

PROVINCIALIZING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES*

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Born in the 19th. century of occidental descent, the social sciences have sought to transcend history in three ways. They have hidden their Eurocentric origins behind universalistic knowledge claims; they have perpetuated and justified the original division of disciplines by naturalizing and eternalizing their distinctive objects (the capitalist triumvirate of economy, state and society); and they have secured their scientific truth by defining their methodology (positivism) as context free. These are the sweeping claims of the Gulbenkian Commission on the restructuring of the social sciences, *Opening the Social Sciences*, that caused a flutter of interest when it appeared in 1996. Written by eminent academics from different disciplines and chaired by Immanuel Wallerstein, the Gulbenkian Commission's historic role was to draw attention to the imperial birth-marks of the social sciences.

Exposing the parochialism of the social sciences, however, is only the first step toward restructuring. On the basis of its reading of current trends in the social sciences – new meanings of science and the rise of multi-disciplinarity – The Gulbenkian Commission proposed a comprehensive unification of all academic knowledge. I argue

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that Wallerstein and his fellow commissioners overlook the constellation of interests that embroil the social sciences and, therefore, misread the empirical trends. In other words, the Gulbenkian restructuring veers toward another abstract universalism, passing over the ongoing historical context of the social sciences, their conditions of production and their broader societal effects. Instead of an Olympian *restructuring*, I propose to bring the social sciences down to earth by *provincializing* their universalism, their disciplinary divisions, and their methodology, that is grounding them in their particularity, their specific context of production, and exposing their contradictory participation in the social, economic and political worlds they seek to comprehend.¹ To provincialize is to burst the bubble of disinterested knowledge, and to address the role of social science in supplying ideologies that justify market tyranny and state unilateralism.

1. Wallerstein's Totalizing Utopia²

For Wallerstein the social sciences, born in sin, are now on the way to redemption. False universalism, anachronistic disciplinary divisions, and a narrow methodological positivism³, are being superceded in a totalizing social science.

- Claims to universalism by Western social science have been challenged by particularisms rooted in a variety anti-colonial and post-colonial struggles abroad and by excluded groups (racial minorities, women, popular classes, etc.) at home. Wallerstein does not, however, seek to replace the old universalism with a series of particularisms but with a new *pluralistic universalism*, “on the analogy of the Indian pantheon, wherein a single god has many avatars” (Wallerstein et al., 1996, 59-60).

- The social sciences, and here Wallerstein mainly focuses on the nomothetic sciences of politics, economics and sociology, are themselves based on an outmoded distinction between state, market and civil society. The rise of multidisciplinary – new programs or even new departments, new scholarly associations, new journals – is the harbinger of the *decomposition and transcendence of the tripartite division of the social sciences*. Professional organizations are the die-hard defenders and enforcers of the anachronistic separation (Wallerstein et al., 46-7).
- The methodological positivism that underpinned Newtonian science and provided the model for social science has been replaced. Positivism's search for laws, induced from an empirical and passive world, that predict the future with certainty, has given way to a conception of complex systems whose futures are radically uncertain, as they try to grapple with a nature that is now thought of as active and creative. Such a new self-understanding of the natural sciences (associated with chemist Ilya Prigogine) converges with cultural studies where poststructuralism has introduced radical skepticism toward all foundational knowledge. The terrain of this convergence will be a reunified social science. "It also now seems that the social sciences are no longer a poor relative somehow torn between the two polarized clans of the natural sciences and humanities; *rather they have become the locus of their potential reconciliation*" (Wallerstein et al., 69 emphasis added).

Wallerstein, therefore, is proposing the supercession of all contradictions in a grand synthesis, a seamless integration of all disciplinary knowledge that will be centered in a comprehensive social science.

In short, if knowledge production in the 19th. century was limited by the cradle of its creation, now finally knowledge has broken the bonds of its determination, constituting itself as a unitary system that transcends history. The social sciences, in particular, can finally escape the stamp of the society they interpret. In an uncharacteristic move Wallerstein casts aside the constraints of space and time to take up a radically utopian project. He suppresses the conditions of the production of knowledge, the interests behind the production and consumption of knowledge, as well as the relations of power that define terrains of knowledge production. Far from rejecting positivism, Wallerstein fulfills its dream by arriving at pure science emancipated from its roots in society, at a science outside the society it describes and in which it dwells. Positivism's ambition to unify the sciences is realized but extended to incorporate the humanities too. Far from provincializing the social sciences, Wallerstein gestures to another unelaborated universalism.

