Structuralism Versus Individualism: Part 1, Shadowboxing in the Dark*

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ABSTRACT

American sociology has been dominated by an individualist, psychologistic perspective. This dominance has been so pervasive that American sociologists are generally unfamiliar with a sociological apprehension of social phenomena. That is, American sociologists are largely unfamiliar with the structuralist (sociological) view of social phenomena. The two approaches are so far apart and employ such different terminologies and definitions that they would be more accurately conceived as two entirely different fields of study. This essay attempts to draw out some of the differences between the structuralist and the individualist perspectives and to offer a criticism of the individualist position. The critical aspects of the essay are intended to clarify for individualist sociologists just why structuralists regard individualism not only as a dead end, but, indeed, not even as sociology.

One wonders sometimes if science will not grind to a stop in an assemblage of walled-in hermits, each mumbling to himself words in a private language that only he can understand (Kenneth E. Boulding, 12).

In recent years, I have heard from one source and another that there are several structuralisms around. There are varieties of both Marxist and non-Marxist structuralism (Sahlins, b; Sebag). These include French structuralism, British structuralism, and—difficult to believe though it may be—even an American structuralism. Similarly, under a plethora of names, there are several varieties of "methodological individualism," such as symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, behavioral sociology, etc. There is, however, nothing new in this spectrum.

Sociology has always contained a marked variety of metatheoretical positions. Individualism and structuralism, as I shall define them, are only two voices in a wider, many-sided conversation. The larger din provides a background of noise making discussion of this one difference dif-

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ficult to comprehend. There is a tendency to confuse the individualism-structuralism dispute with the disagreements between the subjectivist and objectivist camps, the humanist and naturalist camps, the conflict and consensus camps, the voluntarist and mechanist camps, the idealist and materialist camps, the essentialist and analyst camps, etc. The confusion is compounded by the fact that there is some truth to the view that individualism, on the one hand, and structuralism, on the other, have tended to cluster with particular end points of these other axes, somewhat along the lines suggested in Table 1. But the clustering is never complete, and we can find an odd man out for any of these comparisons. Durkheim, for example, was a structuralist, but he could hardly be called a conflict theorist. Similarly, Homans is an individualist, but his style of explanation is nomothetic.

Some theorists contend that all the differences I have listed in Table 1 are false oppositions (e.g., Bourdieu). What they mean, however, is that only one side is correct. Bourdieu solves the opposition between voluntarism and mechanism by embracing free will.

Excluding the differences for unit of analysis, I could have constructed two tables with the same axes shown in Table 1: one for the individualists and one for the structuralists. Within these new tables, the left-hand side would correspond to "soft" individualism and "soft" structuralism, while the right-hand side would correspond to "hard" individualism and "hard" structuralism. Such a pair of tables would make it easier to locate Durkheim and Homans, but it would still show significant discrepancies. If I went on to construct four tables, then eight, etc., the kaleidoscope of

Table 1. SOME DIFFERENCES IN METATHEORETICAL POSITIONS ADOPTED BY SCHOOLS (FACTIONS) IN SOCIOLOGY

Differences in Assumptions and Concerns Corresponding Roughly to:		
Psychologism		Sociologism
Individual (individualism)	(Unit of analysis)	Social network (structuralism)
Inside (subjectivism)	(Location of observer)	Outside (objectivism)
Essentialist	(Construction of phenomena)	Analyst
Ideal	(Prime movers are)	Material
Voluntarism (free will)	(Dynamic assumed)	Mechanism (impersonal constraint)
Ideographic (interpretation; humanist)	(Understanding mode)	Nomothetic (explanation; naturalist)
Consensus	(Basis for association)	Conflict
The present	(Time frame for study)	All history & prehistory
Parochial	(Location of inquiry)	Cross-cultural

sociological assumptions and concerns would be more accurately revealed. But an expanded number of tables would need more axes than I have indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 is no more than the tip of an iceberg. One need only consider the varieties of Marxist sociology, which Rodinson has estimated to number possibly thousands, to appreciate the fragmented nature of sociology's intellectual domain. I am referring to academic Marxism (Legros and Copans). Doctrinaire Marxism (cf. Assmann and Stollberg) is of no interest here. Structuralists would agree with Varga (3–4) that "dogmatic Marxists" pose a barrier to sound Marxian analysis, for the same reason that militant enthusiasm poses a barrier to *any* analysis (Rodinson, 14).

Further complicating matters is the fact that sociologists are not only speaking from different camps, they are speaking different languages. Shall I discuss individualism and structuralism with a subjectivist definition of terms or an objectivist definition of terms? Shall my syntax be in the humanist or naturalist mode? Actually, I have no choice: time compels me to glide over the terminological squabble. My biases fall more on the right-hand side of Table 1, so I will speak from there. I like to believe that I can appreciate some hypotheses offered by the left-hand side, but my appreciation has limits. Unlike the individualists, I do not believe that one can jump overboard while swimming underwater. Nor do I imagine that anything I say here will diminish the controversy. Most American sociologists listen in the language of individualism. They have, as the structuralists say, cultivated a trained incapacity to hear any other point of view.

Most of what I have to say about structuralism does not derive from sources in American sociology. The reasons for this are numerical. Within American sociology, structuralists have always been a tiny minority, a minority that is seldom heard. Partly for this reason, individualists in American sociology do not have a marked familiarity with the concerns of structural sociology. But, even more to the point, within the United States most structuralists are not in sociology. They are found largely in anthropology, geography, economics, and history. For this reason, structural sociologists in America spend most of their time talking to people outside sociology (Blau, b). They talk to other sociologists only on very rare occasions. Since, on these rare occasions, structuralists have to switch to the language of individualism in order to be understood, structuralists generally regard these conversations as a waste of time. Finally, the structuralists in the United States are a tiny minority of all structuralists in the world. Most structural sociology—regardless of the academic field which develops it—is done outside the United States. This is partly because many Marxists are structuralists (however, some structuralists are not Marxists). There are very few Marxists in the United States in any field of social science. Furthermore, most Marxists in American sociology are actually individualists who have adopted only those elements of dogmatic Marxism which they see as

consistent with their individualist assumptions (e.g., Flacks and Turkel). Within American sociology, the number of Marxists concerned with explanation (as distinguished from preaching) can probably be counted on one finger.

The brevity of this essay will require that I speak in caricatures, rather than in detailed qualifications. For this reason, among others, some structuralists would not agree with what I have to say about structuralism and some individualists would not agree with what I have to say about individualism. Although I will be critical of individualism, I will at least emulate one of its high priests by speaking *ex cathedra* (Freud, c).

Structuralism

From the holist or totalist point of view, everything happens at the population level, so that the individual is nothing but a passive reflection or, at best, a partial one, of processes which are quite independent of him and belong to a quite different genetic scale (Jean Piaget, b, 393).

Writing in 1857, Karl Marx formulated the view of society which I take to be fundamental: "Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations in which individuals stand with respect to one another" (c, 176). In this view, the individual is never the unit of analysis in either research or theory construction. Rather, in this *structuralist* conception of social life, sociologists are studying a communication network mapped on some human population. That network, the interaction which proceeds through it, and the social structures which emerge in it are the subject matter of sociology. Sociology is therefore the study of this network's *organization.* It is an attempt to construct and test explanations of variation in social organization.

Of course, structuralists conceive of their task in somewhat broader terms than "social organization" alone would suggest. They are also concerned with determining how social organization is related to other forms of organization. At a minimum, the latter include (1) the *organization of information* (symbols)—commonly called the cultural or ideological system—and (2) the *organization of materials* (tools)—commonly called the technological system. Most structuralists (see Duncan) would also insist that explaining social organization presupposes a knowledge of the social network's underlying demographic structure as well as its ecological context (biophysical and social environment).

In studying organization, structuralists are concerned with at least two kinds of phenomena: (1) aggregate properties of populations and (2) *emergent* (purely structural) properties of organization itself. An aggregate property is one which can be used to construct a variable by simple addi-

tion of bio-physical characteristics of individual population elements, e.g., population size. However, an emergent property can only be constructed from relations between population elements. In the case of social organization, an emergent property is one defined on the overall connectivity of the network, and is not, therefore, derived from characteristics of individual population elements (Krippendorff). The division of labor and the degree of stratification are emergent properties of social organization.

Structuralists do not study human behavior.[2] The behavior they do study is that of the variables which define various aspects of social organization, its population, environment, ideological and technological subsystems.[3] For structuralists, a general sociological theory is a set of theorems stated in terms of these variables, theorems which will predict and explain the structure and dynamics of societal phenomena. This is a rather large task—coextensive with sociology itself—and it has few workers in the United States.

Most American sociologists do not study sociology in the structuralist sense of the term indicated above.[4] Rather, they merely assume the existence of social structures in order to study their impact on *individuals*, that is, in order to study *social psychology* (the study of the behavior and experience of individuals in social stimulus situations: see Mead; Sherif; Sherif and Sherif). In this subfield of psychology (Sherif and Sherif) the objectives are expected to be aligned with those of general psychology (Asch; Mead; Sherif; Sherif and Sherif) not necessarily with the objectives of sociology (see Blau, a).[5] In other words, most American sociologists adopt the *individualist* perspective in that the individual is their unit of analysis and so-called "human behavior" (in both its subjective and objective aspects) is the individual level phenomena they seek to explain or interpret.[6]

To a very large degree, this means that structuralists and individualists are asking different questions. They are attempting to explain different things. I would not say (as individualists often do) that structuralists and individualists are merely studying different aspects of the same phenomena. This may happen in a few instances, but generally their paths of inquiry diverge to such a marked degree that no shared language and no line of communication unites them in any common discourse. From my structuralist point of view, the psychological concerns of American sociologists do not bear on questions of social structure and organization, and at best would have only a secondary relevance to them (Blau, a). The reason for this is quite simple (say the structuralists). If one assumes the structure of society in order to examine its impact on the immediate acts, thoughts, and feelings of individuals, one has assumed most of what has to be explained (indeed, about 95 percent of the variation in human society) in order to study a small part of human activity and experience (about 5 percent—and as such, difficult to distinguish from random noise). Where-

as, in the structuralist view, the primary task of sociology (Blau, a) is not to assume the empirical conditions of social structure, but to explain its existence in the first place (the opposite of social psychology's concerns). The reason for this, of course, is that structural sociologists are interested in explaining most of what happens in human society, not some minute fraction of it.

