

Late-May 2021 Entry - 1st Year Publication Anniversary Special (on the axiomatic approach to macrosociology)

It is first important to understand what Gestalt-Genesis/Day Million (GGDM for short) is and how it developed: GGDM is a [simulation game](#) of [civilization](#) in an interstellar science fiction setting. It is [space opera](#). It is also a vehicle for thinking, in that during the process of designing the game, I learned and thought and learned and thought, and wrote and rewrote, as an approach to macrosociology and macrostructures grew within the game. Thus, the game and the macrosociology approach are two different, but very intertwined entities. I have recently come to think of it as being like a Cylon Raider in the re-imagined [Battlestar Galactica](#) television series: an organic thing grown inside a metal shell:

“The Raider was species of Cylon which entered production some time after the Cylon War, replacing the Raiders of that era which were merely vessels crewed by Centurions.”
– from [galactica.fandom.com](#) article, “[Raider,](#)” captured May 19, 2021.

“Originally it was thought that the fighter was controlled by an advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) but after a pilot from the Battlestar Galactica was able to capture one of the fighters, it was discovered that the fighter is actually bio-mechanical in nature with a biological brain. The brain of the fighter is of limited intelligence, similar to a trained dog, but is capable of learning. Like the humanoid Cylons, when a Raider is destroyed and the brain inside is killed, the consciousness can be transferred to a new body provided that there is a base or Resurrection Ship close enough. This allows the brain to learn through multiple times having been killed.” – from [kitsunesden.xyz](#) (Kitsune’s Web Page) article, “[Cylon Raider,](#)” captured May 19, 2021.

Now that sounds pretty sad, it doesn’t seem that Cylon Raiders had much of a social life! The question of the first anniversary of publication of GGDM (pub. May 2020), is whether or not the [heterodox](#) macrosocial approach of GGDM can survive outside its “shell.” Shall we see?

When you think of [economics](#), what do you see? [Numbers](#). People think of economists as calculating costs and benefits, collecting data, predicting market valuation, predicting economic futures, and trying to work out economic laws that are expressed in equations. Basically... numbers. In doing so, economists must treat people and masses of ‘economic beings’ as particles, like physics. They use pseudo-physics terminology sometimes; there was a thrust in the development of the social sciences, and especially pronounced in economics in late 19th and early 20th Century toward becoming a mathematical science like physics.

Some people objected to this, because humans are [volitional](#), whereas, as far as we can determine, particles are not, and overall, the *a priori* ‘predictive value’ of economics has been less than satisfactory, rather, economics excels at a *posteriori* analysis (harkening

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back perhaps to the late 19th Century argument between [Carl Menger](#) and the Prussian School). Among those who objected to the development of economics on a pseudo-physics mathematical model is [Ludwig von Mises](#). Ludwig von Mises proposed '[methodological dualism](#)' which says that what works for physics is not appropriate as an approach to studying humans because human 'experiments' (basically, history) are non-repeatable. [Michael Accad](#) describes it thus:

“When Ludwig von Mises began to establish a systematic theory of economics, he insisted on what he called the principle of methodological dualism: the scientific methods of the hard sciences are great to study rocks, stars, atoms, and molecules, but they should not be applied to the study of human beings. In stating this principle, he was voicing opposition to the introduction into economics of concepts such as ‘market equilibrium,’ which were largely inspired by the physical sciences, and were perhaps motivated by a desire on the part of some economists to establish their field as a science on par with physics.

Mises remarked that human beings distinguish themselves from other natural things by making intentional (and usually rational) choices when they act, which is not the case for stones falling to the ground or animals acting on instinct. The sciences of human affairs therefore deserve their own methods and should not be tempted to apply the tools of the physical sciences willy-nilly. In that respect, Mises agreed with Aristotle’s famous dictum that ‘It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits.’” – Michael Accad, M.D., “[An introduction to praxeology and Austrian school economics](#),” [alertandoriented.com](#) (blog), April 13, 2016.

Dr. Accad concludes:

“One may remark here that uncertainty may simply be a mind phenomenon and not a feature of reality, that reality is in fact completely determined, or that science may eventually allow us to understand the determination of all events. [Ludwig von] Mises had no problem with that possibility and, in fact, may have been a determinist himself. By insisting on methodological dualism, however, he was simply pointing out that at present time, empirical science does not shed light on the topic one way or another and, for human scientists studying human behavior, the intentionality of human action seems to be a valid and constructive premise on which to build a social science.” – Michael Accad, M.D., “[An introduction to praxeology and Austrian school economics](#),” [alertandoriented.com](#) (blog), April 13, 2016.

Thus, he proposed to rework economics from an axiomatic approach based on the [axiom of action](#). This didn’t go over so well with the rest of the economists, and Ludwig von Mises was famously abrasive and pejorative. He eventually emigrated to the United States where his work was funded by patrons and he obtained professorships at universities, wrote books and annoyed the rest of the economist to no end into the mid-20th century, by which time the initial buoyant rush of economic theory had begun to peter out.

