



Working Outlines for the Sociology of Self-Knowledge

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In this working paper I present an outline¹ for a sociology of self-knowledge concerned with the study of how the investigator's own self-knowledges and world-historical social structures constitute one another. The outline is built upon critical assimilation of contributions made in three seemingly independent traditions in sociology: 1-Sociology of Knowledge; 2-Social Psychology (broadly defined); and 3-World-Systems/Historical Studies.

LOCATION

Sociology of knowledge historically challenged the conventional interpretations of "objectivity" in the methodological foundations of science by insisting on the social relationality of all knowledge, especially that held by the investigator. Social

1.The outline presented here is derived from a more detailed study of the history of the sociology of knowledge previously conducted (Tamdgidi 2002), both of which are due for presentation at the 100th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association to be held in Philadelphia, August 13-16, 2005. For more substantial engagements with the literature informing this outline, please consult Chapter III of "Mysticism and Utopia: Towards the Sociology of Self-Knowledge and Human Architecture (A Study in Marx, Gurdjieff, and Mannheim)" (Tamdgidi 2002, pp. 599-819).

psychology historically questioned reified sociological theorizing by incorporating the study of individual selves and lives of social actors into broader sociological inquiries. World-systems studies moved beyond the logico-deductive constructions of our understanding of the modern world based on narrow national or civilizational models, insisting on the value of inductive historical investigations of singular long-term large-scale processes of social change in an increasingly world-historical framework. Research in the sociology of self-knowledge cannot be fruitfully carried out unless the conceptual tools and frameworks within each and every one of its three constitutive intellectual sources are taken as variables, subjected to critical investigation and not assumed as givens.

The sociology of self-knowledge may be considered as a sub-field in the scholarly tradition of sociology of knowledge which has historically been concerned with the study of the relationship between knowledge and social existence. However, it does not necessarily follow or confine itself to either the classical methodological assumptions or the theoretical frameworks and historical preoccupations of its parent sociological field. The literary environment which the sociology of self-knowledge draws upon is not limited to only those sources which use the rubric "sociology of knowledge" to define themselves. It is the content relevance that matters rather than common semantics and labels. Therefore, contemporary literature in the so-called cultural studies, postmodernism, discourses on poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and deconstructionism, the literature on methodological individualism and psychologism, controversies over determinism and reductivism, and the classical or more contemporary scientific, philosophical and epistemological literature on dialectics and dialectical logic, are as much a part of the literary environment of the sociology of self-knowledge as those specifically labeled as "sociology of knowledge."

SOCIOLOGY OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

The sociology of self-knowledge has close affinities with what C. Wright Mills has coined as the sociological imagination, but is also different from and goes beyond its classic formulation. In Mills's view, the legacy of sociology may best be served through the development of a sociological imagination that is able to comprehend the relationship between personal troubles and broader public issues. Mills was quite clear about the elements of what constituted his sociological imagination as a whole:

1. An awareness of the structure of society in which the individual presently lives;
2. A world-historical awareness of the spatiotemporal position and peculiarity of the given society in the context of human history as a whole;
3. The kinds of "human nature" associated with that society, and the nature of troubles commonly experienced by men and women living in that society as compared with those in other world-historical spacetimes.

(Mills, 1959, 6-7)

Of particular interest in Mills's formulation was that of distinguishing not only the private troubles and public issues from one another, but specifically contrasting on one hand (at the macro level) of the contemporary social awareness with the world-historical contexts in which the person finds her/himself, and on the other hand (at the micro level) of the inner life of the person with the variously stated "external career,"¹ "the range of his immediate relations with others,"² or "local environments of the individual."³ In other words, there was a secondary breakdown within each of the private and public spheres which con-

stitute the dialectical pairs of the sociological imagination as a whole. For Mills, all these four spatiotemporal landscapes constituted the legitimate subject matters of sociology, such that the serious sociologist and socially committed intellectual could not remain so without grappling with them all at once, as organic moments or aspects of each given inquiry.

