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THE LOGIC OF MACROSOCIOLOGY

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A Biographical Note

Amos H. Hawley received his AB degree from the University of Cincinnati in 1936, and his PhD from the University of Michigan in 1941. He taught at the University of Michigan from 1941 to 1966, serving as chair of the department from 1951 to 1961. During that period he also served at various times as demographic advisor to the government of the Philippines, the Netherland Antilles, Thailand, and Malaysia. From 1966 to 1976 he was a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, and Kenan Professor there from 1971 to 1976. Professor Hawley is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; he was president of the Population Association of America in 1971 and of the American Sociological Association in 1978. He holds a Litt. D. from the University of Cincinnati and has been the recipient of the Lynd Award from the Urban and Community Sociological Section of the ASA and of the Award for Human Ecology Contributions from Cornell University. Professor Hawley is the author of 150 papers and books.

INTRODUCTION

It will come as no surprise to anyone who has read my work to be told that I am committed to a macro view of social phenomena.¹ I'll not try to explain

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that predilection as I have very little faith in introspections of that sort. Rather I will try to trace briefly the history of my intellectual bias and then turn to a defense of that position. In this I shall regard the macro view as embodied in the concept of organization, and I shall use that concept in the broadest sense to include all forms of organization from the simplest to the most complex.

My introduction to sociology was quite fortuitous. I had returned to school at the University of Cincinnati after a three-year, Depression-induced absence, with the intention of studying English literature. Soon I began to hear enthusiastic comments about lectures being given on an intriguing subject matter by an exceptional teacher. The professor was James A. Quinn and the subject was introductory sociology. A friend persuaded me to visit the class a time or two. That I did and I found the materials and their presentation as fascinating as my friend had promised. The text was *An Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, by R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess (1921). The choice was understandable for Quinn had been a student of Park at the University of Chicago. Sociology was for me a new and exciting way of thinking about the world around me. I had not been aware of the possibility that everyday experiences could be dissected, analyzed, and shown to possess systematic properties. After staying with the introductory course as an auditor to the end of the semester, I elected to major in sociology.

It was not long before I came across C. H. Cooley's *Social Organization* (1929), and soon thereafter G. H. Mead's *Mind, Self and Society* (1934). The two volumes opened a new vista for me with their compelling arguments that so intrinsic and private a matter as one's conception of self is a product of social interaction. Thus I was predisposed very early to regard the group as the fundamental unit of collective life; only later did I come to appreciate the full implication of that position. Given the importance of interaction it seemed to me that psychology should have something to contribute to an understanding of that process. So I decided to minor in that field. But after ten or twelve course hours in psychology I found I had learned nothing useful about collective life.

At this late date I cannot say how long I would have stayed with sociology had I not discovered human ecology. For that, too, I am indebted to James Quinn. The further I had read into the literature of sociology (as of the late 1930s) the more it impressed me as a classificatory enterprise embellished here and there with philosophical speculations. By contrast, the macroscopic yet earthy point of view of human ecology, free of all psychological baggage, appealed to me greatly. Its lucid propositions, its convincing demonstration of patterns in collective life, and the seeming beauty of the analogy with the

¹My use of "macro" is very similar to that of Smelser (1988) in that it denotes the use of organizations and networks of organizations, as opposed to psychological properties of individuals, as units of analysis.

biotic community, all derivable with a minimum of postulates about human nature, won me completely as a student and a proponent. Whatever vague notions I might have had at the outset about what to do with an undergraduate concentration in sociology crystallized in my senior year in a decision to pursue the subject in graduate school with a view toward becoming a professional sociologist. Applications for admission to the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan brought modest inducements. I opted for the latter because I had become much impressed with the writings of R. D. McKenzie, then chairman of the department at Michigan.

