



E-Bulletin International Sociological Association

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International Sociological Association

e-bulletin

Announcement

E-Bulletin (International Sociological Association)

The initiation and formulation of a new concept for an ISA publication, in the form of the E-Bulletin, indeed signals an exciting time for the social sciences. This document is by definition multi-dimensional and multi-functional. As an organ of the ISA, it aims to cater to the various needs of the organisation as well as its diverse community of members, located in varied socio-cultural settings. It is conceptualised as a forum through which the various ISA members are able engage in debates and communication regarding the intellectual activities of national associations and research committees of the ISA.

This publication carries an important and central intellectual agenda. As editor, I see this as a forum for showcasing the work, practices, ideas and voices of the diverse community of sociologists, engaged in substantive, ethnographic, demographic, theoretical, historical and critical research, and operating out of different locations, both sociological and geographic. The publication has the potential to stimulate and facilitate scholarly and professional communication and interaction amongst individual sociologists, universities, research institutions and non-governmental organisations - local, regional and international- connecting in important ways a widely scattered community. In my view, developing a substantive and theoretical focus upon which the structure of the Bulletin must then rest is an important initial task - in identifying central issues, themes, dilemmas, problematics and challenges that concern sociologists everywhere. As a practitioner myself, I have my own sense of the important issues, but I seek and solicit ideas and suggestions from other sociologists. Given that the global community of sociologists is multi-faceted and diverse, the bulletin too strives to reflect and convey this multiplicity.

The plan is for every issue to include a very brief editorial and carry at least two pieces of theoretical interest (short essays, addresses, reflections) by sociologists from different parts of the world. An essay by a prominent sociologist could be accompanied by commentaries and responses from other practitioners. The Bulletin could also be a space for important conversations with eminent, practising sociologists, presented in the form of in depth interviews or it might carry important review essays on particular subfields of sociology. There is also a plan for a forum- for exchange of letters and communication. It could further showcase important contributions to the sociological enterprise from practitioners working outside of academia - such as NGOs, and those in applied fields. I think that a fluid shape to the publication would allow these kinds of contributions to be presented to members of the ISA. The technical and publication schedule details are still

being formalised but I expect the first issue of the E-Bulletin to be published in the next few months.

Personally I am very excited for this opportunity to contribute to developing the intellectual dimension of the new electronic publication, but seek the co-operation and involvement of all sociologists to launch this successfully.

Editor, E-Bulletin, ISA

Vineeta Sinha, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

Call for Submissions

E-Bulletin

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Editor: Vineeta Sinha

Production: SAGE

Article submissions to the E-Bulletin must have sociological value and interest for an international community of social scientists, both from the point of pure, scholarly research as well as from applied dimensions. Submissions will be reviewed by the editorial board and the Publications Committee of the ISA for possible publication. We welcome all submissions in the following categories:

1) Feature essay (up to 4000 words)

We invite contributions in the form of feature articles from sociologists working in all fields - substantive, methodological and theoretical. The article can be both empirical and theoretical and deal with issues that will be of interest to sociologists practising in a variety of locales- universities, research institutes and NGOS- for example.

2) In Conversation with...

Here our intention is to showcase the sociological work and life experiences of a prominent sociologist (including 'retired') from any part of the world, in the form of a dialogue, conversation, interview with another sociologist. All suggestions and proposals are welcome.

3) Reflections on...(up to 3000 words)

We are seeking the more personal, biographical accounts from practising sociologists about their experiences of teaching, researching or leading administratively in a particular setting. The topic and theme is open-ended and we welcome all proposals.

4) Forum (200-400 words)

We invite brief comments, notes, communications and letters from sociologists on any topic of relevance to an international community of sociologists. We intend for the 'Forum' section to be a regular feature in the e-Bulletin. This will need the support of the members to be successful.

5) Photo Essays, Audio and Video Clips

The new on-line technology allows us to conceptualise and include different kinds of material in the E-Bulletin, in addition to the written/printed word. We welcome submissions in the form of photo essays, audio and video clips, photos and films.

6) Reaching Out to the Community

In this section of the e-Bulletin, the intention is to showcase important contributions to the sociological enterprise from practitioners working outside of academia - such as NGOs, development agencies and others in applied fields. This is in recognition of the multifaceted engagement and contributions of sociologists with domains beyond the academia- teaching and research, whose work enriches the discipline as a whole.

All communications should include a contact name and address, including an e-mail address. The deadline for submissions is the first of the month before each of the four issues (eg. 1 December for the January issue).

Please direct all communications, submissions and enquires to the Editor, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, 11 Arts Link, Singapore 115750. e-mail:bulletineditor@yahoo.com; phone: 0065-68745976; fax: 0065-67779579.

International Sociological Association

e-bulletin

"Knowledge, Power, and Politics: The Role of an Intellectual in an Age of Transition"

Immanuel Wallerstein*

The relation of knowledge specialists, intellectuals, to persons of power, persons in power has always been an ambiguous one, fraught with tension and dishonesty. Intellectuals are essential to the ability of persons in power to remain in power. They illuminate the realities and the alternatives that exist. At the same time, they are dangerous to those in power, first of all because they can serve opponents, and secondly because they can expose the follies and the deceptions of those in power. On the other hand, intellectuals do not exist in a void. They need material support, which is difficult to obtain without at least the passive assent of those in power. And they need a public audience, which is difficult to maintain if they are merely the mouthpieces of the powerful.

I do not intend to review the history of these relationships nor do I wish to discuss in any detail these dilemmas. I make mine the basic lessons that Machiavelli and Gramsci bequeathed us, tempered by the sober reflections of Max Weber. The powerful seek to achieve legitimacy via the construction of the mental world of those they govern, using the production of the intellectuals. And the intellectuals, or at least the honest ones, try to skirt the siren call of those in power.

I believe, however, that this long-standing unhappy symbiotic relationship has taken a special turn in the era in which we are living because it is an era of transition. It is important to underline that eras of transition are rare but are very important, because we all operate in different ways in such periods than in the more normal times during which historical systems function according to their rules and in which the mechanisms that repeatedly restore some kind of equilibrium are more or less operative. So, let me start by justifying my use of the concept, age of transition.¹

1. Structural Crisis of the Modern World-System

I start with the assumption that all systems, and therefore all historical systems, have determinate lives. They are not eternal. They have a period of origin, followed by a longish period of development and so-called normal functioning, and finally a period of structural crisis which is also an era of transition. Systems have lives, because all systems have contradictions, if one uses Hegelian language. Or one could say, in the language of Braudel, systems exist in the *longue durée*, but never in the *très longue durée*, of which Braudel says: "If it exists, it can only be the time period of the sages."² And, if one uses the language of Prigogine and of the sciences of complexity, one would say that all

systems move over time far from equilibrium; and when they move sufficiently far, they oscillate chaotically and bifurcate. They thereby come to an end, moving then in one of at least two alternate paths, but which path they choose is inherently unpredictable.

The historical system in which we presently live is the modern world-system which is a capitalist world-economy. It came into existence in a part of the world some 500 years ago, its period of origin. It has developed and expanded to cover the entire globe. But it has now moved far from equilibrium and it has entered a phase of global anarchy. The system is bifurcating; that is, it is in structural crisis, and will no longer exist 25-50 years from now.

The reason it is in structural crisis is that the three mechanisms it has used to maintain its equilibrium and to permit its guiding principle, the endless accumulation of capital, to prevail, have all created their own undoing, by limiting the long-term possibilities of accumulating capital. This is of course exactly what Hegel meant by contradictions - pressures to achieve objectives by acting in ways that achieve these objectives in the short run but which undermine the same objectives in the long run. There are three such contradictions in historical capitalism.

The first is the globally rising cost of personnel payments. The reason for this is that the basic medium-run way to overcome increasing syndical demands has been the relocation of production activities in times of economic stagnation to lower-wage areas. What makes an area lower-wage has been the availability of rural workers, often largely outside the money economy, to migrate to new production activities and work, usually in urban areas, at wage-levels that at first are interesting for the workers but which are nonetheless below the world norms and therefore interesting for the employers. The contradiction is that, every time this occurs, the world pool of such available rural labor is reduced. We have reached the point of a major deruralization of the world labor force, which is rapidly approaching completion. This then is exhausting the possibility of using the tactic of relocation to maintain profit levels.

The second is the globally rising cost of inputs for production. The reason for this is that the basic way to keep such costs down has been not to pay for them, otherwise known as externalizing the costs. Producers externalize the costs by not paying for detoxification needed as a result of their production processes, not paying for restoring the basic supply of the primary resources they use, and not paying their fair share of the costs of infrastructure essential to production and marketing of their products. The contradiction is that the social costs of dealing with the effects of cumulative toxicity, the exhaustion of resources, and the necessary renewal of infrastructure have risen to the point that there has been a political pressure of considerable importance for producers to internalize these costs, which of course reduces the level of profits that can be obtained.

The third is the globally rising cost of taxation, the result of the combination of rising costs of security and infrastructure with ever larger welfare benefits. The three fundamental welfare benefits have been education, health care, and guarantees of lifetime income. These costs first began to be assumed by governments in the nineteenth century. The costs have steadily expanded both because what is demanded and offered has risen and because the number of parts of the globe in which they are demanded and

offered has risen. The benefits have therefore required more and more taxes, and everywhere. Social welfare costs are the price for the elites to limit opposition to the governments by offering what amounts to some limited redistribution of the accumulated capital. The contradiction is that this "democratization" of the world is not reversible but at the same time is ever more expensive, and therefore reduces profit levels.

It is the combination of these three structural pressures on the ability to accumulate capital - rising costs of labor, rising costs of inputs, and rising tax bills - that has led us to the present chaotic situation, which combines short-term efforts to rollback these costs and to acquire capital through speculation rather than production with a rising delegitimation of the political structures that gird the modern world-system. We therefore get global economic oscillations and global political anarchy. We are living amidst this situation.

2. Structural crisis of knowledge systems

But what has all this to do with the structures of knowledge, with the university systems of the world, with scholarly and scientific research? Everything! The structures of knowledge are not divorced from the basic operations of the modern world-system. They are an essential element in the functioning and legitimation of the structures of the system, and have emerged in forms that are most useful to the system. I wish to deal with three aspects of the structures of knowledge in the modern world-system: the modern university system; the epistemological divide between the so-called two cultures; and the special role of the social sciences. All three are essentially nineteenth-century constructions. All three are in turmoil today, as part of the structural crisis of the modern world-system.

We regularly talk of the university as a structure developed in western Europe in the Middle Ages. This makes a nice story, and permits us to wear lovely gowns at university ceremonies. But it is really a myth. The medieval university, a clerical institution of the Catholic Church, essentially disappeared with the onset of the modern world-system. It survived in name from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. But during this period it was virtually moribund. It certainly was not the central locus of the production or reproduction of knowledge in this period.

One can date the reemergence and transformation of the university from the middle of the nineteenth century, although there were beginnings of this process from the late eighteenth century on. The key features that distinguish the modern university from that which we had in the Middle Ages is that it is a bureaucratic institution, with full-time paid faculty, some kind of centralized decision-making about educational matters, and for the most part full-time students. Instead of curricula being organized around professors, it would come to be organized within departmental structures, which offered clear paths to obtaining degrees, which in turn served as social credentials.

By the end of the nineteenth century, these structures were not only in principle the locus of the reproduction of the entire corpus of secular knowledge but also the principal locus of further research and therefore of the production of knowledge. The new kinds of structures then either diffused from western Europe and North America to other parts of the world or were imposed on these other areas as a result of Western

dominance of the world-system. By 1945 there were similar kinds of institutions virtually everywhere.

It was only however after 1945 that this worldwide university system reached its full flourishing. There was an enormous expansion of the world-economy in the period 1945-1970. This fact, combined with constant pressure from below to increase admissions plus growing nationalist sentiment in peripheral zones to "catch up" with leading zones of the world-system, led to an incredible expansion of the world university system - in terms of numbers of institutions, numbers of faculty, and numbers of students. For the first time, the universities became more than the reserved ground of a small elite and became truly public institutions.

The social support for the world university system came from three different sources: the elites and the governments which needed more trained personnel and more fundamental research; the productive enterprises which needed the technological advances which they could exploit; and all those who saw the university system as a mode of upward social mobility. Education was popular and, after 1945 especially, the provision of university education came to be considered an essential social service.

The drive to establish modern universities and then to increase their number opened immediately the question of what kind of education would be offered within these institutions. By the middle of the eighteenth century, when this drive to recreate the university began, the secular humanism of the philosophers which had been struggling, more or less successfully, against the previous hegemony of theological knowledge itself came under severe attack from new groups of scholars who came to call themselves scientists. Scientists (the word itself is a nineteenth-century invention) were those who insisted that the world was intrinsically knowable, but only via empirical investigation which would lead to general laws that explained real phenomena. From the point of view of these scientists, the secular humanist philosophers offered merely speculative knowledge that was not truly different from that historically offered by theologians. It could not represent truth, since it was not in any way falsifiable.

The scientists had one main claim to social support and social prestige. They were able to come up with kinds of knowledge that could be translated into improved technologies, something that was well appreciated by those in power. Thus scientists had every interest in advocating and achieving the so-called divorce between science and philosophy, a rupture that led to the institutionalization of what we would later call the "two cultures." The most concrete expression of this divorce was the split of the historic medieval Faculty of Philosophy in two. The resulting names of faculties varied according to the university, but generally by the mid-nineteenth century, most universities had a faculty reserved to the natural sciences and one reserved to what was often called the humanities, or the arts, or *Geisteswissenschaften*.

We must be clear about the nature of the epistemological debate that underlay this separation into two faculties. Scientists insisted that only by using the methods they preferred - empirical research based on and/or leading to verifiable hypotheses - could one arrive at "truth." Practitioners of the humanities contested this assertion strongly. They insisted on the role of analytic insight, of hermeneutic sensibility, of empathetic *Verstehen* as the road to a truth, a kind of truth which they asserted was profounder than

and underlay the generalizations (often seen as hasty) of the scientists. Furthermore, the practitioners of the humanities insisted on the centrality of values, of the good and the beautiful, in the pursuit of knowledge, whereas the scientists insisted that science was value-free and that values could never be designated as being true or false. Therefore, they said, values lay outside the concern of science.

