

Perspectives

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SEVEN THESES

Lee Freese

Washington State University

I have seven theses, all methodological or programmatic and none terribly original, that I state for the purpose of starting an argument. This is pretentious inasmuch as most of them have been argued before and continue to be so. But the arguments go in circles, and I do not understand why. So I state the theses, with a minimum of argument and explanation and even less scholarship, and slip in some corollaries, and hope to strike an attitude sufficiently deviant that somebody might break out of circles. I don't suppose this will finish anything.

FIRST THESIS. The idea that the historically situated nature of social knowledge militates against objective knowledge is trivial when it is true; and when not trivial, it isn't true. The idea is emphasized as an antidote to positivist claims about objectivity, but it is no such thing. My claim that the moon is not made of green cheese is objective. Whether the moon is made of green cheese or not depends not at all on my value-laden, ideologically informed, historically situated context. It depends on the moon. That my concepts of the moon and green cheese depend upon my value-laden, historical situation, which brackets my knowledge of the moon and its constitution, is true but trivial. That the constitution of the moon would be changed by my value-laden concepts about it would not be trivial, but it isn't true.

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The point is not affected by substituting objects that have reflective agency -- say, social actors. A reflective object that by its agency can change the true statements about it is just an object about which there are truths that are not nomic -- which is not to say no truths about it are nomic. That there are objects such as social actors about which there are some truths that are not nomic does not imply of these objects there are no truths that can be objective. Put another way, subjectivity does not cancel objectivity.

SECOND THESIS. Positivist sociology can never deliver on its promise of nomic laws if it theorizes by abstract empiricism, which it almost always does. This is why it has not delivered and why the critics have a point. Yet, they have no point at all, because the promise can be delivered, although to date it has not been much, if theories describe exact classes of invariant phenomena whose demonstrable laws of interaction in idealized systems are then interpreted to empirical systems.

The attitude of abstract empiricism is to extract certain facets of the social world, assume there are such things, treat them as causes and describe their effects (or vice versa), and take the resulting theory as an abstract representation of a concrete social reality. Theories so formulated may or may not be formal or quantitative. The alternative attitude -- call it theoreticism -- is to design hypothetical entities in some perfect world with intended applications in mind, assume if there were such things they would have such and so consequences, describe their invariant interactions, and develop the desired applications. These theories have to be formal and quantitative. The only place to find invariance is in a perfect world, where it is a property of formally described idealized systems, not the variable world of concrete historically situated contexts that drives abstract empiricism to ever airier abstractions. To interpret invariance models to a variable world in accord with desired applications, usually one is going to need statistics to interpret the variation.

THIRD THESIS. There is nothing inductive about inductive statistics, nothing nomic to be got from statistical methods of data design and data analysis, and nothing variable about statistical laws. There is nothing inductive except the psychological effect of getting more out of a statistical procedure than what one has put into it. This is a fantasy. Inductive statistics is a body of deductive mathematical theory. It takes what one puts into it and gives it back in different form, a form presumably one didn't know. If statistical probability methods were inductive one could program a computer to generate all knowledge. One could also then generate laws, but this is also why one cannot with just statistical procedures.

One can, of course, generate statistical laws within the context of a theory that utilizes probabilities. Statistical laws do not express variation; quite the contrary, as the probability expressed in a statistical law does not apply to the law but to the joint occurrence of classes of events. A nomic statistical probability is a limiting value in an infinite sequence. As such it materializes just once in that sequence, at the limit, and it is a constant not a variable. Its application to the classes of events it associates is likewise invariant. An example, not of a law but of statistical invariance, is the probability of obtaining a seven

in the limit from fair throws of true dice. It is one-sixth for all such pairs, which is to say the value is invariant across all applications. Empirical estimates may show variation because dice are not perfect cubes and no one observes to the limit. The probability value is theoretical, unlike its empirical estimates, and it is applicable to dice that are never even thrown. It is not a property of an experiment. Because they express invariant theoretical values, statistical laws are not weaker versions of universal causal laws.

