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THE SYSTEMS THEORIES OF PARSONS AND BUCKLEY COMPARISON AND EVALUATION

In this essay, Parsons' and Buckley's systems approaches to sociological theory are presented and compared. Parsons'¹ scheme is presented first, organized so that the concept of system is treated, then the ingredients of the action frame of reference on the societal level, followed by a description of the double contingency situation. Finally, socialization is examined for its explanation of the preparation of actors for the enactment of roles. Following this, Parsons' sketch of evolutionary social change is reviewed, using his systems concepts as a reference point.

Buckley's² systems approach is then described using the same developmental procedure. His concept of system is treated first, followed by his idea of the social system. His treatment of social action is then reviewed, followed by a description of his ideas of socialization, the preparation of actors for action. Following this, Buckley's ideas are drawn out concerning the way in which long term social change (evolution) might take place.

In the course of the descriptions, it will be apparent that comparisons and contracts exist between the two systems approaches. Some of these will be developed in the third section of the paper along the same developmental lines used for the description of the two systems approaches.

¹ The principal sources of Parsons' ideas used in this paper are: Max Black, *The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961); Talcott Parsons, *Social System* (NYC: Free Press, 1951); Talcott Parsons, *Societies* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966); Talcott Parsons *The System of Modern Societies* (mimographed n.d.); Talcott Parsons, Robert F. Bales, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955).

² Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

Finally, the points of disagreement and contention between Buckley's and Parsons' approaches will be evaluated.

For Parsons, the concept of disagreement and of "system" connotes the organization of elements into a whole, the maintenance of which relies on these elements and their relationship to each other. Thus the elements of a system may not be reduced in terms of other elements or combinations of other elements. The elements are indispensable to each other and to the system as a whole; anyone element provides a focus from which to view the others and the totality. It is important to stress that this concept of system provides for interdependence and interpretation of system elements, but that no element is derivable from others. All elements contribute to the maintenance of system states, such that a change or disturbance in one element necessarily implies changes in all the other elements³.

Based on this idea of system, Parsons develops his action system, referring to the totality of interrelated elements. These elements, or subsystems, are: the cultural system, the social system, and the personality system⁴. Together with the behavioral organism (the person), these four subparts are interrelated and interpenetrate each other. The cultural system is that constellation of norms and values which exists in every society. It changes over time, but remains recognizably stable and thus may be legitimately thought of as a system itself, while it is, at the same time, a subsystem of the total action system. The cultural system defines the rights and obligations of actors toward each other and toward society. In so doing, the cultural system must also state the legitimation of the normative order, i.e., the reasons for the rights, obligations, and prohibitions each society member must confront. But the cultural system is not self-legitimizing; that is, it can not answer the question "why" the normative order is as it is. Therefore, the cultural system must be grounded in and closely articulated with the society's conception of "ultimate reality," which is in some way religious in nature⁵.

The prescriptions of the cultural system are conceptually organized into the "pattern variables." These are a set of dichotomies derived from the *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* distinction which formalize the ways in which the actor is to view the central problems of action. "Diffuseness-specificity" refers to whether approval is to be projected to the "whole

³ Stating the Parsonian system concept without use of the term "equilibrium" seems to allow more for the "openness", of the system and the analysis of change than if the term were used. It is asserted that the foregoing paragraph captures the essence of Parsons' system concept without the use of "equilibrium", which, however, he himself uses.

⁴ Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, Chapter I.

⁵ Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, p. 9.

other” or to only a selection of his attributes. “Affectivity-affective neutrality” specifies whether gratification is to be gained immediately, or only after a protracted set of performances. “Quality-performance” refers to whether the other is evaluated according to his own being, apart from ego, or in particular way according to alter’s value for ego. Ego may treat an object or alter according to some generalized principle or in specific relation to alter’s performance of a given action; this is “universalism-particularism.” “Self-orientation — collective-orientation” refers to whether the individual acts according to self-interest or collectivity-interest⁶. Since this last dichotomy seems redundant in view of the previous four, Parsons has dropped it in his later treatment of pattern variables. Thus the cultural system sets legitimate patterns, grounded in ultimate reality, which define the nature of the relations between individuals, i.e., the social system.