That Mills's sociological imagination spread like a brush fire across the discipline in the coming decades is a fact. His insistence on the linking of macro and micro sociologies in favor of intellectual commitment to meaningful social inquiry and change was meant to counter the sterile grand theorizing of Parsonian functionalists of his period. It clearly succeeded in that effort, and has now penetrated the sociological imagination of most scholars in the field. However, one may question whether the "tragedy of sociology" Mills was lamenting about during the '50s and '60s may perhaps be revisiting and threatening the sociological imagination today in the form of an emphasis on the global nature of public issues at the expense of efforts towards parallel but integral development of private sociologies focusing on inter/intrapersonal social landscapes.

How should we understand Mills's warning (Mills, 1959, 6) that "No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has complet-

1. "The sociological imagination enables its possessors to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals." (Mills, 1959, 5)

2. "*Troubles* occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others; they have to do with his self and with those limited areas of social life of which he is directly and personally aware." (Mills, 1959, 8)

3. "*Issues* have to do with matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the range of his inner life." (Mills, 1959, 8)

ed its intellectual journey”? Is there today a unified sociological theory which meaningfully takes account of the complexity of the range of social spacetimes whose integrative comprehension was considered by Mills to be an essential prerequisite for practicing good sociology? In other words, has the gap between macro and micro sociologies (or sociological theories) narrowed or widened in the course of the several decades since Mills penned his views?

The purpose of the sociology of self-knowledge is to extend the sociological imagination in both directions of its dialectical inquiry. On one hand, distinguishing between the study of one's own and other individuals' personal troubles, the sociology of self-knowledge focuses more immediately on the self-knowledges of the investigator and her or his own personal troubles—that is, on the self-reflective and autobiographical aspect of the microsociological inquiry, seeking to legitimize the seeking of scientific self-knowledge as an important sociological interest. It is one thing to study others' personal troubles, and another to study one's own. On the other hand, the sociology of self-knowledge seeks to encourage the conduct of scientific autobiographical inquiry in the context of a rigorous and ever expanding knowledge of world-history and the development of long-term and large-scale social structures in comparative and cross-cultural frameworks. The sociologist engaged in the sociology of self-knowledge is specifically interested in how her or his own self-knowledges and autobiography on one hand and long-term, large-scale world-historical social structures on the other hand intersect and constitute one another.

Another important difference (of emphasis, perhaps) between the sociology of self-knowledge and the sociological imagination is the relaxing of a reductivist and somewhat dogmatized assumption built into sociology, the sociology of knowledge,

and at least some interpretations of the sociological imagination. Traditionally, to be “sociological” has meant the effort to explain the micro by the macro, of knowledge by its “social origins,” of inner experience by the “social context,” of the personal troubles by the public issues. The sociology of self-knowledge specifically and intentionally seeks to deconstruct such predetermined and dualistic conceptions of the micro and macro, of individual/self and society, etc., pursuing a strategy which takes the interactive nature of the dialectics of self and society seriously in terms of the dialectics of part and whole. Social “context,” “origins,” “issues” do not exist over and above the intra- and interpersonal realities of social actors, especially of the investigator. Being “sociological” in the pursuit of the sociology of self-knowledge requires adopting a postdeterminist attitude towards the dialectics of self and society, subjecting the determination of the nature of causalities in the self-society interaction to the dynamics of research and social praxis itself. This issue will be further elaborated upon later in this essay.

LITERARY ENVIRONMENT

The literary environment of the sociology of self-knowledge includes on one hand various theoretical sources in the traditional interdisciplinary domain of social psychology, such as the behavioral theory, gestalt and cognitive theories, the field theory, the psychoanalytic theory, the social exchange theory, symbolic interactionist theories (both the intuitive Chicago school and the Iowa school of self-concept, as well as the dramaturgical approaches—including the emerging discourses in critical dramaturgy), and the theoretical work in phenomenology and ethnomethodology. Besides the literature associated with traditional and emerging social psychology, attempts will be made especially not to limit

the theoretical exploration to Western sources. Therefore, cross-cultural theories, discussions, and debates on the nature of individual self in a world-historical and comparative contexts will also constitute an important component of the literary environment of the sociology of self-knowledge (Tamdgidi 2002; 2004).

