SECTIONCULTURE

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Editors:
Yu Ching Cheng
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science
Johnnie Lotesta
Harvard Kennedy School
A.J. Young
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Editorial Assistant:
Dustin S. Stoltz, Univ. of Notre Dame

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Letter From the Chair

I write this amidst the coronavirus pandemic, with the uncertainties swirling around us. Every day the situation changes for academics as for the rest of the nation, and there is a lot that we do not know right now: How long will we be social distancing? What's the right mix of compassion and substantive work in a class suddenly moved online? What will be the pandemic's impact on the sociology job market? No one has the definitive answers, making the task of charting an ethical and caring path through this crisis a challenging one. We know this: that the pandemic's impact will be broad and deep and potentially transformative, and that we should prepare for personal and professional trials.

While deeply unsettling, it is also a moment for sociology to contribute, including culture scholars. We need work right now that explains the patterns of disease understanding and belief; the influence of expert and nonexpert voices; the impact of politics and age and rurality; the class, race, gender and other dimensions of how people are responding and able to respond. Culture scholars

can help write the stories we tell ourselves about this moment.

Cultural sociologists can also help us think about the transformations to come. Massive economic downturns have in the past shifted the cultural tectonic plates in the United States and globally. I'm personally fascinated by the relative cultural absence of billionaires, given how much airspace they commanded as recently as February. Could we be moving into an era where accumulating extreme wealth is no longer celebrated or seen as entertaining, but actually viewed more broadly as a social problem? We need your work to help us think about these and other potential changes.

Some universities are coming up with funding to support new research; NSF also has a RAPID channel for short-term urgent proposals. Take these words as inspiration only if you are in a space to be inspired; I know the crisis has stretched so many so thinly that people simply do not have the capacity to mount additional effort. In the same vein, ASA has responded to the virus with a statement, endorsed by many other professional organizations, urging universities to "limit the use of student evaluations", "adjust expectations for faculty scholarship", and "clearly communicate how they will modify criteria and expectations for review and reappointment." I hope that your universities are following this good advice.

As for the ASA annual meeting, we do not know, at the time of this writing, whether it will be held. The ASA staff and leadership are meeting frequently to discuss it. As part of the program committee for ASA2020, I know how much effort goes into the planning, and I am hoping that if changes are made, that people are still able somehow to exchange ideas, get feedback, meet other scholars and help students. At its best, the annual meeting acts as an intellectual and social firestarter for our community, but for a host of reasons (expense, climate, and now pandemic) we may need to invent new ways to generate effervescence. More updates about the 2020 annual meeting to come.

I'd like to draw your attention to some of the labor going on behind the scenes here. First of all, your award committees are hard at work evaluating section members' books and articles for their commendation – special thanks go to the committee chairs **Gabriel Abend**, **Ming-Cheng Lo** and **Mariana Craciun**, and to their committee members, for keeping it up even during this difficult time. Second, the reception committee has been scouring a long list (22!) of possible venues in San Francisco, despite the meeting's uncertain future, and successfully found one that is large and close enough to work well for us – our enthusiastic appreciation is due to **Kjerstin Gruys**, **Elise Paradis**, and **Sharon Yee**. **Tania Aparicio**, a PhD candidate at the New School, curates each set of announcements that we send out to the section by email – a terrific help. These folks join others in helping the section run smoothly and well, and I am very grateful for their service.

Thanks are also due to your newsletter team for a fantastic issue. See inside for an article about global epidemics/pandemics from **Sasha White** at Johns Hopkins, 2 book symposium sections (with discount codes for those interested in purchasing the featured books), "4 questions with **Steven Lukes**," announcements of new releases by section members, and more – plenty of diverting reading on offer.

Please contact me (apugh@virginia.edu) if the section can serve you better.

Warm wishes,

Allison

Letter From the Editors

Dear Culture Section,

Hello from your new newsletter editors, **Yu Ching Cheng** (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science), **Johnnie Lotesta** (Harvard Kennedy School), and **A.J. Young** (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis). With this being our first issue, we wanted to take the opportunity to introduce ourselves, explain what you can expect in the issues ahead, and solicit your input and contributions.

We are honored to continue the vibrant tradition that is our section newsletter. Building on the knowledge and work of previous editors **Hillary Angelo** (UC Santa Cruz), **Diana Graizbord** (Univ. of Georgia), **Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz** (Northwestern University), and section webmaster **Dustin Stoltz** (Univ. of Notre Dame), we will continue much of the content with which you are familiar. This includes conference reports, book symposiums and reviews, virtual roundtables, interviews with scholars of culture, and the "From the Archives" section introduced by the previous editorial team in 2017. We will also continue the newsletter's current publication schedule, releasing new issues three times per year: once in late winter/spring, once in the summer, and once in late fall.

Looking forward, we aim to regularly feature member-authored essays that place current world affairs in conversation with cultural theory and sociological debates. We are also excited to broaden the newsletter's scope by highlighting culture-related research from non-sociologists. Our hope is that members will find these initiatives helpful in thinking critically about current events and in identifying relevant research from other fields.

In the present issue, we are pleased to publish an essay by **Alexandre White**, which places the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak in comparative and historical perspective to consider possible trajectories for sociology produced in and about pandemics. We also include two book symposiums, one on *The Civil Sphere in East Asia* edited by **Jeffrey C. Alexander, David A. Palmer, Sunwoong Park**, and **Agnes Shuk-mei Ku**, and one on *A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy* by **Joel Mokyr**. We round out this issue's content with "Four Questions for **Steven Lukes**," teaching abstracts of courses designed by section members, and a number of exciting book and article announcements.

We invite you to share your ideas and contributions for future issues. Please contact us with suggestions for essays, book reviews, symposia, and conference reports. We also welcome your input on topics or debates you'd like to see covered in the section newsletter. Lastly, we invite you to consider volunteering as our section webmaster and social media manager, as **Dustin Stoltz** will be vacating his seat after three years of excellent service. All contributions and queries can be sent to the editorial team at asaculturenews@gmail.com.

With warmest regards,

Yu Ching, Johnnie, and A.J

Culture Section Council

Gabriel Abend
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Ming-Cheng M. Lo,
UC Davis 2020

Victoria Reyes,
UC Riverside 2021

Book Symposium

The Civil Sphere in East Asia (2019, Cambridge)

A Tale of Two Civil Spheres

Yu Ching Cheng
International Research Fellow
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

It is the spring of self-quarantine, it is the season of contemplating the world. It is the worst of times for the civil sphere to advance itself, it is the best of times to advance civil sphere theory.

Jeff Alexander and **David Palmer** along with their co-editors **Sunwoong Park** and **Agnes Shuk-mei Ku**, have made *The Civil Sphere in East Asia* a necessary starting point, a volume urging us to re-think what the civil sphere is and is not.

Empirically, the volume has expanded the horizon of the civil sphere. Responding to a broader global south turn, it challenges the western/American model by looking into the particularity of civil spheres in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Meanwhile, it showcases how the civil sphere may work differently in transnational or authoritarian contexts and suggests between-group differences in civil sphere participation.

More importantly, the volume presents a window of opportunity to deepen civil sphere theory. After all, case studies without theory turn out to be area studies in disguise. It stimulates debates on whether civil sphere theory is applicable to non-western societies and post-colonial states and how it shall deal with methodological nationalism. It also raises an epistemological question of what counts the real civil sphere.

This book symposium features three critical pieces on *The Civil Sphere in East Asia* from **Ming-Cheng Lo**, **Sadia Saeed**, and **Lyn Spillman**, followed by Jeff's and David's replies to their critics.

Based on a session held at the Social Science History Association meetings in Chicago on November 24, 2019, hopes to awaken cultural sociologists' imagination of the civil sphere between east and west, between particulars and universals, between theoretical explanation and case description.

Civil Sphere in East Asia *Symposium: Critics Comments*

East Asian Political Cultures and Civil Sphere Theory

Lyn Spillman

Professor of Sociology,
Univ. of Notre Dame

The normative and political significance of investigating "the civil sphere in East Asia" has been emphasized with every headline from Hong Kong in recent months, and this book is a pleasure to read even for the way it helps think about those news stories. But here, I leave a discussion of the understanding this book has to offer about contemporary events to area specialists. I want to

assess what this set of expert empirical investigations tells us about civil sphere theory. What new insights do they offer? How is the theory extended? What might need to be revised?

The Project and its Contributions

This book is only one part of a much more ambitious project. Civil sphere theory is an innovative theory of political culture which puts cultural processes and conditions at the center of political claims-making. It focuses on the cultural categories, performances, and institutions which provide the essential infrastructure for democratic politics, and explain its outcomes. In my view,
one important virtue of civil sphere theory is its macro-theoretical ambition. For too long now, cultural and political sociologists have been focused on meso- or micro-level analysis. A few decades ago, it was important to modify social science ambitions and overarching claims because macro-theoretical perspectives like reflection theory and modernization theory were failing. Now, though, we've done a lot to refine mid-range analytical tools and we need to build back out. Civil sphere theory is an important contribution to that task.

One important reason for redeveloping broader theoretical perspectives is comparative. If all our work is too "contextual" we have no transferable insights to offer other scholars. A broader theory offers a basis for comparison. Civil sphere theory is now ambitiously comparative, too. Originally developed in the context of social movements and conventional politics in the U.S., its scope was sometimes thought to be limited to the west, or simply to the United States. Yet the potential analytic insights the theory offers extend far beyond as we see in this volume and its siblings on other regions.

But theoretical arguments with general comparative ambitions are too often empirically under-developed, and we never really know whether and how the ambition can be sustained. Here, though, the comparative leverage across the different regions and cases is almost unprecedented. And as a result, one of the unusual contributions of the project is the way it assembles many well-regarded area experts in a new conversation of general scholarly interest. And because of the unified theoretical principles underlying the research in these volumes, each is actually much more coherent and allows much more precise comparison than the typical edited volume.

Implications for Civil Sphere Theory

What are the implications for civil sphere theory of the studies in this volume?

First, we see a number of claims about the cultural infrastructure of the civil sphere, and especially how the cultural codes constituting the civil and anti-civil are inflected or charged with additional meaning particular to the historical context. Choi shows how Korean influences like neo-Confucian codes affect coding of civil and anti-civil in Presidential scandals. Similarly, Yanagihara shows how "autonomy" develops different sorts of inflections– including anti-civil meanings-- in Japanese debates about surrogacy. Chapters by Park, and by Lee, show in different ways how claims-making may rely on language related to other institutions, not just civil and anti-civil codes– language like "professionalism" in education scandals or "developmentalism" in credit crises in Korea. And David Palmer pushes the concept of civil and anti-civil codes even further beyond their original interpretation, analyzing different forms of generalizing solidarity in China (the "yellow," and the "red," as well as the "blue.")

So when do different languages of claims-making about universalizing solidarity stop being civil sphere languages, and start being something else? Recognizing strong historical inflections seems like an important friendly amendment, but what about when the difference goes further, drawing on different institutions, or different bases of solidarity? Should the line be drawn more precisely?

Second, the comparisons in this collection offer a lot to reflect on about civil sphere institutions.

Lin points out that states may actively shape civil sphere institutions in his neat comparison of two processes of participatory budgeting in Taiwan (and he also adds to the evidence of how specific histories shape civil sphere languages). Moreover, institutions are not just passive supports of the civil sphere, they can actively shape civil sphere processes, as Shimizu argues in her interesting study of how policing in Japan promoted civil codes, or excluded the anti-civil. And Ku points out for Hong Kong that sustaining institutions like law are themselves an object of struggle, such as in conflicts between ideas about "rule of law" as opposed to "rule by law."

