The Genesis of Social Interactionism and Differentiation of Macro- and Microsociological Paradigms

Dmitri N. Shalin

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, shalin@unlv.nevada.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/sociology_pubs

Part of the Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons, and the Social Psychology and Interaction Commons

Repository Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology at Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.
THE GENESIS OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONISM AND DIFFERENTIATION
OF MACRO- AND MICROSOCIOCOMPARADIGMS*

Dmitri N. Shalin

This paper presents an historical outlook on the macro-micro distinction in modern sociology. It links the genesis of social interactionism and microsociology to the rise of Romantic philosophy and attempts to elaborate methodological principles dividing macro- and microscopic perspectives in sociology. Six ideal-typical distinctions are considered: natural vs. social universality, emergent properties vs. emergent processes, morphological structuralism vs. genetical interactionism, choice among socially structured alternatives vs. structuring appearance into reality, structural vs. emergent directionality, operational vs. hermeneutical analysis. The complementarity of the languages of macro- and microsociological theories is advocated as a foundation for the further elaboration of conceptual links between the two levels of analysis.

A review of current literature reveals a growing concern with the macro-micro distinction in sociology. Among others, Wagner (1964), Etzioni (1968), Wallace (1969), Turner (1974), Goode (1975), Merton (1975), and Smart (1976) stressed the need for a separate conceptual treatment of macro- and microscopic phenomena and urged more attention to the methodological implications involved. This task is particularly exigent in view of the little attention given to systematic codification of the microscopic perspective in sociology. Whereas "macrosociology" has already found its way into the subject index of the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, "microsociology" is conspicuously absent. Still common is the approach that equates "psychological redactionism and micro-analysis... psychological and micro-social knowledge" (Etzioni, 1968:50-51), and not infrequently, macrosociology and general sociological theory are viewed as coterminous. In his article, entitled "Competing Paradigms in Macrosociology," Bottomore (1975) draws together under the name of macrosociology such diverse theoretical orientations as functionalism and ethnomethodology, structuralism and critical sociology, Marxism and phenomenological sociology. As a result, the whole issue of the macro-micro distinction is dropped, rather than resolved.
Interestingly enough, the issue is typically addressed by those who do not consider their own main concern microsociological. This may in part explain why the discussion often revolves around the question of whether or not a particular theoretical scheme qualifies for the analysis of society as a whole. Such analysis is seen as a specialty of macrosociology, while microsociology is associated with the study of parts, fragments, and elements of total social structures. The distinctive feature of macroscopic phenomena is said to be their persistence over time independently of the variance in compound elements. This holistic precept, variously depicted as the "emergent property," "Gestalt," or "network" aspect of social processes, is contrasted to the study of definitions, subjective attitudes and experiences attributed to microsociology.

This line of demarcation is hardly satisfactory. On methodological grounds, the assertion that microsociology deals with the parts without explicit reference to the contextual whole is untenable, for, as soon as a part is isolated from its context, it ceases to be a part and becomes a whole requiring analysis from the standpoint of its inner structure. The contrast of macrosociology as a study of total social structures and microsociology as concerned with small items of subjectively held attitudes is also hardly illuminating. It should be remembered that Max Weber, whose approach is consistently labeled macrosociological, treated Western capitalism as a dependent variable and sought to interpret it in terms of the meaningful actions and rationalizations held by members of early Protestant sects. Conversely, Durkheim's interest in the division of labor and structural sources of anomie precipitated his brilliant analysis of a conspicuously microscopic phenomenon: suicide. A common drawback of the prevailing approach is the tacit assumption that these are inherent properties of the object itself that make it macro- or microscopic, and subsequently, invite distinct conceptualizations. This tenet implies the classification of social objects into those marked by emergent properties and less enduring microscale phenomena irrelevant to perpetuation of the whole. The latter class of social objects tends to be considered
secondary in importance to the theory of society. The whole distinction, then, serves to separate "the 'hard data' of social structure (macro)" from "the 'soft data' of individual and group experience of social reality (micro)" (Smart, 1976:86).

The present analysis gives up an attempt to isolate the proper object of macro and microsociological analysis as it exists in reality. The question to be addressed is how macro- and microsociologists go about defining their subject matter and shaping their object conceptually. It is assumed that both orientations attend to the same social reality, but use different sets of conceptual tools and procedural devices to account for social order, conflict, change, action and personality. The discussion centers on the historical roots of the current split into the macro- and microsociological paradigms and attempts to illuminate the complementarity of the languages of macro- and microsociological analysis.

The suggested approach brings into focus the problem of a transition from the micro to the macro analysis of social systems. The failure of the prevailing approach to resolve this outstanding issue is one of the stimuli to the present endeavor. The task still remains before us which Wagner (1964:584) fifteen years ago saw unresolved: "The task of finding an effective transition from macro-sociological interactional concepts to the analysis of macro-social phenomena, as formulated fifty years ago by the German sociologists, remains still to be done." It should be clear, however, that this paper does not pretend to offer a solution to the problem. Rather, it analyzes the origins of the present difficulties, reconsiders the terms in which the problem could be addressed, and thus lays some ground work for further analysis. The ultimate end of this project is to contribute to the codification of macro- and microscopic perspectives in sociology. This objective cannot be fulfilled within the framework of one paper, especially because one of its main concerns is historical. As Merton (1968) argued so convincingly, the task of theoretical codification is not identical with that of historical systematization. Yet the whole...
division is justified only if there is a clear understanding that one concern is a foundation for the other.

Since Hobbes' classical solution to the problem of social order, sociologists have been accustomed to seeing the solid fact of society in macroformations. State, government, laws—such were the various faces of the Leviathan, that mythical monster armed with a scepter and sword to symbolize justice and coercion. A drastic change in the premises of sociological theory had to have occurred before Simmel (1950:10) could have asserted that "society is merely the name for a number of individuals, connected by interaction" and Ellwood (1907:307) could have reasserted that "society is but a broad term standing for psychical interaction of individuals." In Ross' words, "'Society' is, of course, a kind of fiction. There is nothing to it, after all, but people affecting one another in various ways" (1901:293). In the same categorical mode, Dewey (1930:85) wrote: "Society is of course but the relations of individuals to one another in this form or that. And all relations are interactions, not fixed molds." Going even farther than his contemporaries, Cooley declared: "...The imaginations which people have of one another are the solid facts of society" (1964:121). Thus the solid facts of society were dissolved into the liquid states of precarious intersubjective currents. This shift marks the thorough revision that sociological theory had undergone on the eve of the 20th century. Similar changes were affecting various other disciplines about the same time when sociology began to occupy itself with the micro-world. By the end of the 19th century, scholars had shifted their attention (1) from the macro- to the microscopic world; (2) from mechanical to relativist models; (3) from mechanistic causality to pluralistic determinism; (4) from the metaphor of "body" and "organic whole" to the image of "field" and "intersecting systems;" (5) from evolutionary teleologism to the schemes accentuating contingency and multidirectionality of change. These metamorphoses reflected the general swing in the metaphysical foundation of science from subject-object dualism, foreseen by Descartes as a basis of scientific knowledge, to Leibnitz's subject-object continuum and Romantic philosophy of the microcosm.