2. Knowledge and Human Interests

Recognizing their origins does not remove the three sins. It requires resituating universal knowledge claims, disciplinary divides and context-free methodologies in the world that constitutes them, even as they constitute it. We approach false universalism, disciplinary divisions, and unreflective positivism by asking two simple but fundamental questions never broached in the Gulbenkian Report.

- Knowledge for Whom?* To put it most crudely, as social scientists are we merely talking to ourselves or are we concerned with an audience beyond the academy? To be sure the raw material for the social sciences comes from the society in which we are embedded but should and can social science be given back to the world from which it was taken? Can we and should we transcend Bourdieu's hiatus between analytical and folk theory, between the logic of logic and the logic of practice? We have devoted much energy to interpreting the world, with all the problems of translation, but what about changing the world, translating back our interpretations?
- Knowledge for What?* If we are concerned about the world beyond, then as social scientists are we consigned to work out solutions to problems given to us from without? Are we servants of power, seeking the best means for a given end? Or are we also engaged with questions about those goals themselves. Is it, to use Weber's language, our business to engage in questions of value rationality (value discussion) as well as instrumental rationality? Are the social sciences part of a wider "eclipse of reason," as Horkheimer put it, as they too suppress a reflexive concern with ends.

TYPES AND DIMENSIONS OF DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE⁴

| | Academic Audience | Extra-Academic Audience |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Instrumental Knowledge | PROFESSIONAL | POLICY |
| Reflexive Knowledge | CRITICAL | PUBLIC |

Posing these two questions generates the four fold table above. *Professional social science* is instrumental knowledge inasmuch as it is organized to solve puzzles in research programs defined by assumptions, bodies of theory, methods, questions, exemplars – all of which have to be taken as given if a research program is to expand. The research program arises and functions within an institutional context that shapes it, a context that includes the university, itself embedded in society. Wallerstein’s restructuring of the social sciences dwells on this category of professional knowledge, reiterating the positivist concern with mirroring reality.

If professional knowledge grows within taken-for-granted disciplinary frameworks, it is *critical social science* that calls into question these frameworks whether they be singular research programs or, multiple research traditions. Here we may find dissident economists, such as Joseph Stiglitz or Amartya Sen, or critical sociologists such as Robert Lynd, C. Wright Mills, Alvin Gouldner, and more recently feminism and poststructuralism. Critical theory is the conscience of professional knowledge. It is reflexive knowledge not only because it interrogates the normative foundations of professional knowledge but also because it does so through open discussion. Wallerstein’s assault on the disciplines comes under the rubric of critical social science, although it does not explore the normative dimension.

Critical social science supplies the normative dimension of *public social science* which elaborates and calls into question values held in society, through the stimulation of open public discussion, what Jürgen Habermas calls “communicative action.” There are many forms of public social science, depending on the nature of the public and the mode of communication, but we can most easily distinguish between elite forms that are

disseminated through the media, what I call *traditional* public social science, as opposed to grassroots public knowledge that is an unmediated dialogue between social scientists and their publics, what I call *organic* public social science. Here we find the social scientist in dialogue with communities of faith, neighborhood associations, labor movements, social justice movements, and so forth. It is too easy to focus only on the traditional forms of public social science, associated with such renown figures as Kenneth Galbraith, and Paul Krugman in economics or Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, William Julius Wilson, David Riesman, and Robert Bellah in sociology. Traditional public social science should not eclipse the organic public social science that may be less visible, but more ubiquitous and effective. The organic anchors traditional public social science just as the latter can inspire, contextualize and link up different grassroots engagements.

Finally, we must distinguish between public and *policy social science*. In both cases the audience is extra-academic but whereas the former generates discussion over ends as well as means, the latter focuses exclusively on the most effective means for a predetermined end – predetermined by some client who “employs” the social scientist or by a patron who defines a broader agenda for research. As compared to the professional social science with its *puzzles* defined by research programs, policy social science focuses on *problems* defined by policy agendas. As we shall see, depending on historical context, some disciplines (economics in the United States today) are more effective in the policy arena whereas other disciplines are more effective in the public sphere (sociology in the United States today).

