# Accepted Manuscript

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PII:	S0009-2614(16)30844-2
DOI:	http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cplett.2016.10.059
Reference:	CPLETT 34283
To appear in:	Chemical Physics Letters
Received Date:	29 June 2016
Accepted Date:	21 October 2016



Please cite this article as: H. Qian, P. Ao, Y. Tu, J. Wang, A framework towards understanding mesoscopic phenomena: Emergent unpredictability, symmetry breaking and dynamics across scales, *Chemical Physics Letters* (2016), doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cplett.2016.10.059

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# ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

### A framework towards understanding mesoscopic phenomena: Emergent unpredictability, symmetry breaking and dynamics across scales

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#### Abstract

By integrating four lines of thoughts: symmetry breaking originally advanced by Anderson, bifurcation from nonlinear dynamical systems, Landau's phenomenological theory of phase transition, and the mechanism of emergent rare events first studied by Kramers, we introduce a possible framework for understanding mesoscopic dynamics that links (i) fast microscopic (lower level) motions, (ii)movements within each basin-of-attraction at the mid-level, and (iii) higherlevel rare transitions between neighboring basins, which have slow rates that decrease exponentially with the size of the system. In this mesoscopic framework, the fast dynamics is represented by a rapidly varying stochastic process and the mid-level by a nonlinear dynamics. Multiple attractors arise as emergent properties of the nonlinear systems. The interplay between the stochastic element and nonlinearity, the essence of Kramers' theory, leads to successive jump-like transitions among different basins. We argue each transition is a dynamic symmetry breaking, with the potential of exhibiting Thom-Zeeman catastrophe as well as phase transition with the breakdown of ergodicity (e.g., cell differentiation). The slow-time dynamics of the nonlinear mesoscopic system

Preprint submitted to Journal of LATEX Templates

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