The social system is the patterned interaction of individuals according to norms and values found at the cultural level. Such interaction is the performance of roles *vis-a-vis* other actors in a reciprocal relationship of expectations (based on the cultured system). Thus, alter’s expectations are ego’s role prescriptions and *vice versa*. Ego and alter thus reciprocally gratify each other’s needs. This interlocking activity between ego and alter involving needs, expectations and motivation fits together (for non-deviants) because socialization has comparably affected both ego and alter relative to these three ingredients of social action in a constant cultural setting. The end product is that for any action ego wants to do that which gratifies alter’s needs in accordance with his (alter’s) expectations⁷. In this description the cultural system has been linked with the social system and the personality system has been alluded to by the mention of needs and motivations.

The personality system is “the learned organization of the behaving individual”⁸; thus, it is intimately associated with the socialization of behavior and value along three major lines. The complete personality system is a given society involves: (1) a knowledge of and commitment to the prevalent legitimate general norms and values that are found in the cultural system and which are articulated with ultimate reality. (2) The appropriate motivational aspects of behavior *vis-à-vis* others in accord with cultural prescriptions. This socialization of motivation accounts for the individual’s behavior according to his construction of the social situation, and not in other ways. It rests on the development of the “pleasure principle” into complex socially oriented motivations in the course of socialization. (3) The knowledge and expectations involved

⁶ Max Black, “Some Questions About Parsons’ Theories”, *The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons*, pp. 285–86.

⁷ Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, pp. 211–212.

⁸ Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, p. 12.

in the performance of particular activities toward particular goals. This is the specific knowledge of or "know how" associated with particular activities⁹.

Together with the physical-organic environment, which constitutes a kind of base line. Parsons arrives at three environmental aspects of social system: the cultural and personality systems and the behavioral organism. Combining these environments with the social system itself, he arrives at hierarchies of conditioning and control which include these four major elements of his systems approach and which articulate with four major system problem areas¹⁰. In the cybernetic relations, information controls energy. Thus ultimate reality ("pure" information) is at the top of the hierarchy. The physical organic environment is at the top of the conditioning hierarchy. Between these ends of the hierarchies lie the cultural, social, and personality systems and behavioral organism.

Articulated with the three subsystems and the behavioral organism are the four major system problem areas: pattern maintenance, integration, goal attainment, adaptation¹¹. The cybernetic relations, subsystems and system problem areas fit together as shown in Figure 1¹²:

System Problem Areas	The Social System and Its Environments	Cybernetic Relations
L. Pattern Maintenance	Cultural System	ultimate reality.
I. Integration	Social System	↑
G. Goal Attainment	Personality System	cond. contr.
A. Adaptation	Behavioral Organism	↓
		physical-organic environment

Figure 1

It is in the area of the system problems that Parsons draws particularly on his concept of system as an interlocking, mutually supportive organization of subparts. He holds that as society becomes more complex, roles become differentiated into role-areas (the A, G, I, L areas) rather than encompassing a wide range of behavior into a small number of diffuse roles¹³. As roles become differentiated, specific roles fall more into one category than another, and the performance of a role, from the viewpoint of a single problem areas, does not necessarily contribute to solutions in the other problem areas. The four areas (corresponding to the "Functional Imperatives") interpenetrate, in that they each are conceived as having a different kind of "output"; these outputs ensure the mainte-

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, p. 214.

¹⁰ Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, p. 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Taken from Table I, Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, p. 28.

¹³ Chandler Morse, "The Functional Imperative", Max Black, *The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons*, p. 121.

nance of order for the total system because each of them solves a crucial problem for the system as a whole ¹⁴.

The adaptive subsystem (A) produces "generalized facilities as means to an indefinite number of possible uses." Thus adaptation is associated with economy, or wealth-producing subsystem. The goal-attainment subsystem (G) is associated with the policy because its major function is to solve the problem of how wealth will be used and allocated within the system. A sharp differentiation is thus made between the production and control of resources in the system.