There are many qualifications to this four fold scheme, not least that each type of knowledge is itself internally complex. Professional and policy knowledges have their reflexive moments just as critical and public knowledges have their instrumental dimensions. In the same way professional and critical knowledges have an interface with extra-academic audiences -- think of the semi-popular magazines associations put out or the connection of critical knowledge to social movements that flow into the academy. Equally, policy and public knowledges have an interface with the academic world. Indeed, we may say that each of our four types can itself be further subdivided into public, professional, critical and policy quadrants.

In addition, one has to distinguish between this division of social science labor on the one side, and the location and/or trajectory of social scientists through that division on the other. Thus, an aspiring sociology student might begin her career in the public sphere working for the labor movement. On burning out she decides to develop her talents in new directions. She enrolls as a graduate student, an aspiring critical sociologist. Confronted with an elaborate obstacle race that excises all moral moment, she considers dropping out – but where to? Instead she tries to come to terms with professionalism, perhaps even pursuing two tracks at once – an academic on the inside, an activist on the outside. More than likely she accepts, for the time being, the strictures of the academic career. If she wins a tenure track job, then by the time tenure finally arrives (or doesn't) she may be burnt out again or she may have lost touch with the critical and public impulses that motivated her commitment in the first place. Or perhaps those impulses resurface and flourish as never before.

Immanuel Wallerstein himself offers us an instructive career. Very much the critical sociologist in the years of the Columbia student protests of the late 1960s, Wallerstein's critical sociology began a decade earlier with his 1959 dissertation on independence movements in Africa. He then began to question reigning development theory that explained Africa's failure to develop by reference to the values or character of the African people – their countries couldn't catch up because Africans were not modern. He turned this claim upside down, arguing that countries cannot develop in the 20th century in the same way that Europe developed in the 16th and 17th centuries because the world itself had changed. It was one thing to be an early riser creating the modern world system, it was another to develop within the periphery of an already-existing rapacious world capitalist economy.⁵ Wallerstein's success quickly turned world system analysis into a recognized research program within professional sociology, albeit still in its critical quadrant. Wallerstein attributed sociology's resistance to the full acceptance of World Systems Theory to the compartmentalization of the disciplines. World Systems Theory itself brought together history, economics, political science, anthropology, and sociology without specializing in any one of them. Because it lay across disciplines, it never sat comfortably within any one. The new research program did find a home in Binghamton and Paris but it was always hampered by its inter-disciplinary character. From here it was a short step to an open attack on the disciplines themselves, turning Wallerstein once more into a critical theorist, arguing that the disciplines were a creature of the past and of limited relevance to the modern world.

Having deployed my four knowledge categories to provincialize Wallerstein's career I propose now to use them to provincialize the Gulbenkian Report itself, and to address its three bêtes noires: positivism, universalism and the disciplinary divide.

3. Provincializing Positivism without Losing Science

No matter how positivism is defined – and we've been treated to many definitions in the foregoing chapters – it necessarily entails the suppression of both questions: “knowledge for whom?” and “knowledge for what?” Pursuing these questions allows us to provincialize positivism, and understand its place within social science. But let us first specify the meaning of the social sciences, distinguishing them from the humanities on the one side and from the natural sciences on the other.

Dividing disciplinary knowledge into these four types – professional, policy, public and critical -- clarifies why the humanities and the natural sciences cannot be simply fused into a unified system of knowledge. The natural sciences are primarily focused on instrumental knowledge whose criteria of validity are internal to science – science that is externally applied to problems defined for the scientist. Reflexive knowledge -- in the sense defined above of engagement with normative issues -- is not integral to the natural sciences. It does happen that natural scientists engage in the production of critical and public knowledges as we know from the history of physics and the atom bomb. More recently, scientists have become embroiled in social movements opposing the ever-closer relation between industry and the university in such areas as genetic engineering, and contesting the direction of research on moral grounds (Moore, 1996; Schurman and Munroe, 2004). Although natural scientists have become more

concerned with the public dimension of their research, especially as the university increasingly comes under attack, it is not an essential part of their enterprise.

Very different are the humanities whose knowledge is concentrated in the reflexive mode. Poets and painters are fundamentally dependent upon the expert critic or the wider public for validation of their work. In separating the reflexive from the instrumental, critical knowledge in the humanities takes on a slightly different meaning, one that is more hermeneutically focused on the preservation of the integrity of art and literature in face of degradation from without. Yet the academic is on shaky terrain because there are no purely internal criteria for the validity of knowledge, although the movement toward cultural studies and literary theory is surely a move toward academicization of knowledge.