FOURTH THESIS. Causality is a superfluous concept for sociological theories, especially the billiard ball concept of causality that infuses most sociological discourse. The ideas of cause may be useful when we explain social phenomena to journalists, and when we explain to ourselves that real phenomena are not composed of accidental relations. However, theories that aim to discover nomic relations can effectively describe systems of interactions between definite social entities, such that the interactions are determinate for structure, function, and process, without taking recourse to the idea of cause. To explain such a theoretical undertaking as a search for causes is oversimplified anyhow, notwithstanding the psychological satisfactions it provides, because the dynamic functioning and emergent properties of social systems cannot be compared to the action of billiard balls. More sophisticated concepts of cause are available, but no theory needs any of them. Theories need to be right and useful. Perhaps philosophers can find causes at the root of right and useful theories. Why should we care if we can rightly and usefully describe in theory the real nomic connections that define our phenomena?

FIFTH THESIS. Social systems are chaotic and, therefore, the forecasting of broad historical and cultural trends can be no more exact than crystal ball gazing. By chaotic I refer to a property of dynamic systems, for which there is an applied mathematics, in which inherent randomness is generated by perturbations in the initial conditions of a system and is exponentially amplified in macroscopic interactions. This does not imply that system structures, functions, and processes are indeterminate. One can speak meaningfully and without contradiction of orderly chaos and find nomic patterns to it. It does imply there are limits to predictability. The property of chaos in social systems lays waste to any dream of prophecy or program of futurism using the theories and data of the social sciences.

SIXTH THESIS. Society cannot be separated from its biological bases and, therefore, cannot be effectively analyzed in general theories without considerations of same. The biological bases are genetic, ontogenetic, physiological, and ecological. I think the first three are relevant mostly to individual persons, the last to social systems. To acknowledge this does not biologize sociology. To fail to acknowledge it pretends social phenomena behave in some ethereal vacuum entirely unto themselves. The point in acknowledging it is to bring biological factors within the scope of social phenomena and treat them as endogenous rather than suppose they are exogenous or just boundary-defining. Biological and social forces are not Cartesian dualities. The theoretical description of social forces without reference to the biological forces that interact with them doesn't tell the whole story of the social forces.

SEVENTH THESIS. The solution of significant sociological problems is not possible without the continual formulation and reformulation of problem sets in serial order. I take significant problems to be those whose solution is at some remove from the present state of knowledge and whose solution would have extensive effects in theory or in practice. Solutions to significant problems I shouldn't think can be got from common sense because if they could, the significant problems would already be solved -- there having been so much common sense available for so long. The problems sociologists take to be significant for the most part have steadfastly defied solution.

But significant problem solving is a matter of developing knowledge in consecutive stages. If common sense represents stage n , then a solution to a significant problem may be, say, six steps removed. The only way to get to $n + 6$ is to formulate the problem at n , find some solution appropriate to that level; then formulate a problem at $n + 1$ conditional on the solution to n , and solve it; then formulate a problem at $n + 2$ conditional on the solution of $n + 1$, solve it, and so on, repeating the procedure until the desired significant solution is obtained. By a conditional problem or solution I mean the next problem in the series cannot even be framed until a solution to the preceding problem is in hand. As one proceeds in such a serial order the very formulation of each problem depends on the solution to its predecessor. Eventually one gets somewhat removed from ordinary common sense this way, but one also gets to a solution -- which at the beginning was at some remove from common sense. Since the method of interpreting and applying common sense doesn't provide solutions to significant problems, one has to look to alternative methods.

The serial method renders the seventh thesis almost trivial. But hardly anyone I know accepts the thesis or practices the method, and some appear not to understand it. And since it has never been refuted, I conclude there is something here besides trivialities.

All of the foregoing theses are consistent. Moreover, the set of them is impervious to the traditional and fashionable critiques of positivism, which have almost exclusively emphasized its empiricist strain. None of the theses is empiricistic. But all of them are informal and inadequately developed here, so they do not form a doctrine. However, as I said, I'm trying to start arguments, not finish them. For the purpose of argumentation, let us agree there is a difference between refuting a thesis and merely disputing it. I challenge anyone to refute any of the seven theses.