So my second question has to do with institutions supporting the civil sphere. Some studies in this collection show the importance of active institutions with the power to shape, develop, or block the civil sphere. I may be misinterpreting, but that seems like a significant revision to the original theory. What are the consequences for the theory when we go in that direction? Does it make it less distinctive as a theory of political culture?

Third, should the concept of the civil sphere be stretched to cover all settings, from the micro to the transnational? David Palmer argues for the existence of localized civil spheres even in China's authoritarian context, and Tian looks for prefigurative or incipient foreshadowing of civil claims in Chinese online fiction (though she doesn't really find them.) Somewhat similarly, Eiko Ikegami (2005) argued that popular poetry circles in Tokugawa Japan pre-figured the later emergence of democratic political forms, because they modeled alternatives to hierarchical social order. But it seems important to distinguish more clearly, as she does, between prefigurative antecedents and real civil spheres.

Some studies in this collection examine settings in which transnational civil spheres seem to emerge. Pun and Ng suggest that a transnational campaign for Foxcomm workers in China was a movement for civil repair relying on civil sphere institutions like association and independent media (and certainly, if we are going to find a transnational civil sphere anywhere, it might be in labor activism, precisely because of the Marxist history of transnational social movements.) And we also see an incipient transnational civil sphere in Wang's study of civil repair in the writing of a common history by scholars from China, Japan, and South Korea. Again, though, these cases raise the question of how broadly to define "the civil sphere." Perhaps they call for further theoretical specification of where and how the boundaries are drawn when you're identifying the civil sphere. More generally, should there be a stronger distinction between different forms of solidarity, prefigurative political culture, and real civil spheres?

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Civil Sphere in East Asia *Symposium: Critics Comments*

Between East Asian cases and Western-originated concepts

Ming-Cheng M. Lo
Professor of Sociology,
UC-Davis

The Civil Sphere in East Asia presents a dynamic conversation between East Asian experiences and Jeffrey Alexander's civil sphere theory. Among other things, this monumental volume transcends beyond two unhelpful mainstream approaches, both of which end up freezing Asia as the perpetual "other." The first of these approaches features various versions of cultural relativism

implying that Asian societies are so unique that they can never be explained by Western social theories. The second approach includes modernization theory and its more sophisticated cousins, which measure the "maturity" of East Asian civil societies against Western theoretical yardsticks. The framework developed in this volume, instead, informs and is informed by rigorous mutual articulations between East Asian cases and Western-originated concepts. Below I discuss three features of this framework.

Through careful contextualization, this volume builds a framework for observing and explaining what I elsewhere have called the "code hybridizations" accompanying democratizations in the region (Lo 2019). The Introduction places East Asian societies in a cultural context shaped by the Confucian tradition, moral values originated from Western democracies, and the developmental state and related ideological and institutional features developed in East Asia in the post-WWII period. Situated in this context, some chapters argue that democratic codes can originate from multiple sources. Others contend that only the code of liberty is truly democratic. Still others show how civil sphere participants combined the code of liberty and neo-Confucius values as complimentary moral themes. Some suggest that the meanings of these moral codes are shaped by their deployments. (A good example is Yanagihara's chapter, which documents how the code of autonomy came to connote anticivil meanings in the surrogacy debates in Japan.) These competing views on the interactions of multiple codes constitute a rich illustration of democratic cultural hybridizations as a multifaceted process.

Furthermore, some chapters develop an analytical vocabulary for discussing limits of Asian civil societies without reducing the conversation to how similar to the West these societies are. Of particular significance is Park's notion of "system repair," which is informed by Alexander's discussions of civil repair, code-switching, and societalization of problems (Alexander 2018). System repairs refers to civil sphere debates that mainly activate the binary codes (e.g., efficiency) of a malfunctioning noncivil sphere (e.g., the market) to surmount its functional crisis, rather than mobilizing values from the civil sphere (e.g., equity) to democratize the noncivil sphere in question (e.g., the market). In a related chapter, Lee sees such mobilization of cross-sphere codes as an incomplete reconstruction of boundary relations between the civil and the noncivil spheres, arguing that, because of their relatively short histories of institutionalization, East Asian civil societies are particularly vulnerable to this problem. The value of efficiency, for instance, is believed to be more likely to spill over from the market to the civil sphere in South Korea than in the U.S. or France. (This insight may be particularly questionable in the era of Trumpism and Fox News, however.) Notions of porous boundaries offer an analytical vocabulary for comparative analyses of the limits of East Asian civil spheres, although the volume does not feature comparative studies.

Thirdly, a few chapters highlight the importance of an international civil sphere for the region. Examples include Junker and Chan's study of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, Pun and Ng's study of the Hong Kong-based labor activism, and Wang's chapter on the tri-national joint history project. This international perspective captures well the intricate historical, political, and identity tensions and connections among several East Asian societies. In many instances, civil repair in East Asia involves redefining the meanings of labor rights, historical controversies, or the very sense of we-ness of the civil sphere against the narratives about the same issues developed in neighboring countries.

Moving forward, however, I suggest that we need to examine more fully the "China factor." Chapters that discuss China shed important lights on the limited civil sphere in this authoritarian regime, such as the world of on-line fantasy novels, the labor movement that draws support from other parts of the world, and the cultural grammar that combines the communist, Western, and Confucian moral codes. Consistent with, but further complicating, the idea of an international civil sphere, it would be important to study how China's efforts to influence the meanings and deployments of moral codes in other societies are affecting, even

damaging, the civil spheres in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and elsewhere.

Zooming out for a bird's eye view, the editors explain that their focus on cultural codes aims to counteract the field's overemphasis on the numbers of associations and social networks as the central indicator for the strength of civil society. I posit that, having completed this mission masterfully, the volume has also laid the foundation for future dialogues about how cultural codes, social networks, and other features of civil society potentially interact. In effect, the two chapters on Taiwan point to these research directions. Lin's study prompts us to examine how the history of social capital formation shapes the local social landscape and cultural repertoire, which in turn shape how local cultural codes become meaningful for its civil sphere participants. Wang's chapter emphasizes that it is at the interactional level, not through rational debates, that the feeling structures towards "the other" can change. Developed in the last chapter, the notion of an interactive level of civil society is pregnant with insights yet to develop fully. The question of how to cultivate empathy for fellow citizens who feel that they are "strangers in their own land" is a pressing one. The notion of an interactional level in the civil sphere provides a promising tool for unearthing some potential answers to this question, both in East Asia and beyond.

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Civil Sphere in East Asia *Symposium: Critics Comments*

On "Applicability" of CST to Non-Western Contexts

Sadia Saeed
Assistant Professor of Sociology,
Univ. of San Francisco

The Civil Sphere in East Asia builds on Jeffrey Alexander's Civil Sphere Theory (CST) and is part of a broader collaborative effort to assess and assert CST's applicability to contexts outside the United States. The initiative is certainly welcome. As David Palmer argues in his chapter in the volume, democratic ideals have been an integral part of political discourse in China throughout much of the twentieth century. Indeed, postcolonial states in the Global South cannot be analyzed without examining how ideas about freedom, democracy and rights were deployed to resist European imperialism. Furthermore, these norms continue to animate resistance to authoritarian and corrupt forms of political rule.

In my comments, I will address two issues: first, the question of "applicability" of CST to non-Western contexts and, second, how CST has been applied to East Asian contexts in the current volume. I would like to note that my comments derive from a broader interest in political sociology of postcolonial states in South Asia and global historical sociology.

The editors are sensitive to the potential critique that their intellectual endeavor of extending CST beyond the West might appear as a project of advocating US-style civil sphere politics. However, more is at stake than the issue of "diffusion" of Western norms and their overlapping and intertwining with non-Western indigenous values and moral codes. Our current intellectual moment is centrally defined by a broader cross-disciplinary project, including within sociology, that seeks to globalize and internationalize the origins and

spread of core modern values such as democracy and rights. The aim is to rethink their supposedly tight coupling with "the West". In other words, the notion that social and political norms such as those that are central to CST are Western or American is no longer tenable.

For example, if we accept the conventional definition of democracy that posits universal adult suffrage as a core defining element of democracy, we see that the United States did not become a fully functioning democracy until 1965 when the Voting Rights Act was passed. In contrast to the United States' pattern of incremental increase in adult suffrage, India introduced universal suffrage immediately upon gaining its independence in 1947. In other words, India became a democracy before the United States. Consider also another context, one incidentally offered by Julian Go in his call for a postcolonial sociology (Go 2013). If we situate the Haitian and French revolutions in a comparative perspective, we find that the ideals of the Haitian revolution were more radical in their universality than the former. The revolutionaries leading the Haitian revolution against French colonial rule advocated freedom for all races, while French revolutionaries, despite their universalist rhetoric and temporary abolition of slavery across France's colonies, ultimately engaged in violent repression of human rights of Haitians. For sure anticolonial resistance in both India and Haiti contained "uncivil" forms of resistance, but these were adopted alongside, or after, civil politicking failed. My larger point is that CST must contend seriously with methodological nationalism that underpins it and respond to interventions by postcolonial sociology that takes "the global" as its point of reference.

The volume offers a number of penetrating analyses of politics in East Asia through the lens of CST. The various chapters demonstrate that civil values such as concerns about corruption and transparency are universal values and can be expressed in various idioms. We see that much politics in East Asia is carried out in idioms that are central to CST. On the whole, the volume wonderfully demonstrates the centrality of civil and democratic moral codes to everyday life and oppositional political discourses in East Asia.

A striking aspect of the three chapters on South Korea (Choi, Park, Lee) is that all rely on analyses of newspaper debates. Are newspapers in Korea, then, the main vehicle for civil politics and civil repair? Similarly, two of the three chapters on China (Pun and Ng, Tian) focus on non- or extra-national spaces of civil politics – transnational solidarity between Hong Kong students and Chinese activists and online fiction. The latter chapter demonstrates that when an authoritarian state monopolizes the discourse of civility, citizens engage in uncivil social practices, thereby implicitly offering a critique of undemocratic appropriation of civil discourses. It also raises a larger issue about the relationship between civility and authoritarianism, on one hand, and uncivility – perhaps even violence – and democracy on the other. This is to say, civility and democracy do not always go hand in hand. The chapters, taken together, also suggest that different East Asian countries have different sites in which civil spheres emerge. This opens up an interesting line of inquiry about how class and status underpin the structuring of civil spheres.

David Palmer's analysis of microspheres offers a conceptual framework for thinking about idioms of politics in different historical contexts beyond China. Palmer argues that there are three distinct codes of civility in modern China: the yellow code (derived from Chinese traditional values), the blue code (derived from Western values), and the red code (derived from China's revolutionary tradition). In my own work on desecularization in Pakistan (Saeed 2017), I have identified the workings of what Palmer terms the blue code. I have also identified an Islamic moral code that has been deployed in two distinct and contrasting ways – both to justify more traditional, authoritarian forms of rule and to advocate for democratic ideals such as elections, consultation, accountability, justice etc. Palmer's conceptualization also raises a number of intriguing questions: is there a particular code that is more attractive to Chinese women? To Chinese youth? To urban versus rural dwellers?

Andrew Junker and Cheris Chan tackle the recent Hong Kong protests and argue that actors within Hong Kong that are advocating for a separatist identity from China are promoting localist ideas and are veering towards particularism, while those that are seeking to build bridges between China and Hong Kong are veering towards universalism and inclusion. However, one could argue that the demand for an autonomous Hong Kong is not localist, because it is founded on democratic ideals. From this perspective, keeping Hong Kong forcibly tethered to China has the effect of normalizing Chinese authoritarianism. There is a fallacy in seeing imperialistic assemblages as cosmopolitan and nationalist aims as particularistic. This is especially so because cosmopolitanism does not necessarily lead to horizontal equality since cosmopolitan spaces can be organized very hierarchically.

