

PAST, PLAY AND FUTURE

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In recent years, sociology has begun to express a renewed concern with anticipating the future. Although the growing influence of Marxian perspectives has contributed much to this development, it is significant that recognition of the "utility of utopias" is shared by both critical and conventional orientations (Moore 1966; Bell and Mau 1971). Increased attention to the sociology of the future reflects an expanding interest in linking social science with social change. While the two orientations differ with respect to how this linkage is to be accomplished, the strategies for anticipating the future are strikingly similar.

Anticipations of the future, whether derived from imputations of historical necessity or constructed as empirically feasible goals in light of present conditions, are rational, instrumental, and purposive. Scientifically employed to aid decision-makers in shaping policy or politically utilized to bring consciousness of prevailing injustices to those outside the decision-making process, images of the future assume a problem-solving orientation. To arrive at future goals from the present, calculation and strategy are required, and pursuit of the future must be monitored by those who anticipate the future. Sociologists of the future, comprising a vanguard party of experts, legitimate their efforts "to integrate their professional work with their desire to build a better society" (Huber 1974 37).

Formulating images of the future to guide and to legitimate participation in social change is not limited to sociologists. Throughout history, especially during periods of structural and symbolic dislocation, individuals and collectivities have created anticipations of the future as a means to sustain psychological, cultural, and social integration and to prepare the ground for engaging in socio-historical change (Wallace 1956; Barkun 1974). Typically, these anticipations of the future are characterized by a concern with meaning rather than feasibility, an urge to recapture rather than to escape the past; and an element of play, rather than purposiveness. Such images of the future result from celebration, not extrapolation, and in collective

celebration the future initially tends to be conceptualized and experienced in a non-rational and noninstrumental way.

Indispensable to this nonrational mode of anticipating the future is a playful attachment to the past. The elements of past and play which underlie the formulation of meaningful anticipations of the future and, in turn, the role of such future anticipations in guiding participation in change are examined in the following pages. Images of the future are created and sustained in the interaction of past and play, receiving content from the past and form from play. In this interaction, the past is playfully or imaginatively reconstructed, portrayed not as it actually was, but as it ought to have been. Thus the future is anticipated with reference to a past that never was. This argument suggests that tradition and play give a person both contact with and distance from his situation, thus providing a basis for evaluating that situation and, if desirable, acting to change it.

PAST AND FUTURE

The instrumental orientation to anticipations of the future commonly regards tradition and play as impediments to thinking about the future and participating in progressive social change, and hence, overlook the sense of continuity so essential to meaningful images of the future capable of guiding the creation of a better society. This sense of continuity, as it emerges from the interaction of past and play, is both rooted and changeable, and as such supplies an organizing principle around which novel aspects of reality are incorporated into prevailing structure of meaning. Without this sense of continuity, the future would frighten, not stimulate, and future-oriented social change would be resisted, not supported.

Meaningful anticipations of the future have strong roots in the past. Bernot and Blancard (1953), in their study of a small village in France, observe that peasants sustained a longer, more meaningful perspective on the future than did workers who recently had migrated to the community. In contrast to the workers who anxiously regarded the future as uncertain and threatening, the peasants possessed a "memory of the future" with a deeper attachment to traditional structures and value-orientations. They perceived the

future in more promising terms as a continuation of the past. Similarly, personal anticipations of the future, as Cottle and Klineberg find, are "primarily created out of the implication of past experience, of the sense of continuity and of orderly predictable change that it may provide" (1974 34). This point is supported generally in the literature on revitalization and millennial movements (Wallace 1956; Clemmer 1974; Talmon 1962) and more specifically in Lifton's (1964) examination of time-imagery of activist Japanese youth.

Lifton's analysis suggests three primary modes of anticipating the future: 1) transformation, 2) restoration, and 3) accommodation. Each has the capacity to bridge inner emotional experience with existing social currents, and, by neutralizing the prevailing sense of historical dislocation, each facilitated participation in social change. Also common to these modes of anticipating the future was a concern with recapturing the past. The mode of transformation, although tracing present evils to the past and demanding a comprehensive restructuring of social existence, exhibited a "profound underlying nostalgia for old cultural symbols." The symbolism of the future expressed in the mode of transformation derives from the past, not the historically factual past, but the imaginatively conceived "golden age" of the past.

Peter Marris (1974) has attempted to place this process of anticipating the future with reference to the past in broader theoretical perspective. Marris focuses on the 'conservative impulse' which he describes as the tendency of individuals and collectivities to both assimilate reality to and interpret new experiences in terms of their prevailing structure of meaning. The conservative impulse defends, not prejudice and ignorance, but the predictability of life and the continuity of meaning, and thus "is an aspect of our ability to survive in any situation: for without continuity we cannot interpret what events mean to us, nor explore new kinds of experience with confidence" (Marris 1974 2). When structures of social meaning disintegrate, people experience a deep-seated sense of loss, and "try at once to reassert the past and escape into an idealized, detached vision of the future" (Marris 1974 166). In short, an image of the future emerges from the reaffirmation

of the past. While lamenting the betrayal of tradition, the conservative impulse simultaneously justifies participation in social change: the traditions betrayed in the present must be retrieved in the future.

