

several interesting, individual historical and biographical observations illustrating shifts and trends in social theory during our century.

The first essay 'Modern, Anti, Post and Neo' unfolds the fate of the theoretical codings, narratives and explanations of modern societies during the political, economic and ideological transformations, especially since the decline of modernization theory in the 1960s. Alexander's character sketch of 'neo-modernism' in the 1980s as a response to expanding market economies and the collapse of communist regimes, including e.g. rational choice, analytical Marxism, Wallerstein, new economic sociology and the revival of the concept of civil society, is provocative in accusing neo-modernism of regressiveness by reviving otherwise abandoned themes and assumptions like romantic individualism, belief in convergence and teleology. His own suggestions to overcome these problems are, however, very sketchy and programmatic.

The second and third essays ('Between Progress and Apocalypse' and 'General Theory in the Postpositivist Mode') mainly deal with philosophical, epistemological and metatheoretical problems in social theory concerning mediating reason and unreason, rationality and irrationality. Against the abandonment of general theory and universal knowledge, specially represented by Clifford Geertz' claim for local knowledge and particularistic relativism, and Richard Rorty's antifoundationalism and his rejection of universals in any sense, Alexander tries to make a 'postpositivistic case for theory', drawing in Ingram's and Bernstein's critical hermeneutics. Also, this time the exposition remains rather programmatic, appealing to general criteria of validity such as correspondence 'between "reason-created" conceptual structures and reasonable "observational statements" about the world' (p. 113) and 'possibility of reaching consensus' (p. 114).

As mentioned, the last essay falls somewhat beside the main theme of the rest of the book. But it is interesting on its own terms. It contains an extensive critique of the theoretical and empirical works of Pierre Bourdieu, specially conceived as an attempt to mediate traditional dualisms in social thought: structure/agency, symbolic/material and interpretive/strategic. The main criticisms are that Bourdieu, partly by misrepresenting what he attacks, ends up in casting subjectivity in a determinate, antivoluntaristic form, and that his emphasis on strategic dimensions of action leads to an economic reductionism of action and social fields, unable to understand the plurality of social forms of contemporary societies.

One great merit of this criticism is the comparison and confrontation of Bourdieu's core concepts, like culture, habitus, 'unconscious strategy' and field with corresponding concepts in other theoretical traditions (structuralism, functionalism, interactionism, ethnomethodology, etc.). I can not examine the extensive argumentation in details; but in my eyes it presents itself as well documented, careful and convincing.

In conclusion, the essays bring many acute, crucial and critical observations concerning important themes in current social theory, often in elegant, polemical style. What frustrates the reader is the very vague and sketchy hints when one looks for guidelines for ways out of the dilemmas and problems in social theory. After reading the book the desire to know how to carry out Alexander's intent to incorporate relativism and social construction without giving up universalizing intent' is still stronger than before.

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Thorvald Gran: *The State in the Modernization Process. The Case of Norway*. Oslo: ad Notam Gyldendal, 1994.  
Andrew Sayer: *Radical Political Economy. A Critique*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.  
Lars Udehn: *The Limits of Public Choice. A Sociological Critique of the Economic Theory of Politics*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Cut across a log, and you reveal a pattern of concentric rings: cut along the length of the same log, and the grains form [sic] a pattern of parallel lines. The two patterns could hardly be more different and yet they are part of the same structure. If you look at capitalism from a Marxist standpoint you find capital accumulation and class: if you look at it from the standpoint of liberal economics you see exchange and economic calculation regarding the allocation of resources among competing ends . . . in some respects the concerns of the two modes of abstraction are no more contradictory than the concentric rings and the parallel lines of the wood grain; they are radically different but complementary representations of different aspects of the structure of market economies. (Sayer, p. 214)

The three books under review cover a wide subject area, ranging from a detailed empirical examination of Norway's modernization process to two general critiques of contemporary political economy. As a result, they probably do not share similar audiences, except for the odd political economist interested in Norway. What they do share, however, is an interest in providing a different view to understanding economic exchange. As in the Sayer quote above, and in ways not unlike Karl Polanyi, all three authors want to analyze the economy from different cuts: in substantive, rather than simple formal, terms. In the doing, they build bridges across a number of disciplinary divides, be they sociology, political science and/or economics.