The social sciences, on the other hand, are at the intersection of the humanities and natural sciences since they necessarily partake in both instrumental and reflexive knowledge. Here are research programs which are deeply embedded in value premises that need to be critically fleshed out and become the object of public debate. Indeed, I would argue that the vibrancy of a social science depends upon the reciprocal influence of all four types of knowledge – professional, policy, public and critical. The flourishing of each is dependent on the flourishing of all. Professional social science, in varying ways, depends upon critical analysis of its foundations, and on being sensitive to the movement of public issues and policy agendas, just as public social science depends upon the accumulated bodies of professional knowledge and the legitimacy it offers, it depends on an infusion of values from critical knowledges, and often the debate that policy interventions so often generate. Critical social science could not exist were there no

professional knowledge to criticize, but it also benefits from the examination of the hidden assumptions of policy research and public debate. Although policy social science does not necessarily appreciate the sometimes vigorous criticism it receives, subjecting itself to such critique strengthens its autonomy with respect to its clients. It may use professional knowledge but it should not dictate professional knowledge by virtue of its control over purse strings.

This balance among the four knowledges is often hard to maintain in the face of centrifugal forces. On the one hand, there is a tendency for academic knowledge to regress toward the esoteric while, on the other hand, there is a tendency for extra-academic audiences to capture the social scientist who then becomes a servant of power, often blowing back into and distorting professional knowledge. Equally, pandering to publics leads to faddishness, or “pop” social science just as critical knowledge that is accountable to a community of intellectuals may turn inwards and become dogmatic. Professional knowledge suffers from the same regressive temptation, self-referentiality and insularity, especially when it sees itself as competing with other professional knowledge. As Andrew Abbott (1988) has pointed out and as Breslau makes clear in his chapter on economics – the more abstract the knowledge the higher its status.

In arguing for the reciprocal interdependence of these four types of social science practice, I am not at all suggesting that they simply blur into each other. To the contrary their interdependence depends upon their *relative autonomy*. Like Sandra Harding in this volume I believe that an effective public social science far from being incompatible with, depends upon the best of science. In my view, however, such a science has to be postpositivist in that it has to recognize its own implication in the world it studies. It is a

view of science that focuses on the growth of knowledge and prediction rather than on a positivist concern with correspondence to reality. Specifically I see such professional bodies of knowledge developing through what Imre Lakatos (1978) calls scientific research programs which have their own relatively autonomous logic, although one that is not impervious to external stimuli – autonomy without insulation. Scientific research programs are impelled forward through their engagement with internal contradictions but also with external anomalies.

From the standpoint of this division of social science labor, *positivism* becomes the self-misunderstanding of professional knowledge, that knowledge is and has to be autonomously produced, an autonomy without embeddedness. Under certain historical conditions, such as the ones Philip Mirowski outlines in his contribution, positivism becomes part of the professional habitus, and is seen to be necessary for knowledge to grow. It is, to use the vocabulary of Bourdieu, the *illusio* of the professional field, the rules of the game to which we are so riveted, and that thereby eclipse the conditions of their existence. As we shall see the conditions of the positivist *illusio* are eroding, forcing the rules out into reflexive deliberation and creating pressures for their transformation.

4.Provincializing Universalism without Resorting to Particularism

If positivism is the method, universalism is the project – to develop knowledges that are true in all contexts – context-free knowledge. In recent decades such unreflexive universalism has received hammer blows from social movements. The women’s movement has been at the forefront in exposing the masculinist assumptions of social science, demonstrating their rootedness in the conditions of men, conditions that women

daily create, conditions that were for so long invisible to social science. Anti-colonial movements have been no less effective in unmasking racial and ethnic assumptions of Western social science. Such unmasking has been the project of postcolonialism and the critiques of Orientalism. The struggle between universalism and particularism is none other than the struggle between an instrumental knowledge that can be applied by experts in all situations and a reflexive knowledge that reveals the arbitrary grounds upon which professional knowledge rests. Critical social science directly engages the assumptions of universalizing theory while public social science enters a dialogue with local knowledges demonstrating the limits of all-purpose recipes.