More abstractly, the Integrative subsystem (I) produces the generalized capacity to control behavior, i.e., solidarity ¹⁵. This capacity is applied to aberrant tendencies or behaviors which threaten the system by breaking down its ability to retain harmony — the interlocking nature of role complementarily. The Pattern Maintenance or Latency subsystem (L) "produces" stability. "Stabilization" against distabilizing influences arising in the culture system is 'Pattern Maintenance'; that against similar influence arising from strains 'Tension Management' " ¹⁶.

These four major system problems are articulated with the four subsystems (as shown in Figure 1) in the following way. Pattern Maintenance is associated with the cultural system because it is that system which is made up of the norms and values which sustain the system as a recognizable entity ever time. Integration is associated with the social system because it is this system which is made up of the actual interlocking role enactments which are fit together according to cultural prescriptions. Thus proper action is integrative. Goal attainment and the personality system are associated because it is the personality system which is developed from a crude pleasure-seeking entity into one of complex socially-oriented motivations and ideas of goals to be socially attained. Adaptation and the behavioral organism are associated because it is only the human and the machinery which he creates and controls that can have concrete outputs in wealth and power. When these four major system problems are met for a given people, which is self-perpetuating, a societal community is constituted ¹⁷. This is the self-sufficient organization of persons which has attained solidarity and a distinctive membership criterion. It carries a culture, a generalized and legitimate normative order.

Parsons has given a theoretical account of how order in social relationships is achieved and maintained. To fit into this order, the individual must be prepared through the socialization process. Thus, socialization is crucial and, in a sense, the whole system "rests on" proper socialization.

¹⁴ Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Chandler Morse, "The Functional Imperatives", p. 127.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, pp. 16-18.

Since socialization has been alluded to above, aspects of the socialization of motivation will not again be covered. But it is in relation to socialization that Parsons explains a major category of behavior, that of deviance, and it is in relation to deviance that socialization must be considered separately in this paper¹⁸.

The normal socialized individual has been brought from a cultureless organism with only primitive drives for pleasure, to a person with culturally directed and socially oriented goals. This involves the socialization of the "pleasure principle" such that pleasure (gratification) is attained in culturally prescribed ways toward approved ends. Socialization involves the commitment to the culture as well as the learning of particular aspects of it which bear on the individual's roles. Deviance arises when socialization has been improper. Deviance refers to the enactment of roles in ways other than those prescribed by the culture, the working toward ends other than socially approved ones or for other than legitimate reasons. Thus a failing in any area of socialization produces deviance, but it is failure in the socialization of motivation and commitment that is crucial. A simple failure to learn procedure is easily corrected, and the individual heartily concurs that his behavior should be brought into line; he has only been "incorrect." Deviation arising out of motivational and commitment failure must be dealt with more seriously because this kind of deviant threatens the system and its cultural prescriptions by the lack of loyalty and appropriate motivations.

Parsons has applied his scheme to the analysis of societies in evolution. Based on his reading of history, he has viewed social evolution in terms of a series of changes leading to a continually more adaptive system. This involves the increasing differentiation of role structures and the recombination of these structures in ever more efficient solution to the major system problems. Based on Spencer's axiom that change always moves from the more homogeneous to the more heterogeneous, and on his knowledge of biology, Parsons postulates a four-stop process of social evolution: 1. differentiation, 2. integration, 3. inclusion, and 4. generalization¹⁹.

Differentiation refers to the number of tasks which a single role encompasses. A more differentiated role structure involves fewer different tasks in the definition of each role. Integration refers to the increasingly interlocking nature of roles, which serves to hold the society together due to the reciprocal gratifications that roles come to have for one another. Thus, integration refers to the fact that increasingly, members of the society come to "need each other." Inclusion refers to the proportion of the total society which is affected by differentiation and integration along division of labor lines. Differentiation and integration lead to

¹⁸ Cf. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, Chapter VII.

¹⁹ Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, pp. 21-24.

increasing inclusiveness. As differentiation occurs, it "increasingly frees the cybernetically higher factors (see Figure 1) from the narrow specificities of the lower order conditioning factors, thus enabling the basic patterns of the culture to become more generalized, objectified and stabilized"²⁰. Thus generalization refers to the abstract and overarching nature of the cultural system. As it is increasingly generalized, it is less concerned with solving specific problems of order originating in the other system and can thus become more of an abstract statement of the character of the societal community.