The debate got more shrill as the decades went by, many on each side tending to denigrate any possible contribution of those on the other side. It was a question of prestige (the hierarchy of claims to knowledge) and of the allocation of social resources. It was also a question of deciding who had the right to dominate the socialization of the youth through the control of the educational system, particularly the secondary school system. What can be said about the history of the struggle is that, bit by bit, the scientists won the social battle by getting more and more people, and particularly persons in power, to rank them higher, even much higher, than the practitioners of humanistic knowledge. After 1945, with the centrality of new, complicated, and expensive technology in the operation of the modern world-system, the scientists pulled very far ahead.

In the process, a de facto truce line was created. Scientists were given priority in, even exclusive control over, the legitimate assertion of truths. The practitioners of humanistic knowledge for the most part ceded this ground and accepted being in the ghetto of those who sought, who merely sought, to determine the good and the beautiful. This, more than the epistemological divide, was the real divorce. Never before in the history of the world had there been a sharp division between the search for the true and the search for the good and beautiful. Now it was inscribed in the structures of knowledge and in the world university system.

Within the now separate faculties for each of the two cultures, there then occurred a process of specialization which we have come to call the boundaries of "disciplines." Disciplines are claims to turf, claims that it is useful to bound sectors of knowledge in terms of the object of research and the methods that are used to study these objects. We all know the names of the principal disciplines that were widely accepted - astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology among others in the natural sciences; Greek and Latin (or Classics), various national literatures (according to the country), philology, art history, philosophy among others in the humanities.

The organization of disciplines brought into being a further separation of knowledge over and above that between the two cultures. Each discipline became a university department. Degrees were awarded for the most part in a specific discipline, and faculty appointments were to a particular department. In addition, there grew up transversal organizational structures, cutting across universities. Disciplinary journals came into existence, which published articles primarily or only by persons in those disciplines, articles that concerned (and only concerned) the subject matter that these disciplines purported to cover. And then, first national, then international, associations of scholars in particular disciplines were created. Finally, and not least, by the end of the nineteenth century, the so-called great libraries began to create categories that were the mirror-image of the disciplinary organization, which all other libraries (and indeed booksellers and publishers) then felt obliged to accept.

Finally, there was the special and ambiguous situation of the social sciences. The French Revolution had led to a general legitimation of two concepts not widely accepted prior to it: the normality of socio-political change, and the sovereignty of the "people." This created an urgent need for governing elites to understand the modalities of such normal change, and fostered a desire to develop policies that could limit or at least channel such change. The search for such modalities and by derivation social policies became the domain of social science, including an updated form of history based on empirical research.

The epistemological question for social science was and has always been where its practitioners would stand in the battle of the two cultures. The simplest answer is to say that social scientists were deeply divided on the epistemological issues. Some of them pushed hard to be part of the scientific camp. And some of them insisted on being part of the humanistic camp. What almost none of them did was to try to evolve any third epistemological stance. Not only did individual social scientists take sides in what some called the *Methodenstreit* but whole disciplines tended to take sides. For the most part, economics, political science, and sociology were in the scientific camp (with of course individual dissenters). And history, anthropology, and Oriental studies were for the most part in the humanistic camp. Or at least, this was the story up to 1945. After that, the lines became more blurred.³

As the modern world-system began to come into structural crisis, which is something I believe that began to play itself out in and after the world revolution of 1968, all three pillars of the structures of knowledge of the modern world-system began to lose their solidity, creating an institutional crisis parallel to, and part of, the structural crisis of the world-system. The universities began to reorient their social role amidst great uncertainty as to where they were heading or ought to be heading. The great division of the two cultures came under severe questioning from within both the natural sciences and the humanities. And the social sciences, which had flourished as never before in the immediate post-1945 years and had been full of self-confidence, became scattered and fragmented, and entered into loud wailings of self-doubt.

The basic problem for the world university system is that it was growing in size and costs exponentially, while its socio-economic underpinnings were slowing down because of the long stagnation in the world-economy. This led to multiple pressures in different directions. The very top intellectuals in the academy became a scarcer phenomenon as a percentage of the total, simply because the numerator was far more stable than the denominator. The result of this was an increase in the bargaining power and therefore the cost of this top stratum, who used their situation to obtain massive reductions in teaching load and massive increases in research funds. At the same time, university administrators, faced with a decline in faculty/student ratio were seeking to increase in one way or another teaching loads and were also creating a two-tier system of faculty, with a privileged segment alongside underpaid, part-time faculty. This has had the consequence of what I call a trend to the "high-school-ization" of the university, a long-term downplaying of research and increase in teaching responsibilities (particularly large classes).

In addition, because of the financial squeeze, universities have been moving in the direction of becoming actors in the marketplace - by selling their services to enterprises

and governments, and by transforming research results of their professors into patents they can exploit (if not directly, at least by licensing). But to the extent that universities have been moving down these lines, individual professors have been taking their distance from, even moving out of, university structures - in order either to exploit their research findings themselves, or out of distaste for the commercial ambiance in which they were finding themselves. When this discontent combines with the bargaining power which I have already discussed, the result can be an exodus of some of the top scholars/scientists. To the extent this occurs, we may be returning to the pre-1800 situation in which the university was *not* the primary locus of the production of knowledge.

At the same, the two culture divide began to become unhinged. There have arisen two major knowledge movements in the last third of the twentieth century - complexity studies in the natural sciences, and cultural studies in the humanities. While it seems on the surface - to participants in these movements, and to analysts of them - that they are quite different, and indeed antagonistic to each other, there are some important similarities between the two knowledge movements.

First of all, both movements are movements of protest against the historically dominant position in their field. Complexity studies is basically a rejection of the linear time-reversible determinism which prevailed from Newton to Einstein and which has been the normative basis of modern science for four centuries. What the proponents of complexity studies insist is that the classical model of science is actually a special case, and indeed a relatively rare case, of the ways in which natural systems operate. They claim that systems are not linear but rather that they tend to move over time far from equilibrium. They claim that it is intrinsically, and not extrinsically, impossible to determine the future trajectories of any projection. They claim that science is not about reducing the complex to the simple but of explaining ever-greater layers of complexity. And they think that the idea of time-reversible processes is an absurdity, since there exists an "arrow of time" operating in all phenomena, including not only the universe as a whole but every microscopic element within it.

Cultural studies is similarly a rejection of the basic concept that has informed the humanities, that there are canons of beauty and natural law norms of the good, which can be learned, taught, and legitimated. Although the humanities always claimed to favor the particular (as against the universalizing concepts of science), the proponents of cultural studies insist that the traditional teachings of the humanities incarnated the values of one particular group - that of Western, White men of dominant ethnic groups - and claimed that it represented the universal. Cultural studies insists on the social context of all value judgments, and therefore the importance of studying and valuing the contributions of all other groups, which had been historically ignored and denigrated. Cultural studies insists on the demotic concept that every reader, every viewer, brings to art productions a perception that is different and valid.

Secondly, both complexity studies and cultural studies have each, starting from different points on the spectrum, concluded that the epistemological distinction of the two cultures is intellectually meaningless and/or detrimental to the pursuit of useful knowledge.

Thirdly, both knowledge movements ultimately place themselves on the domain of social science, without explicitly saying so. Complexity studies does this by insisting on the arrow of time, on the fact that social systems are the most complex of all systems, and by insisting that science is an integral part of culture. Cultural studies does this by insisting that one cannot know anything about cultural production without placing it within its evolving social context, the identities of the producers and of those who partake of the production, and the social psychology (mentalities) of everyone involved. In addition, they insist that cultural production is a part of, deeply affected by, the power structures in which they find themselves.

As for social science, it finds itself in an ever-increasing blurring of the traditional disciplines. Virtually every discipline has created subspecialties that add the adjective of another discipline to the name of the discipline (e.g. economic anthropology, social history, historical sociology, etc.). Virtually every discipline has begun to use a mix of methodologies, including those once reserved to other disciplines. One can no longer identify archival work, participant observation, or polling with persons of particular disciplines.

In addition, new quasi-disciplines have emerged and even grown strong in the past 30-50 years: area studies of multiple areas, women's and gender studies, ethnic studies (one for each group politically strong enough to insist on it), urban studies, development studies, gay and lesbian studies (and other forms of studies revolving around sexualities). In many universities, these entities have become departments alongside the traditional ones, and if not, they are at least so-called programs. Journals and transversal associations have developed parallel to the older disciplinary associations. In addition to adding to the swirl of the social sciences by creating every more overlapping boundaries, they have also made more acute the financial squeeze, as ever more entities compete for essentially the same money.

It seems to me clear that, if one looks 20-50 years ahead, three things are possible. It is possible that the modern university may cease to be the principal locus of the production or even the reproduction of knowledge, although what would or could replace it is scarcely discussed. It is possible that the new epistemologically centripetal tendencies of the structures of knowledge may lead to a reunified epistemology (different from both of the two principal existing ones) and which I think of, perhaps provincially, as the "social scientization of all knowledge." And it is possible that the social science disciplines will collapse organizationally and be subject to, perhaps forced into by administrators, a profound reorganization, whose outlines are most unclear.

In short, I believe the structures of knowledge have entered a period of anarchy and bifurcation, just like the modern world-system as a whole, and whose outcome is similarly anything but determined. I believe the evolution of the structures of knowledge is simply a part of, a very important part of, the evolution of the modern world-system. The structural crisis of one is the structural crisis of the other. The battle for the future will be fought on both fronts.

3. The Role of the Intellectual

The intellectual operates necessarily at three levels: as an analyst, in search of truth; as a moral person, in search of the good and the beautiful; as a political person, seeking to

unify the true with the good and beautiful. The structures of knowledge which have prevailed for two centuries now were unnatural, precisely because they edicted that the intellectual could not easily move between these three levels. The intellectual was adjured to segregate these activities. The intellectual was encouraged to restrict him or herself to intellectual analysis. But if he/she could not hold back from feeling moral and political compulsions, the intellectual was told to segregate the three kinds of activities rigidly.

Such segregation, such separation is extremely difficult to achieve. And it is no accident therefore that most serious intellectuals failed to achieve the segregation, even if and when they preached its validity. Max Weber is a good case in point, and his two famous essays, "Politics as a Vocation" and "Science as a Vocation" reveal the nearly schizophrenic ways in which he wrestled with these constraints, and ratiocinated his political involvement to make it seem as it was not contradicting his commitment to value-free sociology.

Two things have changed in the last thirty years. As I have tried to show, the hold that the concept of two cultures has had on the structures of knowledge has weakened considerably, and with it the intellectual underpinning of this pressure to segregate the pursuit of the true, the good, and the beautiful. But as I have also argued, the reason for the massive questioning of the concept of the two cultures is precisely linked to the developing structural crisis of the modern world-system. As we have moved into this era of transition, the importance of fundamental choice has become more acute, at the same time that the meaningfulness of individual contributions to that collective choice has grown immeasurably. In short, to the extent that the intellectual sheds the constraints of a false value-neutrality, he/she can in fact play a role that is worth playing in the transition within which we all find ourselves.

I want to make myself very clear. In saying that value-neutrality is both a mirage and a deception, I am not arguing that there is no difference between the analytical, the moral, and the political tasks. There is indeed a difference and it is fundamental. The three cannot simply be merged. But they also cannot be separated. And our problem is how to navigate this seeming paradox, of three tasks that cannot be merged and cannot be separated. I would say in passing that this effort is one more instance of the only kind of epistemology that holds hope for the reunification of all knowledge - a theory of the unexcluded middle.⁴

Of course, this dilemma exists for everyone, not just the intellectual. Is there then something special about the role of the intellectual? Yes, there is. What we mean by an intellectual is someone who devotes his/her energies and time to an analytic understanding of reality, and presumably has had some special training in how best to do this. This is no small requirement. And not everyone has wished to become a specialist in this more general knowledge, as opposed to the very concrete particular knowledge we all need to perform any task competently. The intellectual then is a generalist, even if his general scope is in fact limited to a particular domain of the vast world of all knowledge.

The key question today is how we can apply our individual general knowledge to an understanding of the age of transition in which we live. Even an astronomer or a critic of poetry is called upon to do this, but *a fortiori* this is a demand that is made of social

scientists, who claim to be specialists about the mode of functioning and development of the social world. And by and large, we the social scientists have been doing it badly, which is why we are on the whole held in such low esteem by those in power as well as by those opposed to those in power, but also by the vast numbers of working strata who feel they have learned little of any moral or political use from what we have produced.

Our first need is the historicization of our intellectual analysis. This does not mean the accumulation of chronological detail, however useful that might be. And this does not the sort of crude relativization which asserts the obvious fact that every particular situation is different from every other, and that all structures are constantly evolving from day to day, from microsecond to microsecond. To historicize is quite the opposite. It is to place the reality we are immediately studying within the larger context, the historical structure within which it fits and operates. We can never understand the detail if we do not understand the pertinent whole, since we can never otherwise appreciate what is changing, how it is changing, and why it is changing. Historicizing is not the opposite of systematizing. One cannot systematize without seizing the historical parameters of the whole, of the unit of analysis. And one cannot therefore historicize in a void, as though everything were not part of some large systemic whole. All systems are historic and all of history is systematic.

It is this sense of the need to historicize that has led me here to spend so much emphasis on the argument that not only do we find ourselves within a particular unit of analysis, the modern world-system, but that we find ourselves within a particular moment of that historical system, its structural crisis or age of transition. This, I hope (but who can be certain?), clarifies the present, and suggests the constraints on our options for the future. And this is of course what most interests those in power, those opposed to those in power, and the vast numbers of working strata who are living their lives as best they can.

