



Editor's Note: **“Spiritual Renaissances & Social Reconstructions”**

Teaching courses originally intended for Dr. Donald A. Nielsen, who retired last year from the Department of Sociology at the State University College of New York (SUNY) at Oneonta, I recently found the brief note “I miss Dr. Nielsen!” among the student evaluations of my “Ideas and Ideologies” class offered during the Fall 2002 semester. Paradoxically, the note also reminded me that I actually miss him too, despite the brief period of our face-to-face interactions towards the end of his tenure. Thankfully, just before leaving Oneonta, and having warmly received the first issue of *Human Architecture*, Dr. Nielsen had kindly agreed to submit one of his own earlier articles on Mannheim to this journal.

The coincidence goes much deeper to substantive matters, however—and I think the “missing of Nielsen” can be better understood from this angle. The piece by Nielsen on Mannheim printed in this issue of *Human Architecture* speaks to the heart of the project the journal has set itself to pursue. In my reading, Nielsen also arrives at the need for the sociology of self-knowledge and human architecture (in his own words, of course), through a constructive critique of Mannheim as well. Nielsen’s thesis about the legitimacy and the necessity of challenging global capital’s “busybodies” culture (using Mannheim’s term) by consciously withdrawing from it for spiritual self-reflection and renewal as prerequisites for any meaningful efforts at social reconstruction, involves a radical redeeming and renewed appreciation in a scholarly fashion of

the useful legacies of the world’s religious and utopian traditions.

It is more than fitting, therefore, to dedicate this issue of the journal to Dr. Nielsen on the occasion of his “retirement,” for in many ways its pages (hopefully) represent a symbolic retreat center in the midst of busy academic life for spiritual renaissance and social reconstruction as envisioned by him.

An example of globally self-reflective awakening to the ideological frameworks shaping our lives can be read through the pages of the piece by Emily Margulies. Speaking in powerful prose and confident spirit, Margulies finds value in subjecting her own views to critical examination, effectively enriching her feminist critique of everyday personal sexism with a macro-structural understanding of the global forces perpetuating gender stratifications and prejudices. The finding will surely accompany her strong-willed efforts in social reconstruction—as already evident in the way she applies them in her family, campus, and classroom environments.

Another thoughtful example of Nielsen’s emphasis on the need for spiritual renewal as a condition for radical social reconstruction can be read in the pages of the article by L. M. Damian. Engaging with Mannheim (and subtextually with Nielsen, I believe), Damian traces both the macro and micro dynamics of what he calls the ideologies of “Conspicuous Conflict,” insightfully questioning what many take for granted in the global culture of busybodies: ceaseless seeking of wealth, prestige, and power statuses.

The beauty of the article by Kristy Canfield lies in the way she uses sociological theories to globally and self-reflectively revisit her experience with what society has labelled “speech impairment.” In doing so, she not only proves the eloquence of her speech in both form and substance, but also sheds light on how the prejudices of the world at large can only work so far as individuals allow them to. Her findings best illustrate the value and the necessity of macro/micro sociological theorizing and analysis, letting her personal experience and insights inspire our theoretical revisions of “impairment” as difference.

The dialectics of macro and micro theoriz-

ing in sociology are also insightfully explored in the piece by Steve Sacco. The strength of Sacco's argument for defying the sweatshop goes beyond the political economy of clothing production and marketing, however; he also illustrates the limits of teleological determinisms built into most macrosociological theories. Again, by combining the global and everyday sociological analyses, Sacco provides us with an excellent example of how we can go about challenging the global culture of busybodies in fashion and clothing industries, and redeem the spiritual and social reconstructive worth of being content with grassroots "sewing" of alternative social arrangements, by one's example.

Jennifer VanFleet confronts the issue of poverty not only in the broader institutional, national, and global arenas of social welfare policies, but also in the inner recesses of the ideologies which have shaped her own identity and attitude towards poverty as a social reality. The openness to question not only macro but also micro knowledges and structures perpetuating poverty enables her to begin putting herself in the shoes of those (both children and families) she would help educate in her emerging career as a teacher.

Nancy Chapin eloquently sets aside the habituated ideologies of "Honor Thy Father and Mother" and gives a sober and realistic analysis of her own family experience enriched by the sociological concepts and theories pertaining to the relation of society and the individual. Her conclusion that it perhaps may be useful to extend the notion of spousal abuse to that of abuse by parents of *adult* children, is best interpreted in the spirit of her efforts to understand and honor parental roles, if not role-takers.

Katie J. Dubaj adds further voice to Chapin's, by narrating how the translucence of her absent father has actually been a real and solid fact of her life. Her emotional words tell of the hard facts of life of many children who find themselves in family environments not ready to take up the responsibilities of parenting. Such experiences of everyday life, however, can best be understood in the framework of macrosociological analyses of structural forces that lead to irresponsible parenting experienc-

es. Dubaj takes some steps in this direction through her critique of the limits of welfare policies and institutions designed to address and resolve (or, as Dubaj reiterates, "band-aid") social problems.

The senses of love and sacrifice in Rena Dangerfield's family memoirs strongly voice the paradoxes of family hardships as shaped by broader social structures. The intersectionality of class, gender, and race, as explored in a micro/macro framework in the eloquently woven narrative of Dangerfield's article reminds the reader of the dances of mixed feelings and selves we all have more or less engaged in while growing up among our families and friends.

In this issue we are proud to hear the subtle voices of Festus Ngaruka as expressed through selections from his poetry. Through his poems, and also a commentary at the end, Ngaruka shares with us both his everyday and global experiences with racism and racial stratification arising from the capitalist and colonial social structures. His poetry educates both the conscious and subconscious realms of our minds, if we care to listen attentively to the songs of his reed.

The last contribution in this issue proposes for further exploration a guiding thread for viewing world-history as a long-term and large-scale process of splitting of the creative human search for the good life into a philosophically perpetuated religious vs. scientific ideological dualism whose transcendence has been, and will necessarily be, dependent upon creative, conscious, and intentional human effort.

Last, but not least, I appreciate the kind assistance provided by Anna Beckwith in helping edit this issue. I hope readers will approach all contributions to this journal as important beginning steps in a long journey, and not as destinations. Borrowing from Dangerfield's prose, I hope this journal proves to be for all contributors an enduring waltz of spiritual and social renewal.

Tamdgidi
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