Individualists and structuralists, each within their respective domains of inquiry, can examine various relationships. However, I will select for illustration here only one for each. Out of all the types of relations between phenomena they may examine, the two shown in Figure 1 are exclusive to each approach. That is, as shown in Figure 1–A, structuralists may examine relations between one form of organization and another (at the same or different points in time), but individualists would never do this. Similarly, as shown in Figure 1–B, individualists may examine relations between one individual action and another (at the same or different points in time), but structuralists would never do this. The two extreme cases shown in Figure 1 are intended to indicate just how far apart the two approaches can be (although Figure 1 does not exhaust the possibilities for either). To mention concrete cases, Figure 1–A is exemplified in Offe's treatment of the *relation* between the organization of occupational positions in a bureaucratic hierarchy (social organization) and the organization of ideas (information) about the way these positions are reputedly filled through rules of performance (ideological system). Figure 1–B is exemplified in Collins' (b) discussion of the *relation* between what an individual talks about at one point in time (individual action) and what that same individual talks about at a later point in time (individual action).

Many individualists do not believe there is any difference between the phenomena distinguished in Figure 1. They would probably say that the organization in Figure 1–A is nothing more than the actions (behaviors) of individuals in Figure 1–B. Structuralists would reply that the individualists are wrong, or that any existing correspondence between the two is irrelevant. I will try to illustrate (very briefly) why structuralists see a difference between the two.

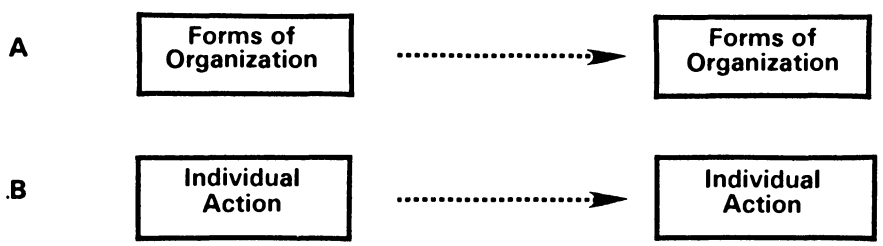


Figure 1. STRUCTURALISTS RELATE FORMS OF ORGANIZATION TO ONE ANOTHER (*A*), WHILE INDIVIDUALISTS RELATE INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS TO ONE ANOTHER (*B*)

Figure 2 illustrates two forms of organization in social networks. Each is comprised of points and directed lines. Points may be interpreted as positions (not individuals) and directed lines as asymmetric social relations defining each network. The positions may be occupied by individuals, households, communities, associations, and the like. But—for the benefit of example—I will assume they are occupied by individual humans. The social relations may refer to any kind of communication link (direct or indirect)[7] between positions (as long as their asymmetric quality is preserved). They could, for example, be interpreted to mean "has authority over." In this case, we would call the two forms of organization *dominance structures,* because they are defined by dominance relations, but also because they carry no identification of the concrete population elements occupying each of their positions.

The particular way concrete (identifiable) individuals are placed in the Figure 2 structures generates six *patterns* for the transitive form and two *patterns* for the cyclical form, as shown in Figure 3. The fact that these different patterns of individual arrangement can be identified means that individuals can change positions with respect to one another in a wide variety of ways *without altering the structure* at all. Not only can such form-perserving shifts in individual position occur, they have in fact been observed (Mayhew and Gray). And, since the shifts in position between concrete individuals can come about as a result of a wide variety of different actions (behaviors) of individuals, this indicates that *there can be a wide divergence between the actions of persons and the forms of organization they participate in.* In Figures 2 and 3, there is a much wider divergence between action and form in the transitive than in the cyclical configuration. Not only, therefore, may there be a disjunction between concrete behavior and organizational form, the degree of divergence is determined by the structure itself. And, the larger the set of population elements drawn together in such networks, the wider this divergence becomes.

Consider one more illustration of this difference. Figure 4 shows six interaction networks drawn as points and lines. Points represent positions

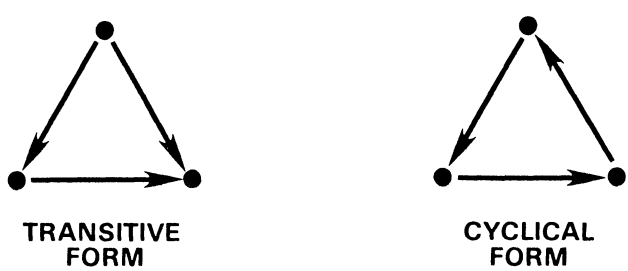
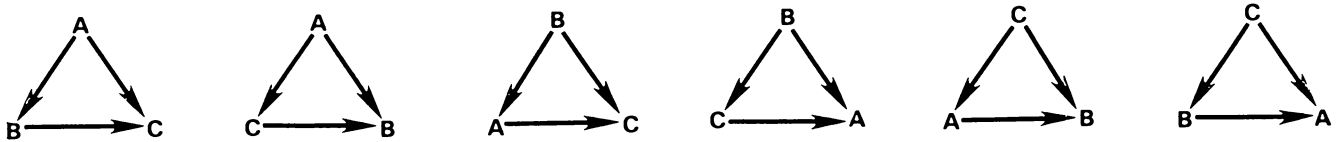


Figure 2. TWO DIFFERENT FORMS OF NETWORK ORGANIZATION

PERMUTATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE CYCLICAL NETWORK FORM



PERMUTATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE TRANSITIVE NETWORK FORM

Figure 3. CONCRETE PATTERNS OF INDIVIDUAL LOCATION IN TWO DIFFERENT NETWORK FORMS

(or locations) and lines represent communication (and/or transportation) links between positions. For the moment, I will assume that the positions are occupied by individuals who communicate with one another along the indicated lines. The three networks on the left-hand side of Figure 4 all have the property that they can be disrupted by the removal of at least one one point (position). That is, all three have at least one point which, if removed, will break off communication between other positions in the network. Points which can produce such disruption are called cut-points and networks containing cut-points are said to be point-vulnerable. The three networks on the right-hand side of Figure 4 have no cut-points and are, therefore, point-invulnerable. Regardless of which point we remove from them, the remaining positions are still in communication with one another.

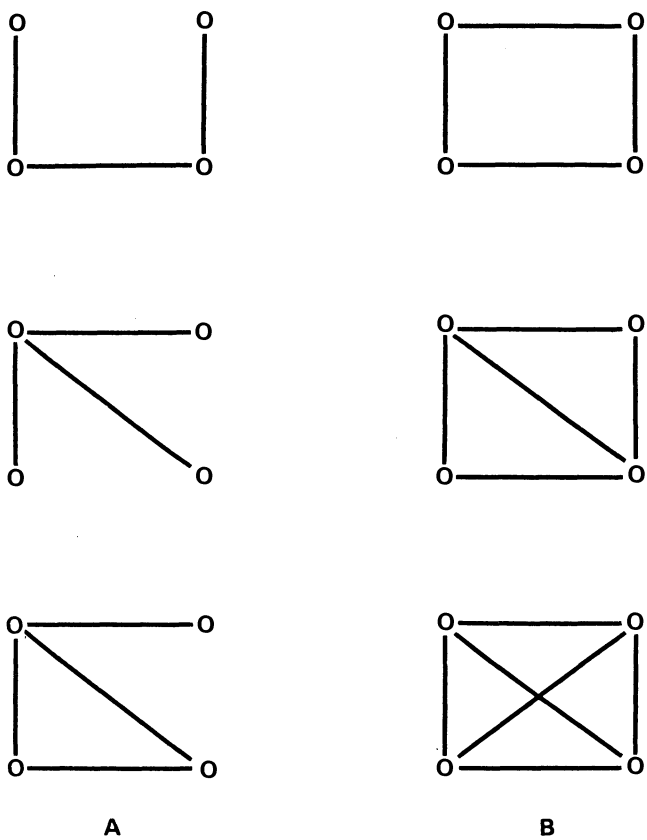


Figure 4. POINT VULNERABLE (*A*) AND POINT INVULNERABLE (*B*) FORMS OF ORGANIZATION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

Point-vulnerability and point-invulnerability are purely structural properties of social networks. They are derived from the organization of the network itself, not from the characteristics of individuals occupying various positions in them, nor from the characteristics of the positions themselves. A cut-point is a cut-point not by virtue of its own characteristics, but because of the way in which the network is organized. Whether a cut-point exists at all depends entirely on the structure of the network itself.

Social networks may vary a great deal in the number of cut-points they contain. The proportion of cut-points in a network is a measure of the a priori likelihood that it will be disrupted by a break in communication. It is also possible to assign a cutting-number to each cut-point. This cutting-number refers to the number of network pairs (of positions) which cease to communicate after the cut-point is removed (excluding pairs involving the cut-off point itself). The average cutting-number is a measure of the *magnitude* of a network's disruption potential, that is, of the degree of communicative disruption which is potentially contained in the *organization of the network.*[8]

The amount of variability in all the above network properties depends primarily on the size of the network (the number of positions it defines). The larger the number of positions, the greater the variability. In any case, all of these network properties depend directly on how the network is organized *and on nothing else.* The structuralist's concern with these properties involves relating them to other forms of organization, such as the division of labor and the degree of social stratification. That such concerns do not require paying attention to the concrete behaviors (actions) of individuals is easily discerned from Figure 4. Each of the networks in Figure 4 can channel wide varieties of individual action. These networks can map the flow of rumors, or business transactions, or moves in chess games, or any number of other concrete activities *without in any way altering the structural properties of each communication system.* In other words, there can be a wide divergence between activities of individuals and the structural relations through which these activities are expressed. It is for this reason (as well as for those mentioned in discussion of Figures 2 and 3) that structuralists consider the individualist equation of *behavior = structure* to be either false or irrelevant.[9]

Dyed-in-the-wool individualists will have no trouble doubting everything I have just said about the illustrations in Figures 2 and 4. Perhaps they will want to reflect on the consequences of filling the network positions in Figures 2 and 4 with groups instead of individuals. In that case, the positions might be occupied by villages, factories, or battleships. Each position would then contain its own internal network of social relations. Under these circumstances, the connection between structure in the larger network and items of individual behavior within each position's micro–

network admits an even wider divergence between network properties and individual action than anything I have mentioned before. The huge gap between the two indicates just how far individualists are from sociology.