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
According to Descartes, the critical function of the subject consists in the removal of the obstacles (Baconian idols) impeding the free flow of information from the object to the subject. The ultimate source of activity was attributed to the object that informs the subject's action and thought. German transcendentalists reversed the scheme, assuming that the subject himself must first inform the object before the latter reveals itself to the knower. The activity of a subject (sensory, cognitive or practical) was held to be constitutive of both the world of objects and the world of knowledge. From the standpoint of Romantic philosophy, categories of human knowledge—universals and classifications, concepts and theories—are not only a passive reflection of the external world, but are also constitutive of this world. They function as "generative devices" in terms of which individuals apprehend their universe and, thereby, constantly reproduce it in macro, as an objective and meaningful whole. This whole does attain a life of its own insofar as it becomes independent of the will of a particular individual taking part in its daily reproduction. But this independence remains chronically problematic. The objective reality is intrinsically tied to an a priori system of categories and classifications in terms of which individuals treat "things in themselves" as instances of universal classes. The world "out there" loses its appearance of natural and independent where traditional categories are no longer perceived as mere copies of external reality. Once the subject comes to question what normally appears to be a priori true, the objective reality betrays its reified nature as the world of objectified, fossilized human activity.

This subject-object relativism was driven to its logical extreme by Kant when he asserted that the subject not only gives unity to the world of nature, but also generates the maxim of his own conduct that should be treated as a norm of the whole community. This view utterly diverged from the assumptions of classical sociological theory that stipulated that the sacred reality of social contract requires its externality and essential independence from the will of individuals. The fact that power was external was a guarantee of its objectivity and incorruptibility. Correspondingly, the individual was held to be a person
to the extent that he delegated the authority over his own action to society and acted according to the socially supplied role. In Romantic philosophy, the individual is a person because he is an autonomous source of actions and innovations. Here the individual actor manifests himself as a sovereign, as an embodiment of humanity at large, or, to borrow Marx's term, a "species being" (1964:112).

The Kantian categorical imperative furnished a new outlook on the antinomy of the impersonal universe—macrocosm—and the personal world of the individual—microcosm. The latter was stripped of its traditional idiosyncrasy and irrelevancy vis-à-vis the Leviathanic vastness of the natural and social orders. This romanticist concern with the active part played by the subject in shaping his object inspired the relativist and hermeneutical orientation in sociology that stressed the role of language, meanings and cultural values in the formation and transformation of societies. The adherents of the new approach objected to the exclusive treatment of social reality from the standpoint of its external manifestation. Young Marx's criticism of "reification," Husserl's investigation of "natural attitude," Simmel's critique of organicist sociology, Weber's and Cooley's analysis of the interpretative nature of social action carried into the social realm the romanticist criticism of the classical theory of knowledge. The new approach laid bare some of the background assumptions of the classical sociological theory and rendered problematic what hitherto had seemed to be obvious and well established.

Just as classical mechanics had failed to recognize that the universal spatio-temporal structure was but an abstraction from the infinity of possible frames of reference, classical social theory failed to appreciate that besides a commitment to the Leviathan, to society as a whole, individuals are geared to smaller scale groups that may autonomously determine actions and serve as an additional source of conflict. Moreover, in a manner resembling relativist mechanics, interactionist sociologists postulated that social facts are not independent of the frame of reference by which they are accounted for. Interactionists rejected
the classical scheme that attributed to the individual an absolute location in the social structure. The universal system of social coordinates was replaced by diversified frames of reference relative to which the same individual agent could assume different social faces or selves. A far-reaching implication of this relativist outlook was the abandonment of the classical postulate of the independence of social structure from interacting individuals. Social structure was reinterpreted as the product of a "social a priori." The self-contained world of social facts that "present a note-worthy property of existing outside individual consciousness," and persist independently of their "individual manifestations" (Durkheim, 1964:2, 13) was reconceptualized as a process of intersubjectively constituted meanings in terms of which macrostructure is continuously shaped and reshaped. The focus of sociological analysis shifted from the question of how society shapes personality, how it is internalized by individual actors, to the question of how subjectively elaborated definitions are transformed into the facts of social structure, or, in Giddens' words, how "society is created and recreated afresh, if not ex nihilo, by the participants in every social encounter" (1976:15).

This interpretation differs from one formulated by Parsons in his article on interactionism. According to Parsons (1968:434), the idea of interiorization is pivotal to interactionist orientation in sociology: "...Weber, rather than having to arrive at a conception of interiorization—as did utilitarianism, as well as Freud and Durkheim—quite naturally took it for granted, on the basis of his general theoretical position." The same is asserted about Cooley and Mead. This view emphasizes the interiorization phase of social dynamics and centers on the question of how society produces social individuals. The exteriorization phase of social reality goes relatively unattended by this treatment which does not elaborate on a question equally central to interactionist sociologists: "How individuals produce society." For purposes of the present discussion, I should like to emphasize the dialectic of exteriorization and interiorization, objectivation and disobjectivation, as a constituent feature of early interactionist analysis. This dialectic
can be seen in the young Marx's interactionist view of social reality as objectified activity and his treatment of the inner world of man as a realm of meanings extracted from the objects shaped by the activity of preceding generations. It can be found in Weber's deep concern with the objectification of charismatic explosions in the organizational structure of bureaucracy. It is at the very core of Simmel's vision of the life process as a continuous creation and negation of social forms in which the human spirit grasps its meaning. It is unmistakable in Mead's view of an exchange between self and society: "Human society ...does not merely stamp the pattern of its organized social behavior upon any one of its individual members, so that this pattern becomes likewise the pattern of the individual's self; it also, at the same time, gives him a mind...And his mind enables him in turn to stamp the pattern of his further developing self (further developing through his mental activity) upon the structure or organization of human society, and thus in a degree to reconstruct and modify in terms of his self the general pattern of social or group behavior in terms of which his self was originally constituted" (Mead, 1934:263).

Central to interactionist sociology is an attempt to overcome the traditional dichotomy of personality and institution, to bring into one continuum individual and society by considering them as different phases of the same process, rather than as separate entities belonging to two different worlds. They are meaningless abstractions without each other: "The two--social and individual--are only different categories under which the same content is subsumed, just as the same plant may be considered from the standpoint of its biological development or its practical uses or its aesthetic significance" (Simmel, 1971: 17).