Theory Section News

SEPTEMBER 1987 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The September Theory Section membership drive fell short of its goal. Consequently, no additional convention slots will be allotted to the section by ASA, and there will not be a session devoted exclusively to graduate student papers at the 1988 meetings. However, we should continue in our efforts to recruit new members, especially among graduate students. Charles Lemert, incoming section chair, indicates that there will be a graduate student session at the 1989 meetings if section membership climbs above 600 by September 1988, enabling us to claim another session.

1988 THEORY PRIZE NOMINATIONS

Charles Lemert, Chair of the Theory Section's Theory Prize Committee, invites submissions and nominations for the 1987-88 competition. The annual prize has been established to recognize outstanding work in theory and to encourage the broadest most pluralistic possible understanding of theoretical scholarship. Articles, papers or book chapters (published or unpublished) appearing within the past two years are eligible so long as submission does not exceed fifty pages in length. Nominated papers should include a brief cover letter and five copies of the text. Authors are encouraged to nominate their own work. In addition to Lemert, who teaches at Wesleyan University, the members of the Prize Committee are Samuel W. Kaplan, Northwestern University; Moishe Postone, University of Chicago; David Sciulli, University of Delaware; and David E. Willer, University of Kansas.

Deadline for submissions is February 15, 1988. All entries should be mailed (five copies included) to Charles Lemert, Theory Prize Committee, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut 06457.

REPORT ON SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Norbert Wiley
University of Illinois

Sociological Theory is thriving, intellectually, with increasingly better submissions and published articles. Its future, as a vehicle and organizer for theoretical research looks excellent.

On the other hand, the economically austere times are slowing up our library expansion and hurting our clout in the ASA. ST has 1230 individual subscriptions, an impressive and steadily rising number. On the other hand we have only about 200 library subscriptions. We need two or three hundred more to solidify the financial base. Of the 1230 individual subscribers about half buy the journal as part of their "journals check-off" dues payment, and about half buy it as an extra journal, for \$13. These check-off people are not regarded as new money, but as money that would otherwise stay within the journal pool and go to some other journal. Libraries, in contrast, are new money, and they strengthen the hand of the journal. In other words the competition among existing ASA journals is fierce.

Therefore let me again ask you to find out if your library is subscribing, and if not, ask them to subscribe. This might well require that you get other colleagues to also request the journal, and also that you keep checking with your serials librarian to push it through. You should also try to get it into other libraries, particularly if you know someone in that sociology department.

If the best you can get is the placement of ST on some kind of priority list, for possible, eventual purchase, then by all means get that place in line. I think most of our library possibilities may be of that kind -- easing the journal into skittish libraries by virtue of a fairly intensive, labor process on your part, along with the continuation of this pressure over time.

But back to the journal itself, Randy Collins' policies, which are also mine, are working well. These are (1) to get all major perspectives into the journal and on the masthead, (2) to "nudge" things empirical, while still respecting the integrity of each approach, and (3) to encourage European participation. The way things are going, ST could be the central theory journal within five years, and not just within sociology. Social theory is also now coming from anthropology, philosophy, economics, linguistics and even literary theory. We should be coopting and assimilating the best ideas from these competing theory-producers and getting them into our journal. In other words I see the possibility of ST's becoming central, both internationally and across disciplines.

But to achieve these intellectual possibilities we have to also be practical. We have to sell more libraries. All dollars are the same for economic purposes, but library dollars are more politically powerful within the ASA, where our success is now viewed as somewhat parasitical on other journals. Given the present power realities in the ASA, it is necessary that you all pitch in to improve our base in libraries.