Exploring this matter further, we see that the division of social science labor harbors not just the possibility of reciprocal interdependence, but also the reality of antagonistic interdependence. Professional social science is accountable to a community of peers, concerned to establish themselves within the hierarchy of disciplines, vested in the monopoly of inaccessible knowledge. Public social science is justified by its relevance and accessibility to given publics to which it is, at least partially, accountable. Policy research with the funds it brings all too easily imposes its own agenda on professional knowledge. Open debate about the value foundations of social science disrupts the scientific process that takes them as given. Stable containment of these antagonisms requires hierarchy. Hierarchies come in different forms – despotic and coercive or hegemonic and negotiated.

The compromise and unstable hierarchies among our 4 types of knowledge vary with context. In the United States we are accustomed to professional social science being hegemonic, in Third World countries it can happen that public knowledge is hegemonic.

In the Soviet Union policy social science imposed itself on the profession, blotting out (manipulating or forcing underground) critical and public social science. In Scandinavia policy social science is also important but not so exclusively as to be at the expense of the other types of knowledge. Critical knowledge is rarely hegemonic but it nevertheless plays its role not least in authoritarian regimes, where it also often succumbs to annihilation. In short, the configuration of professional, policy, public and critical social sciences varies from country to country, and from one historical period to the next.

This in turn can give rise to an emergent global division of social science labor. With their enormous resources, built on a vast complex of higher education, advanced capitalist countries dominate professional social science, leaving a vacuum in poorer countries, split between opposition and attachment to that Western professional knowledge.⁶ A global division of labor that concentrates professional knowledge in the North – a division promoted by the World Bank -- threatens to destroy local synergies of the professional, the public, the critical and the policy knowledges. Social science that parachutes in from the United States, dealing in abstractions that are irrelevant to local needs, breaks up the production of local knowledge, directs it into fruitless channels, resulting in a clash of Western “universalism” and local “particularism.”

Thus, countries of the Global South find it an uphill task to retain a disciplinary nexus of all four knowledges worked out on a national terrain. While it is undoubtedly true that the United States dominates the production of professional knowledge it is nevertheless a terrain upon which alternative professional knowledges, true to national contexts, might develop – professional knowledges that might emerge from the critique of Western paradigms but also from local publics and policy concerns. Crossing borders

social scientists from the South can collaborate in knitting together their own emergent body of professional knowledge, reconfiguring dominant paradigms by building them up from below. Beyond the antagonism of universalism and particularism are the struggles on the terrain of a hegemonic social science – itself a very complex and contradictory unity -- emanating from the West. Provincializing social science cannot mean a *reactive devolution* into scattered and defensive nativist particularisms, but the *reconfiguration* of the existing global division of social science labor. The social scientists of the global North, but particularly in the United States, must first recognize just how powerful they are, and that their universal knowledges are only universal because of that power.

5. Provincializing the Disciplines without Dissolving Them

Tracing the social sciences back to their idiosyncratic birth Wallerstein claims that the divisions among them are arbitrary and therefore should be abolished. Certainly, there are blurrings, overlappings, hybrids but the underlying distinctions, I shall argue, do have their rationale, rooted as they are in the abiding division of capitalism into the three spheres: economy, state and civil society. There is no perfect fit here and some social sciences, e.g. anthropology, geography and history, do not have a clear object, which can be to their critical advantage. In the final analysis, to provincialize the disciplines is to recognize their continuity in the abiding foundations in the societies that created them. Thus, to wish them away is to indulge in utopian fantasy.

We can appreciate the distinctiveness of the different social sciences with the same grid that counterposes type of knowledge (instrumental vs. reflexive) to audience (academic vs. extra-academic). Put crudely economics is oriented toward the instrumental

and sociology toward the reflexive with political science in between. This balance is reflected in the organization of the professional knowledge. Economics has an integrated, coherent and overweening research program, buttressed by a relatively authoritarian and elite dominated profession with its own internal hierarchy -- as Dan Breslau shows in this volume. In its imposition of a singular paradigm one might liken the economics profession to the communist party, both in its internal organization and its imperial ambitions. The organization generates rare but distinguished dissidents. -- a Nobel Prize often helps! The internal coherence of economics makes it an effective policy instrument -- policy makers know they will get a definitive answer to their questions whether they are right or wrong.