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“The Institute is founded in Misesian praxeology ('the logic of action'), that holds that economic science is a deductive science rather than an empirical science. Developed by Ludwig von Mises, following the Methodenstreit opined by Carl Menger, it is a self-conscious opposition to the mathematical modeling and hypothesis-testing used to justify knowledge in neoclassical economics. Externally, this economic method usually is considered a form of heterodox economics.” – from Wikipedia article, “[Mises Institute](#),” captured April 26, 2021.

Mises wasn't the only one, some sociologists, notably [Professor Clarence Marsh Case](#) (U. Iowa, U. Southern California) in the early 20th century, began to object to the same thing happening in sociology as had happened in economics. Professor Case adopted the ideas of methodological dualism into sociology in his [Outlines of Introductory Sociology](#) (1924), a college sociology textbook, couching it within a modified framework of orders of natural phenomenon that he adapted from [August Comte](#), one of the fathers of sociology (which Comte called “social physics” ... see where this begins?). The framework of his four orders of natural phenomenon clearly separated physics, biology, mental, and social phenomenon in such a manner as to demonstrate it ludicrous to attempt to study human society in the same way that one would study planets, stars, or molecules. Professor Case objected to sociology falsely obtaining scientific respectability by imitating the physical sciences, or more precisely, he objected to sociology being excluded from scientific respectability by a parochial definition of science that could only include physics and biology. Professor Case wrote:

“In more recent decades, students of biological phenomenon, apparently well disremembered of their own former exclusion from the circle of the elect, have so far made themselves at home in it that one often hears the word ‘science’ used, even in faculty discussions and literature, to designate exclusively the physical and biological departments. Recently, however, investigation of mental phenomenon has become so exact and systematic that psychology is sometimes recognized by the academic legitimists as falling within the scientific pale, thus leaving the social studies, notwithstanding one of them is known as political ‘science,’ to grope in the outer darkness, along with philosophy in all its branches.” – Clarence Marsh Case, [Outlines of Introductory Sociology](#) (1924), p. xv.

Professor Case continued on the next page:

“The more or less exclusive claims of the other sciences rest upon their use of mathematical, quantitative reasoning, and are inadequate in two ways. In the first place, their mathematical accuracy is only a question of degree, as compared with one another; and secondly, mathematical reasoning is not the only method of exact thinking. No one who has notice at all the procedure of careful students, even in the fields of historical, ethical, or aesthetic values farthest removed from quantitative considerations, will longer cherish the obsolete notion that painstaking observation, systematic classification, and rigid analysis are the prerogatives of workers in any field of human thinking. The same attitudes of mind and method of procedure are now to be met in every branch of investigation, and it is the assumption in this book that it is a mere

confusion of terms to give to the word science, which, historically and logically speaking, designates just this systematic investigation of reality, any narrow or private interpretation.

Such a private, or at least special, interpretation is met in the reasonings of those who propose to use the word science to indicate only those branches of study which seek primarily to arrive at abstract generalizations, laws, and principles.

...But while the authors ... are plainly distinguishing between history and natural science, others are less discriminating, so that one can trace in current discussion a tendency to blur this clear and valid distinction between history and natural science, by substituting the term science in general for natural science, and thus making it appear that the historical studies (history proper, archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, etc.) are in sharp contrast as to method with science, whereas they are themselves worthy and fruitful branches of science itself.

If one steers clear of this confusion and recognizes that all systematically organized research and knowledge of every realm of phenomena is equally a form of science, it is then proper to recognize that there are several different orders of natural phenomena, and two distinct, yet inseparable methods of thinking about them which traverse all these orders. ... The four orders are the inorganic, the vital organic, the mental organic and the super-organic, or social. In every one of these fields of investigation the student may proceed either by the historical method, which seeks to depict concrete reality in all its concreteness, or by the analytic, processual method, which tries to give an account in terms of abstract generalizations, mechanisms, processes, laws and principles. ... It is the purpose simply to point out in this place that we have here, not history verses science, but the contrast between the historical and analytical aspects of science itself.”
– Clarence Marsh Case, Outlines of Introductory Sociology (1924), pp. xvi-xvii.

Professor Case died in 1946 and his work was quickly tossed aside and his structure of orders of natural phenomenon forgotten in the later 20th century as sociology continued on its merry path toward pseudo-physical ‘scientific respectability.’ This trend continued in sociology so strongly that [Professor Jonathan H. Turner](#) argued against it in 1981, writing:

“Sociologists have lost their vision of what science is. Indeed, only in a discipline that has lost its way could mechanical number crunching, per se, be considered ‘science’ and philosophical navel contemplation be defined as ‘theory.’ It is almost as if we have forgotten that science and theory are part of the same enterprise. That is, science is to seek understanding of the universe, and the vehicle through which such understanding is to be achieved is theory. Sociology has allowed poor philosophers to usurp theoretical activity and ‘statistical packages’ to hold social science hostage.” – [Jonathan H. Turner](#), “Returning to Social Physics: Illustrations from the Work of George Herbert Mead,” *George Herbert Mead: Critical Assessments, Volume 3* (1992), Ed. Peter Hamilton, p. 132.

