1962 at St. Barbara, Calif., under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions financed by the Fund for the Republic, for the purpose of studying the prospects of democracy in the decade from 1963 to 1973; and finally the conference "Il mondo di domani", organized by the Philosophical Institute of the University of Perugia in Italy and the conference on Germany 1985 organized 1965 in Berlin by the Evangelische Akademie.

VI

The numerous methodological problems with which the social sciences are confronted if they are to make the most accurate prognoses possible[5],can only be touched upon. John Stuart Mill already emphasized - and he may have been too optimistic - that a mere knowledge of certain trends or tendencies would enable us to predict their ultimate beneficial or harmful effect on human society. In line with Mill, Herman Finer observed that a politician is able to make exact predictions about those aspects of behavior that are determined by a main goal, by a limited field of reference, and a given scale of values.

Again it makes an important difference whether a phenomenon repeats itself, whether it is subject to regular change or exposed to irregular alteration:

1. Given a succession of identical single facts or collective data (sequences, systems, processes), the future form or development of each phenomenon is predictable, because it is simply a repetition of a phenomenon known in the past (Simplest example: The budget or even the national budget of 1965 will equal that of 1964 and is therefore predictable).

2. In the event that a single fact or a set of collective data, has undergone regular change in the past, we can predict its future development as the pattern of change will remain constant (Simplest example: participation in the American in-between congressional elections is always lower than in the presidential elections; the national income or the population increase at an uniform rate).

3. If collective data (processes, systems) are subject to irregular change, i.e., if in the future new factors may break into the system, preventing a regular pattern of change, limited prediction is possible if the number of new factors is small, and if we have gathered some knowledge of their influence on similar systems (Example: Effect of the introduction of the one-chamber-system into an American state, after one of the states - Nebraska - has had experience with this system).

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5) Cf. also E. Grunberg and F. Modigliani, "The Predictability of Social Events, The Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 62, 1954, pp. 465 ff. and B. de Jouvenal, L'art de la conjecture, Monaco 1964.