The usual response of individualists to the kinds of differences I have been discussing here is to ignore them. Homans tells us that "the arbitrary lines we draw between the psychological and the social will disappear" (g, 13) if we are willing to adopt the psychological priority of studying individuals, while ignoring other considerations. If he had said "sociology will disappear," I would agree with him. But, since these other considerations are what structuralists study, I am more inclined to agree with Znaniecki's (799) contention: "We deny that the theories of psychology or of biology or of any other science can form the premises of sociological propositions." As I have attempted to illustrate, structuralists do not endorse this statement on the basis of some hypothetical possibility that there *might be* some difference between action at the level of the individual organism and structure at the level of the social network. Those who continue to believe that social structure can be reduced to the characteristics of individuals may wish to examine Krippendorff's mathematical proof of their error.[10]

Structuralists conceive of sociology much in the fashion of Simmel (a)[10] as being concerned with forms of human association abstracted from their *specific* content. But they would not agree with his assumption that social phenomena require an "explication psychologique" (a, 503). Instead, they would concur with Marx (a) that relations among people have a material character which is largely independent of individual control or conscious action. Accordingly, there is a vast distance between the structuralist and the Weberian (c, 1) definitions of sociology.

A Dialogue of the Deaf: I

The predictability of academic debates is less depressing than their emptiness (Gail T. Parker, 43).

Since structuralists are interested in explaining organization and individualists are interested in interpreting the acts of individuals, it surprises no one that they make radically different assumptions, conceive of social phenomena in radically different terminologies, and generally approach any topic from opposite directions. It would only be surprising to find one of them who understands what the other is saying.

The differences between structuralist and individualist modes of apprehending social phenomena could only be enumerated in a lengthy monograph. I will mention only a few of them here.

Individualists may speak of certain social characteristics of individu-

als, such as an individual's ethnicity, or of certain psychological characteristics of individuals, such as an individual's self-concept. Structuralists do not speak of individuals in these terms (except when trying to communicate with an individualist). Structuralists do not attribute social or psychological characteristics to individual humans. Rather, structuralists view individual human beings as biological organisms. Hence, individual characteristics might include pulse rate, blood pressure, height, metabolic rate and so on. But there are no social characteristics of individuals. To structuralists, social phenomena are properties of social networks (properties of organization); they are never characteristics of biological individuals. Furthermore, for structuralists, psychological phenomena do not exist (they are not defined).

What individualists call psychology is for the structuralist either a part of biology, or it is an item of data in a culture which posits psychic phenomena (in the same sense that witchcraft is an item of data in a culture which posits witches). To the structuralist, people who talk about self-concepts are like people who talk about witches.

To the structuralist, psychology is contemporary civilization's witchcraft and psychologists are its corresponding witchdoctors. This refers, of course, to psychology as the study of the psyche (mind). Behavioral psychology is a contradiction in terms, and structuralists relegate it to the field of biology. Structuralists generally consider that there are two fields of study relevant to understanding human society: biology and (the structuralist version of) sociology. They fail to see any psychic (mental) phenomena falling in between these two, for much the same reasons as are implied in van den Berge's statement: "Several brands of social psychology, notably psychoanalysis, symbolic interactionism, and the currently fashionable 'ethnomethodology' rely heavily on a conceptual apparatus that presupposes questionable inferences from people's behavior, rather than being directly derived from readily observable behavior" (19). Structuralists tend to agree with Kunkel that sociologists have made too many unwarranted assumptions about human beings.[11]

Structuralists consider that the human brain is a biological phenomenon and that its electro-chemical processes are the subject matter of biology, most particularly of what may be called "machine biology." Human organisms are conceived as information and energy processing machines, much as one finds them treated in the writings of von Bertalanffy (a, b) and Broadbent. To structuralists, the human central nervous system is a biological computer.[12]

Accordingly, structuralists do not assume that people think, that people are conscious, or have a mind as these terms are defined by individualists—e.g., Ritzer et al. claim that "To the sociologist, the mind is not viewed as a physical entity, but as a mental process" (25). The sociologist in question is not a structuralist. From the structuralist point of view, what

individualists call "being conscious" is an electrochemical configuration not unlike the one projected on a television screen. To structuralists, this configuration is a "simulation function" of the central nervous system (Monod). From the structuralist point of view, differences between the biological computers in grasshoppers and humans is a difference in the structure of nervous systems as empirically determined by biologists. It is not a difference to be endowed with divine qualities.

Hence, one of the largest differences between structuralists and individualists occurs in their treatment of the organization of information. Initially, I indicated that this organization was in terms of symbols. I said that to avoid creating a panic. To structuralists, information fills a much broader category along the lines conceived in the mathematical theory of information (Meyer-Eppler), whereas individualists generally include only symbols processed by the human central nervous system. Because they are interested in population structure and ecological context, structuralists include the information transmitted in light waves (von Foerster), through the genetic code (Monod), and even in the viral diseases of epidemiological systems (Weidl).

Needless to say, structuralists distinguish cultural information from these other forms and do not minimize the importance of symbol systems organized into social ideologies. Rather, exactly that form of information organization is of paramount importance to structuralists. But they do not suffer from the conceptual restrictions of individualism Structuralists find symbols stored in either the biological memory banks of humans or in the external memory banks of material culture: writing in books (Febvre and Martin), numbers in computers (Janco and Furjot), paintings on cave walls (Leroi-Gourhan), etc.

Whereas individualism, with its emphasis on "minded" individuals, wanders off into free will (Robertson)[13] and random behavior (Blumer), structuralists study the organization of information at the societal level, including the relations of information transfer between social networks and their environments (social and bio-physical). For example, structuralists see the development of "artificial memory" in material culture as a crucial shift in social history, leading to the structural transformations into urban civilizations (Lévi-Strauss, a), bureaucratic empires (Loewe), and on to the bustle of information levels in industrial societies (Blute; Segraves). These developments in information processing technology are used to explain changes in the organization of information itself (Goody).

Thus, while some sociologists have insisted that humans are fundamentally non-logical or irrational (Pareto, a, b) and others have treated them as rational (Heath), structuralists see these phenomena as functions of information processing technology. As Goody noted, only with the development of external memory banks in the form of writing was it possible to develop the logic underlying Western science. Without external repre-

sentations of statements, syllogisms could not be systematically articulated by humans. Their biological computers were too frail—hence Lévy-Bruhl's thesis. Communication among humans in the absence of material aids, and even with a few, is notoriously prone to every kind of distortion (cf. Campbell, a; DeFleur). The human central nervous system can perform logical operations when it can cultivate that form of information organization through external props, through material information processing technology. Piaget (b) appears to be one of the few biologists to have grasped the significance of these material developments.[14]

Structuralists do not assume that humans are logical or non-logical, rational or non-rational, per se. They see logic and rationality as aspects of the organization of information, as properties of sociocultural systems, not as characteristics of individuals (cf. Godelier, a).[15] An integral part of the structuralist argument rests on the extension of the *material bases* of communication in society (Østerberg, a, b). But, structuralists are not committed to a view that technology alone alters information structure. They see forms of social organization as being of critical importance in transforming and sustaining particular systems of ideas (cf. Foucault).

All this discussion of machine biology and material technology makes it easier to see why structuralists do not employ subjectivist concepts such as purposes or goals in their analyses. What these vague notions were presumed to accomplish by individualists are, in the structuralist view, accomplished in a more parsimonious fashion by blind variation (Campbell, b) and equifinality (von Bertalanffy, a).

In a word, even in looking at some very limited aspect of sociocultural phenomena—such as the organization of information—we find that the differences between structuralists and individualists are enormous.[16]

Another point at which there is a nearly perfect disjunction between structuralist and individualist conceptions is the distinction drawn between micro- and macro-level social phenomena (Duverger). The differentiation has to be made primarily in the way they treat micro-level phenomena, because most individualists fail to mention (or even deny the existence of) macro-level social phenomena. If individualists mention macro-level phenomena, they usually see it as a direct extension of micro-level activity (e.g., Homans, a, b).

That is, for most individualists micro-level phenomena are the only social phenomena: the individual is the unit of analysis and "human behavior" in relatively small face-to-face aggregates is the object of inquiry. Macro-aggregates are merely additive collections of micro-aggregates: human behavior is simply summed over a larger number of individuals. The social aspect of the human behavior studied is usually an incidental feature—it merely indicates the presence of others. Individualists seldom study social interaction itself, even when provided with the opportunity to

do so (e.g., Homans, c). On those rare occasions when behavior involves some kind of social interaction, it is seen at both levels of aggregation as a direct function of subjective states, such as attitudes (Sakoda). Generally, however, interaction is ignored, and the focus of inquiry is on the individual's subjectively defined "experiences" (cf. Smith; Smith-Lovin).

In the structuralist view, micro- and macro-level social phenomena are distinguished by the nature of the *population elements* on which social networks are defined. Micro-level phenomena are defined on networks of relations between individual human organisms, usually, but not invariably, in face-to-face groups. Macro-level social phenomena, on the other hand, are defined on networks of relations between groups, communities, organizations, societies or any other set of supra-individual population elements selected for study. The variables defined on these two levels may, therefore, be the same: social inequality, division of labor, network vulnerability, etc. Some differences occur, however, because there is usually a more restricted range for each variable in micro-level networks. Micro-level networks seldom include more than forty to fifty population elements and usually range in size from two to thirty people. This restricted size range places definite upper limits on the range of structural variables defined on micro-level networks. Also, some kinds of social relations can be defined between individual organisms which cannot be defined between groups and vice versa. In any case, the structuralist concern is the same for both levels: the organization of the network. Structuralists are particularly concerned with determining whether the same or different processes and structures occur at these two levels and especially with whether the same or different theoretical considerations apply to them.