And [Professor Elwell](#) put it more bluntly in 2006:

“Mainstream sociology is straying from its roots. ... Today, too many sociologists practice the discipline as one of social data collection and manipulation, a reification of method over substance.” – Frank Elwell, [Macrosociology: Four Modern Theorists](#) (2006), p. xi.

The differences between Ludwig von Mises and Clarence Marsh Case are twofold. First, Ludwig von Mises really irritated a lot of economists, he was brash and brilliant, both respected and reviled – a prideful intellectual man railing against the collective orthodoxies of other entrenched prideful intellectual men. Such was the fervor of his arguments that his work was formally continued post-mortem by [Murry Rothbard](#) who was involved in founding both the [Cato Institute](#) and the later Mises Institute. Economics and politics always intersect in a way that politics and sociology rarely do (sociology is a ringside viewer), and the libertarian Cato Institute, perhaps has the unfortunate association with its initial sponsor, billionaire [Charles Koch](#). It is however, *precisely because economics and politics intersect so that people get so fervent and riled about economic theory that allowed Mises’ arguments in [heterodox economics](#) to continue past his lifetime*, as opposed to arguments such as those made by Professor Case even though they share the same underlying basis.

Conversely, Professor Case’s arguments were largely written in sociology articles for the [Journal of Religion](#) – he was a school principle, teacher, and a pastor before becoming a sociology professor at [University of Iowa](#) and [University of Southern California](#). Despite his impressive rise through academia to finish as a full professor at the University of Southern California, it was thus easy for 20th century sociology to brush him aside after his passing and continue marching onward. But the key difference here is that *Professor Case never suggested an axiomatic approach to sociology in the manner of Ludwig von Mises*. His framework, the four orders of natural phenomenon expressed in [Outlines of Introductory Sociology](#) (1924) are, as I pointed out in GGDM, nearly axiomatic, but this framework is not itself an axiom-based approach to sociology, but rather a demonstration of sociology’s place in the spectrum of [natural phenomenon](#) and why sociology cannot be approached like physics, despite Comte’s initial description of it as “social physics.” Notably, the current Wikipedia "Natural Phenomenon" article does not even list mental or social phenomenon as 'natural phenomenon,' instead, restricting the term to physical sciences only!

GGDM’s approach to macrosociology is thus identifiable in this sense: During the design of GGDM, I adopted and used throughout, both Professor Case’s four orders of natural phenomenon on the argument of framework, along with his writing as historical eyewitness to the early struggles of sociology to be recognized as a science, and also I adopted – as best I could in a simulation game format – Ludwig von Mises’ idea of an axiom approach, adapted to macrosociology and expressed as an ‘axiom of human meaning,’ and throughout the simulation, all that naturally flows from the concept. I may be a little abrasive too, like Ludwig, I even suggested a possible axiomatic basis to retrench modern psychological sciences: Let’s start with [metaconsciousness](#).

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If the [Mises Institute](#) and [Austrian School](#) can be called ‘[heterodox economics](#)’ then GGDM could by the same measure be called ‘heterodox sociology,’ or at least ‘heterodox macrosociology.’ The essence of the ‘[heterodox](#)’ approach to anything – economics, religion, sociology, physics – *is to say to the establishment that you are asking the wrong questions* (Einstein did this too... but physics operates by empirical rules and so got over it), but if you re-ask the question this way, then these are the answers that flow from it; this is what Mises did and this is what I did. A lot of prideful, professional intellectuals don’t take that well at all. I find the application of ‘heterodox’ suspicious and wonder that any modern, professionalized organized branch of study would resort to using such a term, as it relates directly to [blasphemy](#) (there are many who see little difference between heterodoxy and blasphemy), but I guess we can’t think of a better term and those who are called heterodox anything tend to wear their heresy with rebel pride.

Unlike the hostility that apparently existed in economics however, at least on the Austrian School side, I and GGDM do not explicitly reject [empirical](#) sociology for whatever it may teach us, whatever we may discover about human civilization by any means is advantageous – perhaps a lingering feeling from my [Cold War](#) youth when the world was on the brink – the two approaches are not as oppositional or mutually exclusive as some might claim. But in the same measure, I also reject the notion that empirical sociology is the sole definition of sociology and that we cannot advance or learn by different avenues, and most of all, like my predecessors, I maintain that we should not reduce the study of humans to particles and pseudo-physics or mathematical modeling.

The heterodox approach of GGDM to macrosociology is not brilliant or original, in fact, it is arguably a bit of a knock-off product from the Austrian School. But it is another – powerful I maintain – way of looking at the subject of humanity on a [macrostructural](#) level, and a proper introduction of the existential into macrosociology that has long been missing as sociology drifts away from the ‘human’ parts they study. [Richard Feynman](#) said very finely, speaking about physics:

“Therefore, psychologically, we must keep all of the theories in our head and every theoretical physicists that is any good knows six or seven different theoretical representations for exactly the same physics and now knows the truth that they are all equivalent, and that then nobody is ever going to be able to decide which one is right at that level, but he keeps them in his head hoping that they’ll give him different ideas for guessing.”

By Charles W. Phillips