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Civil Sphere in East Asia *Symposium: Author's Reply*

Against the Idea of "Western Modernity": Axial Foundations and Contemporary Civil Spheres in East Asia

Jeffrey C. Alexander
Professor of Sociology,
Yale University

I am grateful to Ming-Cheng Lo, Sadia Saeed, and Lyn Spillman for their attentive and detailed readings, and most of all for their recognition that *The Civil Sphere in East Asia* (CSEA) represents a decidedly more even-handed approach to theorizing and empirical research about non-Western societies than has often been the case heretofore. The concept of "modernity" has been a massively vexed one in the history of social science. Motivated by presentism and legitimating self-congratulation, the trope has all too frequently functioned as a placeholder for "where we are today," temporally and spatially, in contrast with "those stuck in tradition" long ago or far away (Alexander 2003). Max Weber, the founding figure of comparative and historical sociology, was himself deeply implicated in this misplaced concreteness, despite his acerbation about disenchantment. Though Weber rarely employed the term modern, his explanatory model was fully imbricated in the binary East-West, and his studies of China and India suffered greatly as a result.

CSEA avoids, not only the term, but the very idea of "Western modernity," taking its leave, instead, from research and theorizing about the trans-civilizational Axial Age and from scholarly demonstrations that the intellectual lineaments of Western democracy long preceded the so-called take-off to modernity. In fact, CSEA is not, strictly speaking, a comparative study at all; rather, it is an investigation into the manner in which civil spheres have developed in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. These developments need not be compared with those in the putatively more fully realized democracies of the West. Why should such a comparison be made? Have Western civil spheres thrived so fully? Have not the nations within which they have been instantiated also maintained damaging patrimonial structures of anti-democratic domination and deeply compromising economic, racial, religious, and gender structures, which have undermined civil incorporation and made the split between "us" and "them" such a continuous feature of democratic life? (cf., Alexander and Tognato 2018).

As S.N. Eisenstadt (1986) and Robert Bellah (2011) developed Axial theory, they effectively turned Weber on his head, arguing that

transcendental, universalistic and critical cultural ideas informed, not just the West, but religious and institutional complexes in all the world's "great civilizations." Axiality provided fertile common ground for the extraordinarily rapid development of global "late comers." If Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic regions did not, on their own, achieve Western levels of social development, they were certainly already in possession of the basic cultural and institutional resources to do so – after coming face-to-face with Western advances and depredations. Hence one of the most important implications of CSEA: The efflorescence in East Asia of civil sphere culture and critical communicative and regulative institutions should not be seen as "made in the USA" or Europe.

If democracy constitutes the singular cultural and institutional structure that, historically speaking, is distinctively Western, it is not "modern." As Quentin Skinner (1978) and his colleagues (e.g., Pocock 1975) have demonstrated, after the early Greek and Roman experiments fizzled, republican ideas re-emerged and thrived during the late middle ages. From 1000 A.D. there circulated popular and scholarly tracts protesting kingship, advocating for liberty and constitutionally regulated self-determination, civil sphere ideas that, not only reflected, but also triggered, the formation of democratic, albeit aristocratic city-states, first in Italy and then elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, the Protestant Reformation that Weberians herald as the origins of cultural modernity emerged from the transformation that republican humanism had already effected in papal Christianity.

Civil sphere theory (CST) is the first systematic effort to conceptualize the key sociological elements of this republican tradition as it came to be developed in highly differentiated, complex, mass-mediated, rule-regulated, industrial and post-industrial nation-states. A key premise of CST is that democracy, rather than being synonymous with elections, depends on the existence of a richly developed and relatively autonomous civil sphere. The latter is conceptualized as a social world that aspires to broad solidarity, one in which feelings of individual autonomy and collective obligation intertwine. Civil spheres are constructed culturally, institutionally, and interactionally. Civil discourse defines a binary language about motives, relations, and institutions; the signifiers of its sacred side legitimate incorporation into the civil sphere, those on its profane side mandate civil exclusion and repression. Communicative institutions, such as factual and fictional media, public opinion polls, and civil associations connect this binary meta-language to ongoing events, providing continuous representations of who and what is civil and not; regulative institutions, such as law, voting, and office, connect these interpretations to the administrative and coercive powers of the state.

When we examine East Asian societies, we find that key elements of civil spheres have long been in place. Civility is demanded and broad solidarity encouraged. Office obligations are institutionalized to control personal power. Quasi-legal coding regulates institutional and economic relations. These cultural, institutional, and interactive elements were enriched and often democratized in the course of fateful encounters with Western power and ideas. Western imperialism may have forced East Asian empires to their knees, yet it also brought intellectual and political leaders into contact with the discourse of civil society, with republican tropes like self-determination and constitutionalism. The "new culture movement" in China from the mid-1910s to the 1920s called, not only for "science," but also for "democracy." In Japan, during the same period, the liberal Tasho movement opened up democratic possibilities as well.

Western imperialism faded, and, more recently, postwar and cold war intrusions have begun to be set aside. Building on Axial foundations and the legacies of early 20th century democratic movements, the elements of East Asian civil spheres have re-emerged and gained strength. These are the topics of the rigorous and original empirical studies that compose our book. In Korea, critical, universalizing strains in Confucian-cum-civil culture motivate continual revelations of office corruption (Park 2019, Lee 2019), and have triggered a massive, non-violent

protest movement that compelled an authoritarian president to be impeached (Choi 2019). In Taiwan, public bodies sponsor widespread experiments in participatory budgeting that have expanded solidarity across class, region, gender, and ethnic groups, and empower citizens and democratic deliberation vis-a-vis state and local bureaucracy (Lin 2019). In the three decades of Hong Kong's post-UK alignment with the mainland, continuous waves of protest -- in the name of rule of law, integrity of office obligations, and popular sovereignty – have created a newly democratic collective subject (Ku 2019). In post-war and especially post-1960s Japan, extraordinary efforts were made to ensure that police are responsive to the civil sphere, not only to the state (Shimizu 2019). In China, the "communist civil sphere" (Junker, forthcoming) has been compelled by Hong-Kong intellectuals and trade union leaders to allow worker struggles against exploitation to take hold in Taiwanese and U.S. owned factories (Pun and Ng 2019); meanwhile, China's elite journalism schools assign American academic texts extolling investigations of official wrong-doing (Ya-Wen Lei 2018, Alexander 2016), even as they train future journalists in censorship and submission.

Certainly, there are powerful authoritarian movements in East Asia that push back against emerging civil spheres, fueled by cultural and institutional forces as indigenous as resources that emerged from the Axial Age. Not only party but developmental states have refused to be regulated by civil sphere institutions, whether communicative or regulative. The "hybrid codes" (Lo 2019) of Confucian-cum-civil culture can motivate patronizing demands for deference alongside liberal calls for ethical critique (Spillman 2020). There remains, as well, the enormously unsettling threat generated by inter-national enmities inside the broader East Asian region, military efforts to wrest a measure of revenge to compensate for historical traumas and military build-ups whose justification is the putative defense against such possibilities in turn.

The universalizing ambitions of CST make it an unlikely candidate for Beck's admonishment against methodological nationalism (contra Saeed 2020). Recognizing the particularistic and compromising effects of instantiating civil spheres inside nation states is baked into the DNA of civil sphere theory (Alexander 2006: Chapter 8). Yet, the social dangers of nationalism are real, even if its challenge to CST is not. To make these dangers visible (Wang 2019), along with other anti-civil perseverations of actually existing civil spheres, is as much the ambition of CST as laying out the sociological foundations for democracy and the pathways for civil repair.

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Civil Sphere in East Asia *Symposium: Author's Reply*

The Geopolitics of Civil Spheres: Hong Kong and the China Factor

David A. Palmer
Professor of Sociology,
Univ. of Hong Kong

Spillman recounts how *The Civil Sphere in East Asia* helped her to make sense of daily headlines on the Hong Kong protests of 2019. She asks, "when do different languages of claims-making about universalizing solidarity stop being civil sphere languages, and start being something else?" Lo asks us to think more about the "China factor" and its role in an "international civil sphere." Saeed forcefully asserts that it is "no longer tenable" to consider that the democratic and civil norms underpinning civil spheres are "Western or American". When I began this project, I would have agreed with her on the necessity of decoupling civil society theories from their Western historical grounding, and to see how far one can go in that direction. But Hong Kong's protest movement has led me to become starkly aware of the limits of such a proposal. In this discussion, I will use the Hong Kong case to reflect on some of the questions raised by Lo, Spillman and Saeed.

The protest movement that shook Hong Kong throughout the second half of 2019 has been portrayed in the American media as a paradigmatic instance of a dramatized struggle, played out in the streets between citizens and the police, between civil values of democracy and anti-civil, violent authoritarian repression. On the ground, there has been no shortage of verbal and physical incivility

on both sides of the conflict. But the repeated and regular acts of protestor violence, mob assaults, vandalism, arson, and attacks on police officers with petrol bombs and bricks never inflected the Western media's narrative, which has focused on police arrests, beatings, tear gas and pepper spray as the symbols of anti-civil violence being deployed against innocent citizens. In the Western civil sphere, the symbolic binary has been unambiguous in its dramatization of the Hong Kong struggle – an inverted image of the typical media framing of protests using similar "Black Bloc" tactics in Europe and America. Writing of media coverage of anti-corporate globalization protests such as the "Battle for Seattle" in 1999 and the G20 meeting in Genoa in 2001, for example, Juris (2005: 428) writes, "dominant media frames skillfully decontextualized and reinserted images of militant rebellion into a larger narrative of dreaded criminal, if not terrorist, deviance, threatening to alienate potential supporters and wrest legitimacy from the broader movement." In contrast, in its investigation of the overwhelmingly positive media coverage of the Hong Kong protests, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) concluded that "The quantity of Hong Kong articles is inversely proportional to the diversity of opinion. The reality of the situation is much more nuanced, but this nuance is entirely lacking in the hundreds of articles sampled. Corporate media sing the same song on Hong Kong, presenting the situation in a lockstep single-mindedness that would impress any totalitarian propaganda system." (Macleod 2019)

Who is the public to whom Hong Kong protesters and the media present this monolithic narrative? In other words, within which civil sphere are the actors shaping public opinion? In Hong Kong, much of the protest actions aim to garner the attention of the Western media. An important strategy has been to mobilize the Western media and other authoritative institutions such as human rights organizations, to pressure the American and British governments to take actions to support the protests and punish the Hong Kong government. The Hong Kong movement engages Western civil spheres as much as Hong Kong's.

Protesters waving American flags and posters of Donald Trump have been common sights. The passage of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act by the US Congress in November 2019 was widely seen as a major victory in the struggle, the fruit of an intense media and Washington lobbying campaign by public leaders of the Hong Kong protest movement. The act, which threatens to sanction officials and revoke the special trade status conferred on Hong Kong by the USA, was supported by the bipartisan coalition of "national security hawks on China, trade hawks on China, and human rights hawks on China" (Girard 2019), and passed with only one dissenting vote. Hong Kong is now regularly mentioned alongside technology, intellectual property, the South China Sea, Xinjiang, and other issues justifying the containment of China in the new cold war. The Hong Kong protest movement has enthusiastically joined the American side in the broader geopolitical conflict between the US and China.