Accordingly, for structuralists, the shift from macro- to micro-level phenomena does not involve a change in the unit of analysis; it involves a change in the kind of population elements on which the unit of analysis is defined. In structural sociology the unit of analysis is always the social network, *never the individual.* I have already stated the reason for this: structuralists see human organisms and their behavior as *biological,* not social phenomena.

I will break off here, in order to address individualism more directly in the next section. What I have said here—incomplete though it may be as a catalogue of diversity—should be sufficient to make it clear that any conversation between a structuralist and an individualist is a dialogue of the deaf. They are speaking different languages even when they employ the same terms.

Individualism: A House of Cards

From the atomistic or individualist point of view, the individual is the source of all new characteristics or transformations, so that the group or population is nothing but the additive outcome of such initiative by the individual (Jean Piaget, b, 393).

Partly because structuralists and individualists slice up the social world in different ways and partly because they are not even asking the same questions about the world, attempts to compare and evaluate them are difficult at best and meaningless at worst. We would be better advised to evaluate these two perspectives as separate fields of inquiry, treating each in terms of its own universe of discourse. So, in this section, I will confine my remarks to individualism, which I will criticize on its own ground and in its own terms. The aim is to convey to individualists just why it is that structuralists, as outside observers, do not find the individualist approach very appealing, i.e., why structuralists generally see individualism as a blind alley.

I have said that most American sociologists adopt the individualist perspective in that the individual is their unit of analysis and "human behavior" (in both its subjective and objective aspects) is the individual level phenomenon they seek to explain or interpret. When carried to the *essentialist* extreme of *methodological individualism,* individualism holds that only individuals exist (cf. Agassi; Simmel, b).[17] Individualists further assert—because only individuals exist—that the only item of interest to social scientists is "human behavior" as Poloma tells us: "The task of sociological theory is to discover the scientific laws that explain human behavior" (14). This, at least, is the flag they wave. Whether they actually pursue this kind of (scientific) explanation is another question.

Bear in mind (as subjectivist individualists say) that there are no societies, no communities, no organizations, no groups, and, indeed, no structures at all, except to the extent that structure is another word for patterned behavior of individuals.[18] As Robertson (20) explained: "Concepts such as 'the economy' or 'the state' are, after all, merely abstractions; they cannot exist or act by themselves. It is only people that exist and act . . . " (20). Sometimes, individualists do use expressions like group or even society; but these are no more than convenient labels for aggregates of individuals, aggregates in which each individual has a unique personality.[19]

What I have just said is very important. The "social stimulus situation" in which individualists study "human behavior" or "the behavior and experience of individuals" is simply the behavior of other individuals. That's all there is, say the individualists (e.g., Collins, b). In pursuing social psychology, individualists are studying "human behavior" in the context of "human behavior," or *X* in the context of *X*. In a word, they are

interested in studying "human behavior" and nothing else. This is how individualists first entered their cul-de-sac.

Individualists have no objection to psychological terminology: it is the only vocabulary they know. As Rivers once stated the individualist position: " . . . the final aim of the study of society is the explanation of social behavior in terms of psychology" (a, 2). And this is just as it should be, say the individualists, because: " . . . every social phenomenon must have its origin in some property of the individual" (Spencer, a, 17).

Consistent with the foregoing, individualists see individuals as free and extremely powerful, juggling the social structure on the tips of their fingers. In their view: "It is a sociological truism that man makes himself" (Hamblin and Kunkel, 523).[20] For individualists, social structure or social phenomena are epiphenomena which follow directly from the whims of all-powerful individuals:

> Sociology is the study of individuals in a social setting. . . . The social settings in which people live have been created by individuals throughout the course of history. . . . Social settings also are re-created and reaffirmed by individual action. . . . people daily reconstruct their social settings and have the ability to radically alter them. . . . (Ritzer et al., 7–8)

In other words, sociology is the study of free, all-powerful individuals and the epiphenomena which they manipulate. Ritzer et al. go on to say that: "We do not mean to imply that individuals are totally free, because they are not" (25). Yet they do not specify how free or constrained individuals are and, in light of the statements cited above, one is left to consider whether individuals are 99.44, 99.55, 99.66, 99.77, 99.88, or 99.99 percent free.

Or, in Robertson's version of individual freedom: "Within very broad limits, we are free to fabricate ourselves and our behavior as we wish—particularly if we understand the social process through which we became what we are" (114). In the individualist view, the human mind supplies what is needed for this near total control: " . . . people are endowed with the ability to think, to debate alternate courses of action in their minds, and to choose the best suited to them and their particular situatio. Human action requires that the mind play a crucial role in determining what individuals do. . . . " (Ritzer et al., 25). That is, the human mind or psyche permits all-powerful individuals to control events: "After selecting the stimuli to which they will react, they choose *how* to respond. . . . They do this by looking into the future and predicting how others will react to each of their potential responses" (Ritzer et al., 25). Thus, individuals never do anything from habit; they maintain a total mental picture of all possible events and select the line of action they want based on their omniscience.[21]

Erikson noted the source of these individualist views:

> An old tradition in Western thought—strongly endorsed by humanists of one sort or another—is that social institutions are the product of human imagination and wisdom. Individuals are the basic material of human life, the atomic particles that make it up; and the social forms they devise can be understood as transient arrangements that reflect the human spirit but do not bind it in any vital way (36).

That individualist views arise from such a tradition does not, ipso facto, invalidate them (Coser). Rather, this background merely permits us to see why individualism accounts for most American sociological activity. These sociologists are telling people what they already believe. This is by far the most effective method of gaining a wide audience, as Lazarsfeld and Merton noted many years ago.

This unabashed endorsement of free will and individual omnipotence helps to clarify certain otherwise mysterious events described by Erikson (36): "One college in New England did not appoint its first sociologist until a few years ago, and when the president was asked to explain that neglect, he is reported to have answered, 'Because we believe in free will' "(36). With individualists openly advocating free will in introductory text books (Ritzer et al.; Robertson) the ideological barriers have dropped. Individualist sociology and American ideology are now one. In American society, sociologists are no longer teaching a new field; they are helping Americans clarify their own beliefs by stating them in a systematic way called sociology. In a word, what Americans believe about the nature of human beings and human society is true, and that truth is called sociology.

Since the views of individualists and those of the American public coincide, individualists are commonly found stating that the subject under discussion is something "we already know" (Ritzer et al., 25), or that what is being said "is not only true, but obviously true" (Homans, e, 55). Since the audience "knows" these things, they are "obvious." No proof or argument is required. It is obvious to Americans that what their sociologists are saying is true.

What I have said here about individualism is an oversimplification. Some differences certainly exist in the individualist camp. But my oversimplifications are not as critical as they undoubtedly appear to individualists. The foundations of the several individualisms are all equally spurious, and they all lead to the same cul-de-sac.[22]

INDIVIDUALIST EXPLANATION

The writings of Talcott Parsons have been dismembered by many people. Some of the surgeons have concluded that his works are incomprehensible. I agree with them. For this reason, scholars claiming to have interpreted Parsons' formulations (e.g., Bourricaud, b) are not very helpful. Since I have not understood Parsons' work, I have no way of knowing whether

Bourricaud, or anyone else, has fathomed Parsons' arguments. However, even if all Parsons' writings cannot be unraveled, we may identify a few major notions which both Parsons and his commentators have agreed on.

Among other things, Parsons has been interested in explaining (or interpreting) the actions of individuals by means of a scheme called "institutionalist individualism" (Agassi, a) or "institutional individualism" (Bourricaud, b). In this view, people have values, a subjective set of factors or states which, from their subcranial location, generate the actions of individuals (Olsen).[23] In other words, people have certain ghostly properties hidden inside their heads, properties which somehow generate action and thereby *explain that action.* The origin of these values is historically arbitrary (Mousnier).

Basically, Parsons has said, as Max Black summarized the result, that: "What you do depends on what you want" (279). People have values which tell them what they want. (This is what a value is.) So, *people do things because they want to.* That is the explanation of their behavior. If a person refrains from doing something, this means the person did not want to do that. Thus we have Parsons' contribution to individualism.[24]

George Homans' formulation of the individualist position differs from that of Parsons in a few trivial respects. His contribution to American psychologism may be called "methodological individualism" with all its essentialist overtones, or "psychologism-cum-individualism" to use Agassi's (a, 246) phrase. Homans' terminology is often—but not always—different from Parsons', and he sees social life through the eyes of B. F. Skinner instead of Sigmund Freud. But one psychologist is as good as another in the United States, where behaviorism has never supressed subjectivist interpretations for very long.

In his earlier works, Homans (b; d) employed "sentiments" more than "values," but in the long run he returned to the subjectivist fold even on terminological grounds (g). His final formulation contains several propositions (g) some of which tie his entire theory to Parsons' subcranial mysteries. In addition to one proposition which posits the feeling of "anger" (g, 39), Homans articulated a *value proposition,* which stated that: "The more valuable to a person is the result of his action, the more likely he is to perform the action" (g, 25). That is, values lead to action, or: *people do things because they want to.* Now, since Homans' propositions are all tied together in one explanatory framework, this value proposition is integral to his theory. Indeed, it informs all of his other statements. As soon as one notices that "a person is rewarded" (g, 16) means that his values are realized, we are back on the Parsonian track. The fiddlers are different, but the music is the same.

To briefly summarize Homans' views, he said that: "The institutions, organizations, and societies that sociologists study can be analyzed without

residue, into the actions of men" (f, 378). Furthermore, since the actions of men are themselves explained by the statement that people do things because they want to, nothing more is required.

I am sure that some people will object to my summary of Homans' views, especially to my claim that he explains human action with this kind of statement. I must ignore their objections, because Homans' case is much clearer than Parsons'. We do not require an interpreter to discover that this is exactly the way Homans explains human behavior, for he has said so himself on several occasions and in no uncertain terms (e.g., e, 95).