Graduate study at Michigan was not all I had hoped it would be. The department was small and weak. Of the six full-time staff members only two, R. C. Angell and McKenzie, provided any intellectual challenge for the student. After my first productive year with McKenzie, however, he began to show symptoms of what proved to be a degenerative disease. His activities were progressively curtailed. Midway in what was my fifth semester, McKenzie became too ill to continue. I was drafted to assume his teaching assignments—a large undergraduate course in human ecology and a graduate course in population. The experience for me was traumatic; for the students it must have been depressing. At any rate I continued teaching two courses through each of the next three semesters while working on a dissertation at odd hours. By May of 1940 I had a final draft of a dissertation in hand. Before that month was out, however, McKenzie succumbed. My dissertation committee had to be reconstituted, and a final oral was held near the end of the summer. I was then appointed an instructor in the department. Prior to that I was persuaded by Mrs. McKenzie and a vice president of the Ronald Press to finish a book on human ecology which McKenzie had contracted to do for that Press. But McKenzie's files held no part of a manuscript, only fragmentary notes and many transcribed excerpts from the publications of other authors. It was clear that I would have to proceed on my own while trying to represent McKenzie's ideas as faithfully as possible. The prospect was intimidating. Somehow I managed to finish a manuscript for the book in 1948. Two years later it was published under the title *Human Ecology: A Theory of Community Structure*.

During my graduate years and later as I worked on the human ecology manuscript, I became increasingly disenchanted with the then received conception of human ecology. The prevailing preoccupation with spatial distributions, which had attracted me at first, seemed to me a theoretical cul-de-sac. My readings of the works of bioecologists such as Elton (1927), Wheeler (1928), Braun-Blanquet (1932), Allee (1938), and others taught me that the important contribution to be gained from the analogy drawn from bioecology had been overlooked, namely, that adaptation to environment is a collective phenomenon. It is accomplished, that is, only through organization. Not only was the field thus opened to fascinating theoretical explorations, human

ecology was placed squarely in the purview of sociology. Spatial analysis thus receded to a place of secondary concern as attention shifted to the study of change, structure, and functioning of the social system in an environmental context. That context comprises not only the biophysical realm but equally importantly the surrounding socio-economic-political matrix. To a considerable extent this interest is shared with sociology. Indeed, human ecology and sociology have converged more than a little.² A macrolevel treatment of organization and society is no longer, if it ever was, a monopoly of human ecology (cf Blau 1977, Lenski & Lenski 1987). Human ecology takes its place as one of several paradigms in the inclusive field of sociology.

AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

A commonly used starting point in thoughts about the social system is that of an aggregate of individuals who establish interrelations, thereby forming an organized group. The group is then thought to be able to relate itself to other groups to create complex groups. In the progress from a simple aggregate to an organized group to a network of organized groups, one or more emergent properties are thought to appear. These, presumably, are relationships. Relationships are emergent because they are not inherent in the individual; they cannot be known by an examination of the individual organism. This seems to be a fair representation of how sociologists have viewed the ontogeny of societal organization. I also have held that view. I have said that human ecology is a study of how populations organize to adapt to given environments. Now I believe that such a statement, appealing as it is to common sense, puts the cart before the horse.

A more tenable assumption is that organization has precedence over the individual. All evidence points to the fact that there is no individual life—whether it be cell, organ, or organism—apart from an organization (von Bertalanffy 1952:12–14, Weiss 1971, Coleman 1971). The seemingly intangible character of organization and the obvious substantial quality of the human individual are both misleading. The comparison invites a misplacement of abstraction. The separate individual is an analytical fiction, though a very useful one. Analysis is a tactic we employ to understand what is a whole. It is used, however, always with a loss of information. To view individuals simply as biological organisms is to lose sight of the accumulation of behavior patterns they have acquired; to regard persons as independent actors is to reckon without the manifold organizational involvements in which their

²Namboodiri has argued persuasively that ecological-demography constitutes the core of sociology (1988).

behavior patterns are embedded. A reductionist argument, though methodologically defensible, has no theoretical support.³