Over the decades, Hong Kong's civil sphere had evolved through the tensions between different formulations of civil/anti-civil binaries, becoming a space for negotiating the conflicts, ambiguities and overlaps between liberty and paternalism (Lo & Bettinger 2009), liberal and traditional conceptions of the rule of law (Ku 2019) and the localizing vs universalizing boundaries of the sphere of solidarity (Junker and Chan 2019). In the current protest movement, however, most nuances have been lost. Earlier debates between mainstream advocates of civil disobedience and localist groups advocating violence, have given way to a generalized cultural legitimation and acceptance of violent tactics. Local civil/anticivil binary codes have largely merged with the deep structure of American discourses of the new Cold War: American power is sacralised as the guardian of civility, while China is profanated as the looming spectre of anti-civil infiltration and menacing world domination.

Under this moral code, in the Hong Kong protest movement, anything associated with mainland China is vilified as anti-civil. Mainland Chinese (even native Hong Kongers) who disagreed with protesters were often subject to violent mob attacks

-- in one case set on fire -- and prominent leaders of the movement declined to criticize such acts. Businesses, banks and restaurants associated with critics of the movement, and even the metro system, were systematically trashed and vandalized week after week, and are now the subject of boycotts. A sacred principle of the movement is an unshakable unity and tactical cooperation between violent "warriors" and non-violent "moderates." Any criticism of the movement, including principled reservations about its tolerance or advocacy of violence, may lead to stigmatization as "pro-Beijing" or "pro-communist."

Hong Kong's protest movement plays out in Western civil spheres to the extent that the media for which it performs, and the public opinion that it intensely engages with, is Western public opinion. Conversely, the movement does not engage with mainland Chinese public opinion. Rather than seeking to win mainland Chinese over to democratic values, the anti-mainland mob violence and vandalism have only provided fodder for the inverted moral code of civility propagated by the Chinese government: just as major Chinese cities have made significant strides in improved public behavior and civic consciousness, in many ways catching up to the much-vaunted civility of Hong Kong and demonstrating the advanced capacity of Chinese "social management", the Hong Kong rebellion provides countless images of Western-style liberalism degenerating into violence and barbarity.

In the discourse of the movement, translated into the terms of Civil Sphere Theory, the Chinese regime is anti-civil by nature, and all civil means of engagement have failed. There is no mainland Chinese civil sphere to contribute to. There is no channel for influencing the mainland Chinese media narrative and engaging with mainland Chinese public opinion. There is no choice but violent pressure, and to internationalize the issue by drawing in the US and Western powers. Thus, Hong Kong can only engage the Western civil sphere, and add to the voices in America that call for an all-of-society struggle against Chinese communism (Wong and Chow 2019).

In my chapter in *The Civil Sphere in East Asia*, I stressed the role of ambiguity in the overlaps between the conflicting moral codes associated with Chinese tradition, socialist ideology and Western liberal values, thus making possible the emergence of evanescent "micro-civil spheres" on the mainland. I argued that these spaces collapse when state actors and popular groups symmetrically deploy the codes against each other, mutually contaminating each other as existential enemies in their respective binary schemes (Palmer 2019: 141-144; see also Palmer & Winiger 2019; Ning & Palmer 2020). In recent years, the space for ambiguity has shrunk in China with the increasingly rigid orthodoxy of the socialist "red code". Broader trends such as China's greater international assertiveness and rising economic power, coupled with local incidents such as the abduction of five Hong Kong booksellers in 2015, has amplified existential fears of China's socialist regime in Hong Kong (Palmer 2020). The ambiguities and overlaps between the moral codes of mainland China and those of Hong Kong society, are now deeply frayed, replaced by zero-sum opposition between the codes of the supporters and opponents of the protests, each side polluting the other as the incarnation of anti-civility.

In the new cold war narrative, American power is required to save freedom, democracy and human rights from the China menace. American geopolitical power is the guarantor of freedom, and the Hong Kong protest movement turns to it for protection. So, can a civil sphere exist outside of the framework guaranteed by such power – a power that is military as much as economic?

Sadia Saeed uses the examples of Haiti in 1791 and India in 1947 to show that such non-Western countries were able to surpass the level of democracy that existed in France and the US at those times. But Haiti and India were first colonized and subjugated, and democracy grew out of, if against, such subjugation. What these cases show is that non-Western societies can absorb Western democratic principles and hybridize them with indigenous cultures. But is this possible without Western domination? Let's turn to Asia

and the polities covered in *The Civil Sphere in East Asia*: Japan's current democratic political system, within which its civil sphere is nested, came into being after the Japanese empire was crushed by American nuclear bombs then placed under direct American administration, and remains under the US military umbrella. Taiwan and South Korea were military dictatorships under American protection during the Cold War, and were able to evolve into democracies as the Cold War ended, maintaining and even expanding deep cultural and military ties with the US. Hong Kong was a British colony that knew little democracy under colonial rule and whose evolution towards greater democracy after the handover to China was ultimately aborted – even though intense economic and cultural ties with the West have led to high expectations for Western-style democracy. China, the exceptional case in our book, is the one country that was never fully colonized, occupied, or durably integrated into an American military alliance (other than a brief period during and following World War II).

The Civil Sphere in East Asia demonstrates that civil spheres can exist and flourish in East Asian societies, and that the moral codes that structure them can integrate and hybridize moral codes from indigenous sources, Western values, and local historical experiences and trajectories. But one question that we didn't raise in the book is the troubling relationship between civil spheres and geopolitics. Is it the case that the legacy of some form of Western conquest or military domination is a necessary condition for a democratic civil sphere to develop – even if this civil sphere then overturns or "civilizes" the colonial or postcolonial structure of domination?

As shocking as such as suggestion may sound, it seems to be inherent to the concept of the civil sphere. As Junker and Chan (2019) show in their analysis of Hong Kong localism, both democracy and xenophobic chauvinism have their roots in the collective constitution of a "people" with its boundaries between who is to be included and excluded from popular citizenship and sovereignty. The civil spheres of democratic nation-states grow out of the tensions between those two poles. As narrated by Alexander, the American civil sphere was originally limited to white men: women, blacks, Jews and others were excluded. Two centuries of the struggles of the civil sphere led to its expansion, as these populations successfully fought their way into the civil sphere, acquiring equal rights and dignity. But they fought their way in from a position of being *dominated subjects within the same state*. They acquired a civil status within the Western system of domination.

And now, it is in the name of this system– and with broad public support spanning the ideological spectrum, both within the US and in places like Hong Kong -- that the US flexes geopolitical muscle to protect people against "anti-civil" threats in other countries. The *Civil Sphere in East Asia* focused primarily on specific national or regional political entities as the local of analysis, although two contributions touched on transnational cases (Pun & Ng 2019, Wang 2019). But, stimulated by recent events in Hong Kong and the comments by Lo, Spillman and Saeed, I now feel that further exploration of the civil sphere needs to move beyond the nation-state as the unit of analysis, to consider the deeply paradoxical connections between civil spheres and colonial trajectories, geopolitical histories and contemporary international tensions. This is an empirical question.

And there is a normative question: if my hypothesis is correct, there are important implications. If a legacy of Western subjugation or protection is a *sine qua non* of civil spheres as we now know them, what, then, of China? Washington's support for repressed groups in mainland China – or for the protests in Hong Kong, which enjoys a high level of freedoms – is countered by a tightening of the Chinese state's apparatus of control, not only of those groups, but of Chinese society as a whole. America and its allies may well be able to restrict Chinese threats to their own security – but China is simply too big and powerful to be fully subjugated. As for dreams of regime change, the experience of other countries in the past few decades shows that civil spheres do not simply grow out of the ruins of collapsed regimes. The weakening of the civil spheres of

America and other Western countries, makes them increasingly unlikely exemplars. There is not, and will not be, a Chinese civil sphere derived from or relying on Western geopolitical pressure. But, as argued in *The Civil Sphere in East Asia* and reiterated by Alexander in his contribution to this issue, values and participatory practices of solidarity and civility, both of indigenous and Western provenance, have deep roots among Chinese people. The challenge, then, is not so much a cultural one, but a geopolitical and ethical one: is it possible for civil spaces to open up and grow without becoming bound up with geopolitical interests and struggles? (Palmer 2018) Is it possible to build a truly civil geopolitical order? (For a more general discussion of these questions, see Palmer 2018)

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How to Have Sociology in a Pandemic[1]

Alexandre White,
Johns Hopkins University

As a graduate student, my first dissertation project intended to examine through ethnographic methods the long-term effects of social distancing practices associated with the West African Ebola virus disease (EVD) epidemic of 2014-2015. I was curious what, after many months of curfews, quarantines, and distancing measures, social life would be like. I thought this a novel moment to consider such a rare and potentially devastating social phenomenon. Today, the experiences of social distancing and public health mandated social isolation are becoming ever more universal to human existence. Similarly, I expect that many of us will become, in some form, sociologists of pandemics for some time to come.

"Pandemics are not only biomedical but also made manifest through the social and political lenses that produce the experiences and practices of those living through them. An epidemic, to quote Allison Bashford is of course biological but also 'a bureaucratic and political effect' (2004:4)."

The role of the social sciences and humanities in a pandemic more broadly is a question that has been of deep discussion at universities around the country. Last week the Center for Medical Humanities and Social Medicine at Johns Hopkins University[2] held an online workshop on this theme bringing together, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, science and technology scholars, and clinicians. Understanding the phenomenon of pandemics must be recognized to be an interdisciplinary concern from which we can draw from many intellectual communities. At a time when quick responses are needed and the dynamics of the pandemic shifts in hyper-speed, pandemic moments are ones that are preternaturally resistant to contemplative sociological thought. Pandemics seem to require swift data and decision-making to manage, but they also need robust sociological intervention so that perhaps we won't reproduce the mistakes of today in the future.

Beyond chronic and lingering pandemics such as that of HIV/AIDS, acute epidemics and pandemics have rarely produced sustained sociological inquiry. This is even the case in medical sociology in large part. A 2013 volume entitled *Pandemics and Emerging Infectious Disease: The Sociological Agenda* and edited by Robert Dingwall, Lily M. Hoffman, and Karen Staniland produced an enduring account of how a sociological research agenda can be tailored to questions of acute epidemic events. They suggested that a reason for the lack of research on acute epidemics may be the perception that such moments are largely the domain of public health and medical sciences (Dingwall, Hoffman, and Staniland 2013). However, in so many ways they are much more complex. Pandemics are not only biomedical but also made manifest through the social and political lenses that produce the experiences and practices of those living through them. An epidemic, to quote Allison Bashford is of course biological but also 'a bureaucratic and political effect' (2004:4). While I would highly recommend the provocations provided by the authors of this volume, I want to echo that, both prior to COVID-19 and now, epidemics are of urgent concern for our sociological imagination.

[1] For this title and for much of my analysis here I am grateful to Paula Treichler's 1999 work "How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS".

[2] I am grateful to Jeremy Greene, Elizabeth O'Brien, Carolyn Sufrin, Svea Closser, Graham Mooney, and Marian Robbins for organizing this thought provoking event.

At this moment we as sociologists are attempting to understand, theorize, and contextualize this alien moment to encapsulate this global phenomenon within our sociological frameworks. In this short article I want to suggest a few ways that sociological imaginations can confront this moment. I also want to consider how they might call upon us to think *otherwise* about traditional scholarship and to produce new questions for critical investigation. I do not intend to be exhaustive but rather to highlight some frames through which sociology can confront the practice of sociology in a pandemic moment. In this very brief space I wish to outline two broad approaches to thinking about pandemics as sociological phenomena that will be essential to frame the COVID-19 pandemic in sociological terms. The first would be to explore questions of sociology 'in' epidemics. What lessons can we learn from epidemic episodes that teach us more about the wider social world? The second is to explore epidemic diseases and COVID-19 more specifically as sociological phenomena themselves. This I would call sociology 'of' epidemics. I draw these framings from the work of David Mechanic on the role of sociology in health affairs (1990).

