, as negative quantities in commercial accounting which is generally the point of departure for economics. In the definition of „standard of living“ suggested here, food, housing, clothing, theater, sickness, occupational fatigue and leisure time are all to be included. The living conditions of a person are improved or lowered as these elements change.

The atomistic, utilitarian approach (which we do not accept) would express the matter thus : „positive“ and „negative“, as well as „indifferent“ elements exist side by side. The „feeling“ of a person would then be regarded as constituted of „pleasure“ and „pain“. These individual „feeling“-quantities would be correlated with certain causes, namely, the pleasure-quantities with „commodities“, and the pain-quantities with „discommodities“. The quality of an object, functioning under certain circumstances as a „commodity“, admits of various degrees of utility. In the same way, degrees of „disutility“ can be distinguished within the framework of this approach.

Although this analysis appeared in the history of the theory of value, it did not lead to the formulation of an atomistic theory of the standard of living which would, in a certain sense, be a parallel construction to the standard of living theory we propose. Not even those authors who consider negative elements in the basic discussions of value make any permanent use of them later. Generally, only the positive elements, the „commodi-

ties", are employed in the theory because only „commodities“ are the objects of purchase. By and large, the tendency was to ascribe certain values to certain prices, so that, in general, the atomistic point of view also fails to employ the negative quantities of the theory of value.

2. State of Felicity (Lebensstimmung).

Whereas this atomistic approach coordinates positive and negative „feeling“-quantities with positive and negative conditions, we shall coordinate the totality of a person's feeling, or that of a groups, with his or its entire living condition and investigate the extent to which changes in the „state of felicity“ in a positive or negative direction depend upon changes in these conditions. We, therefore, do not begin with single pleasure- or pain-quantities and then construct the totality of feeling. Instead, we investigate only the conditions under which the totality of feeling becomes more or less pleasurable. Only these elements are significant for our approach to standards of living. We call that standard of living higher which produces a more pleasurable state of felicity characterized by a certain attitude or behavior.

In the language of the „subjective theories of value“ — this is not the place to point out the differences between the various doctrines — the problem could be expressed as follows : We regard the total standard of living as the bearer of „value“ in any given case. We shall only deal with the fact that the total standard of living, but not its various parts, can have different values for the same person. Even the subjective theory of value has not always ascribed a specific value to a specific object ; it recognizes the concept of „complementary commodities“. If we introduce the negative quantities into the subjective theory of value, then we must also define „complementary discommodities“. Oxygen, hydrogen and a burning match in combination would be a „discommodity“, but not one of the three elements alone or any two of them together. It is also possible that the objects in one combination of „commodities“ would be „discommodities“ in another combination ; for example, a stove combined with coal would be a „commodity“, but with dynamite a „discommodity“. We should be able to speak of „complementary parts of a standard of living“ which together would determine the value of the total standard of living. Then the subjective theory of value would lose an important part of its field of action. Essentially it requires the atomistic point of view which always leads to logically inadequate „allocations“.

We, therefore, do not construct the state of felicity out of single pleasure and pain quantities and do not coordinate specific parts of the standard of living to them. We do, however, arrange the states of felicity in a scale in that we say that one is higher, equal to or lower than another. We then classify standards of living according to the states of felicity conditioned by them. How we classify states of felicity is a special problem. We could, for example, use certain persons as test cases, and consider their answers to questions, as well as other kinds of behavior which have to be defined previously.

This excursus shows how the study of standards of living can be fitted into the theoretical viewpoint, and approximately what position it occupies. The main task, however, is to define the elements which are characteristic for the standard of living. We cannot regard it as a weight made up of the sum of the weights of the various parts. We cannot even specifically enumerate all the things which might be counted in the standard of living. Nevertheless, it can be shown that this concept suffices for both our theory and practice.