On the other hand, the literary environment of the sociology of self-knowledge also includes the knowledges produced in world-systems and world-historical studies, very broadly defined, including recent world-systems debates on structures of knowledge and historical constructions of disciplinary boundaries in science, nature of antisystemic movements, utopistics, the structural crisis of capitalist world-economy, debates on realistic historical alternatives to the modern world-system, geometries of imperialism and hegemonics in world-historical perspective, comparative studies of empires, historical systems, and civilizations, the emerging discourses on dialogue of civilizations, explorations of the “two cultures” shaping the modern academy, the divides among philosophy, religion, and science, discourses on coloniality and postcoloniality, debates on agency and structure and on the role of individuals in history. The cross-cultural scholarship on mystical and utopian movements especially pertaining to the problem of world-historical self-knowledge also constitutes an important part of this research area’s literary environment.

Again, it is the content relevance, and not the conventional labeling of what is or is not scientific, mystical, utopian, etc., that will guide the inclusion or exclusion of sources in the literary environment of this research area. It is important to note here that such sources and research projects are not limited to abstract philosophical discourses, but will especially incorporate historical and theoretical literature and research as well, since it is the actual practical sources and uses of methodological ori-

entations that are of specific concern to this new scholarly field. In all these cases the literature are critically evaluated from the vantage point of methodological, theoretical, and historical issues they raise with regards to the study of the dialectics of individual self-knowledge and world-historical social change.

PURPOSE

The sociology of self-knowledge centrally addresses the intellectual problem of whether and how an individual can scientifically know and transform her or his own world-historically constituted selves. Fruitful exploration of this intellectual problem necessitates (self)critical and systematic revisiting of the intellectual problem of “objectivity” embedded in the ontological, epistemological and sociological foundations of western science. Ontologically, the notion of “objectivity” has been classically grounded on the dichotomous Cartesian view of the world as being essentially composed of “matter” and “mind,” such that “objectivity” and “reality” are treated as attributes of the former in contrast to the “subjective” nature of “ideas” in the latter. To be “objective,” epistemologically, has therefore involved efforts to make sure our “inner” subjective ideas conform to the reality of the material world “out there.” “Scientific” hypothesizing, construction of empirio-theoretical accounts, and experimentation has thus involved efforts to make our ideas conform to the reality of the “objective” material world.

Sociologically, “scientificity” has been interpreted in terms of the effort to reflect, as “objectively” as possible, social “reality” in the subjective domain of our ideas and minds. Since “mind” is always embedded in concrete human individuals, and “social reality” is often used to refer to their “external” social organization, we have thus followed the “social scientific” practice of

assigning “objective” status only to studies in which individuals study the realities “outside” themselves and outside their own individual lives. When the inner “self” and subjective experiences of the individual does constitute the subject matter of our “scientific” research as in western psychology, it is only the study of that subject matter by “others,” and not those individuals themselves, that is assigned “scientific” legitimacy. We are therefore confronted often by “scientific” knowledges of the self that are actually undertaken by others. And when the individual does take steps to know and study herself or himself, such efforts are interpreted as not being “scientific” and thus relegated to the realm of humanities (i.e. to philosophy, autobiography, literature, poetry, mysticism, etc.). No science of individual self-knowledge is thereby recognized and developed.

The classical sociology of knowledge historically challenged the notion of “objectivity” embedded in the methodological foundations of modern science. It posited that knowledge is socially grounded and relational, not just in terms of content, but even in terms of its form and linguistic structure. It pointed to the fact that the same social “reality” is often interpreted quite differently by different social observers/actors rooted in different social positions. In the realm of socio-political knowledge, especially in its Mannheimian formulations (Mannheim 1936), it posed the intellectual problem of how we could overcome unconscious ideological and “utopian” biases in our own social knowledge. The notion of “objectivity” was itself historicized. The Mannheimian sociology of knowledge went even beyond the recognition of the ideological or utopian nature and social rootedness of our adversaries’ viewpoints, and recognized that we as investigators are not ourselves exempt from the influence of social positions and interests on the “objectivity” of our thinking. The investigator, therefore, could not sepa-

rate herself or himself, her or his “ideas,” from the “reality” which he or she studied. “Mind” was thus considered to be an integral part of its subject “matter.” To rescue science from the relativistic implications of his own sociology of knowledge, Mannheim resorted to Alfred Weber’s theory of “unattached intellectuals” who by the virtue of their social detachment from particular group interests, could retain and develop an “objective” science of politics, integrating various biased and one-sided viewpoints of reality into a synthetic perspective of reality.