"Given the scarcity of COVID-19 tests in the United States and the difficulties of access, we might ask: How are those potentially sick with the disease having to perform new modes of patient-hood in order to receive care? What sort of performative practices translate their experience into effective healthcare seeking procedure?"

Sociology in Epidemics

Maynard Swanson, in his work on plague and racist sanitation practices in 1901 Cape Town reflected, echoed Louis Chevalier that "Epidemics do not create abnormal situations but rather sharpen existing behavior which betray deeply rooted and continuing social imbalances" (Swanson 1977:389). My experience studying histories of international epidemic responses can attest to this perspective. Very recent work has been examining these very questions. Naomi Klein's recent analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of disaster capitalism suggests that pandemics come to be framed and responded to in the context of free market ideology. Similarly, the current responses to COVID-19 have exposed how latent inequalities – especially within US society – expose how access to care, resources, and even who gets sick and who doesn't fissure along racial and socio-economic lines. Epidemics have historically produced aggressive responses against those already marginalized by society, such as those of lower class status, the impoverished, or the socially oppressed for reasons of race, gender, sexual preference, or other categorizations (Decoteau 2013; Paye-Layleh 2014; Swanson 1977; White 2017). How pandemics expose, reproduce, and highlight crises of inequality and economic systems allows sociologists to examine how what may otherwise be discrete phenomena affecting particular populations play out in real time on a much larger scale. The crises of capitalism, financialization and inequality, and biopolitics produced by COVID-19 as discussed by Klein (2020), Zizek (2020), Agamben (2020) highlight spaces to reconsider how social structures, regulations, and governmentality all shift in such moments. Thus, pandemics can be a useful heuristic for understanding social dynamics when all institutions and relations are warped almost to breaking point.

Sociology of Epidemics

But what novel questions do pandemic moments themselves produce? As much as this is an empirical question it is also a call to decenter our analyses and bases of comparison from Eurocentric or US cases to geographies that have experienced similar events more recently. While the 1918 H1N1 Influenza pandemic may be seen as the archetypal comparison to the COVID-19 pandemic, geographical biases might preclude us from seeing more recent epidemics such as the West African Ebola epidemic of 2014-2015 or even the very recent ebola epidemic in the

Democratic Republic of Congo (where similar social distancing measures were employed at national and regional levels) as prime cases for important comparison and conversation. Much anthropological work has explored how epidemic moments as well as broader health crises produce new rationalities of medical practice, politics, and citizenship. Given the scarcity of COVID-19 tests in the United States and the difficulties of access, we might ask: How are those potentially sick with the disease having to perform new modes of patient-hood in order to receive care? What sort of performative practices translate their experience into effective healthcare seeking procedure? These questions would be informed by the work of Vinh-Kim Nguyen on HIV/AIDS care in West Africa (2010), Adriana Petryna's analysis of negotiating social support and welfare claims after Chernobyl (2004) and Claire Decoteau's examination of bio-citizenship in Post-Apartheid South Africa (Decoteau 2013). Paul Richards (2016) explores how community responses and peoples' science confronted the failures of international responses to EVD in West Africa in the absence of clear case counts and a lack of personal protective equipment for health workers. My own work explores the histories of the phenomenon of epidemics, how they produce populations for control and care, and how epidemic threat is perceived as a function of geopolitical concern (White 2020). All of these comparisons should give us pause. They should make us think about how the current crises of data and forecasting, the discourses on 'flattening the curve,' and the health and policy responses currently deployed have distinct valences to epidemics of the past around the world.

This is in no way meant to be a complete accounting of the lines of sociological inquiry that emerges from pandemic events. It is an attempt to sketch some paths towards sustained sociological inquiry of pandemics. As phenomena they require a plethora of sociological tools, theories, and perspectives to understand. Like all phenomena they are shaped by the histories, contexts, and geographies of their emergence.

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Book Symposium

A Culture of Growth (2018, Princeton)

Introduction: Defining a Model of Cultural Change

Joyce Burnette
Professor of Economics,
Wabashi College

Joel Mokyr tackles big historical questions. His work as a whole tells the story of how Europe, and Britain in particular, became the location where modern economic growth first erupted.

We have already heard about the development of the important technologies (*Lever of Riches*), the importance of useful knowledge for economic growth (*Gifts of Athena*), and the role of the enlightenment in encouraging the development of such knowledge (*The Enlightened Economy*). *A Culture of Growth* adds to the story the role of culture.

When I was in graduate school, economists were reluctant to use culture as an explanation for economic phenomena, seeing cultural explanations as not falsifiable and thus not useful. Since then, economists have been more open to the idea that culture might provide an explanation for what we observe. (See, for example, Fernandez and Fogli 2009; Alesina, Giuliano and Nunn 2013; Alesina and Giuliano 2015) *A Culture of Growth* contributes to this trend by providing a clear definition of culture and a model of cultural change. The book examines the role of cultural entrepreneurs by examining in detail two of them, Bacon and Newton. The book also examines aspects of the European "culture of progress" that encouraged the creation of useful knowledge and economic growth.

This symposium is a summary of a session held at the Social Science History Association meetings in Chicago on November 22, 2019.

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Getting It Almost Exactly Right; Mokyr's Glittering Culture of Capitalism

Deirdre Nansen McCloskey

Emerita, Economics and History,
Univ. of Illinois at Chicago

Joel wrote a characteristically brilliant, witty, learned, persuasive, humane, penetrating book. It is economics, for its steady attention to the most recent insights of economic theory; it is history, for its astonishing essayistic scholarship bringing the histories of science, technology, and social thought together for the benefit of each; and it is economic history, for its breaking of paths through the materialist jungle that our dear, dear colleagues have let grow up around the Industrial Revolution and its amazing follow-on, the Great Enrichment.

The range of scholarship in the book is astonishing, but is not mere ornament. Joel takes seriously the job of making an argument, which always requires comparison and test. For example, his brilliant chapters late in the book on China make the point that we need to understand China in order to understand the peculiarity of northwestern Europe.

Joel and I hold in common anti-materialist hypotheses concerning how we became rich, stressing ideas as against coal, savings, imperialism, slavery, capital accumulation, legal rules, and the other materialisms beloved of economists from Smith through Marx down to "growth theorists" nowadays. All of the ideational arguments make more sense in explaining the strangest secular event in history—the increase of average real income per head by fully 3,000 percent, 1800 to the present—than the scores of materialist arguments which historians and economists devised.

Ideas mattered, immensely. I am therefore anxious that Joel gets the ideational arguments exactly right. I wish therefore that he had attended to:

(1.) The shakiness of the claim that "institutions" were central.

Yes, yes, the Royal Society. But Joel correctly notes that it atrophied in the 18th century. So much for conservative institutions like the French Academy, killing Progress in detail. Joel knows this, and for example shows persuasively in Chapter 11 that the institution of universities was usually a drag. But he wants to situate the book within the neo-institutionalist movement in modern economics, which has become orthodoxy at the World Bank: Add institutions and stir. Yet his theme is in fact that ideas, ethics, rhetoric, language, enthusiasms, ideologies mattered most. To call these "institutions" is to make Douglass North's mechanical version of the theory ("the rules of the game") into a tautology. All human action gets called "institutions." Action causes action. Duh. Joel would be well advised to look into John Searle and others such as Tomasello, Tallis, Martin Buber on institutions, They give a humanistic perspective on "institutions"—which is what Joel is doing, whether or not he quite realizes he is.

(2.) The de-emphasis of the Great Enrichment.

Goldstone among others has emphasized that industrial revolutions are somewhat common. It is the astonishing follow-on, the Great Enrichment of the 19th century, and then its Science-driven consequence in the 20th, that amaze. Joel is reaching back, admirably, into the early modern world in Europe to see the roots, but he does tend to smoosh the time periods together, especially when he is claiming that Science made us rich in the 19th century. No one of sense would deny that now Science is crucial to our future prosperity.

But when exactly it became the chief pusher of the economy is very much in doubt. Not, certainly, as early as 1800 or 1850. Not plausible even much in 1900. Yet certainly by 1950. Most trade-tested betterments before 1900 had little or nothing to do with High Science.

(3.) The emphasis on Science to the exclusion of commercially tested betterment.

Joel needs to take on what he and I would recognize as the "Pete Boettke point," namely, that "usefulness" is only to be measured by what people are willing to pay in a market. The market for ideas on which Joel spends so many illuminating and persuasive pages does not automatically value its products commercially. But only if they are commercially viable do innovations contribute to explaining modern economic growth. The Republic of Letters did not lead in "the long term" to economic effects unless there was also a Bourgeois Revaluation. I entirely agree with him about the long term (very long term) effect of even High Science. I agree, too, that the honoring of curiosity and intellectual originality spilled over into economically relevant areas, some even pretty early. But it would have been seed cast on stony ground if the Bourgeois Revaluation and the Bourgeois Deal had not happened at about the same time.

(4.) The exclusive emphasis on the Republic of Letters and on Science and their alleged sufficiency.

I quite understand that it is our scientific duty to find the largest causes we can, and to firmly set aside trivial ones. But I don't agree that incentives suffice, or that Science did a lot for the economy (until very late). But the main point is that Joel is giving his BaconScienceRiches link exclusive billing, when it's pretty obvious that political and social changes leading to liberty and dignity for ordinary people were also at play, and had large effects on the economy much earlier than Science. Early on---I mean before 1900 or so—the shift of egalitarian ideology matters much, much more than science for economic development.

But I do not want any of this to detract from my Main Conclusion: it is a sensationally good book, a major work of science and scholarship.

A Cultural of Growth *Symposium: Critics Comments*

Can economics explain cultural change?

Jan de Vries

Ehrman Professor Emeritus
UC-Berkeley

For many decades economic historians focused on honing their technical skills as economists in order to address fairly small historical questions. Recently, several leading figures have turned to big questions, those hitherto thought beyond the reach of economics. None is bigger than the question Joel Mokyr poses *A Culture of Growth*: the culture underlying the emergence of modern science that is, in turn, the fundamental cause of the technological change driving modern economic growth.

In making this move, Mokyr does not abandon his discipline for another – one that claims to understand culture. Rather, he seeks to endogenize culture within the terms of economics. Economics is about human choice, and he argues that it is a specific "choice-based cultural evolution" that led to the emergence of the modern world. Now, we usually say that economics is about choice under conditions of scarcity. Thus, in Mokyr's application, he needs to show how cultural choice was constrained in the past – somewhere,

sometime – to yield an enduring, science-friendly culture.

The cultural evolution of interest to Mokyr occurs among an elite population, a small group, that adopted a new attitude toward nature and developed an interest in harnessing nature to human material needs. But it quickly becomes clear that this achievement was not enough. It needed to be linked to institutions that could diffuse more broadly the new knowledge about nature, and to adopt a method, a spirit of skepticism, to continually test and revise that knowledge. That is, it needed this elite group to form a culture, and to interact with each other on an ongoing basis. It found what it needed in open science, practiced in a sufficiently diverse yet firmly connected community, a republic of letters.

Mokyr's cultural change was highly contingent; it needed the convergence of several factors beyond culture, per se, in order to take root. His historical claim is that cultural evolution in these directions had not yet proceeded far in 1500, but that human choices brought it to a sufficient maturity by about 1700. Once in place, an "Industrial Enlightenment" would convey the fruits of this cultural evolution to material life, by drawing on an ever-expanding epistemic base: the fund of propositional knowledge –applied science -- available to entrepreneurs. This was essential to establish modern economic growth, the product of the Industrial Revolution.

