

SOME META-SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONSENSUS-CONFLICT
DEBATE IN SOCIOLOGY

A Thesis

Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Sociology
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Sue Ann Peterkin

May 1973

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ABSTRACT

This investigation of the Consensus-Conflict debate in contemporary sociology explores some unresolved issues in the philosophy of the social sciences which are implicitly involved in many sociological disputes but often obscured in this particular debate by strong emphasis on its ideological aspects.

Outlining the implications of the two major philosophical positions in the social sciences, an attempt is made to trace out the influence of divergent scientific presuppositions on sociological theory in general and on the Consensus-Conflict debate in particular.

Examples of contemporary publications on social theory are evaluated in order to assess the impact of this extended debate in sociology, and a classification of interpretations of Consensus-Conflict is presented which highlights three interrelated components which should be recognized for an adequate description of the debate.

Interpreted within the framework of meta-sociology, the volatile nature of the Consensus-Conflict debate is explained as possible result of shifting criteria of relevance and standards of scientific quality within the field of sociology as well as in the broader scientific community.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	2
Procedure	3
Review of the Literature	3
Definition of Terms	5
II. PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES	8
Problem of Reduction	8
Problem of Hypothetico-Deductive Model	13
Debate over Unity of the Sciences	15
III. CLASSIFICATIONS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY	22
Criterion- Focus of Attention	22
Criterion- Philosophical Commitment	30
IV. INTERPRETATIONS OF CONSENSUS-CONFLICT DEBATE	35
General Characteristics	35
Problems of a Dominant Image	36
Exclusivity of Two Frameworks	45
Symbolic Nature of the Debate	51
V. GENERAL SUMMARY	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	64

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mid-20th century American Sociology has witnessed a resurgence of the Functionalist debate (Merton, 1943) which has led not only to a sweeping reevaluation of sociological theory but also, with the advent of Parsons (1954), to the rise of a highly ideological debate over Consensus-Conflict as the dominant explanatory principle of society.

Viewed within the context of the political upheavals taking place in American Society (1960-1970), the decline of interest in Structural-functional analysis and the rise of interest in the Marxist conflict schema seems understandable. However, the elevated ideological aspects of the debate seem to indicate a definite shift in the level of concern.

Without attempting to refute the prevailing evaluation of this debate as ideological - a conflict of rationales - it seems important to point out that the general tendency to subsume the debate under a single descriptive term has precluded, somewhat, investigation of other issues involved in the debate. Increased concern over this problem has attracted the attention of several sociologists, and a survey of contemporary publications does indicate that there is enough material on the debate to make its investigation a challenging topic for research.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The intent of this study, then, is to attempt to locate important philosophical aspects of the Consensus-Conflict debate - to look for possible source of the debate in divergent scientific presuppositions and to trace the influence of these on sociological theory in general and on the Consensus-Conflict debate in particular.

Assuming that evaluation of sociological theory always takes place against a set of standards which govern the direction and quality of development of the field of sociology, the central focus will be on problems meta-sociological. The shift in level of concern with the advent of Parsons is taken as an important indicator that the Consensus-Conflict debate now involves the important criteria which govern a relevant, scientific sociology.

PROCEDURE

For the purpose of this study the universe of discourse will be the scientific community. This abstraction will be made so that possible sources of the debate can be located within the scientific community and so that the debate in sociology can be viewed in relationship to other important contemporary debates going on within the scientific community.

- I. Survey material on the Consensus-Conflict debate and attempt to classify the diverse interpretations of the debate.
- II. Survey contemporary material on the philosophy of the

Social Sciences and attempt to locate those issues which have been most problematic for sociology.

III. Describe as briefly as possible the major problems meta-sociological and trace the influence of these through:

A. Classifications of Sociological Theory

B. Interpretations of Consensus-Conflict.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although most contemporary work contain some reference to Consensus-Conflict or to Marx-Parsons in connection with the debate, materials chosen for use have been limited to those publications which deal most specifically with the debate and which focus on the broader aspects of the debate. Original sources have not been consulted when works or partial works appear in edited collections pertinent to the problem under investigation.

The single most influential book was Robert W. Friedrichs' A Sociology of Sociology (1970). His sociological interpretation is "in the open area (reference groups) where political predisposition and philosophical idea are at least as efficacious as empirical data in shaping conclusions".¹ Showing an important relationship between the historical development of sociology and the life cycle of the political community in which it has evolved, Friedrichs interprets Consensus-Conflict as the "battle of the paradigms". Polarization is explained as the crisis which precedes a scientific revolution. The revolution

occurs when a new gestalt appears which alters fundamental images of reality, redefines crucial problems and establishes uniquely new standards for solution.

Attempting to rule out the polemics of the debate in order to focus attention upon the broader issues involved, System, Change and Conflict, ed. by N. J. Demerath III and Richard A. Peterson (1967) contained a good collection of articles for presentation of issues central to the Functionalist debate and Consensus-Conflict.

Percy S. Cohen's Modern Sociological Theory (1968) presents an empirical examination of the rival claims of the two models. By examining problems which have been central, he derives the kinds of questions being asked in each case and evaluates the explanatory power of each. His conclusion: Neither is able to adequately explain the problems of social order and social change. The solution to either set of problems will provide solution for both.

Gerhard E. Lenski's Power and Privilege (1966) contained the best description of the ideological implications involved in debates over social stratification. Treatment of this sociological problem has created two major interpretations which are built around differing assumptions as to the nature of man.

Presenting a valuable description of the tasks of meta-sociology in The Scope and Method of Sociology (1953), Paul H. Furfey also points out the importance of recognizing the differing sets of philosophical presuppositions which underlie all sociological research.

One current publication of articles on the philosophical problems

of the Social Sciences (May Brodbeck, 1968) contains a valuable description of the problem of reduction in Sociology. Highlighting the fact that the term reduction is employed in several different ways within sociology, this description of theoretical reduction reveals an important relationship between a stance taken in the debate over group concepts and a stance taken on the hypothetico-deductive model. These two issues can be seen as interrelated parts of a larger debate - the unity of the sciences.

Providing a description of three major interpretations of the meaning of the unity of the sciences, Herbert Feigl's article "Unity of Science and Unitary Science" in Readings in the Philosophy of Science (1953) was invaluable.

The most significant reading in the philosophy of the sciences was Israel Scheffler's The Anatomy of Inquiry (1963). Challenging the idea that explanation and prediction are central to scientific activity ("such conceptualization is too narrow" p. 55) he also presents a good description of a highly divisive issue in the philosophy of the sciences - the debate over the notion of cognitive significance. This debate is simply stated as "systems" vs. "understanding" (p. 183).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Broad terms, such as philosophy and ideology are problematic in scientific usage, and some specification must be made since these terms are utilized throughout this study.

In its broadest sense the term philosophical is used to refer to

those issues which center on world views (cognitive perception of reality) or sets of basic assumptions (knowledge assumed to be true or self-evident).

The philosophy of the sciences focuses more specifically on those issues which concern the basis or validity of knowledge.

The terms philosophical and metaphysical are often used as equivalents; however, there is an important distinction which is made in scientific usage. The term philosophical is used to refer to those issues which, until there is demonstration or adequate confirmation, are amenable only to rational-logical determination. The term metaphysical is used to refer to those questions which are addressed to the determination of the "nature of" or "character of" a particular phenomenon.

Metaphysics should not be confused with meta-physics, meta-mathematics, meta-sociology, etc. These terms refer to philosophical problems of status of knowledge in specific scientific fields.

In its broadest sense the term ideology is used to refer to a belief system, which makes it difficult to distinguish from the general usage of the term, philosophy. Sociological usage often makes the term equivalent to such terms as rationalization or justification.

In this study the term ideological will be used to refer to those questions which are addressed to the determination of value-primacy.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

¹Norman Birnbaum's foreword to Robert W. Friedrichs, A Sociology of Sociology (New York, The Free Press, 1970).

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Meta-sociology has three main tasks: "to establish the criteria for deciding what is relevant to sociology, to establish the criteria for the satisfaction of scientific standards, and to establish the procedural rules for applying these criteria in specific instances."¹ Meta-sociological problems occur, then, when there is a debate over the appropriate rules of procedure, or, at another level, when there is a debate over the criteria for a relevant, scientific sociology.

For the purposes of this study, the debate issues that have been considered philosophical are those that involve high level meta-sociological problems which would necessarily involve problems shared by all the social sciences.

The two philosophical problems which have created the greatest difficulty for sociology are the problem of reduction and the problem of the hypothetico-deductive model.

PROBLEM OF REDUCTION

The reduction problem in the social sciences appears in two ways. One is theoretical and involves the possibility of deducing group laws (sociology) from individual laws (psychology). The second is conceptual and involves the possibility of the definition or analysis of group concepts in terms of individual behavior.