This paradigm of evolutionary change is summed up in Parsons' treatment of "archaic" societies where he distinguished "archaic" and "advanced intermediate" societies. In terms of literacy and religion, he notes that "archaic" societies are characterized by craft literacy and cosmological religion, whereas the "advanced intermediate" ones have full upper class literacy and "historic" religions, revealing a breakthrough to philosophical religious forms²¹.

Thus at the level of differentiation of "archaic" societies, literate priest-hoods have developed, but in the true "archaic" societies, it is only the priests who are literate (craft literacy). In "advanced intermediate" societies, literacy includes the full upper class. Thus it cuts across more different roles and contributes to greater integration. The "historic" religions of the "advanced intermediate" societies constitute an advance over cosmological ones, because their philosophical nature frees them from cosmological links, so that they may incorporate more areas of behavior into ethical systems at a greater level of generalization. This contributes to greater systematization and explication of the constitutive symbols linking culture to "ultimate reality."

Turning to Buckley's systems approach, the first consideration is his concept of system. He describes system as "complex of elements or components directly or indirectly related in a causal network, such that each component is related to at least some others in a more or less stable way within any particular period of time"²². But the critical point is not that a mass of entities are in stable interconnection. Rather, Buckley focuses on the organizational aspects of systems²³. Thus his concern is with the ways in which organizations of elements come together and change. He can thus speak of varying degrees of "systemness" and assert that individuals are not discrete, but only exist as a variation of the degree of organization of a part of the total system²⁴.

²⁰ Talcott Parsons, *Societies*, p. 114.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

²² Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, p. 41.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁴ Furthermore, Buckley's is an "open" systems approach — meaning that change is an essential element of the model.

By sociocultural system, Buckley means something synonymous with society. He sees this system as a set of meanings generated in the process of social interaction of a number of individuals in a common environment²⁵. The organization of these meanings constitutes a set of mappings of behaviors associated with goals which have a basis in the common meanings generated in interaction. This system is "morphogenic," i.e., the process of social interaction tends to "elaborate or change"²⁶ a system's form or structure. Morphogenesis is necessary in that it provides the necessary variety for meeting contingencies as they arise in the environment or as they are produced by individuals.

This constant elaboration and change of the mappings of the environment is accomplished through feedback links between entities. To develop the concept of feedback in the systems approach, the concepts of "information,"²⁷ "energy," "control," and goal are necessary. Information refers to a message about or understanding of the environment or an entity. Information flows through communication channels which link the entities or parts of the system together. As new information is transferred about a given object, the map or developed picture or conception of that object is changed or elaborated in accordance with the information. Thus the maps are contingent and kept up to date by constant consideration of information bits as they arrive²⁸.

Energy is the expending of force or work on the environment by an entity. Thus, it refers to the generalized capacity of a given entity to be self-motivating in the sense that sustenance from the environment is needed only intermittantly; the rest of the time, the entity has a capacity for action of its own. Energy has no means of self-direction. Thus, information, which constantly recreates the maps of the environment, controls energy; without information about the environment, energy would be useless in achieving a goal²⁹.

The concept goal ties information and energy together. For the system as a whole (information and energy intimately associated) goals arise. The achievement of these goals requires a "mapping"³⁰ of the goal state and its environment as well as the system's relation to the goal. This first mapping controls the first expenditure of energy toward the goal. The expenditure of energy has some effect on the goal, the system, the environment, or all three. Thus, new information is needed to remap these entities and their relationships in order to direct the next energy release.

²⁵ Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, p. 94.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁷ Sociocultural systems need information about past, self and environment. (*Ibid.*, p. 56.).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁹ Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, pp. 46-50.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

This linking of energy, information, system and mapping of goal is all sifted through some controlling agency which coordinates the energy expenditure according to the new mappings that are constantly being formed. Thus the implication is that the system always has alternative actions open to it. Choice and freedom characterize this systems approach³¹.

