

The Renewal of the Cultural in Sociology

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Many are the ways to think the link between cultural studies and sociology. A map of their institutional location would reveal a dense network of interdependencies, a separate department formed in one place, a unit or program that casts a wide net over existing resources in another (Berry & Miller 1999). This exercise in transdisciplinary cartography would also show tremendous regional variation (Forbes & Kelly 1996; Forgacs & Lumley 1996; Kelly & Shepherd 1998; Graham & Labanyi 1996; Turner 1992). A sociologist could be “doing” cultural studies as much as a renowned figure from the new field could grace a sociology faculty (Aronowitz 1993; Clough 1992; Gray 1997; Morley & Chen 1996; Bennett 1998). At times competition for monies would generate tensions, while at other moments political affiliations would allow cooperation to rule (Grossberg 1997; Striphas 1998).

While establishing propinquity, such a map would not necessarily tell us much about the fields of knowledge that these two terms are meant to designate (Gaokankar & Nelson 1996; Long 1997). One would be hard put to sort out which research methods belonged to which domain (McGuigan 1997). Ethnography? Historical Comparison? Content Analysis? Ethnomethodology? Survey Research? Yes please! Less satisfying still would be to claim that one took its object of study to be culture and the other society – if for no other reason than that both fields take the relation between these terms to be foundational to their endeavors. But it is precisely in the way that this relation is imagined that the impact of cultural studies on sociology can be most fruitfully expanded and specified.

My emphasis in what follows therefore will be on cultural studies as a theoretical intervention in sociology that brings new life to the latter’s core questions. To treat cultural studies thus is not to address all the work that has gone by that name, but to focus on the conceptual innovations made available when a range of critical endeavors are clustered together that have permitted a fundamental rethinking of the meaning of the cultural. It is worth recalling that sociology came into being in the nineteenth century as an amalgamation of other

fields (Brown 1993). No less today, its renewal rests upon an influx of critical reflection from the outside. Conceived of in the broadest terms, cultural studies is the conduit through which this flow of transdisciplinary energy has taken place. Since discipline is the organizational currency of the academy, the often internecine battles over intellectual and institutional properties need to be responsibly engaged. But lest these be left as merely local skirmishes over the banners under which we march, we need to keep the conceptual stakes of our interests close to hand. The tale I want to tell here is how the culture–society question came to be understood within sociology, how it was transformed by cultural studies, and what prospect this new embrace holds for the way in which we orient ourselves to our world.

Cultural Animations

Given all the entrances and exits to the big house called sociology, it is tough to claim that all the residents think alike even if they are subject to the same house rules or discipline. The same would have to be said for the somewhat smaller domicile called cultural studies. Imagining what the idea of sociology might be, well that's a different story – for any dweller is likely to offer up an account of what life is really like. Sociology textbooks frequently provide a linear narrative of the field with a tryplich of founding fathers: Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber; and a trilogy of schools: conflict, interactionist, functionalist. The two trinities don't really correspond. More importantly, origins are irrepressible, and the margins remain wider than the center.

Culture itself is given various inflections by sociologists active in the 1920s and 1930s. Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (1921: 52) argue that the cultural process shapes the forms and patterns inherited from prior generations. Charles Horton Cooley (1933) sees culture as the accumulated result of association. For William Graham Sumner (1927), it is an adjustment to the environment, and for Florian Znaniecki (1952) sociology is itself a cultural science. Yet concurrent with this scientific inflection is an interpretive enterprise as suggested by Alfred Schutz (1932: 214) with a privileging of “spontaneous activity,” a perspective consonant with George Herbert Mead's emphasis on the “social creativity of the emergent self” (1934: 214). While these figures indicate a range of perspectives to early sociology in the United States, their work is seldom subject to significant revisitation.