3. The Silhouette of the Standard of Living (Lebenslagenphysiognomie).

If we wish to characterize the increase or decrease of the standard of living, we can select certain important determining elements. It is important to measure these elements with the help of units or at least to grade them. We can speak about trebling the mortality rate, but perhaps not about trebling the beauty of an ocean view. Complexes which are thus composed of various quantities, each of which would have to be measured by specific units, we shall call „standard of living silhouettes“. They are the crude tools of our discipline. This terminology was chosen with a view to graphic demonstration. For the sake of simplicity let us take as an example a standard of living silhouette characterized only by food, housing and health. All three are measurable quantities. Two human groups, A and B are given ; f signifies a unit of food, d a unit of dwelling, and h a unit of health. (We assume that we can measure these three quantities by means of specific units.) The standard of living A, is composed of $3 f + d + 3 h$, B of $2 f + 3 d + h$:

Person A	Person B
fff	ff
d	ddd
hhh	h

The standard of living A is characterized by more food, a smaller coefficient with respect to dwelling, and a greater degree of health (to this might be added leisure time, working time, etc.). The form of the silhouette depends upon the choice of units. In the case given here the A silhouette is „concave“, the B silhouette „convex“. If the unit of dwelling were assumed to be smaller, then both silhouettes might be „convex“, but the B silhouette would then be more convex than the A silhouette.

We have defined the concept „standard of living“ so broadly that we can include more or fewer elements, according to the formulation of the problem. The standard of living silhouettes can be applied in the most varying ways, for the analysis of society as well as of the market. If, for example, a market analysis were to follow sales potentialities, it would be concerned not only with age-groups in the population (sales of tobacco, etc.) but also with the morbidity rate (sale of certain medicines, etc.).

If one wishes to characterize the standards of living in specific regions,

it may be important to be able to do this precisely, with the aid of the fewest possible elements. Silhouettes making such precise differentiation would be especially useful if the elements were selected in such a way that one could derive other elements of the silhouette from them. A characterization of the standards of living of different countries and eras by means of few data should make it possible to grade these standards in such a way that an increase in the data would not change the order in its rough outline.

It is not advisable to tie standard of living calculations to data derived from money calculations, although one may of course use such data if they are sufficiently controlled. If one wishes to characterize the mode of life of a laboring group on the basis of „money wages“, one would pass, by considering „purchasing power“, to „real wages“. We do not intend to enter into the problem of index numbers here, nor into the difficulties which arise when price differences exist, that is, when the same amount of money has a different purchasing power in different groups for some or all purchases. Neither shall we consider the fact that money may have a different „purchasing breadth“ in different regions, that is to say, that articles which can be bought in one place can only be obtained in another by official assignment. However one establishes the „real income“, one considers only the „positive“ elements of the atomistic subjective theory of value, never the „negative“.

The objects of consumption directly assigned to a worker, whether by a factory or by a public institution, could be added to his „real wages“ as „wages paid in kind“. In budgeting one would give them their usual money value in order to make them comparable. But even so, one has omitted some of the elements of the standard of living — those which cannot be bought, as, for instance, the use of public parks. Thus, besides the „negative“ elements, there are also missing certain „positive“ elements, which a broader atomistic theory of value would have to introduce.

We cannot go into the question of the degree to which one can establish what might be called momentary standards of living or the degree to which one can seek to comprehend the standard of living of one life, anticipating future possibilities to a certain extent. Within the framework of social analysis, the problem of the possible significance of the waste of natural resources for a future decline in the standard of living plays an important role. The question then arises as to how far one can take these future possibilities into account in setting up the silhouette without becoming vague. The standard of living of a society at this moment and in the future appears as the function of a specific given condition, including certain potential changes. But these are special questions which are not directly related to the main problem.

4. Selection and Grading.

In our scientific work it is necessary, on the one hand, to present the various possible relationships schematically, but also, on the other hand, to combine the available data fruitfully. Systematic analysis of standards of living has really just begun. In general sociology, in sociographic studies,

and also in many practical compilations, there has as yet been no sufficiently precise terminology based on a consistent theory of the standard of living. In economics, too, no proper place has as yet been found for the standard of living problem. It is highly instructive to look through the large general and sociological encyclopedias on this point. Just as in the systematic presentations, „consumption“ and „standard of living“ are treated incidentally without closer connection with other subjects. When „measurement“ is discussed, it pertains in general only to the problems of accounting and index numbers.