The relationship of a flow of information in one direction and energy in another is the feedback loop, which is the name given to the controlled channels of information and energy transfer in goal oriented behavior. It is important to note the reflexive, interactive nature of even this simple description, in which the goal made no movement of its own. If the goal had been associated with a system itself (such as another human being) information and energy transfers would continually change the goal itself, as well as the relationship of the "goal" system to the first system, which viewed the second system as "goal".

In this model, there is no necessary specification of this end products, or structures of organization, that the system must reach. At any point in time the "structure" of the system will be the picture of roles being played toward the attainment of given goals as these actions and goals are defined at that time. Institutions arise (see below) but they are only the relatively stable forms of interaction which have developed at any one time. The "same" form of organization could indeed develop out of various antecedent interactions (equifinality), or different ones could develop from similar antecedent interactions (multifinality)³².

Buckley holds that human interaction is exactly analogous to this abstract description of the morphogenic system. The "act" involves first an impulse or tension induced by the environment (which includes other people). This tension is effected by the information the person has about the environment as well as his selective perceptions and previous manipulations of it. Tension is defined as such by the person because previous interaction and/or interperson states (such as pain) are given meaning and are articulated with a goal. Persons have the peculiar ability to use vocal gestures or significant symbols as a medium of both information and energy transfer. Thus in symbolic communication the individual signifies to (controls) both the environment and himself at the same time. This verbal control effects the environment (other persons) as well as himself. Thus, new mapping of the person's states, as well as those of the environment, are immediately called for. These are provided by the other person in the form of symbols, which are interpreted both by the individual and the environmental person. This second volley of symbols chan-

³¹ Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, pp. 124-125.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

ges the environmental person, and provides information changing the original map in the actor, calling for yet further re-adjustment, etc ³³.

Thus the interaction process is characterized by tensions and a variety of behaviors which emerge in interaction. These characteristics form the basis of Buckley's model of institutionalization. When they are accompanied with selection mechanisms, over time characteristic modes of resolving certain types of tensions develop. When these selected modes are perpetuated, an institution is formed: certain more or less regular means of resolving tensions which are perpetuated ³⁴.

Buckley argues, with Mead, that agreement on symbols (a universe of discourse) emerges from interaction, and that this agreement is necessary as a starting point for the morphogenic systems model to be applicable to sociocultural analysis ³⁵. Sociocultural analysis and explanation in morphogenic system terms "...requires some optimum level of both stability and flexibility; a relative stability of the social-psychological foundations of interpersonal relations and cultural meanings and values, i.e., the universe of discourse..." as well as "flexibility of structural relations characterized by a lack of strong barriers to change..." ³⁶ Thus Buckley's view of socialization must allow for both stability and change; that is, it must be the preparation of actorst to operate in a world where behaviors are "negotiated" according to situational determinants.

In line with the basis model's flexibility, which for any given problem, allows considerable freedom to the system, Buckley's views of socialization do not prescribe a rigorous learning of attributes of roles. Rather, since information must be put to its most efficient use, the information transformed in the socialization process must be applicable to the infinite number of different forms of association possible in the social interaction process. Thus Buckley likens socialization to the DNA transfer of basic formation principles in biology ³⁷. Rather than being specific, socialization imparts a set of rules to the individual couched in the given universe of discourse, which will be applicable to a wide variety of situations. Based upon these abstract rules and principles, the individual will be able to negotiate each of his behaviors with the various situations in which he and these others come together.

Buckley refers to A. Strauss' studies of hospital interaction in support of this view. Even though all the hospital personnel had gone through the medical training of some kind (from minimal training to protracted specialization), the guiding principle in which all had to concur was curing the sick. The exact behaviors which ensued among the hospital personnel

³³ Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, pp. 94-100.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

concerning each case (goal) were the products of each individual's "mapping" of the situation and the resultant "role-making" that seemed appropriate, given the single healing ideal. Thus Buckley would hold with Second and Backman, that each individual is "like" (personality) is a product of the situation and the requirements of others, given a certain minimal major set of criteria. This personal identity may be either stable or changing, may be amplified or suppressed, according to the exigencies of situations ³⁸.