Max Weber's legacy is more illustrative of how earlier threads get rewoven. Weber's consummate concern is to place the conduct of society on a rational basis. Because people take account of each other in doing what they do, their actions are both meaningful and oriented. Sociology is a science devoted to the “interpretive understanding of social action” (Weber 1978: 4). But action is divided between the means people acquire to conduct their affairs (instrumental reason) and the ends to which these techniques are put (substantive reason, or

more prosaically, values). Society, in this light, is a historical project that rests upon certain value orientations held in common. The sum of these shared values is what typically passed as culture. Because action can lead societal development in any number of directions, and Weber details the various types, culture is left to play a compensatory role in providing purpose to the myriad ways people are able to behave. Parsons picks up on this notion of culture as a basically inert orientation that binds people together. Parsons describes culture as “transmitted,” “learned,” and “shared” (Parsons 1951: 15). Society is a “system” that has “dynamics” but whose normal state is static, leaving activity in opposition to culture as the thing needing to be explained.

In these accounts, sociology is separated between a statics and a dynamics. From this split a host of dichotomies issues that are frequently taken to organize the field conceptually – structure and process; macro and micro; norm and deviance. It is common to find figures like Durkheim read to be principally concerned (in his case via his concept of solidarity) with problems of order rather than change (Giddens 1972: 41). Change is the effect of the passage of still or synchronic moments transpiring in an abstract medium of time. Temporal succession is given and need not be explained by sociological law. Because change is a property of distance from the present and not the latter’s internal condition, sociology is a predictive science that must measure what transpires against fixed expectations of what is possible. Under the assumption that explanation is predictive, seminal thinkers like Marx can be dismissed as irrelevant when a putative system change fails to take place.

The rationalization of culture achieved by sociologists should not be dismissed out of hand. Routine affairs of the common folk are made reasonable, where hitherto the actions of the mass were treated as intrinsically irrational (Le Bon 1895; Ortega y Gasset 1932). But this normalization of societal mundanities came at the expense of the very creative, generative aspect of daily life that would make it of interest to those who live it. Here cultural studies would have something to say.

Already by the mid-sixties when cultural studies was getting underway, the correction was occurring within sociology – and from Parsons’ own students (Becker & McCall, 1990). Erving Goffman (1959; 1963) turned to dramaturgical models of human activity to explore how identity was accomplished through the avoidance of normalizing judgment (stigma). Harold Garfinkel (1967) explored the implied communicational maneuvers in conversational exchanges in his ethnomethodology to study how people passed themselves off as accomplished in quotidian situations. The latent cultural norms now became strategic and solidarity was proven to be an active complicity of self with others. Harvey Sacks (1995), John O’Neill (1972), Alan Blum and Peter McHugh (1984) mined the intricate sociality of what would come to be called the popular – the fundamental creativity with which common activities were invested. But for the system-theoretic model, these alternate sociologies were relegated to occupying the place of the micro in the very syntax they were meant to disturb. As Michael

Brown has shown, the incessant judgment without reference to value that characterizes a passing self-presentation is a feature of all capitalist social relations and therefore consistent with Marx's critique (Marx 1967; Brown 1986). This critical reengagement with Marxism (again already detectable among so-called maverick sociologists like C. Wright Mills (1959), Alvin Gouldner (1970), and Daniel Bell (1976)), is precisely what articulates cultural studies and sociology.

Twentieth-century Marxism was profoundly taken up with questions of culture and consciousness. In what initially was a hallmark of the west, leisure, private life, social reproduction were caught up in market relations to further expand the reign of the commodity. This brought the inner life of labor into the den of capital. At the same time, the cooperative and creative traditions of laboring people gave a different weave to the life made of commodified exchange, this was the basis for the study of popular culture. Animated by the rise of German fascism, Frankfurt School theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1944) saw Weber's instrumental reason eclipsing the critical faculties that would allow people to see how capitalism compromised their most basic human interests. Herbert Marcuse's (1963) notion of repressive desublimation saw in the restrictive pursuit of pleasure a channeling of energies away from political activity. Jürgen Habermas (1989) saw the domain where community values were advanced being colonized by the universalization of technically driven specialized self-interest. For all of these theorists, whereas the commodification of culture served as a principle arena of social control, critical consciousness also held the promise for societal transformation. The enthusiasm for their work culminated in the widespread adoption of Habermas's concept of the public sphere (self-representing social practices evident in newspapers or coffee houses, as distinguished from state, market, and domestic life) as one of the signal ideas of current sociological thinking. Above all, the public sphere became a watchword for the intervention of critical participation in reasoned communication, guided by rules to facilitate the exchange of different perspectives, as itself a transformative societal force.