Interactionists admit, if sometimes only in theory, that individual actions do have macroscopic consequences, otherwise put, that these actions are transformed into "emergent properties" in the modern sense of the word. Yet they insist that the solid facts of society are quasi-independent from individual actors. It is postulated that macro-
social institutions have their representation in the attitudes, values and intersubjectively maintained meanings which, in their turn, comprise what Cooley called a "microcosm of...society" (1962:144). This formula is consistent with Durkheim's definition of social facts as "ways of acting, thinking and feeling;" yet, where Durkheim stipulates, "external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion" (1964:3), interactionists contend, "The 'within' and 'without' between individual and society are not two unrelated definitions but define together the fully homogeneous position of man as a social animal" (Simmel, 1971:17). To depict the continuum of macro- and microcosms, a whole array of new concepts had to be brought into being, such as social attitudes, values, symbols, meanings, definitions of the situation, selves, roles, generalized other. What draws these concepts together is that they embrace at the same time the two different worlds. On the one hand, they are parts of the subject's inner world and characterize the modes in which individuals act, think and feel in their everyday life. On the other hand, they are referred to as social facts, as patterns of society. The two-fold status of these concepts has made them an important analytical tool. The same status was also the source of a fundamental ambiguity that marked the history of their usage. Among others, the pitfall of psychologism was the most plausible.

The view that equates microsociology and psychological reductionism still retains currency. It is consistently advocated by Homans who considers himself "an ultimate psychological reductionist" (1958:597). And yet, despite the apparent common roots, it seems unjustified to align interactionism and psychological sociology. Interactionists contended that consciousness was a stage for ongoing social processes; however they added the following qualification: "But it is of extreme methodological relevance—ever of decisive importance—to note that the scientific treatment of psychic data is not thereby automatically psychological. Even when we use psychological rules and knowledge, even where the explanation of every single fact is possible only psychologically (as is true in sociology), the sense and intent of our activities do not have to be psychological" (Simmel, 1971:32).

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
To avoid the pitfall of psychologism, interactionists look for a theoretical scheme that would allow them to describe social process from the standpoint of actors without thereby losing the perspective of a social whole. They search for such a unit that would have its locus within the individual and at the same time would codify properties of a social organization. Among other variables, social self seemed to most closely satisfy these criteria. Paradoxically, interactionists see the source of societal unity in the human self, which, being the innermost part of the individual, is at the same time "the solid fact of society." That is what Simmel seems to mean when he says that "societal unification needs no factors outside its own component elements, the individual" (1971:7). Mead puts the same idea as follows: "The organization and unification of a social group is identical with the organization and unification of any one of the selves arising within the social process in which that group is engaged..." (1934:144).

By conceptualizing self as a "monad" or microcosm, interactionists solved the problem of psychological reductionism that haunted Tarde in his polemic with Durkheim. Psychic and idiosyncratic in their content, individual actions, feelings and thoughts were conceptually clustered into variables that were not psycho- but socio-logical. Social facts were declared to be facts of human self-identities in terms of which social wholes are regenerated in the course of daily interaction. A "wholeness" ceased to be an exclusive property of a macro-world and was extended to the microscopic compounds, to the elements of a Gestalt. This logical construct is remarkably similar to the one worked out in microbiology. Although the latter deals with molecular and chemical substances, it organizes them into "microcosmic" wholes whose meaning is informational, i.e., they codify the macroscopic (biological) properties of the entire organism and through them are linked to the evolutionary process. Along these lines, we may consider Weber's assertion that "such concepts as 'state,' 'association,' 'feudalism,' and the like, designate certain categories of human interaction. Hence it is the task of sociology to reduce these concepts to 'understandable' actions, that is, without exception, to the actions of partic-
ipating individual men" (Gerth and Mills, 1946:55). Weber's interest in the symbolic meaning of mundane activity, his analysis of Western capitalism from the standpoint of symbols and definitions introduced by the members of the Protestant sects were not reductionist but microscopic. In a sense, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism is a genuine example of a microscopic approach toward the study of total social structures in terms of their genetical codes as embedded in socially structured matrices of meaning.

However revolutionary the early interactionist statements seemed against a background of social organicism and its Hegelian archetype—Absolute Mind incorporated into a state, they were too general to deal satisfactorily with the Leviathanic facets of social life. Weber's analysis in The Protestant Ethic was admittedly a preliminary study to be supplemented by the macroscopic, economic interpretation, as Weber himself made clear. This intention, however, was not fully implemented. As a result, many perplexing methodological problems of transition from the macro- to the microscopic level of analysis remained unanswered. The subsequent development led to the growing differentiation of sociological theory into the two competing branches. One of the approaches followed Durkheim's definition of sociology as "the science of institutions, of their genesis and of their functioning" (1964:1vi). The proponents of the other approach argued that "social science cannot remain on the surface of social becoming, where certain schools wish to have it float, but must reach actual human experiences and active social reality beneath the formal organization of social institutions..." (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1958:1883). Macro-sociologists insisted on studying social reality in its external manifestations. They preferred to deal with the readily identifiable products of social activity apart from the precarious meanings that individuals may associate with them. Microsociologists objected to this analysis on the grounds that it mistakes the reified forms of social reality for the living process of an everyday construction of the social world by self-conscious actions of individuals. This discrepancy in the focus of sociological analysis resulted in a progressive dichotomization of
structure and interaction, institution and definition of the situation, role and self-identity. Macrosociology came to be increasingly identified with the study of social structures, formal organizations and societies, whereas microsociology was confined to the investigation of situational encounters, definitions of the situation and selves. This differentiation was accompanied by a typification of the opponents' position. Interactionists reprimanded macrosociologists for talking in a reified mode, for the loss of humanistic perspective and unreflexive methodology, whereas macrosociologists criticized their opponents for the lack of conceptual clarity and experimental rigor.

The objective of the following analysis is to examine more closely these typifications. What I will try to do in the remainder of this paper is to amplify some of the characteristics of the straw men set up for heuristic purposes. It should be clear that the two sets of theoretical premises contrasted below as elements of macro- and micro-sociological paradigms are ideal-typical constructions and therefore need not be used by the two distinct groups of sociologists. Symbolic interactionism, Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, ethnomethodology and phenomenological sociology are diverse theoretical orientations with distinct conceptual frameworks and research programs. The present analysis stresses what they allegedly have in common as non-reductionist variants of microsociology and contrasts them to equally disparate forms of macro-structural and structural-functional analysis. Such an approach is not in itself unproblematic. It poses the ancient methodological problem of universals and particulars. The question is how we go about assigning particulars (particular theorists) to the universal classes (types of theory) when neither of them can be exhaus-tively subsumed under the logically exclusive categories. This is where the differences between macroscopic and microscopic, structural and interactional, classical and relativist visions of society begin, and where we start our analysis.
Natural vs. social universality. In historical perspective we can isolate two major positions with regard to the status of collective nouns: realism and nominalism. Realistic tradition views universals as nonmental wholes, existing in nature independently of the particular's awareness of its membership in a class. Individual particulars, composing any given class, are said to "share" objective qualities inherent in their nature. The scientific mind apprehends what is common to a class of particulars. The latter are treated as "instances of" or individual "existences" of universal essences. Characteristic of languages of realism is that universals serve not only as predicates of individual things (something is red) but are also allowed "to function in the subject places of sentences" (redness has an instance) (Brandt, 1971:25). The radical version of realism is Platonism. According to Plato, universals are real things, entities structured into a perfect pattern, whereas empirical objects are shadows, imperfect copies necessitated by the originals. In a more moderate, Aristotelian version, universals are immanent properties of natural things, and as such are denied the status of independent entities.