The selection of problems and terminology is determined above all by the fact that one is not so much interested in the way in which certain institutions and measures influence the standard of living as in the way in which specific phenomena, and above all, market phenomena, can be derived from the „economic aims“ of individuals or of whole groups. The idea of the „homo oeconomicus“ which explicitly or tacitly lies at the basis of many economic theories, easily leads one to construct, beside the „actual“ trend, a so-called „correct“ trend, as a standard of comparison for the real one. If special care is not taken, this could easily lead to an absolutistic metaphysics.

The derivation of attitudes from „motives“ can be accomplished empirically with certain precautionary measures. But the tendency to look for the derivation of trends from motives instead of looking for specific trends also leads economists who follow an empirical procedure to the neglect of the negative elements discussed above. Without concerning ourselves with the form of organization which is more or less explicitly based upon the homo oeconomicus we can investigate the influence of various forms of organization upon the distribution of the standard of living.

In analyses of social order it is customary to use greater formal precision where money values can in some way be applied, while the operation of the social order on personal life, which one may really wish to consider no less forcefully, is presented with less logical rigor. This disproportion between the separate parts of the analysis can be overcome by giving greater emphasis to research on the standard of living, practically as well as theoretically. Just as production curves, rate of exchange curves, stock price curves and so on, are considered in market research, so in the study of standards of living one could include curves of leisure time, mortality, morbidity, etc. The problem of the extent to which use would be made of momentary quantities and certain derived quantities which might apply to the entire life of a specific individual (such as the amount of leisure time a person may still expect at a given time) will not be discussed further here.

As soon as one describes the changes in standards of living systematically and precisely, and particularly their dependence upon other quantities, among which can be included some that are not customarily dealt with in economic research, quantities which characterize social life and the environment in so far as they are significant for our problem, the question arises as to how one can grade, or measure with the help of certain units, the separate quantities under consideration. So long as no specific scientific research

furnishes the possibility of finding a general unit — and thus far there is a complete lack of one — we must seek to establish special units for every element of our silhouette of standard of living and, where this is impossible, to attempt gradings.

The attempts to characterize the standard of living are like those which try to characterize the „state of health“. Both are multidimensional structures. But, even when we limit ourselves to one of the quantities of the state of health or standard of living, it is still not easy to compare the state of health of one person or group with that of another person or group. To give one example : When the age grouping of two groups is different, then the same total mortality and morbidity rates take on a different significance and one must somehow combine the age structure with mortality and morbidity in order to obtain comparable data. Here, as in the study of the standard of living, there is always a temptation to take a specific „standard“ as a basis for comparison. For instance, one can take a „standard population“ which can be combined with a „standard consumption“ in order to arrive at a fruitful classification. It is obvious that the selection of such a „basis“ is admissible only if the selection of another „basis“ does not change the order of the quantities in question.

We know from the comparison of living standards in different countries what difficulties arise when one takes a specific standard of living as the point of departure in order to relate all other standards to it. These difficulties recur with each of the individual elements of our silhouettes of standard of living. For certain special purposes, however, they have been partially overcome, so that it is only a matter of introducing considerations which are as yet lacking and, above all, of indicating how one can fruitfully construct silhouettes of standard of living out of individual elements.

5. Inventories of Standard of Living (Lebenslagenkataster)

The previous discussion shows in what way one can develop a consistent method of dealing with standards of living, one which will make it possible to fit such studies into general sociological, as well as economic research. We can regard the standards of living as defining the market relationships. This corresponds, in a certain sense, to existing tendencies in market theory. But the schematic characterization of our problem, the demonstration of the possibility of treating special concrete problems, is insufficient to make continuous practical work possible. For that a technique is needed comparable to those used in following the movements of certain quantities, namely, barometers of production, sales, etc. Statistics and descriptions of certain relationships must be developed in such a way that one could set up and compare inventories of standard of living for particular districts, whole countries or the world at various periods.

The theoretical analysis of the standard of living, briefly sketched above, is linked by the compilation of inventories of standard of living with those significant works, repeatedly undertaken since the middle of the 19th century for the special purpose of defining the living conditions of

laboring groups in particular towns. Since these painstaking studies do not rest upon a common theoretical basis, they are difficult to compare and they have, in a sense, an insular character. The restriction of the studies to laboring groups sometimes prevents the establishment of concepts which would be suitable for considering the standards of living of all population groups in the same way.

