

Jeffrey C. Alexander. On the Intellectual Origins of “Strong Program”

In the short preface to the special issue of “Sociological Review” one of the key contemporary sociologists, Jeffrey Alexander, casts a look on the intellectual origins of so called “strong program” in cultural sociology. In particular, Alexander directs his attention to Dilthey’s hermeneutical project which was developed further in the works of Ricoeur. Alexander shows briefly that in the masterpieces of classical sociology, i.e. in the famous Weber’s book “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,” there are already elements of hermeneutical program. However, Alexander believes that a critical role in the making of cultural sociology belongs to Durkheim’s “The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.” Then Alexander describes a reception of Durkheimian ideas in the social science of the XXth century. Alexander also considers the making of cultural sociology as a part of his intellectual biography and in conclusion presents his view on the perspectives of cultural sociology.

Jeffrey C. Alexander, Philip Smith. Strong Program in Cultural Sociology

In the paper, which pretends to be a program manifesto, its authors justify a necessity of the new theoretical approach to culture which they call a “strong program” in sociology of culture. While the existing sociological approaches to culture (“weak programs”) bear a reductionist character, the “strong program” treats culture in terms of its autonomy. After a general review of the sociological conceptions of culture authors analyze the most significant approaches within the “weak program.” In the core section of the paper they discuss the required steps that will make a “strong program” possible on the grounds of synthesis of structuralism and hermeneutics.

Clifford Geertz. Art as a Cultural System

The paper is one of the four central texts where Clifford Geertz summarized his ideas. Geertz suggests an understanding of art as a social phenomenon and gives a social anthropological account of aesthetic experience. In opposition to structuralism, which analyzes art as a closed sign system developing according to its inherent logic, and to radical functionalism, which attempts to study art as if its main function was to maintain established institutions of culture, Geertz proposes to view a work of art as a symbolical expression of the significant experience of its creator. In this case the ability of aesthetic perception of the work of art is treated as the ability to recognize the symbols it contains — the ability that results from involvement in the relevant cultural (religious, commercial, ceremonial, etc.) practices. Author illustrates his argument by the examples from the studies of that time: studies of Abelam tribe of New Guinea, Yoruba people of Western Africa, Quattrocento Italia, and modern Morocco.

Nail Farkhatdinov. The Autonomy of Painting: From the Field of Art Production to the Picture’s Frame

The paper deals with key issue of sociology of art — the problem of autonomy. Analysis of origins and overview of main theoretical and methodological approaches in sociology of arts in regard to the autonomy problem is given. Within the production of culture perspective autonomy is reduced to social conditions of art production and is regarded in terms of an ideology of dominant social groups. The limits of this approach are discussed. Cultural sociological program presented by Robert Witkin’s research aims to overcome the reductionist perspective by redefining the notion of aesthetic and turning to anthropological dimension of art perception.

Ekaterina Fen. Ron Eyerman. Toward a Meaningful Sociology of the Arts

In the introductory chapter to “Myth, Meaning, and Performance: Toward a New Cultural Sociology of Arts” Ron Eyerman states meaningful sociology of arts as a new approach. He posits the interactional nature of art and considers art as independent variable that allows him to overcome the culture production paradigm. The acceptance of new sociological approach is possible if the sociologists of arts will take into consideration the concept of meaning. Inclusion of this notion into the theoretical framework extends the possibilities for the arts analysis as an object, notion, practice and field of aesthetic experience. Meaning allows to explicate the communicative nature of art, that appears in the art work fundamental openness toward the multiple interpretations. Following Adorno and Bourdieu Eyerman outlines interpretative and representational concepts of meaning and truth in the artistic work. Taking these conceptions as a base he postulates the meaningful sociology of arts research principles.

Nail Farkhatdinov. **Robert W. Witkin. Chewing On Clement Greenberg: Abstractions and the Two Faces of Modernism**

This is the summary of Robert Witkin's paper where he analyses the shift occurred in the American art in 1960s from the abstract expressionism to pop-art and minimalism. His analysis shows that the tension between two different modernist strategies in art caused this shift. While abstract expressionists followed the ideas of Clement Greenberg about the definition of high art in opposite to mass culture (and failed to resist the invasion of mass culture), pop-art aimed to involve mass culture in their art and tried to blur the borders of art. To describe and explain this shift Witkin elaborates the anthropological ideas of perception and abstraction.