If intellectuals pursue the tasks they are called upon to pursue in an age of transition, they will not be popular. Those in power will be dismayed at what they are doing, feeling that analysis undermines power, especially in an age of transition. Those opposed to those in power will feel that intellectual analysis is all well and good, provided it feeds and encourages those involved in political opposition. But they will not appreciate hesitations, too much nuance, and cautions. And they shall try to constrain intellectuals even if they claim to be pursuing the same political objectives as those who oppose those in power. And finally the vast numbers of working strata will insist that the analyses of intellectuals be translated into language which they can understand and with which they can connect. This is a reasonable demand, but not one always easy to fulfill.

Still, the role of the intellectual is crucial. A transition is always a difficult process. There are many shoals against which the process can stumble. Clarity of analysis is often blurred by the chaotic realities and their immediate emotional tugs. But if the intellectuals do not hold the flag of analysis high, it is not likely that others will. And if an analytic understanding of the real historical choices are not at the forefront of our reasoning, our moral choices will be defective, and above all our political strength will be undermined.

So, we must all simply persist in trying to analyze a world-system in its age of transition, of clarifying the alternatives available and thereby the moral choices we have to make, and finally illuminating the possible political paths we wish to choose.

Notes

* Opening Presentation at UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge Global Research Seminar, "Knowledge Society vs. Knowledge Economy: Knowledge, Power, and Politics," Paris, 8-9 December 2003.

¹ I have done this in greater detail in two places: Immanuel Wallerstein, *Utopistics, or Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century*, New York: New Press, 1998; and Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, coords., *The Age of Transition: Trajectory of the World-System, 1945-2025*, London: Zed Press, 1996, esp. chs. 8 and 9.

² Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*," in P. Burke, ed., *Economy and Society in Early Modern Europe*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, 35.

³ The story of the evolution and choices of the social science disciplines are spelled out in I. Wallerstein et al., *Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*, Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996.

⁴ I have argued the case for the unexcluded middle in more detail in "Time and Duration, the Unexcluded Middle: Reflections on Braudel and Prigogine," *Thesis Eleven*, No. 54, August 1998, 79-87.

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e-bulletin

Religion and Globalisation: Explaining Religio-ethnic Conflict

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Introduction: the Huntington thesis

Although there has been much ethical and ideological objection to the Huntington thesis, it continues to provide an influential explanation of modern religious conflict (Huntington, 1996) and has become a dominant paradigm in the social sciences. Criticism of the Huntington thesis has often been developed at an empirical level by showing for example that conflicts *within* religions (such as Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland, or Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq) are as important as conflicts between religions. Huntington is said by his critics to have no real explanation for the fault line between religions, because the thesis is, according to Michael Mann (2003: 169) 'an ethnocentric blind to avoid having to discuss the things that Muslim opponents of the US actually care about'.

What is the Huntington thesis? At first sight it might appear that the Huntington thesis is a cultural explanation. After all, he describes it as a 'clash of civilizations'. Certainly the thesis has indeed shaped much of the academic debate about inter-cultural understanding in the humanities and social sciences. Whereas Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) offered some optimistic prospect that intellectuals could, through recognising the inherent limitations of the Orientalist tradition, cross the borders dividing cultures, and forge pathways towards mutual respect and understanding. In the post 9/11 world, Huntington's pessimistic analysis of micro fault-line conflicts and major core-state conflicts has captured the mood of western foreign policy in the 'war on terror'. The clash of civilizations is in fact the conflict between western Christianity and the Muslim world. For example, the thesis does not attempt to address dual citizenship issues arising from substantial (Catholic) Mexican migration into (Protestant America) (Glazer, 2002). In recent years, Huntington (2003) has even more explicitly spoken about 'the age of Muslim Wars' and the global emergence of Muslim grievances and hostility towards America. This framework has to a large extent determined the contours of the academic debate with the emergence of new disciplinary fields such as terrorism studies. The prospect of cultural exchange through internal criticism has been replaced by a more brutal acceptance of the incommensurability and incommunicability of cultures. The fault line is a line of incomprehension (Turner, 2003; 2004).

We can summarise Huntington's initial explanation of Islamic radicalism in the following terms. He makes a useful distinction between micro conflicts and a macro fault line, but in both cases it is essentially the conflict between Islam and other civilizations that occupies his attention. Islam or Islamism or *jibadi*- Islam is, according to Huntington, a consequence of the social frustrations, articulated around the social divisions of class and generation, following from the economic crises of the global neo-liberal experiments of the 1970s and 1980s. The demographic revolution produced large cohorts of young Muslims, who, while often well educated to college level, could not find opportunities to satisfy the aspirations that had been inflamed by nationalist governments. I will therefore define the Huntington thesis as an explanation that involves a political demography of religiously inspired conflict, because the thesis argues that a demographic bulge in failing third-world societies produces a sense of relative deprivation. In this sense, the thesis is not especially innovative.

Huntington's argument is not therefore unlike the position taken by Gilles Kepel (2002; 1994) or Olivier Roy (2002) for whom Islamism is the product of both generational pressures and class structure. First, it has been embraced by the youthful generations of the cities that were created by the post-war demographic explosion of the Third World and the resulting mass exodus from the countryside. This generation was poverty stricken, despite its relatively high literacy and access to secondary education. Secondly, Islamism recruited among the middle classes – the descendants of the merchant families from the bazaars and *souks* who had been pushed aside by decolonisation, and from the doctors, engineers and business men, who, while enjoying the salaries made possible by booming oil prices, were excluded from political power. The ideological carriers of Islamism at the local level were the 'young intellectuals, freshly graduated from technical and science departments, who had themselves been inspired by the ideologues of the 1960s' (Kepel, 2002: 6). Islamic themes of justice and equality were mobilised against those regimes that were corrupt, bankrupt and authoritarian, and often supported by the West in the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet empire.

Cultural Explanations versus social reductionism

It has been characteristic of recent approaches to radical religion to reject their own explicit ideologies that is social science tends to reject their self understanding as religious movements and to argue instead that the religious ideology is merely a reflection of underlying political, economic or social issues. A religious ideology such as fundamentalism is to be cynically deployed to recruit the masses to social and political movements. For example, class conflicts between feudal Shi'ite landowners and Sunni shop-keepers in Pakistan are the real basis of the social conflict, and we should not take the ideological contents of the sectarian conflict too seriously. Anti-Shi'ite rhetoric was useful in the mobilization of the population against landlords. Many local criminals used religion to cloak their real economic activities activities. Such religious conflicts are best explained, it is claimed, by social movements theory that does not necessarily attend to the religious content of such protests against class privilege (Wiktorowicz, 2004).

In India similarly, ritual pollution is employed to provoke ethnic conflict such as the Moradabad riot of 1980 was provoked by the discovery of a pig's head in Idgah where

the Id uz-Zuha celebration was to be held. These various rituals, highlighted by a cultural analysis of religious symbolism, provide a necessary backdrop but do not sufficiently explain the social violence in that these factors of riots only serve as pretexts for other types of conflicts. Conflict is a cyclical phenomenon which is a function of political competitions between heterogeneous groups which are held together by a religious label. These riots therefore tend to follow the cycle of political elections, and are expressions of group rivalry (Jaffrelot, 2002).

The conflict in Mindanao in the Philippines has also been explained, not a matter of religious contention between Christians and Muslims, but as an illustration of new forms of military engagement in failing states. Although religion clearly plays a very significant role in this conflict, the most suitable explanatory framework from the point of view of political science for the conflict involves the changing nature of military conflict, within which state action (and often state inaction) explains social conflict (Holsti, 1997) In this conflict, the ideological characteristics of Islam (equality, justice, the concept of community) are important in the mobilization of the masses, but they ultimately play a secondary role.

If the pressure of a youth bulge in the demographic structure produces relative deprivation as an explanation of radicalism in young men, why Islam? Why not Christianity, or nationalism, or secular politics? One explanation is that other ideologies have (recently) lost credibility, and hence Islam is a potent alternative, the ideal post-colonial ideology. Hence the characteristics of Islam have an 'elective affinity' with the outlook of people who have been marginalised. Islamic ideas have consequences in the absence of secular ideologies such as Marxism, and Islamic notion of justice have an affinity with the social and economic deprivation of marginal social groups, especially young, educated, but frustrated, Muslims.

Riaz Hassan's recent research on Islam attempts to show, amongst other things that ideas have consequences (Hassan, 2002) it is the exigencies of the consequences desired or sought by Jihadis in different periods of Islamic history which shaped the dominant nature and meaning of the doctrine of Jihad. We need an historical overview of the evolution of the theory of jihad in Islamic thought in order adequately understand how the idea of religious struggle has become dominant in the modern world. In these political struggles, *Jihad* has become a popular description of violent confrontation. Sympathetic interpretations of Islam normally argue that *Jihad* means 'spiritual struggle' but has been corrupted to mean 'armed struggle'. It is instructive to read Montgomery Watt's account of the origins of *Jihad* in the inter-tribal raids (*razzia*) that were common in Arabia. In *Islamic Political Thought*, he argues that *Jihad* ('striving' or 'expenditure of effort') had entirely secular economic origins, namely camel raids. In the great expansion of Islam in its first century, 'there was no thought of spreading the religion of Islam; apart from other considerations that would have meant sharing their privileges of booty and stipends with many neo-Muslims' (Watt, 1999:18). In subsequent generations, it 'has roused ordinary men to military activity', whereas later mystics have described it as 'self-discipline' (Watt, 1999: 19).

Although these sociological studies of religion and political conflict are primarily concerned with the modern period, in order to understand such contemporary social movements as Islamism, we need to develop an adequate historical framework. There

have been four periods of Islamic political action in response to the social and cultural crises resulting from foreign domination and internal haemorrhaging. These movements have critically attacked contemporary political and military failures in the name of the pristine Islam of the early community of the Prophet, and hence they have been labelled 'fundamentalist'. In the nineteenth century, these reformist movements, which were hostile to both traditional folk religion such as the Sufi lodges and external western threat, included Wahhabism in Arabia, the Mahdi in the Sudan, the Sanusis in North Africa, and Islamic reform movements in Egypt. The second wave of religious activism occurred in the 1940s with the development of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the third movement began in the aftermath of the Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel and reached a crescendo with the Iranian Revolution in 1978-9 and with opposition to the Russian incursion into Afghanistan. The contemporary fourth wave of resistance begins with the Gulf War in 1990, when the entry of American troops into Saudi Arabia created the groundwork for the formation of Al Qaeda networks, September 11 and the war on terrorism.

Kepel's *Jihad* is without doubt the best account we have of the rise of militant Islamism, but it is also controversial. His argument is simply that the last twenty-five years have witnessed both the spectacular rise of Islamism and its political failure. In the 1970s, when sociologists assumed that modernisation inevitably required secularisation, the sudden emergence of political Islam, especially the importance of Shi'ite theology in popular protests in Iran against authoritarian, largely secular, government, appeared to challenge dominant paradigms of modernity. These religious movements, especially when they forced women to wear the *chador* and excluded them from public life, were originally defined by leftist intellectuals as a form of religious fascism. Over time, however, Marxists came to accept that Islamism had a popular base and was a powerful force against western colonialism, while western Christian fundamentalists were attracted by Islamic preaching on moral order, obedience to God and hostility to 'impious' materialists, namely communists and socialists. Western governments were eventually willing to support both Sunni and Shi'a resistance groups against the Russian involvement in Afghanistan after 1979, despite their connections with radical groups in Pakistan and Iran.

Kepel claims however that Islamism has failed, and that political Islam has been in decline since 1989, despite the dramatically successful attack by Al Qaeda groups on New York in 2001. The political opponents of radical Islam have been able to exploit the divided class basis of the movement. For example, the fragile class alliance between the young urban poor, the devout middle classes and alienated intellectuals meant that Islamism was poorly prepared to cope with long-term and systematic opposition from state authorities. Governments found ways of dividing these social classes and frustrating the aim of establishing an Islamic state within which the *Shari'a* would have exclusive jurisdiction and authority. Kepel regards the extreme and violent manifestations of Islamism – the Armed Islamist Group in Algeria, the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Al Qaeda network of Osama bin Laden – as evidence of its political disintegration and failure. This collapse was triggered by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, which was calculated to galvanise the Arab urban poor against the political elites of the oil-rich states. The Iraqi attack destroyed the Islamic consensus that the

Saudis had established, and the presence of American troops on Saudi Arabian soil promoted the growth of dissident Islamic groups in the kingdom and beyond. After the fall of Kabul in April 1992, holy warriors were dispersed to other conflict regions such as Bosnia, Algeria and Egypt. In Bosnia, they failed to insert Islamism successfully into the conflict - a political failure made evident by the Dayton Accords in 1995. In Algeria, extreme violence against civil groups cut off their popular support, and the Berber population remained hostile to Islam. In Egypt, while radical groups had assassinated Sadat, they were unable to sustain broad political support. In Afghanistan, the Taliban lost local and international support through its brutality towards women and opposition groups. In Iraq, there are important divisions between Sunni and Shi'a radicals that make the creation of an Islamic political consensus problematic.

By 1997 there was growing evidence that support for radical Islamism was on the wane. Often with reference to human rights abuse and the need for democratisation, the middle class and women's groups who had been targets of religious controls challenged the political dominance of the conservative mullahs and their followers. The election of President Mohammed Khatami in Iran with the support of the middle classes and a generation born after the revolution was achieved against the will of the religious establishment. In Indonesia, a secular president BJ Habibie was elected to replace Suharto who fell from office in May 1998, having failed to cope with the financial crises that had undermined the currency. In Algeria, the new government of Abdelaziz Bouteflika included both secularists and moderate Islamist leaders. In Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf replaced Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who had been the protector of the Islamist movement. In Turkey, the Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan was forced out of office, thereby breaking the precarious alliance between the middle classes and the radicalised young urban poor. Finally in the Sudan, the Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi was forced out of office. For Kepel, 9/11, the Afghan war and the Iraqi conflict are further evidence of the political erosion of extremist Islamist movements. In conclusion, Al Qaeda has been unable to mobilise a mass movement behind its vision of a global religious war.