Mokyr has 'demystified' cultural change as a phenomenon, but can he account for the specific change that concerns him? That is, has he succeeded in endogenizing it? That is a question the reader must decide. But there is a second, related issue that will be important to that decision. This concerns Mokyr's motive in delving into the realm of culture in the first place: Did the 'epistemic base' really stand as a hard barrier to economic growth during the Industrial Revolution? That is, even if he is convincing about the origins of cultural change, was that achievement really critical to the Industrial Revolution?

It is undeniable that the world we now inhabit could not exist without a massive expansion of the epistemic base extant in 1500. But that is not the same thing as the claim that modern economic growth could not have begun without the prior expansion of that base.

I believe we should think of this development as an "emergent property", or, in historians' terms, as a product of contingency – what Annales School historians liked to call conjuncture. In places, Mokyr seems to agree. After a discussion of the relative importance of science and artisanal skill, he concludes "It is the confluence of artisanal ingenuity and scientific method and discovery that is the essence of the Industrial Enlightenment." (p. 274)

It is a mistake, I think, for Mokyr to join the long list of economic historians who have invoked a hard barrier as the obstacle to the Industrial Revolution, whether that was land (Malthus), capital (Marx and most classical and neoclassical economists), or energy supplies (Wrigley). Now we have an "epistemic barrier" blocking the pathway.

But it is now clear, in a way that was not yet evident a generation ago, that the miracle of the Industrial Revolution resides not so much in its initial acceleration (which now seems less dramatic than it once did) but in its very long continuation. Economic growth was substantial before the era of the Industrial Revolution, and, indeed, science-based innovations were not major contributors to sustained growth until after that era. That is, it is possible that long-term growth – based on labour intensification, expanding consumer demand, higher skills, improved access to information, fuller utilization of available knowledge and resources – channelled human ingenuity toward the enrichment of the fund of propositional knowledge. Culture co-evolved with a growing economy.

Elites, Cultural Bias, and Ideas as Drivers of Economic Advance: Comments on A Culture of Growth

David Mitch

Professor of Economics,
Univ. of Maryland

Joel Mokyr has produced a masterful collection of 17 essays on the relationship between early modern European intellectual life and subsequent European economic growth. The book's spotlight on the early modern period is something of a departure from Mokyr's usual focus on the British industrial revolution. Highlights include a formal discussion of cultural bias, essays on Bacon and Newton as cultural entrepreneurs, a discussion of the informal Republic of Letters in early modern Europe, and two comparative essays on Europe and China.

The array of literatures historical and theoretical cited in the book is dazzling reaffirming Mokyr as master of the historical synthesis genre. However, the genre itself has limitations in establishing causation or magnitude of impact. Does the elaboration of examples reach a point where their further listing does little to promote a given argument? Have possible counterexamples been ruled out? Extensive listing of examples briefly adumbrated can leave the reader to look elsewhere for fuller exposition.

While each essay is self-contained, there are unifying themes across essays. The cultural bias framework outlined in chapter 5 is incisively employed in later chapters. As in other work, Mokyr argues that ideas are more important than material circumstances as drivers of economic advance. He also emphasizes the importance of elites as the sources of the intellectual change which he thinks accounts for why Europe and in particular Britain lead the rest of the world in the onset of modern economic growth.

Mokyr thus endeavors to rescue the long-standing view that the onset of modern economic growth can be attributed to scientific advance. This perspective has frequently been challenged by those noting that key advances during the British industrial revolution made little use of scientific concepts being based instead on "useful knowledge."

Mokyr's essays are eloquent narratives about the importance of propositional knowledge to the cultivation of economic growth. However, as Mokyr acknowledges, propositional and prescriptive knowledge interact with each other and it is problematic to elicit their relative contribution. This is especially the case given the long lags in play with developments in the 17th and and early 18th centuries only fully manifested in technological advance over a century later in the nineteenth century.

These tensions surface in Mokyr's 2018 Journal of Economic History review of Gillian Cookson's Age of Machinery. Cookson focuses on the contributions of Yorkshire machinery builders to the growth of the English textile industry. While acknowledging that she may be right to dismiss the contribution of propositional knowledge for this case, he asserts that "the argument is surely not true in this strong form for the British Industrial Revolution as a whole" (pp. 1253-54). Addressing this adequately is perhaps beyond the purview of *Culture of Growth*. This may reflect the more general difficulty of establishing relevant counterfactuals and estimating magnitudes of impact for intellectual developments and the contributions of elites.

The focus throughout the later essays on economic growth as suggested in the title is arguably anachronistic. Economic growth was not a term used in early modern Europe. The term "progress" employed in Chapter 14 may be more appropriate here and the evolution of the term progress and how it segued into awareness of the possibility of growth warrants further consideration as would allowance for views of the darker side of capitalism and the power relationships at stake.

In highlighting the importance of culture, Mokyr acknowledges the aspects of subjectivism this introduces. However, the implications of this subjectivism could be more fully embraced. Mokyr's advocacy of a choice based approach to culture is problematic because it begs the question of a rationalistic meta---approach to culture. One specific difficulty with embracing the subjectivity of culture is that already noted of distinguishing propositional from prescriptive knowledge. In this regard the contributions and intellectual legacy of the idealist Immanuel Kant and his Copernican revolution in thinking about how the perspectives of the observer influences what is seen warrants extended treatment in a serious cultural approach to modern economic history.

While I have dwelt on some limitations of *A Cultural of Growth* I should also reiterate how much I learned from reading it and underscore the range of important issues the book opens up for exploration.

A Cultural of Growth *Symposium: Critics Comments*

Four Questions To Mokyr's A Cultural of Growth

Steve Pincus

Thomas Donnelly Professor of History
Univ. of Chicago

Joel Mokyr's *Culture of Growth* is a remarkable achievement. Mokyr has produced a cultural account of the origins of the Industrial Revolution, the Great Divergence, or the Great Enrichment based on deep reading in the economics literature, the literature in the history of science, and the cultural history of the early modern period. His argument, laid out in 350 densely argued pages, is at once simple and complex.

Nevertheless I was left with a few questions.

First, was the Republic of Letters a sufficiently robust institution to disseminate useful knowledge? The evidence points in two directions. Mokyr cites a good deal of material to demonstrate robust discussions and a range of applications. But I am always struck as I comb through archives in Britain, France, Spain and the Netherlands how much effort and money was spent spying on industrial processes, on accounting procedures, and methods of commercial organization. Even more money was spent on enticing individual adepts to leave one country and arrive in another. So transnational competition is very important, yes.

But I wonder how important was the republic of letters. To translate this into the terms of a lively debate in European intellectual history, perhaps jealousy of trade was more important than doux commerce. Perhaps the cultural changes that Mokyr traces would be insufficient without accounting for a very different logic that led to economic production.

Second, I wonder about selection bias. Mokyr's story is a story about scientists and indeed often a discussion of findings in the literature of the history of science. But why should we believe that the key cultural entrepreneurs were two Englishmen described as natural philosophers: Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton? I have no doubt they were important in brokering new ideas. But Thomas Jefferson, quoted by Mokyr (on p. 69) lists

three not two great emblematic men of the enlightenment: Bacon, Newton and John Locke.

I puzzled why Locke is not mentioned. Mokyr claims of Locke that "for the change in the cultural menu of choices regarding useful knowledge .. we must look elsewhere." (p. 68) Locke is often discussed by Matthew Boulton and seems to have been often referred to by many inventors of the 18th century. Indeed in a recent book tracing the emergence of ideas that were vital to the Great Enrichment, Sophus Reinert highlights the importance of a Lockean disciple, and the dissemination of his ideas throughout Europe. In fact, as president of the Board of Trade from 1696 Locke did all he could to promote the implementation of useful knowledge in productive economic enterprises throughout the Empire. The Irish linen industry in particular was essentially founded by Locke. Marx obviously called attention to the importance of William Petty in mathematizing science and practical knowledge. Jake Soll has highlighted the ideas and methods of Colbert in the same enterprise.

The point is not necessarily that Mokyr is wrong, but that there is no principle of selection enunciated. One could pile up quotes from the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries about each of these cultural entrepreneurs and many more to the same effect that Mokyr has done for Bacon and Newton. The question is what are the interpretative implications of selecting those entrepreneurs? Or perhaps those entrepreneurs described in the way that Mokyr does.

Third, I was puzzled by the role of the state in Mokyr's account. "Once the possibility and desirability of economic progress had been accepted" in the late 17th century, Mokyr says, "a concrete agenda of policy measures and institutional change had to be formulated, elaborated, proposed, and implemented for long term progress to take place." This was only implemented "in some European nations in the late eighteenth century and then more widely in the nineteenth." (p. 20). Later Mokyr summarily dismisses Robert Wuthnow's claims for the importance of the state in supporting and/or impeding cultural innovation. (p. 180).

And yet, there is overwhelming evidence that the state played a key role both in promoting cultural interchange and in promoting the implementation of useful knowledge from the late 17th century – a full century before Mokyr claims that it happened. It is surely significant that Mokyr's two emblematic cultural entrepreneurs were state actors. Bacon, as Mokyr, tells us was Lord Chancellor. Isaac Newton took up arms to overthrow James II, sat as MP in the revolutionary Parliament that remade the English state, promoted the financial revolution and initiated the great era of British economic legislation discussed by Jo Innes, Julian Hoppit, Patrick O'Brien and others. Newton, as head of the Mint, used monetary policy to encourage economic innovation and promoted a mechanized mint as a model for manufacturing innovation.

Others have shown – in an article recently published in the Annales -- that the first industrial nation, Britain, spent about 15% more of its annual revenue on economic development from 1689-1790 than did its European rivals and it did so because from the late 17th century it was committed to a developmental economic policy. Colbert, while spending a smaller percentage of the French treasury on economic issues, did much to promote the progress of the French economy long before the late eighteenth century.

Many have pointed out the importance of the French bureau de commerce in helping to lead France out of the long recession of the 17th century. Cardinal Fleury, the French leading minister in the aftermath of the Mississippi scheme, was committed to the developmental state. These findings are all the results of recent scholarship that has not made its way into Mokyr's extensive bibliography.

Mokyr highlights the importance of the postal system in facilitating the Republic of Letters, calling attention to Francisco di Tasso's early sixteenth century innovations in Italy, Germany and Austrian lands. But the massive explosion of

the postal service – a growth of more than two orders of magnitude – in terms of quantity of letters circulated and in terms of postage sold – was a state enterprise of the late 17th century. There is no question, then, that European states in general, and the British state in particular, were both committed to promoting the culture of progress and to implementing developmental economic projects from the late 17th century. Perhaps the state played a rather larger role in the Great Enrichment than Mokyr lets on.

Fourth, one is struck by the absence of a discussion of empire in Mokyr's account. When he discusses explanation for the Great Divergence (pp. 288-289) Mokyr makes no mention of Pomeranz's famous "ghost acreage" hypothesis. More to the point he does not discuss the point that Pomeranz and a number of others have made, that Empire played a decisively important dynamic consumer base for European manufactures in the period between 1680 and 1780. In a world in which increasingly closed markets made it difficult to reach European consumers, the rapidly growing markets of both Spanish America (for French manufactured goods) and British America for British ones made all the difference. Indeed it could be argued that only the doubling of the size British colonial markets every twenty years created the demand necessary to spur the industrial revolution.