Concurrent influxes of Marxist-informed thought also supported this shift in the conception of culture from inert preservation of sameness to generative agent of difference. The reception of Gramsci (1971) was key for a range of explorations of what came to be known as counterhegemonic or resistant practices. Gramsci's suggestion that popular consent to capitalist rule meant devising modes of participation in dominant ways of life, spawned equal interest in the ways that culture might refuse the prevailing logic. For this to happen working-class culture had to be resistant or different at its core, as Paul Willis (1981) showed in his ethnographic study of British working-class kids' classroom misbehaviors. The subcultural was held out as a domain of creative refusal and could be deployed to describe stylistic innovation that embodied cultural differences along the lines of youth, race, sexuality, and the like (Hall et al. 1990; Williams 1977; Hebdige 1979). The relation between domination and opposition

was treated as actively contested and therefore productive of politics. Three concepts were especially significant here. Althusser's (1971) notion of interpellation, the way in which people become subjected to authority through their recognition of themselves through what the state demands of them (to be good citizens, workers, parents, etc.), extended the reach of the state beyond its traditional institutional sites. Foucault's (1979) double meaning of discipline, as molding the body for certain acceptable practices and generating the capacity to act in ways that are socially legible, enabled repression and resistance to be understood as two features of the same process. Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossia and polyphony found an unruly and uncontrollable proliferation of different voices as the vital source of the popular. Each of these lines of analysis suggested that there was no unitary core to the self, but rather a whole field of contending subjectivities. The sociological category of role would have to yield to the more complex problematic of identification (Castells 1998). The definition of a particular self could no longer be read off from their position or location in a social structure. Identity was an effect of forces and flows already in motion. Cultural strife could not be seen as an artifact of failed normalization as in the older language of deviance, but now had to be treated as resulting in a transformative process that was less a deficiency in need of amelioration than a novel articulation of human activity that was fundamentally productive. Cultural production became the term of preference within sociology and was meant to amalgamate who people were with what they made (Peterson 1976; Barrett 1979; Blau 1989; Bourdieu 1993). This distinction between symbolic and material, once thought of as discrete activities, sectors, or spheres, could only be appreciated as a conceptual clarification of social practice that was both reflexive and generative, self-making and world-building.

It would certainly be inaccurate to say that all these refashioned ideas belonged to cultural studies. The linguistic turn which harkened in semiotics held the promise of treating the social as both structure and practice (*langue* and *parole*), neither outside nor inside the speaker's head but existing only through a community of speakers capable of introducing new meaning and value (Saussure 1966; Voloshinov 1973). These developments, known collectively as structuralism, promised a universal science of meaning that was capable of recognizing the shared complexity and capacity for innovation evidenced in human activity across cultural differences defined both ethnologically and hierarchically. Yet for this expansion of cultural value to occur, the limits to language, representation, structure had to be noted and the currents known as poststructuralism generalized the intensities of aesthetic practices to get at sublime, embodied, unspeakable dimensions of cultural accomplishment (Dosse 1997). Cultural studies directed these intellectual energies to a program of social research that was in coalition with what it studied (Grossberg 1997; Johnson 1986/7). Sociologists wasted no time incorporating the work of individual writers of these tendencies into the pantheon of social theory. But in the enthusiasm to operationalize the insights of a Foucault or Althusser, the context that gave these