Theoretical reduction has already been accomplished in some of the sciences (chemistry has been reduced to physics). Since theory may be deductively organized in different ways, the type of deduction depends on the nature of the connection between two theories. "Deduction is reduction, however, only when deduced laws are in a different area from those that serve as premises. Premises are microscopic relative to the deduced laws which are macroscopic." ²

Discovery of laws which are applicable in more than one field serves to simplify at least portions of highly complex phenomena. Increasing the scope of scientific explanation and serving to integrate diverse fields, the promise of theoretical reduction is one systematic body of knowledge, expressible in uniform scientific language.

The possibility of theoretical reduction in the social sciences remains a matter of conjecture until it has been demonstrated. Those who endorse the possibility and desirability of theoretical reduction take a position which is called Methodological Individualism. This position is anti-emergent in two senses: It denies the existence of any macro laws which are essentially sociological, and it embraces the idea of operative composition laws - laws permitting computation from elementary to more complex systems.

Methodological Individualism explains large scale effects as the "indirect complex product of individual factors, none of which may bear any resemblance to it at all". ³ Of necessity, this position rejects any implication that large scale social characteristics are but a reflection of individual characteristics. It also considers as

specious any explanation of large scale characteristics as tendency in the social whole or as product of deliberate action of individuals and groups. Emphasis is definitely on the unintended consequences of human interaction.

Those who oppose the idea of theoretical reduction take a position which is called Sociological Holism. This position contends that there are wholes or group entities which have laws of their own - such laws are not derivable from laws of individual behavior. The property of the whole is unanalyzable and is said to be emergent from the properties of the parts - emergentism. In fact, behavior of individuals should be explained partly in terms of group laws, perhaps in conjunction with an account of individual roles within institutions and functions of institutions within the whole social system. "Irreducible social laws postulated are usually regarded as laws of social development as well as laws governing the dynamics of society." ⁴

In response to the problem of theoretical reduction, then, there are two main positions: Sociological Holism which is anti-reductionist and utilizes ideas emergentistic and deterministic. Methodological Individualism which supports reduction and utilizes the idea of composition laws which are anti-emergent and anti-deterministic.

The second problem of reduction occurs in the definition and analysis of collective terms or group concepts.

Debates over the definition of a social unit continues to plague sociology. Two related problems occur when the group is logically the subject of the predicate. The first concerns the determination of a

concrete observable. "When dealing with groups the agency for action is devoid of an unambiguous referent. When we speak of 'the team' or 'the state' the collective concept has misleading singularity and shifting character." ⁵ The second problem concerns the determination of properties to be assigned to a social unit.

When the group is logically the subject of the predicate a non-distributive property (not attributable to each and every member of the group) occurs. The controversial question is whether or not there are any such attributes which are undefinable in terms of individual behavior. ⁶

In addition to the definitional dilemma there is the question of whether collective terms employed in sociology can be or should be analyzable in terms of individual behavior.

Holistic concepts such as "the reformation" or "capitalism" have no implicit statistical reference and refer to a list of behaviors that cannot be sharply terminated. Even terms like "depression", "boom", which contain some statistical components, raise questions like how many of these, and what else? When can we say the necessary conditions prevail? ⁷

In response to the question of conceptual analysis, then, there are two main positions: Methodological Individualism endorses the view that all group concepts or collective terms are in principle definable in terms of individual behavior. Also called Sociological Nominalism, this philosophical position contends that group concepts are theoretical constructs and not to be confused with substantive or observational terms.

Any attempt to mistake our models for concrete things results in methodological essentialism - concern about..."nature" of "state", "man", "society". Such questions...are not empirical. They tend to destroy scientific models rather than encourage them. ⁸

Sociological Holism contends that there are collective or group entities which, though ambiguous and unanalyzable, exist and exert influence on

human behavior which is observable and important. It denies the possibility or desirability of reducing group concepts to individual behavior, dispositions, etc. The social group, defined as a set of persons having certain roles in relation to each other remains the fundamental unit of description and explanation. This position contends that... "It does not follow that all propositions whose subjects seem to include atoms are necessarily generalizations, abstractions, or somehow constructs".⁹ Insisting that "the group" is a substantive term which refers to ontological reality, this philosophical position is also called Sociological Realism.

As one of the still unresolved disputes in meta-sociology this debate over group concepts is conspicuous in typical criticisms of sociological theory. While Methodological Individualists are charged with the sin of reduction (or psychological reduction or psychologism) the Sociological Holists are charged with the metaphysical and logical sin of reification.

The two forms of the reduction problem are of major importance to sociology. Collective terms and group concepts are indispensable although not ideal. The more macroscopic the concept the greater the difficulties of specifying any initial conditions and anticipated consequences. Theoretical reduction, with its ideal, the hypothetico-deductive model, creates special problems in sociology.

Many large scale social events require a long chain of premises as their explanans ... Premises to explain "social revolution" will include large number of laws about various kinds of events within the total pattern. What is needed is laws about their interaction ...¹⁰

PROBLEM OF HYPOTHETICO-DEDUCTIVE MODEL

Controversy over the Hypothetic-deductive model is not new to the social sciences, but the current controversy is of special interest because of the global nature of the attack (for the physical sciences too). Some reject the model in toto because it is deductive. Others take a moderate stance and reject it because of the nature of the premises from which deductions are made. ¹¹

Rejection of deductive explanation is but part of a more sweeping rejection of formal logic. There are three related arguments: The term explanation can be applied to many kinds of inference. Certain common sense facts are indisputable, and no laws need be deductively invoked from some facts to another which they explain or predict. Historical explanation or appeal to conceptual analysis is as conclusive as appeal to logical truth. The logician's use of the terms, deductive and explanation, affront ordinary usage and is irrelevant. Nothing corresponding to the narrow, tautological sense of deduction occurs in science. Scientific laws are not hypothetical. They are rules and not premises in a deduction. Neither are they contingent or subject to refutation by observation. They are true by virtue of meaning - by the way the scientist uses the terms connected by laws.

Those who support the deductive model as the ideal of scientific explanation present their defense of formal logic: Logicians use an improved language to explicate notions of logical truth. These articulate the criteria by which one is justified in saying someone is being inconsistent or that an observation refutes a generalization. Exact deduction does not imply formal syllogistic (Aristotlean) logic. The statements of

a theory (axioms and theorems) are strictly hypothetical. Deductive explanation remains the only scientific explanation for the social sciences as well as for the physical sciences.

The present controversy over the hypothetico-deductive model is important not only because it is now occurring in the physical sciences but also because it represents an important reoccurrence of an old debate in the social sciences.

Interpreting the radical rejection of formal logic as an old argument against a science of history and of man, and interpreting the moderate rejection of formal logic as an old argument against the unity of method of the physical and social sciences, it is possible to see the centrality of the deductive model to the reduction problem in sociology and the influence of commitment to differing philosophical presuppositions. Methodological Individualism claims that the methods of the physical sciences are the only scientific ones and must be applied in their entirety to human affairs. Sociological Holism claims that there is a basic difference in the structure of the social world and the world of nature. Different methods are needed for the investigation of man-society, and perhaps a different logic would be more suitable.

If sociological criteria are established in relationship to the broader criteria governing the scientific community, it is important to investigate the possibility that differing philosophical positions in the social sciences may be related to divergent perspectives at the level of meta-science.

Survey of the contemporary debates going on within the scientific

community reveals the fact that the most volatile ones have been triggered by articles which present a strong case for the unity of method thesis. Carl G. Hempel's "The Function of General Laws in History", appearing in 1942, instigated the quarrel over historical explanation. His thesis: Historical causes and effects must be mediated by statements of law. The historian must fulfill the same requirements as other sciences. Robert K. Merton's "Manifest and Latent Function", appearing in 1945, is an argument for functionalism as a method common to all the sciences. Ludwig von Bertalanffy's "General Systems Theory", appearing in 1955, argues that the systems concept is relevant to every science. In fact, it is the common denominator of the sciences. The publication of Karl R. Popper's The Logic of Scientific Discovery in English (1959) has produced great controversy in the philosophy of science over the nature of theory and the hypothetico-deductive model. His thesis: Induction (specific data and empirical generalizations) do not produce theory. Theoretical development is actually a process of the elimination of false hypotheses. Only deduction, which permits the derivation of logical consequences subject to the test, aids and abets theory development.

What is interesting about these articles is that while the idea of unity of method is strongly endorsed, there is some variation of interpretation as to which method is the method.

DEBATE OVER UNITY OF THE SCIENCES

The Unity of the Sciences has been a "topic of controversy for more than half a century. It has split logicians, methodologists and

social scientists into two schools of thought".¹² Although the basic issue may be simply stated as continuity vs. discontinuity of the sciences, there are many ramifications. Probably the most significant of these, which carries implicit question of value, is the determination of the goal of all scientific activity. While one philosophical position views the goal of science as one systematic, uniform body of knowledge (primacy of knowledge), the other position views the goal of science as rational comprehension of the universe (primacy of man).