Growing from a concern with conserving the past, these images of the future aim for reintegration, not disruption. Reintegrative aims, however, often prompt rebellious and revolutionary practices. Indeed, the participants in modern peasant wars (Wolf 1969), in the early American labor movement (Gutman 1973), and in the direct-action riots in eighteenth-century Western Europe (Hobsbawm 1959; Rude 1964; Thompson 1971), legitimated their rejection of the present and anticipated their future goals with reference to traditional values and beliefs. Although couched in terms of a restoration of the past, the demands issued by the participants in these uprisings were future-oriented. The past they sought to restore was not a past that was, it was a past that should have been and that could be in future-time. It was a playfully reconstructed past, and in play the past comes to be regarded as both superior to the present and the goal of the future.

PAST AND PLAY

Typically, the connection between past and play is examined in its most routinized forms, namely, myth and ritual. Although constituted in part by past experiences and pre-established elements, play also initiates exploration, a search for novelty. In play the past is not merely preserved, it is relived in such a way that a positive response to novelty is possible. By minimizing the uncertainties of the future, play bridges new experiences and prevailing structures of meaning. Inclusive of both completed and non-completed time, play contributes to the conceptualization of the future as a fulfillment of the past. Play simultaneously strengthens and transforms the conservative impulse, fortifying its roots in the past while stimulating it to embrace the present.

Several features of play combine to transform the past into a "golden age" which appears as both superior to the present and a worthy model of the future. Play does not conceal nor deny the social reality, but reorders and represents this reality, making it more manageable and

more meaningful (Simmel 1950 43). The representation and transcendence enabled by play permit the creation of a set of criteria which allows a reflective assessment of the present order. As Richard Sennett suggests (1975 180), play encourages people "to objectify the law, to look at it, to weigh it, to judge it, by having stepped beyond its term"; play guides people "beyond the existing rules so that they might become fully conscious of what those rules" are. In this way, play can initiate a tension between what is and what can be, a dialectic between the real and the possible. The "possible" projected in play is not confined by realistic considerations, instead it is a possible that promises freedom from compulsion, hierarchy, inequality, and injustice (Browning 1975; Cox 1969; Huizinga 1950). In the possible social order created in play, rules are not abandoned, they are self-imposed; control does not disappear, it becomes more relaxed and human. In short, as Richard Burke notes (1971 42), play gives rise to a "free, intrinsically satisfying world governed by rules of man's own making... a meaningful world that man can call his own". Imaginatively recalled and given shape in these terms, the past offers the symbols which constitute the image of a better society of the future.

PLAYFUL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PAST

Participation in future-oriented social change presupposes the availability of a set of standards which enable people to discredit, legitimate opposition against, and anticipate future alternatives to the present social arrangements. Such critically evaluative standards emerge meaningfully from the playful reconsideration of the past. By itself, the past (or the conservative impulse) is only capable of guiding conservative or retrogressive social change. Alone, play encourages participation in the creation of artifice, not actuality, and thus serves to stabilize the present order by fostering the pretense of freedom in reality. With the interaction of past and play, the past social arrangements appear as emancipating and just, they constitute a social order that both was and can be. The Playfully transmitted past, then, generates the symbolic prerequisites for participation in progressive social change. The professed

aims of this participation, while stated in terms of a restoration of the past, anticipate the future--a future conceptualized and experienced as a past that never was, a future defined as a past that ought to have been.

Structural-cultural dislocation, the weakening of norm-governed relationships and predefined roles, not only prompts an orientation toward the past but, by diminishing the force of existing constraints, also permits greater spontaneity and playfulness. As a result, the past often is revitalized in festival, standing as an object of collective celebration. During these liminal periods new new cultural forms are generated from the playful, imaginative and fantastic attachments to the past (Turkle 1975 91). Thus, when playful access to the past is possible socio-cultural disintegration produces not anomie but fantastic visions of a more desirable society.

Psychodynamically, as Wallace (1956 272-273) shows, these fantastic visions serve a synthesizing and therapeutic function which enables the individual to chart a future course of action despite the experience of extreme stress. Imaginary, metaphorical images of the past operate similarly on the level of the collectivity, providing a meaningful sense of continuity which orients present activity toward the future.

Metaphorical and highly expressive in nature, these anticipations of the future primarily are concerned with ends and thus lack a systematic consideration of strategy and tactics. Comprised largely of an emotional awareness of a more desirable culture, such images of the future merely guide diffuse, poorly organized, and, at times, seemingly aimless participation. For participation to become enduring and effective, emotional awareness must be supplemented by a theoretical understanding which affords a comprehensive view of society in terms of which the pursuit of the future can be appropriately planned. The metaphoric must be given an analytical mode of expression. As Portes (1971 829) finds in his study of lower class political participation in Chile, "Leftist radicalism... requires a period of intellectual apprenticeship in which the insecurities and anxieties of a lower-class situation are placed within the general interpretative framework of a coherent theory of classes,

class-interests, and class-conflict." This point is made by Gouldner (1976 6-9) who suggests that the effectiveness of the Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese revolutions rested on a synthesis of the emotional awareness reflected in the tradition--infused, spontaneous uprisings of the peasants and the grammar of rationality supplied by intellectual leaders. Until the affective language of the playfully reconstituted past is given theoretical expression, the pursuit of the desirable future remains *ad hoc* and disoriented, as is often the case with millennial movements (Talmon 1962). In short, the future can be anticipated metaphorically as a playful reconstruction of the past, but the problem of its actualization is best addressed analytically.