But such an effort failed, for it soon became apparent that the “unattached intellectuals” were themselves a special interest group, sociologists were themselves a socially rooted agency, and that Mannheim was himself a member of them. Mannheim’s own views were revealed to be ideological and utopian (Tamdgidi 1997; 1999; 2002). His efforts to historicize the scientific principle of “objectivity” was itself (to be) historicized as a particular western, materialist, sociological, and thereby intellectually attached approach. Successfully questioning and demystifying the scientific principle of “objectivity,” therefore, Mannheim’s own search for “objectivity” through the agency of the unattached intellectuals was a failure for he exempted his own self from the subject matter of his investigation. After all, the disciplinary boundaries of sociology and its reified theories did not consider one’s own individual self to be a legitimate subject matter of one’s own scientific practice—such issues had to be relegated to the space-time of the textual footnotes.

The notion of “objectivity minus the self,” seems to be a dangerous proposition. It legitimizes all kinds of technological and social scientific thought and practice at the expense of personal and human relevance and responsibility. One way to resolve the problem of “objectivity” in science, as hitherto challenged, is to abandon it, declaring

science to be just another form of thought and knowledge, ultimately “subjective” in nature. The results of scientific knowledge and practice during the past several centuries may not have been absolutely beneficial to the human condition—given the vast amount of destructive arsenal compiled in ammunition houses, and the vast number of people living in poverty, homelessness, alienation, and degradation all over the world. But relatively speaking, the basic advances in scientific thinking and practice, and its potentials are indubitable.

The problem with the principle of “objectivity” may therefore not be that it has been practiced, but that it has not been practiced consistently, that it has not gone far enough to encompass the possibility of scientific practice in the realm of self-knowledge.

Is it possible to critically rebuild the ontological foundations of science in such a way that “matter” and “mind” would not be conceptualized in opposition, but in dialectical reconciliation with one another (Tamdgidi 2003)? Is it possible to develop a dialectical notion of scientific objectivity, epistemologically and sociologically, which allows for the possibility of development of a science of individual self-knowledge as well as of “objective reality”? Can individuals be empowered and equipped with the possibility and the ability of scientifically understanding and (if necessary) changing their world-historically constructed selves? Is it possible to creatively and flexibly incorporate contributions of other cultural traditions in comparative, east-west, frameworks to enrich the methodological foundations of our world historical explorations to enable us to develop alternative visions of our world-historical realities not only interpersonally, but also intrapersonally? Can our increasing scientific awareness, and the development of scientific and dialectical methodologies of self-knowledge and change, have any significant repercussions and implications for the

trajectories of world-historical development in the future? Can one establish linkages between the causal pattern of world-historical events in the past and the causal patterns embedded in the processes of self-awareness and mastery in individuals participating in and shaping, or remaining distant and passive to, such events? Can one move beyond ideological patterns not just in socio-political knowledge, but also in self-awareness and develop scientific self-knowing and self-praxis in a relatively autonomous fashion in the midst of global events, empowering oneself to shape the latter in meaningful and effective ways? Has there been attempts made in the past to develop scientific methodologies of self-knowledge? Is it possible to carry out a comparative analysis of such efforts in a world-historical framework?

PROBLEM OF THE SELF

One of the underlying paradigmatic defects which has prevented the development of an adequate science of individual self-knowledge and change as been the lack of an adequate theory of the “self.” More specifically, the problem is that in most existing theories of the self, the self is conceptualized as an object or “essence,” by-and-large monolithic and singular in nature (in “healthy” adults), which develops during the life-time of the “individual” through the process of socialization. (Although such monolithic conceptions of the self have been increasingly challenged in contemporary cultural studies and in discourses on the postmodern self, and in fact in many social psychological studies, an assumption in these recent approaches has been that the multiplicity of self is only a conjunctural phenomenon related to the postindustrial and postmodern lifestyle, rather than one arising from deeper and broader structural conditions). Conceptualized in this way, often the “individual,” the “self,” or “person-

ality," is taken to be a unitary social actor whose nature is externally determined by the positions and roles he or she occupies in the social system during her or his life-time. An "outside-in" theory of the self, often referred to as "social self," then results from such singular and object-oriented conceptions of the "self." Subsequently, the "individual" is often taken for granted as being the name it is called by, that is an "indivisible" being which enters or is drawn into the social whirlpool of social relations with other fellow "individuals."