Now that we have individualism's ultimate theorem clearly in view, I want to point out that Parsons and Homans are not themselves responsible for this cul-de-sac. It is the same "explanation" individualists have been offering for years and it continues in use today without a blush or an apology. I will provide a brief illustration.

Consider the individualist explanations of fertility behavior offered by W. H. R. Rivers (b) and R. R. Rindfuss. Rivers explained the decline in fertility on Eddystone Island by noting that the Melanesians inhabiting said isle had developed a "lack of interest in life" (101). That is, the natives stopped having children because they did not want to have any more children. This, at least, is Rivers' explanation, which he called "the psychological factor" (84). Rindfuss addressed his inquiries to the fertility differential between the southern United States and the non-South. He summarizes in the abstract of his article: "*The South currently has lower levels of fertility than the non-South, and this is because southerners prefer fewer children than nonsoutherners*" (621; italics in the original). Lest there be any doubt about what Rindfuss is saying, I quote from his summary and conclusion section, where he said: " . . . southern fertility is lower because southerners *prefer* fewer children than nonsoutherners" (633; italics in the original). That is, southerners have fewer children because they want to have fewer children. That is the explanation of their behavior.

Parsons and Homans might have used different words and phrases. Parsons would have said that Melanesians ceased to value children and that southerners value fewer children. Homans would have said that Melanesians ceased to find children rewarding, or that southerners found fewer children rewarding. The words range across "interest," "prefer," "value," and "reward," but they all reduce to the same individualist theorem: *People do things because they want to.*[25]

No insignificant part of the individualist cul-de-sac derives from the claim that "values" (or, for that matter, any social "institutions" of any kind whatever) are arbitrary products of history (Homans, e). These values have sources which are both unknown and unknowable (Homans, f). So: (1) values occur arbitrarily in space and time; (2) values tell people what they *want* to do; (3) peoples' behavior is generated by their values; and this makes it possible to say that (4) people do things because they want to.

What this boils down to is that human behavior is unexplainable. The individualist explanation is that there is no explanation. Had they started with this conclusion, *a conclusion that should have been clear from the very statement of the problem,* individualists could have saved a great deal of time.

HUMAN BEHAVIOR: THE FALSE PROBLEM

I have said (twice already) that American sociologists who adopt the individualist perspective take the individual as their unit of analysis and "human behavior" (in both its objective and subjective aspects) as the individual level phenomenon they seek to explain or interpret. That is, they state their aims exactly as Max Weber (c, 1) stated his. In the individualist view—I am quoting Poloma again—"The task of sociological theory is to discover the scientific laws that explain human behavior" (141).

From what I have been saying about the individualist system of "explanation," it should now be clear that structuralists view individualism as a false start with a banal ending. Structuralists do not define their task as explaining "human behavior" because there is nothing there to explain. Indeed, the individualists have repeatedly arrived at this conclusion themselves, but have yet to notice that they have done so.

The individualists do not seem to have grasped the elementary principle that one does not explain a set of data by simply repeating it. To say that *people do things because they want to* is not an explanation (nor even an interpretation) of what people do: it is a restatement of the (individualist's) data. It is not different from saying that people do things because they do things.

I am saying that the individualists have not posed an intelligible question. One would not seek for an explanation of human behavior any more than one would seek for an explanation of the moon. In order to pose and answer intelligible questions about human behavior or the moon one would first have to define a set of variables mapped on human behavior or the moon.[26] Only after deciding what these variables are is it possible to pose questions about the way they relate to one another, and about how they maintain certain constant relations or change over time. Until that has been done, no intelligible question has been asked about human behavior and consequently, no intelligible answers about human behavior will be found. I maintain that the individualists have not defined a problem to study, and until they do, we will continue to hear their platitudes about people doing things because they want to.

I am sure that the individualists will say they have defined a set of variables on human behavior. If so, they are keeping these variables hidden from view, either by claiming a location in some subcranial netherworld (cf. DeFleur and Westie) or by confusing the characteristics of individuals with those of social networks, and reverting to their usual stance that

everything is "obvious." If that fails, their old standbys are waiting in the wings: social life is too complex (Collins, a) and social psychology is still too young to have accomplished anything (Cartwright). I will agree with the last part: American social psychology has accomplished nothing.

Another smoke screen laid by the individualists consists in partitioning "human behavior" into misty sub-sets of the larger cloud. They tell us that they are going to explain "criminal behavior" (Feldman), "psychopathic behavior" (Hare and Schallings), "crisis behavior" (Brecher), "health behavior" (Knutson), "aggressive behavior" (E. Wilson, c), or even the ever popular "sexual behavior" (Robertson). The folly of this procedure is immediately apparent.

There is, for example, no set of behaviors which can be called criminal across human populations in space and time. If a definition of criminal behavior is given, it is stated in terms of the common sense notion prevalent in the individualist's own culture. Donald Black (b) has correctly observed that this procedure leads to non-science (nonsense). There is no set of behaviors which can be identified as health behavior or psychopathic behavior across human populations in space and time (cf. Ackerknect). Even individualists tell us that there is no set of sexual behaviors which generalizes across human populations (Robertson). Similarly, the category of so-called aggression or aggressive behavior does not yield to a definition permitting generalization across human populations (cf. Lorenz, a; E. Wilson, c).

So, the individualists wander back into their cul-de-sac. Aggressive behavior is explained either by attributing it to some as-yet-undiscovered, subcutaneous "gene," or—in the usual fashion—by attributing it to subcranial "values." These are both "want to" explanations. If the "gene" is invoked, the individual "naturally wants to" be aggressive. If the "value" is invoked, the individual has learned to "want to" be aggressive. I am not exaggerating. Pinkney suggested that the violent behavior of Americans is explained by the fact that Americans value violence. Americans engage in violence because they "want to." That is the explanation of their violent behavior.

PSYCHOLOGISM

Webster observed that: "The availability of psychological explanations for social phenomena is undemonstrated; any claim that a general reduction exists is absurd" (272). Krippendorff has shown that Webster is correct on logical grounds alone; that is, that it is logically impossible to reduce social phenomena to the characteristics of individuals. However, as Durkheim (a) noted, arguments from logic have never made an impression on believers.

The individualistic sociology which has developed in the United States is not a sociology in any sense of the term. It is social psychology, a

subfield of psychology. For reasons I have mentioned above, structural sociologists view social psychology as the trained incapacity to comprehend the nature of social life. The psychologism of American sociologists has produced nothing more than platitudes, platitudes derived from American middle-class ideology (see Mayhew). Indeed, the non-accomplishments of American sociologists are striking testimonials for Durkheim's (c) critique. The sure way to fail to understand any aspect of society is to examine it from a psychological point of view.[27]

A Dialogue of the Deaf: II

But are individual actions the phenomena sociologists are most eager to explain? Probably not, since the phenomena they are specifically interested in are institutions, social structural arrangements (social networks), collective actions, or products of joint actions–in short: collective phenomena (Reinhard Wippler, 141).

STRUCTURALISM'S ANSWER?

What does structuralism have to contribute to the individualist concern with "human behavior"? Nothing. As I have said, structuralists are not attempting to explain human behavior. Structuralists are attempting explain social phenomena in human societies. Since social phenomena are derivatives of social networks, and not of individual action, there is no common ground for discussion. Structuralists have nothing at all to contribute to the non-problems individualists have posed for themselves.

Evaluations of structuralism have to proceed along different avenues. One does not evaluate structuralist theories or research by asking: What does this tell us about human behavior? That is not the question being addressed. Furthermore, with such a small number of American sociologists working on structuralist questions, there is not a wide variety of written material to compare with the niagara of print flowing from the individualist presses. Should we attempt to survey what has been done, we would find ourselves confined to the activities of a few people like Amos Hawley, James D. Thompson, Harrison White, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Peter Blau.[28] Since most of this work has just started, it probably has numerous weaknesses I would not attempt to defend. When there have been enough structuralists around long enough for their work to cover a wider spectrum of questions, we will be in a position to evaluate the results. Until then, structuralism in American sociology can hardly be called a flicker in the world's darkest room.

THE MISCONCEPTION OF TWO SOCIOLOGIES

Some of the weaknesses in the works of Thompson, Wallerstein, and Blau derive from their having failed to abandon some elements of the individualist perspective. And, some American individualists have at times managed to disregard their own assumptions long enough to make important contributions to structural sociology (e.g., Collins, b).

What accounts for these strange events? It appears that throughout much of the history of American sociology, structuralists and individualists have not been able to completely abandon one another in their respective attempts to make social phenomena intelligible. There are two basic reasons for their failure to do so.

First, since individualism's assumptions place it in an endless void, individualists have been able to navigate only by abandoning their individualism to some degree. Only by assuming the already existing structure of society (or collectivities of various kinds) have individualists found it possible to conduct an intelligible discussion of their concerns (Wippler). Without that context of organization, their lack of direction becomes immediately apparent. But, because they assume the structure of society, they bypass 95 percent of what has to be explained by sociology. The individualists continue to swim in a sea of random noise comprised of the 5 percent measurement error of structuralist research.

Second, most sociological discussion in the Western world has been conducted in the language of individualism. Many—perhaps most—structuralists have had difficulties in constructing a structural sociology precisely because they have been trained to operate on individualism's assumptions and questions. Any achievements of structural sociology to date have come about solely because a few structuralists have managed to disengage themselves from individualism's unwarranted assumptions and false questions. But most American structuralists have yet to make this clean break and their sociological imagination has suffered accordingly.

Most American structuralists have yet to discover that questions about the relationship between "the individual" and "society"—as posed by Kistiakovsky (a) and other outriders of Weberian subjectivism—are not central to sociology. Indeed, such questions have nothing to do with sociology. These questions were posed by individualists, and structuralists would do well to leave such individualist dilemmas where they belong: in the quagmire of individualism.[29]

Within American sociology, at least, too many structuralists have wasted too much time attempting to solve the pseudo-problems of individualism, rather than focusing on their own questions. Since it is their individualist training that has put them on this false trail, the essential irrelevance of individualist questions needs to be spelled out in more detail. Particularly, what needs to be stated is the fundamental difference between

structuralist and individualist perspectives on individual action or individual behavior. I have said a number of things about this already, but I have yet to draw out the principal difference between the two. I have refrained from doing so up to this point in order to develop my criticism of individualism in its own terms. With that out of the way, I can address the problem more directly.