Education and Religious Revival

One important aspect of Islamic revivalism has been the attempt by Muslim intellectuals to counter western systems of knowledge and education through the 'Islamization of knowledge'. Mona Abaza (2002) provides an important historical account of this intellectual development from the First World Conference on Muslim Education in Mecca in 1977 when the parameters of the debate were established by three major figures: Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, S.N. Attas, and S.N.Nasr. The Islamization of knowledge has not been just a conflict with western secular knowledge, but also against secular Arab and Malaysian public intellectuals. Her research is important because it clearly illustrates the dilemmas confronting modernising state authorities. Both Sadat and Mahathir at one level welcomed the Islamists as a counterweight to secular communists, and hence supported the Islamization of knowledge by creating higher education institutions that could promote an 'official Islam' that did not threaten the state. In the case of Malaysia, Mahathir supported Islam in his rivalry with Singapore where the cultural presuppositions of government had the effect of promoting Confucian capitalism,

despite the official commitment to a secular state. However, both leaders wanted to crush the Islamists in order to preserve a monopoly over state power and political ideology. Mahathir condemned the obsessive ritual practices of the Islamists as a burden on the economic modernization, and yet the attempt to compromise with radical Islam created a social space within which it can flourish. A further paradox for both societies has been the role of modern technological universities rather than traditional educational systems in recruiting and training the radical Islamist students.

There is some evidence that Qur'anic training has played an important role in the moulding of a radical mentality that supports fundamentalism. Certainly the educational institutions that support popular competitions in the recitation of the Qur'an for example in Indonesia have been important in Islamic revivalism (Gade, 2005). New technologies, including media technologies, require different operating practices and different pedagogical assumptions. In turn, different pedagogical environments produce different personalities. Book based learning by rote remains a common pedagogy as we have seen in Indonesia. In fundamentalist Islam generally the social movement of Deobandism has been particularly important. This Sunni revivalist sect emerged in British India in the nineteenth century, and it has played an important part in the radicalisation of Islamic thought in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan's Deobandi *madrassas* played an important part in the training of the radical Taliban. The Deobandi tradition came into existence around 1867 to defend Islamic traditions in a society dominated by Hinduism. As a strategy of cultural survival, they developed a strict interpretation of Islam, including strict control over women. By the 1980s the Deobandi community found itself in conflict with Shi'ites in Pakistan and Iran. In part this was an economic conflict in which impoverished Sunnis found themselves in conflict with rich Shi'ite landowners. The conflict was also related to the payment of religious tax or *zakat*. Under Zia's dictatorship *zakat* was levied on bank accounts during Ramadan to show the piety of the government. These taxes were used to fund religious schools, and many Shi'ite groups (around 20% of the Pakistani population) who claimed that they were already paying *zakat* taxes to their own ayatollahs, were eventually exempt. The manner in which the *zakat* was collected and distributed fuelled conflict between Sunni and Shi'ite communities. The Deobandi movement has employed the idea of *jihad* to attack any group such as the Ismailis which are considered to be *kafirs*. The Deobandi *madrassas* or religious schools have played an important part in creating powerful social solidarity through an intimate dependency between students and their *ulama*. Deobandi pedagogy emphasises the memorialisation of koranic verses, repetitive learning and strict obedience to teachers. It creates a disciplined self that is very different from the spontaneity and shallowness that is associated for example with surfing the net. The generation that came out the Pakistani Deobandi *madrassas* became the Taliban whose name means '*madrassa* pupils'. These pupils became the jihadist militants of the 1990s. In short Deobandi pedagogy of strict submission to the word produced a technology of the Talibanic self.

For Islam, and many other cultures, globalisation has meant migration and then the creation of diasporic communities. The internet provides an obvious method for dialogue within and between such diasporic groups, but the unintended consequence is often that diasporic politics and their intellectual elites come to depart radically from

tradition, building up their own internal notions of authority, authenticity and continuity. The internet holds the diasporic community together across space and then challenges traditional authority, which is often an oral, and print authority. Although the new media have had important consequences for the Middle East as a region, it is often in the diaspora that the democratic effects of the media have their most important effect. Perhaps the most useful recent discussion of Muslims, diaspora and the information superhighway is to be found in Peter Mandaville's *Transnational Muslim Politics* (2001). Many young Muslims bypass their *ulama* and *imams* in order to learn about Islam from pamphlets and sources in English for example *The Muslim News* and *Q-News*. The vast majority of Muslim users of the Internet are in Europe and North America. These diasporic Internet users are typically Muslim students in western universities undertaking technical degrees in engineering, chemistry and accountancy. There is an important affinity between their scientific backgrounds and their fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. Because internet access is often too expensive to be available in peasant communities in the Middle East and Asia, it is again students in western universities accessing the net for religious and political communication. There is little real evidence that the net is used by radical activists to promote terrorism against the West. By contrast, the net tends to promote reasoned argument in a context where everybody can in principle check the sources for themselves. 'In the absence of sanctioned information from recognised institutions, Muslims are increasingly taking religion into their own hands' (Mandaville, 2001: 168). Much of this net discussion is about the proper conduct required by a 'good Muslim' in a variety of contexts and circumstances. The majority of sites are not developed by 'official' Muslim organizations such as the Muslim World League. Muslim sites tend to provide opportunities for discussion and discourse outside the official culture. It is for this reason that the net is a means of bypassing the traditional gatekeepers of Muslim orthodoxy. The net also has a democratising effect in the sense that it levels out power differences between social groups; for example the Ismailis can appear to be as mainstream as other movements in Shi'ism.

New wars, civil war and terrorism

In the recent sociology of the military, there has been an important debate about the distinction between old and new wars, that provides a valuable insight into micro religious conflicts, ethnic-cleansing and genocide (Munkler,). In particular, the concept of new wars is helpful in thinking about the increased vulnerability of women and children in civil conflicts. Old wars are said to be characteristic of the international system that was created by the Treaty of Westphalia, involving military conflict between armies that were recruited and trained by nation states. In the conventional inter-states wars of the past that involved large set battles and military manoeuvres, sexual violence against women on enemy territory was dysfunctional in terms of strategic, rational, military objectives, because it interfered with the primary objective of war, which was the decisive defeat of an opposing army by direct military engagement. Harassing civilian populations constrained military mobility on the battle field and delayed engagement with an opposing army. With these conventional inter-state wars, the development of international law to protect civilians was perfectly compatible with these military objectives.

In new wars, this military logic evaporates, and systematic rape of women (so-called 'camp rape'), and violence towards civilians generally, become functional activities in undermining civil authorities and destroying civil society. In wars between states, the majority of casualties are military personnel; in new wars, the casualties are almost entirely civilian. New wars involve the sexualization of violence. The other characteristic of such wars is the growing use of children as cheap combat troops. These wars are in part the product of failed states and the reduced cost of military equipment, such as the widespread use of the Kalashnikov rifle. New wars have occurred in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Darfur, Rwanda, Burma, East Timor and the Sudan.

These new wars have the following characteristics occur therefore in post-colonial territories and they are expressed in terms of ethnic differentiation. Conflicting groups deploy or invent traditions to explain and justify current conflicts, and the belligerents need ideological simplification of the conflict to justify violence. And hence violence plays a large part in community formation. Religious conflicts are often seen to be exacerbated by the negative social impact of civil wars and ethnic violence that are in turn the products of new wars.

Conclusion: Sovereignty, State Failure and Citizenship

Recent sociological and political approaches to religious conflict have neglected cultural aspects of social violence. What these explanations often have in common is some attention to the failure of the state to deliver adequate forms of citizenship that can embrace cultural or ethnic diversity. With weak or failing states, the public sphere is no longer a neutral ground for the expression of peaceful competition between social groups. Drug cartels and the funding of the state through illegal activities has become a common feature of political activity in the third world, where the state is directly involved in trafficking, drug dealing, and sexual slavery. The rule of law is corrupted by the direct involvement of the state in ethnic conflict (for example by supporting Hindus against Muslims in Gujarat, or Christian settlers against Muslims in south Philippines).

Empirical case studies of religious conflict such as Hindu-Muslim riots, Sunni and Shi'ite conflicts in Pakistan and Iraq, or Christian-Muslim conflict in Mindanao support the view that ethnic conflict is a function of state intervention in support of majorities against minorities. This suggests that the principal cause of social conflict and civil rights abuses is the crisis of failed states (Ignatieff, 2001), but the response of western governments to these problems has been defensive and unhelpful, and thus the 'historical record suggests disturbingly that majorities care less about deprivations of liberty that harm minorities than they do about their own security' (Ignatieff, 2004: ix).

Global changes in economics and politics have meant that the failure of many societies to benefit from economic growth in the post-war period has laid the foundations for social conflict. Failed states create an environment for new wars, in which it may be in the interests of elites to use ethnic and religious conflict for political objectives, but can we finally ignore the cultural dimension? Are monotheistic religions (primarily the Abrahamic religions) less able to adjust to the hybridity and complexity of globalisation? David Hume once argued to the effect that polytheism is more tolerant of difference and complexity than monotheism. We need a better understanding therefore of how multicultural societies that are the products of global migrations and the rise of

transnational communities can better manage cultural diversity and foster communal tolerance. We need to better understand the new challenges to political sovereignty that are consequences of globalisation without descending into fascism as the only radical response (Montgomery and Glazer, 2002).

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Tocqueville as an Ethnographer of American Prison Systems and Democratic Practice

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Even so there is irony in the fact that [...] Tocqueville came here to study the wonderful ways in which America incarcerated human beings, not how democracy freed them.

-Ronald Walters (1986: 4).

The most useful way in which to think of Democracy in America is neither as history nor ethnography but as an ideal type.

-Robert Nisbet (1988: 186).

Already in his own time Tocqueville was rightly considered to be the greatest thinker on democracy. Now that democracy at the end of the millennium seems to be beginning its triumphal procession over our entire globe, Tocqueville is still our best guide if we wish to understand democracy. Tocqueville has an undeniable right to such praise, since no other political thinker has been more deeply aware of the paradoxes and the sublimity that are forever the glory of democracy.

-F.R. Ankersmit (1996: 343).

The Problem:

Alexis de Tocqueville is one of the most influential interlocutors of modernity whose reflections on democracy continue to inspire, engage and haunt us as we are supposedly in an age of global democratization. Tocqueville's work on Democracy, *Democracy in America*, was published between 1835-1840. Around this period, European society was making a transition from an ancient regime to a form of social and political system whose full contour was yet to emerge. Not only the transition from feudalism to democracy but also other lines of transition such as the transition from feudalism to the industrial and the capitalistic order were subjects of profound concern for both the laymen and the concerned commentators of the existing condition. During this period, we have in Europe the emergence of such powerful observers of this transitional society as Saint Simon, Karl Marx and Hegel--to name the most influential among them. In the history of political and social thought, these powerful commentators of the European transition have their own schools and trajectories of influence. We have the more

familiar schools built around Marx and Hegel. What is interesting, there is also a school built around Tocqueville that Tocqueville was a great system builder of democracy.

Tocqueville wrote about institutions of democracy in America. He was also concerned with the impact of these on other institutions and cultural relations in America. When one reads Tocqueville as an ethnographer, not as a partisan social theorist, one is not sure whether Tocqueville intended to build a system of democracy as a political system or whether his work is an ethnography of American democratic practice. Ethnography believes in a critical description of the complexities of life and stresses the limits of apriori theoretical determination and ideological assertions in the understanding and articulation of the dynamics of life. However, students of Tocqueville take a variety of positions on this issue. For some, Tocqueville belongs to a continental tradition of deductive method and theorizing and the description of facts about American democratic practice interested him to the extent that it could lead to a coherent theoretical statement. As Melvin Richter writes: "Montesquieu's theory had provided the categories by which Tocqueville sought to explain what he had discovered by his empirical research in America. Tocqueville's own intellectual style determined in part the use he made of Montesquieu. But there can be no question that theory guided heuristically Tocqueville's explorations in person and later in his sources, just as it contributed to the ultimate shape it took in his final version" (Richter 1970: 101). Cushing Strout argues that Tocqueville has a double analytical task in *Democracy in America*: to describe America in particular while setting forth in general the abstract outlines of the egalitarian society (Strout 1969: 87). Raymond Aron whose interpretation of Tocqueville portrays him as a counter figure to Marx provides a somewhat different reflection: "*Tocqueville... was a sociologist who never ceased to judge while he described.* (For him), a description can not be faithful unless it includes those judgments intrinsically related to description..." (Aron 1965: 204; italics added).

But the above interpretations of Tocqueville have been subjected to a recent fundamental critique by historian and philosopher F.R. Ankersmit. In his provocative essay, "Metaphor and Paradox in Tocqueville's Writings," Ankersmit tells us that "Western political thought knows few texts so conspicuous for lack of consistency as those of Tocqueville" (Ankersmit 1996: 295). For Ankersmit, Tocqueville has no "theory of democracy" and a close reading of his texts suggests that "Tocqueville's major insights can only be found at what one might call the micro-level" (ibid). Tocqueville's work does not carry any model of historical inevitability or certainty and Tocqueville uses paradox as an important tool of description and understanding. For Ankersmit, "...both the form and the content of Tocqueville's work are a protest against the attempt to objectify democracy, to look at it from a certain distance in order to develop a theory of it" (ibid).

Controversies exist not only around the issue of theory versus description but the implication of Tocqueville's theory for the wider question of ideology and revolutionary social transformation. Bottomore (1993) argues that the history of modern political philosophy can be characterized by two contending socio-political visions: one emphasizing the significance of economic democracy and the dismantling of capitalist class inequality for the emergence of real political democracy, the other stressing the power of democracy as a socio-political system in reducing class antagonism leading to real social equality. In this dialogue between Marx and Tocqueville, it is assumed and

sometimes explicitly argued that Tocqueville was building a theory of democracy as a political system suitable for the emerging industrial polity. It is argued that Tocqueville was looking forward to democracy as a panacea for class and corporate conflict engendered by the conflict between capital and labor in industrial society. Raymond Aron makes this fight with the ghost of Karl Marx clear: for Tocqueville, industrial wealth is mobile and is not concentrated in the families. "Thus American society can provide, not a model, but a lesson to European societies by showing them how liberty is safeguarded in a democratic society" (Aron 1965: 193). Even in terms of style, for Aron, Tocqueville was writing in a literary style rather in terms of explicating concepts.