Very different is sociology with its multiple research traditions, its canonical return to the founders. If economics is like the communist party, sociology looks more like anarcho-syndicalism with its 43 sections, its multiple journals (some 200). Its range of research traditions, self-conscious about their value premises, makes sociology less effective in the policy world but more responsive to critical thought and multiple interests arising in the public arena. Political science lies between these two disciplines, with dominant internal disciplinary pressures to emulate economics, the so called rational choice framework, which has generated its own more reflexive opposition, the perestroika movement. As we can see in the chapters by William Sewell, Geoff Eley and Webb Keane, history and anthropology, although deeply divided, are bent more toward the reflexive than the scientific pole -- and indeed they are an effective bridge to the humanities -- while human geography can look in many directions, not least the physical sciences.

But here I will focus on the triumverate of economics, political science and sociology. Their divergent configuration of knowledges (public, professional, critical and policy) in part reflects their relation to their objects of knowledge. As Tim Mitchell argues in this volume, over the last century, but particularly the last half century, economics has been amazingly successful in defining and thereby constituting its object – the economy as seen through the lens of the market. The close link between economics and its project of expanding the market is not a 19th. century anachronism but a devastating 21st. century reality. In the same way, political science has historically made its object the state and its project the consolidation of political order⁷, just as sociology’s object of knowledge is society, or more specifically civil society, and its project the expansion of the social. By civil society I mean the constellation of popular associations that grew up in Europe at the end of the 19th century – political parties, trade unions, voluntary organizations, mass education, newspapers. Civil society is a messy residual concept, which perhaps accounts for why sociology is such a sprawling undisciplined discipline. Be that as it may state, economy and civil society set the terms for the interests of their respective social science.

Of course, disciplines are not homogeneous but contested fields. But they are fields nonetheless, that is they do have projects which define the stakes, the struggles, the issues. As I mentioned above there are dissidents in economics but there are also organizations opposed to the mainstream – the Union of Radical Political Economics or the movement for “post-autistic economics,” just as in political science there has been a long history of opposition from political theory, and much more recently from the perestroika movement. Sociology is slightly different in that the radical challenge of the

1970s was absorbed rather than repelled and the critical opposition today comes more from the “pure science” wing of the profession, hostile to “politicization.” These internal divisions within disciplinary fields are defined by the structure of the field itself. They do not directly correspond to the constellation of interests in the wider society but to those interests refracted through the academic field.

What then is the significance of multi-disciplinary programs in area studies, the inter-disciplinary fields such as communication studies, administrative sciences, etc., the cross-disciplinary programs that recognize excluded “others” (African American studies, Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies), and more generally the overlapping of disciplines? For Wallerstein they mark the untenable character of the disciplines whereas it might be equally argued they mark their tenacity. Here too the demarcation into policy, public, critical and professional knowledges is pertinent. Thus, as Michael Dutton argues in this volume, the *multi-disciplinary* area studies, funded by state interests in the international balance of power, have often been tied to policy research, turning them into an arm of the disciplines. The new *joint-disciplinary* programs of women’s studies, ethnic studies, African American studies are tied to publics and as such have often had a fractious history in the university hostile to such an unmediated public connection. Poststructuralist *trans-disciplinary* tendencies infuse critical knowledge with challenges to disciplinary foundations.

Finally, at the boundaries of the disciplines themselves there is often *cross-disciplinary* fertilizing, so that we do find economic sociology or political sociology borrowing ideas from economics or political science, but economic sociology examines the social bases of the market just as political sociology studies societal bases of or

challenges to state power. That is to say these subdisciplines may appear as cross-overs but in practice they are firmly rooted in the project of a single discipline. Indeed, they bespeak the power and the interests of the disciplines, as do the deep schisms within joint-disciplinary programs.

There is no doubt that alternative projects and challenges to the disciplines are as likely to come from these hybrid endeavors as from anywhere, still they all depend on the existence of disciplines. Thus, to seek to turn the disciplines into a melting pot of disinterested knowledge, ignores the real and contradictory interests, both within and beyond the university, to which divergent disciplinary projects are connected. If within the social sciences economics, with its powerful instrumental knowledge, is hegemonic, that hegemony is always under reconstruction as historical forces give more or less weight to reflexive knowledge, associated, for example, with sociology or anthropology. Internal rearticulation of the hegemonic system is one way to think of change, the elaboration of an alternative hegemony is another but altogether more difficult way. To think about these alternatives one needs to return to the present world-historical conjuncture of the production and consumption of official knowledge.