In planning inventories of standard of living it is clear that only families or other groups are considered. The life of an average man in a specific group can be construed from the given data, assuming that the existing condition is characteristic. The delimitation of specific spatial areas or specific groups leads to difficulties which have been encountered in other studies, and which need not be dealt with here.

It is perhaps not unimportant to point out that the customary approach to „consumption“ and „use“ requires certain modifications. It is not sufficient to determine how much gardenland is available in the vicinity of the town, or how many books per person. These quantities must be related in some way to the time during which they can be used. It means more to a worker to be able to use his plot of ground for ten hours a week than for only two, and it means less than if he had thirty hours. In order to put these factors in their correct position, one might multiply the amount of gardenland by the leisure time available. Similar problems arise constantly. They have as yet been dealt with only in exceptional cases, but never systematically, even though they are extremely significant for practical considerations.

The inventory of standard of living also shows what individuals have „made“ of given possibilities. The figures on real income indicate what can be bought with money income. The sum of real incomes is, therefore, a fictitious quantity which may be of value for certain considerations, but the inventory of standard of living gives us a view of the actual life of men. It can easily happen that some persons with the same income have a higher standard of living than others; they use their money in a different way. One can, then, compare the effective use with possible uses, but one must guard against the assumption that there is only one optimum mode of use, an assumption which repeatedly plays a role in economic theory.

The inventory of standard of living can also be set up in cases in which one is not in a position to compare different standards of living. One could, for example, set up an inventory of standard of living for a district in China without having to know how to rank the different standards within that district or without knowing how to compare that standard of living with those shown by the inventories of a district in USA or Sovjet Union. To be sure, the systematic treatment of such inventories of standard of living presupposes that, in broad outline, one has certain assumptions as to which data might be essential for purposes of comparison. Scientists making such inventories of standard of living are comparable to research workers who make geographical surveys and note the quality of the soil, vegetation, etc. Without a specific theoretical orientation the investigator will overlook or omit much that may later prove to be important. On the other hand, it is possible today to note down much that can only be

profitably evaluated later, in order to set up new hypotheses or to test old ones in a new way.

The analysis of standards of living becomes a sector of broader sociographic analysis, just as a study in social hygiene is a sector of the broader biological analysis of a specific region. Not all of the important sociological elements need be of interest from the point of view of the standard of living, just as not all the biological characteristics of specific groups are of interest in studying their health conditions. On the other hand, we know that good research into health problems does not stop with an inquiry into the cases of sickness and death, but includes all data directly connected with the state of health. Similarly research into the standard of living should include those data which experience has shown to be characteristic or important for the standard of living, such as social life, family conditions and school relationships. One could conceivably include the appearance of certain conflicts, restrictions, etc., in order to obtain a good basis for establishing the „state of felicity“. The very precision in formulating the problem itself prevents us from slipping into unbounded activity and from gathering too much „accidental“ material. For, just as theoretical work suffers from the lack of opportunity to work up sufficient concrete material, so the amassing of observational material without a strict definition of concepts and a strict formulation of the problem can lead to a dissipation of forces which often contributes to underrating the significance of the assembling of material.

6. Social Analysis and Research into Standard of Living.

The inventory of standard of living presents, to a certain extent, the result of a specific social condition; the trend of the totality of living conditions presents the result of a social development. Large historical surveys indicate roughly in what way the stratification of standards of living within societies have changed the „standard of living reliefs“. Societies having bold „relief“ may succeed societies having low „relief“. One can compare the levels of these peaks of standards of living with one another by a casual glance, just as one compares the height of various mountains ranges in geography, without necessarily being able to show exactly what definition was used for „average height“ of the mountain range. But we know that a more precise statement of all such estimates is possible, even if it has not yet been done.

Inventories of standard of living for characteristic areas of the United States, England, Italy, the Soviet Union and China, compared for the past few centuries, would be a valuable contribution to the analysis of the social development of these countries. It will not always be so simple, as has sometimes been assumed, to separate the influence of forms of social organization (assuming that this concept has been sufficiently defined) from the influence of other circumstances. It is just when one thinks that one has analyzed theoretically the total effect of a society upon the standard of living that such a control by means of concrete studies becomes particularly important.