In the domain of social science, the realistic tradition is continued by those who insist that social universality closely approximates the natural one, and should be treated in the same way. The sociologist is urged to detect objective interests, common positions, behavioral patterns that persist independently of the subject's attitude toward them. These common properties provide a basis for assigning particulars to the classes, such as Workers, Southerners, Protestants, etc. After universals have been formed, they are likely to be turned into subjects and accorded the status of independent agencies: "Armies and churches, tribes and classes, these are the actors of the social world. To understand history or society, these giants and their interactions must be studied" (Etzioni, 1968:41). The language of realism has the advantage that it allows formulation of new statements and predictions which cannot be derived from direct observation. The trouble is, however, that to test assertions about the class of particulars, sociologists must get down to the properties and behaviors of particulars themselves. Yet,
more often than not, empirical particulars enlisted for the test fail to fit the nomothetically generated categories and to act consistently as instances of classes to which they allegedly belong. Rather, they "spill over" the classificatory borderlines, showing their "multiple group affiliation" (Simmel, 1955). This haphazard behavior of social particulars casts a long shadow on the "universality" of social classes. As Wittgenstein (1965:17) noted, in "our craving for generality" we tend to forget that particulars need not to have anything inherent in their nature to form a class. It is enough that they are treated as belonging to a class, or to put it in language more familiar to sociologists, except that they are not we.

Nominalists reject the view of universality as inherent in the nature of particular things. The radical theory, attributed to the medieval philosopher, Roscelin, denies the objective status of universals and treats them as "mere sounds" standing for distinct empirical objects. Peter Abelard advanced a moderate version of nominalism. For Abelard, universals are "meaningful names" whose objectivity is to be found in their meaning. In more recent nominalist renderings, universals are held contingent upon human activity which imposes common names on particulars. The latter form a class in so far as they are treated in a uniform fashion (Mead, 1933:82-90). The languages of nominalism distinguish "the status of predicates by refusing to allow them to occur in the subject place of the sentence" (Brandt, 1971:253). A more moderate nominalism allows nomothetic categories but stipulates that they are theoretical constructs, "ideal types" that are being supplemented by the "idiographic" inspection of their shaky existential basis. As Weber insisted, "In cultural sciences, the knowledge of the universal or general is never valuable in itself" (1949:30). Similarly, Blumer (1969:148-9) refuses "to clear aside what gives each instance its peculiar character and restrict ourselves to what it has in common with the other instances in the class" and urges the supplementation of nomothetic categories by "sensitizing concepts." In contrast to realists, nominalists are unconcerned with the question of what is common in the nature of particular individuals that makes them a member of a
universal class, such as "witches," "slaves," "enemies of the people," "workers," "delinquents," or "Protestants." The question they set out to answer is how the empirical individuals are identified as members of classes through their own defining, classifying activity.

The nominalist treatment of universals did not enjoy much popularity in the natural sciences, at least not until more recently when scholars confronted the puzzling behavior of microparticles that forced scientists to reconsider the problem of "class attribution" and identification of microobjects. The nominalist problematic was more appreciated in the domain of social sciences. Sociological nominalists view properties as "interactional" in a sense that they emerge in the course of practical encounters and exist only in relation to the frame of reference in which they are registered. Universality of social particulars is contingent upon the activity of individuals who can literally "share" some of their potential properties with others. Individuals collectively shape and sustain symbolically invoked meanings. These meanings serve as routine frames of typification and self-typification (Schutz, 1971) for social actors. The distinctive feature of social particulars, therefore, is that they can be aware of their membership in a class. This awareness is a constituent element of social universals of a new order. Universals emerge as socially objective when they are placed in diverse individual perspectives of active, conscious particulars. Having become an object of the individual's thought and action, social universals become subject to conscious transformation by their members and nonmembers. Of strategic import for the interactionist account of universality is that every particular has many social predicates and shares memberships with real and potential classes, which makes the operation of class identification critically important. Ethnomethodologists make specifically problematic the social act of assigning particulars to a class. Their concern with accounting practices, by means of which jobless applicants are converted into recipients of welfare benefits, alleged perpetrators into certified criminals, and the man on the street into classified case numbers (typified instances) ready to be processed according to standardized procedures,--
is an example of the microscopic approach to the emergent metamorphoses undergone by individuals in practical interactional settings. This preoccupation with the "social art of accounting for things in themselves," with "living universals" and multifacetedness of individual monads contrasts with the macroscopic focus on natural social universals which are treated as emergent properties capable of preserving their identities intact amidst changing identities of class-self-conscious individuals.

Emergent properties vs. emergent processes. The distinction between macro- and microscopic visions of society can be best elucidated through the double meaning of the term "emergent" which refers to both "emanation" and "reoccurrence." The term is used in both orientations, though macrosociologists speak of "emergent properties" where microsociologists see "emergent processes." Macrosociology conceives of emergent properties as a coherent pattern, or a configuration of parts or a network of interactions that does not oscillate over a certain period of time regardless of the variation in compound elements. Macroformations are immune to situational fluctuations. Their identities undergo appreciable change over longer (historical) time periods. Once formed, a set of emergent properties persists as a body that rigidly maintains its boundaries in spite of upcoming challenges. A system of interrelated properties comprises a structure which constrains the behavior of individuals channeling their actions along socially prescribed paths. The accent is on the discreteness and independence of a pattern from the microscale actions of individuals. This approach suggests a corpuscular image of societal processes.

Microscopic theory grasps the same phenomenon by breaking it down into routine cycles of everyday activity through which emergent properties are constantly regenerated and accomplished. The microscopic approach attends to the periodicity of social processes as it manifests itself in the quasi-ritual routines of collective actions. It attempts to isolate the sequences of rational activity that constitute a complete phase of a whole process. Through the continuous cycles of

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
competent performances, individuals reproduce social structures. Social classes, groups, systems are said to be "emergent," but in a different sense: they never cease to reemerge in the course of application of "frames of understanding" (Goffman, 1974:22) used by individuals to make sense of the ongoing reality. Similarly, ethnomethodologists undertake a systematic inquiry into the production of social facts in various domains of social life (Garfinkel, 1967), and social phenomenologists endeavor to reduce all social objects to intentional operations and unacknowledged (taken for granted) presuppositions (Schutz, 1971) in terms of which things (selves) in themselves are rendered meaningful, i.e., amenable to practical manipulations. These are theories that attend to the wave-like properties of social life. We may say that microsociology deals with interactional or emergent (in the sense of recurrent) aspects of social structures, while macrosociology centers on structural or emergent (in the sense of invariable) aspects of an ongoing social activity.