The interpretation of Tocqueville's work as providing an alternative to Marxian analysis of social transformation and as a builder of democracy as a total system obscures the real Tocqueville, Tocqueville the ethnographer. When we look closely at Tocqueville's work not as an enthusiastic ideologue, but as an open-minded ethnographer, Tocqueville's rich, thick but critical description of the American democratic practice strikes us. As Abraham Eisenstadt helps us understand this:

In trying to understand the tendency of his times, he kept his vision wide and his reason flexible. He did not fit them to a procrustean chronology [...] Tocqueville built the grand structure of *Democracy in America* out of three elemental ideas--democracy, revolution, and liberty. He explored these elements in all their permutations and combinations, ceaselessly contemplating, ruminating, speculating. Writing a variety of scripts for the evolving future, he never insisted on the inevitability of any one of them. He kept his options open, intently resisting dogmatism. This mind-set gives the *Democracy* its special nature. It is in many respects an intellectual log book in which Tocqueville takes the reader on a shared, almost personal adventure of inquiry about the new democracy. In sum, the broad scale of his inquiry, his starting intuition, his refusal to dogmatize, his unremitting questions, his persistent hypothesizing: these formed the premises of *Democracy*, giving it a sustained importance for the generations that followed Tocqueville" (Eisenstadt 1988: 6-7).

And such an open-ended approach to Tocqueville is facilitated by historian Ronald Walters's argument that Tocqueville was never shy of placing tensions and inconsistencies at the heart of his analysis (Walters 1986: 18).

In this context of conflict of interpretations and different ways of reading Tocqueville, the present essay seeks to bring the ethnographic Tocqueville to the center of our understanding of Tocqueville. It argues that in order to understand the significance of Tocqueville's work, we have to be cautious in imputing our system building and political enthusiasm into Tocqueville, the ethnographer who describes the work of democracy in America rather than present a coherent theory of it. It pleads for reading *Democracy in America* not solely as a theory of democracy but as an ethnography of the American democratic practice. It submits that even to understand Tocqueville as a theorist of democracy, it is essential to remember and take seriously the fact that the young French aristocrat had come to America to study the American prison system. Its main objective is to understand Tocqueville's ethnography of American prison systems

and American democratic practice, to explore the links between these two ethnographic universes and finally to look into the significance of this ethnographic link for understanding Tocqueville's model, theory and vision of democracy.

Tocqueville's Ethnography of the Penitentiary System in America

It is not entirely clear when Tocqueville first thought of writing a book about America. In 1831-32, the official mission of the young French magistrate and his colleague, Gustav de Beaumont, was to prepare a report on American prison system and they stayed in America for nine months. Even though they wanted to stay longer, the French government was pressing for an end to their mission and a quick return to France.

Tocqueville and Beaumont point to the aspects of solitary confinement in American prisons. They discuss two models of the penitentiary system: a) the principle of isolation practised in Philadelphia prisons and b) emphasis on the labor of the prisoners as in the Auburn system. Both these two penitentiary systems are based on the isolation of the prisoners (Tocqueville and Beaumont 1964: 55). These prisons rest upon the united principles of solitude and labor. In Philadelphia, perfect isolation secures the prisoners from all "fatal contaminations." On the other hand, in the Auburn system, prisoners labor together silently during the day. What strikes them in the American penitentiary system is the solitary confinement of prisoners in prisons.

The attitude of these two observers is anything but unambiguous. On the one hand, they refer to the danger in the refuge houses and the difficulty of keeping a house of refuge in proper medium between a school and a prison. They also refer to "the unhappy condition of the working class who are in want of labor and bread..." (Tocqueville and Beaumont 1964: 34). But there is also much to suggest that "in many ways they were pessimistic about reform. Although criminal behaviour for the authors is primarily the result of indolence and idleness, they see no simple reformation of the criminal" (Tocqueville & Beaumont 1964: viii). Even before leaving for America, both Tocqueville and Beaumont had grand designs for studying more than criminal codes and penitentiary scheme. "We are rearing with the intention of examining in detail and as scientifically as possible all the mechanism of this vast American society about which everyone talks and no one knows" (Schleifer 1980: 1). Moreover this book on the penitentiary system is crucial in the construction of the argument in *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville's note books on prison-system are mostly filled with observations on political, social and economic matters that were later to furnish the data for Tocqueville's work on Democracy. As Walters (1986: 4-5) argues:

To some extent there was a tie between Tocqueville's interest in American jails and his assessment of American democracy. The most striking characteristic of the penitentiary system that drew the interest of the French was its use of extreme measures-including enforced silence and solitary confinement. As convicts suffered through the prison yards, they were in a perverse way the logical extreme of Tocqueville's democratic man, each part of an undifferentiated mass, yet driven in upon himself, "shut up in the solitude of his own heart."

Tocqueville's Ethnography of the American Democratic Practice

It is essential to look into Tocqueville's *Democracy of America* to find out what a picture of the democratic man and the democratic society comes out in his ethnography. But before coming to terms with the ethnographic Tocqueville, it needs to be noted that Tocqueville was also engaged in a somewhat broader design of finding the image of Democracy in American society. As he puts it clearly: "I confess that in America, I saw more than America; I sought the image of democracy itself, with its inclinations, its characters, its prejudices, and its passions in order to learn what we have to fear or hope from its progress" (Tocqueville 1945: xxxii).

In America, nothing struck him more forcibly than the general equality of conditions. "The more I advanced in the study of American society, the more I perceived that the equality of conditions is the fundamental fact from which all others seem to be derived, and the central point at which all my observations constantly terminated" (ibid: xvii). For him, the coming of the democratic age was inevitable not because of any inexorable law of social change but because of the supervening role of Providence. "He took this as a given, on the basis of a highly sensitive intuition rather than of extensively amassed evidence" (Eisenstadt 1988: 6). Tocqueville attributes the working of the American democracy to the mores of the people, what he calls "habits of the heart." For him, the mores are even more significant than the laws. By mores, Tocqueville not only refers to manners that constitute the "character of social intercourse" but also to "the various notions and opinions current among men, and to the mass of those ideas which constitute their character of mind" (Tocqueville 1961: 354). In the operation of the town meetings in America, Tocqueville observed the growth of a democratic temper. In New England, townships were constituted as early as 1650. The independence of the township was the nucleus around which the local interests, passions, rights and duties clung. Tocqueville describes how in Massachusetts, the mainspring of public administration lies in township. Outside of New England, the importance of the town is gradually transferred to the county, which becomes the intermediate power between the government and the citizen. For him, the prominent feature of the administration in the U.S. is its excessive local independence. Moreover, people of America like this form of governance. As Tocqueville tells us: "In America, I know of no one who does not regard provincial independence as great benefit" (Tocqueville 1961: 99).

In the working of American democracy, Tocqueville attributes great importance to the power of the judiciary. He writes: "Few laws can escape the searching analysis of the judicial power for any length of time" (Tocqueville 1961: 104). He looks at the legal profession as the most powerful existing security against the excesses of democracy. The language of law pervades popular consciousness in America. "All parties are obliged to borrow even the language usual in judicial proceedings" (Tocqueville 1961: 330). Lawyers, for him, form a cultural class and provide an equivalent to aristocratic temper in a democratic society. They have nothing to "gain from innovation, which adds a conservative interest to their natural taste for public order" (Tocqueville 1961: 328). The jury in America facilitates the communication between the judges and the citizens.

Political associations form the bedrock of American democracy. For Tocqueville, political associations are peaceable in intentions and strictly legal in the means which they employ. He also discusses the function of the Federal Government. The President and the Ministers are excluded from Congress. He finds two dangers to democracy in the way the Federal Government operates: a) the complete subjection of the legislative body to the caprices of the electoral body; b) the very complex nature of the means which the Federal Govt. employs to conduct its execution. He analyses the principal causes which tend to maintain the democratic Republic in America. He shows how religion provides support to American democracy. Religion also facilitates the use of free institutions. As Tocqueville writes, "Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention" (Tocqueville 1961: 365).

The features of democracy depicted above have been described in Tocqueville's Volume One. Many observers have attempted to make a distinction between the optimism in Tocqueville's portrayal of Democracy in 1835 and the dark pessimism in his second volume in 1840. As Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. observes:

Looking at America in the 1835 Democracy, Tocqueville returned a rather hopeful answer. Religion, voluntary associations, local government, federalism, the free press, the machinery of justice, the traditions of the people...-all held out the prospect of keeping private interest under social control. Above all, he was impressed and reassured by the national ardor for civic participation...Participation was both stimulated and guaranteed by political freedom. The 1840 Democracy, as we all know, presented a less cheering picture. Here Tocqueville introduced his theory of individualism. By individualism, Tocqueville...meant something close to the modern sociological concept of "privatization." For Tocqueville individualism meant not self-assertion, but self-withdrawal--the disposition of each member of the community to "sever himself from the mass of his fellows, and to draw apart with his family and friends, so that he forms a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself (Schlesinger, Jr. 1988: 98).

Schlesinger attributes this perspectival difference between the two volumes to Tocqueville's close exposure to the democratic practice at home and his journey to Britain. This distinction between the optimism of the first volume and the pessimism of the second volume is a useful starting point to understanding Tocqueville's critical ethnography of the American democratic practice. However, Schlesinger himself argues that this distinction can not be pushed too far. Tocqueville is critical of the pretensions of American people and their democratic practice in the first as well as in the second volume. In both the two volumes, he encounters the American condition both as an aristocrat and as a European. He is extremely critical of many of the social, cultural and political practices of the Americans: from their literary life to how they adore their body. "Even in the first volume itself, the balance between virtue and self-interest remained precarious and he identified an array of dangers" (ibid: 97). In the first volume itself, Tocqueville pointed to the tyranny of the majority and the American love for money. In

the first volume itself, Tocqueville's ethnographic mind brings him into critical encounter with much of American democratic practice. He writes, "I do not say that tyrannical abuses frequently occur in America at the present day; but I maintain that no sure barrier is established against them" (Tocqueville 1961: 307). Contrary to the familiar interpretation of Tocqueville as emphasizing mores and ignoring the material relations of social life, Tocqueville argues, "No great change takes place in human institutions, without involving against its causes the law of inheritance" (ibid: 435).

As a superb ethnographer of the cultural condition of another people, Tocqueville presents many of the broad features of American society and culture in the context of which American democracy operates. He writes: "The Anglo-Americans are not only united together by their common opinions, but they are separated from all other nations by a feeling of pride." Throughout his text, he never misses a single chance to point to the mediocrity of the Americans in all aspects of their cultural and social life. The comparison between the Americans and the Europeans is always in his mind. For him, the "Europeans do not think of the ills they endure, while they [the Americans] are forever brooding over advantages they do not possess" (Tocqueville 1945: 136). Tocqueville is full of sarcasm about the literary and the intellectual life in America. Insofar as the production of text is concerned, some students of contemporary cultural forms have made a distinction between authors and writers (Geertz 1988). For Tocqueville, in America, there are neither authors nor writers, but only journalists (Tocqueville 1945: 56). He also captures the ahistorical nature of the American character and its intellectual concerns: the only historical remains in the U.S. are the newspapers (Tocqueville 1961: 243). The books he finds in American book stores remind him of American pragmatism and insensitivity. Whatever books he finds interesting in America are imported from Britain. Authors in democratic societies will "aim at rapidity of execution more than at perfection of detail" (Tocqueville 1945: 59). As shall be discussed later, Tocqueville points to the paradoxes in democracy, more particularly in American Democracy: the tensions between despotism and democracy, individualism and equality, equality of conditions and individualistic competitiveness and between equality and inequality. All these tensions have to be situated in the context of Tocqueville's observations about the general cultural attitude of the American people. In his discussion of the paradoxes of the American democratic practice, he attributes a lot of problems to the narrow self-interest of the Americans. What is interesting is that Tocqueville puts forward similar sarcastic comments on American moral standards: "The American moralists do not profess that men ought to sacrifice themselves for their fellow creatures because it is noble to make such sacrifices, but they boldly aver that such sacrifices are as necessary to him who imposes them upon himself as to him for whose sake they are made" (Tocqueville 1945: 122)

Corollary to the Anglo-Saxon pride is the fact of religious insanity that strikes him. But by religious insanity, Tocqueville does not have in mind the contemporary problem of religious fanaticism and bigotry. Here he is referring to a sort of "fanatical spiritualism," "certain momentary outbreaks...when their souls seem suddenly to burst the bonds of matter by which they are restrained and to soar impetuously to heaven" (Tocqueville 1945: 134). But for him, this fanatical spiritualism is the inevitable outcome of a socio-cultural life that puts so much emphasis upon material prosperity and

individual self-interest. To quote him, "I should be surprised if mysticism did not soon make some advance among a people solely engaged in promoting their worldly affair" (ibid: 135). From all these observations, what comes out clearly is the derision and the sarcasm with which he looks at American society and culture.

For him, in no country in the civilized world is less attention paid to philosophy than in the United States. Americans always tend to results without being bound to means. "America is therefore one of the countries where the precepts of Descartes are least studied, and are best applied. Nor is this surprising. The Americans do not read the works of Descartes, because their social conditions deter them from speculative studies; but they follow his maxims, because this social condition naturally disposes their minds to adopt them" (Tocqueville 1956: 143). Starting from the realms of fundamental outlook to such areas of life as art, he only finds mediocrity and non-seriousness. "In aristocracies, a few great pictures are produced; in democratic countries, a vast number of insignificant ones" (ibid: 169). What also strikes his derisive aristocratic temper is the way Americans adore their body and their physical well-being. Anthropologist Robert Murphy's recent work on the disabled people in American culture also shows how American culture celebrates eternal youth and despises the old and the physically handicapped (Murphy 1987). Constance Perin shows how this adoration of the youth in American culture is manifested in a negative and derisive attitude towards the children (Perin 1988).