It is true of course that Mokyr's *A Culture of Growth* as well as Jan de Vries's *Industrious Revolution* – cultural changes – were necessary for this demand to grow. But structural changes – the acquisition of colonies and their demographic dynamism were necessary as well. These cultural and structural factors were highlighted by 18th century commentators like the Abbé Raynal, Adam Anderson, Malachy Postlethwayt, Adam Smith, and Benjamin Franklin as well as Marx in the 19th century. Both of these factors were artifacts of the British state. And, of course, the existence of these vast overseas markets set the European Empires apart from China in the critical period under investigation.

These points, of course, need to be read as mere quibbles. Mokyr's series of books have made it impossible for any of us to discuss the Great Divergence, the Industrial Revolution, the Great Enrichment without taking account of cultural factors. That is a tremendous achievement.

A Cultural of Growth *Symposium: Author's Reply*

Culture, Useful Knowledge, and A Belief in Human Agency

Joel Mokyr

Professor of Economics
Northwestern University

It is almost intimidating to have four of the world's most distinguished scholars — two economists, two historians — comment on one's book, and describe it in such flattering terms. That there would be some disagreements in such exchanges is inevitable, and talking about such disagreements is useful, if only in making the exact areas of disagreement sharper.

Jan De Vries is quite right in noting that we should not think of the "epistemic barrier" as a hard barrier to economic growth. It was not a hard barrier: there could be, and had been for centuries, technological progress without any understanding of the underlying natural processes. In some cases it was not really needed (in the mechanizing of cotton spinning, for instance, where mechanical intuition and ingenuity were largely enough). In other cases it was at best partial, such as in the adoption of chlorine for textile bleaching.

The relationship between propositional knowledge and prescriptive knowledge was always subtle and bi-directional, as David Mitch points out. That

said, suggesting with Deirdre McCloskey that science (including the experimental and computational methods) and mathematics had little or no impact on economic growth before the 20th Century belittles its achievements in earlier times in many areas. Even if the full principles underlying techniques in use had not yet been discovered, insights from natural philosophy were critical — none more than the discovery of atmospheric pressure in 1643. Some other striking advances of the 18th century depended on prior breakthroughs in hydraulics, astronomy, and physics — one thinks of the improved watermills, the marine chronometer, and ballistics.

Even though the physics of steam power (that is, thermodynamics) was almost a century away, James Watt had learned of the Scottish chemist William Cullen's finding that in a vacuum water would boil at much lower, even tepid, temperatures, releasing steam that would ruin the vacuum in a cylinder. That piece of knowledge was essential to Watt's realization that he needed a separate condenser (Hills, 1989, p. 53). Gaslighting, another paradigmatic improvement dating to the Industrial Revolution, depended on advances in pneumatic chemistry.

All the same, what mattered for the Great Enrichment was not just the "classic" Industrial Revolution of 1760-1830 per se, but the fact that the innovations of the Industrial Revolution were sustainable. Unlike earlier efflorescences (as Goldstone has memorably called them) the "wave of gadgets" of the decades between 1760 and 1800 did not fizzle out in a new stationary state but became the first act in what turned out a series of technological waves, each more powerful than the other. Steady, technology-driven economic growth was a fact of life in 1900, and it depended on the ever-tighter interaction of science and technology. The growing dependence of technological innovations on propositional knowledge meant that economic growth slowly turned from a negative feedback process to one that was positive-feedback and non-ergodic.

In addition, it meant a growing importance of a relatively small group of highly-trained informed inventors, engineers, applied mathematicians, and physicists, experimental geniuses such as Von Liebig and Pasteur and the much larger (but still small) group of technicians, instrument-makers, and other highly trained women and men that made their work possible — in short, upper-tail human capital. Knowledge became increasingly important for invention — there would have been no Marconi without Hertz. The net result for the world economy was a phase-transition, a fundamental change in the dynamics of economic change. When precisely the transition happened may be too simple a question: it differed from industry to industry, from sector to sector, even from product to product. The speed of progress depended on how hard the problem was given the tools and capabilities of the best people at the time. "Market-tested" electricity generation emerged a century after the separate condenser and the puddling-and-rolling process.

Culture, all four commentators agree, mattered. But what part of culture? As I see it, what mattered is a belief in human agency that leads to progress or "improvement" as contemporaries often called it (Friedel, 2007; Slack, 2015). Material conditions — that is, prosperity — depend on humans's ability and willingness to harness the forces of nature to their needs and to overcome the many ways the environment resists human meddlings and manipulations. The realization that the road to success here leads through useful knowledge — the term I deploy throughout my book — is at the very basis of progress. It was not the entire story, but it was essential.

What else mattered? In contrast with Professor McCloskey I believe that institutions matter and that they are not the same as "culture." Of course they do — or else why would we observe such gaps in living standards between North and South Korea, or between Costa Rica and Nicaragua? But those examples are low-hanging fruits. What about the centuries before the Industrial Revolution? How did institutions matter for the growth of useful knowledge? Here my argument is that institutions mattered, but not necessarily only the formal institutions known as "the state" — entities

that raised taxes, exercised justice, and fought wars.

Instead, as Jan De Vries also notes, the more informal and ethereal institutions that in one form or another rewarded people who had made major contributions to our understanding of nature were of greater importance. Institutions were needed if the market for ideas was going to be the environment in which new useful knowledge was produced, vetted, and adopted. Economics has long known how hard it is to reward skeptical and heterodox out-of-the-box thought and incentivize intellectual innovators, from Galileo to Beethoven. Early modern Europe, I argue, created such institutions, and they worked. The Ottoman Empire and China did not. The Republic of Letters was one such institution, and if I stressed it in the book to a fault it is because it differs from the mostly political interpretation that scholars like North and Acemoglu-Robinson have placed on what they see as institutions. A transnational and trans-religious institution superimposed on a fragmented world of states, statelets, and autonomous cities turned out to be a fertile ground for intellectual innovation.

Steve Pincus rightly points out that I do not give states and state capacity their due. By creating an environment that incentivized both the creation of new useful knowledge (through patronage and subsidies) and its diffusion, the competitive states system was an integral part of the advances made between 1500 and 1750.

That said, and the many examples adduced by him notwithstanding, I stand by my position that in the end Europe's formula for attaining Bacon's dreams was to farm out the generation of intellectual innovation to the private sector. Bacon and Newton were closely associated with politics and the state (to say nothing of Leibniz), but their intellectual breakthroughs were produced first and foremost as private citizens; their political standing were often the consequence of their contributions to knowledge and the social prestige that their eminence entailed (as was the case with John Locke, whose neglect in my book Pincus quite rightly criticizes).

The role of the "state," as I see it, was not negligible. That said, early modern Europe was the age of mercantilism and economic policies were still mostly subservient to the political objectives of the rulers and the interest groups that supported them. The triumph of the notion that the state's role is to augment the well-being of the citizens at large rather than that of the ruler(s) was itself a product of the market for ideas of this time.

Four Questions For Steven Lukes

Dustin S. Stoltz (Univ. of Notre Dame) interviews **Steven Lukes** (New York University) on the past, present, and future of cultural analysis and sociology

Dustin Stoltz: How did you become interested in sociology and the study of culture?

Steven Lukes: Originally, I studied sociology in a place where there wasn't any graduate work in sociology. I was at Oxford in the 1960s, and there were one or two sociologists, but no formal courses. There was the famous British sociologist of education, **A. H. 'Chelly' Halsey**, and an American political sociologist, **Norman Birnbaum**. There, I became very interested in Marxism, French Marxism in particular, and I ended up interested in late nineteenth century intellectual thought. I was advised to go read some Durkheim, and that was the turning point. **Edward Evans-Pritchard**, the great anthropologist, became my dissertation advisor—and that was my greatest stroke of luck. And, I learned sociology along the way, by going to the London School of Economics and attending courses by **Tom Bottomore**. Eventually, I got a job at Oxford in the

mid 60s and, by then, graduate courses in sociology were developing.

I wrote a dissertation on Durkheim, which became my book on Durkheim,[3] and you couldn't really get deep into Durkheim without what we call "culture" becoming a central preoccupation. He wasn't a materialist, and he didn't have a lot to say about "economy," but he had a lot to say about what we call culture. Especially, and above all, in his great work on religion.

DS: What work does "culture" as a concept do in your thinking?

SL: I don't know if I actually use the concept of culture particularly, but it defines a large area of what interests me. You said so yourself, before we started this interview, that you thought what I called the "third dimension of power" is part of the sphere of culture. The third dimension of power certainly has to do with the ways people are framing their experience. It's about how language shapes beliefs and desires, and therefore we could think of it as central to the sociology of culture.

"There is a philosopher, Mary Midgley, who argued that we should think of culture more like a weather system. There is of course something that characterizes the weather in a particular time and place, but it's the result of everything that's going on around it, and not neatly contained. You can't understand culture in a particular time and place unless you understand how it relates to everything around it."

Apart form Durkheim and power, a lot of what I've written is about morality, and morality also has to be thought of as part of culture. Sociologists and anthropologists are getting more and more interested in a "sociology of morals" dealing with the diversity of beliefs, ethics, experience, norms, rules — all of which is strongly associated with the culture concept.

The danger of the culture concept, though, comes from the early anthropologists' notion that there are "cultures." In other words, the contention these "cultures" are somehow holistic, integrated, ways of thought, ways of acting, which can characterize an entire society or community. That's always been an obstacle to understanding "cultural" things. There is a philosopher called **Mary Midgley** who argued that we should think of culture more like a weather system;[4] there is of course something that characterizes the weather in a particular time and place, but it's the result of everything that's going on around it, and so you can't ever understand the weather in a particular place unless you understand how it relates to everything around it.

DS: How does culture shape your choice of research topics, settings, and methods?

SL: Topics and works kind of grow out of another. One thing leads to another. I don't know if I've ever been particularly moved by the conceptual vocabulary that goes with culture—moved to study a particular topic. Culture, of course, was a central idea in anthropology going back to the 19th century, but the early anthropologists tended to think about culture holistically, as "the tribe"—like Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*. I don't know exactly when culture started to become a topic in sociology. Perhaps it was a response to Marxism, or materialism, or economic sociology that was influenced by Marxism. But, more importantly, I think a methodological hole that these later anthropologists and sociologists fall into—which I think was very much encouraged by Clifford Geertz—is the notion that the task of cultural analysis is to develop a plausible interpretation. This leads you to a kind of perilous work in which you end up telling convincing stories about cultural and social things and you lose the sense of "how would you know if this wasn't true?"

In terms of methods, we can't just stop with producing more elaborate stories, there has to be a way of trying to do explanations that are supported by evidence and refutable. Although Geertz, whom I knew and liked a lot, was perfectly aware of that,

[3] Lukes, S. (1985). *Emile Durkheim, his life and work: a historical and critical study*. Stanford University Press.

[4] Midgley, M. (1993). "How Large Is a Culture?" p. 84 In *Can't We Make Moral Judgements?* (pp. 87-96). Palgrave Macmillan US.

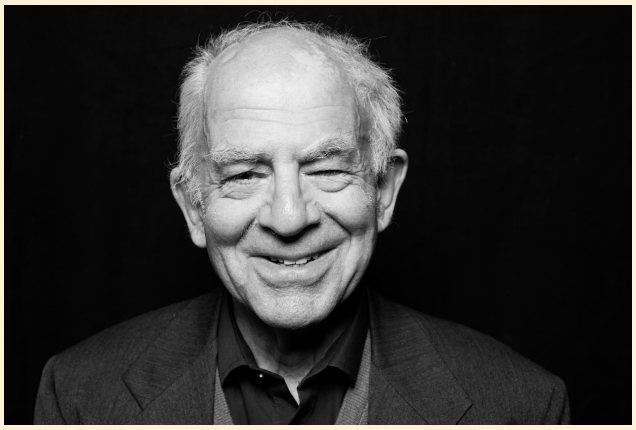
I think his work and influence was unfortunate in that it led people to ignore this.