Taking one more step in this direction, we may say that macroscopic theory conceives of society as a giant mechanism of interacting social bodies (particulars clustered into classes). As a member of social groups, the individual shares with others certain values. He plays his roles, and thus contributes to the welfare of these groups. The group membership has here a connotation close to the original meaning of the word "member"--an organ or part of the whole organism: "...His [individual's] nature is, in large part, to be an organ of society, and his proper duty, consequently, is to play his role as an organ" (Durkheim, 1964a:403). It is a distinct, externally identifiable attribute of the actor which does not vary throughout the time of the individual's effective membership. It is stressed that the roles the individual is expected to play as a member of different groups may contradict each other. Yet the reality of these roles can be established independently of whether or not the individual is aware of them. The actor changes his roles and group memberships during his life career, but his location within the social structure at any given moment is not problematic.

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
A microsociologist grounds his theory in the precept that there are more groups, both primary and secondary, in any given society than there are individual members. The image of society implied in this observation is that of a "field." The key characteristic of the logical construct denoted by this word is that each element of a field is held to be constituent of various bonds, and as such, cannot be unambiguously located in any one particular field. The individual particulars are converted into each other and take each other's places in various fields to show many faces at once. Drawing on this model, we can say that a symbolic core generates around itself a field to which individuals variously gravitate. The properties of a social field, its ability to produce "corpuscular effect" vary in time. Individuals periodically enter and leave any given field, bring forth and withdraw their commitments, assume responsibilities and evade them, deliver their actions personally and delegate them to others, and, above all, simultaneously participate in other often competing chains of collective actions. Viewed in this perspective, social groups, classes and societies lose their "impenetrability." The idea of boundaries, that distinguish the inside of a social group (its members) from the environment (nonmembers)--changes its meaning in micro-analysis. For the boundaries turn out to be inside individuals: they serve to separate different faces of the same self. "...The individual can never stay within a unit which he does not at the same time stay outside of, that he is not incorporated into any order without also confronting it" (Simmel, 1971:15). Macroscopic theory treats the social group as given, as a readily observable aggregate or unit. In microscopic perspective, social group is more likely to be a variable. Whereas the former approach assumes that it is a group that directs the conduct of its members, the latter implies that individual actions can produce a macroscopic or "group-like" effect. A group is held to be an emergent process of individual perspectives converging around a symbolic nucleus. A search for self-identity is at the same time the search for class-identity. And the more effectively individuals are stripped of some of their social predicates in favor of others, the more salient is the resultant "corpuscular" effect. Taken in their objectified forms, social fields

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
present themselves to social actors as social bodies. Seen through the prism of microsociology, the body of society manifests itself as an ocean of interferentially overlapping social fields initiated through prophecies, charismatic appeals or routine enterprises that form meaning-clusters and interpretation schemes, around which chains of collective actions evolve.

Morphological structuralism vs. genetical interactionism. The image of "Gestalt" is more likely to crop up in the writings of macrosociologists. But it can also be met in the works of Simmel, Schutz and Goffman. The original meaning of this term was closely associated with the neo-Kantian revision in philosophy. It referred to the subject-object relation and denoted an abstraction formed by the subject who selects some of the elements of the surrounding field and organizes them into a pattern. In this sense the term was employed in Gestalt psychology (Kohler, 1947). Macrosociologists do not address themselves directly to the active part that the individual consciousness plays in the formation of Gestalts. They view Gestalts as essentially nonmental entities independent of the rational, purposive action of individuals. Macrosociologists insist that behavior of social bodies is irreducible to behavior of individuals and urge direct treatment of "societies, their components, and their combinations as distinct phenomena whose variance cannot be explained satisfactorily on the basis of properties and relations of lower level units..." (Etzioni, 1968:47). The macroscopic approach is morphological. It depicts society as a macrostructure composed of hierarchically organized units. Units of a higher level provide a contextual setting for the functioning of the lower level units. The quality of being "whole" is meaningful only in the unit's relation to its parts. At the same time parts play the role of a "function" vis-a-vis their contextual whole.

The microscopic approach follows the line of argumentation advanced by Simmel (1971) in his classical statement on "How is society possible?" This is essentially Kantian solution. It is based on the assumption that patterns or forms of knowledge (and action) are tran-
scendental, i.e., they transcend every individual experience or are a priori (a specifically Kantian way of saying that something is socially derived) and are at the same time individually appropriated and re-conceived. To put this in language of modern parlance, the properties of Gestalt are codified by its genetical code or frame of understanding. The social structure is continuously regenerated by the individuals who keep subsuming diverse content of empirical reality under the limited set of social categories. This process of interpretatively generating social reality is not automatic. There is typically more than one frame available in terms of which individuals can "beat the sense out of reality." The interpretation of any particular case or setting is a product of negotiation. Through the process of negotiation individuals establish or challenge the status of social reality as objective and meaningful. Interpretative codes should not be identified with parts or elements of social structure. They are "informational microwholes" that program the larger social act. A carrier of a code is a social individuum. In Simmel's words, "...The unity of society...is directly realized by its own elements because these elements are themselves conscious and synthesizing units" (1971:7).

The distinction between morphological structuralism and genetical interactionism is well known in various social disciplines. It is found, for example, in the division between structural linguistics, that which depicts language from the standpoint of its morphological parts irreducible to their individual uses, and generative grammar, that which seeks to uncover genetical codes and deep structures as they are revealed in the competent language user's behavior. The gist of the latter approach "lies in its central emphasis on the 'creative' aspect of the language user's ability to produce novel sentences he never uttered or heard before" (Greene, 1972:17). A similar distinction exists in anthropology and depth psychology. The latter attempts to account for macroscale behavior in terms of the paradigm-setting conflicts a child has suffered in the formative stages of its growth. Morphological structuralists work on what linguists would call the "language level" of analysis. They are preoccupied with the

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
states of the system. Genetical interactionists are concerned with the "speech level" of investigation and eventual states of the system: language insofar as it becomes an event in particular interactional settings (Ricoeur, 1978:109-19). Macrosociologists are aware that normative rules are routinely violated, that, say, the 55 mile an hour speed limit is observed by some 50% of the car drivers. But they consciously concentrate on the syntactical rules which comprise a system of constraints limiting behavioral options. Genetical interactionists investigate how virtual systems are eventualized through practical negotiations (hence, Goffman's interest in the "backstage" of Parsons' social system). When studying the phenomenon of bureaucracy, the macrosociologist would first delineate a set of formally designated offices, an official hierarchy of authority, a system of rules and instructions regulating the relationships between offices, and a set of criteria for appointments to the office. The objective of the macroscopic analysis is then to demonstrate how observable behavior fits (or is necessitated by) the structure of analytically elucidated components of a bureaucratic organization. A microsociologist, setting out to analyze the phenomenon of bureaucracy, could conceptualize it as a bureaucratic mode of production of objective reality. He would concern himself with the interpretative practices by means of which unclassified reality of case numbers is organizationally processed into an objective social reality of "facts" and "data." The reality of formal organization is then systematically described from the standpoint of how it is routinely generated and enforced by the individuals who are authorized to interpret, label and classify a social being as rational and orderly.