Before I was asked to write its review, I had already obtained a copy of Thorvald Gran's *The State in the Modernization Process*. The reason for this, in addition to my interest in the Norwegian case, is an impressive recommendation by Charles Tilly on the book's back cover. Tilly tells us that 'Gran's penetrating study of Norway will serve as a model for reexamination of state-class relations throughout the western world.' I'm not one to argue with Tilly, but it seems to me that this book's contribution is less in the theoretical realm (of examining capitalist state-class relations), and more in its ambitious collection of evidence in support of his argument about the modernizing role of the Norwegian (bourgeois) state.

*The State in the Modernization Process* is a typical dissertation, and the book itself would have benefited greatly from a purging of several of the obligatory artifacts associated with that genre. There is simply too much theoretical and empirical terrain covered. The driving question is a large and important one: what role did the Norwegian state play in modernizing this country from the ranks of Europe's poorest nations to one of its richest? To answer this question, Gran includes wide sweeps of Norwegian economic and political history, and in-depth studies of specific 'transverse' cases. This is a very ambitious book, one which provides a very useful, if somewhat cluttered, lexicon of Norwegian economic and political data.

The book itself has four main sections, one conceptual, the other three empirical. The first three chapters constitute the conceptual section of the book, where Gran wishes to specify the process of capitalist state formation in terms of: (1) the alienation of the state from society; and (2) the role of parliamentary state intervention as a bureaucratic form of power wielding (p. 5). These chapters

provide a critical review of previous literature on the state in theoretical, operational and alienational terms. Gran is primarily concerned with the possibility of state autonomy, various institutional structures and their effect on state autonomy, and the power of the bureaucracy.

The empirical section of the book contains several cross-sections of Norwegian economic and political history. The discussion is divided into three historical periods: the 19th century, the inter-war, and social democratic periods. In each period Gran is concerned with the organizational history of the Norwegian state, changing class-state relationships over time, and the nature of Norwegian modernization from an international, comparative, perspective. His sectoral case studies (agriculture, banking and industry) are both interesting and novel. Indeed, his analysis of the Norwegian Trade Bank affair is the best English reference I know on the subject.

Gran wants to study the nexus of state-economy and state-class relationships during Norway's modernization process. The market is its central venue, but the nature of the market is dependent upon an active and autonomous state organization which encourages and promotes the transformation from subsistence to market agriculture, and from *laissez-faire* to corporatist modes of exchange. Like the other books in this review, Gran's project is decidedly Polanyian — yet he does do not anchor his argument in Polanyi's work.

The other two books are better organized and less empirical. In both Sayer and Udehn, the criticism of dominant ideologies is more explicit and more sustained. The title of Sayer's *Radical Political Economy* may be misleading if below. As it turns out, it is a critique from liberal quarters. But it is a rather friendly critique: Sayer is concerned with strengthening the radical tradition in a way which allows it to better understand contemporary cleavages. Indeed, the most refreshing aspect of Sayer's book is his willingness to stride ideological cleavages to develop a new perspective.

*Radical Political Economy* begins with a discussion of methods and the development of critical standpoints. The author feels a need to defend critical theory, while going beyond its emphasis on 'middle-range theory' and what he claims is its inability to deal with the diversification of radical interests. It is in the book's third chapter that Sayer's real contribution begins; here he cautiously introduces Hayek as a way to reconceptualize social divisions in capitalist societies. The remaining chapters are largely lexicographic: chapter 4 discusses different modes of coordination, chapter 5 rehearses general debates about the role of the market (including a very interesting discussion of the Panglossian assumption); chapter 6 discusses the relationship between ownership and control; and chapter 7 gives a brief comparison of non-capitalist systems. The eighth chapter attempts to apply this broadened radical approach to urban and regional development issues. Sayer's conclusion is that (traditional) radical political economy has blinded us to important cleavages by relying on a sort of class reductionism. Whereas some attempt has been made to correct for gender and race, '... the significance of the social division of labour or catallaxy as a source of division and a key feature of urban and regional development is still not adequately appreciated' (p. 212).

