

Crossing the Psycho-Social Divide: Freud, Weber, Adorno and Elias, by **George Cavalletto**. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007. 300pp. \$99.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780754647720.

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Crossing the Psycho-Social Divide is an impressive book—well argued, deeply researched, compelling, and important. George Cavalletto identifies an issue now largely ignored in sociology and, by making the case that Freud, Weber, Adorno, and Elias were each deeply engaged in understanding the complicated relation between social forces and the individual psyche, he argues that the failure today by sociologists to entertain psychology undermines efforts to understand social action and, as a result, the social world. By returning to classic sociological thought, Cavalletto seeks to reinvigorate this set of concerns for sociology and to document the inadequacy of social theory that fails to provide a complex, highly theorized understanding of the self. His conclusion schematically outlines the contours of just such a theory, one that crosses this self-imposed divide between psychology and sociology.

The book succeeds on many different levels. It reminds the reader of the continuing relevance of classical sociological thought—not as something to be treated merely as historical artifact but as providing the basis for richer and more nuanced thinking on key concepts, like the self. In arguing for a “psychological Weber,” for example, Cavalletto argues that *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is an essay concerned with the ways in which psychology mediates between idea and action. Weber emphasizes the paradox that a religious belief (here, salvation and damnation) generated psychological pressures that could only be relieved through the “methodologically rationalized” life of modern capitalism (p. 60). It is a complex theory of the self, indeed. Weber

demonstrates both the non-rationality and consequentiality of human motives, its “relative autonomy,” as well as its relevance to social outcome.

The author reveals his own powerful intellect in situating each of these author's ideas about psychological phenomena in relation to the social world. Cavalletto documents in each case the basis for these writers' own dissatisfaction with the field of academic psychology, their insistence that attention to sociological phenomena is required to understand personality, and their intention to make evident ways in which historicity is required to understand not only specific social formations, but also psychological ones. Cavalletto demonstrates that Elias, for example, was himself intellectually motivated to counteract a resolutely ahistorical academic psychology with a conception of the human psyche as thoroughly historicized. Thus, Elias's conception of the “civilizing process” is inspired by this pre-existing interest in psychology, and a conviction that the human psyche does not exist independent of particular correlates of space and time. Elias's understanding of both the endogenous features that mitigate against an individual psyche's change and the intricate interpersonal mechanisms that shape it, required him to develop a sufficiently nuanced social theory of historical change—the civilizing process—as a match to his appreciation of the psyche's complexity.

What most impresses Cavalletto is how these theorists struggled to provide a complex, dynamic, and socialized understanding of the psychology of the person. The fact that readers need to be reminded of their efforts to theorize the self speaks to the success with which contemporary sociology has succeeded in eviscerating a depth-psychological understanding of the person. Instead, sociology has been content with some version of the “rational actor,” or the person shaped exclusively through interaction with others. Moreover, Cavalletto shows how the psychology employed by Weber, Adorno, and Elias referenced a Freudian version of the psyche—replete with ideas of repression, ambivalence, and sublimation. It is an understanding of the person always in some tension with, even opposition to, the social world in which he or she was embedded. Such a conception of the self contrasts then, as it does now,

with an academic psychology that embraces a blend of behavioral, cognitive, and ahistoricist elements, making the social world of little interest or simply reductive to the characteristics of the individual psyche.

It is noteworthy that among those considered Cavalletto ignores Durkheim. Durkheim's absence casts a powerful and instructive shadow over the book. If Cavalletto is arguing on behalf of those who struggled to understand interconnections between the psyche and the social, *Crossing the Psycho-Social Divide* is also an argument throwing into relief the Durkheimian solution. For Durkheim, collective representations *are* the expression of the group's experience of the social, and the individual psyche is comprised of nothing more than the internalization of those representations. No special tension exists between person and society because the individual is itself a social construction. This is the sociological counterpoint to non-Freudian psychology. Just as academic psychologists display little interest in the mediation between social world and psyche, this version of sociology displays little concern for the independent psychology of the (historical and socially situated) person and his or her contribution to the constitution of the social world. This helps explain Cavalletto's own preference for Freud's *Future of an Illusion* as foundational for a sociological psychology, as compared to Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*. The latter, it will be recalled, was Parson's way of linking Freud to Durkheim—through the concept of internalization. Yet Cavalletto argues while *Civilization* emphasizes the one-way directionality of social structure in shaping the individual psyche—the creation of guilty man—*Future of an Illusion* explores ways in which the social itself expresses, too, certain psychodynamic characteristics, either in the symbolic order of the culture, e.g., religion, or in the structures of social organization (p. 266).

Cavalletto succeeds in explicating the deep interest by these theorists to engage psychology for sociology. Through this discussion he stakes out the ground between a psychology possessing few sociological correlates and an overly socialized sociology. By showing the ways in which Weber, Adorno, and Elias each engaged psychodynamic formulations of the person, Cavalletto also reasserts Freud as both an important founda-

tional figure in the discipline and as a continuing resource to further develop a currently theoretically impoverished sociology of the self.

Crossing the Psycho-Social Divide is an impressive achievement and deserves a wide readership. It is a model for how careful research on the intellectual foundations upon which the discipline is built ought to be done, and offers clear evidence of the gains that might derive from such multi-dimensional thoughtfulness.