Choice among socially structured alternatives vs. structuring appearance into reality. From Hobbes to Durkheim, the proponents of macroscopic theories denied to the individual the authorship of his action. This powerful analytical device was introduced to describe societal determination of individual behavior. The individual was seen as a bearer of a social role which is supplied to him in exchange for the surrender of his authority (literally authorship) over his own
action. The closer is the identification of the individual and his role, the more thoroughly are his need-dispositions socialized, then the more smoothly the actor functions as a social character within socially defined space. More recent versions of macro-structural interpretation of role theory stress the choice among various roles the individual faces in practical situations. In his rendering of Merton's theory, Stinchcombe (1975:12) conceptualizes social behavior as "the choice between socially structured alternatives." Several features common to the macroscopic account of social action can be isolated: (1) the individual is confronted with ready-made alternatives which are superimposed upon him: "But it is important to remember that those doing the choosing were the authors neither of the alternatives nor the circumstances influencing their choice" (Lenski, 1975:148); (2) the ultimate source of activity is attributed to social wholes that are seen as true actors of the social world; (3) action is consistently treated as a dependent variable conceptualized as "role performance" [Dahrendorf's Homo Sociologicus (1973) is an approximation of this idealization].

In the microscopic perspective, the individual reveals himself not only as the actor of a social role, but also as its co-author. Microsociologists take pains to emphasize what they consider the distinctly human alternative available to human beings: introduction of new alternatives and restructuring of the existing structure of choices. Where macrosociologists seek to show how the action fits the standard framework of choices, microsociologists attempt to reconstruct the logic of transition from one frame to another with special attention given to the emergent definitions, "keyings" (Goffman, 1974)5 of the established frames. Microsociologists point out that social norms, instructions, treaties are marked by "strategic ambiguity." Any system of formally defined rules contains what Garfinkel calls an "et cetera clause" or an implicit assumption that these rules are applicable to any relevant situation. However, their practical application is contingent upon the creative interpretation of the formal guidelines by the individuals who continuously adjust conflicting frames of under-

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
standing in the light of changing exigencies of the situation. The central process in microsociological analysis is structuring perspectives for social action. To put it in the more esoteric idiom of microsociology, action is structuring appearance into reality. Subjectively invoked definitions are transformed into objective meanings when they are taken into account by the participants, translated into their parts of social action, and dramatized through their facework as "genuine reality." As seen in this perspective, objective social reality is very much a phenomenon of "Potemkin portable villages," insofar as this reality requires facework and artistic performances for its erection and maintenance. An individual actor is deemed to be free to frame the situation the way he sees fit (even though he may be held personally accountable if his interpretation of reality differs from the officially enforced one). Ultimately, it is the "trustworthiness" of the individual performances and personal commitments to sustaining "fronts" that presents a perennial threat to the established social scenario. The performance skills needed for staging social reality are learned through the process of socialization. This process is seen not so much as the learning of roles, as the learning of codes and skills needed for the creation of new codes. Children begin to experiment with the "construction of social reality" (Berger and Luckman, 1966) as soon as they are able to communicate. First they play at being someone or something, and then they engage in collective "games" where they can test the limits of collectively defined reality (Mead, 1934). To summarize the microscopic view of social action: (1) Microsociologists conceptualize social behavior as a creative application of existing models to the changing exigencies of the situation. This implies not only making new sentences from the old vocabulary, but also adding new "idioms" to the established corpus of social meanings. Microsociologists refer to this aspect of social activity as "conduct which is shaped by the actor," "formative process in its own right" (Blumer, 1969:63, 53), "shaping activity" (Denzin, 1969:929). (2) The subject of social activity is an individuum. It is through his conscious actions that collective enterprises are conceived and carried through. (3) Social action is more likely to be an independent variable in microscopic analysis.
One important implication of the diverse perspectives on social action is the different way in which both orientations account for non-conformist behavior. Macrosociologists perceive it as "deviance;" microsociologists look at it as potential "dissent." The first approach seeks to subsume deviant behavior under the category of structural constraint. The latter emphasizes its creative potential and unpredictability. Both views suggest diverse perspectives on social change.

Structural vs. emergent directionality. The central question for understanding the nature of social change is: "How are new alternatives evolved in the course of social interaction?" Macrosociology derives new patterns from the interplay of the available alternatives. The source of this tradition can be traced back to the Hegelian view of social action as recognized necessity and his vision of historical process as a cumulative growth toward the transcendental goal. Each stage of this process is conceived as necessary and is said to be formed within the framework of the old structure. The dynamic source of change is conflict between different units of society. The historical process seen as a whole is a succession of social structures that lawfully evolve according to the immanent logic of societal change. More recent theories avoid the providentialistic overtone of these formulations and introduce the element of contingency. Social change is conceptualized as a process of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization. It is rooted in the propensity of morphological parts to develop "functional autonomy" (Merton, 1968) which results in the growing disintegration of the established social system and its subsequent replacement by a more differentiated system. This transformation is completed when the new structure of choices is institutionalized. The continuity in the macroscopic tradition is manifested in the stress (1) on the convergence of development of different societies which are said to pass through essentially similar stages, e.g., traditional, modern, and postmodern; (2) on the role of structurally induced conflicts that constrain individuals to change their routine paths and to embark upon the new course of social action, (3) on the independence of the long-term trends of societal transformation from the will of individuals.

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
Microscopic theory sees social change as a result of emergent definitions originating in individual actions. Individual actors are imbued with an ability to generate spontaneously new meanings and symbols that modify the established frames of action. Microsociologists attribute similar importance to conflict. They place its source inside the individual: "...Conflicts arise between different aspects or phases of the same individual self..., as well as between different individual selves. And both these types of individual conflicts are settled or terminated by reconstructions of the particular social situations, and modifications of the given framework of social relationships..." (Mead, 1934:307-8). Conflict is conceptualized here as a conflict of interpretations. It refers to what could be called an "antinomy of identification" found in marginal situations where two or more mutually exclusive names (identities) are equally applicable to an empirical particular. (A hero of the Soviet Union does at the same time happen to be a "dissident" and "anti-Soviet agitator," or an Afro-American in the late 19th century USA turns out to be the first surgeon to perform an open-heart operation.) Social change begins when the individual stops considering himself as an instance of customary universals, when the old symbols are emptied and new meanings are coined. The latter provide fresh grounds for the universalization of action. Those apprehending themselves in a new fashion form a community of the "born again." This community is based on a universe of discourse which cuts across traditional divisions by emphasizing new frames for self-typification. The emerging social uni-verse (literally one-word, one-verse) comes alive and forms a macro-whole when it is inhabited by a multitude of committed individuals. At the same time, as these individuals keep reciting their revolutionary verses, the old objective reality begins to fade away, castigated as obsolete, apparent and doomed to failure. The microsociological paradigm does not have much to say about why certain alternatives emerge in the course of social development. It is left to macrosociology to reconstruct the logic of "natural selection" in societal evolution. Microsociologists are likely to proceed on the assumption that mutations of fossilized understandings occur randomly within the framework of daily interaction: "Indeed,
in countless ways and ceaselessly, social life takes up and freezes into itself the understandings we have of it" (Goffman, 1974:563). The historical process, as seen in microscopic perspective, could be described as a "self-fulfilling prophecy," to borrow Merton's term. The prophet is, first of all, an individual with a vivid sociological imagination. He performs what phenomenologists would call a "phenomenological epoch:" he suspends belief in the present reality and dissolves existing social bodies by offering an insight into the "genuine reality" behind reified appearances. At any given time, there is a number of competing prophecies. Which of them will have come to be "self-fulfilling" could be established only ex post facto.6

To summarize, the microscopic perspective on social change suggests that: (1) The individual, as a social being, is an autonomous source of social innovations. He introduces new meanings which provide alternative foundations for universalization of action. (2) Social development is an open-ended process resulting from the conflict of self-identifications and prophecies. (3) Social change is a multidirectional and multidimensional process that cannot be exhaustively derived from the existing structure of preinterpreted alternatives.