I have said that humans and their actions are—from the structuralist point of view—biological phenomena. The way these phenomena are treated by structuralists and individualists is one of the greatest differences between the two positions, a difference universally misunderstood by individualists.

Structuralists consider biological phenomena, such as species characteristics, to be important background conditions placing limits on the kinds of populations studied and the range of variables to be defined. They consider, for example, that ant and human populations differ with respect to the *information bands* through which they operate. The width of these bands, and their upper and lower limits, differ for ants and humans, and so, therefore, should the organization of information for ants and humans. Looking within species, e.g., *homo sapiens*, structuralists have no interest in the biological differences among individuals—with two exceptions noted below. The reason for this, of course, is that structuralists study organization, not people:

> The crucial point concerning all . . . human characteristics is that they are taken for granted in the study of social organization. They are given constants, or parameters, for the study of organization, but they are not themselves variables to be investigated or explained. Put more directly, from the point of view of social organization all individuals are . . . interchangeable. (Olsen, 25–26).

The two exceptions to this are found in the *age* and *sex* structure of human populations.

Differences by age are considered by individualists and structuralists alike to have a bearing on the individual's potential for participating in social interaction. To my knowledge, this is the only aspect of humans on which the two positions agree. For purposes of studying fertility—that is for certain demographic processes—structuralists assume that sex is a significant individual characteristic. Otherwise they do not. When social conditions are the same for the two sexes, structuralists assume that males and females have approximately the same potential for participation in social interaction (cf. Halbwachs). Individualists usually assume that there are marked biological differences between the sexes, differences with profound influences on social interaction, independent of social conditions (e.g., Collins, b; Pareto).[30]

So much for background. Consider Figure 5 which shows certain *traditional* ways of conceiving the relation between organization and indi-

vidual action, for structuralists and individualists, respectively. In Figure 5–A the view attributed to structuralists shows organization influencing individual actions and those actions rebounding on organization, possibly by creating or re-creating it. In Figure 5–B the view attributed to individualists shows individual actions creating organization and that organization rebounding on individual actions, possibly giving them direction. Of course, I could have joined the sequences in 5–A and 5–B, creating one longer sequence. Then structuralism and individualism become differences in emphasis, depending on where one chooses to start in the sequence. No doubt this longer sequence, with an arbitrary starting point, accounts for the tendency of some sociologists to flit back and forth between individualist and structuralist perspectives (cf. Halbwachs; Kistiakovsky, b; Michels; Simmel, c; Sorokin, b).

Actually, the differential is more powerful than Figure 5 implies. In many formulations, the difference can be reduced to the first two links in Figure 5–A and 5–B, with organization dominating individual actions in the structuralist perspective and individual actions dominating organization in the individualist perspective (Dawe). I have called the sequences in Figure 5 "traditional" because they were commonly in use about twenty years ago—especially in the writings of Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton (both individualists under my definition)—and much earlier as well.

However, Figure 5 involves a fundamental error in distinguishing between the individualist and structuralist positions. The error was created just as much by structuralists (e.g., Halbwachs; White, b) as by individualists, although in recent years it has become the exclusive province of individualism (Agassi, b; Berger and Luckmann). The error resides in the assumption that there is some reason for examining the relation between organization and individual action. Today, it is an error to assume that sociologists are interested in (1) explaining individual actions by reference

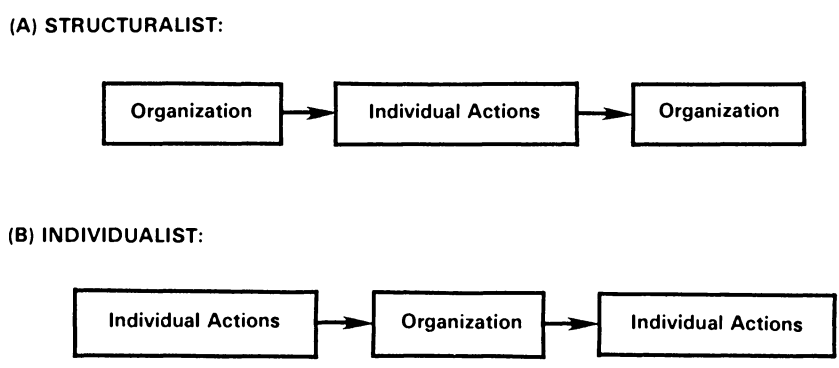


Figure 5. TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF THE WAYS STRUCTURALISTS AND INDIVIDUALISTS RELATE ORGANIZATION AND INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

to organization or (2) explaining organization by reference to individual actions. True, there are still a few traditionalists who perpetuate the error of Figure 5 (cf. Dawe). But, in general, structuralists are not attempting to explain individual action and most individualists do not consider that organization even exists (except as another word for individual action). Hence, contemporary structuralist concerns can usually be reduced to the relation in Figure 1–A, just as most contemporary individualist concerns can be reduced to the relation in Figure 1–B.

Suppose that a man who lives in a suburb of a given city is observed at his suburban home at time 1 and then at his downtown office at time 2. Individualists would say that this *actor* went to his office.[31] That is, their description of the event and their explanation of it are contained in the same statement—hence the confusion between theory and data. In the individualist view, actors create action, so that if the actor is observed in two different places at two different times, the actor is conceived as having arranged this spatial transformation. The word, actor, itself implies that this is the case. If, on the other hand, in the traditional view of structuralism, the individual is seen as being propelled from one point to another by forces outside his control, then he becomes an *actee* (one acted upon). That there is no word actee in the English language gives an idea of the individualist bias of that tongue. In any case, these two different ways of seeing individuals and their actions presumably distinguishes two sociologies: a structuralist or social system view and an individualist or social action view (Dawe). As I have said, Dawe is in error.[32] His is the traditional view of the difference, a view which perpetuates the long-standing confusion between the two positions.

How, then, does structuralism treat the human organism and the event(s) in which it was observed to be located in the suburbs at time 1 and downtown at time 2? A structuralist apprehension of the data would be to say that organism *alpha* is characterized by spatial coordinates $X = 2$ and $Y = 6$ at time 1 and by spatial coordinates $X = 3$ and $Y = 4$ at time 2. No assumption would be made about whether the organism is an actor or an actee, about whether *alpha* moved under its own power or was catapulted across the terrain by external, social system (or other) forces beyond its control. It is in this respect that Dawe's characterization of the social system perspective is in error—not with respect to the traditional confusion about such questions, but about how structuralists treat such data.

The structuralist does not define this problem as one of individuals or of action associated with individuals. Structuralists are interested in answering certain questions about the phenomena of social mobility. Placing organism *alpha* in a more general context, the suburban and downtown locations may correspond to *alpha's* positions in two social networks (a household and a business firm.)[33] So the mobility examined could be both spatial-demographic and across social networks (horizontal social mobility).

The structuralist may also note *alpha's* coordinates within an organization's network (the business firm) at two different points in time in order to examine vertical social mobility across the organization's hierarchy. In all these instances, the question is not: What is *alpha* doing? The question is: What accounts for stabilities and mobilities of a class of *alpha*-like organisms within and across social networks? The problem is conceived in terms of *rates* and *magnitudes* of mobility (Sorokin, a), and answered by theoretical statements which account for the values these variables assume within and across networks (or, for that matter, across physical space if the purely demographic aspect is of interest). Structuralists are not concerned with whether these phenomena are better explained by one conception of individuals or another, or with whether the explanation says anything about individuals at all. The only thing which concerns structuralists is a theory which explains these mobility phenomena, a theory which has maximum predictive power (cf. Herbst).

The question being asked is not about individual action. The question is about the phenomena of social mobility. If individual action has anything to do with social mobility, then individual action would be a part of the answer, but individual action would not enter into the formulation of the question itself. If it did, we would have been assuming the answer in posing the question (as individualists invariably do: see Homans, e, 108). If individual action is part (or all) of the answer, structuralists will not object. If individual action is not part of the answer, structuralists will not object. Structuralists are concerned with obtaining a powerful answer, not with assuming a pet answer which may or may not be relevant to the problem. Brenner's analysis of mobility from one kind of (community) network to another kind of (organizational) network provides a fair illustration of how structuralists obtain powerful answers to mobility questions without invoking individual action as part of the explanation. The reason structural analyses seldom find individual action as a part of the explanation for social phenomena has nothing to do with their preferences with regard to the role of individual action. Rather, it has to do with the fact that answers involving individuals and individual action are (1) less parsimonious and (2) have low explanatory power.[34] The more sophisticated of the individualists have long been aware of this fact (cf. Pareto, a, 40).

That individualists are interested in invoking their pet "explanations" without regard to their explanatory power is easily illustrated for the kind of internetwork social mobility I mentioned above. James Coleman examined the movement of people from one city to another (from one social network to another; from one geographic domain to another; or both if you prefer). His discussion makes it clear that he has no interest in arriving at a powerful explanation of these phenomena, for he begins by excluding from analysis exactly those variables (population size of cities and distance between cities) known to account for the greater part of the

variance in intercity movement. In seeking an explanation, Coleman eliminates the important factors and suggests using "social psychological" factors to explain the error term (random noise left over after the powerful predictors have been excluded). His reasoning is that sociologists (he means individualists) are not interested in things like distance and population size (the powerful predictors) but in the attitudes of individuals. In a word, individualists are less interested in understanding social phenomena than they are in injecting their pet answers into such analyses, regardless of how irrelevant these answers may be to explaining the phenomena under study. Worst of all, individualists have introduced this strategy into the training of American sociologists, thereby crippling their analytic power and insuring the pursuit of irrelevancies.