This raises the question of what credence can be attached to the individual as a unique contributor to organization, whether as leader, scholar, inventor, or through whatever special abilities may be manifested. That there is a dualism in social situations cannot be denied. Max Weber (Gerth & Mills 1946: 253 ff) phrased it as charisma versus discipline. The prototype of discipline is bureaucracy. If these poles are ideal types, in the sense that they hold true only when all relevant variables are constant, perhaps we can substitute the variable quality of individual ability and initiative for the one, and a more adaptive concept of organization for the other. Giddens thinks of actor and organization (structure) as comprising a recursive system (1984: p. 5). Yet for all of the individual's irritability and capacity, he or she can only act in patterns and with information provided by or through organization. "No man is an island entire of itself;" said John Donne, "every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (59:108). And that thought has been echoed in the works of numerous poets and novelists. But it has been left to the sociologist to explicate the foundations of that elemental principle. The difficulty with explanation in such matters lies in determining the extent to which the influences of peripheral organizations enter into the behaviors of individuals in any given organization.

It is to be noted in passing that erratic, undisciplined, and riotous action occurs where organization has been rendered ineffective. Cataclysmic events or permanent or temporary ostracisms can destroy an entire role structure or simply exclude an individual from such a structure. The consequence is a regression to extraorganizational and random behaviors. It is also possible, of course, that an organization can be so rigid as to stifle all degrees of freedom and flexibility.

In view of the argument thus far, how is one to understand the prevailing preoccupation with individuals which holds them to be prime movers in all things social? That belief is of fairly recent origin, for it was not always so. In the tribal kinship residence system, the individual is entirely possessed by the group; there is little individual life apart from a particular group and very few degrees of freedom of activity within it. The most severe penalty for transgressions of group ways is ostracism. Historically, however, dominance by a

³A reductionist fallacy identifies an object with its elements. Such instances, say Cohen & Nagel (1934: 383), are found in an argument that sees "scientific books as nothing but words, animate or inanimate nature as nothing but atoms, lines as nothing but points, and society as nothing but individuals, instead of holding books, nature, lines and society to be constituted by words, atoms, points and individuals, respectively, connected in certain ways." (See also Webster 1973).

single group over the individual eventually yielded to a multiplication of group influences as organizations became more numerous and complex. Boulding (1968) has said that an organizational revolution occurred in mid-nineteen century. But I believe that the process of so-called individuation began much earlier than that. Von Martin (1944) finds the beginnings in the Renaissance during which urban organization grew at the expense of feudalism.⁴ Since then, of course, organizations have increased geometrically.

No one organization in the modern world can be sovereign over individual life. Instead the contemporary individual may be thought of as a locus formed at the intersection of numerous organizational ambits. In his comments on this fact Simmel confined his remarks to so-called voluntary organizations (1953). But it is also true that all other kinds of organizations intersect on individuals. Autonomy is an illusion resting on the individual's liberty to choose among organizations in which to participate. One may shop at one store or another, join or not join a club, affiliate with one church or another, or even elect the government under which to live. But the decision to participate is not an option; it is made for the person. "In the entire course of social evolution," declared Durkheim, "there has not been a single time when individuals determined by careful deliberation whether or not they would enter into the collective life or into one collective life rather than another (1958)."⁵

Nothing that has been said should be construed to mean that organization is independent of personnel or population. People of various kinds and numbers are required to staff the functional positions of organizations. But the requirement is for people of defined categories rather than for people with personal identities. Population is by way of being a necessary condition. The sufficient condition lies in the interaction of organization, population, and environment.

Given the primacy of organization the issue of emergence disappears. The disappearance is due not to an antithesis between reductionism and emergence, but to the fact that both rest on an incorrect supposition, namely, the independence of the individual. Nor does the multiplication of relations among organizations and the complexity compounded thereby revive the emergence question at a higher level.⁶ What happens with added complexity is the appearance of new functions, actually subdivisions of pre-existing functions, and an elaboration of the relational network linking new to older

⁴Sir Henry Maine stated the transition in more general terms as change from status to contract. He found the uses of contract well advanced in ancient Roman law (1917).