Conferences

GEORG SIMMEL AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY

On November 23, Boston University held the first in a series of annual symposia on "Fundamental Issues in Sociological Theory and Methods." The preliminary program included papers by Klaus Christian Kohnke (West Berlin), Michael Kaern (Boston) on "The Structure of Simmelian Theory," Donald Levine (Chicago) on "The Legacy of Georg Simmel: A Persisting Enigma," Gary Jaworski (Fairleigh Dickenson) on "Simmel's Contribution to Parsons' Action Theory and its Fate," David Frisby (Glasgow) on "Georg Simmel and the Study of Modernity," O. K. Moore (Pittsburgh) on "Simmel and Folk-Model Analysis," Birgitta Nedelmann (EUI Florence), and Bernard Phillips (Boston) on "Simmel and Social Change." Future symposia are planned on the topics of Structuralism and Sociological Theory, Pragmatism and Sociological Methodology, and Societal Problems and Sociology.

Albany Theory Conference

Announcing a Theory Conference at the State University of New York at Albany, April 15-16, 1988. The theme is "General Theory and Its Critics." Participants will include Jeffrey Alexander, Stanley Aronowitz, Richard Brown, Jean Cohen, Randall Collins, Craig Calhoun, Charles Lemert, Linda Nicholson, Jonathan Turner, Steve Turner, and David Wagner. For information contact: Steve Seidman or Dave Wagner, Department of Sociology, SUNY at Albany, Albany, New York, 12222.

Ferdinand Tönnies, Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, was published one hundred years ago in 1887.

MARYLAND THEORY CONFERENCE

On March 11, 1988, the University of Maryland will sponsor a one-day conference entitled "Sociological Theory: Current Status, Near-term Prospects." The idea will be to bring together a number of the younger generation of sociological theorists to assess where a number of important theories now stand and where they are likely to be in the near-future. Among the participants and topics will be Jeffrey Alexander (Neofunctionalism), Robert Antonio (Neo-Marxian Theory), Ronald Burt (Network Theory), Karen Cook (Exchange Theory), Gary Fine (Symbolic Interactionism), Charles Lemert (Structuralism and Post-Structuralism), George Ritzer (Macro-Micro Theory), Jonathan Turner (the General State of Theory), and Norbert Wiley (the General State of Theory). It is likely that one or two additional presenters and topics will be added. In addition, Ruth Wallace, George Ritzer, and Jonathan Turner will conduct a discussion of theory textbooks and teaching sociological theory. The conference will take place at the Adult Education Center, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland. It is also worth noting that a number of presenters at the conference (Alexander, Ritzer, Turner, and Wiley) as well as Art Stinchcombe and Ed Tiryakian will be involved in a major session the next day (March 12th) in Philadelphia on the state of metatheory at the meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society. For further information contact George Ritzer, Department of Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

SOCIETY FOR PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES

The annual meeting of SPHS will be held in Toronto, Canada, May 19-21, 1988. For information contact Dr. David Rehorick, Department of Sociology, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, Canada E3B 5A3. The phone number is (506) 453-4849.

The State of the Discipline

THE CURRENT STATE OF STRUCTURALIST THEORIES

Edith Kurzweil
Rutgers University

As sociologists we examine not only social structures, but the impact of economic, psychological, political, architectural, and a variety of other structures as well. But to study structures -- whether in sociology, anthropology, literature, or economics -- does not make us structuralists. For the latter use a specific method of inquiry -- by systematically attempting to uncover deep universal mental structures as these manifest themselves in kinship and larger social structures, in literature, philosophy and mathematics, and in the unconscious psychological patterns that motivate human behavior (Kurzweil, The Age of Structuralism: Levi-Strauss to Foucault, 1980).

Insofar as this method focuses on unconscious patterns it cannot be deemed sociological as such, although we may maintain that these patterns engender social phenomena which are empirically

observable. This property of structuralism may well be why sociologists trailed far behind anthropologists, literary theorists, psychologists and philosophers in taking note of the theories of such "structuralists" as Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault. Though labeled "structuralists" by others, they all denied belonging to a school, or to a movement.