The revitalization of the past occurs as a response to the stress generated by social and cultural dislocation. As existing structures and symbols disintegrate, the future becomes uncertain, and the search for a more satisfying order is oriented toward the past. At the same time, with the weakening of prevailing forms and constraints, social activities become more playful, more spontaneous and noninstrumental. Accordingly, the past is playfully pursued and imaginatively recaptured. From this festive celebration of the past emerges a meaningful image of the future. If this anticipation of the future is to guide effective participation in social change, its metaphorical content must be joined with a theoretical capacity. Alone, the metaphorical mode of anticipating the future tends to result in aimless, emotional outbursts; alone, the analytical mode confines the imagination the logic of rationality preventing a vision and an experience of a more desirable future. When these two modes are compartmentalized, the process of meaningfully anticipating the future becomes blocked. It is in this situation that socio-cultural dislocation produces anomie and an apathetic orientation toward the future.

CONCLUSION

"Facticity (Bloch 1970 109) has no right to interfere with the primacy of practical reason." When it does intrude, human historical time, reflected in the playfully reconstructed past, is sacrificed to formal, linear time, and the establishment of fu-

ture goals is confined to political and scientific specialists. Technical utopias replace moral utopias, and future anticipations embody scientific assessments of feasibility, not an image of the good life. With the instrumentalization of culture, the dissociation from the past and the constriction of play, the capacity to meaningfully anticipate the future has been blocked.

Facticity prevades, indeed, it defines the sociology of the future with its rational problem-solving techniques and its concern with identifying future goals made objectively possible by present conditions. The emphasis on scientific analysis and prediction, as Huber (1974 31) observes, "tends to inhibit the formulation of long-range, desirable goals because they, like the actual forecasts, tend to be delimited by what presently seems possible. As a result, a radically different future can never be conceptualized..." Confined to realistic considerations and oriented toward instrumental and strategic action, such an approach merely promises to further the instrumentalization of culture. Metaphors of human purpose are replaced by metaphors of technique, a technical vocabulary which "conceals the voluntary, personal, and spontaneous dimensions of human experience" and reduces the anticipation of the future to a problem-solving activity engaged in by professional specialists (Bundy 1975 69).

A critique of instrumental culture is outlined in the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse and Jurgen Habermas. In the form of a Marxian hermeneutic which incorporates the categories of remembrance and imagination, critical theory intends to renew the capacity to anticipate meaningful images of the future. Remembrance has a liberating effect in that it overcomes the surrender to the present and to chronological time by restoring a sense of wholeness to man. In turn, remembrance makes possible the creation of human utopias which both demystify and transcend the immediacy of the present (Marcuse 1955). Incorporated into the methodology of critique, the category of remembrance directs social analysis to a consideration of the past such that the construction of future alternatives becomes a matter of reconstruction (Habermas 1971). With the category of remembrance, critique attempts to "restore missing parts of the historical

self-formation process to man, and in this way, to release a self-positing comprehension which enables him to see through socially unnecessary authority and control systems" (Schroyer 1973 31). The image of the past produced by critique serves a hermeneutic rather than a historical function. With reference to this image, as Fredric Jameson (1971 84) notes "we measure, indeed for the first time we understand... the quality of experience in our own culture and in our moment of history by weighing it against this hypothetical reconstruction of a more natural and original past". The critical theory hermeneutic anticipates the future and critiques the present by an imaginative reconstruction of the past. In this way, it imagines a humanized future, a future that can be brought about only with the widest possible participation.

A sociology of the future based on an appreciation of the critical theory hermeneutic would seek to give theoretical expression to the metaphorical images of the future that arise in times out or structure. "It is essentially the task of social theory, and the social sciences more generally, to create new and 'extraordinary' languages, to help men learn to speak them; to meditate between the deficient understandings of ordinary language and the different and liberating perspectives of social theory." (Gouldner 1973 103) This task involves a continuous movement between the 'fantastic' future sustained in the metaphorical culture of the playful return to the past and the concern with rational pursuit found in the analytical culture of social theory.

A social theory cognizant of, yet not smothered by, realistic considerations, can allow the expression of the 'fantastic' images contained in restricted anticipations of the future. Developed within but not bounded by the limits of facticity, future goals would have the character of what Andre Gorz (1964 7) calls revolutionary reforms: they would be conceived "not in terms of what is possible within the framework of a given system and administration, but in view of what would be made possible in terms of human needs and demands". If the sociology of the future is to take seriously the possibility of such images of the future and the possibility of their actualization, it must become more realistic by becoming more utopian. The

future, if it is to be more than an extension of the present, can only be understood by playfully reconstructing the past.

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