The sensitive philosophical issues are better understood when three general meanings of the term, unity of the sciences, is explicated.¹³

The first interpretation is called physicalism. As the most radical and problematic stance, the central issue is the potential derivability of all scientific laws from the laws of physics. This thesis denies any discontinuity between inorganic and organic phenomena or any discontinuity in organic phenomena with the advent of man.

The second thesis, naturalism, endorses the belief that explanatory constructs need not go beyond spacio-temporal-causal frame (the heuristic program). This thesis not only excludes metaphysical entities but also rules out certain logically conceivable and empirically meaningful forms of hypotheses (only certain normal forms of spacio-temporal frames and causal (or statistical) laws are necessary). Leaving open the question of reducibility, it does permit assumption of irreducibility (emergentist naturalism) which differs from vitalistic doctrines which assert irreducibility on entirely different ground. This view is somewhat poorly defined and has one vague aspect - continuity of causality.

The third interpretation focuses on the unity of the language of science. This idea is logically revised and refined formulation of the essential thesis of empiricism and operationism (on an intersubjective basis).

Ongoing debates in philosophy of science between the Pragmatists and Fictionalists bear a striking resemblance to contemporary debates in sociology. Central issue: Can E (language) be so constructed as to be 1) significant throughout and 2) capable of expressing all of science?

The question of significance is key, raising problem of how to distinguish between legitimate theoretical terms and other analytical terms. "Notions of significance is related to 1) idea of intuitive clarity and 2) idea of an effective systematic account of the world." ¹⁴

Pragmatism decides significance of concept on basis of 1) definability in E terms and 2) functionability in scientific systems already established. It cuts tie with intuitive clarity in order to incorporate all of science into a uniform language.

Fictionalism decides significance of concept on its intuitive clarity - term must not be obscure. Goal is uniformly significant (relevant) discourse. This position refuses to reject non-E terms but generates the problem of how to treat non-E terms.

Instrumental Fictionalism utilizes non-E terms but treats them differently. Viewing non-E as "useful machinery" typical expressions include: Are theories interesting? Are theories useful or not?

Eliminative Fictionalism attempts to eliminate non-E in favor of something that falls within E. This position is basically dissatisfied

with science as it is (the divorce of intuitive clarity and comprehensive systematization). They strive for reformulation of scientific terms with utility of original but superior in intuitive clarity.

The two issues central to these debates, then, are: whether E terms and non-E terms are mutually exclusive or whether both are necessary to the language of science; whether or not it is possible to have a comprehensive systematic body of scientific knowledge, expressible in uniform language.

This description of three general meanings of "unity of the sciences" permits location of sociological position in relation to other interpretations. It also permits an important relationship to be established between problems meta-sociological and problems meta-scientific.

There is little doubt that the social sciences have been central to the "unity of the sciences" debate. In broad form, the conflict has involved a dispute over the boundaries to be drawn between sciences and humanities. Whether one refers, then, to the "unity of the sciences" debate or to the unity of method thesis, it is obvious that important philosophical issues are involved which affect the entire scientific community.

Any attempt to articulate the precise standards of what constitutes "scientific" knowledge raises questions concerning the validity of knowledge gained in other fields (by other methods) and concerning the status of history, philosophy and social sciences as sciences.

Whether these debates are interpreted at the level of meta-science or at the level of meta-sociology, the problem is basically the same -

the establishment of the criteria of relevance (what belongs in the field) and the criteria of scientific quality (what models, concepts and techniques are permissible in the field).

The reoccurrence of these debates also indicates that the determination of these standards is never final. If there is growth or development of any magnitude, there will be occasions which command some re-adjustment of criteria for purposes of re-indentification and re-orientation in a new set of circumstances.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

¹Paul H. Furfey, Preface to The Scope and Method of Sociology (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1953).

²May Brodbeck, "Methodological Individualisms: Definitions and Reduction" in Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, ed. by May Brodbeck (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 287.

³J. W. N. Watkins, "Methodological Individualism and Social Tendencies" in Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, ed. by May Brodbeck (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 278.

⁴Ibid., p. 271.

⁵Floyd Allport, "Logical Complexities of Group Activity" in Philosophical Problems of the Social Sciences, ed. by David Braybrooke (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 27.

⁶May Brodbeck, op. cit., p. 282.

⁷Ibid., p. 285.

⁸Karl Popper, "Unity of Method in Natural and Social Sciences" in Philosophical Problems of the Social Sciences, ed. by David Braybrooke (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 36.

⁹Ernest Gellner, "Holism versus Individualism" in Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, ed. by May Brodbeck (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 266.

¹⁰May Brodbeck, op. cit., p. 386.

¹¹May Brodbeck, "Explanation, Prediction and Imperfect Knowledge" in Readings, pp. 364, 365.

¹²Alfred Schutz, "Common Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action" in Philosophical Problems, p. 231.

¹³Herbert Feigl, "Unity of Science and Unitary Science" in Readings in the Philosophy of Science, ed. by Herbert Feigl and May Brodbeck (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953), pp. 382-384.

¹⁴Israel Scheffler, The Anatomy of Inquiry (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 181.

CHAPTER III

CLASSIFICATIONS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Any examination of a critical evaluation of sociological theory carries the dual task of weighing both the concrete work of the theorist and the criteria used by the evaluator. In this survey emphasis has been placed on the criteria chosen for the classifications of sociological theory. In general, these classifications are made either according to the focus of attention or according to the philosophical commitment of the theorist.

CRITERION - FOCUS OF ATTENTION

When the focus of attention serves as the primary criterion, a two-way classification may be used to indicate general direction of field focus, or a three-way classification may be used to indicate general categories of sociological theory.

Shifts of focus from the collectivity to the individual, and shifts of interest from problems theoretical to problems clinical have been documented:

The focus on the collectivity generates several types of Holistic theory: Positivistic and pure organicism - the basic unit is society and/or culture conceived as an organismic unity; Functionalism and neo-functionalism - total social systems are conceived as organismic units; Marxian and neo-Marxian conflict theory - society is composed of basic

classes or conflict groups. Holistic theories give causal priority to the whole. They necessarily employ some kind of dialectical method, implying some immanent mechanism. The crux of change is always located in the larger configurations.

Focus on the individual generates several types of Atomistic theory: Social behaviorism, symbolic interaction, pluralism - the basic unit is social action or some aspect of it; Formalism - the basic unit is social forms; Individualistic forms of conflict theory - the basic unit is interests. Atomistic theories employ more diverse methods and may focus on many levels of abstraction. The causal implications are more diverse in these theories and change is viewed as a problem of social arrangements at every level of complexity.¹

Shifts of focus also occur as a result of changes in the major interests of social research - focus on society as wholes and focus on special problems of society:

The study of society as wholes has involved comparative studies and the search for uniform pattern of development and fundamental all-embracing laws to account for social process. The goal of this approach has been synthetical - an attempt to coordinate all relevant knowledge to discover principles applicable, to provide the most general comprehensive interpretation of the origin, continuity and destiny of society. Sustained by the dominant philosophy of 19th century science (Evolution and the Newtonian conception of nature), this emphasis on the whole has precluded, somewhat, an analytic approach to the study of society.

The focus on special problems of society has involved great

emphasis on remedial measures and on a clinical approach to social research. Sustained by the idea of society as the arena of a struggle for survival, this approach has been concerned with specific substantive problems and has led to the proliferation of many subfields in sociology.²

These two-way classifications of social theory according to focus, then, reveal some important shifts of attention between the Collectivity and the Individual and between the needs of the field of sociology and the need for solution of substantive problems of society. An important fact which should be taken into account is that different focuses carry different ideas of the fundamental social unit, different techniques and levels of abstraction, and different causal implications.

Presenting some examples of the use of a three-way classification of sociological theory, it is important to assess not only the criteria chosen for such categorization but also the central purpose of each writer.

Theodore Abel bases his classification of social theory on differing assumptions as to the nature of the social collective. There are three major propositions: Social Realism, Social Nominalism and Social Humanism.

Social Nominalism in its extreme form contends that the group is not the object to be studied but is a subjective guideline to interactive and distributive aspects of individual behavior. (Allport) In its moderate form Social Nominalism contends that the group is the object of study. The relational properties - individuals in certain descriptive

relations to each other - are the phenomena to be investigated. One proceeds to study collective phenomena "as if" holistic - configurations that are wholes with emergent properties. (Brodbeck)

Social Realism in its extreme form is highly organismic. (Spencer) Sustained by 19th century biological analogue which polarized structure and metabolic processes, its contemporary counterpart is the modern idea of system - the essence of the group is the organization of its parts. In its moderate form Social Realism endorses the importance of cultural as well as organizational aspects of group phenomena. (Sorokin)

Social Humanism (Znaniecki, Leopold von Wiese) contends that every fully developed social group is imagined, remembered and conceived by its participants as a super-individual objective whole with definite content and meaning. In the mind of each participant the group is represented and conceived as agent (duties-rights). By acting as if the social group were what they believe it to be, its human participants turn it from an idea into a reality within the human world. The unity of the group is a fiction created in the minds of its members. It has entity only as idea. It has determinant consequences as belief influences conduct and serves as a point of reference. ³

Although this writer does not reject the importance of the synthetic and clinical approaches, he endorses a more analytical approach for theoretical development in sociology. He also endorses propositions of Social Humanism: the gestalt arises from common bases of experience. The group as imagined produces concrete data - images - which strongly influence human behavior.