6. The University against Market and State

The social sciences were born in the 19th. century so that today they are an anachronism. That is Wallerstein's case for a singular but comprehensive social science. I argue differently, that the 21st. century looks ever more like the stereotype of the 19th. century with its division between state, market and society. The 20th. century, from which Wallerstein spoke, was the age of extremes with its anomalous interpenetration of state,

economy and society, assuming the despotic forms of communism and fascism or the more benign state regulation of social democracy. This is now at an end as states increasingly pursue their own terrifying political logics, whether behind a democratic façade or not, allowing markets to devastate the conditions of human existence in the name of freedom. We are searching, therefore, for a Polanyian backlash from society – local, national, regional or global -- that will protect humanity's interests in economic security and political freedom.

In this theatre of clashing forces where do the disciplines lie? I have argued that political science and economics as they are presently defined only buttress these tendencies but sociology, along with cultural anthropology and human geography, are rooted in the resilience of civil society. Immediately, one must add that civil society is not some oasis of resplendent harmony and fructifying solidarity. It has its own scattered hegemonies, racial exclusions, and class dominations – compounded by if not the direct result of invasions by state and economy. Reflecting these divisions, sociology like the other disciplines is itself a heavily fractured and a contested field. Some tout civil society as the answer to society's problems, absorbing the devastation wrought by markets and state deregulation, while others see civil society as the source of demands to reassert state regulation of markets. Margaret Somers, in her chapter, captures this contestation over the meaning of the “social” in her passionate defense of the concept of an active civil society against its colonization by economic notions of social capital. She forcefully raises the question as to whether the market will be socialized or civil society marketized. Just as civil society is the carrier of the last best hope against the depredations of state and economy, so sociologists despite their differences do promote an emergent and

convergent ethos, hostile to unregulated markets and unilateralist states. And in this they can join hands across the world.

Indeed, it is this critical ethos that finds its expression in public sociology. Yet here is the paradox. At the very time when sociologists desire greater connection to various publics, those publics are under threat or in retreat. Indeed, it is often argued that there can be no public sociology because publics are disappearing, at least in the United States, or if they do exist they are receding from the sociological ethos. The very forces we oppose have the upper hand, systematically eroding the terrain upon which public sociology might sprout. I would argue that the situation is not so bleak. There are still plenty of publics to work with. Some sociologists spend time with communities of faith, others with labor unions. Some operate at the neighborhood level, others at the municipal level others attach themselves to state level organizations and movements. As I travel the country to state associations of sociology I discover all manner of interesting projects directed at displaced workers, environmental groups, homelessness, prisoners, HIV-AIDS and needle exchange, and immigrant rights. Sociologists are indeed in the trenches of civil society.

Sociologists are also specialists in the fabrication of categories and identities, helping to turn private stigma into public action, especially in the field of public health. Sociologists partake in the constitution of publics – people with AIDS, with cancer, obesity, etc. Finally, if publics are indeed on the wane, if the public sphere is a desert, and here again I'm talking about the United States, all the more reason to constitute ourselves, following the lead of other professional associations such as the lawyers or the psychologists, as a public with a political role to play. And more broadly the university

itself moves from being an actor motivated by self-preservation to one with a broader vision of its mission.

There is one public that is here to stay. As long as there are faculty there will be students, and by students I mean undergraduates. They are our first and most important public – the public whose constitution we all share. We can relate to them like traditional public sociologists relate to their publics, reigning down truth from above as though pouring wine into empty vessels, or we can look upon them as partners in a collaborative venture, a process of mutual enlightenment in which students learn to locate their own experience in its broader historical, national and even global context. We teach people, as C Wright Mills famously put it, to turn private troubles into public issues, to transcend their possessive individualism. That surely is what a critical social science has to offer students, although it is often a painful experience for both teacher and taught. Such an impetus coincides with a growing interest in service learning, which when properly carried out takes sociology beyond the classroom – students become ambassadors to wider publics, to what you might call secondary publics. We are in the business of educating the educators, even as we educate ourselves.