What results from this conception is that "society" is relegated as an "objective" and external reality to the "individual." In sociological theory, this approach has especially been taken to an extreme and resulted in a taken-for-granted and generalized dictum about "society" being more than the sum of its individuals, a social reality which exists independent of the "individual" members of that society. What is noteworthy is that in many accounts of theories of the "self," if the latter term is replaced by the word "individual," or "personal being," or sometimes "personality," the basic meaning intended by the author remains the same. The "self," monolithically objectified, and deprived, "objectively," of knowing itself scientifically then becomes a subject matter of studies by "others" who are empowered and scientifically legitimized to study the "self" more than the very "individual" who constitutes their subject matter. At best, the "individual" supplies the scientist with the information about her or his "self," deemed of course to be quite "subjective" and not scientific in nature, which can otherwise be used as raw data for further scientific research by others.

The one-sided theories of the "self" posited by early social psychologists and social behaviorists were increasingly challenged by more interactionist theories of the self which allowed for the self to be considered a product of a dialectical interac-

tion between the individual and her or his social environment in the course of the socialization process. However, these theories of social psychology, one-sided or dialectical, have still retained their "outside-in" approach, assuming that the study of the external relationship of the individual with society, even when considered in a dialectical fashion, can provide adequate data for understanding the inner life of the individual.

The emphasis on development of such "outside-in" theories have been partly influenced by the western requirements of objectivity in social scientific investigation. Dramaturgical theorists in social psychology and symbolic interactionism who have insisted on treating social life as a drama in which individuals are actors, however, have increasingly noted that it is evidently possible that the personalities displayed by individuals in public life can be, consciously or unconsciously, different from the "true" self of these individual actors in private. Other, "new self," theorists in social psychology, in fact, have suggested that the early "outside-in" theories of the self which insisted on close ties between socialization process and the nature of self, were interpretations that were themselves historically grounded in the pre- or early industrial stages of modernity, conditions in which closely knit social networks of pre-industrial and pre-capitalist communities were still intact. With the advent of advanced and post-industrial societies, some dramaturgical theorists increasingly argue, such a close and organic dependence of self-identity and social position are loosened, making it possible for individuals to develop more fluid "external" personalities in "short-take" or "long-take" acting roles in the drama of social life, while retaining or developing relatively autonomous forms of self-identity in their more private and personal lives.

Of course, the challenges posed by the dramaturgical theorists against the earlier

and cruder “outside-in” forms of behaviorism and symbolic interactionism themselves retained the basic theoretical structure of their adversaries intact, since their argument was mainly based on different socio-historical circumstances precipitating “more autonomous” ways in which the self is articulated in relation to the external social reality. In other words, it was the society dominated by large-scale organizations, uninterested in stationary and rigid self-concepts and interested in more fluid and organizationally flexible self-identities, that precipitated the advent of the dramaturgical society and self. Such theories therefore still retained their “outside-in” modality.

However, in the process of such theoretical challenges, something new has occurred: the realization that the “individual” self may not need to be conceptualized so monolithically after all. The individual self could be a social drama in itself, in other words, a social multiplicity, a social organization in the subjective realm, a miniature “world-system” composed of many different selves, a “self-system,” an “ensemble of social relations” among diversely articulated self-identities. Whether such a reality and conceptual possibility for the theory of self were results of reflections on the reality of self at a particular period in development of capitalism—itsself an interesting question to ask—is not as important as the theoretical and conceptual space it opened up. The self, conceived as a monolithic object, could now be conceptualized as a relational construct, a relational and dialectic social interaction among various self-identities that can be as much “subjectively” constructed by the individual as it can be constructed “objectively” in interaction with the external social environment. It is to highlight this dialectically relational conception of the self as an objectively and subjectively constructed social reality that the sociology of self-knowledge—in contrast to the traditional theories of “social psycholo-

gy”—intends to draw our scholarly attention.