Abel's presentation reveals the existence of some variety of stances underlying the broader classifications of sociological theory and highlights the fact that there are three alternative assumptions as to the nature of society which enjoy a certain legitimacy within the field of sociology.

Obviously utilizing a somewhat different set of criteria, Severyn T. Bruyn classifies social theory under three general typologies: First, formal theories of structure, traditionally represented by Comte, Simmel, and von Wiese, are present in contemporary theory of Merton-Parsons. Second, theories of social dynamics, traditionally represented by Marx and Spencer, are present in contemporary work of C. Wright Mills. Third, theories of social process, early developed in the work of Cooley and Mead, are present today in the symbolic interaction of Blumer and Rose.⁴

This writer views typical kinds of social theory as somewhat incomplete, although they may provide an important link to what is needed in sociological development - a theory of culture.

Exploring the implications of man's tendency to polarize perspectives, concepts and modes of interpretation in social theory, Bruyn makes an important distinction in level of abstraction: polar principles (most comprehensive, high level abstraction, reflecting universal traits), polar typologies (mid-level generality - class of empirical instances) and polar concepts (operational).

Investigating a means by which polars can be utilized to scientific advantage, he presents a technique to be used in sociology which utilizes both subjective and objective data. Using the idea of

"participant-observer", he conceives of the humanistic perspective as midway between strict objectivism and strict subjectivism.

David Miller deplores the split between theoretical and empirical work in sociology. Exploring a means by which these can be brought into a more workable relationship, he classifies sociological models as general, theoretical and operational.

A general model is a conceptualization of some phenomenon that is formed in relation to a rationale or basic idea. This rationale explains the nature of the included phenomena and leads to the nominal definitions (terms of everyday experience) of the concepts of the model. The emphasis placed in the definitions of the concepts determine the structure of their relationship and thus provide a mechanism for the model.

Formal (theoretical) models are limited to statements of relationships in their simplest form in order to make them easily testable. In focusing on only the relationships, the heuristic model is not encumbered by the definitions, rationale and the mechanism of the general model.

The terms of the formal model represent both operational and nominal definitions indirectly.

The operational model is limited to concepts whose definitions permit specific measurement to be made.

General models have too often been based on incomplete analogues. The mechanism derived from the rationale is too rigid and does not permit alteration. As Functionalism has moved away from a strictly organismic treatment, it has progressively weakened the original analogue.

All the traditional sociological theories are based on general

models - too vague to be tested. The most rudimentary aspect of control is missing - the definition of the proper area of application. Better heuristic models, standing midway between general and operational models, are the means by which theoretical and empirical work can be brought significantly close.⁵

Theodore Abel's presentation of the three major propositions of sociology - Social Realism, Social Nominalism, Social Humanism - indicates the presence in sociology of continuing concern over the determination of the nature of society for the purpose of properties to be attributed. David Willer's differentiation of models, his justification for rejecting both major traditional models and his opting for heuristic models indicates the presence of a thrust to bring sociology more in line with the prevailing notion of scientific standards.

Severyn T. Bruyn's interest in humanism and a theory of culture shows a similarity to the interests of Theodore Abel. Bruyn's interest in a technique which is midway and his concern for the establishment of domains of applicability, however, shows an affinity with the criteria used by David Willer.

Three-way classifications do not exhaust the possibilities of contemporary theoretical interpretation. Gerhard Lenski views the traditional models of social stratification as classifiable into two groups: those built around the "radical" thesis and those built around the "conservative" thesis. Both of these models show excessive concern with questions of structure (consequences of stratification) and neglect a more basic problem concerning the processes which generate these

structures (causes of stratification).⁶

Traditional kinds of questions and concepts utilized in sociology have assumptions built into them which may force answers into limited range of categories, none of which may represent a reasonable approximation of the truth. What is needed is a critical scrutiny of traditional assumptions and reformulation of problems and concepts. Not only should compound concepts be broken down into their constituent elements but also categorical concepts should be transformed into variable concepts. (Categorical concepts by their very nature force one to think in limiting either-or terms.)

The central aim of this writer is to aid and abet what he perceives to be the emergence of a third field of theoretical development in sociology - a genuine synthesis. Insisting that a synthesis is not a compromise nor indiscriminate selection of elements from two traditions but an integration of thesis-antithesis made possible by approaching the problem on a different level, Lenski builds a model by drawing elements from both traditions and combining them with others.

Important for this study is the way in which he ties induction to relevance. Contending that induction is as vital to theory construction as deduction, he raises a question of vital concern to the philosophy of the sciences. "Many have come to equate theory building with the use of purely deductive logic, which is a serious error. To limit oneself to only deductive reasoning is impossible if one desires to be relevant".⁷ Induction is necessary at specific level (particular society) while deduction is necessary at general level (all societies).

As product of the sweeping reevaluation of sociological theory which has accompanied the contemporary Functionalist debate, these four publications provide some valuable insights into the general trend of social theory and its interpretation. Although these interpretations and plans of action show some variance, there are interesting similarities and a definite underlying agreement as to the need for new directions in the field of sociology.

CRITERION - PHILOSOPHICAL COMMITMENT

Although scientists may differ in their view of what constitutes the philosophical task in the social sciences, all include broad classifications of social theory as an important part of their work and use philosophical criteria as means of such classification.

There are two distinctly opposed philosophical attitudes underlying the social sciences - objectivism and subjectivism. These represent broad ways of seeing the social world, of fundamental conceptions of the social itself. These set the criteria of what is to be achieved which affects the selection of problems and the standards to be applied with respect to solution of these problems. 8

Objectivism includes behaviorism, naturalism, empiricism and positivism. The goal is empirically verifiable propositions incorporated in a theoretical instrument capable of explanation and prediction. Subjectivism includes verstehen, phenomenology and existentialism. The goal is exploration of reality as immediately experienced in an attempt to comprehend the way in which social life is lived by the actor.

Paul Furfey points out the intimate connection between the data of empirical sociology and humanism. Referring to what he calls the

"supra-empirical" postulates of sociology, he shows how these are related to classical philosophical categories of Idealism, Dualism and Materialism. These postulates play a dominant role, for it is by them that various systems of sociology are differentiated.

"Representatives of the polar positions are verstehen and neo-positivism. These positions are philosophical in the sense that there is no corpus of empirical facts in dispute and no crucial experiment to decide." ⁹

The writer also points out that it is possible to interpret these differing positions as two conceptions of sociology - one purely empirical (narrow) and the other broad (to include the "supra-empirical") which is probably necessary for the fullest possible interpretation.

Another investigator of problems meta-sociological views the main philosophical task: "to sort out 'a priori' questions from the empirical questions." ¹⁰ Presenting a principle of differentiation for the social sciences, this writer points out the importance of distinguishing questions about behavior and action.

These two orientations involve different concepts of man. Behavioral questions conceive of man as conditioned in making adaptive responses to environmental situations. The behaviorist studies how a repertoire of actions and policies have evolved. Action questions conceive of man as a purposeful agent, operating with or against other agents within a context of rules. Although both conceptualizations of man are capable of expansion the mutual impact of values-facts are more troublesome in the case of action questions.

One recent publication of the philosophy of the social sciences seems to take a very broad view of the philosophical task.

The philosophy of the social sciences investigates the most general and fundamental questions about the nature of our knowledge of man and society ... These questions cut across varying technical problems of all the specialties: What are the bases for reliable description and explanation of human affairs? What special difficulties confront the social scientist and how are these to be met: How are concepts related to behavior observed? What are the limits, potentialities and implications of a science of man? 11

It is interesting to note that May Brodbeck defines the province of the social sciences as "meaningful" behavior. She also differentiates behavior and action questions in this manner: Behavior refers to animate or inanimate change or tendency to change. Action refers to a narrower category of behavior dealing with man's intentionality. The main problem in action questions is distinguishing between human action and reaction.

Classifications of social theory according to philosophical commitment may utilize either broad world views or basic concepts of man for purposes of interpretation. The similarities of all these classifications seem to indicate that the consequences of either criterion are fundamentally the same. The interesting difference in interpretation centers on the fact that the two broad categories may be presented as polars or as existing in a general-specific relationship.

The important question which is raised as a result of this survey is whether a shift in focus of attention commands a shift in philosophical commitment. If so, then broad changes of field focus are highly problematic. No scientist is likely to surrender his operating world view or basic assumptions with ease.

