AN ASSESSMENT OF KENNETH BURKE'S INFLUENCE ON THE SECOND CHICAGO SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This essay critically assesses some of the ways that some members of the Second Chicago School used Kenneth Burke's ideas. On the whole, they selectively graft some of Burke's ideas onto their existing approach to sociology, an approach that was deeply rooted in symbolic interactionism. However, their selection and use of particular Burkean ideas suggests they were more interested in maintaining the integrity and unity of their existing framework than they were in critically using Burkean ideas to identify and overcome problems intrinsic to their own theory and methods. A fuller appropriation of Burkean ideas, I argue, would have led the Second Chicago School to a self-reflection and criticism that might ultimately have lead them to create an approach that was radically different, and arguably richer, from the one they in fact did develop.

INTRODUCTION

Kenneth Burke once wrote "the pragmatist is strongest when he is more like the artist than like the metaphysician" (1957). His influence upon American sociology can be found in three places. First, he influenced some members of the Second Chicago School in the 1950s and beyond. Second, his thinking was the springboard for C. Wright Mills' (1940) often cited article, *Situated Actions and the Vocabulary of Motives*. Third, contemporary sociologists who are more receptive to the currents of postmodernism and poststructuralist thinking are increasingly utilizing his work, partly because these sociologists are being informed by academics from other disciplines, such as Jameson and Lentricchia who themselves engage with Burke, while participating in debates on social theory.

In this essay, I critically assess how some members of the Second Chicago School used Burke's ideas. I begin with the assumption that some of the ideas developed by Kenneth Burke are more nuanced and more sophisticated than the fundamental ideas of George Herbert Mead, the symbolic interactionists, and those inspired by them. Burke's ideas provide a richer seedbed for theoretical developments.

On the whole, the members of the Second Chicago School selectively graft some of Burke's ideas onto their existing approach to sociology, an approach that was deeply rooted in symbolic interactionism. However, their selection and use of particular Burkean ideas suggests they were more interested in maintaining the integrity and unity of their existing framework than they were in critically using Burkean ideas to identify and overcome problems intrinsic to their own theory and methods. (A few notable members of the Second Chicago School, including Erving Goffman and Joseph Gusfield, particularly in their later work, appeared to demonstrate an increasing willingness to allow Burke's ideas to more fundamentally shape their overall intellectual frameworks, but such influences were rather limited within the context of the overall School.) A fuller appropriation of Burkean ideas, I argue, would have led the Second Chicago School to a self-reflection and criticism that might ultimately have lead them to create an approach that was radically different, and arguably richer, from the one they in fact did develop.

THE SECOND CHICAGO SCHOOL

The Second Chicago School of sociology was a group of scholars at the University of Chicago in the post-World War Two decades, including Howard Becker, Erving Goffman, Joseph Gusfield, Anselm Strauss, Herbert Blumer, C. Everett Hughes, among many others, who reinvigorated the sociology program at Chicago. In the early years of the twentieth century, the first Chicago School of sociology developed the first coherent approach to sociology in America. This earlier school was applied in its orientation; it was keenly interested in urban sociology; and it attempted to fuse qualitative and quantitative approaches, though it was most noted for producing numerous, classic case studies. It also drew intellectual inspiration from the pragmatist school of American philosophy, specifically from the works of George Herbert Mead.

While there is much debate over whether and if the scholars in Chicago during the post-World War Two period actually shared a

common orientation towards sociology (with many of the members claiming they did not), it is my contention that a review of their empirical work clearly shows some important commonalities. The Second Chicago School drew inspiration from the earlier school. It appropriated some of its ideas, modifying some, while rejecting others. It fully embraced Mead's work and developed it into what it now known as symbolic interactionism. Several themes run through this approach. In keeping with the influence of the pragmatists, the members embraced the theoretical focus upon language, self, and social interaction: The self is an active agent and is continually and actively constituting itself through symbols in a social process. Methodological, the members of the Second Chicago School embraced the qualitative approach, embodied in the case studies of the earlier school. The School produced numerous case studies and other forms of qualitative work. They largely avoided quantitative research.

The conceptual approach to methodology and to the communicating of their empirical work (often field work) is another unifying feature of the school having its roots in the earlier school. Second Chicago School scholars tended to look at the mundane as if it were not mundane. They sought to view humans behaving in their natural settings and specifically sought to understand how social encounters can and do occur. Social psychology, from a micro-sociological orientation, was at the core of their project. They wished to assess how humans create and recreate social settings and encounters. In short, they took the obvious and demonstrated the subtle, hidden and implicit features of this obvious.

