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an understanding of their implications for Western rationality. This could have been used to direct us into more efficacious avenues of investigation and to the possibility of rethinking these issues on another level entirely. The reader is left hanging without a sense of where and how Alford would turn in order to work himself out of the dialectic of the Enlightenment.


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In the first of this charming pair of books, Collins joins Alexander, Ritzer, and Irving Zeitlin in defining the major paradigms within sociology and in arguing that paradigm disputes, requiring so much time and energy, are not worth the effort. It is not inevitable that about halfway between the BA and the MA all fledgling social scientists should decide whether they wish to join forces with the conflict, Durkheimian, or microsociological tradition. Rather, we should all strive to be paradigm bridgers in the style of Collins himself, whom the reader encounters among the “main points” of both the conflict tradition (48) and the Durkheimian tradition (120) and whose work of late has been micro-interactionist. We should no longer act as one another’s gravediggers, as Herbert Blumer is said to have done (201) when he first defined symbolic interactionism as an alternative to functionalism. The ideal type among paradigm bridgers is Max Weber, and Weberian sociology is clearly Collins’ preference.

Throughout Collins’ basic argument we find assorted microbenefits: an attempt to give Friedrich Engels his due as a founder of sociology (56ff); a recognition of Durkheim’s strong interest in demography and statistics (133, 136); a demonstration of the way “allegiance theory” brings together minds as disparate as Lévi-Strauss and Marvin Harris; an appreciation of C. Wright Mills, the conscience of American sociology; an excellent and fair-minded treatment of ethnomethodology. And there are many more.

On several matters I found myself quarreling with Collins. At first these matters seemed highly disparate and unconnected, but I soon realized that most of Collins’ peccadillos arise from a single source—a strong, pervasive, and perhaps subconscious doubt that a science of society can be created.

Item: Collins claims (41) that because Quetelet’s statistical laws involve no more than “a few simple probabilities” and a strong prospect of predicting “rates of population change or crime,” interest in Quetelet soon “fell away as the statistics failed to live up to the claims.” This alleged failure has never been demonstrated, least of all by Collins (175). In Boorstin’s The Discoverers, Quetelet gets the tribute he deserves.

Item: Although Collins discusses many contemporary social scientists, there is a consistent lack of attention to what Wells and Picou in American Sociology: Theoretical and Methodological Structure identify as the predominant paradigm, “quantitative structuralism.” The suggestion that the “macro wing” (120) of the Durkheimian functionalist tradition has no major exemplars after 1960 (except for Bourdieu) is obviously untenable. Among recent presidents of the American Sociological Association one thinks of Hauser, Sewell, Blau, Hawley, Blalock, the Rossis, and Short as macrostructuralists who share Wells and Picou’s conviction that paradigm integration in the social sciences must allow “guidance by methodology.” If you don’t have an appropriate epistemology, you don’t have a science.

Item: Collins raises fundamental questions, but he never makes it clear that the major rationale for the social sciences is that they sometimes provide “publicly verifiable” ways of answering at least some of these questions. Among Collins’ big inquiries:

1. Is it possible for Weberian rationality to exist for organizations but not for the individuals found within them? Or vice versa?
2. Are abstract social phenomena, such as the suicide rate, real?
3. What is the social impact of ritual and, specifically, what is the role of ritual in maintaining social organization?
4. Is God really society?
5. Is there such a thing as a universal grammar, in Chomsky’s sense?
6. Is ethnomethodology correct in its presumption that society is brittle, tenuous, and forever on the brink of collapse?
7. Why did the early Durkheim argue that ideas do not determine social structure—rather, the opposite—while the later Durkheim “began to give ideas somewhat more autonomy” (129)? Was Durkheim justified in making this transition?

To be sure, Collins grapples with these questions; this entire work, in fact, can be considered a demonstration that we cannot answer question 7 and should therefore give up the attempt. But what Collins must do next is to show us the ways in which social scientists decide whether, and how, such questions are to be answered. It will do no good to eliminate paradigm squabbles if this accomplishment does not aid us in what Marvin Harris calls the struggle for a science of society.

Charles Peirce, whom Collins admires, once explained how to answer tough questions. Suppose, he said, that we find a boy trying to catch a squirrel that is clinging to the far side of a large tree. The boy first moves left and then right, back and forth around the tree, and the squirrel does the same; at all times both boy and squirrel are facing the tree. Suppose, says Peirce, that we wish to decide whether the boy is “circling” the squirrel. Clearly the answer requires a definition: if circling means that the squirrel is first in front of the boy, then to his right, then behind him, then to his left, and then in front again, the answer is no. But if circling means that the squirrel is first to the boy’s north, then to his east, then to his south, then to his west, and then to his north again, the answer is yes.

Peirce gives us many of the keys to the social sciences, but not precisely for the reasons cited by Collins.


GEORGIA WARNKE
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Agnes Heller’s _A Radical Philosophy_ is an attempt to show the possibility and function of philosophy as a critical enterprise. In Heller’s view, this criticality is part of the structure of all philosophy to the extent that it challenges its recipients to reflect on questions of truth and morality and their interconnection. Philosophy in general, in her view, involves questioning how we should think, act, and live. She is well aware that this is an old-fashioned view of philosophy, the questionable status of which is commonly attributed to a modern self-consciousness about history.

We no longer believe in one truth or one system of morality but are rather aware of other possibilities and different forms of life. Hence, according to this common view, philosophy in its traditional mode as the concern with “the true” or “the good” or “the unity of them both” (9) makes no sense. The task Heller sets herself in her book is to show that such a concern is not only sensible but absolutely necessary to any decent prospect for the future.

Her argument has three parts. First, she disputes the common analysis of the demise of traditional philosophical concerns to which I have just alluded; second, she shows the form of these concerns can take if one accepts the modern insight into history; and finally she indicates the challenge this revised form of philosophy presents to existing social arrangements.

Heller begins by arguing that the current low status of philosophy is attributable not to modern sophistication about notions of “the good” or “the true” but rather to philosophy’s reduction to a “job.” (21). Philosophy is now a profession normally open only to college and university professors whose function is to disseminate knowledge of the positive doctrine of different philosophies. In Heller’s view, such professionalism misses the point of the philosophies it teaches. Indeed, Heller suggests that it misses precisely that which the modern self-consciousness about history ought to have taught us—that it is the search for truth that is important, not doctrinal details. Philosophy is a Socratic effort, an invitation to thought and reflection with others in the attempt to justify one’s beliefs and choose one’s values consciously. A recognition of history does not require the end of philosophy, then; rather, it illuminates the structure that philosophy has always had, according to Heller: that of critique.

Of course this analysis raises the question of whether philosophy has any point, since no philosophy gives “the” sole correct answer to questions of truth and morality but simply offers the starting point for reflection. This question leads to the second part of Heller’s analysis. If we are now aware of different plausible answers to the questions of how we

*Actually, the squirrel story may have been told by William James. This is a question for hermeneutics.*