How far one can thereby progress toward prognosis depends, on the one hand, on the extent to which the elements of our description can be tied together by hypotheses. Where this is possible only to a slight degree, prognosis depends on the extent to which one can count upon a constant relationship between the complexes which cannot be analyzed more closely. We see the results actually produced by market analysis, but also that market analysis cannot prognosticate new social changes nor the conditions which might be conditioned by such changes. Prognosis in market analysis is based, above all, on the assumption that the total complex with which it deals will not change essentially. A more comprehensive social analysis would have to transgress the bounds of pure market research, as well as pure research into the standard of living in order to arrive at a general theory of society, for which so many preliminary studies are already at hand. Social analysis has so far been carried on in the most heterogeneous fashion. Whereas certain groups of concepts — sometimes very narrow in their application — have enjoyed the most scrupulous attention, others, which we at once recognize to be important, have been utterly neglected. Among the latter are the concepts of research into the standard of living. The reasons for this neglect have been briefly pointed out here. They depend on the domination of that world of concepts which is linked with accounting. Accounting even becomes significantly noticeable where „non-monetary“ concepts are used.

With the establishment of the inventory of standard of living, the theory of standards of living automatically fits into the system of „measurements in kind“, which proceeds basically from the view that society produces the standard of living. „Measurement in kind“ characterizes the point of departure in furnishing the data for further deduction. These fundamental data we shall designate collectively as the „basis of life“, environment in the broadest sense : supplies of raw material, all sorts of sources of energy, inventions, human abilities, existing towns, streets, trains, canals, etc., all things which, taken together, and determined by means of specific measurements of quantity, are united into a structure. This always produces the standard of living which can be similarly characterized by means of complexes of specific measurements of quantity.

If certain problems of social analysis are treated by means of accounting (for example, the characterization of standards of living by money income), then only „measurement in kind“ (that is, calculations of standard of living in the sense used here) can show whether the results actually exhibit the gradation of given standards of living. In these standards we would especially include working time, leisure time, rate of accident, morbidity and mortality rates, as well as housing, food, clothing, education, recreation, etc. Accounting does not show us whether a surplus production of iron was not obtained at the cost of a higher rate of accidents. We could conceive of an approach which would not only aim at calculating the amount of human labor time per ton of iron, as has been customary, but also the corresponding number of accidents and amount of leisure time. It follows that a computation which is concerned with the profits of an industry and the sale of a product is primarily interested in the amount of work which

goes into a ton of iron, assuming that this can be defined with any degree of exactness. From this point of view, whether a ton of iron is extracted by a process which requires 12 working hours daily or only 6 is of no interest, assuming that the work pays the same. If we calculate that 8 hours are required for sleep, then, in the first case, there would remain 4, in the second case, 10 hours of leisure time. Social analysis, from the point of view of the standard of living theory, would automatically combine production with leisure time, accident rates, etc. At present, this is done only occasionally, when, for example, certain accident problems or questions of insurance, which add to the cost of the production of iron, are discussed. Naturally, the leisure time, working hours, accidents, etc., can also be determined per worker and per year and these and other quantities can be distributed over the life span of the worker.

The standard of living approach provides the opportunity for constantly keeping in mind the relationship of each social element with the standard of living and it avoids the calculation of accidents apart from production. If a hospital having 500 tuberculosis patients cures 50, while 10 out of 50 nurses contract tuberculosis, it has accomplished less than another hospital which only cures 45 out of 500 but which sees to it that no nurse contracts the disease. If one makes two separate computations, the first hospital appears to be more effective, but not when one makes a combined computation. The standard of living approach compels us to keep the social process as a whole constantly in mind and to avoid the atomistic approach unwillingly forced upon us by accounting. All attempts to permit the general approach to work itself out by a detour through concepts such as „national income“ and similar quantities only lead to unsatisfactory results, as this paper has shown.