To come from the realm of culture to the arena of democratic practice, Tocqueville starts with the tension between equality and liberty. He argues that democratic nations show a more ardent love of equality than of liberty. The passion for equality is produced by equality of conditions prevalent in the democratic societies. For him, "the principle of equality may be established in civil society, without prevailing in the democratic world" (Tocqueville 1956: 189). He further adds: "The taste which men have for equality and that they feel for liberty, are in fact, two different things; and two unequal things" (ibid: 190). Compared to aristocratic societies, democratic societies take equality as an ultimate value, but this is not necessarily accompanied by freedom. Democratic communities have a natural taste for freedom. "But for equality, their passion is ardent, insatiable, incessant, invincible: they call for equality in freedom; and if they can not obtain that, they still call for equality in slavery" (Tocqueville 1956: 192).

What is to be noted here is that Tocqueville is making a distinction between equality as value and equality as practice. In the so-called social condition of equality, he finds the passion for tyranny, arbitrariness and inequality among the American people. "An American is forever talking of the admirable equality which prevails in the United States., but in secret, he deplures it for himself; and he aspires to show that, for his part, he is an exception to the general state of things which he vaunts. There is hardly an American to be met with who does not claim some remote kindred with the first founders of the colonies" (ibid: 225). When equality is pursued to its ultimate extreme, it only creates a social condition of inequality. The corollary value which generates inequality in the process of pursuit for equality is the value of individualism. In democratic societies, citizens "perpetuate, in a state of equality, the animosities that the state of inequality created" (ibid: 101).

Tocqueville's conception and description of individualism in democratic societies in general and in American democracy in particular is complex. Tocqueville points to the irresistible process of the emergence and growth of individualism in democratic societies. But this does not mean that Tocqueville provides unqualified support for individualism as a value to be strived for and fought over. Nor does he build a utopia around the value of individualism. As in case of his broader presentation of the democratic society, Tocqueville's vision of an individualistic society contains more elements of "dystopia," to borrow a term from cultural psychologist Ashish Nandy, than of utopia (Nandy 1987). Cushing Strout notes that Tocqueville's vision of a society of individualism contains a possible anti-utopia that any one has ever made (Strout 1969). He is not only skeptical about the pursuit of individualism to its extreme, he is sensitive to the varieties of manifestations it can take. His notion of individualism is complex and his vision of a future individualistic society lacks his unqualified support. Like his idea of democracy, his view of individualism has ethnographic richness that can hardly be translated into a formal theory of individualism and an enthusiastic political doctrine. In this context, it is helpful to note the distinction between aristocratic individualism and apathetic individualism that Abraham Eisenstadt finds in Tocqueville's Democracy (Eisenstadt 1988). For Eisenstadt, in the first volume, Tocqueville confronts active individuals in American democracy who take a very active role in its public and political life: building schools, creating churches and participating in the local town meetings. But in the second volume, Tocqueville confronts apathetic individuals in American Democracy: individuals who are withdrawn within themselves, individuals who live through a form of solitary confinement, individuals so busy in the pursuit of their own interest that they have hardly any concern for and commitment to the public issues. This individualistic apathy succumbs them to the pressure of the number in democratic societies, it is the basis upon which the tyranny of the majority is founded. Tocqueville writes: "The same equality which renders him independent of his fellow-citizens, taken severally, exposes him alone and unprotected to the influence of the great number" (Tocqueville 1956: 148). For Tocqueville, the line of separation between egoistic selfishness and democratic individualism is thin and there is no historical destiny in this dyad. In the words of Tocqueville:

I have shown how it is that, in ages of equality, every man seeks for his opinions within himself: I am now to show how it is that, in the same ages, all his feelings are turned towards himself alone...Selfishness blights the germ of all virtue: individualism, at first, only saps the virtue of public life, but, in the long run, it attacks and destroys all others, and is at length absorbed in downright selfishness. Selfishness is a vice as old as the world, which does not belong to one form of society more than to another: individualism is of democratic origin, and it threatens to spread in the same ratio as the equality of condition (Tocqueville 1956: 193).

This complex relationship between individualism and equality comes out clearly in Tocqueville's discussion of the differential impact of the Protestant and the Catholic individualism upon the practice of democratic equality. For him, the Catholics constitute the most democratic class of citizens who exist in the United States. He writes, "If

Catholicism predisposes the faithful to obedience, it certainly does not prepare them for inequality: but the contrary may be said of Protestantism, which generally tends to make men independent, more than to render them equal" (Tocqueville 1961: 356). Tocqueville also points to egotistic competitiveness accompanying individualism and equality. Individualistic competitiveness, in the long run, undermines the practice of social equality. This pursuit of individualistic competitiveness, for Tocqueville, is a product of insatiable "desire," giving rise an ambition in the individuals that "he is born to no common destinies" (Tocqueville 1945: 138). "But this is an erroneous notion which is corrected by daily experience" (ibid).

Both Cushing Strout and Arthur Schlesinger argue that by individualism Tocqueville refers to the modern sociological concept of "privatization" (Schlesinger 1988; Strout 1969). Schlesinger argues that by individualism Tocqueville meant something very different from Emersonian self-reliance or Darwinian rigid individualism. But when we read Tocqueville's description closely, he also brings to the fore the operation of rugged individualism. This is especially true when he speaks about mad competitiveness and the limitless pursuit for money and the business interest. Tocqueville was not only struck by the emerging social conditions of equality in American democracy, he was also not insensitive to the emerging patterns of industrial inequality in America. Walters has argued that it is not simply fortuitous that Tocqueville discusses the emergence of aristocracy among the manufacturers in America. For Tocqueville, in democratic societies, as conditions of man become more and more equal, the demand for manufactured commodity becomes more extensive. The manufactures, in democratic societies, have both capital and intelligence (Tocqueville 1956: 218). "While the workman concentrates his faculties more and more upon the study of a single detail, the master surveys an extensive whole..." In this manufacturing process, "the art advances, the artisan recedes" (Tocqueville 1956: 218). In manufacturing, the worker "no longer belongs to himself, but to the calling which he has chosen" (ibid: 217). The manufacturers are more powerful than "manners and laws." The theory of manufacturers assigns the worker a "certain place in society, beyond which he can not go: in the midst of universal movement, it has rendered him stationary" (ibid: 218).

In American democracy, as Tocqueville argues, the manufacturer asks nothing of the workman, "but his labor; the workman expects nothing from him but his wages" (ibid: 219). For him, the manufacturers create a small aristocracy in democratic societies. Unlike the aristocrats by birth, these aristocrats, however, do not form a class. Tocqueville's provocative portrayal of the manufacturing relationship in American democracy instantaneously reminds one of Marx's analysis of the capitalistic society. Tocqueville's discussion of the condition of the worker comes close to Marx's discussion of alienation of the workers in capitalist society. It is undoubtedly true that Tocqueville has written, "To say the truth, though there are rich men, the class of the rich men does not exist; for the rich individuals have no feelings or purposes in common" (ibid: 219). While this line may be interpreted as the anti-Marxian stance of Tocqueville, at the same time, his sensitive and sympathetic portrayal of the condition of the working class in democracy brings him closer to the critical insights of Karl Marx. Tocqueville was also perturbed by an ominous trend in the American democratic practice: the problem of the tyranny of the majority. Interpreters of Tocqueville as early as John Stuart Mill have

pointed to Tocqueville's arguments regarding how the sovereignty of the majority creates a tendency on their part to abuse their power over all minorities. Tocqueville accounts for this tyranny by both the mediocrity of the men of power and the apathy of the citizens. For him, merit is common among the governed and rare among the governors. Individuals do not form their own authentic opinions on issues, rather they are swayed away by the pressure of the number. Tocqueville's dark passages about tyranny of the majority antedates the most critical observations of mass society.

Tocqueville's description and evaluation of the American democratic practice--the mediocrity of its rulers, their lack of purpose and an aristocratic sublimity--has been influenced by his background, both as an aristocrat and as an European. European observers of the American condition have always been critical of the shallowness of the social roots and mores in America. At a fundamental level, it reflects the way Europeans have had to come to terms with the ascendancy of America and its supersession of Europe. To place Tocqueville's critique of the democratic mediocrity in proper perspective, Ortega Gasset's (1985) critique of mass society is helpful here. Gasset makes a distinction between the uncommon aristocrats and the common masses in modern society. The uncommon aristocrats have an elevated moral and historical responsibility, they are those who have chosen for themselves a much larger commitment, on the other hand, the masses are bound by their own interest and characterized by an apathy to issues larger than their self-concerns. In the same book, interestingly enough, Gasset is melancholic about the way America supersedes Europe.

Tocqueville's Ethnography and Interpreting Tocqueville

Two broad interpretations of Tocqueville which I want to specifically encounter from this portrayal of the ethnographic Tocqueville concern the issues of Tocqueville's method and politics. The first interpretive problem concerns Tocqueville's method in his *Democracy in America*. In the introduction to this essay, mention was made of the way students of Tocqueville discover a systemic and formalistic method in his study. Such an argument is justified on the basis of Tocqueville's introductory remark that in America, he saw more than America, he saw the image of democracy. Robert Nisbet quotes this same line to justify his interpretation of Tocqueville's method. For him, "...the important features of Tocqueville's mind were not experimental or experiential; they were Cartesian to the hilt" (Nisbet 1988: 183). For Nisbet, Tocqueville was so obsessed with formulating an abstract and general model of democracy that "he saw more than America; and in the process he saw less than America" (Nisbet 1988: 173). This abstract mind was supposedly not interested in the particularities of the American life. Nisbet also thinks that Tocqueville's work on Democracy is an exercise in ideal-type par excellence. "Tocqueville holds his two great ideal-types, Aristocracy and Democracy, in a kind of dynamic tension, a dialectical opposition, quite as Marx and Weber do with their paired opposites" (ibid: 188). For Nisbet, Tocqueville, like Marx, had a teleological view of history: ".in Marx, socialism and communism; in Tocqueville, equality and homogeneity" (ibid: 190).

Nisbet's reading of Tocqueville is an illustration of the way Tocqueville's method and political vision has usually been interpreted. Such an interpretation of Tocqueville's method can be traced, at least, back to James Bryce's classic work, *The American*

Commonwealth. For Bryce, Tocqueville was looking for the essence of Democracy in America. Bryce contends that Tocqueville did not present "Democracy in America," but his own theoretic view of Democracy illustrated from America. For Bryce, the "problem with Tocqueville's Democracy was that it was an exercise in deductive logic" (Eisenstadt 1988: 240). But in the context of this familiar interpretation of Tocqueville's method, this essay wants to make a plea for Tocqueville's non-reductive method. Tocqueville's work on Democracy is an example of a superb ethnography; it is the best reflection of an ethnographic mind which does not believe in reducing the complexity of the human condition into certain principles. Of course, Tocqueville has a view of Democracy, but in his ethnography his exercises are never of a deductive nature. As a sensitive observer, his objective is to understand the working of American democracy in the context of American mores. He was not thinking in terms of a few abstractions. Had it been the case, he would not have taken it his objective to place the working of the American polity against the background of its mores, by which he meant both the principles of social structure and the fundamental assumptions of culture. The test of an ethnographic mind is the ability to see connectedness to larger issues in very trivial things. As a sensitive ethnographer, Tocqueville took notice of trivial aspects of American life which he thought could provide some clue to the understanding of American mediocrity. Whether in a bookstore or in a museum, or in the way the democratic individuals degenerate their individualism into downright selfishness; Tocqueville had a sensitivity to observe the superfluousness of the American people. His title confirms what he had in mind: "Democracy in America" was meant to be an ethnography of democratic practice in America.

James Schleifer (1980) argues that Tocqueville used to think in terms of contraries. But it has to be stressed that Tocqueville did not have only the contrary pair of aristocracy and democracy with him. He was keen to depict the tensions between the elements which are usually interpreted to be harmonious parts of a deductive system of Democracy. Tocqueville discussed in which context the fundamental elements of democracy--individualism, equality and liberty--can be in irreconcilable tension with each other. He discusses how the pursuit of individualism, in the process, may undermine the value of equality, how the pursuit of equality may lead to both "equality in freedom" and "equality in slavery." While Schleifer's argument has the potential to undermine Nisbet's attribution of essentialism to Tocqueville's method, still much convincing case can be made for Tocqueville's ethnographic method. The epidemic of French structuralism has swayed us so much that our search for complexity can go only to the realm of the tension between the binary opposites. But the complexity of the human situation is much more than the complexity in structuralist opposition. Tocqueville had in mind not only the tension between the two historical forces--aristocracy and democracy--but the tension among the elements internal to democracy and the permutation and combination of forms that this tension can take. This is an ethnographic method, not a Cartesian one.

Tocqueville's distinction between "equality in slavery" and "equality in freedom" is indeed an insightful distinction which reminds us of Simmel's distinction between "individualism of equality" and "individualism of inequality" (Cf. Beteille 1986). Setting these two pairs of distinctions in conjunction is essential to fight against another familiar

interpretation of Tocqueville: namely his views on the positive relationship between individualism and equality. In his comparative reflections on India and the modern West, anthropologist Louis Dumont has made so much of Tocqueville's distinction between aristocracy and democracy (Dumont 1980), which has led him into another major contrasting pair: hierarchy and individualism. For Dumont, Tocqueville presents a symbiotic and mutually reinforcing relationship between individualism and equality. But a close reading of Tocqueville shows that Tocqueville, even at a conceptual level, is clear about the thin line of separation between individualism and selfish competitiveness that may lead to inequality. At the level of ethnography, he has many examples to make his case for a complex and non-teleological relationship between individualism and equality.