The English literary journalist John Sturrock recently has held that "as an academic fashion Structuralism flourished most widely in the 1960s and 1970s; . . . and that Structuralist ideas now seem less new and subversive (Structuralism, 1986:ix). In America, however, structuralism got a late start and took hold after its peak in England, and long after it had lost its central intellectual position in Paris. And in sociology it did not really catch on. In part, it seems to me, this is due to the fact that American academics are much less interdisciplinary than European ones, and that, except for the literary theorists, Althusser is of interest primarily to (a special breed of) Marxists, Lévi-Strauss to anthropologists, Lacan to psychologists (though not to Freudian psychoanalysts) and Barthes to writers and literary critics. Actually, when American sociologists deal with structuralism they tend to lean on Foucault, whose work, by grappling with origins of power, surveillance, and with the discourse these engender, addresses the central questions of our discipline.

Another Englishman, the philosopher Richard Harland, recently wrote on "Superstructuralism" to cover what "Structuralists, Semioticians, Althusserians, Marxists, Foucauldians, Post-structuralists, etc. are sharing" -- that is, a certain way of thinking about superstructural activities as "taking precedence over what we used to think of as basic" (Superstructuralism, 1987:1-2). He distinguishes between structuralists such as Saussure, Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss, and structuralist semioticians such as Greimas and Barthes -- although he acknowledges that they all are concerned, in general, to know the human world through detailed observational analysis. (Such observation, it seems, subsumes unconscious phenomena.) and he divides -- with qualifications -- the Post-structuralists into (1) the Tel quel group of Derrida, Kristeva and the later Barthes, (2) Deleuze and Guattari and the later Foucault, and (3) Baudrillard -- all of whom share an anti-scientific position, accentuate the differences among them, and favor gaining insights by means of "paradoxical illumination." Unable to account for Lacan's, Althusser's and Foucault's pre-1969 theories, Harland considers them to be the originators of "a movement -- or of three separate movements."

My own approach to all of these theories, all along, has been comparative; and I have adopted a sociology of knowledge perspective. Thus I would agree with Harland that Lacan and Althusser started movements; but "the descent of Lacanian psychoanalysis into the street" came after Lacan supported the students during the events of 1968, while Althusserian Marxism lost its legitimation in Paris because he did not do so. Furthermore, Lacanian terminology, and his version of Freud, has penetrated all of Parisian intellectual life, while Althusser, at best, retains a few dozen followers. Foucault's ideas, on the other hand, continue to attract intellectuals and academics of all stripes, among them sociologists. So whether we consider him a structuralist, a superstructuralist, or a post-structuralist, a number of his theories are relevant to sociological inquiry.

Foucault can be read in many ways, depending upon the commentator's bias. Dominique Lecourt, for instance, held that his "archeological practice" was similar to historical materialism, that he had no answers to his own questions about the rapport between infrastructure and ideology, and that he missed the class viewpoint Althusser had supplied ("Sur l'archéologie et le savior," Pensée, 152, 1970:69-87). Sylvie Le Bon attacked Foucault as an "archaeological positivist," whose "arbitrary manipulation of constituted knowledges is illegitimate" ("Un positiviste désespéré: Michel Foucault," Temps modernes 22, 1967:1299-1319), while Karlis Racevskis found that "on the one hand Foucault recognized the value of Marxist critique... [and] on the other hand believed all attempts to resuscitate Marx to be futile at best (Michel Foucault and the Subversion of Intellect, 1983:122).

As we know, Foucault was against every dogma, and, probably more than most of the other "superstructuralists" -- except Barthes -- expected to expose, or "deconstruct" every ingrained belief. Increasingly, his work was influenced by psychoanalysis, although he observed that even Freud had not been able to liberate individuals -- because his own discourse belonged to the discourse of his time, so that he could do no more than replace the whispering in the confessional with "whispering on a couch." The power of the priest, he found, was being replaced by that of the medical, legal and political establishments.