Assuming the criteria of relevance to govern the general focus of attention, it is possible to see not only that these criteria are subject to fluctuation but also that different focuses carry important consequences for the development of a field.

The impact of the broader community can be substantial on the scientific community and on any one of its disciplines as it sets its standards of relevance. The criteria of scientific quality, however, are developed within the scientific community and are not as susceptible to the influence of the broader community. The basic philosophical cleavage within the scientific community, however, provides fertile ground for artificial boundaries to be drawn. In fact, the classificatory activity of science, itself, often erects what may be called "false polars" which may preclude the discovery of significant relationships within the universe of discourse. The high variety within the field of sociology seems to indicate that there are components of the broad philosophical systems which are compatible and which may be combined without logical inconsistency.

Internal alterations of the criteria governing scientific quality have been very much a part of the development of science. Today, the differentiation of the sciences - physical and social - indicates that a somewhat separate set of standards have evolved for the social sciences. The revolutionary advance within the primary field or orientation - physics - has tended to radically reinforce the standards already set for scientific quality and has placed increasing pressure on all other disciplines to meet those standards.

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

¹Don Martindale's Introduction to Explorations in Social Change, ed. by George K. Zollschen and Walter Hirsch (New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964).

²Theodore Abel, The Foundations of Sociological Theory (New York, Random House, 1970), pp. 1-4.

³Ibid., pp. 29-38.

⁴Severyn T. Bruyn, The Humanistic Perspective in Sociology (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 76.

⁵David Willer, Scientific Sociology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 1-53.

⁶Gerhard E. Lenski, Power and Privilege (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 2.

⁷Ibid., p. 21.

⁸Foreword to Philosophy of the Social Sciences, ed. by Maurice Natanson (New York, Random House, 1963).

⁹Paul H. Furfey, The Scope and Method of Sociology (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 46.

¹⁰David Braybrooke, ed. Philosophical Problems of the Social Sciences (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 1.

¹¹May Brodbeck, ed. Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 5.

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONSENSUS-CONFLICT DEBATE

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The volatile Consensus-Conflict debate in contemporary sociology has created a general polarization of the field which has affected both style and content of much recent sociological literature. Increasing pressure to take a position in regard to this debate has led to indiscriminate "labeling" of many sociologists and has made objectivity (or neutrality) in relation to the debate appear as the sin of indifference. Nevertheless, several important sociologists have attempted an unbiased appraisal of the problem and a plausible explanation of its occurrence.

A classification of these interpretations has been attempted for this study in order to clarify the major components of the debate and to further efforts made toward its adequate description.

In light of the material surveyed on Consensus-Conflict, there is definite agreement on the abstract nature of the debate. The centrality of Marx and Parsons to the debate is significant since there is no evidence that Talcott Parsons was in any manner anti-the works of Karl Marx. It should also be noted that although Parsons' work is central to the overall Functionalist debate, he seldom entered it. Arguments over early-late Marx and early-middle-late Parsons seems to indicate a desire for consistency where none exists in any absolute sense. The tendency to

overlook or ignore the documented similarities of Marx-Parsons also indicates that they represent certain values which are more important than the facts.

The difficulty encountered in locating the specific issues of the debate and the many diverse interpretations of the debate lend credence to the fact that it is operating on a symbolic level with Marx-Parsons serving as major representations. In order to clarify the symbolic representation of the central figures, the hyphenated references to Marx-Parsons indicate that they are serving as major archetypes.

The serious attempts to investigate the broader issues involved in the Consensus-Conflict debate tend to fall into three general categories. The debate interpretations may center on the problem of a dominant image, on the problematic question of whether the two frameworks are mutually exclusive, or on the symbolic nature of the debate.

PROBLEM OF DOMINANT IMAGE

The first classification, which focuses on the dominant image or dominant characteristic of society, contains an important related issue - the image of man. Whether one views sociological models as projecting definite images of man or as derived from basic assumptions about the character of man, it is obvious that a metaphysical question is posed concerning the nature of society.

As the most value-laden question raised in the Consensus-Conflict debate, it is important to present in brief form the two basic rationales and their ideological implications.

Sociologists have long been fascinated with the problem of social order - how it arises and how it is maintained. In order to assess some basic differences in the Consensus-Conflict frameworks, it is important to briefly describe how each attempts to answer the question of social order.

Consensus endorses the idea that the existence of society implies social order. Men voluntarily or unwittingly discover the advantages of cooperative organization of their activities. They enter into formal (contractual) or informal (spontaneous) agreements to secure common goals. Social order is maintained by shared cognitive orientations (meanings-values-norms) in which coercion plays a minor role. Power is necessary to the maintenance of social order, but its successful exercise is dependent upon its legitimation (acceptance under the prevailing system of meanings-values-norms).

Conflict endorses the idea that society comes into existence under the compelling demands of concrete environmental situations. Scarce resources compel men to enter into social relationships in order to secure their existence. Social order is a function of the social relationships necessary for economic production. In certain type of economic production (capitalism) there is conflict in this fundamental unit. Social order is maintained by coercion - the dominance of some members (owners of the means of production) over other members (workers). This coercion is supported by a belief system (ideology) which is created to justify the social relationships already in existence.

The Consensus rationale, then, tends to project an image of society

as a harmonious unit. Social order is good. Cooperative activity on the part of all members guarantees maximum benefits for all members. Man is basically voluntaristic, cooperative, social. The conflict rationale tends to project an image of society as a battlefield. In the compelling competition for scarce resources, some men gain more than others. The resulting social order is evil, guaranteeing maximum benefits to some at the expense of others. Man is basically involuntaristic, competitive, anti-social.

Arguments over the problem of social order are not new to Sociology. The "cause celebre" of the contemporary Functionalist debate - social stratification - is but a resurgence of the old debate over social order and carries with it all the ideological aspects associated with the two rationales. Consensus argues that social inequalities are necessary and just. Division of labor is necessary and maximum rewards accrue to the more responsible (and important) positions. Conflict argues that social inequalities are unnecessary and unjust. Differential rewards are not based on importance of tasks performed but on the basis of the ownership of the means of production. With the demise of capitalism, gross inequalities will disappear and a communal (just) society will be possible.

Sociologists have also been concerned with the problem of social change. Since the consensus explanation has been charged with neglecting the aspect of change, it is important to assess how the conflict explanation handles this.

Since the social structure is a function of the relations of production, change occurs when there is a shift in the fundamental economic

unit. Under the capitalistic system, change can only occur through violent revolution - counter coercion on the part of the submissive members (workers). Such revolution is a function of: increased alienation of the workers, increased awareness of workers' mutual interests (class consciousness) and successful overcoming of dominating ideology (false consciousness).

This portion of the Marxist rationale projects the possibility of voluntaristic, cooperative class action whereby men can improve their own conditions of existence. It is important to add here, that the consensus rationale does acknowledge the existence of anti-social tendencies in man when it focuses on the process of socialization - training and restraining necessary to secure maximum commitment to the value system.

Parsons, as contemporary sociologist, confines his rationale as closely as possible to the Structural-functional model. Since many charges have been leveled against the model itself, it is important to briefly describe it.

The classical model of Functionalism embraced the following postulates: unity of the whole, functional interrelatedness of the essential parts, and the indispensability of the parts for the maintenance of the whole. Attention has been directed toward assessing the essential contribution of each part to the function of the whole, and reciprocity of roles has been the usual means of explaining the interrelatedness of the parts.

The contemporary Structural-functional model retains the basic postulate of the unity of the whole. Modifications include: idea of some

autonomy of the essential parts (lesser degree of integration necessary), possibility of functional alternatives (essential function of a major part may be taken over by another part), and maladjustment of the essential parts (tensions-stresses) which are self-correcting by systemic goal - state of dynamic equilibrium.

Although it would be impractical to list all the charges and rebuttals involved in the Functionalist debate, it is important to present some of the most typical criticisms so that questions pertinent to the philosophy of the sciences can be recognized.

Conflict over the primacy of man-society can be easily identified in some of the charges: "Functionalism is an ill-conceived utopia. It portrays a social hell uncritically." ¹ Focus on the needs of society ignores or negates the importance of the needs of man. Focus on roles as fundamental units makes man expendable.

Other charges contain related value and philosophical implications: There is a tremendous gap in the abstractions of Functionalism and the world's realities. Focus on normative aspects of behavior neglects actual patterns of behavior. Behavior which departs from the normative is termed deviant and conflict is termed dysfunctional. (Both abnormal)

The demand for focus on actual behavior and the charge of "too abstract" is obviously intended to imply that sociologists have lost contact with reality. It certainly cannot be taken as a denial of the utilization of highly abstract models in science. There has definitely been some confusion over Parsons' model as to whether it is purely the abstract construct he declares it to be, or whether it actually presumes to present

a description of reality. Rejection of the model on the basis of abstraction may imply need for more realistic model, and the debate over representational vs. instrumental models is very much a part of the philosophy of the sciences.²

Other charges against the model involve issues directly pertinent to the philosophy of the social sciences: The Structural-functional model demands a level of scientific inquiry which does not exist in Sociology at this time. It departs from the canons of causality by emphasizing mutually dependent variables. It also encourages teleological explanation.