A brief comment on this debate on individualism and equality can shed further light on the clouds surrounding Tocqueville's familiar interpretations. The noted Indian social scientist Andre Beteille takes Dumont to task for forwarding the premise that "individualism entails equality" (Beteille 1986: 123). To subject this premise into examination, Beteille takes recourse to George Simmel. For Beteille, when Simmel was talking of "Individualism of inequality," he was referring to the "individual that had thus become independent also wished to distinguish himself from other individuals" (Simmel 1950: 78). Both for Simmel and for Beteille, "this inequality was posed from within" (Beteille 1986: 126). To see the tension between individualism and equality, Beteille not only goes to George Simmel but also to "the Catholics, Conservatives, socialists and various others" who have expressed some "misgivings about overemphasis on the individual" (ibid: 122). But Beteille does not realize that it was Tocqueville who had also expressed his strongest misgivings about the abuse of individualism and the consequent overemphasis on the individual. Of Tocqueville, Beteille writes, "Alexis de Tocqueville was one of the first to argue that individualism and equality were both new values and that they were inseparably linked in their origin and development" (ibid: 121). Yet Tocqueville's rich ethnography shows how individualism is not inseparably linked to equality: for example, how Catholic individualism can promote equality and Protestant individualism, inequality. His sarcastic comment on the American self-interest is the clearest illustration of his "misgiving of the overemphasis on the individual." Beteille finds problem with Dumont, but if he pursues his critical inquiry a little further into Tocqueville's ethnographic mind, he can find in it the same tension between individualism and equality, the tension that he finds in George Simmel.

It is not clear from Tocqueville's ethnography that he had a teleological view of history--that democracy is going to replace aristocracy as an irresistible historical force. To start with, unlike Marx's political enthusiasm for communism, Tocqueville was not personally and politically enthusiastic about democracy. Hence the fight between Marx and Tocqueville that the various liberal interpreters have conducted is a "metasocial commentary" upon the politics of these commentators than that of Tocqueville. It has to be stressed again that Tocqueville's analysis of wage-labor under the aristocracy of the manufacturers is not simply metaphorical. Among the major European thinkers with whom Tocqueville has close parallel it is not Karl Marx, but Max Weber. Unlike Nisbet's (1988) argument, this parallel is not based on Tocqueville's use of ideal-types. It is based upon the fact that both Alexis de Tocqueville and Max Weber were not personally and politically enthusiastic about the historical processes and the ethnographic universes they

were discussing. While writing about bureaucratic rationalization, Weber never accepted this as an "ultimate value" for him. Bureaucracy was an iron cage for him, and his ultimate value was based on charisma. Tocqueville, similarly, was a cautious and aristocratic observer of the democratic practice and was worried about tyranny internal to democracy.

Critics of Tocqueville's ethnography argue that Tocqueville was thinking about Europe, while writing about America. It is pointed out how Tocqueville's ethnography missed a whole lot about America such as the American education system. His ethnography is compared with Harriet Martineau's *Society in America* and judged to be less realistic especially in its portrayal of "women and family life" (Nisbet 1988: 174). Critics of Tocqueville point out how the elements of democracy--localism, decentralization etc.--were originally conceived by the French social observer, Lamennais (Nisbet 1988). But these criticisms do not undermine the significance and value of his ethnography. Even if Tocqueville might have been biased by Lamennais' ideas of localism and decentralization, this does not undermine his own contribution in presenting us an ethnographic portrayal and critique of democracy in America.

Tocqueville's ethnographic mind cautions us to have models of certainty and finality not only about democracy but also about any aspect of human socio-cultural reality. It is probably for this reason that Ankersmit writes: "..writing a conclusion to an essay on Tocqueville is a task fraught with dangers" (1996: 341). "..What is really interesting in Tocqueville..is not what lends itself to a reduction to consistency, coherence and logical arguments, but rather the paradoxes and inconsistencies that resist such a reduction" (ibid). There is an elective affinity between Tocqueville's ethnographic method and mind and the dynamics of democracy as an unstructured and emergent process, which resists apriori fixation and determination. The dynamics of democracy expects us of a style of understanding and writing which is not determined by any apriori formulation and is ever attentive to complexities, contradictions and emergent processes. As Ankersmit again helps us understand this:

..if Tocqueville is correct in saying that democracy has no center, that it has neither essence nor nature of its own, this requires us to adopt a style that bestows on the text exactly the *same* characteristics. xx Tocqueville's texts are an implicit suggestion about which manner or style we ought to adopt if we wish to say something useful about democracy. In a curiously oblique way Tocqueville's texts show that its antitheoretical, antimetaphorical, and paradoxical style is the only key to the secrets of democracy. In contrast to relatively crude political systems like feudalism, aristocracy, or absolutism, the philosophical web of democracy is so subtle that we will tear it apart if we approach it with an unsuitable stylistic apparatus (ibid: 342, 296).

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Endnotes:

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¹ Insofar as partisan social theorizing is concerned, it is important to note that Tocqueville writes at the beginning of his *Democracy*: "The book is written to favor no particular view, and in composing it I have entertained no design of serving or attacking any party" (quoted in Ankersmit 1996: 324).

² Ankersmit (1996: 330) argues:

..Tocqueville's break with the historiographical traditions of his (and our own) time mainly consists in his abandonment of metaphor in favor of paradox. And surely we may expect a penchant for paradox in an author who, like Tocqueville, presents to his readers the French Revolution as being no revolution at all or who describes democracy as being, in fact, a despotism of the multitude and as a political system that is essentially conservative.

³ Ankersmit (1996: 338) posits the integral connection between self-withdrawal and the demands on a centralizing state in between democratic citizenship and the tyranny of the majority: "Democratic citizens will become more and more isolated from one another in their search for private well-being, and ever less capable of solving either individually or in mutual co-operation what they experience to be the problems of their social and political life. It is the democratic state to which they will therefore unanimously turn."

⁴ In this context, we may note what Tocqueville writes about himself: "Intellectually I can approve of democratic institutions, but I am an aristocrat by instinct. I passionately love liberty, legality, the respect for rights; but not democracy. That is the essence of my personality" (quoted in Ankersmit 1996: 336).

⁵ It may be noted here that Tocqueville argues that there is a passion for abstraction in democracy and "Tocqueville ruefully concedes that his own use of the term 'equality' shows how much he himself has fallen victim to democracy's fatal love of abstractions" (Ankersmit 1996: 299).

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International Sociological Association

e-bulletin

From Classrooms to Field Sites: Qualitative Research and Sociology in the Philippines

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Academic attempts in the Philippines to develop social science perspectives grounded on local constructs and culturally-sensitive approaches generally recognize the contributions of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Philippine Psychology), *Pantayong Pananaw* (Pantayo/Our Perspective) and *Pilipinolohiya* (Philippine Studies). Initiated during the seventies and the eighties by Virgilio Enriquez, Zeus Salazar and Prospero Covar, respectively, their pioneering efforts have influenced succeeding generations of Filipino social scientists, albeit, amidst considerable debate and criticism.

As part of these continuing endeavors and keen to assist the Department of Sociology in further developing its substantive and methods courses, I began teaching social organization and qualitative research in the late nineties using Pilipino as the medium of instruction. On reflection, these two areas of sociology, separately or in combination, provide fertile ground to explore people's meaning systems and an appropriate mode with which to engage dominant Western concepts and methodological approaches. My teaching of social organization paved the way for initial explorations in *panlipunang pagbabanghay* as the study of Philippine social organization using local constructs and perspectives. To provide the empirical context for these concerns and to explore and examine culturally-sensitive research methods, I also felt the need to teach qualitative research. Although these two courses are interlinked in my academic pursuits, this brief reflection paper will focus primarily on my experiences in teaching qualitative research at the undergraduate level.

In the course of the last six years (or twelve semesters), the syllabus for the course has developed along four phases or dimensions: First, as a general introduction to the course, and to provide the academic context for a research course, the works of Filipino social scientists on qualitative research and Philippine social science are discussed. While the works of the more senior social scientists are being studied, students are encouraged to explore their particular research interests and suggest possible field sites; and depending on academic, logistic and ethical considerations, initial visits to the field may be undertaken during this stage. During the third phase of the course, various Western philosophies on social research, including such approaches as *verstehen*, sensitizing concepts and the Chicago School of sociology are explored as well as engaged vis-à-vis their initial experiences in the field. The fourth phase focuses on the various phases of

doing actual research from developing a methodology to writing a research paper. At this stage, the class usually chooses a field site or a specific theme within which each student pursues a particular topic according to her/his interests. Foreign and local materials on one hand and their actual field experiences on the other are engaged and examined. A local term known as *talastasan* captures the spirit of this exercise. While the literature provides glimpses of the experiences of more experienced researchers, “learning by doing” is nevertheless an important adage to develop in the course.

The field sites for the course have included four agricultural communities in nearby provinces, one town known for its local artists, two nearby cities currently undertaking urban renewal projects, and three different sites within Quezon City where the university is located. The latter includes the Cubao Commercial District, Quezon City Jail and the *Batasang Pambansa* (House of Representatives). On the other hand, on account of its timeliness and particular significance, instead of choosing particular sites, two particular themes were explored during two semesters: Dimensions of the Estrada Impeachment Trial (2001) and Understanding the Quezon and Aurora Tragedy (2004).

Aside from participation in classroom discussions and two examinations, the major requirement for the course is a research paper which I have referred to as the *papel paglilimang*. Using the metaphor akin to a farmer’s tilling of the field, *paglilimang* underscores the need to cultivate what is available, suitable and beneficial to a particular field. Sensitivity to the terrain and an open-minded approach are essential skills to develop to ensure a productive and sustainable yield.

In the course of a semester or approximately seventeen weeks, the number of field visits vary depending on the accessibility of the field site. In general however, a first visit is usually undertaken by the entire class, followed by team or individual visits depending on the students’ research topics. While the first few research classes consisted of 35 students which is the regular size for undergraduate students, I have had to request a class size of 10-15 students so as to maintain the requirements for a field-based course. The students’ observation notes, research proposals and interview guides are more interestingly discussed in a small class than in a big group. Similarly, I can also have more time to study and reflect on fewer papers. Not surprisingly, I have also learned that in field classes, teachers and students have better opportunity to interact among themselves (and hopefully grow) not only academically but also as full persons.

While the teaching of the course itself has been a fulfilling and exciting one for me, attending to funding, field safety and related administrative requirements constitute the downside in handling field courses. Since the university itself cannot afford to provide for field expenses, the students’ financial situation has increasingly become an important consideration. While cities and nearby urban areas provide an endless wealth of sociological material to explore, the differences between Manila and the world beyond it are realities social science students cannot ignore.

Last October 2004, I invited one or two students from previous qualitative research classes to join a project which will put together the various *papel paglilimang* which have been written by students in their respective field classes. Using the lens of qualitative research, its main objective is to highlight the students’ concerns and perspectives on contemporary Philippine society. Through this project, we also hope to more fully

explore the similarities and differences between *verstehen* and *pag-unawa ng loob*, interviewing and *pakikipagkuwento* or research ethics and *pakikipagkapwa*.

Since most of these students have moved on to pursue graduate studies or law or have embarked in full-time jobs, coordinating the project has not been easy. However, with three drafts on hand, I am optimistic that we can come up with a volume in due time. Wish us luck!

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In Barangay Aplaya, along Laguna Lake



At the Quezon City Jail during Christmas



With children from Angono

International Sociological Association

e-bulletin

Teaching Sociology in Japan

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Sociology as a discipline emerged seriously in Japan in the post-war era, in part as an element in the reconstruction of the devastated country as it struggled to reform or even reinvent its social institutions. Before the war the dominant influences had been primarily German - Weber for instance was (and is still) widely read in Japanese translations, and certainly Marx was a powerful intellectual source at least up until the suppression of the Left as fascism gained momentum in the pre-war and wartime years. After the war, not unexpectedly, the sources of external sociological inspiration widened considerably, especially to include the currents coming from American sociology, and later from French social thought. These influences were incorporated into an already vibrant indigenous tradition of ethnology, folklore studies, archaeology, local history, Buddhist inspired social philosophy and a sociology characterized both by its meticulous attention to empirical detail and its free-ranging and interdisciplinary nature, many works of Japanese sociology having long been closer to what we would now call cultural studies, long before that term came into use in the West.

With the postwar expansion of Japanese universities (there are now over five hundred, a dramatic increase from the handful of old Imperial universities and the small number of private ones that existed prewar) sociology rapidly became a very popular subject with students with today at least sixty six universities having mainstream sociology departments, and many others teaching the subject in the context of law or literature faculties, business programs, social welfare departments or in cultural studies, international studies, or global or Asia-Pacific studies programs. While many students with the language ability go abroad to graduate school in the US, UK and other European countries, Australia and less frequently to other Asian destinations, large and active graduate programs also exist in Japan. So the profession and discipline is alive and well in Japan. But what is it like to actually teach the subject there - in the context of a highly industrialized and technological society, which, as is well known, has also managed to preserve much of its traditional culture and social norms? Sociology students in Japan are often motivated precisely by the desire to understand this dialectic, coupled with the fact that they comprise a generation that is having to confront the challenges of globalization in an unprecedented way at the same moment that Japanese society is experiencing a slowing of its economy, the rapid ageing of its population, pressures for the internationalization of its labor force, criticism from its Asian neighbours about

nationalist and revisionist versions of school history textbooks and the soul searching that has gone on since the sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway a decade ago by the Aum Shinrikyo cult, the government's totally inadequate response to the great Hanshin earthquake, widespread corporate corruption and the still very small but rising number of bizarre and brutal crimes that are occurring. The international context - especially Japan's involvement in the Iraq war which was strongly opposed by the majority of the population, and growing awareness of serious ecological problems globally signalled in Japan by the rapidly growing number and intensity of typhoons, has created a teaching situation in which paradoxically my political science and international relations colleagues seem to have few creative responses, with the result that students are looking to sociology for some guidance as to how to think about such issues.