For Buckley, deviance is not so much a separate category of behavior as it is a legalistic definition of some behaviors, which develop in basically the same ways as all others. He applies the same model of feedback in morphogenic systems to deviance that he uses for explaining normal behavior.

Taking Schoff's *Being Mentally Ill* as an example, he shows that the mentally ill person (a deviant) begins his career by breaking the rules ³⁹. Schoff holds that most rule-breaking is rationalized or "explained" so that the no concept such as "criminal", "deviant" or "ill" is needed to understand it. (Schoff holds that we all break rules.) His concept of "residual rule-breaking" takes in that rule-breaking which may not be rationalized or explained away ⁴⁰. When this kind of rule-breaking becomes public, the deviant label is applied to the rulebreaker. Especially since the person so labeled may be struggling for an explanation of his own behavior, such a label may affect his self concept as well as his public performances. Information fed back from the environment to the individual effects his behavior, perhaps amplifying it, so that the "deviant" label becomes increasingly deserved. If this is the case, the feedback would be considered "positive," in that it enhances the behavior pattern. If the individual's deviant behavior were reduced or eliminated in the light of feedback, such feedback would be termed "negative."

Thus, because of circumstances causes or initial misreadings of situations, some persons come to be successfully labeled "deviant," and for similar reasons are unable to shake off the label. They become the people who populate criminal records and mental hospitals. It is not because a person fails to fit into society, but only because a combination of misperceptions and/or fortuitous occurrences has led to his being labeled "deviant" that this label has meaning.

Buckley does not concern himself with an analysis of long-term social change or evolution. His systems approach may be drawn out to permit

³⁸ P. F. Secord and Carl W. Backman, "Personality Theory and the Problem of Stability and Change in Individual Behavior", *Current Perspectives in Social Psychology*, E. P. Hollander (ed.) (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 178-189.

³⁹ Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, p. 169.

⁴⁰ Cf. T. J. Schoff, *Being Mentally Ill* (Chicago: Aldine, 1966).

an approximation of what he might have said, had he seen fit to discuss this topic.

Change is a central ingredient in his brand of systems thinking. Morphogenesis not only allows for constant change, but holds that it constantly occurs. Changes occur because the constant remapping of the environment continually produces reformulation of goal definitions and brings new tension to the system. Thus, the system is always in a changing state; it may be moving in a given recognizable direction or may be "drifting" without clear purpose. However, as societies become more centralized, and societal level control becomes more clear cut, it will be increasingly possible to direct change⁴¹. Thus, the possibility exists that evolution; social change and structural elaboration toward given goals may eventually be subsummable under social change in general.

Some comparisons of Parsons' and Buckley's systems approaches may now be made. Relative to the concept of system itself, Buckley's approach is the more loose fitting one. Whereas Parsons stresses the interpretation and interdependence of parts of systems, Buckley does not even assert that all the system elements need be related to each other. For Buckley, the critical aspect of "systemness" is whether or not the entities may be conceptualized as a system; whereas the connotation Parsons seems to give is that no system exists unless the parts are interrelated in the manner he suggests.

The question of the application of the two systems approaches the human living is central in the context of sociology. It has been suggested that Parsons overstresses culture, while Buckley overemphasizes organization at the expense of culture. Certainly Parsons has been more clear in stating exactly what he means by the environments of the social system. His cultural system indeed plays a great part in this regard. It stands above the social system in the cybernetic hierarchy of controlling factors. It articulates with ultimate reality and provides the society's superstructure of role prescriptions. Socialization is the transfer to the individual of norms and values (culture) as well as the direction of motivating forces in him.

Buckley, however much he avoids the concept of culture, cannot do without it. While he emphasizes that roles are "negotiated"⁴² in the context of the individual actors' goals and the situation in which actors find themselves, he still requires a common "universe of discourse" for his actors. This universe of discourse is understood to be a common symbol system and a relatively stable and agreed-upon meaning system⁴³. Thus, a concept very much like Parsons' "cultural system" is necessary in Buckley's systems approach.

