

Preface

This is the second volume of *Theoretical Principles of Sociology* on microdynamic processes. Like the other volumes in this trilogy of books, I seek to define the fundamental properties of a realm of social reality and then develop principles on the operate dynamics of these properties. The ultimate goal is to articulate a series of highly abstract principles that apply to all times and places that humans have interacted and organized. The twenty-nine nice principles in this volume explain, I believe, many if not most of what transpires when humans interact in focused (face-to-face) and unfocused (avoidance of face engagement) encounters. I obviously take the distinction between focused and unfocused encounters from Irving Goffman because I see encounters as the fundamental structure of the micro social realm. A theory of microdynamics should explain the forces driving the behaviors of individuals in encounters, and as is evident, these behaviors are constrained not just by the properties and dynamics of encounters but also by the dynamics of meso- and macro-level phenomena. An encounter is almost always embedded with in meso- and macro-level sociocultural formations. This embedding loads the values of the variables in the theory, while providing conduits by which the meso and macro realms influence individuals interactions in encounters. Thus, in developing principles on the dynamics of encounters, considerable progress is made on linking, theoretically, the micro, meso, and macro realms together. The often-noted macro-mico gap is closed; and the three volumes of *Principles of Sociology*, when taken together as one general theory, resolve to a very great extent the conceptual gap across levels of social reality.

The principles offered here build on two earlier efforts to develop a general theory of microdynamics, *A Theory of Social Interaction* (2000) and *Face-to-Face: Toward a Theory of Interpersonal Processes* (2002), and *Human Emotions: A Sociological Theory* (2007). The major difference in this volume and these other books is that the principles developed in these

pages to be part of a more inclusive set of principles on mesodynamics and macrodynamics that address the other two fundamental realms of the social universe. Of course, my effort here is not the last answer, but only a beginning to formulate the laws of interpersonal processes and to see how these laws articulate with those about meso- and macro-level dynamics. Although the theory is certainly in the grand theory genera, it is nonetheless a theory that can be tested and revised; moreover, the theory can be assessed in more purely analytical terms with regard to whether or not the principles capture all of the properties and processes of the micro realm. When arguments are stated in a formal way, even when couched at a very high level of abstraction, the ideas do not get buried in textual discourse but, instead, are highlighted so that their plausibility can be assessed. If there is to be discourse, it should focus on what are seen as generic properties and on theoretical principles explaining their dynamics. When discourse is on these issues, it promises to advance theoretical sociology as a science.

Murrieta, CA
USA

Jonathan H. Turner