A defining feature of this school is the method of presentation of their research findings. Second Chicago School scholars strove for simplicity and clarity in presenting their work. Eschewing all a priori theorizing, aside from their own symbolic interactionism, they sought to understand and to describe how and why individuals do what they do as they set about trying to define, maintain, and reinvent their personal identities through social interactions.

The Second Chicago School's sympathy for induction is another methodological theme reverberating throughout their body of work. While most members did not fully and explicitly embrace this, a number of them did (Spector & Kitsuse 1987). The Second Chicago approach is much more compatible with induction than with deduction because of its philosophical foundations which claim that a social analysis should begin with the assumption that human behavior can best be understood when it is seen as practical problem solving behavior. The social scientist should first observe the mundane before developing elaborate theoretical explanations of the mundane.

The school is also characterized by another substantive concern. Many of the members focused on understanding deviance and the social reactions to deviance. Whether it is Becker's (1963) *Outsiders* or Goffman's (1959) *Asylums*, the Second Chicago School was quite interested in the social dynamics by which deviance and deviant identities were created and recreated.

KENNETH BURKE AND THE SECOND CHICAGO SCHOOL

Burke advanced three themes relevant to a discussion of how the Second Chicago School appropriated or misappropriated his thinking: the pentad, the theory of tropes, and his embrace of dialectics. The pentad is at the heart of his theory of "dramatism," which is a theory of an interpretation of motives. In the opening pages of *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke describes the pentad:

> any complete statement about motives will offer *some kind of* answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose). (1969 xv)

His theory of tropes is rooted in the notion that meaning is often made possible through turns in the language, i.e. through the use of tropes. Tropic strategies are an intrinsic feature of communication. Tropes in ways are like cognitive frames through which language passes to make meaning. The task for the social analyst is to recognize and identify tropes and to assess how they are utilized in social encounters. His embrace of dialectics is evident throughout his writings. The centrality of dialectics is quite clear when one attempts to develop a clear, consistent, and unambiguous reading of his work. His writings do not lend themselves easily to this.

Instead, they are difficult, conflictual, ambiguous, and unstable, partly as the result of his use of dialectics. Dialectics goes to the heart of his thinking. As living, subjective human beings, we are confronted with an objective world. We live within the tension of permanence and change (Burke 1967). Dialectics is a Burkean methodological homage to anti-essentialism.

We can now examine how or if the Second Chicago School appropriated these three elements. Several members certainly utilized Burke's pentad in their own work. This is perhaps most evident in the work of Goffman. Though Goffman was known for his unwillingness to discuss his precise methodological strategies, it is clear he drew much inspiration from Burke (this despite the fact that the relatively limited amount of acknowledgements in his citations might suggest otherwise)(see Edgley & Brissett 1990; Mitchell 1981). Perhaps most starkly, the term Goffman uses to describe his own method, dramaturgy, is almost identical to the term Burke uses to describe his, i.e. dramatism. The similarities are not a coincidence.

Goffman used theatrical metaphors extensively in *Asylums* and elsewhere. (However, toward the end of his career in the opening pages of *Frame Analysis*, he rejected as inappropriate the use of Shakespeare's phrase "All the world's a stage..." as a foundation for social analysis, suggesting a self-reassessment of his earlier work.) His dramaturgical method incorporates at least two of the five elements of the pentad – scene and agency – and arguably it incorporates most of the other elements. The use of more than one element of the pentad comes directly from Burke. Burke, when writing about the usage of the pentad champions the use of "ratios," i.e. the explanation of motives that concurrently employ two of the pentadic elements (such as scene-act or scene-agent).

On the surface, it would appear that Goffman has kept true to Burke's interpretive method. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that Goffman's dramaturgical method bastardizes Burke's dramatism. At the heart of the pentadic scheme lies a fundamental claim about motivation: Motivation is an attribute assigned by an observer to explain individual or social phenomena. It is not something that rests within individuals, such as a spring that launches human

behavior (Burke 1969). Motives do not have a transcendent home or vessel within individuals or within social settings. (C. Wright Mill's essay, "The Vocabulary of Motives," written fifty years ago, provides a sociological awareness of this Burkean way of interpreting motives.)