Modifications of the classical Functionalist model is best understood as a somewhat incomplete translation from the postulates of Functionalism to the postulates of formal Structuralism.³ What is essential to the Structural model is knowledge of: conditions of closure, set of relevant variables, and the process law. Causal and functional treatment are less sophisticated form of knowledge and are irrelevant when the process law is discovered.⁴ Mutually dependent variables, then, are compatible with the modified Functional model; however, it does seem to require a level of scientific knowledge which does not exist at this time.

One of the oldest debates in the philosophy of the social sciences centers on whether the teleological lexicon is permissible in science. Although such explanation was abandoned at one time because of its abuses - to postulate the end of all action where none can be empirically ascertained, it now tends to be permitted under conditions where goal (intentionality) can be reasonably ascertained. Another closely related issue is the status of imputed needs, purposes, or mental states. "Do such

imputations involve the use of logical canons which are different from those employed in connection with imputation of 'objective' traits to things in other areas of inquiry?" ⁵

Although more emphasis is now being placed on unintended consequences of individual and collective behavior, the social sciences continue to be hard-pressed to build an acceptable science of man-society which rules out all imputation of needs (physical and psychological) and of purposive (intentional) aspects of human behavior. The critical philosophical question in sociology remains the status of group concepts: Are there no social units whose purposes are real rather than imagined and whose consequences are intended rather than accidental?

Both Consensus and Conflict tend to treat a social unit in realistic manner although the differential focus determines which unit (society or group) is so treated. Needless to say, a strict Methodological Individualism would deny the validity of both treatments while Sociological Holism would endorse the validity of both.

Although it is difficult to separate the Consensus-Conflict debate from the overall Functionalist debate, one edition conceives the differentiating factor to be Parsons' use of the concepts - systems and equilibrium. ⁶

Quite obviously the rejection of Parsons' most basic postulate - the systemic nature of society - will make other issues peripheral to the debate.

The Parsonian model is also highly criticized for projecting a static conceptualization of society. If maladjustments and/or dysfunctions

are taken as abnormal, and equilibrium is taken to mean that the system always returns to its previous state, it cannot account for development and change. If the equilibrating process can produce a new state of equilibrium, then change or development is provided for by the model. Dynamic equilibrium, as ideal state for maximum operating condition of the system, does not preclude several possible states of operative condition, or some minimal point where the system is in stasis. To postulate the goal of the system as state of equilibrium merely describes a potential and not an actual condition.

Equilibrium is also rejected because of the implied automatic nature of the adjustment process. There is definite value implication in the idea that it may not require constructive action on the part of individuals and/or social units to gain the necessary integration of essential parts for continued operation of the system. When it is suggested that there is some minimal point at which the system breaks down, however, there is denial of the automatic nature of the equilibrating process.

Although the contemporary Consensus-Conflict debate in Sociology has consisted chiefly of attacks upon the Structural-functional model, attacks upon the Marxist model have been a persistent part of the sociological tradition. Two of the most difficult obstacles to an adequate evaluation of Marx's contribution are his diatribe against capitalism and the idea of the inevitability of violent revolution. Marx has also been accused of deserting reality with: his utopian vision of a classless society, an overly simplistic treatment of classes, and utilization of monistic treatment - one factor (economic) as basic and all other elements

as derived. Some label his work "a theory of conspiracy".

The criticism of monism can only be understood as it opposes the idea of mutually dependent variables. It is standard scientific procedure to treat one variable "as if" constant (one most subject to control) with all other variables incorporated in a "set of conditions".

Others laud Marx for his unique contributions: impact of concrete situations upon social structure, impact of structural position on the ideas of men, and revolution as vital part of the process of evolution. Needless to say, the Marxist rationale tends to legitimize conflict and violent revolution under a specified set of conditions. Marx himself produced what is not accounted for by his model - the revolutionary idea and its justification. The broad political impact of Karl Marx seems also to indicate that revolution may occur as result of a superior act of construction.

If the question central to the Consensus-Conflict debate is the determination of the nature of society for the purpose of attributing a dominant characteristic, then the debate is frankly metaphysical. The centrality of man to any conceptualization of society merely projects the classical problem of the duality of man on another level - the duality of society.

To pose the classical metaphysical question often leads to the classical solution - search for the origin of evil.⁷

Objections to the concepts utilized by Parsons highlights an old debate meta-sociological concerning the proper field of orientation - physics or biology. Scientific presuppositions of Methodological

Individualism tend to orient toward the physical sciences while Sociological Holism tends to orient toward the organic sciences.

The reoccurring metaphysical debate as to the nature of society, then, involves not only highly charged value component but also a pragmatic philosophical question important to the field of sociology: What is the proper field of orientation? Holding in mind that man is the central analogue, what concepts and theoretical frameworks are most appropriate to the development of sociology?

EXCLUSIVITY OF TWO FRAMEWORKS

The second classification of the debate under investigation focuses on the question of whether Consensus-Conflict are mutually exclusive frameworks. The two responses given to this question (yes-no) can be shown to occur as a result of a prior commitment to divergent philosophical presuppositions. The initial stance taken can also be shown to influence both the focus of attention when the debate centers on Marx-Parsons, and the response given when the question of a possible solution is raised.

Methodological Individualism endorses the goal of science as a comprehensive body of knowledge and accepts the hypothetico-deductive model as the ideal of scientific explanation. Since Consensus-Conflict cannot, in any theoretical sense, be deduced from each other, they are, of necessity, mutually exclusive frameworks.

The difference in Marx-Parsons have been emphasized and the similarities often overlooked. More attention is directed toward the difference in rationale and focus than to important differences in method.

The weakness of Parsons' rationale that society is based on "value consensus" has been pointed out by many sociologists. However, if he had used a more specific term, such as "value structure", it would be more obvious that there is a causal implication located in culture (superstructure). Although Holists would insist on the causal efficacy of non-concrete phenomena (ideas, beliefs, values, norms, etc.), Marx's rationale, that it is the concrete social situations that determine the ideas of men, is certainly more in line with the presuppositions of Methodological Individualism.

The differences in focus of Marx-Parsons concerns two major problems of sociological investigation - the explanation of societal maintenance-persistence and explanation of societal development-change. It would be difficult to separate the political from the sociological implications of the "status-quo" - "change" arguments that surround Consensus-Conflict. The polarization of the two positions has tended to generate either a "right-wrong" implication which is a gross oversimplification or a "conservative-liberal" implication which is obvious political sloganism.

The differences in methods of Marx-Parsons are seldom mentioned in discussion of Consensus-Conflict, but these differences are important to this study.

Another Functionalism is a simple classificatory scheme that involves a system of reasoning which presumably bears a relation to a corresponding system in nature, Parsons uses a highly complex classificatory scheme which starts with a single unit, ego-alter, and attempts to relate the pattern to the broader unit, a social system. Parsons has stated that

his theory "is not an attempt to present a theory of any concrete phenomenon, but it is an attempt to present a logically articulated conceptual system".⁸

Marx used a simple scheme of binary division. Separating first infrastructure from superstructure, he proceeded to separate infrastructure into two classes, the Bourgeoise and the Proletariat. His intention was obviously a realistic presentation of the inner dynamics of society. Using the anthropological term, classes, he was able to speak to an experiential reality that can be understood by any man. His treatment of classes is viable only with a symbolic interpretation of stratification, which differs significantly from contemporary statistical treatment. In fact, the differential treatment of classes is a result of central focus. Contemporary Structural-functional analysis treats society realistically and classes nominalistically. Conflict analysis treats classes realistically and society nominalistically.⁹

The methodological difference between Parsons and Marx is more conspicuous when it is pointed out that Marx utilized the hypothetico-deductive model and Parsons attempted a modified Structural model. Both methods are old to science, although one enjoys "seniority" and the prestige that goes with it.¹⁰

The response of those who support the presuppositions of Methodological Individualism, then, is one of acceptance of the separation - the two frameworks are mutually exclusive. Relativity of usage may be recommended, or there may be a persuasive argument that one perspective is more fruitful than the other.

The response of those who support the presuppositions of Sociological Holism to the problematic question of whether the two frameworks are mutually exclusive is: No, they are not genuine opposites. Neither can claim exclusive priority in sociological investigation. Both are necessary for adequate comprehension of the universe.