⁴¹ Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, p. 206.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

Parsons and Buckley differ more fundamentally in their conceptions of what makes up the "cultural system" and the "universe of discourse" and how these concepts are related to the individual. For Parsons, the cultural system is that set of norms and values which has grown up in the society and which guides the behaviors of society's members. The cultural system, being articulated with "ultimate reality," codifies a legitimated set of prescriptions for the roles and the relationships of these roles. In this, Parsons is very close to Linton in conception of the place of culture.

Since the cultural system is so all inclusive, and since it specifies the legitimate relationships among rules, the actor is left with but small impact on his own roles. While power certainly exists, and roles stand in power relationships to each other, for Parsons the legitimate nature of these power relationships ensures that power never becomes a problem for the system. He prefers to speak of "authority," which carries a legitimate connotation. Thus, Parsons solves the problem of order by emphasizing culture and its impact on human interaction.

For Buckley, the "universe of discourse" and the meanings that grow out of interaction are at the same time more fluid and less emphasized. Certainly common means of communication are necessary for interaction, but beyond this, the "cultural" elements of Buckley's system are less stable and enduring. Rather than specifying the nature of the roles to be performed, the common meanings and orientations only broadly outline goals and directions of movement, which themselves may be changing. Thus, whereas Parsons actor has little choice concerning the way his role is to be played, Buckley's actor initially has almost infinite choice. This choice is narrowed in the "role-making" process⁴⁴ in which others and the setting place demand on the actor which he weights in the light of his own capabilities and goals.

Implicit in the foregoing discussion are the various interpretations Parsons and Buckley give to socialization. Whereas Parsons sees the process as one of the imparting a major portion of the cultural values and prescriptions to the individual, Buckley sees it as that process which acquaints the individual with the universe of discourse, and orients him with certain guiding principles which are applicable to many situations. It was seen that the diverging views of socialization and the place of the actor in controlling his own role performances led to differing views of "deviant" social action.

Parsons developed a paradigm of social evolution, holding that it is characterized by differentiation, integration, inclusion, and generalization. He is, thus, clear that social evolution pertains to the differentiation of social forms. *Societies* documents his argument by drawing attention

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

to such topics as the development of language, stratification, bureaucracy, and the separation of social forms from each other, as in the gradual breaking away of religions from governing institutions. Buckley was characterized as not necessarily holding this view.

It was perhaps unfair to Buckley to discuss his work in relation to long-term social change or evolution since his book is silent on this subject. However, drawing out his notions of the social process seemed reasonable for an application to long-term social change. While evolution could entail the separation of forms, it is not clear in Buckley whether morphogenesis refers to elaboration of structure or change, or both⁴⁵. Certainly elaboration of structure would entail change, but change from one form to another does not necessarily imply elaboration. Thus Buckley was interpreted to hold that long-term social change is just a case of social change in general, and subject to the same analysis.

The concluding section of this paper will set forth objections Buckley has made to the Parsonian systems approach and evaluate the objections and the alternatives offered by Buckley. These evaluations will constitute the position of this writer relative to the arguments herein reviewed.

Buckley charges that Parsons has so emphasized the solution to the problem or order that his theoretical scheme suffers from a lack of inclusiveness⁴⁶. Parsons has taken a dominant structure and explained it in terms of its normative and value components, interpreting opposing structures as "problems" for the system. Buckley argues that doing so relegates these "opposing" structures to a residual place in Parsons' model, thus failing in explanation of them. This means that "deviance" in the Parsonian model is not given full status as a part of the system. It is understood through failures in the socialization and regulation mechanisms of societies, rather than as "normal" processes logically following from the basic premises of the model.

Buckley's alternative is to widen the inclusiveness of his systems approach, and to place less emphasis on its cultural aspects. By emphasizing the processes rather than the structures involved, Buckley claims to make strains and stresses, deviance and power, integral parts of his approach.

