framework for relational sociology. Mustafa Emirbayer’s essay, “Relational Sociology as Fighting Words,” ends the first volume by calling for relationalists to recall their reactionary roots and a past grounded in the criticism of mainstream sociological thought. But Emirbayer’s own relationalist manifesto was solidly grounded in a wonderfully coherent interpretation of pragmatism. He did much more than merely criticize, and indeed I am not sure why we would need an overarching theoretical framework for sociology if the framework lacked consistency and a clearly recognizable logic, that is, was more than mere criticism. That is not necessarily easy to achieve, but it is a project well worth undertaking, and I am grateful to the editors and contributors for making real progress in this task.

References

Democratic Ideals and Sobering Realities: The Lifeworks of Philip Selznick and Amitai Etzioni

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While there is a constant output of books and articles about the founders and classics of the sociological discipline, much less attention is being devoted to the crucial figures of later phases in the history of the discipline. The two books under review here indicate a certain change in this respect. Two of the towering American sociologists of the first decades after the Second World War who later became major public intellectuals of international influence are the subject matter of these two thorough and well-researched monographs: Philip Selznick (1919–2010) and Amitai Etzioni (1929– ). There are interesting parallels in the biographical developments of these two scholars that could nourish debates about the present state of the discipline. The


methods used in these two books for the reconstruction of the lives and works of these sociologists also merit serious reflection.

The book by Martin Krygier, *Philip Selznick: Ideals in the World*, is a remarkable achievement, both substantively and methodologically. In its first part it is particularly fascinating to read how the major writings of one of the leading sociologists of organization and administration are based on the experiences of leftist circles in New York City in the years before World War II. Selznick belonged to the group of mostly Jewish young intellectuals who later, like Irving Kristol, became the leading voices of American neoconservatism. He shared with them a deep interest in Leon Trotsky’s writings and became active in the Trotskyist movement of the time. While conventional Marxism tended to deal with “bureaucracy” as a secondary phenomenon only, Trotsky interpreted the stabilization of Stalin’s power as a bureaucratic distortion of authentic socialism. Selznick soon outgrew the remaining Leninist traces of his Trotskyist comrades and discovered two sources for an alternative articulation of his progressivism. One was American pragmatism, particularly John Dewey’s philosophy and political theory. Dewey at the time presided over the Trotsky tribunal in Mexico and demonstrated, with reference to his sophisticated understanding of the interplay between means and ends of action, how naïve many of the self-interpretations of social movements inspired by Marxism had been. Selznick became a life-long proponent of pragmatism. The other source was one of the classical works of early German sociology, Robert Michels’ book on the sociology of political parties (originally published in 1911). Michels has become marginalized in the sociological canon because of his trajectory from syndicalism via the sociological claim of an iron law of oligarchical tendencies in mass organizations to his apologetic attitude toward Italian fascism. Selznick’s early work could be characterized as an attempt to synthesize Dewey and Michels, to remain faithful to the project of radical democracy without ignoring the unintended and unanticipated consequences every organization has. Krygier correctly emphasizes that Michels had concentrated on the most pro-democratic political party in Germany in his time, and that Selznick followed him by choosing the Tennessee Valley Authority for a case study, namely one of the most ambitious American projects of a grassroots approach to governance and administration. Selznick’s results (Selznick 1949) are as sobering as those of Michels, but the frequently-cited critique of pessimist “metaphysical pathos” in Selznick’s study, as it was most forcefully presented by Alvin Gouldner (1955), is nevertheless misguided. “There is a pattern here that endures throughout Selznick’s writings. It is the commitment to moral realism as a means to, rather than an alternative to, the striving for ideals” (p. 28). “Ideals in the World” is, therefore, the appropriate subtitle for this book. Krygier follows Selznick in assuming that Dewey alone would have been a source of pure optimism, and that Selznick needed a dose of Michelsian (and Niebuhrian) realism as an antidote. This is one of the few aspects of this study where the author is a bit superficial: the old stereotype of the naïve optimism of Dewey or of pragmatism in general is today obsolete. Selznick’s way led on to a sociological study of parties and to a synthesis of his insights into the logic of organizations, presented in his book *Leadership in Administration* (1957). Here and in his following efforts to develop a sociology of law that sees the law in terms of human action and its creativity, Selznick goes beyond Max Weber in important respects. Krygier constantly and fruitfully compares Selznick’s empirically-grounded theoretical work with Weber. It is worth mentioning that Selznick’s work, despite its pragmatist inspiration, is often ignored both by neo-pragmatist philosophers and by that school of sociologists which claims to be a direct continuation of pragmatism, namely symbolic interactionism. A certain weakness of the pragmatist tradition, namely a lack of interest in the historical and sociological understanding of the state, is continued even in Selznick’s work.