Since there has as yet been no complete theory of research in the standard of living the numerous isolated theoretical remarks have not been discussed. That would require a separate analysis. Many fruitful suggestions are found in studies which have no bearing upon our method, while, on the other hand, some formulations in studies which are close to the approach suggested here are insufficient from a theoretical point of view. An analysis of all of these efforts would require a study of the historical development of various ideas and cannot be included in an approach which seeks to operate in a direct constructive way.

Research into the standard of living can be used in many ways; above all, the whole set of social institutions can be compared within its framework. At any rate, whether or not one has in mind such comprehensive social problems, research into the standard of living, in the sense of developing a theory of measurement in kind, should gradually become an important scientific activity.

Lebenslagenkataster.

Es wird vorgeschlagen, einen Begriff „Lebenslage“ in den Sozialwissenschaften zu verwenden, der nicht nur „Wohnung“, „Nahrung“, „Kleidung“ und andere Teile des „Realeinkommens“ umfasst, sondern auch „Mortalität“, „Morbidity“ usw. Die gesamte „Lebensstimmung“ einer Person hängt von der Gesamtheit der Lebenslagen ab, von der Morbidity ebenso wie von der Wohnung. Ob man die Lebens-

stimmung in „positive“ und „negative“ Elemente zerlegen kann, die man einzelnen Elementen der Lebenslage zuordnet, ist eine offene Frage.

Die wissenschaftliche Praxis geht am besten von „Lebenslagenphysiognomien“ (Lebenslagensilhouetten) aus, die durch verschiedenartig gemessene und skalierte Grössen gebildet werden. Wenn man die Lebenslagen einzelner Personen oder ganzer Länder auch nicht stets „skalierend“ zu vergleichen vermag, so kann man sie doch immer beschreiben. Geht man daran, „Lebenslagenkataster“ (Lebenslageninventare) verschiedener Völker und Zeiten aufzustellen, so muss man beachten, dass die Lebensstimmung eines Menschen nicht etwa schon durch die Gartenfläche gekennzeichnet wird, die ihm zur Verfügung steht; man muss angeben, über wieviel Freizeit er verfügt, um die Gartenfläche zu benutzen.

Man kann Gesellschaftsordnungen durch die von ihnen „produzierten“ Lebenslagen in Verbindung mit einer umfassenden „Naturalrechnung“ kennzeichnen. Ob die Geldrechnung in gewissem Ausmass geeignet ist, die Naturalrechnung zu ersetzen, kann nur mit Hilfe der Naturalrechnung entschieden werden, innerhalb deren die Lebenslagenrechnung eine wesentliche Rolle spielt.

Cadastre de „situations de vie“.

On propose d'introduire dans les sciences sociales le concept de „situation de vie“, qui englobe non seulement logement, alimentation, vêtement et autres parties du revenu réel, mais aussi mortalité, morbidité, etc. Le „climat de vie“ d'une personne dépend de l'ensemble de sa „situation de vie“, de la morbidité aussi bien que du logement. Est-il possible de décomposer le „climat de vie“ en éléments „positifs“ et „négatifs“, qui correspondraient aux différents éléments de sa „situation de vie“ ? Réserveons provisoirement la question.

Si nous envisageons la méthode scientifique, le point de départ le meilleur serait la notion de „physiognomie (silhouette) de vie“. On les dessinerait à l'aide de grandeurs diversement mesurées et graduées.

Certes, il ne serait guère possible de comparer les „situations de vie“ de personnes ou de peuples entiers en utilisant une seule échelle de graduation, tout au moins est-il possible de les décrire. Si l'on tente de dresser un „cadastre (inventaire) de situations de vie“ de différents peuples en différentes époques, il ne faut pas oublier que le „climat“ dans lequel vit un individu n'est pas assez déterminé par la surface du jardin qui lui appartient, il faut aussi préciser le loisir dont il dispose pour le cultiver.

On peut caractériser les différents régimes sociaux par les situations de vie qu'ils produisent, à condition de combiner cette analyse avec un calcul en nature aussi étendu que possible. Le calcul en argent peut-il remplacer dans une certaine mesure le calcul en nature ? La question elle-même ne peut être tranchée qu'à l'aide du calcul en nature qui lui-même dépend largement du calcul des „situations de vie“.