DS: What excites you most about the future of cultural theory and analysis in sociology?

SL: I'm excited by the whole sphere of culture and cognition (not that I'm an expert in it). Cognition is very interesting, and the way sociologists are studying, for example, cultural schemas, seems to be a compelling area of research. Which, I think this area relates to my work on power. Not just perception, but how aspects of experience are *not perceived* by the actors. Or, the study of stereotypes and the ways of conceiving of groups of people at work in unconscious ways. So, this notion of cultural schemas is exciting. As well as new ways of investigating it, for example, through the ways in which words are associated—**Paul DiMaggio**'s work with topic modeling, for instance. It relates to the third dimension of power, it seems to me, because we can see the actual behavior of people, in interaction with others, being influenced by what they are unaware of.

I'm also excited that the study of the "diversity of morals," and how to think about morality sociologically, has become central in sociology, or rather has *re-entered* sociology. It used to be central, at the time of Durkheim and Simmel, and indeed Weber—think about the *Protestant Ethic*! Early sociologists talked about ethics and morality as essential to social life. Today, there is very interesting work by a range of people. In particular, I'm thinking of my colleague, **Gabriel Abend's** *The Moral Background*.

This whole set of questions about morality doesn't have to be just the domain of sociologists. For example, there is a new development in anthropology called "ordinary ethics." In philosophy, you have the work of **Alistair Macintyre** at Notre Dame; he developed an interesting history of morals and the idea that there are different moralities, which philosophers tend to investigate "what is moral" without considering the diversity of morals. Also, **Owen Flanagan** who has written a *Geography of Morals*, and **Webb Keane** has a wonderful book called *Ethical Life*, both philosophers. I'd like to see more sociologists working in this area and drawing on fields outside of sociology.



Steven Lukes is Professor of Sociology at New York University. Lukes completed his bachelor's degree in 1962 at Balliol College, Oxford. He completed his dissertation at Oxford in 1968 under the direction of the renowned anthropologist **Sir E.E. Evans-Pritchard**, which became *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*, the definitive intellectual history of the man. Aside from his work on Durkheim, Lukes is perhaps best known for *Power: A Radical View*, first published in 1974, in which he lays out the three dimensions of power: the overt, the covert, and the shaping of thoughts and desires. In addition to being an advocate and example of interdisciplinary work, bridging philosophy and sociology in particular, his recent work advances the sociology of morality, exemplified by *Moral Relativism*. Prior to his appointment at New York University, he was a fellow at Balliol College, Oxford, a professor at the European University Institute and the Univ. of Siena. He has been a fellow of the British Academy since 1989, was awarded an honorary D. Litt by the Univ. of East Anglia in 2009, and was a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton from 2011-2012.

Teaching Abstracts

Collective Identity

Shai Dromi, Harvard University

Blue collar and middle class, Blacks and Latinx, Christians and Muslims, Americans and French–groups have, by their very definition, some criteria to discern those who belong from those who do not, whether they are as large as whole nations, or as small as a group of friends. But what does it mean for a group to have a collective identity? This course will examine what collective identity is and how we can study it sociologically. It will ask questions such as How does a shared past shape group identity? How do similar present circumstances? To what extent do group members have to agree on what their collective identity is, and how are disagreement and conflicts managed? How do group members engage in identity politics, and how do they compare their groups to others? The course will begin with a review of some of the key debates on this topic in sociology. Moving forward, students will design and complete their own research projects. Each student will choose a group on campus or in the Cambridge/Boston area, formulate a research question, and conduct participant observations and/or interviews. The course will cover the various steps of the research process, from formulating a research question through collecting and analyzing data and reviewing existing literature, to constructing the final paper.

Religion Modules for Sociology Courses

Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University
Elena van Stee, Univ. of Pennsylvania

A group of sociologists recently completed teaching modules to make it easier for colleagues outside the subfield to incorporate religion into undergraduate sociology courses on other topics. Created by faculty who work at the intersection of religion and other subfields, these thematic modules provide two weeks of class content that can be easily integrated into existing courses. The thematic modules examine the relationship between religion and a variety of other social structures from a global perspective. Each module introduces faculty and students to key texts, theories, and methods in the sociology of religion through the lens of another subfield. The modules are intended to be accessible to faculty outside the sociology of religion and do not assume any prior knowledge about religion for the professor or the students. Each module includes readings for the instructor and students as well as suggestions for class activities and assignments. The modules are accessible at the following link: https://grri.nd.edu/syllabi

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Call for New Webmaster and Social Media Manager

The Culture Section is looking for someone to take over the responsibility of managing and updating the content on the website as well as managing the Section's Twitter and Facebook pages. If interested, send inquiries to asaculturenews@gmail.com.

Announcements

Journal Articles & Book Chapters

Altheide, David. 2019. “Capitalism, Hacking, and Digital Media.” In Adrian Scribano, Freddy Timmerman Lopez, and Maximiliano E. Korstanje, Eds. *Neoliberalism in Multi-Disciplinary Perspective*. London: Palgrave MacMillan. Pp. 203-228.

Altheide, David. 2019. “Reflections on Interactionist Institutional Orders.” *Symbolic Interaction*. DOI: 10.1002/SYMB.466.

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Altheide, David. Brief Essays in Counterpunch: https://www.counterpunch.org/author/david-altheide/

Altheide, David. Forthcoming. “Media Logic, Fear, and the Construction of Terrorism.” In William Gibson, Natalia Ruiz-Junco, Dirk vom Lehn, Eds. *Handbook of Symbolic Interaction*. New York: Routledge.

Altheide, David. Forthcoming. “Emotions and the Politics of Fear.” In Katrin Doveling, Christian von Scheve, and Elly Konijn, Eds. *Handbook of Emotions and the Mass Media*, (2nd Edition). London: Routledge.

Altheide, David. Forthcoming. “Media Logic and Media Psychology.” In Jan Van den Bulck, Ed. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*. New York: Wiley.

Altheide, David. Forthcoming. “Media, Terrorism, and the Politics of Fear.” In Nelson Ribeiro, Ed. *Global Transformations in Media and Communication Research.* London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Altheide, David. Forthcoming. “The Terrorism Enigma.” In Maximiliano E. Korstanje, Ed. *Allegories of a Never-Ending War: A Sociological Debate Revolving Around the War on Terror and 9/11*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

Fang, Jun. 2020. "Tensions in Aesthetic Socialization: Negotiating Competence and Differentiation in Chinese Art Test Prep Schools." Poetics. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2020.101443

Jasso, Guillermina, and Mark R. Rosenzweig. Forthcoming. “What is the Size and Legal Composition of the US Foreign-Born Population?” *International Migration Review*. Prepublished 21 January 2020. https://doi.org/10.1177/0197918319893287.

Jasso, Guillermina. 2019. “Distributive Justice.” In George Ritzer, Ed. *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Second Edition. Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosd078.pub2

Jasso, Guillermina. 2019. “Factorial Survey.” In Paul Anthony Atkinson, Sara Delamont, and Richard Williams, Eds. *Sage Encyclopedia of Research Methods*. London, UK: Sage Publications. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036 .

Kotarba, Joseph A. 2019. "The Everyday Life Intersection of Translational Science and Music." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 15(2):44-55.

Mijs, Jonathan J.B. and Mike Savage. 2020. "Meritocracy, Elitism and Inequality." *The Political Quarterly*. doi: 10.1111/1467-923X.12828.

Mijs, Jonathan J.B. 2020. "Earning Rent with Your Talent: Modern-Day Inequality Rests on the Power to Define, Transfer and Institutionalize Talent" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (Special issue: Talents and Distributive Justice) doi: 10.1080/00131857.2020.1745629

Puckett, Cassidy, Jenise C. Wong, Tanicia C. Daley, and Kristina Cossen. 2020. "How organizations shape

medical technology allocation: Insulin pumps and pediatric patients with type 1 diabetes." *Social Science & Medicine*. Volume 249: 112825.

Books & Special Issues

Davis, Joseph E. 2020. *Chemically Imbalanced: Everyday Suffering, Medication, and Our Troubled Quest for Self-Mastery*. Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press.

> For a generation, an intense debate has been waged over the expanding number of people who are diagnosed with a mental disorder and treated with prescription drugs, like Prozac and Adderall. One side, the psychiatric, sees progress. People suffering from mental illness are finally getting the treatment they need. The other side, including many sociologists, challenges the psychiatric perspective and the medicalization and treatment of common personality traits and forms of distress as mental disorders. Neither side has much to say about how people themselves explain their suffering and or envision a resolution.
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> *Chemically Imbalanced*, based on qualitative interviews, explores this sense-making among people dealing with experiences of loss, disappointment, and underachievement. At the heart of distress is a gap between experience and valued standards and ideals of selfhood, and confusion over why things are not going as they should. People are in a predicament, and the book explores how many take up diagnostic categories, biological explanations, and pharmaceuticals as social objects and narratives to make sense of their situation and ameliorate it. These efforts reveal that a quiet but profound revolution in consciousness is underway. Ways of conceiving of suffering in terms of the mind, interpersonal experience, and social circumstances are being replaced with a thin and mechanistic language of the body/brain. The appeal of this "neurobiological imaginary," the book argues, is not in its explanatory power but in what it promises people they can be in our fluid and depthless culture. Despite the vaunted freedom, the imaginary has troubling and entrapping consequences.
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> *Order online before June 15, 2020 from the Press and receive 20% off with this code: UCPNEW*

Dromi, Shai M. *Above the Fray: The Red Cross and the Making of the Humanitarian NGO Sector.* Univ. of Chicago Press

> From Lake Chad to Iraq, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide relief around the globe, and their scope is growing every year. Policymakers and activists often assume that humanitarian aid is best provided by these organizations, which are generally seen as impartial and neutral. In *Above the Fray*, Shai M. Dromi investigates why the international community overwhelmingly trusts humanitarian NGOs by looking at the historical development of their culture. With a particular focus on the Red Cross, Dromi reveals that NGOs arose because of the efforts of orthodox Calvinists, demonstrating for the first time the origins of the unusual moral culture that has supported NGOs for the past 150 years.
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> Drawing on archival research, Dromi traces the genesis of the Red Cross to a Calvinist movement working in mid-nineteenth-century Geneva. He shows how global humanitarian policies emerged from the Red Cross founding members' faith that an international volunteer program not beholden to the state was the only ethical way to provide relief to victims of armed

conflict. By illustrating how Calvinism shaped the humanitarian field, Dromi argues for the key role belief systems play in establishing social fields and institutions. Ultimately, Dromi shows the immeasurable social good that NGOs have achieved, but also points to their limitations and suggests that alternative models of humanitarian relief need to be considered.

Streib, Jessi. 2020. *Privilege Lost: Who Leaves the Upper Middle Class and How They Fall*. New York: Oxford University Press.

There are two narratives of the American class structure: one of a country with boundless opportunities for upward mobility and one of a rigid class system in which the rich stay rich while the poor stay poor. Each of these narratives holds some truth, but each overlooks another. In Privilege Lost, Jessi Streib traces the lives of over 100 youth born into the upper-middle-class. Following them for over ten years as they transition from teens to young adults, Streib examines who falls from the upper-middle-class, how, and why don't they see it coming. In doing so, she reveals the patterned ways that individuals' resources and identities push them onto mobility paths--and the complicated choices youth make between staying true to themselves and staying in their class position. Engaging and eye-opening, Privilege Lost brings to life the stories of the downwardly mobile and highlights what they reveal about class, privilege, and American family life.