Many of the debates about sociological theory are non-starters. The consensus-conflict debate is rhetorical, the two approaches are not genuine alternatives. Wholistic and atomistic theories can be considered irreconcilable only when taken to their logical extremes... It is a fallacy that there is any one theory or method that can adequately explain all of social reality... The big problem is how to build explanatory models without hopelessly distorting reality. ¹¹

Some of the important similarities of Marx-Parsons have been pointed out by some sociologists: Marx's analysis of religion is a true functional analysis if the polemics are removed. It is also very close to Durkheim's treatment of religion. The Marxian model also shares a common image of man with the work of G. H. Mead. The systemic tone (equilibrium) passages of Marx that are comparable to Parsons' has been pointed out by C. P. Loomis. ¹²

The Parsonian and Marxist paradigms share a common analogue. They both use a combination of physico-organic model and both include some psychological aspects. Parsons' inclusion of the psychological is intentional and Marx's is not. Any reference to consciousness in Marx gives definite causal implication to a non-concrete phenomenon. The two paradigms also "share a view of the individual as product of institutional monoliths in an overpowering matrix". ¹³

Parsons and Marx both focus heavily on social structure. One writer sees this similarity as the only ground on which they can be

equated in contemporary sociology.

To place Marxian theory in a class with American theory of social action and functionalism would seem, perhaps, the height of intellectual misjudgment, yet this is the case where both give priority to social analysis... Marx was a social structuralist of the first order, for he saw all of culture as a secondary outcome - an epiphenomena. ¹⁴

Since Sociological Holists do not perceive the Consensus-Conflict frameworks as mutually exclusive, they are more likely to resent the polemics of the debate. They will either try to get at the basic issues or to solve it in some manner. They may try to build on the similarities of the two models in search of a possible synthesis,¹⁵ or they may search for a viable alternative.

This second classification of Consensus-Conflict, which focuses on the question of exclusive frameworks, reveals some important consequences of interpretation, focus and response, which occur as a result of commitments to different sets of basic assumptions at the level of meta-sociology. Where Holism tends to command a both/and approach which leads to a search for a viable solution to the debate, Methodological Individualism tends to command an either/or approach which leads to an impasse.

The possibilities of interpretation of the two frameworks involved in the Consensus-Conflict debate is not exhausted by this categorical treatment. David Willer rejects both models as basically unscientific. "Conflict and Structural-functional are general models. Serving as 'means of orientation' only, both are inadequate as scientific models." ¹⁶

Robert W. Friedrichs interprets Consensus-Conflict as "battle of paradigms" and makes an interesting distinction between paradigm and

model. "Paradigm communicates the notion of model without invoking the word's physical imagery." ¹⁷ The paradigm serves as common frame of reference and provides the basic focus of orientation. When there is one paradigm dominating, there is more rapid development of the field. The scientist is not distracted by alternative frames, research tends to be cumulative, and the possibilities of the paradigm are explored in depth. However, the dominance of one paradigm sacrifices novelty for precision and new departures for detailed explanation.

Both of these sociologists point out the importance of recognizing different levels of abstraction and both agree as to the function of the metaphysical framework in sociology - cognitive orientation of sociologists. The important difference lies in treatment of the metaphysical framework - one sees it as expendable and the other sees it as vital. Friedrichs makes the interesting observation that "competing frames are not simply alternative but nested as well". ¹⁸

Arguments over the question of whether Consensus-Conflict are mutually exclusive frameworks seem to exclude any specific reference to the scientific principle of closure. If the two models focus on different levels of abstraction, then they are alternative in this sense but certainly not opposites. In fact, the tendency to perceive man-society (or scientific frameworks) as polars tends to preclude differentiation of important levels of abstraction.

Probably the most significant fact revealed in debate over the traditional models of sociology is that these models not only utilize incomplete analogues but also combine concepts borrowed from three fields

of orientation. Concepts seem to be borrowed as "ideas" rather than as specifically defined and utilized in their own fields.

SYMBOLIC NATURE OF THE DEBATE

The third classification of Consensus-Conflict focuses on the interpretation of the debate as a philosophical one - similar to the one which existed between Marx-Hegel in mid-19th century.

We have yet to recognize that the modern day categories of social structure and culture carry the dialectical problem which existed between Marx and Hegel. ¹⁹

Another similar interpretation appears in an essay by David Lockwood:

Many of the basic assumptions of Functionalism and Conflict theory are identical... The contemporary Functionalists and new-Marxists reenact a drama bearing similarities to the earlier transition from Hegel to Marx. ²⁰

Although both of these writers recognize a similarity in the current debate and its historical antecedent, neither attempts to trace out possible similarities in a more specific way.

Although it would be interesting to speculate on the social doctrines that might be in conflict in American Society today (Laissez Faire - Social Darwinism or Pragmatism - Existentialism), the scope of this study commands an assessment of only those values that may be in conflict in contemporary sociology which affect most significantly the scientific community.

If there is an important similarity between the two debates occurring approximately a century apart, it should be helpful to look at the earlier revolt of Marx-Engels.

German scholars have never quit the realm of philosophy, nor do they investigate the connection of German philosophy with German reality. All agree in belief in the rule of religion - of concepts of an abstract general principle existing in the world... The dependence on Hegel is the reason they have never attempted a comprehensive criticism of the general philosophical premises of the Hegelian system. Their polemics are confined to this - each abstracts one side of the Hegelian system and turns this against the whole as well as against the side abstracted by the others. The old Hegelians comprehended everything as soon as it was reduced to a Hegelian logical category. The young Hegelians criticize everything by pronouncing it a theological matter... The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary, but real... Abstractions can only be made in the imagination.²¹

Although this revolt was directed specifically against both Hegel and his disciples and the Utopian Socialists, it was also directed in a broader sense against the dominance in German Universities of a rational philosophy, highly optimistic, which supported the prevailing ideals of German Society.

The revolt certainly represented a thrust for a redefinition of reality based on concrete experience rather than on arbitrary intellectual abstractions.

The contemporary attack on Parsons and his followers by the neo-Marxists definitely point to the possibility of a reoccurrence of the reality problem in mid-20th century American Sociology.

Those who criticize Parsons' emphasis upon equilibrium theory as the result of a political stance are snapping in the wrong direction. They may be barking at the right tree, but its epistemological roots are the culprit, not its ideological fruit... Parsons takes more seriously than any other writer the logic of science. He assumes closure in principle. He operates on the presumption that the phenomena available are all related in and over time... He may reflect this more because his conceptual framework is a very high level of abstraction.²²

Parsons himself was early aware of the need for a voluntaristic, action theory to counter the dominance of behaviorism in Sociology. During the period 1930-1940 The Structure of Social Action was produced. His work on The Social System (1940-1950) obviously represented a response to an equally pressing need for a comprehensive theory which could integrate a rapidly diversifying body of sociological research.

What is seldom mentioned in an evaluation of Parsons' theoretical development is the existence of a "double bind" situation. Although this can be interpreted as the constraint of the historical situation, the important constraint was logical. Trained under the traditional behaviorism of Sociology, he was understandably reluctant to move beyond the key concepts and controlling abstractions of Structural-functional analysis.

Although Parsons' major effort was to break away from naturalistic sociology by adding subjective elements to a model of society, his resulting theory emphasized a severe analytical standpoint and retained physical metaphors in key concepts.²³

Behavioristic sociology must deny the introduction of concepts vitalistic and any concept referring to consciousness. Most sociologists concur on the fact that there is no such thing as group mind. Action theory, however, presupposes rationality. There can be no voluntaristic, action theory of society without the attribution of a psychological dimension to the collectivity and the logical implication that this cultural dimension is capable of exercising some control.

Parsons' crucial failing: although he identifies action theory with reality, he sees no interpenetration of that by reality of an existential mode of understanding.²⁴

Needless to say, there is no logically consistent way to attribute rational or irrational properties (or immorality or intentionality) to a mindless

physico-organic entity - society.

Historical evaluations of the development of modern Western Philosophy often view Hegel as the peak and end of an era of rational philosophy dominated by optimism and theism. Parsons in like manner, may represent the peak and end of an era in sociology dominated by a scientific philosophy, naturalistic.

The revolt of the contemporary neo-Marxists can be equated to the Marx-Engels revolt if it can be shown to involve similar philosophical issues.

Using two publications as examples of early (1959) and late (1970) neo-Marxism in American Sociology, it is possible to see the broader implications of the Consensus-Conflict debate and its involvement with the prevailing ideals of the scientific community.

Probably the most conspicuous example of an attack which moves beyond Parsons and includes the entire academic scene is C. Wright Mills' The Sociological Imagination. His criticism is definitely directed toward the abuses of abstractionism. Both Parsons' "grand theory" and "abstracted empiricism" are condemned. He not only argues persuasively for a shift in focus to the substantive problems of society but also emphasizes the importance of the orientation needs of man - to locate himself in social structure and his society (nation) in history.