writers their nuance and impact was lost (Wright 1979). To the extent that cultural studies could not be pinned to a particular genealogy, it promised a more programmatic and dramatic effect on sociological habits. Hence it could be seen as something to be kept outside or made redundant with extant work in sociology, rather than serving as a vehicle to renew the commitment to advancing the society/culture problem. This would require different ways of reading and attending to sources than was typical of protocols for data collection. An opportunity was presented to reflect upon representation in a dual key: as the metonymic issue of how a part might stand for a whole raised by the relation between sample and population in survey research, and question of resemblance posed when one looks for the world in a given object or work. The idea of text as developed by Barthes (1979) was especially useful as a means to get at the interwoven relations between the single case and the multitude of connections taken as context. These relations were inscribed or written onto what could be called a textual field made available through a self-critical practice of reading (Derrida 1998). Textualization meant being disturbed by details and not simply positioning them to affirm or deny hypotheses. Cultural studies did offer a shift in orientation toward extant methodologies rather than establishing a new paradigmatic method that would usurp the plurality of devices for research that reign in sociology. Within this more restricted dilemma, the limit to representation meant that epistemological issues could not be resolved by methodological fiat.

Dispersions Within

It would be a mistake to see sociology as a frictionless surface upon which all ideas glide evenly. The texture of susceptibility to influence varies greatly and the receptivity to the cultural turn has been concentrated in several areas. Sociology has long admitted a cultural dimension to every site and practice. There is a culture of the economic, the political, the family, you name it – making it easy to suggest that there is no resistance to what is already there. At issue, however, is not the presence of culture, but its concept, and here the interest in generative, creative activity has nestled selectively where existing perspectives have been most strained. As culture became privileged as the means to register social change, the questions of what it was and how it came to be were also enlarged. Among the traditional disciplines, what could count as an object of study was dramatically magnified. While sociology thrived in this climate along with the humanities, it made sense that the very approach to culture would be transformed along the way. That the functioning of society was questioned at the very moment when the vision of modernization heralded by sociology seemed to be realized, could only lead to tremors within the conventional understanding of social theory. These challenges were not simply attributable to the routine realization of logical inconsistencies that a community of expertise would learn to assimilate. Rather, there was a way in which the popular mobilizations implied

a practical critique of society's operations that sociologists had to attend to. How social movements themselves incarnated critique would have to be rethought. These three areas where cultural studies has proven most effective are clearly intertwined. To see what this influence has entailed, I want to unravel the strands a bit between cultural sociology itself, by which I intend the whole range of areas from media, arts and the popular, social movements, especially those studies that have had to grapple with emergent forms, and theory.

It would be reasonable to expect art studies to have the greatest affinity with the turn to intrinsic generativity described here. Yet the thrust of much of this work has been to demonstrate that art too is a kind of rational action organized with a definite occupational structure (Becker 1984) and institutional dimension (Wolff 1981; Zolberg 1990). No longer simply a critical idea, but now a material force in its own right, the affinities between aesthetic and social form received less attention. Missing in this earlier work was the insight that the attention to design might advance the discussion of research design more broadly by providing a language to analyze the relation between knowledge's expressive form and its now inseparable content. When, for example, Attali (1985) argued that societal arrangements took audible form in music before they could be seen in more conventional measures of change, the aesthetic took on a special methodological and epistemological significance beyond any transformative capacity that could have been claimed for art itself.

This idea that one could think society through culture could be seen pointedly in developments in media studies. Against the kind of technological determinism that media increased information access without regard to interest and therefore indexed freedom and openness in society, seminal media studies located interest in ownership (Schiller 1973) through which media epitomized corporate dominance (Parenti 1986). The more radical implications of these studies for the fact-value distinction in sociology had to await further developments (Inglis 1990). When the concept of mediation was taken seriously, what appeared as discrete message transmissions could be treated as revealing the integration between production and circulation that allowed for a rethinking of economic relations (Baudrillard 1981). The notion that audiences had to be actively constituted granted agency to the otherwise passive domain of consumption. The study of the popular pushed this active force still farther, not only demanding that the artifacts employed in mundane affairs be appreciated through more expansive evaluative criteria (Frow 1995), but that the impact of the people as makers of history could never be reduced to the standard measures of accomplishment through which progress has typically been rendered (Brown 1986/7). The popular came to embody value-giving modes of rational action that were irreducible to the profit-taking dictates of exchange. Pleasure could become a political category that expressed this counterlogic (Jameson 1988). Symptomatic of these shifts, two recent developments are of note. One is the creation of a new special interest group of the American Sociological Association, "Consumers, Commodities and Consumption," with a new *Journal of Consumer Culture* edited