Certainly Buckley is correct in charging Parsons with overconcern for order. Parsons' attention to order has led him to overstress the place of culture, such that Homans could charge him with constructing a "theory of action" while allowing the actors no "action" at all⁴⁷. Buckley's atten-

⁴⁵ "Morphogenesis will refer to these processes which tend to elaborate or change a system's given form..." (emphasis supplied) Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, p. 38.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁷ G. C. Homans, "Contemporary Theory in Sociology", *Handbook of Modern Sociology*, R. E. L. Faris (ed.), (Chicago, Rand-McNally, 1964), pp. 951-977.

tion to process enables him to include deviance as an integral part of his basic model. Parsons seems to confuse a legal category with an action category. He is not entirely consistent on this point. Parsons includes "great men who are never conceived simply as products of their societies"⁴⁸ (deviants?) as possible sources of social change. In this he would seem to be arguing that such people form an integral part of the social system, but he includes "great men" in the category of exogenous factors of social change, along with geographical and natural features of the environment. Thus, it is often difficult to predict Parsons' handling of the factors to be included in and to be excluded from the social system.

An unresolved problem in both Parsons and Buckley is that of system "needs" and "problems". Buckley charges Parsons with anthropomorphism and reification in postulating system "needs" and "imperatives"⁴⁹. Perhaps he is correct in his charge. But central to the general systems approach is the concept of "central center" which Buckley is hard put to specify at the societal level⁵⁰. He suggests that in highly rationalized societies, these centres are the governmental agencies in control of given processes; but to extent that such control centers may not be identified and defined, they pose a conceptual problem for general systems applications to sociology in much the same way that the Parsonian "needs" and "problems" do. If control centers are said to exist, but are left undefined, the problem of reification occurs for general systems theory, in that there is no apparent agency to exercise the "control" over the system which is theoretically operative. At this stage, it seems that theorists must be willing to live with both kinds of concepts making sure that they emphasize that they have only "heuristic" value.

The "openness" of the Parsonian system is a point of contention for Buckley. He argues that it is, in fact, a "closed" system. Parsons argues that his system is "open" in that it includes elaborate "processes of interchange with the environing systems"⁵¹. A major difficulty here seems to be over the various scopes of the term "system" as it is applied by Parsons and Buckley to sociocultural phenomena. As Buckley would have it, "system" would include the interaction process, the "negotiations" necessary to achieve roles. This tends to include the individual as a calculating, at least partially rational entity. Thus he tends to combine what Parsons would call the "social system" with the "personality system." In Parsonian terms then, Buckley would say that the universe of discourse

⁴⁸ Talcott Parsons, "A Paradigm for the Analysis of Social Systems and Change", *System Change and Conflict*, N. J. Demerath III and R. A. Peterson (eds.), (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 197.

⁴⁹ Walter Buckley, *Sociology and Modern Systems Theory*, p. 29.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵¹ Talcott Parsons, "A Paradigm for the Analysis of Social Systems...", p. 189.

("cultural system") and the situation set limits in which the "personality systems" of individuals tend to condition and shape the resultant social roles played by each person ("social system"). It seems to this writer that Parsons means precisely this when he argues that the "openness" of his system consist in the processess of interchange between social systems and environing systems. Thus, by examination of the relative scopes of the term "system" in this context it is seen that Buckley means a broader system than Parsons means by the "social system" (subsystem of the action system). This confusion of scope and inclusiveness accounts for the confusion over openness.

Regarding socialization, a comparison between Buckley's and Parsons' systems approaches may be unfair because Buckley has not actually set out to give a systematic account of this process. It is notable that he fails to develop an explanation of motivation to action — the socialization of motivation to sociocultural ends. In this regard, Parsons' theory is much more complete in that his account of socialization covers the development of appropriate motivations.

There is considerably strong suggestion of convergence in the opposition of Buckley's and Parson's views. The Parsonian model has led to the decline of the old Chicago (process) school of sociology, but Buckley is suggesting that it be reactivated and reconceptualized in general systems terms. When adjustments are made in Parsons' emphasis on culture and the essentially normative interpretation of roles, the process school becomes quite comparable with the Parsonian model. Parsons has recognized this himself, relying somewhat on Mead, in *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process*. He is not willing, however, to push the interactionist approach very far, for he argues that it is "the structure in the personality which regulates the orientation of the individual to an object..."⁵² Interactionists Secord and Backman argue that the locus of personality is in the situation, not the actor. Still, the promise of general systems theory for sociology seems to be greatest in its potential integration of the structure and process schools.

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⁵² Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process*, p. 56, (emphasis supplied).

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