By catallaxy, Hayek meant a complex structure of incidental and contingent inter-relationships. Sayer places the notion of catallaxy at the core of his critique. Sayer wishes to distinguish between class and other social divisions, as he sees advanced economies experiencing a fragmentation and dispersion of power. In particular, Sayer wishes to account for both a technical and social division of labor. Unlike traditional Marxist analyses, however, this division is based on material and informational differences — *independent of ownership* (p. 72). Sayer

argues that traditional class analyses are unable to account for or understand this division, so he introduces Hayek's economy/catallaxy distinction. Whereas the former (economy) can be understood in rational terms (as they are organized for a specific purpose), the latter (catallaxy) is spontaneous and without design — just a mass of sundry economies without a specific, common purpose. The alienation that people have with respect to the economic process is the result of this catallaxy, not class divisions. In short, today's significant divisions (such as those which separate rival producers and/or producers and consumers) cannot be understood in traditional class terms (i.e. organized and rational) but reflect — instead — catallaxy.

This argument, and its application to regional and urban development theory, provokes two questions, neither of which are explicitly anticipated in the text. The first, and more innocent, is: to what extent does Sayer's critique apply to the political economy literature outside of urban and regional development studies? Sayer seems to be content on focusing his application on a rather small area of political economy (urban/regional development).

The more problematic question is derived from his desire to contrast the interests of producers and consumers. Sayer seems satisfied to stop at simply noting the divergence of interests between these disparate groups. He does not offer to characterize or evaluate the nature of the relationship (equal? unequal? dependent? exclusive?), nor does he address the potential institutional barriers to organizing some groups over others. Because these cleavages may be contingent and incidental, it does not mean they are just. As there is enormous literature on the relative effectiveness of these sorts of organizations, it seems peculiar that *Radical Political Economy* does not address the normative aspects of these issues. As a brief aside, I find it incredible that the book lacks a reference to Mancur Olson and the collective action literature.

Lars Udehn's *The Limits of Public Choice* is my favorite of the three books. It is a well organized, argued and balanced book. If I had a concern, it would be personal — derived from my position as a political scientist. As 'a friendly critic' points out to Udehn (a sociologist at the University of Uppsala), the perspective of this book makes political science, itself, disappear (p. 11). *The Limits of Public Choice* is a book that takes sociology seriously and provides an informed critique of the shortcomings of rational choice, as applied to public choice theory. Those who are worried that Udehn is simply a European version of Green and Shapiro's recent critique (*Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Yale University Press, 1994), rest assured: Udehn is covering different territory, but his critique dovetails nicely with that of Green and Shapiro's.

Udehn offers a good introduction to the economic politics and social politics literature (although I find it strange to see Marx appear among the sociologists); a nice review of public choice theories; and a wealth of data and literature — if somewhat taxonomical at times. It is a very well organized critique of public choice theories. Its only shortcoming may be its hubris. This book also covers a lot of territory.

Chapter 1 contrasts economic man against sociological man and introduces the main assumptions of public choice: self-interest, exchange, and individualism. These three main assumptions are each addressed in detail in subsequent chapters. The second chapter, for example, shows how much of our behavior is motivated by both self-interest and public interest. Udehn recognizes the usefulness of self-interest assumptions (in heuristic terms), but he is interested in developing more complete explanations of behavior. The third chapter takes up the question of exchange. Here the argument is that the essence of politics, despite many metaphors to the contrary, is not exchange, but persuasion. Persuasion is about changing, not satisfying, people's wants. The fourth chapter

takes on the final assumption of public choice theory: individualism. Here the critique is twofold, one methodological, the other normative; Udehn argues that the public choice literature uses individualism in a normative, not a methodological, manner. The result of this careful and critical examination of the underlying assumptions of public choice theory is that the reader sees how precariously this tradition rests atop its rather shaky foundations.

The book's remaining chapters take up collective action dilemmas (or the lack thereof). Chapter 5 suggests that communication is underemphasized in the literature aimed at understanding collective action. Economists have been focusing on incentives and mixed motivations, at the expense of other, more social/interactive, factors. Udehn would like us to consider more systematically how communication itself creates a collective identity which facilitates collective action. This argument is buttressed in the final two chapters, which offer a defense for sociological theories of collective action and social order.

The most interesting discussion in the book may be Udehn's careful drafting of the distinction between public and market morals. Udehn argues that it is not inconsistent to suggest that man acts differently in the political and market environments. Building on Adam Smith's model of mixed motivations (from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*), Udehn suggests that people act on different motives in different institutional settings. This allows him to conclude that 'sociological man is the offspring of Adam Smith's theory of human nature and superior to rational choice as a model of political man' (p. 94).