by George Ritzer, whose own work (1993) has helped delimit the field. The formation accepts that consumption is “production for use,” but does not want to diminish the significance of property and purchase that are dominant in a market-driven culture (Butsch 2000). Secondly, the journal of reviews for the American professional association, *Contemporary Sociology*, has renamed the section that attends to the above topics “cultural production.” This new designation by the only genuinely nontechnical and consistently comprehensive registry of the field suggests an interesting change in syntax. While sequestered as a new speciality, cultural production nonetheless betokens an assimilation of the new turn. Production already denoted more active participation in what was made and what could be taken as fixed or given than construction, which was typically contrasted with essence or nature (Fuss 1989; Taussig 1993). At the heart of the distinction between production and construction lies another – that of the sensuous human activity that makes itself as it creates its world (Marx’s conception of labor), versus construct, a contingent code or meaning that nonetheless begs the question of how it comes to be. A social construct operates by being momentarily naturalized as an inert truth, while production, properly construed, is a process that attempts to realize the capacity of forces that are uneasily brought together. Construct brings us back in the direction of codes, norms, and law from which the notion of cultural production beats a path of escape.

The case of cultural production suggests that once-familiar terms get freighted with new meanings and that what appeared to be a subspeciality of the discipline turns out to address it as a whole. What could be said for the study of culture *per se*, applies as well to sociological theory. For theory is meant to be the means through which one reflects on the general features of a situation. That it would be seen as one area of knowledge among others within sociology and not what is foundational to all avenues of research (Calhoun 1998) already speaks to a core problem for the field that cultural studies could be seen to rectify. Without appreciating the radical insight that one can grasp the whole otherwise by attending to what seems to be a particularity, the various critical currents applied to sociology look like abandonments of the aspiration to understand all of society. In actuality, the view from the concrete particular can make unexamined assumptions newly available. This decentering reveals what is contingent about the hitherto fixed center. This is where the attribution of a critical perspective to a particular identity or group interest proves so unhelpful. When gender, sexuality, race, or colonial relations are no longer blank constructs that organize people into groups but optics from which to make sense of the entire world, the approach to any comprehensive analysis cannot remain untouched. Here the distinction made by Eve Sedgwick (1990) between minoritarian and majoritarian uses of queer theory is worth bearing in mind. By attending to the sexual subjectivity of what appears outside normal practice, the diverse ways that sexuality is lived get uncloseted. What is illuminated as truth rests upon something kept in the dark, out of view, is what Peggy Phelan (1993) calls the unmarked.

It becomes evident that a position typically denoted as minority actually contains the key to the expansion of a whole domain of cultural expression and societal relations. As such, putatively natural categories such as sexuality and race are denaturalized, and identities pluralized so as to embrace a more inclusive view of human affairs. In addition, the creative and expansive work done over the kinds of available social relations is amplified.

We could say that what traditionally appear as issues of exclusion from nonnormative expressions that would be seen in terms of prejudice and discrimination, can be seen instead as a matter of the ambivalent desire to draw upon the creativity or pleasure of these newly articulated forms. For example, racism and homophobia are both barriers to equal treatment and ways to concentrate value (positively or negatively) in a category formally defined as other but practically constitutive of what a self might be (Mercer 1994; Berlant 1998). Cultural appropriation is the twin of hatred, for the theft of what is coveted, covers its tracks of being where it was not supposed to be (Lott 1993; Ziff & Rao 1997). This is not simply because there is pleasure in transgression, but because this is where a now socially expressible range of practices attains its fullest scale and scope. This is where cultural expression assumes the proportions of societal dynamics. The theorized voices of others point to the production of a social surplus in the sense of an elaboration of social forms and relations that extend what once would have been referred to as complexity. Because this last term assumes as its alter the simple or primitive, it has rightly been criticized by anthropologists (Lévi-Strauss 1966; Trouillot 1991). Society is not simply differentiated as Parsons would have understood the term, as further specialization and particularization of what is done by people – a kind of division of labor for social reproduction.