⁵Coleman contends that a defect of a macrolevel position is that it assumes the existence of a social system as a starting point (1986, p. 1322). The same objection applies to a micro level position. In either case some unit must be assumed.

⁶On this point I differ radically from Devereaux who contends that every change in organizations is an occasion of emergence. (1940)

functions. But neither functional subdivisions nor the added relations are new qualities, as the emergence concept requires. They are rather repetitions and extensions of what is already in being.

The assumption of organization primacy and the macrolevel approach it implies should not be confused with philosophical holism. The latter argument holds that a phenomenon, and especially a social phenomenon, is to be viewed as the "totality of all the properties or aspects of a thing, and especially of all the relations holding between its constituent parts" (Popper 1957, p. 76). It follows from the holist position that wholes can only be known in their wholeness, and not through analysis of unit parts. Because it does not allow abstraction, the holist method must be that of intuition. None of this is acceptable in a macrolevel treatment of social phenomena. This position rather acknowledges the necessity for dissection and analysis of selected aspects of a whole, as is done in all scientific investigation. The constituent parts are functions or roles, relations and categories of individuals. Other abstractions, such as personalities and their components, are left to microlevel approaches. There is nothing in the discipline of sociology that I have been able to discover which enables one to identify, to say nothing of measuring, motives, values, or other internal attributes of individuals (cf Mayhew 1980).

The primacy assumption raises the nettlesome question of where or how organization originated, a familiar chicken-or-egg dilemma. To be caught up in an infinite regress promises no answer. It is enough to acknowledge: no organization, no survival. Born with no clothes, tools, or foreknowledge of any kind, the human infant is utterly dependent on others from the beginning, and it is a dependence from which he or she is never freed. The initial dependence occurs in a parent-child relationship, the most primitive form of organization, one which may owe its existence to selection. From that simple form, organizations multiplied and diversified. What the sequence might have been is unknown, for we have no natural history of organization. The sweeping homogeneity-to-heterogeneity of Spencer (1921), the equally general mechanical-to-organic solidarity of Simpson (1933), or the more elaborate classificatory schemes of anthropological evolutionists (e.g. Goldschmidt 1959) are of no great help. They describe large-scale social systems without filling in the details represented by small units of organization. A developmental or evolutionary concept should apply to organizations of all sizes. At the risk of oversimplification, it may be argued that all organizations change, whether toward expansion or contraction, with the assimilation of inputs from other organizations. Inputs in the form of techniques or ideas are in effect behavior patterns which had their prior existence as organizational components. Their assimilation in a receiving organization necessitates rearrangements of relations and other structural elements in that organization, and

those alterations usually have cumulative potential. Tracing the path of organization formation and development one encounters an immediate difficulty in the marked differences among organizations. That circumstance makes a taxonomy imperative. A simple yet useful classification is composed of corporate and categoric types. Perhaps, in describing these organizational modes, I will be forgiven for repeating what I have said on more than one previous occasion (Hawley 1986, pp. 73 ff).

The corporate form of organization is composed of complementing differences or specializations. The family is the simplest and doubtless the earliest manifestation of such a unit. Its division of labor, though rudimentary, contains a principle of organization which lends itself to extensive elaboration and increases of scale. A progression from farm household to craftsman and mercantile shops to large-scale enterprise is accompanied by refinements of specialization from industry to skill to task. The multiplication of specializations orders them in transitive sequences extending through several levels of simplification. As functions increase arithmetically, relations increase geometrically.⁷ Thus complexity tends to grow logistically, approaching an asymptote at which internal communication costs approximate net gains from organization. As that point on a growth curve nears, either growth ceases or a centrifugal tendency develops. In the latter case the outcome appears, on the one hand, as a departmentalization within the organization or, on the other hand, as an establishment of new units or organizations.