Individualists, with their focus on individuals and individual activity, do not have a question, they have an answer. They carry this answer around until they encounter a question and then restate this question *in terms of their answer* without regard to how weak the answer may be or, indeed, without regard to whether the answer has anything at all to do with the question in the first place. Thus, for all social phenomena, Homans restates the question as one of individual activity (e): "If the central question of the social sciences is to show how the behavior of individuals creates the characteristics of groups, . . . " (e, 108). But, since the central question of sociology is not "how the behavior of individuals creates the characteristics of groups," his development of the problem is merely deceptive. The question is: What explains social phenomena? The question is not: How does the behavior of individuals explain social phenomena? But American individualism dictates the question in terms of Homans' answer. To insure that this fallacy will endure, the individualists add to it yet another fallacy, presumably to convince their students that theirs is indeed the correct statement of the problem. This second fallacy consists in the claim that, since individuals and individual activity are always a part of and always involved in social life, then individuals and their activity *must be taken into account in any explanation* of social life. They use this same fallacy to justify the inclusion of attitudes, emotions, sentiments, etc. That this fallacy is exactly that, a fallacy, is easy to see.

It is a fallacy to claim that because X is present in or a part of Y, then the explanation of Y must involve X. Otherwise, one could argue that because the average hair length of individuals in a group is always present in and a part of the situation to be explained, then the average hair length of group members *must be taken into account* in any explanation of what happens in the group. Leslie White (b) noted this fallacy long ago, but the demonstration has never made the slightest impression on individualists.

What matters, of course, is not the impression it makes on individualists. Its importance lies in the impression it should make on those American sociologists who have attempted to overcome the bias of individualism

they acquired in the course of their sociological training. And, what ultimately matters is the realization that the difference in the way structuralists and individualists treat individuals and individual action resides in the individualist assumption that these phenomena must be taken into account and in the lack of such an assumption by structuralists. If individualists are going to continue to insist on this assumption, that is their problem. It is not sociology's problem.

Contrary to Vanberg, there are not two sociologies. There is one sociology called structuralism and there is one psychology called individualism. Because it has been dominated by the psychology called individualism, American sociology ground to a stop the day it was born. A few structuralists have attempted to restart a genuine sociological tradition in the United States, but I doubt that they will succeed until they have made a complete break with individualism.

Comment

The folly of the Sahibs has neither top nor bottom (Rudyard Kipling, 244).

In the language of the functionalist school, the system-maintaining function of sociologists appears to be that of maximizing disagreement about the nature of human society. The more research carried out on a particular topic, the less we know about it. Or, as Marvin Harris summarizes our folly: "The aggregate social function of all that research is to prevent people from understanding the causes of their social life" (vii). He goes on to say that "we shall know less, not more, if these scholars have their way." But he does not say, as Marx and Pareto would have, that sociologists are employed by their ruling elites for exactly this purpose.[35] Harris offers a different, although possibly related, explanation: "The manifest inability of our overspecialized scientific establishment to say anything coherent about the causes of lifestyles . . . is the result of bestowing premium rewards on specialists who never threaten a fact with a theory" (vii).[36] I concur with one part of this explanation. Social scientists seldom threaten a fact with a theory. Even in those rare instances when they do, they nevertheless disagree about just how the theory is to be evaluated (cf. Gibbs).

In my opinion, the problem requires a different kind of statement. Contrary to Gouldner (a) the use of *particular* methods of study does not imply the existence of *particular* assumptions about man and society. The reverse would be more nearly correct, but even in that case, no one-to-one correspondence obtains. Rather, our range of methods is quite limited, and each permits inquiry to proceed on a wide variety of meta-theoretical assumptions. This is why we say that the data do not speak for themselves, regardless of the research strategy employed.

Since the data do not speak for themselves, and since it is the disagreement across meta-theoretical assumptions which prevents sociologists from selecting a common criterion for evaluating theories, Hubert Blalock's view that this group can resolve the problems of relating theory to research is not unlike the belief that one can quench a fire with gasoline.

In spite of their disagreements, most American sociologists seem to agree on one thing: methodological individualism. The worst feature of this concensus has been the focus on its research on so-called human behavior, an amorphous cloud of concrete items. Since, in the individualist view, human behavior supplies its own context, American sociologists have failed to define any questions on an essentially unbounded plane. Without questions, there are no answers. Individualists have substituted platitudes as non-answers to their non-questions.

Most American sociologists have set themselves the task of explaining or interpreting "the behavior and experience of individuals" and have concluded with Parsons and Homans, that "people do things because they want to." When one considers the time and resources that have been expended on this enterprise, it is difficult to avoid the further conclusion that American sociologists have truly been shadowboxing in the dark.

As Pareto (c, 79) would have it, these scientists may have banished a few popular prejudices, but only to replace them with some of their own. So, I am less inclined to agree with Harris and more inclined to agree with Boodin (b, 23) that the "barrenness of sociology" is a consequence of studying individuals rather than groups.

Notes

1. Where foreign language sources are cited, the translation into English has been supplied.
2. Homans' (e, 71) claim that the social sciences are concerned with the behavior of people is not merely incorrect, it is an unwarranted projection of the *individualist* perspective onto all social scientists. However, considering the psychologism which often passes for sociology in the United States, his error is understandable.
3. The use of the term "system" or "subsystem" here should not be construed as an adoption of Talcott Parsons' terminology. These words are used here to refer to any set of elements which a theorist conceives as related to one another.
4. I shall be using the term, sociologist, to designate anyone who adopts that label, although I consider most American sociologists to be working in the areas of psychology, biology, or philosophy.
5. I am inclined to agree with Mead that: "No sharp line can be drawn between social psychology and individual psychology" (1). Freud (a) held the same view. I also agree with Mead and Sherif and Sherif that social psychology is a sub-field of psychology. The definition of social psychology given in the text above is taken from Mead (1) and Sherif and Sherif (4). I find that most other textbooks agree with it (However, see Kretch et al., 5). I have employed the Mead–Sherif definition because it describes the concerns of most American sociologists quite well.
6. That is, they tend to follow Max Weber's definition of sociology which makes it virtually identical with the definition of social psychology I indicated in the text:

> Sociology (in the sense in which this highly ambiguous word is used here) is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course

and effects. In 'action' is included all human behavior (either overt or purely inward and subjective) when and insofar as the acting individual attaches subjective meaning to it (c, 1).

Notice that Weber's view excludes from the sociological domain any phenomena of which individuals are unaware. This would exclude most structural phenomena, including a few which Weber himself discussed. Weber's tendency to depart from his own definition is well known (cf. Turner, 19, 40–42, 48–49). Weber's conception of sociology is radically different from that held by the historical materialists who have contended that people are quite unaware of the primary determinants of their social life. Both Pareto (a)—an individualist—and Durkheim (d)—a structuralist—have agreed with the materialists on this point, as did Sigmund Freud (b, 1).

7. In this example, it will not matter whether the positions are occupied by individuals forming a "distributive" or "collective" plurality in Elster's (61–62, 87–88, 131) sense of these terms.

8. Another important property of social networks like those shown in Figure 4 is the structural phenomenon of network-distance between positions. Examples of purely structural properties germane to sociological inquiry can easily be multiplied by considering *direction* in social relations, as in Figures 2 and 3 (cf. Harary et al.).

9. Of course, this does not imply that structuralists have no interest in the nature of items flowing through network channels. In studying the types of networks illustrated in Figure 4, they would be concerned with whether channels carry *information flows* (symbols), *energy flows* (objects, including people), or some combination of the two. Many other content classifications are of interest to structuralists, but these classifications do not necessarily tie analysis to specific, concrete acts of individual human organisms.

10. The basis of Krippendorff's argument has been accurately identified by Lorenz: "All so-called '-isms,' such as biologism, psychologism, etc., presume to explain the laws and processes proper to higher levels in terms of categories derived from lower levels, *which is simply not possible*" (b, 61). The power of Krippendorff-type arguments must be very great to persuade a biologist to abandon his earlier views (e.g., Lorenz, a). Sociologists who have yet to encounter Krippendorff's work continue to marshall a barrage of non-sequiturs in defense of psychologism (e.g., Esser). The principal difficulty facing the "methodological individualists" is that they have succumbed to their own propaganda. Their belief that: "The task of sociological theory is to discover the scientific laws that explain human behavior" (Poloma, 141), was propagated by themselves among themselves. Since this concern falls outside structuralist inquiry, the methodological individualists are actually arguing with themselves, although they say they are arguing with structuralists (e.g., Esser). Because structuralists are not attempting to explain individual behavior (action), they do not even enter the discussion.

11. The structuralist partition of phenomena into biological and sociological does not carry with it an endorsement of the exotic claims made by so-called sociobiologists. The irresponsible statements about humans one finds in the work of Lorenz (a), Barash, and Edward O. Wilson (c) are suspect for exactly the same reasons van den Berge distrusts inferences drawn by social psychologists. The excesses of the sociobiologists make the social psychologists sound like paragons of logical positivism. Sociologists might agree with Lorenz's (a) analogies between rats and humans, but they would be skeptical of Barash's mystic claim that female Mallards "know" where their genes are going (67–68). Structuralists are even skeptical about whether it can be said that humans "know" anything. On this latter point, structuralists would be more likely to agree with Freud (b).

12. The reader is again cautioned, that adopting the model of "machine biology" does not imply any acceptance of the unwarranted claims which continue to pile one absurdity on another from so-called sociobiology, e.g., the truly fantastic statements about the human central nervous system and the so-called "mind" one finds in the astonishing leaps made by Blakemore.

13. Because there is a long tradition in sociology which implies that individuals are not free, when the individualists explicitly state that humans have free will (Robertson), they cover their embarrassment with a prior statement disclaiming any such notion (Robertson, 6). But, as time proceeds, the individualists are becoming bolder and bolder in their advocacy of the free-will argument, as I will detail in subsequent discussion of Ritzer et al.

14. I am giving Piaget the benefit of the doubt based on one possible interpretation of his statements in the work cited. Some of his earlier reports do not convey the impression that he

grasped the implications of this argument for the interpretation of his experiments (cf. Inhelder and Piaget; Piaget, a; Piaget and Inhelder, a, b).