The various poststructural interventions exert a new transdisciplinary effect on sociology in which questions of power and domination are not simply distributional exclusions, but different ways to craft society when the means for producing social life (and not simply products) are considered historical resources. Sociology always had the potential to treat society as both subject and object, self-made and self-positing. Yet foundational concepts such as structure and process, macro and micro tended to uncouple what is in fact an indissolvable unity. The theoretical resources marshaled by cultural studies complicate these terms that would fix social positions and behaviors expected to flow from them and offer a recognition of both representation and its limits. The inclusion of the normally excluded must be conveyed by a rationalization or extension of rule to what was hitherto outside the pale. But the progressive force of the newly included is not simply assimilated, absorbed, and neutralized. Subalterns, as Gayatri Spivak (1988) would put it, do not suddenly speak as if they would be relieved of the burden of otherness to become a normal self. Little of the creativity of society would be realizable if such a predictable path to normalization could actually take place. Limitation becomes a sign for continued but contingent influence, for an expansive capacity whose effects can not simply

be named to be further sequestered by instrumentalities of control. Culture comes to embody the dynamism that is an ongoing feature of the accomplishment of society that is nonetheless incomplete.

As was the case with the influences of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, social theory attains its greatest advances when its protagonists are actively engaged and affiliated with the societal projects they imagine. Marx helped organize and critically addressed an array of worker organizations and parties. Durkheim was active in the professional politics of the French sociologists. Weber worked to draft the legislation he felt would best rationalize society. It is therefore no accident that the theoretical innovations discussed here share the activist trajectories of the classical figures while bringing activist sensibilities into the process of theorizing itself. To appreciate these connections requires a look at the popular mobilizations and their renewed appreciation through a cultural studies lens. This takes us to the discussion of social movements.

While social change was always a central problematic of sociology, the question of how it came about remained vexing. A century of sociology had established the rationality of informal and mundane activity, but the market-driven optimization of self-interest produced a conception of individualism that rendered collective action an exceptional condition in need of explanation (Olson 1965). The common person engaged in transforming the social environment was a kind of decision-maker modeled on an executive of government or business. Collectively, social movements followed the Weberian split of means and ends that characterized all rational acts. Resources such as information or money were gathered or mobilized to achieve clearly articulated goals.

The gains of the resource mobilization approach were undeniable. What appeared inchoate and ephemeral could have lasting institutional effects as the goals of social movements became legislated or addressed as social goods. Further, the meaning of democracy was enlarged to emphasize participation as a value in itself, and not simply electoral or policy outcomes. Power was an effect of gathered critical publics, and not simply a perquisite of state to be distributed on demand. But beyond serving as an index of societal type, it remained unclear why people would affiliate with movement organizations if time for other pursuits was lost and the gains would be disbursed whether any given individual had participated or not. On closer inspection, it was the assumption that self and social interest were necessarily at odds that required revision. Participation did not so much meet an interest as generate a sense of self that was already social. When social movements were treated as culture-making bodies, participation could be playful and pleasurable, identity-giving and space-producing. As a grip on a narrow conception of politics was loosened, recognition and resource were no longer monopolized by the state. This did not mean that the state had withered, but that regulation of domestic life was a response to the politicization of what was once considered outside of politics, namely the matters of identity, consumption, development, thought to be merely private. By politicizing the quotidian, by extending the culture of movements beyond the measurement of

formal goal attainment, by insisting on mobilization as the normal condition of life, cultural studies aimed to make what was scarce and exceptional abundant. This was a complication of the field that would introduce its own confusions.