The categoric type of organization, adopted by units that make similar demands on environment, is the simplest of all forms of organization. It proliferates in the internal networks of corporate units. Differentiation of experiences and interests are to the differentiation of functions as wool is to warp. Such units occur as mutual aid gatherings, clubs, labor and professional associations, and social classes. They wax in the presence of a threat and wane in its absence. Where the challenge to a common interest is recurrent or continuous, the unit acquires some degree of permanence. To attain that state, however, a staff of administrators must appear, for that is not, as in the corporate unit, an intrinsic element of categoric organization. It then becomes possible to develop controls on competition for the resource on which all depend. But the administrative staff needed to mount a set of controls on

⁷James Coleman (1971, pp. 66-73) measures growth by increases in the number of links in the chains of functions from the point of origin of a material or item of information to the final consumer.

Organization ecologists have used an evolution model in studies of births and deaths of organizations in systemic environments. Competition among organizations for limited resource space results in the selection of the most fitted (e.g. Carroll 1988). To note that those studies do not reveal how organizations advance from conception to maturity does not in any way denigrate the value of that work.

competition presupposes a large membership. Increases in size bring other changes in the categoric unit. With size comes heterogeneity, for adherents have many and diverse organizational attachments. Thus the initial commonality tends to become more abstract and more vulnerable to discord. In fact one or more subdivisions of the common interest can find enough supporters to form one or more subunits within the larger unit. What may begin as a single splinter group tends to pursue an accelerating course as unit formations follow one another until the whole resembles a polyp of cells. The Reformation, as a case in point, gave rise to numerous Protestant sects; likewise, polities are often rendered into a number of partisan groups, and professional associations becomes hosts to many divisions and sections. Where on a size continuum subdivisions are most likely to occur has not been determined. Perhaps it is not until an administrative cadre is put in place, which usually lags well behind size increases, that potential subunits find a favorable environment. They can then claim their respective identities while continuing to receive administrative services. In short, it seems that a categoric type of organization can advance the incidence of organization by spawning reproductions of itself, for it too is subject to a centrifugal tendency.

Despite these differences, a kind of similarity exists among all organizations. As units, both corporate and categoric, accumulate within a network of interrelations, they tend toward structural isomorphism. That follows from two exigencies to which all are subject. First, every organization must have within its composition a function which relates it to its environment—both biophysical and ecumenic⁸ environments in cases of inclusive organizations, and systemic environments where limited or specialized organizations are concerned. Second, all units of organization included in a network of interrelations must be able to participate in the flow of communications.

The first is responsible for the inescapable hierarchical arrangement of functions. Even in the most rudimentary organization, as found in temporary assemblages for mutual aid, some one function appears to define the task, set the cadence, and otherwise give direction to the environmental exchange. In more complex organizations a king, a president, or an entrepreneur stands at the head of a set of functional linkages. And every step of removal from the chief or key function in a descending chain of functions is a further step toward indirectness of relation to environment and a further diminution of the share of power in the system.⁹ There is also a demographic as well as a

⁸I use ecumenic as a convenient way to refer to the total socio-cultural-economic-political universe from which influences affecting any given organization originate.

⁹This conception of the roots of inequality in a population stands in contrast to Parson's (1940, p. 843) explanation in terms of differential evaluation, and Dahrendorf's (1970, pp. 14–15) account based on the presence of norms to which sanctions are attached. In my view both of these suggestions pertain to derivative factors, that is, valuation follows power and norms are expressive of power.

functional stratification in the hierarchy. The simpler the role the larger the number of units engaged.

The second circumstance contributing to isomorphism is the mere fact of being enmeshed in a system of interrelations. Every unit so involved must be able to interact effectively with other units in the network. Thus all units tend to acquire organizational components that enable them to participate in communication flows. All become subject to financial and legal accountability. Accordingly all avail themselves of accounting, legal, personnel, and communication services. Where the units of organization attain large size, they can include appropriate specialists in their work forces. Large businesses, industries, educational institutions, churches, and charitable agencies converge upon a common form. The standardizing effects of communication are reinforced further by competition. Units competing for the same clientele or resource arrange their organizations to accommodate to the circumstances attending the clientele or resource on which all depend. They adopt similar technologies and employ similar specialists.