Once more we face a paradox. Precisely when we are thinking of extending the impact of our teaching to wider publics the university itself is under siege (Kirp, 2003, Bok, 2003). Under financial pressure from declining public budgets universities intensively compete for students, marketizing admissions as sales ventures, appealing to the crudest of interests. Those universities that can, increasingly turn to corporate financing of research that further erodes the civic moment of education. Others can sustain themselves only through the proletarianization of teaching, making civic

education far beyond our capacities so that we end up reinforcing alienated self-understanding (Nelson, 1997). At the same time that the state withdraws material support it has begun to encroach academic freedom, beginning with greater surveillance over programs of global import. And now we are facing new movements to “diversify” the academy, movements to root out its critical dispositions.

And where do the disciplines, and particularly the social sciences, line up here? Even as they oppose the colonization and commodification of university life, they supply the very ideologies that justify such encroachments – the disciplinary projects of political order and market expansion. Like the physicists who invented the atomic bomb they know not of what they are doing, as their own existence, not to mention the rest of humanity, is put at risk by the ideological bombs they themselves have manufactured.

As state and market encroach upon the university we can no longer regard ourselves as outside history, projecting forth a universal knowledge from a non-existent Archimedean place. This was the illusion of positivism that, as George Steinmetz points out in his chapter on sociology, was a feature of Fordism with the protection and security it extended to the university. We have been living in a fool’s paradise. The siege of the public university, and indeed everything public, calls forth two responses. We can accept the terms of the conjuncture and compete for privatization, turning to distance learning, sweetheart deals with bioengineering corporations, marketizing admissions and so forth or we can appeal to the very publics we serve. As producers of knowledge and thus of ideology, we have a particular responsibility to produce a reflexive knowledge that, on the one hand, enters a critique of professional and policy knowledges for, among other things, imprisoning the imagination but, on the other hand, forges relations with publics,

generating dialogue that calls into question the directions of society. The more the university loses its autonomy and the more it is colonized by market and state, the more desperately it will need to engage with publics that share a similar fate.

Reflexivity is but the first and indispensable step in provincializing social science, making it aware of its power and particularity. We need to reconfigure rather than dissolve professional knowledge, so necessary to comprehend the terms of public engagement. Professional knowledge helps us reconnoiter the patterning of civil society, and thus the possibilities of a public social science. As I have argued, this is the province of sociology in particular but it cannot be confined to sociology. To elaborate a critical perspective it needs all the help it can get from the humanities as well as from dissidents in the more instrumental social sciences. From Geoff Eley and William Sewell we have a sense of historians turning back from esoteric apolitical cultural analysis to a social analysis from whence they came, just as Emily Hauptmann's focus on political theory suggests deep critical rumblings in political science. Following the lead of Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz, Peter Evans (2004) has charted out an institutional turn that would pay attention to local knowledge, and deliberative democracy.

At the same time the project of public social science cannot be confined to a national terrain. It increasingly calls for engagements with and even the constitution of transnational publics. As the self-defense of social science converges with the self-defense of society, nationally and globally, so our shared fate depends, in part, on the ascendance of reflexive knowledge, although never to the exclusion of its instrumental companion.

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ENDNOTES

¹ I am taking the idea of provincialization from Chakrabarty (2000) that Western social science is both indispensable and inadequate for understanding colonial history. It is similar to Edward Said's (1993) "contrapuntal analysis," which seeks to elicit and display the historical particularities that constitute the putatively universal.

² From now on, instead of referring to all the Gulbenkian Commissioners, I simply refer to their chair, Immanuel Wallerstein. He has also published other collections of papers on the topic of the social sciences that lay out the same argument (Wallerstein, 1991, 1999).

³ "Methodological Positivism," is the term used by George Steinmetz in his chapter for this volume.

⁴ This scheme does not arise from nowhere but from the writings of Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas on the one side and Emile Durkheim and Pierre Bourdieu on the other. Some might even discover parallels with Talcott Parsons' famous AGIL four-function scheme, although I prefer to trace it back to Habermas's conceptions of system and lifeworld.

⁵ You might have thought this would have put the final nail in the coffin of modernization theory, but theories rise up to meet interests and today we see modernization theory reincarnated as a "new institutionalism" that speaks of global isomorphism and convergence.

⁶ For a depressing analysis of the world-wide power of U.S. economics see, Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas (2003).

⁷ Although one might argue that in its attempt to imitate economics, political science has temporarily lost sight of its object. See Sophia Mihic, Stephen G. Engelmann, and Elizabeth Rose Wingrove in this volume and Timothy Mitchell (2003).