The assignment of motives, in a Burkean scheme, to one or another element of the pentad should not be based upon an a priori theoretical framework which states that motives should be located solely and universally within one or another of these elements. As Burke notes,

> if you try to reduce the [pentadic] terms to any one of them, you will find them branching out again; for no one of them is enough. (1969 xx)

Yet this is precisely what Goffman and the other Second Chicagoans do. Their faithful embrace of Mead's pragmatism leads them to locate motives squarely within the agent and/or agency. For the symbolic interactionist the subject is motivated continually to create and recreate a stable self. Mead makes this point on many occasions, as do the members of the Second Chicago School. Here is just one example taken from Mead's discussion of the concepts of the "I" and the "Me":

> In the duties of what we call rational conduct, in adjusting ourselves to a world in which the laws of nature and of economics and of political systems obtain, we can state what is going to happen and take responsibility for the thing we are going to do, and yet the real self that appears in that act awaits the completion of the act itself. Now, it is this living act which never gets directly into reflective experience. It is only after the act has taken place that we can catch it in our memory and place it in terms of that which we have done. It is that "I" which we may be said *to be continually trying to realize*, and to realize through the actual conduct itself. One does not ever get it fully before himself. (emphasis added)(Mead 1962 [1934] 203)

Here we see we see the self is unaware perhaps of the motive propelling it forward, but the motives nevertheless are there: The "I" is "continually trying to realize" itself. The motives are located within the transcendent

self. He or she is propelled blindly forward, motivated in ways that conform to the dictates of symbolic interactionist principles.

If we are to take Burke at his word, then motives are not to be found a priori within any single element of the pentad. The scene can motivate an action as much as an individual agent can. The asylum can motive the patient no less so than the patient is motivated to realize, create and recreate the self.

It is not simply that Goffman and the other members of the Second Chicago School reduced the richness of the pentad to only one of the five elements (or perhaps to the ratio of agency-scene). More importantly, these scholars located motives within one of the elements of the pentad instead of, as Burke advises, within the interpretive process of the social analyst as he or she is analyzing.

The flattening of the pentad by Second Chicago sociologists is evident in the works of others members besides Goffman. Gusfield, for example, in an introductory essay to a compilation of essays by Burke, discusses the pentad in ways that suggest that he too does not appreciate the rich fullness of Burke's ideas. Rather than recognizing that motives are attributes, and rather than recognizing that this implies that it might be important for the social analyst to examine the interpretive process of the social analysis, Gusfield seems to see the pentad as nothing more than a list of menu options available to the analyst from which he is to chose an explanation: The social analyst can focus on What took place (Act); What is the context in which it occurred? (Scene); Who performed the act? (Agent); How was it done? (Agency); Why was it done? (Purpose) (Gusfield 1989 15). Gusfield suggests that the pentad is useful as a device to orient the social analyst to one or another of the elements. He explains by referring to his work on drinking-drivers:

> Burke refers to this relationship between parts of the Pentad as a matter of "ratios," of the fit between parts. What is significant is the lack of balance between parts. In a scene-act ratio, for example, the scene may be portrayed as explainable through the agent or vice-versa. Different meanings are conveyed. In my research on auto deaths, I have pointed out that to describe the problem of *drinking-drivers* creates a different problem than to describe it as a problem of *drinking-driving*. The first directs

> attention to the agent as the source of the act. The second frames the experience as an event, with the act as paramount. As Burke puts it, "The ratios are principles of determination". The first, *drinking-driver*, is a call to transform the motorist. The second, *drinking-driving*, directs attention to the auto, the road, the event. (Gusfield 1989 15)

Here and elsewhere Gusfield seems at best ambivalent about the full impact of the pentad. On the one hand, he seems to recognize its profound implications for sociology – "Different meanings are conveyed." On the other hand, he presents an understanding that fits neatly into the existing paradigm of American sociology, and specifically of symbolic interactionism. That is, he sees the pentad as nothing more than a menu, each item of which could be selected and applied at any time to explain an act. But the pentad seeks to do more than explain an act. It seeks to destabilize the notion of motive, to remove motive from the metaphysical plane – the plane where it is vested safety within the individual — to the interpretive plane of the social analyst in his act of interpreting.