It is precisely this dialectic of Japan as subject/world as context that I have found most fruitful to exploit in teaching sociology in Japan - to teach Japanese society as something in a dynamic interplay with its wider environment, not as something isolated and treated as something separate from Asia and the world. This plays itself out in various ways depending on what subjects within sociology one is teaching. In teaching development sociology for example I have found that to link student's own everyday experiences and habits to global issues works very effectively - getting them to look at their own consumption habits for example and their shock on discovering that Japan consumes more than ten percent of the entire world fish catch - as a way of making concrete otherwise rather abstract issues. In fact it is probably true that Japanese students are not for the most part primarily abstract thinkers, and respond well to examples and to the establishment of connections between what they see around them and global questions. When teaching social stratification I have found that a comparative approach works best - that students are not only fascinated by other systems such as caste, but that this also gives them a sociological vocabulary to relate back to Japan, which they quickly discover is a relatively classless society with huge amounts of hierarchy, something that they do not find discussed in Western oriented textbooks. When teaching the sociology of culture, material is so abundant in Japan that it is hard to know where to begin or stop - with film, fashion, comics, media - and here the students of course quickly realize that they are in a sense already experts! The greatest challenge that I have found is in teaching sociological theory, most of the classical works of course being rooted in Western philosophy and assumptions about the self and social relations. For students coming from a culture formed by Buddhism, Shinto and Confucianism, this is quite a challenge, but with very interesting results in the classroom. Freud is a mystery to them - they simply cannot see what the problem is (and indeed there are almost no Freudian psychoanalysts practicing in Japan) since their culture relates so very differently to notions of self, sex, socialization, the body and social relationships. But postmodern thinkers they relate to easily, but with the interesting twist that they cannot see why this all seems so new in the West, when in fact (and they are right) many of these ideas have long been in circulation in Japan, but of course unknown to ethnocentric North American and European sociologists who do not bother to learn Asian languages.

Teaching in Japan has consequently been a challenge, and also a hugely enriching experience since it has also forced me to assimilate the social and philosophical ideas of a

very distinctive cultural tradition and to think both about how to convey what is in origin a Western set of ideas, methodologies and assumptions to Asian students who are in many ways far less Westernized than say their Singaporean counterparts, and to explore the ways in which their assumptions about the world challenge Western sociology and its own universalizing, but often in fact very local, conceptions of knowledge. Teaching sociology in Japan, for me at least, has been far less the imparting of a received canon than the attempt to help students explore their own very complex society drawing on a range of tools coming from both the Western sociological tradition, but also from the intellectual resources of their indigenous thinkers and indeed from those from other parts of Asia to whom they relate often more quickly than to the classical texts of mainstream sociology.

John Clammer has been Professor of Sociology at Sophia University, Tokyo, since 1989 and has written widely on the sociology of East and Southeast Asian societies, including one book (Difference and Modernity: Social Theory and Contemporary Japanese Society, London and New York 1995) that specifically explores the interplay between sociological theory and the understanding of Japanese society.

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e-bulletin

Teaching Sociology: One case, many challenges

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This text will briefly address some of the challenges involved in the experience of teaching sociology anywhere in the world. Before, however, I will make a short overview of the experience of teaching sociology in Portugal, which, in many respects, presents a case of quick success, at least in the European context.

To reflect, even if briefly, on the practice of sociology teaching should involve the adoption of a strategy similar to what Knorr-Cetina calls *epistemic practice*, that is to say, spelling out the factors that condition and interfere with the production, diffusion and appropriation of sociological knowledge.

I should start by pointing out that the teaching of sociology is a recent activity in Portugal, beginning in a sustained manner only in the mid-1970s, in the wake of profound political changes that led to the democratization of the country. The deficit that existed until then in the teaching of sociology and other social sciences was rapidly overcome, and today there are 16 BA courses, over 20 postgraduate courses, around some 30 research centers, and 600 incoming students per year. This means that the teaching of sociology has had a remarkable success in Portugal, as witnessed by the dimension of the APS (Portuguese Sociological Association), which has over 2000 members in good-standing.

Concerning the relations between teaching and research in sociology, which continue to consolidate, I would like to highlight that sociological teaching and research in Portugal are located somewhere between the two extremes established by what one might call the “international division of scientific labor”: on the one hand, the *center* of scientific production (with solid and varied resources, dedicated to the production of hegemonic theory); on the other hand, the scientific *periphery* (with scarce resources, “incapable” of theorizing, and restricted to providing others with raw empirical material). It seems to me that sociology in Portugal is one of those exceptional cases in which there are significant contributions for the production of a virtuous mixture of empirical and theoretical reflection, showing a felicitous articulation of different methodological and theoretical strategies and the adoption of distanced and critical perspectives in relation to hegemonic sociological knowledge.

Being aware that the hegemony of knowledge is primarily transmitted through the teaching of what is established and conventional, this strategy involves several challenges to the act of teaching that are well beyond national borders. Let me give only the

example of the “classics” of sociology. Once the major and most relevant theoretical and/or methodological contributions and theoretical constructs of the discipline’s “founding fathers” are known, a strong effort is needed to not give students a sense of the rapid erosion of knowledge. One way of avoiding that is to argue for the profound changes in the practical meanings of sociological concepts as they migrate from a specific socio-temporal and geographical context of production to another the context where it is supposed to be appropriated and applied. It is more than likely that, in this movement, the fundamental sense of its efficacy is lost. Furthermore, the teaching of sociology, in Portugal and elsewhere, has to pay attention to the erasing of the discipline’s memory. Thought diversity is required here and more often than not teachers do not point towards disputed views within “classic sociology” for they are generally excluded from text books circulating worldwide, despite their potential contribution for a well-grounded education in sociology. Names such as Kaldhun, Martineau, Lévy-Bruhl, Schmalenbach or even Simmel, among others, may well apply here.

With this in mind, one might argue for the need to decanonize and postcolonize the discipline. These may be heavy-handed expressions, yet, I believe they point to a way of maintaining and continuously reinvigorate the teaching of sociological everywhere. Such decanonization and postcolonization of sociology involve making a conscious effort to counter both onesidedness (i.e. western-bound sociological views) and the sense of the rapid erosion of sociological knowledge. Needless to say that professional uncertainty and the unprecedented valorization of a culture of velocity – and the concomitant loss of the *longue-durée* vision – reinforce one of the most embarrassing though prosaic questions that sociology students may raise: what is sociology good for? Such a question will be all the more repeated, and lead to lack of motivation, if we are unable to interrogate its deepest origins. I believe that this question is only legitimate and uncontestable if, as teachers and researchers, we fail taking into account the conditions (and the contents) under which sociological knowledge is taught – in other words, if we do not interrogate where and how is sociological knowledge produced, how it circulates, and how it is appropriated and consumed.

A final note on how the teaching of sociology is related to the impact of the New Information/Communication Technologies (NICTs). They often give rise to a sense that sociological knowledge is “disconnected” from society, and sharpen the appetite for the so-called *sociology beyond society* issue. Can one say that sociology is, paradoxically, the science that better discerns the end of the social?

It has been argued for quite a while that the efficacy of “intellectual technology” (sociological knowledge as infrastructure) is all the greater the more territorialized or contextualized it is. In order to work on those contextualized territories we need to know them closely... not from a distance. Therefore, due to the NICTs is the global knowledge that comes to us from afar the most adequate for local action? Is this distinction still valid? Or, on the contrary, are the local and the global so interconnected today that we are no longer able to think about the one without by the same token to think about the other? But then how do we explain territorialized sociology? How do we justify its recent expansion throughout the world? How can we explain the growing institutionalization of *regional, national and local sociologies* in times of the globalization of knowledge and the “end” of frontiers?

My hypothesis for reflection is that the process of globalization has allowed sociology to extend the reach of its contribution, both geographically and in terms of numbers of scholars and practitioners. We are thus better prepared to identify the continual change in objects of study, analysis and intervention. This represents an aspect of *empowerment* of sociology that is usually neglected. Sociology expands not only awareness about citizenship rights, but also knowledge of nature and of the *driving forces* behind social dynamics. In addition, it allows us to make a more enlightened inventory of needs for research on the most recent macro-processes that affect the quality of social existence. What I mean to say is that there is no room for pessimism in sociology today, including the teaching of sociology. Rather, there is room for the multidisciplinary combination of sociology with other knowledges, including *other sociologies*, and for the adoption of broad and critical perspectives concerning institutional changes, as well as of a democratic governance that is able to sustain a better life around the world.

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e-bulletin

Experiences in using ‘Sketch presentations’: Teaching Dynamics and Negotiations in Malay households in Singapore

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My concern in the teaching of Malay families and households at the Department of Malay Studies in Singapore, is to deal with the prevalence of images of what the Malay family ‘ought to be.’ This includes the image of the “normal Malay family” where Malay women as wives and mothers are responsible for care-giving and the role of Malay men as husbands and fathers is income earning. In addition Malay parents can rely on their children to take care of them in their old age. As such, when I was formulating the outline of the module on ‘Malay Families and Households,’ I decided to focus on the dynamics of social relationships amongst family and household members. I wanted to highlight the fact that despite a recognition of roles and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled, each family member is an individual with his/her specific interests and concerns. The latter are by no means agreed upon, can be conflicting and as such need to be negotiated.

In the first round of teaching the module I found that most of the students had the problem of moving away from the notion that the family is a unit where there can only be harmony. They generally saw minimal conflicts between family members. While students understood that there is gendered division of labour within the household and that socio-economic changes affect family structures, they however took it for granted that family members will continue to perform their expected roles and responsibilities. As one student expressed in a tutorial discussion, “things get worked out because each family member knows his or her role in the family”.

This experience led me to think of ways to make students see the kinds of discords that can occur between family members in the process of ‘getting things worked out.’ I wanted students to be engaged in the process of negotiation and become more self-aware and self-reflexive about the fact that various members of the Malay household have differential access to resources and hence have the capacity to negotiate in different ways.

I decided to make students do short ‘sketch presentations’ during tutorials. The idea of a sketch is to make students experience the character which s/he plays and thereby be engaged in the dynamics and process of negotiations that can take place. At the same

time, the student audience will visually see scenes depicting Malay households, their members and the dynamics within.

I provided clear instructions to students in a handout as well as in a class session as to what the expected outcome of these sketch presentations was to be. They were asked to form groups of 4 or 5. Topics for the sketch dealt with specific issues e.g. allocation of household tasks, choosing a marriage partner, dual income couples dealing with work and family and planning a family holiday. I provided students with a broad setting for the scene to be enacted. While each of these issues relate to roles and responsibilities of family members, students would also need to work out how these issues can be resolved. Specific readings were given for each of the issue. Students were required to hand in the script of the sketch after the presentation as part of their assessment. I left it open to the students to decide upon the kinds of props and costumes they wanted to use but made it clear that these aspects were not crucial to the presentation. Neither were they required to memorize their lines. While I gave students a time limit of 30 minutes for their sketch presentation this was only a guideline. The presentation was to be followed by a collective discussion. This is where I hoped that the students watching the sketch would raise questions about what was being conveyed in the performance.

Student feedback from the last two rounds of incorporating sketch presentation in the tutorials have been very positive. Students say that they enjoyed the presentations and found that it was an “interesting” and “creative” way of conducting a tutorial. They found that sketches made it easier “to bring issues to the surface”. They realized that in order to write a good script for the sketch they had to go through the readings thoroughly. Students found that it was challenging to think of how to present their argument in the form of a script. It was for me very encouraging that through the sketch presentations students found the tutorials exciting and “something to look forward to”.

In my assessment, the sketch presentations were generally very good. Using minimal props and costume, the students were able to depict scenes very well. Some very good at acting and a good dash of humour made the tutorials very lively and engaging and insightful not to mention instructive.

But more than that, the discussions following the presentations reflected that students were ‘seeing’ the dynamics and the process of negotiations which different family members experience. Students raised questions about how particular characters represented stereotypes. They asked why certain aspects of an issue were omitted or neglected. Furthermore, they suggested alternative ways of looking at the same issue. The group presenting the sketch found themselves having to explain, argue and justify their presentation. Indeed the sketch presentations gave students insights to examine the issues further. By talking about the sketch presentation, its characters and what was conveyed, students were discussing how an educated Malay woman with a career postpones marriage because she is contributing to the household income, or how Malay children may feel the obligation to support their parents but because of their own family and work commitments can only afford minimal financial support and limited. Students identified with the characters and supported actions and decisions made in the sketch. In so doing they were challenged by their classmates. At another level, presenters discussed their problems in creating a particular character and writing the script because they realized that the issues were more complex in reality.

One very clear observation I made of the sketch presentations is that while students were able to flesh out the conflicts and negotiations, they were, at the same time presenting “happy endings” where the problems did get resolved and all worked out well. So the sketch in itself was re-producing the image of the “normal Malay family”. This in itself is good as the sketch presentations opened up avenues to discuss the issue of portraying certain images of the Malay household. Hence issues pertaining to hidden assumptions which students carry were highlighted and duly discussed.

There were however some attempts to debunk stereotypical images. An example was a sketch presentation of five Malay women who met up at a class reunion and were talking about family and career. Two of the characters became a focus of very lively discussion – one a divorced woman who had adopted a child and was skeptical of marriage and another, a single career woman who was living with a partner. The issue of the importance of marriage for the Malay women surfaced very strongly in the discussion, as well as the idea that there is a disciplining process directed at Malay women. In another sketch, students presented the case of a Malay house-husband. The character gave up his job to take care of the couple’s young daughter and saw to the maintenance of the household. During the discussion there were two groups of students, for and against the character’s decision – the latter being the majority. Students explored assumptions of roles and responsibilities of the Malay man and discussed their perceptions of Malay masculinities.

Whether students were re-producing images of the Malay household or de-constructing these images in their sketches, I found that the sketch presentations offer a very good opportunity and a useful teaching tool/medium to examine issues in greater in-depth. Designing the setting for each of the sketches was as important in encouraging students’ critical skills and creative abilities. Even though this approach is a challenging one, and took up quite a lot of preparation time for the instructor, the effort is, nonetheless, worthwhile and I would recommend this as a powerful pedagogical tool. Good and clear instructions are crucial in order that students understand their task. The resulting tutorials are livelier and students continue to find sketch presentation a refreshing change from the usual mode of conducting tutorials, which can be rather non-interactive and disengaged. But the benefits and breath of fresh air are not just felt by the students, for like the students, I too look forward to the next sketch presentation.

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