Relations between organizations parallel those within organizations. That is, some organizations are connected through their complementary differences, i.e. symbiotically, others on the basis of their similarities. Illustrative of the first is the essential operating structure of an urban community. It consists in a set of more or less specialized units of organization, constituting a network of exchange relations. Lesser networks within the larger one are represented, for example, by the social service sector, by the legal establishment, and by industrial complexes, each composed of several specialized functional agencies. On the other hand, linkages form among units engaged in similar activities such as associations of merchants, of manufacturers, of fraternal lodges, and of educational institutions. These coalescences are addressed to the control of competition and to coaction as lobbies for particular legislation or other advantages.

Networks and associations are mutually advantageous to their members. But mutuality does not necessarily mean equality. "It is a basic property of nature. . .," said Margalef, "that any exchange between two systems of differing information content does not result in a partition or equalizing of the information, but increases the differences. The system with more accumulated information becomes still richer from the exchange" (1968, pp. 16-17). The relations of parts suppliers to a manufacturing firm, of local to national governments, of individual chapters to the central office of an interregional association would seem to be of the order described by Margalef. The relations in these examples seem to correspond to those between specialist and generalist organizations as discussed by Hannan & Freeman (1977). Generalist organizations are more strategically located in an information and energy network and therefore are in command of greater resources.

A correlation of organizational complexity and population size has been suggested in one or two prior references. To be more specific, in organized populations of comparable size and technological sophistication equal amounts of diversity or specialization are to be expected. Although the number of small and large units of organization may vary as between populations, the total volume of organization tends toward parity. Stated differently, the person-hours devoted to retailing, transportation, communication, professional services, and other specialized activities approach an equivalent number regardless of the different scales of units. There is a circularity here which should be acknowledged inasmuch as a unitary population is defined by the scope of its inclusive organization. And technology and organization are so intimately connected that they can be regarded as different aspects of the same thing. Yet there is something to be gained from making explicit what might otherwise be overlooked.

In opposing organization and individual as I have been doing in this discussion, one should be prepared to speak to the question of whether an organization is capable of acting as a unit. Charles Tilly raised that issue some time ago in a paper titled "Do Communities Act?" (1973) His answer confirmed an affirmative opinion expressed earlier by Homans (1950, p. 319). Certain conditions, however, are required, said Tilly. Those are (i) there is homogeneity with reference to the main divisions of power; (ii) costs of communication rise rapidly with distance; and (iii) control over land is valued but uncertain. The conception of community to which these conditions pertain refers to what is commonly recognized as a neighborhood association, a localized residence group mobilized to oppose some form of undesirable encroachment, in other words, a categoric group. As is well known, however, the neighborhood association seldom lasts beyond the removal of a given threat. All organizations founded on some particular homogeneity demonstrate a capacity for unified action as long as a threat to a common interest lasts. They lose that ability more often than not when the challenge is no longer present. What Tilly neglected to include in his statement of requirements for unitary action is a division of labor, transitory though it may be, especially a centralization of coordinating responsibility together with some supporting functions.¹⁰

The corporate organization also acts as a unit. it produces a more complicated product or service than individuals acting separately can accomplish, and it can do so repeatedly and continuously. No one who has experienced a

¹⁰The Townsend movement is an interesting case of an organization which emerged in the 1930s to promote the common needs of older people. But with the passage of social security legislation it lost its reason for being. Its administrative staff then sought to convert the organization to an enterprise for door-to-door sales. The rapid decline of membership spelled failure for that effort (Messenger 1955).

philharmonic orchestra performing a Beethoven symphony can doubt the capacity for unit behavior. In contrast to the organization based on homogeneity which can only produce energy additively, the corporate unit generates energy multiplicatively as its organization takes form. Its formation is accompanied by negative entropy or, stated in the parlance of economics, there are economies of scale. That is due in part to its ability to employ highly capitalized technologies. And that, in turn, is supported by the relative permanence of corporate organization. Its longevity over-reaches that of its personnel; individuals come and go, but the structure remains in place. In affording continuity through time, organization makes history possible. Not only is time economized, it is extended.