In the last twenty years of his life, Selznick’s “themes became larger and his ambitions more ‘visionary’ than is common in the academy” (p. 272). His major works from that phase, particularly *The Moral
Commonwealth (1992), are attempts to offer a theoretical grounding to the communitarian movement and to sketch the outlines of a contemporary “humanism”—a scholarly approach that “is on the side of particular empathic understanding over the search for general laws, historicism over universalism, concreteness before abstraction, “thick description” over the development of abstract laws, the Geisteswissenschaften over the Naturwissenschaften” (223). Whoever is looking for an alternative to a Foucauldian or Luhmannian anti-humanism will find rich inspiration in Selznick’s lifework admirably presented in Krygier’s book.

To the general public, Amitai Etzioni’s name is much more familiar than Selznick’s, but in the academy his reputation is much more controversial. Nobody can deny the extraordinary range of Etzioni’s scholarship and publications, “from organizations and professions to international relations and space exploration, and from genetics and drug abuse to economic behavior and political corruption” (Sciulli: vii). Some social theorists (like the present reviewer) consider The Active Society one of the most impressive theoretical achievements in American post-war sociology, while others, when they look back on post-Parsonsian theoretical developments, completely ignore this work or belittle Etzioni’s “entire body of work as largely policy analyses and advocacy or, worst of all, popularizations of received or basic sociological ideas” (viii).

Fortunately Etzioni has also found a deeply interested and fair-minded interpreter in David Sciulli. But Sciulli understood his task in a way that is very different from Krygier’s approach. A comprehensive biographical study was less urgent in this case because Etzioni has himself published a deeply moving autobiography (Etzioni 2003). Sciulli, apart from brief passages, restricts himself to a theoretical study. This enables him to identify a core question of great relevance that he presents as the guiding thread through Etzioni’s work. It is the question of social order, not in the highly abstract sense of classical (normative) functionalism, but as “the problem of democratic social order in a global economy” (p. 22)—a problem he paraphrases in the following words: “Is it possible to institutionalize democratic norms and practices more fully, from governmental agencies to organizations and associations in civil society, while simultaneously competing more effectively in a global economy?” (p. vii).

In Etzioni’s Critical Functionalism, a long (and somewhat repetitive) work, Etzioni’s basic motives are traced back to his youth. Born as Werner Falk in Cologne (Germany), Etzioni emigrated to Palestine in the 1930s. Life in a kibbutz and active duty as a commando soldier when the state of Israel was founded led to a life-long interest in the virtues of community on the one hand and the dangers of violent conflict-resolution on the other. His most important early intellectual influence was Martin Buber’s dialogical philosophy. When Etzioni came to Berkeley to pursue an academic career in sociology, Selznick was one of his teachers. Like him, he first concentrated on the sociology of organizations: some of his articles in this area remain citation classics. Sciulli skilfully demonstrates how Etzioni develops his macrosociology out of the insights gained in the study of organization, combining them with results from peace research and international relations studies as well as with a Buberian anthropology of human needs. Etzioni is presented here as going beyond Weber with regard to the specific problems of democracy—and beyond the symbolic interactionists because of their neglect of the state and of international relations. Sciulli interprets Etzioni’s work as built “on the strengths of American pragmatism while compensating for its greatest weakness” (p. 32), namely an alleged exclusive focus on problems at hand. For Sciulli, Etzioni offers a synthesis of pragmatism with Parsons.

It is a fact that in terms of reception, Etzioni’s The Active Society was a spectacular failure. Why? It is certainly true that the book was published at a time when the rejection of grand theory became hegemonic in American sociology. It is also true that this complex book was easily reduced to a mere expression of an optimistic view of increased state-organized planning, while its title (not “The Active State,” but “The Active Society”) should already have prevented this misunderstanding. But later, when a “new theoretical movement” (J. Alexander) set in, no belated discovery of Etzioni’s achievements...
did. As with the case of Parsons, there is more interest in this book outside of the United States, for example in Germany and Scandinavia.