Operational vs. hermeneutical analysis. The last pair of ideal-typical distinctions to be considered concerns methodological and procedural differences dividing macro- and microscopic perspectives in sociological research. The epistemological root of macroscopic tradition is the principle of subject-object dualism in which Descartes saw the indispensable condition of scientific knowledge. This tradition sees objectivity as an immanent property of reality to be apprehended by the trained disinterested observer. The task of a scientist is to reproduce conceptually the ontologically real things and their relationships which force themselves upon the unprejudiced scholar. In its positivist interpretation, the Cartesian principle of doubt serves to discard the distortions stemming from the mundane world and impeding the formation of a scientific notion of reality. Drawing on this positivist interpretation of the Cartesian axiom, Durkheim formulated the first corollary of a
scientific sociological method as follows: "All preconceptions must be eradicated...The sociologist ought, therefore, whether at the moment of the determination of his research objectives or in the course of his demonstration, to repudiate resolutely the use of concepts originating outside of science for totally unscientific needs" (Durkheim, 1964:31-32). The implication of this attitude is the requirement that sociologists deal with their objects as things and study them in the same fashion as natural scientists study physical things. The central assumption of macrosociological research is that objects under study are independent of the investigator's procedures, or otherwise put, that "his own understanding does not enter into the event" (Gadamer, 1976:28). Macrosociologists are aware that the researcher's presence can influence the behavior of a subject, but this influence is perceived as "noise" to be reduced to a minimum. The objective of operational analysis is to detect properties of the object as it exists apart from the researcher in a scientific system of coordinates (accounting system). On the basis of empirical indicators, a sociologist assigns particulars to analytically elaborated categories. Operational definitions specify conditions under which a given concept may be said to exist. Scientific classifications are expected to meet two requirements: (1) they should be devised so that every empirical object under study could be placed unambiguously in one of the classificatory boxes; (2) the advanced nomenclature must provide for accounting of all empirical objects under investigation. Marginal cases—where more than one identification is possible—are either discarded, or in the case of a questionnaire interview respondents are urged to overcome their doubt and to follow their first inclinations. Mathematical manipulations of the classified cases help to establish the relationships between classes of particulars. If the replication of a research confirms that membership in one class is correlated with membership(s) in other classes, such an empirically established relationship is judged to be a scientific law.

The microscopic inquiry follows the tradition of hermeneutical analysis. The tradition rejects the view that knowledge can be devoid of the subject's presuppositions: "The objective validity of all empiri-
ical knowledge rests exclusively upon the ordering of the given reality according to categories which are subjective in a specific sense, namely, in that they present the presuppositions of our knowledge..." (Weber, 1940:110). Interactionist sociologists assume that reality is objective insofar as it becomes an object of human and therefore social activity. This means that the process of knowing enters as a constituent element of the object and that socially generated objectivities are a historically changing variable. In other words, objective social reality is dependent on the frame of reference in which it is accounted for by both lay participants and scientific observers. According to this precept, the subject matter of sociology is deemed to be unique in that it involves man who meaningfully constructs his conduct. Cooley called sociology a "sympathetic or dramatic science" because it entails "an imaginative reconstruction of life" (1926:60, 78). Weber defined it as an "interpretative" science because "knowledge of cultural events is inconceivable except on a basis of the significance which the concrete constellations of reality have for us in certain individual concrete situations" (1949:80).

Drawing on relativist assumptions, microsociologists urge attention to the "generative" properties of human knowledge. They point out that social reality is continuously objectified by the individuals who apprehend this reality in terms of common sense and scientific frames of understanding. Formalized scientific techniques help to maximize rationality and control over the reality. But "facts" and "data" unearthed by scientific means are ultimately contingent upon the questions asked and nomenclatures chosen to make sense of reality. Gadamer observes that "what is established by statistics seems to be the language of facts, but which questions these facts answer and which facts would begin to speak if other questions were asked are hermeneutical questions" (1976:11). Once the search for the immanent meaning of social reality is abandoned, the sociologist gives up an attempt to eliminate his influence on reality. He treats the "complementarity effect" as an ontological condition of human knowledge. His objective now is to examine taken for granted assumptions and socially derived
nomenclatures used by scientists to reconstruct reality as rational and orderly. Cicourel (1974) calls this methodological orientation "indefinite triangulation;" this means that "every procedure that seems to 'lock in' evidence (thus to claim a level of adequacy) can itself be subjected to the same sort of analysis that will in turn produce yet another indefinite arrangement of new particulars or a rearrangement of previously established particulars in 'authoritative,' 'final,' 'formal' accounts" (quoted in Silverman, 1972:11).

A hermeneutical perspective suggests an alternative strategy for classifying particulars. The latter are treated as self-identifying individuals whose class-membership is contingent upon their class-consciousness. Through his self-conscious action, the individual constantly transcends class-boundaries surfacing as a "particle" of various denominations. A microsociologist encourages the individual's self-identifying activity. He induces the individual to take as many social roles as possible by varying experimental conditions and observing him in natural interactional settings. To do so, the microsociologist becomes a participant observer, a part of the social act which he purports to study. Of particular interest to microsociology are marginal cases which provide an insight into the "interferential effect" of the overlapping class-identifications. The microsociologist is aware that these identifications are a product of a given technique, that by administering a test, the social researcher forces his subject to take a stand, to assume an attitude which thereby affects the future course of action. By expressing theoretically the alleged universality of class interests, the scholar helps to bring them into existence, to make them objectively real. The scholar, adopting the microsociological paradigm, is likely to concur with the microphysicist that the "measuring beam" directed to the microobject detects its properties by shaping them and bringing them into existence.