Robert W. Friedrichs' A Sociology of Sociology is an excellent example of the contemporary extension of the neo-Marxist revolt. While exploring the revolutionary aspects of Consensus-Conflict in contemporary sociology, he also presents a strong argument for the legitimacy of the

dialectical method in science (he equates applied dialectical materialism to the sociology of knowledge). He attacks the extension of the value-neutrality ethic, which is employed in scientific investigation, into any kind of substantive ethic for the life of man. He also condemns the scientific community for the image of man which it projects into the broader community. (The epistemological screen of science rules out the image of man as unique, intrasubjective, existential, and inviolate end in himself.) The only logic suitable for the social sciences is dialogical (2 lenses - 2 levels) and only multiple techniques can adequately handle the right variety of social reality.

The humanistic thrust of the neo-Marxist movement in contemporary sociology is obvious when attacks are launched not only against the ideals of the broader society but also against scientific ideals which do not honor the primacy of man.

The interpretation of the Consensus-Conflict debate as a symbolic one - similar to the debate which existed between Marx and Hegel in mid-19th century - has permitted an interesting parallel to be drawn and has permitted a more precise delineation of some of the cultural values involved in the debate which are derived from and which affect the scientific community itself.

The criteria of relevance and criteria of scientific quality established for the scientific community at any given time are key indicators of the prevailing value priorities of that community. Although there need not be a conflict between relevance and scientific quality, the Social Sciences may find themselves in their own "double bind" if

the prevailing scientific standards preclude investigation of questions considered crucial to man about man, or to society about society.

The structural position of the Social Sciences within the scientific community may account for its somewhat unique conceptualization of what is to constitute scientific quality. Inability to actualize the ideals of theoretical reduction may also explain the maintenance of a modified set of standards for the social sciences and occasional attempts to reject outright the prevailing ideals of the scientific community.

The classification of the Consensus-Conflict debate into three broad categories - the problem of a dominant image, the problematic question of whether the two frameworks are mutually exclusive, and the symbolic nature of the debate - has permitted some organization of the many diverse interpretations of the debate and has indicated an inter-related set of problems which are not highly amenable to arbitrary separation.

Utilization of philosophical "a priori"s and focus on problems meta-sociological has also permitted a description of the Consensus-Conflict debate which highlights the philosophical aspects of the debate and the influence of divergent scientific presuppositions on positions taken in this debate.

CHAPTER IV

FOOTNOTES

¹N. J. Demerath III and Richard A. Peterson, eds., Systems, Change and Conflict (New York, The Free Press, 1967), p. 2.

²See Paul K. Feyerabend, "Realism and Instrumentalism: Comments on the Logic of Factual Support" in The Critical Approach to Science and Philosophy, ed. by Mario Bunge, (New York, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

³Jean Piaget, Structuralism (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1970), pp. 6-16.

⁴Gustav Bergmann, "Imperfect Knowledge" in Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences, ed. by May Brodbeck, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1968), pp. 415-436.

⁵Ernst Nagel, "The Subjective Nature of Social Subject Matter" in Philosophy of the Social Sciences, ed. by Maurice Natanson (New York, Random House, 1963), p. 40.

⁶N. J. Demerath III and Richard A. Peterson, eds., op. cit., pp. 261-308.

⁷Gerhard E. Lenski, Power and Privilege (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. 24-25.

⁸Robert W. Friedrichs, A Sociology of Sociology (New York, The Free Press, 1970) p. 146.

⁹Gerhard E. Lenski, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁰Jean Piaget, op. cit., p. 136.

¹¹Percy S. Cohen, Modern Social Theory (New York, Basic Books, Inc., 1968), p. 238.

¹²Robert W. Friedrichs, op. cit., pp. 261-262.

¹³Wayne Hield, "The Study of Change in Social Science" in System, Change, and Conflict, ed. by Demerath & Peterson, p. 187.

¹⁴Severyn T. Bruyn, The Humanistic Perspective in Sociology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 76.

¹⁵Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "Dialectic and Functionalism" in System, Change and Conflict, ed. by N. J. Demerath III and Richard A. Peterson, (New York, The Free Press, 1967), pp. 293-306; and Gerhard E. Lenski, Power and Privilege.

¹⁶David Willer, Scientific Sociology, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 15.

¹⁷~~Friedrichs, op. cit., p. 4.~~

¹⁸Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁹Bruyn, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁰David Lockwood, "Social Integration and System Integration" in Explorations in Social Change, ed. by George K. Zollschen and Walter Hirsch (New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1964), pp. 244-257.

²¹R. Pascal's Introduction to The German Ideology, Parts I and III, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (New York, International Publishers, 1947), pp. 4-6.

²²Friedrichs, op. cit., p. 239.

²³Bruyn, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁴Friedrichs, op. cit., p. 234.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL SUMMARY

Although the volatile Consensus-Conflict debate in contemporary sociology may be interpreted as result of the impact of the political upheaval in American Society (1960-1970) upon the scientific community, for the purposes of this study it has been interpreted as conflict produced by the revolutionary advance in the field of physics, which has yet to be assimilated by all segments of the scientific community. It may well be that the impact of Einstein has already altered prevailing scientific (and social) doctrines in manner similar to that of Newton in the 17th century and Darwin in the 19th.

Many human commitments are made a priori - without all the relevant facts. Any significant advance in scientific knowledge will inevitably command some reassessment of original a prioris in light of new evidence.

Today, there is more evidence to support the idea of theoretical reduction than to reject it. Although yet to be accomplished in the social sciences, some cross-sectional laws have been discovered in psychology and some overlap now exists between psychology and sociology in area of social psychology. Although the structural model has been demonstrated to be a powerful tool of the sciences, the hypothetico-deductive model is likely to remain supreme because of its integrative function. Integration accomplished, even in the field of physics, however, is always partial and

somewhat incomplete.

The idea, then, that it is possible to have one comprehensive systematic body of knowledge is questionable. The history of the development of several fields (mathematics and physics) tends to refute this thesis. This idea seems to be consistent only with a static conceptualization of scientific knowledge and an idealistic view of man's intellectual reach (unlimited by time and circumstances).

As "ideal" the thrust for comprehensive theory has been demonstrated to be productive even though incomplete historically. Any judgment of Parsons' contribution, then, must be considered somewhat premature (as his attempt at comprehensive theory may have been).

The split between philosophical verstehen and neo-positivism in the field of sociology can be interpreted as product of 19th century conceptualization of scientific knowledge (of necessity, narrow). Barriers erected to protect the emerging scientific community from the influence of the humanities may prove highly problematic in the 20th century. To perceive science and humanities as opposites today obscures the substantial relationships which exist between them and also places the scientific community in high jeopardy as it confronts a broad humanistic movement within its own ranks.

Barriers erected between physical and social sciences may also have provided some protection for emerging new social sciences. Today, however, such barriers may act as reasonable justification for maintenance of separate set of standards which actually isolate the social sciences (at least, philosophically) from the rest of the scientific community.

Continued reliance on Holistic or cosmic treatment of society and continued use of ideas deterministic and emergentistic may be product of over-reliance on illustrious ancestors of the 19th century. Although Methodological Individualism endorses "in principle" the idea of theoretical reduction and laws of composition, there seems to be little demonstration of the efficacy of such belief. Theoretical reduction only requires that group phenomena be explained in terms of individual laws not in terms of individual behavior. Strongly suggesting the field of psychology as possible field of orientation, it also suggests shift of focus of attention from structure to the structuring or integrative process.

Survey of contemporary publications on sociological theory does indicate that many sociologists are assessing the historical development of social theory in order to assign some plausible meaning to the present situation and to determine some new paths for exploration. Resolution of this problem, then, may depend on either some general agreement within the discipline or some concrete demonstration as to the most accurate definition of the situation and the best plan of action.

While the fruits of the Consensus-Conflict debate are manifest in the sweeping reevaluation of social theory which has already taken place, certain unfortunate consequences of the extended conflict should be noted. The general propensity of many to view the contemporary political struggle in Marxist terms has definitely precluded any attempt to gain valuable insights into one of the primary process of societal development - that of integration. Conspicuous by its absence is any comparison of the experiential reality of societal integration with traditional sociological

treatment. While many others defend a model and a man, one important socio-cultural redefinition has already taken place in American Society, and others have shifted significantly.

This particular study of Consensus-Conflict does seem to indicate the presence of a problem at the level of conceptualization... whether the debate is described as ideological, metaphysical, philosophical or symbolic. There is good reason to believe that this problem is not entirely unique to sociology. Any alteration in the criteria of relevance and criteria of scientific quality in the community at large is likely to be noted in all segments. Such shifts are likely to be extremely aggravating to sociology because of the long-standing debates over criteria establishment for the field.

Results of this study also indicate that in any theoretical schema a great deal depends on where one chooses to begin (what presuppositions and concepts are to be utilized). Scientific principles of closure and demand for consistency tend to create a number of deterministic systems in which the logical consequences of initial stances can be traced out. Such knowledge not only presents a serious challenge to any doctrinal stance taken but also gives the scientist an opportunity for enlightened choice and more control over his own universe of discourse.

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