This central concern with power, of course, is what makes Foucault so intriguing even to mainstream sociology. His method, however, which in the final analysis consists of juxtaposing innumerable social facts with their opposites, and which relies on insight rather than quantification or categorization, in many ways is anathema to scientific, sociological inquiry. And if we take just one of his findings, for example that the rising bourgeoisie managed to maintain its hegemony by shifting the emphasis from control of social processes through marriage alliance to the control of sexuality, we can note how attractive his work can be to Marxists, feminists and other liberation movements (Kurzweil, "Foucault's History of Sexuality," Social Research, 53, 1986:647-666). Or, if we follow his illustrations of the criminal systems, where the machinery of punishment, with its concomitant coercion, regimentation and docility, turned people into cases and made power anonymous and functional, we can understand that criminologists may want to apply Foucault's theories.

That more and more sociologists are paying attention to Foucault is proof, I believe, that some of the inquiries inspired by the original "structuralism" have borne fruit -- even though none of the unconscious structures which were expected to emerge in the 1960s ever surfaced.

Book Announcements (Please notify Perspectives of new publications)

- L. D. Blustone, Max Weber's Theory of the Family, New York: Associated Faculty Press.
- Michael Faia, Dynamic Functionalism: Strategy and Tactics, London: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Michael Hechter, Principles of Group Solidarity, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Georg Simmel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, introduced and translated by Helmut Loiskandl, Deena Weinstein, and M. A. Weinstein, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986.

On completion of the tenth year of publication, Perspectives salutes Jerald Hage, who was the founding editor, and Jonathan Turner, who as editor from the fourth through ninth years, guided the newsletter to maturity. Special thanks to all those who have contributed to and otherwise supported the newsletter over the years.

Work in Progress

HOLONOMICS AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

Raymond Trevor Bradley
Univ of California, Santa Cruz

In a longitudinal study of fifty-seven communal organizations, I have been examining the relational patterns that provide charisma with its awesome power for radical change. (See my just published book Charisma and Social Structure, New York: Paragon House, 1987). Probing beneath the surface of charismatic beliefs, one can identify two relational systems that mobilize and align the enormous quantities of social energy required to achieve social transformation. When fused as communion, love breaks down established order to release energy -- the potential for social action. Power translates this potential into new patterns of social activity by channeling the energy toward collective ends. When conjoined as complementary orders, these relational systems not only account for the stability of charismatic groups, but the evidence suggests a similar interrelation holds for noncharismatic systems.

The perspective and methods of network analysis can be used to identify charisma's structural foundation, and to seek evidence of an emergent order in the arrangement of relations. Paradoxically, however, the data show that not only is the whole (the group) different from and greater than the sum of its parts (individuals and relations), but also that part and whole are one -- that they are interrelated in a holonomic order. So that while the whole is constructed from the parts as a manifest, emergent order, each part contains the whole as an implicit, encoded order. In short, the journey of discovery in this book not only leads beyond charisma to questions about the fundamental nature of social organization, but also to some striking parallels between social order and structure at other levels of reality.

CAUSALITY AND META-THEORY

Barbara F. Meeker and Jerald Hage
University of Maryland

In the recent past, among sociologists, the concept of causality has been primarily invoked by methodologists; a book or article with the word "causal" in its title is most likely to deal with issues of research design or statistical techniques for data analysis, as for example in work by Blalock and others. However, causality is also both a theoretical issue and an important issue in applied sociology. Current developments in philosophy of science (for example, by Mario Bunge) as well as in sociology make this a

good time to re-examine some basic questions about causality as applied to social phenomena. We have tried to do this in our forthcoming book Social Causality (by Jerald Hage and Barbara Foley Meeker, Allen-Unwin).

Several traditional notions about causality are no longer accepted as useful by philosophers, nor are they necessary for sociologists: for example, the ideas that every event has one and only one cause, that causality implies determinism, that causality is the same as "necessary and sufficient," that only easily observable events may be considered in a causal theory, and that only a true experimental design can provide evidence relevant to questions of causality have all been abandoned or extensively modified.