* * *

HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978
To summarize this discussion, I wish to reiterate that no attempt has been made in this paper to offer a solution to the problem of transition from the macro- to the micro- level of analysis. What I have endeavored is to trace back the split into macro- and microsociological paradigms and to isolate some of their methodological assumptions. The two sets of principles contrasted above are ideal-typical constructs in that they are "formed by one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena..." (Weber, 1949:90). None of the particular authors quoted in this paper can fit squarely the designated taxonomical box. Moreover, the greater is the sociologist's stature, the more likely is he to look for the synthesis of contradictory principles. To take a paradigmatic case, Marx's holistic approach to society as a social organism is inseparable from his romantic view of man as a species being and society as a product of interaction: "...Just as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him. Activity and mind, both in their content and in their mode of existence, are social activity and social mind" (Marx, 1964: 137). To take another controversial figure, Durkheim's determination to eliminate "all prejudices" and to treat social phenomena as "things" did not impede his discovery of the social origins of human knowledge. One could supply numerous arguments supporting the view of sociology as a science of the external and reified manifestations of the human spirit or favoring hermeneutical analysis of the taken for granted foundations of societal institutions. But the most challenging task is to understand these two perspectives as inseparable and mutually enriching frames in which humans apprehend their being in the world.

Though not a panacea, the dialectic can be useful as a methodological orientation in dealing with the world of relativity and uncertainty. Beyond the current controversies in social theory, we should see the age-old antinomies of realism and nominalism, continuum and discreteness, determinism and chance, necessity and freedom, macrosom and microcosm. As Kant contended, these antinomies cannot be solved once and for all by means of pure reason; and as Hegel and
Marx insisted, we should never give up our search for their theoretical and practical synthesis. Scientists working in different disciplines face similar challenges of the antinomical world. It is in the search for their dialectical synthesis that the 20th century scholars came to discover that corpuscular thingness of mass is convertible into energy; that packages of energy can behave as discrete states; that microscopic genes forge their way into behavior; that human personality programs man's activity; that subjectively invoked meanings are transformed into social structure. However contradictory the "corpuscular" and "wave" images of society, sociology must meet the challenge by viewing them as dialectical rather than as formal contradictions.

The conflict between different styles and forms of sociological thought has a functional implication in that it helps to consolidate the efforts of like-minded scholars and thus facilitate a more thorough development of the advanced line of argumentation. But pushing the thesis to its logical extreme and viewing the antithesis as an inferior way of doing sociology leads to a hypostatization of one paradigm into the only source of truth. The elevation of macrosociology at the expense of microsociology results in "sociological corpuscularism," "structural teleologism," and in what Wrong (1961) called the "over-integrated" conception of society and "oversocialized" view of man. In the same vein, disregarding the layers of objectivity generated by past generations and constraining our path into the future, leads to a kind of "sociological wavism," "overemergent" view of society and "voluntaristic" conception of man. There is nothing wrong with trying to model society after a mechanism, or an organism, or a field, provided we understand that these are logical constructs. But it is a fallacy of misplaced concreteness to insist that society is "indeed" a social organism or an emergent interaction. Schutz (1971) warned repeatedly against inhabiting our world with scientific abstractions. His warning has hardly lost its urgency.

The progress of macro- and microsociological studies is likely to lead to an understanding that meanings are socially structured while
social structures are meaningful. Or to put it differently, definitions, meanings, presentations of self and face appearances comprise a structure that persists over time and codifies properties of macro-wholes, whereas social institutions, organizations, classes and societies are constituted by daily interactions and persist as long as they are translated into meaningful actions of individuals. It took time for scientists to learn how to link micro-currencies to the life of macro-physical and macro-biological bodies, and it may take no less time and ingenuity before sociologists would be able to demonstrate how the ossified and reified forms of social life are related to the ways people allocate their commitments, handle their role distances, manage their appearances, and construct their everyday realities.

FOOTNOTES

* This is a revision of the paper presented at the 73rd Annual Meeting of the ASA. The paper is a part of a project on the genesis of microscopic and relativist models in sociology that was originally begun in 1974, at the Institute of Sociological Research, USSR Academy of Science, and continued in the Department of Sociology, at Columbia University, after the author immigrated to the United States. I wish to express my gratitude to Professors Herbert Blumer, Robert K. Merton, Robert A. Nisbet, Jerald G. Schutte, Whitney Pope, and to Mr. Jay Schechter, doctoral candidate, for comments on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

1. In the 1930's, the early interactionist concern with the continuum of social macro- and microcosms was developed by Parsons (1937) who attempted to synthesize organic and interactionist perspectives on society. His analysis remains perhaps the most systematic attempt to link the two levels of analysis to date. Without minimizing Parsons' contribution to the problem in question, I wish to stress that he views micro-processes through the eyes of macrosociology and that his methodological assumptions are essentially classical. (See Wagner, 1964, for the discussion of Parsons' views on the subject).

2. This line of thought was developed by American pragmatism. Pragmatists accepted the romantic thesis about the subject's role in shaping its environment and translated many idioms of transcendentalism into the language of scientific analysis. Mead's
social pragmatism is of a particular interest to the understanding of the origins of interactionism because it forms the major link between Romantic philosophy and American pragmatism, on the one hand, and the "Chicago pragmatism" and the "Chicago interactionism," on the other.

3. It is interesting to note that physicists themselves stressed the heuristic value of the concept denoted by the term "field." Einstein (1961:450) called it an "incidental concept which is indeed a somewhat arbitrary one," The suggested analogy can generate sufficient "surplus meaning" when its heuristic nature is properly understood.

4. I would daresay in this connection that Goffman's The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life is a sociological equivalent of Freud’s Psychopathology of Everyday Life. Both works pointed to the macroscopic relevance of the microscopic occurrences and illuminated new avenues for theoretical analysis and research.

5. Gonos provides an interesting non-interactionist interpretation of Goffman's works. He refers to Goffman's methodology as "following in its prejudices those of Durkheim" (Gonos, 1977: 864). Gonos radically separates "situation" and "frame" analyses as incompatible. Yet one could argue that frames must be situated and situations must be framed. "Framing the situation" and "situating the frame" are of equal interest to Goffman. He analyzes both processes paying special attention to the question of how frames are routinely broken and transformed. If his sociology may be called "formal," then it is in a Simmelian, rather than in a Durkheimian, sense.

6. Whether he is a traditional religious virtuoso who claims access to the divine providence, or a revolutionary scholar who claims to discover the iron laws of social evolution, the prophet insists on being a "mere" medium of the forces beyond mundane control. What he tends to overlook is that his prophecy is instrumental in bringing the new reality into existence. In this sense, the prophet does not forecast the future. Rather, he casts the future by broadcasting it and thereby supplying contemporaries with new frames of interpretation in terms of which they can redefine and reshape themselves, their action and their future.

7. Whether or not Marx succeeded in reconciling voluntaristic and mechanistic, structural and interactional principles is debatable. But he went further than his contemporaries in trying to bridge the gap between classical philosophy and the emerging relativist tradition. His search for a synthesis should be continued and expanded.
There is the growing awareness in the present day sociological literature that the competing structural and interactionist orientations are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In Merton's words: "Many ideas in structural analysis and symbolic interactionism...are opposed to one another in about the same sense as ham is opposed to eggs: they are perceptibly different but mutually enriching" (1975: 31).

REFERENCES


HUMBOLDT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL RELATIONS-6:1-F/W 1978