Several interpretations of this phenomenon are possible. Some people will simply say that the book itself was a failure and that it did not deserve greater interest. In an important retrospective article, a prominent German social scientist, Fritz Scharpf (2011), makes the interesting point that Etzioni, assuming at the time that the era of laissez-faire ideology was over, neglected the role of the interaction and aggregation of individual actors and proved to be completely unable to predict what really happened in the Reagan-Thatcher period. Sciulli has a third interpretation. For him, Etzioni had relied on shared substantive-normative beliefs in American society which proved to be much weaker than expected. Etzioni’s later turn to “communitarianism” is in this view (p. 129, n. 13) almost an act of resignation. If the active society does not emerge, due to a lack of strong basic norms and values, something has to be done to shore them up. Other more radical changes, like the pushing back of what Etzioni calls “capital corruption” in the American political system, will not happen without such a preceding moral reform.

Sciulli derives from Etzioni’s disappointment in the reception of his most ambitious theoretical work the focus on more policy-oriented topics and on a critique of the micro-economics paradigm in Etzioni’s later work, as well as his turn to organizational activism (i.e., the founding of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics [SASE] and of the Communitarian Network). But Sciulli also burdens his generally convincing interpretations with constant presentations of an alternative approach, namely his own. The main point of the approach that the (late) author had called the “theory of societal constitutionalism” (Sciulli 1992) and that he had applied mostly in the sociology of professions and of law is a Habermasian emphasis on procedures—as distinct from Etzioni’s reliance on substantive norms and values. While it is interesting to reevaluate Etzioni in the light of such an alternative, Sciulli goes very far in this direction. He admits self-ironically that a possible subtitle for his book would have been “How Etzioni’s social theory differs from what Sciulli calls societal constitutionalism” (xxv). I think that he should have chosen a different strategy.

Both Krygier and Sciulli are so exclusively interested in the scholars they are dealing with that they make no attempt to compare them with one another—despite the long biographical connection between Selznick and Etzioni and despite obvious commonalities. Both Selznick and Etzioni do not take their driving motives from the condition of an academic career. They are sociologists who do sociology for reasons that precede their careers and they never forget the wider societal picture. Both could be seen as pragmatists, but in the discourse about neopragmatism their writings remained totally marginal. For an adequate view of the history of American social theory in the last decades, both should be taken much more seriously.

Both books are rewarding in this sense. Authors of such books have to find a balance between reconstruction, critique and explanation. Sciulli should perhaps have been a little bit more guarded in presenting his own theory in the framework of such a monograph. Krygier, without being uncritical, chose a more modest approach. He calls his way of reading “holistic,” and his book is neither a biography nor a sociological explanation, but a “portrait.” Some readers will find this old-fashioned or even methodologically not sophisticated enough. It is certainly true that there has been enormous progress in the sociology of ideas in general and of the social sciences in particular in the writings of, for example, Charles Camic, Randall Collins, and Neil Gross (Camic et al. 2011, Collins 1998, Gross 2008). They have overcome the speculative quasi-explanation of the earlier sociology of knowledge by focusing on the micro-conditions for creative processes. But in their works, the balance between a theoretically oriented creative appropriation of an earlier thinker’s work and such sophisticated sociological explanation also has to be established again and again. For some theoretical purposes, the old-fashioned “holistic” reading at work in the books under review—and in some other writings of the leading

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“sociologists of ideas” as well—might remain a good way to proceed.

References

Centering the Edge in the Shift from Inequality to Expulsion

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“‘What are the spaces of the expelled’ (p. 222). Most of you would be prepared to answer this question, but I doubt that any of you, without having read Saskia Sassen’s book, would be prepared to answer it with the same breadth, theoretical ambition, and dystopic challenge as she mobilizes.

The economic sociologist would likely point to the number of people outside the labor force. The environmental sociologist may respond with accounts of toxic dumps. The political sociologist might talk about people without rights, whether because they are displaced or incarcerated. And that is Sassen’s point. We have the tools to analyze each of these sectors, but we lack the conceptual arsenal, or perhaps even the sociological imagination, to conceive of their connection. Sassen is helping us close this gap.

Her concept becomes clear when paired with its predecessor. Most sociologists would argue that inequality is the key concept and problem of our discipline. That is because, Sassen argues, inequality’s centrality is associated with a century and system we are leaving. We could debate measurements, causes, trajectories, and consequences of inequality because we have assumed the systems in which we thought we lived, more or less demarcated by sovereignties and motored by logics of incorporation whether through colonialism, commodification, or democratization. The edges of those processes might have involved genocide, enslavement, and impoverishment, but they also promised the acquisition of human and non-human assets. Expulsion is different, and is the key logic of the system destroying the world as we know it and defining the life, and death, we approach.

Expulsion allows us to view in common a variety of processes typically understood...