15. In my discussion, the term "rationality" should not be construed in Weberian idiom. Weber used this term to refer to such a wide variety of phenomena—and changed its definition on such a large number of occasions—that it is not possible to decide what he was talking about. On a related issue, I note that some psychologists (e.g., Köhler) have treated the question of "intelligence" in animals and humans as largely a question of how *information is organized* by the individual organism. If this is a significant component of what psychologists mean by intelligence, then structuralists would be likely to conclude that intelligence, like logic and rationality, is not a characteristic of persons. How and whether it would be manifested at all would be largely a function of social, cultural, and technological organization.

16. Further insight into the structuralist treatment of the organization of information may be gained by consulting Flannery, Wirsing, and Gregory Johnson. Needless to say, structuralists do not always agree on the appropriate solutions to their intellectual questions, and nowhere is this clearer than in their treatment of the organization of information (cf. Sahlins, b). But, not a few of their quarrels arise from the tendency of some so-called structuralists to flit back and forth between a structuralist and an individualist position, a vacillation contributing additional swirls to sociology's already highly involuted arabesque of misunderstandings. Claude Lévi-Strauss is a case in point. Some of his work conveys the impression of predominantly structuralist concerns (e.g., a) but a more general reading (cf. b, c) suggests that he adheres to an obscure psychologism similar to that of Sigmund Freud. Lévi-Strauss appears to believe that he is studying human nature and/or the universals of human "thought" (d, 259–260) in population aggregates of nothing more than individuals (b, 365). He once said (b) that he was following in the footsteps of Durkheim and Mauss, but—beyond their common use of the French language—I see no similarities at all. Furthermore, Godelier's (b) claim that there is a parallel between Marx and Lévi-Strauss is less than convincing, for it is based on Lévi-Strauss' opinion, rather than on any analyses actually carried out by Lévi-Strauss. If Lévi-Strauss is a structuralist, he has managed to conceal his structuralism very well. To the extent that "French structuralism" refers to the work of Lévi-Strauss—and it usually does—it is not clear that there is a French structuralism. The only French structuralists I have been able to discover are the Marxists. And, difficult to believe though it may be, some of the French Marxists are actually individualists (e.g., Sartre).

17. For the most extreme statement, see Murdock.

18. In Collins (b, 436) view: "social structure is nothing more than the behavior of individuals." He also tells us that he is concerned with "the behavior of real people" (b, 52). What other kinds of people are there?

19. This sounds like an American description of the United States, does it not? (See Mayhew.)

20. This statement is one version of what structuralists call "the anthropocentric illusion" (cf. White, c). It is a core element of individualist ideology and is about as far from sociology as one can get.

21. The study of free will has recently been elevated to a science by psychologists (cf. Easterbrook). In American sociology, the psychic factor has long been regarded as the controlling element in social life (cf. Ellwood, a; Ward, a). This "subcranial point of view" (Boodin, a, 1) has never disappeared from individualist rhetoric. Even the so-called behaviorists have retained it (cf. Homans, d; Watson). The view that all individuals are virtually omnipotent is a generalization of the great man theory to the masses. Strangely enough, the individualists have retained the old version of the great man theory as well (e.g., Homans, e, 56).

22. I have, for example, largely ignored the differences between "psychologistic individualism" and "institutionalist individualism" as these terms were employed by Agassi (a, 245–246), and as they are represented in the writings of Talcott Parsons and George Homans, respectively. From the structuralist point of view, the differences between these two positions are of no substantive importance because, as I will note in subsequent discussion, they lead to the same conclusions about human behavior. Agassi is correct in saying that "psychologism-cum-individualism" is the "main stream of the individualist tradition" and I have concentrated on it as 'methodological individualism'" (a, 246). Agassi is also correct in identifying an "individualist" and a "collectivist" psychologism. The latter was created by projecting alleged characteristics of persons onto social networks. That is, this collectivist brand of psychologism which gives groups minds, goals, needs, and any number of other psychic properties, was

created by individualists. It is Agassi's "psychologism–holism." Individualists commonly confuse this—their own creation—with "sociologism" or "sociological realism" (e.g., Bourricaud, a). They attack their own creation by attributing it to others. The "group mind" school was a product of this psychologism–holism as may be seen in the works of Boodin (a), Freud, (a), Giddings, and McDougall. These early versions of the so-called group mind were criticized by Kelsen and Allport. From a structuralist perspective, the group-mind formulation is inappropriate, but not for the reasons given by Kelsen and Allport.

23. Robert Stewart reminds me (personal communication) that Parsons has at times wafted "values" outside peoples' heads, locating them somewhere in the sky, or at least very high up somewhere. Stewart is certainly correct. Parsons' writings give this impression very strongly. So, I am willing to assume that Parsons does this on occasion. But such an interpretation does not make Parsons a structuralist; it makes him a theologian. In any case, the dislocation of "values" will not lead to different conclusions about Parsons' style of explanation. Whether "values" are lodged in the sky or lurking within human skulls, they speak with the same voice in telling people what to do (see subsequent discussion in the text).

24. This style of explanation tells us where the "voluntaristic" part of Parsons' "theory of social action" fits. It is Max Weber's free will. I have no difficulty in agreeing with Max Black's (279) overall assessment: "I believe an over-simple psychological analysis pervades Parsons' thought and thereby limits its usefulness" (279). Parsons sees society through the eyes of Sigmund Freud. Martindale's contention that Parsons views society as a psychiatric ward is not a caricature. Benton Johnson's insistence that "all modern sociologists worth their salt must come to grips with . . . Talcott Parsons" (vii) is laughable. Every attempt to do so has led to the same dead end (e.g., Jensen).

25. The catalogue of terms which serve as well in stating "want to" explanations is quite long, including urges, needs, desires, attitudes, interests, and even wants. Regardless of the terminology employed to convey these "want to" platitudes, they all reflect the hoary grip of psychologism on American sociology. We are repeatedly being told what we have heard for a very long time, that "feeling" is the foundation of sociology (Ward, b), because: "Desire is the essential basis of all action, and hence the true *force* in the sentient world. . . . " (Ward, a, 468; italics in original). And there seems to be little prospect for escape from this blind alley, either in the United States or in Europe where the study of "interests" is expanding in all directions (cf. Massing and Reichel).

26. I hasten to note that the term "variable" does not imply a particular level of measurement. Variables can be defined at nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio, levels of measurement.

27. Durkheim's criticism was not made in reference to psychology as behaviorists define it today, but as it was defined in 1895, as the study of the "psyche" or "psychic" phenomena, which is the sense of psychology I have employed in this essay. Durkheim said: "Every time that a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychic phenomenon, we may be sure that the explanation is false" (c, 128).

28. I make no reference here to structuralism developed outside American sociology. There is more structuralism in one book by two mathematicians and a social psychologist (Harary et al.) than one finds in all of American sociology. At times I have been tempted to include Donald Black (a) in the structuralist camp, but I do not know if he would approve of that classification. Similarly, I have often heard that the works of Erving Goffman are essentially structuralist. I would agree that most of his work does not take the individual as the unit of analysis. However, it is also my impression that Goffman is primarily interested in explaining the behavior of individuals. If my impression is correct, then I would say that Goffman has adopted a structuralist approach to essentially non-structuralist problems.

29. A few sociologists have come to appreciate the fact that the "interpretation" of individual and society is a weakly formulated question with an even weaker solution (Jensen). But most structuralist sociologists have yet to realize that it is not even a question. It is instead another of individualism's false starts, and individualists have used it for decades to deceive themselves and structuralists into pursuit of false questions.

30. Individualists see biological differences among individuals as having very significant consequences for their social behavior (Hankins; E. Wilson, c). Structuralists are more likely to see biological differences among individuals as consequences of social conditions (cf. Brues).

31. In standard American English, the word *actor* is defined as " . . . 1 *a*: one that acts a part *b*: a theatrical performer *c*: one that behaves as if acting a part 2: one that takes part in any affair:

PARTICIPANT. . . . " on page 12 of *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary.* Notice that this word does not refer to the sex of the actor. The English language does not exclude women from the term, nor does standard sociological terminology, as may be found by consulting any standard text. For example, Olsen says: "The participants in any social interaction are termed *social actors*" (31). On the other hand, the English word, actress, implies female sex. Actor can imply male only when used in complementary conjunction with actress, and that is a social convention; it is not a part of standard American English. What matters, of course, is how sociologists define the term in their field.

32. Dawe is not wrong in his description of the individualist or "social action" view of actors. Nor is he wrong in treating the structuralist or social system view as historically having conceived people as *acted upon.* His error resides in the implication that this is the contemporary structuralist view. The errors he uses to distinguish these positions have historically been a part of the confusion individualists have employed in descriptions of structuralism. Dawe's description is the individualist conception of structuralism, not the structuralist conception of structuralism. Dawe's discussion is flawed by several additional errors discussed in Mayhew.

33. On the identification of these networks and their intersections, see the analysis of communities by Bates and Bacon.

34. Not only do individual characteristics have low explanatory power in regard to social phenomena, they are only very weakly associated with individual action itself, as numerous studies have shown (Meinefeld).

35. Marx's (b, 10, 45) conspiracy theory of elite action does not command the respect it once did. Such explanations are usually offered in desperation (Lefebvre, 1). Structuralists would not deny that elite factions may cooperate (conspire) with one another under specified conditions, but they would see no contradiction between this and de Greef's hypothesis that both elites and masses are themselves governed by the structure of society. American sociologists might be servants of American elites, but this would not imply that either group sees ignorance and confusion as structural supports of the current regime. Their common individualism excludes such sociological interpretations.

36. The first sentence here hints at a purely structural explanation, while the second runs off into elite theory (cf. Mosca) and ultimately into a Homans style cul-de-sac. Solo observed that the fragmentation of funding for research could not have been better designed to preclude significant discoveries in the social sciences. However, specialization among sociologists and fragmentation of funding need not be interpreted as part of an elite conspiracy (see previous footnote).

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