Burke's pentadic scheme also moves from the concrete and specific to the abstract and universal, something the members of the Second Chicago School did not, on the whole, do. Instead, the latter, firmly embracing the tenets of Mead's pragmatism, focused exclusively upon the concrete and specific in their analysis of social phenomena. The members of the Second Chicago School were adverse to speculative and highly abstract conceptualizations, and instead believed it best to remain close to the ground. Burke, on the other hand, rejects the search for certainty in the concrete and specific, and has criticized pragmatism for doing so. As David Blakesley notes in his essay on "Kenneth Burke's Pragmatism,"

> Burke criticizes the positivist strain in pragmatism throughout Part IV of the *Grammar of Motives*. (1999 85)

Burke argues that one can identify and locate not only specific incidents within the pentadic scheme, but one may also locate large scale social theories and philosophies within this scheme. He argues that schools of thought can rightfully be characterized as

embodying one or another of the five elements. He locates Marxism within one of the elements and pragmatism squarely within one of these five. This opens up numerous possibilities. For our purposes, it calls into question the claims of the universal correctness of the symbolic interactionist ideas. If pragmatism is no more or no less privileged than other modes of social philosophy or social theory, then how is it possible to build a conceptual and applied program such as symbolic interactionism (rooted on pragmatism), which appears to rest on such a solid foundation, when in fact it is built on little more than a bed of sand?

The Second Chicago School was also influenced by Burke's theory of tropes as well. Here too we find the former distilling the latter's thinking into unrecognizable forms. In the most shallow of interpretations of the tropic strategy of the Second Chicago School, one might be tempted to claim that the members ignored or eschewed even the existence of tropes. Their penchant for describing everyday life in plain language, freed from excessively complex conceptual baggage, proclaims a philosophy of language in which words are little more than vehicles for an interactive process by which the subject sets about to define and redefine itself.

Yet the members of the Second Chicago School were well aware of Burke's ideas. Of the members of that school it was Goffman that used an understanding of Burke's theory of tropes in the most sophisticated, though often very subtle, manner. Others such as Gusfield toward the end of his career utilized Burke's tropic strategy more explicitly (particularly on his work with drunk drivers). Here I will focus on Goffman's work.

Both Goffman and Burke appear to recognize that tropes can and do operate on multiple levels, not unlike the levels noted above in the discussion of pentads. We can roughly divide these levels into two: The thematic and the substantive. By a substantive use of tropes I mean here a focus upon the use of particular words or phrases as tropes. By thematic I am referring to a more globalized understanding of tropes: The structure of entire books or other works or entire schools of thought (cf White 1990) can be tropic in nature.

Numerous examples of Goffman's use of substantive tropes can be found. Perhaps the two most classic uses are in his works

Asylums (1959) and *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) . For example, in *The Presentation of Self*, he describes some aspects of performances:

> A theatrical performance or a staged confidence game requires a thorough scripting of the spoken content of the routine; but the vast part involving "expressions given off" is often determined by meager stage directions... And in this, of course, we approach the situation of the straightforward man in the street. (1959 73)

Asylums provides other examples. It is ostensibly a case study of a mental hospital. It is a descriptive analysis of the essential workings of total institutions. Yet ever since its publication it has been widely seen not simply as an account of the workings of a single mental hospital, but as a metaphorical statement of the oppression of modern psychiatry (it was widely embraced by the anti-psychiatry movement), and more broadly as a statement of the oppression of large-scale, rational institutions that have spread far and wide on the social landscape. It was a case study and a political commentary.

Phillip Manning in his intellectual biography of Goffman makes similar points. Manning describes the latter's use of one trope, metaphor:

> He used metaphors as conceptual models rather than as words, exploiting our ability to extent their use to a multiplicity of settings. Metaphors can be "stretched" across many different examples. Thus, for example, his metaphor "life is a confidence trick" was shown to apply on all manner of occasions. (Manning 1992 144)

This relates to his more important use of tropes, which lies in the thematic rather than in the substantive realm. And it is here that one might locate Goffman's most impressive achievement. His work can be characterized as turning the banal into the surprising; the mundane into the extraordinary. At the heart of his method lie two sets of themes: First, he looks at the particular and sees the universal, and he looks at the universal and sees the particular. Second, he looks at a seemingly simply interaction and sees complexity, and looks at complex social interactions and sees simplicity. These

two turns in language, the particular and the universal and the simple and the complex reflect the tropes of synecdoche and metonym.