We do retain the traditional criteria of time sequence (cause must precede effect) and observable association at some point in a causal process. In addition, we suggest that a useful causal theory will propose a process by which the cause creates the effect; this process is not necessarily observable with present research techniques, but should be plausible given other sociological knowledge. We also suggest that causal theory should alert us to look for a complex causal network, in which links between a number of causes and effects are recognized, including direct, indirect, reciprocal, spurious, and feedback relationships. We also suggest that a causal theory will point to conditions under which the hypothesized causal process will be set in motion, and that these conditions may alter or even reverse a process. A variety of research designs can provide relevant evidence, including experimental, survey, and case studies.

In the applied areas, we point out that recently the social sciences have come under attack for their lack of relevance to the real world. Although some of this reflects the ideological position of parties in power, it is also true that social scientists and especially sociologists have not always been concerned with the practical import of their work. To make theory relevant to practical problems requires that there be a deep understanding of what social causality is. Without an understanding of processes of causality, of causal networks, and of conditions, social policies are likely to fail or backfire.

Student Work (Perspectives seeks to give the work of promising students early visibility. Copies of this unpublished M.A. thesis are available from the author, c/o Department of Sociology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.)

CALLING HABERMAS' BLUFF: THE DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE
OF THE WEST GERMAN GREENS AND THE SOCIAL THEORY OF JURGEN HABERMAS

Gregory Metz
Rutgers University

Habermas' theory of communicative action implicitly marginalizes movements which should be more critically scrutinized as reasoned, moral responses to "the colonization of the lifeworld." The West German Greens have articulately framed problems of ecology, arms race escalation, North/South domination, and patriarchy as

pathologies escalated through "advanced capitalism." For the Greens, these issues can and should be resolved through participatory democratic means. The praxis of the Greens would seem to have an affinity with Habermas' philosophically-based expectations that modern actors can develop capacities to resist the frightful consequences of Weber's "iron cage." Habermas' vague characterizations of the Greens, though, are reductive. For Habermas, Greens become romantics, neo-populists, anti-modernists, etc. Habermas holds out the promise of democratically transforming the "system world." The Greens in attempting to do just this should be critically watched but Habermas' unsubstantiated critique may ratify as much as challenge technocratic interests.

Calls for Papers

GEORG SIMMEL AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY

Papers are solicited for an expected volume on Georg Simmel and Contemporary Sociology. Although partly based on the Simmel symposium hosted by Boston University, the editors intend to include other papers as well. Contact Bernard Phillips, Department of Sociology, Boston University, Boston, MA 02215. The deadline is soon.

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL THEORY

Current Perspectives in Social Theory invites submissions on all areas of theory. Papers should be sent to the editor: Dr. John Wilson, Department of Sociology, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina 27706.

Announcing the publication of Volume 8 of Current Perspectives in Social Theory. Papers include: J. M. Barbalet, "Power, Structural Resources, and Agency," Derek Layder "Key issues in Structuration Theory: Some Critical Remarks," Michael Kennedy, "Hermeneutics, Structuralism, and the Sociology of Social Transformations in Soviet-Type Society," Thomas Fararo, "Concrescence and Social Order: Process Philosophical Foundations for Sociological Theory," Richard Brown, "Personal Identity and Political Economy: Western Grammars of the Self in Historical Perspective," Carmen Sirianni, "Economies of Time in Social Theory: Three Approaches Compared," Scott Lash, "Critical Theory and Postmodernist Culture: The Eclipse of Aura," Kim King, "Normative Contingencies: Charity and Moderation," Richard Weiner, "Must Social Democracy always lead to Corporatism? The Legacy of the New Deal and the Social Contract," Judith Howard, "Dilemmas in Feminist Theorizing: Politics and the Academy," and Stephen Sanderson, "Eclecticism and its Alternatives,"

Reminder

Some libraries have made verbal commitments to order our official journal, Sociological Theory, and then have failed to get the journal on the shelves. If you do not normally use a library copy, it might be prudent to make sure that the journal is in fact in the library. Organizationally speaking, we need those subscriptions.