If politics was everywhere and movements abounded, how to assess or evaluate their tendency so as to sustain the commitment to intervention and advocacy. The study of right-wing social movements and their statist assimilations by neoliberal governments suggested that these confusions were not simply issues of relativism. Just as one could no longer assume self-interest prior to activism, the collective will of the people could not just be read off of the presence of movement organizations. As more and more features of human life were set in motion as fungible features of what could be made of history, the fact of this development would come into conflict with the assessment of its tendency. Hints of a direction for society would have to be located in the cultural dynamics of the movement itself. For this to occur, close attention would have to be paid to the conflicting principles embodied in particular practices. The local was not autonomous from but a complex effect of global forces differentially condensed or “scaled” (Smith 1992). The question of how to read movements did not simply entail interpreting their ways of representing themselves. It meant seeing how changes already in process were being reflected upon and directed by those innovating ways of living together. This mobilization outside the organizational entailments of the movement approached the enactments shared by strangers that make it possible to speak of society. While a social movement is knowable through its cultures, it makes known what can be called society (Touraine 1981).

Between Project and Principle

As cultural studies has percolated through sociology, the internal conceptual affinity of culture and society has deepened. Some of the critical work that is the fruit of this relationship has been reported on here. The collaboration has not proceeded without suspicion. Substantive issues notwithstanding, it is tempting to fan the flames of disciplinary xenophobia if we do not have a place from which to imagine the mutual insinuation of fields and concepts. To this end, mere description is unsatisfying. It is important to argue on behalf of a politics for the relation of society and culture. Engagement with the politics would then help orient conceptual stakes and positions. Because of the connotations of society with system and the statics of bounded structures, some work to have come through poststructuralism has avoided terms deemed to be totalizing (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). On the other hand, the cultural turn has been treated as generating its own indulgences that must be corrected, most commonly an avoidance of institutional analysis that would incorporate the state and political economy (Bonnell & Hunt 1999).

While one could identify a list of candidates that bear these sins of omission, it is curious that the work that best overcomes these divides is not considered the

benchmark that most effectively characterizes recent developments. The point is that cultural studies and sociology are as much known for the general impressions they give as for what could be said to be grouped empirically by each. They organize trajectories from which future work can be imagined. What do we want to imagine the relation of culture and society to be – beyond an inventory of pitfalls to be avoided? If society is to again have purchase as an orienting concept it would have to be taken up in critical analysis as a project, an endeavor to be realized, an image of what can be. A society organized on behalf of those who create what is valuable within it, that treats social value as a resource to be fostered, that provides a means to address how relations among us are to be configured and how our creativity of social form can be furthered, these are formulations of a society in and for itself, one that advances its own social means.

For this project, the term socialism (however battered it has been) is still the best fit. To achieve its unprecedented accumulation of wealth capitalism depends upon cooperation on a grand scale, but has difficulty abiding the conditions for collaborative interdependence. The reign of capital can be further extended and elaborated but it is difficult to postulate as an ideal. Conversely, socialism is always in part a project, someplace to get to from here, something other we could get in the move from present to future than dizzy accumulation without reflection on the quality of what has been amplified. If socialism is indeed the substantive reason, the ends of our societal project (a self-expanding aspiration, not a destination), we need equally to rework the question of means. Weber found endless technical mastery disenchanting. Implicitly, one could feel impelled to get good at something, but in the end it really wasn't all that much fun.

Culture, as used here, is not leisure, a break from work, but a “sensuous activity” that is pleased by having more of itself. It is the pleasure of labor that makes this last such a target for appropriation. Wanting more is a notion tainted by that angel called progress (McClintock 1992). But this is also an historical desire that once put in motion is not easily sated. Culture in this reckoning is less a whole way of life than a demand made on living, a critical principle that insists that more can be made out of what is to hand. This excess or social surplus is the material embodiment of participation that gives us democracy in more than name alone. Culture is a tangible capacity or agency to gather together human energies that are already on the move. This unceasing motion invites a reflection on where it is headed, and assumes an expanding appetite for what could be made from the thicket of associations. This amalgamation of socialism and democracy, of societal project with critical principle, should be enough to keep sociology and cultural studies mutually interested for some time to come. Society is not something whose boundaries can be described, nor its shape predicted. Its possibilities are a demand on present capacities that our critical moves must hope for.

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