Organizational economies have the further effect of producing substitutes for population. Increased output per worker means fewer workers per unit of product. That can translate eventually into reductions in the proportion of a population engaged in the labor force. Thus population size tends to lose its relevance as an indicator of economic potential, for smaller numbers can produce equivalent products.¹¹ The matter is complicated, moreover, by the tendencies of organizations to extend their scopes beyond the boundaries of governmental jurisdictions. The demographic basis of industrial organization, for example, has shifted historically from a local to an urban, a regional, a national, and finally to an international population. Consequently the relation of a politically bounded population to the producing sector of its economy has become exceedingly difficult to measure. Measurement requires a determination of the contribution of a local labor force to the gross product of the international economy.

I have spoken of organization growth as a progression on a logistic curve, running its course as it nears an asymptote formed at the point where inputs and outputs are equal. Improvements of organization cause the asymptote to shift farther away from the point of origin. There are occasions, however, in which the asymptote is moved toward the starting point, that is, organizations sometimes decline. While growth rests on an excess of inputs over outputs (revenues over costs), decline occurs when the ratio is reversed, when outputs exceed inputs. That can come about through an exhaustion of resources, a depletion of population below labor power needs, technological changes occurring elsewhere which render a given organization obsolete, or over-expansion that leads to administrative costs in excess of returns from production.¹² How much decline will occur depends on the amount of discrepancy between input and output and the level of inputs. Where the disparity is small the decline is apt to be short-lived. But where the discrepancy is large

¹¹It may be noted, too, that with technological advances brought about by organization development, longevity increases constitute substitutes for births, for fewer births are needed to produce a given number of person-years of life.

¹²The consequences of over-expansion are not found only in political units. Wilson (1985) has

the decline tends to be extensive. And should the inputs from resource reserves be too small, it may be impossible to arrest decline. Barring that contingency, decline will cease when the input-output balance is restored. An equilibrium, however, is unlikely to be more than temporary.¹³

CONCLUSION

Now it is reasonable to ask: What is the utility of a macrolevel view of social phenomena? My answer is that in most respects it makes good sociological sense. The origins of virtually all societal problems are traceable to organizational malfunction or nonfunction. Crime, poverty, pollution, and political disorder are to be understood in such terms, the tendency to attribute such events to motives or meannesses in persons notwithstanding. Although it may be expedient in some instances to hold individuals accountable, as in the applications of laws, that is usually in default of a means for holding organizations responsible. The despot, the exploiter, the racial discriminator, the insurrectionist is invariably the spokesman for an organization. There is thus a justification for allowing an analytical position to serve as a guideline in policy formation.

There is also a potential disutility in the macrolevel point of view. It can encourage an uncritical application of a general principle to policy issues. It can lend support to what Popper calls "the totalitarian intuition" (1957, p. 97). Policies designed to impose a rigid order on society and thereby eliminate individual freedom can be rationalized on such a basis. But well short of that extreme are many political decisions that override individual considerations, some benign, others malignant. Among the first are such practices as graduated taxation, compulsory education, and eminent domain. On the other hand, legally sanctioned racial discrimination and institutionalized absolutism of whatever kind are malignant from the standpoint of both the individual and the body politic. Perhaps the best protection against misapplication of the macrolevel perspective is the maintenance of social system openness. That calls for unrestricted freedom of discourse within and between polities. For then frequent challenges and incursions from without and a resulting competition among organizations may prevent any organization from gaining dominance in affairs outside its immediate responsibility.

described in perceptive detail a similar outcome in an academic institution. Centrifugal forces already at work in the professionalization of faculty qualifications lost their unifying counterpoise as a result of a reckless creation of multiple campuses coupled with unwise admission policies and neglect of the central mission of the institution. The result was a decline of a once distinguished educational institution to a fraction of its former size and a corresponding attrition in its quality.

¹³Gordon Childe's studies of ancient empires (1946, p. 267) led him to the conclusion that there was no middle position between growth and decline; when one ceases the other begins.

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