Even the title of *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* captures the theme of particularity-universalism. Here he describes how living individuals in real encounters behave, but his depiction is also about the universal ways that people behave. The behavior is everywhere and it is somewhere in particular.

Always, however, his use of tropes, whether implicit or explicit, was firmly grounded within the context of the application of a symbolic interactionist perspective. His embrace of symbolic interactionism created a frame within which to operate and it allowed him to use tropes in some ways for somethings, but it did not allow him to use them in other ways for other things. Specifically, he was committed to the conventional American sociological need for metaphysical anchors; one can only play with tropes, and one can only stray so far, if one has a conceptual mooring that grounds the entire intellectual apparatus. (One need not assume that the above claim about a "need" for metaphysical anchors implies anything about the motives of Goffman or of other sociologists. Motives are not essential to the argument being advanced herein. Indeed, "motive mongering," a concern expressed in one way or another by Burke and one ostensibly recognized as a concern by symbolic interactionists and other American sociologists, is not the most fruitful course to pursue in attempts at understanding social realities.) This mooring is the notion of a transcendent self – a universal self with universal properties: The self is a unified and universal entity, having timeless properties shared by all. It is fundamentally motivated by a need to define itself; It does so through the use of the symbolic in social interactions.

The self, I argue, if we are to be truer to Burke, could and should be thought of itself as a trope. Here the genuine fluidity of the self – a theme Mead so very much wished to capture – would be allowed to emerge. If the self is thought of in such a way, much of Goffman's work would need to be reevaluated. (His later work on frame analysis suggests a greater appreciation of this issue, but it remained inchoate.)

Burke grappled with similar issues throughout his life. For example, earlier in his career he embraced the assumptions of a metaphysical essence of the subject that was located in biology (Wess 1996; Burke 1967 [1935]). Wess writes about Burke's Marxism and his early ideas about mind, body, and the subject:

> In the body...Burke locates a primal level of identification that makes possible a corresponding level of aesthetic communication cutting across bourgeois and proletarian differences. In his early aesthetic...Burke sought permanence and found it in innate forms in the mind. In the 1930s, he seeks it again, this time finding it in the body... . (1996 66)

Later Wess quotes from a letter written by Burke in 1932 to Malcolm Cowley in which Burke is discussing Marxism and biological essentialism:

> The organic productive forces, the weapons integral to the body, have remained unchanged, so we might expect some vestiges of an ideological 'constant' in keeping with this constancy on the part of the productive forces themselves. (Wess 1996 65-66)

However, his increasing embrace of anti-essentialism as he grew and changed later led him to reject such claims.

Of the three Burkean themes being discussed herein, Burke's formulation and use of dialectics is the one that is most alien to the Second Chicago School. Burke presumably appropriated dialectics from his early exposure to, and embrace of, Marxist thinking (see "Auscultation, Creation, and Revision" (1993), originally written in 1932; see also *Attitudes Toward History* (1984) [1937] for early examples of his use of dialectics and his focus upon history). Yet while he jettisoned the Marxism of his youth, he kept the dialectics. Dialectics allowed Burke to embrace the inherent instability or changeability of the social world. It provided a conceptual foundation upon which to build a methodology thought to be free from the metaphysical weight that sank so many other approaches.

The notion of dialectics has echoes within the symbolic interactionism that served as the foundation for the Second Chicago

School perspective, but these are little more than faint resemblances. At its heart, Burke's use of dialectics stands in opposition to the Second Chicago School. For Burke, dialectics captures the inherent contradictions in the human experience. It captures the contradictions of the social actors in their actions, and it captures the contradictions in the interpretation of these actions by social analysts.

Goffman and his associates, it might be argued, embrace a form of dialectal thinking. This is evident in a number of ways. For example, the continual exchange between the "I" and the "Me" as well as the formation and reformation of identity within social encounters perhaps could be examples of this same process. However, the Second Chicagoan perspective was one that rejected the premature imposition of abstract theoretical concepts onto the world. They rejected the obtuse philosophizing of the Europeans, and instead embraced, in a quintessentially American manner, the practical, the pragmatic, understanding of social action. Dialectics, they might say, is a confused and confusing concept. It is one that is unnecessary to adequately explain social phenomena. It complicates and obfuscates rather than clarifies and simplifies.