Does the “opened” conceptual space of the self as both a world-historically and intrapersonally constructed social reality have any explanatory and heuristic value in our efforts to understand the transitions to and emergence of new historical social systems in the past, or any practical significance in the development of world-historical realities alternative to the modern capitalist world-system? Can it be the case that the “outside-in” social psychological theories of the self are themselves historically grounded and specific theories of a particular form of society in which the individuals’ alienation from themselves and one another, on one hand, and their “divided and ruled” subjective realities and selves, on the other hand, play a functional role in the maintenance of particular modes of oppressive social relations (in this regard the writings of Fanon and the discourses on race, coloniality, and postcoloniality seem to be of particular relevance)? Can we construct a world-historically framed theory of the self as an ensemble of intra-, inter-, and extrapersonal social relations—in relation to oneself, to others, and to the natural and built environments—that allows for the creative nature of the role played by individual in relatively autonomous (re)construction of her or his own identity, and by extension of society at large? Can one conceive of alternative “utopistic” world-historical realities in which the external social reality is a product, and not just a source, of the self-consciously designed and constructed “autopistic” selves of free and relatively autonomous individuals?

COMPARATIVE APPROACHES AND DEBATES

It may be plausible to argue that the principle lines of debate on the possibility of a science of individual self-knowledge

have been and will still be drawn by the world-historical confrontation of eastern mysticism and western science (Tamdgidi 2002). On one hand, while many religious and mystical teachings have been viewed by many western scholars as remnants of ancient and medieval dogma, to be cast aside as obstacles for the development of science, many genuine eastern mystical traditions have viewed their own work as the most important, meaningful, and strategic branch of human sciences: the science of self-knowledge. On the other hand, western science, despite its visible and external achievements in understanding and changing nature, society, and mind, has been viewed by “mystics” as being involved in a blind and potentially destructive path that is most concerned with the “material” dimension of human existence, than its content and meaning. The lines of this world-historical debate have become somewhat blurred recently, however, in light of development of many eastern esoteric teachings which have embraced and utilized products of western science in their work. In the meantime, many scientists, (social) psychologists, and psychotherapists are increasingly finding fresh new insights in and uses of the world’s mystical traditions in their efforts to understand and “heal” the inner life of human beings. The limitations of scientific methodologies of many western psychological schools have been increasingly acknowledged by western scholars themselves (Deikman 1982). What is important to our research area is to develop a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of these ongoing debates between western science and eastern mysticism, searching for ways of reconciling the most useful and rational elements in both for the purpose of development of a socially concerned and relevant science of personal self-knowledge.

The emphasis here is on the “sociological” for what seems to be clearly lacking in most debates and discussions on mysticism

and science is an historical sociological analysis of their subject matter. The proliferation of a vast literature, not only in specialized academic fields but also in the popular domain on self-help and self-awareness subject matters, not only reflects a growing appreciation of the subject of self-knowledge in popular culture, but also, unfortunately, a diminishing awareness of the world-historical contexts and constraints within which many avenues for self-knowledge are framed. The promises of “quick fixes” in self-knowledge and “self-healing” have compromised the socially complex and conditioned nature of the subject matter; this in particular calls for serious, and systematic, efforts to historicize, in a global and long-term world-historical framework, the debates over the possibility of development of a social science of self-knowledge. The comparative world-historical sociological analysis of ontological, epistemological, and sociological paradigms, conceptual tools and frameworks, and methodological procedures explored in the two world-historical traditions of science and mysticism is an important and central task of research in the sociology of self-knowledge.

As far as the scholarly aims of the sociology of self-knowledge are concerned, the purpose is not to engage in such debates in terms of a confrontation among philosophy, religion, or science—though, such conceptualizations of the problem may be fruitful in other forums. Consulting genuine religious and mystical texts and traditions in search of content elements relevant to the purpose of this area research is a different matter and will be considered useful when necessary. But, the principal lines of debate in this research field does not seem to be drawn in terms of confrontations among philosophy, religion, and science, but among different historicized conceptions and practices of them all, among conceptions that are more or less open to seriously exploring the possibility of a

philosophically revamped and spiritually open, social science of individual self-knowledge cast in a world-historical analytical framework.