*The Limits of Public Choice* — like *Radical Political Economy* and *The State in the Modernization Process* — supplies a more contextually sensitive means for analyzing economic and social behavior. Each book offers a different cut to political economy topics. To varying degrees of success, all three books present challenges to the more simple deductive models which currently dominate the political economy literature. The challenges, however, are offered in a constructive, rather than an exclusionary, tone. Udehn's summation applies equally to all three books:

I am not going to argue . . . that the sociological approach is superior to, or even as good as, the economic approach. I believe that a comparison is difficult, to the point of being entirely devoid of meaning. To a large extent, the economic and sociological approaches highlight different aspects of politics. To the extent that they do, they cannot be compared in a simple way. (p. 9)

For readers of this journal, it will probably come as a great relief to find that alternative — more sociological — analyses of the workings of the economy have begun to make important inroads into the political economy tradition. Although they cover an enormous amount of territory between them, these three books are important contributions to that development.

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Hank Johnston & Bert Kländermans (eds.): *Social Movements and Culture*.  
London: University College London Press, 1995.

Johnston and Kländermans position this book as a follow-up to Morris and Mueller's *Social Movement Theory*. In this context, *Social Movements and Culture* addresses three topics: the usefulness of different theoretical perspec-

tives on culture as a factor in the emergence of social movements, different manifestations of movement culture, and research methods.

From a trivial perspective, culture is simply elaborate artifacts (e.g. music, literature, plastic art) and to which it is difficult to disagree with the economists' insatiability proposition: the more, the better. On the analytical side, however, the concept of culture branches itself out into two interconnected domains: social relations (the ways in which an individual can relate himself to others and how others can relate themselves to him/her) and cultural biases (worldviews or ideologies). Juxtaposing the various cultures, within which a type of social relation and a type of cultural bias mutually justify one another, one is instantly wrong if one has to ask which culture is right. Thus, the argument 'the more of a given culture, the better' needs not be supported by the adherents of other cultures. A final domain of culture is simply the use of it as a causal residue: when other explanations peter out, culture 'explains' what is left. *Social Movements and Culture*, consisting of 11 chapters, touches upon all these domains of culture. But the majority of the chapters fall within the domain of 'cultural biases' according to the editors' key reference to culture as the 'symbolic expressive aspect of social behaviour' (p. 3).

Three chapters of the book merit reference. Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier give an overview of various analysts' approaches to the concept of culture: functionalists' conception of values and norms, marxists' understanding of culture as class consciousness, symbolic interactionists' emphasis on intersubjective meaning, dramaturgists' thinking of culture as ritual, and finally post-structuralists and post-modernists construing culture as discourse. Within these frameworks, the authors convincingly analyze the women's movement.

Michael Billig draws attention to one too often neglected aspect in the field: the inherent contradictions of culture. Even what is conventionally understood as something homogeneous does not escape what Billig phrases 'the dilemmatic nature of common sense' (p. 74). The system of law, for instance, belongs to a 'sensu communis'; yet the prosecutors use the rhetoric of justice, whereas the defense uses the rhetoric of mercy. This chapter convincingly conveys culture as controversy and conflict and from which assumption a better cultural analysis unfolds. It is far less in the instance itself than in the social context in which the instance is embedded, which gives rise to such conflicting interpretations as Billig illustratively mentions: 'too many cooks spoil the broth' and 'many hands make light work'.

Anyone who is interested in measuring culture in an organization or a movement will find useful information in John Lofland's chapter. Lofland offers culture in terms of 'location', meaning 'where we may look to find aspects of culture, and in terms of 'dimension' or degrees of culture. The subcategories of location and dimension may be combined so as to form a matrix within which the analyst may order the various information gathered about a movement. What one finds as a drawback of this approach, however, are the terms 'amount of culture' or 'degree of culture', which both suggest artifacts and quantification. Precision would be improved if one applied the concept of institutionalization in addition to amount and degree of culture.

There are three areas in which the book as a whole may be improved: conceptual stringency, the notion that there is one culture in one organization, and the incomplete pursuit of cultural patterns.

It is a nonstarter to ascertain that 'Culture and social structure combine to induce collective helplessness' (p. 95). If one replaces 'helplessness' with 'capability', one is in no better position to either falsify or corroborate the statement. A better question to ask is what *typified* combination of cultural biases and social relations induces helplessness, and what combination is