The fact that the Second Chicago School members did not embrace Burke's dialectics is a major reason for their distorted use of the pentad and the theory of tropes, discussed earlier. Had the Second Chicago embraced dialectics much of their otherwise reductionist thinking would have been forced to change, and it would have been enriched as a result. But it would have been enriched in such a way as to render it, at least potentially, unstable. The beauty and simplicity of the writings of this school, a style that so neatly uncloaks the complexities of the social world, might be jettisoned if the members had embraced dialectics.

CONCLUSION

One might challenge the above argument by noting that I have focused here on the earlier works of Goffman and the Second Chicago School, and have ignored the distinctly different approach Goffman and others such as Gusfield took later in their careers. The later works, one might wish to argue, are in fact more conceptually sophisticated than the earlier ones criticized herein and do in fact address the problems noted above. Two remarks can be made to address this concern. First, this essay is motivated to understand the constellation of people and ideas that constitute the Second Chicago School. This essay focuses on those shared ideas of this School, and is less interested in tracing the intellectual movements away from the core School principles, which are reflected in the later works of people such as Goffman and Gusfield. Second, the changed intellectual directions of people such as Goffman and Gusfield may have been prompted in part by intellectual dilemmas such as those noted herein, but the solutions they propose do not fully incorporate the Burkean sensibilities described above. For example, Goffman's (1974) intriguing work, *Frame Analysis*, does not reference Burke even once, and even though this in itself does not demonstrate the absence of influence – after all, Goffman has acknowledged the influence of Burke on his earlier works even though there are scant references to the latter found even there, one could argue that the conceptual framework he uses is less inspired by Burke than it is by phenomenologists, cultural anthropologists, and non-Burkean language theorists. The Burkean influences on *Frame Analysis* are at best vague and are arguably negligible. Perhaps a fruitful intellectual course to take might be to reintegrate Burke's ideas into Goffman's later works.

In conclusion, sociologists who attempt to recognize and correct all of the problems related to meta-theory or meta-methods within their own approaches routinely face the prospect of falling into a solipsistic abyss, or as Clifford Geertz calls it, naval-gazing. Phenomenology and ethnomethodology, for example, have led some like Harold Garfinkel to conduct studies which engage in the futile attempt to capture the experiential moment of a social science research interview. Postmodernist scholarship of all stripes has been notoriously identified as having gleefully hopped on to a slippery slope of anti-essentialism in their quest for certainty in the uncertain. This can perhaps most memorably heard in Foucault's famous appeal:

> Do not ask me to remain the same. Leave it to the police and the bureaucrats to see to it that our papers are in order.

Similarly, some symbolic interactionists who

have taken to heart the implications social constructionism have also found a bottomless pit of uncertainty.

Kenneth Burke's scholarship also seems to be on this same merry ride of uncertainty and confusion. It is possible that the Second Chicago School selectively appropriated ideas from Burke because they were well aware of the full implications of attempting to graft his whole orientation unto theirs. Such wholesale use of Burke might lead down the same path as the other schools just noted. As such, in keeping with their pragmatist roots they took what they believed they could use. More precisely, they took those things that they could use from Burke that would not force a radical reformulation of their framework, a reformulation which may not appear to offer the possibility of productive, meaningful social science research.

This leads to a final thought about the relationship between theory and practice. It would appear that that if one wished to graft Burke's ideas onto Second Chicago school sociology in a manner that is true to the former, without destroying the possibility of constructing a viable sociology, then one must turn toward practice rather than abstract theorizing. For both Burke and the Second Chicago School, knowledge and experience are not separate. Yet the Second Chicago School embraced the traditional sociological project of emulating other sciences, and as a result a rigid divide emerged between the social actor being observed and the social analyst doing the observing. In other words, shades of positivism crept into the conceptual apparatus of symbolic interactionism. This is a crucial flaw within the Second Chicago perspective and it is one that Burkean ideas could help overcome.

What is being suggested here is a model of knowledge-in-practice. This is of course an essential element in the work of Habermas (1981) and the Critical Theory tradition. Habermas drew inspiration for his theory of communicative action from a number of sources, including Mead. Nevertheless, many of the intellectual currents that shaped the formation of his theorizing — including Critical Theory, Marx, Weber, Freud, and others (such as philosophers of language) — are quite different from those of the Second Chicago School and from Burke himself. Perhaps a critical synthesis between the American perspectives of Burke and the Second Chicago School together with Habermas's theorizing might prove useful.

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