Lines of western debates on the theories of the self will continue to be drawn between the more sophisticated versions of the classical “outside-in” theories of the self on one hand, and the more updated versions of the dramaturgical theories of the self cast in an increasingly world-historical framework. The problem with some theories advanced by dramaturgical analysts has been, however, that the world-historical context which has conditioned and precipitated the emergence of dramaturgical behavior on the part of individuals in public life has itself been taken for granted. The “individual” has been recognized to have just enough “autonomous” powers of maneuverability to play the games of the world-system while remaining outside it and generating her/his own private selves in private, but not enough to empower her/himself to overturn and transform the very conditions which generated the conditions of her or his alienated selfhood.

Fruitful resolution of such debates necessitates theoretically opening the “black box” of the self, and sociologically exploring this subjective realm of social reality. Research in the sociology of self-knowledge recognizes the useful and important contributions made by both sides of the debate, insisting however on the need for the development of a world-historical framework in which the potentially and relatively autonomous role played by the intrapersonal factors in self and social construction are recognized. An important line of debate which can be introduced by such analyses is the possibility of development of a theoretical framework which critically sublimates not only the concerns of the contemporary versions of behaviorists’ and symbolic interactionists’ “outside-in” theories and the dramaturgical theorists’ dualistic and disjointed “outside-inside”

conceptions of selfhood, but also develops a useful “inside-out” theory of selfhood which can empower individuals to critically and practically (re)construct their intrapersonal and interpersonal social realities.

The disciplinary boundaries across and within the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences have caused considerable definitional and conceptual confusions and ambiguities in studies of the self, in effect reproducing semantic Chinese walls among utopian, mystical, and academic currents. The approach adopted by the sociology of self-knowledge to the development of such a theoretical framework will therefore need to be cross-disciplinary in nature. These three approaches to self-studies can enrich one another and our understanding of the role played by individual self-knowledge in world-historical social transformation.

TRAJECTORIES

In terms of the potential trajectories of research in this field, a sociology of self-knowledge built upon a dialectical methodological foundation that does not assign a priori causalities to “matter” or “mind” provides a more fruitful and effective conceptual framework to address the principle debates and the central intellectual problem addressed in this research area. The problem with many “materialist” or “idealist” approaches to the study of the relationship between knowledge and society is that they often search for or impose universalistic models of causality that supposedly apply anytime and anywhere. As noted earlier, however, one does not have to abandon one causal model for another. Such limited models, despite the claims of their advocates for their universal applicability, may in fact legitimately reflect aspects of reality often dismissed or neglected in other causal models. Mannheim’s efforts to develop accounts of historical reality by criti-

cally assimilating and synthesizing diverse perspectives and viewpoints are of relevance here. Advocating a postdeterminist methodological orientation towards causal investigation, the sociology of self-knowledge refuses to impose a priori universalist models of causal determination on studying the dialectical interaction of matter and mind, of the “objective” and the “subjective,” of self and society, of autobiographical knowledge and world-historical social structures, of knowledge and “social context,” and of “personal troubles” and “public issues.” Instead, it considers various causal modalities—existing models developed by various scholars in the field, or those emerging in the process of concrete research itself—to be equally plausible in the process of investigation. The explanatory value of one or another causal model, therefore, will be decided as a *result* of the concrete research, rather than superimposed on its dynamics from without.

If the self is conceived as a multiplicity—a relatively autonomous ensemble of intra/inter/extrapersonal social relations continually constituting and being constituted by world-historical social structures—it necessarily follows that the individual herself or himself must to be empowered and recognized as potentially the best, and ultimately the only, authentic source for development of scientific knowledge about her or his own selves in a global and world-historical context. The sociology of self-knowledge aims to provide the necessary conceptual and curricular structures for the pursuit of the above goal. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* is dedicated to the conduct, collection, and publication of teaching and research in the area in a theoretically and pedagogically liberating framework.

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