Anna Chistyakova. **Julia Chi Zhang. The Meaning of Style: Postmodernism, Demystification, and Dissonance in Post-Tiananmen Chinese Avant-Garde Art**

Julia Chi Zhang analyzes the Chinese avant-garde movement and in particular focuses on the transformations of artistic style after 1989. She emphasizes that approaches in contemporary sociology of art reduce art and culture to external phenomena of political and economical life. She argues that these approaches are not applicable to avant-garde which is to a considerable degree autonomous art and operates with regard to the motion "art for art's sake." To analyze Chinese avant-garde she develops alternative approach — meaningful sociology of art. Julia Chi Zhang studies the social and cultural meanings of style and its transformations after the events on the square Tiananmen.

Ekaterina Gribova. **Steve Sherwood. Seeker of the Sacred: A Late Durkheimian Theory of the Artist**

Steeve Sherwood proposes a new theory of artists and criticizes the mainstream approaches of contemporary sociology of art (for instance, those which ground on the ideas of P. Bourdieu, H. Becker, G. Pollock and G. Kubler) for avoiding theoretical discussions. He attempts to improve the situation and uses the Durkheim's classical "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life" as a theoretical ground for the discussion of artist's person. New theory bases on the analysis of relations between art work and artist in a similar way to the relations between totem and members of the tribe. Sherwood argues that art work embodies sacred power and artist is continuously seeking for this power and that is why Sherwood uses the Durkheimian concept of soul.

Anna Volik. **Tia DeNora. Music as Agency in Beethoven's Vienna**

Tia DeNora points out the shortcomings of theoretical approach in sociology of music which considers music primarily as a reflection of social reality. She argues that it is inappropriate to reduce music and its function in society to its reflective properties. Following cultural sociological approach she regards music as "an independent variable" and thus endows it with causing power. Searching for theory which combines advantages of several approaches Tia DeNora focuses on the idea of agency understood as "capacities, modes, and opportunities for action," which were shaped within a musical environment. By the example of Beethoven's work she analyzes the process of how his music, its reception and performance produced new modes of agency in musical world of Vienna of the XIXth century and outside. On the one hand DeNora looks at musical critical discourse, and on the other hand she focuses on the embodiment of ideas in the performance of Beethoven's works. By doing this DeNora investigates the connection between philosophical ideas of those times, Beethoven's music and forms of agency, which were reproduced by music.

Maria Polikashina. **Lisa McCormick. Music as Social Performance**

Lisa McCormick pays attention to the fact that music is a matter of research primarily in two disciplines: musicology and sociology of music. While musicologists focus on the analysis of the elements of musical text, sociologists generally concentrate on the structures of production and consumption of music. However neither musicology nor sociology considers music as a performing art. McCormick proposes to put in a centre the idea of musical performance understood as a social performance. Within this research framework performance of music is an activity which looks like ritual that is social interaction connected with collective representations and at the same time with standard patterns of behaviour. As the most relevant source of inspiration McCormick studies the theory of cultural (social) performance proposed by Jeffrey Alexander.

Daria Khlevnyuk. **Bernard Giesen. Triumph and Trauma**

The reviewed work is a book by one of the most significant scientists of the cultural sociology paradigm. It is the analysis of cultural trauma in Germany. Author shows that national identity in the post-nazi Germany is constructed around the figure of perpetrator. The complex of guilt of the Holocaust has spread beyond Germany and the Holocaust itself became the iconic representation of the evil.

Nail Farkhatdinov. **“Culture and Method.” One More Product of Cultural Sociological Factory**

The book under consideration (*Meaning and Method: The Cultural Approach to Sociology* / ed. by I. Reed and J. C. Alexander. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009) is a collection of papers published by Yale school of cultural sociology. The book attempts to provide methodological grounds of cultural sociology. It is argued that, while theoretically strong program is declared as a relevant framework, empirical research still inclines to so-called weak program of sociology of culture.

Nataliya Komarova. **Myth about Mediatized Center: Post-Durkheimian Approach in the Media Analysis**

In the book (Couldry N. *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*. London: Routledge, 2003) there is a critique and further development of the approach in media studies based on the concept of ritual. The author once again turns the original Durkheimian approach and formulates the idea of the myth about media that is crucial for the functioning of contemporary society. The work is analyzed in relation to the context of traditional media studies approach to the analysis of a myth functioning.

Maria Deeva. **From Individual to Shared Affect: Post-Durkheimian Tradition in the Sociology of Emotions**

The article analyses theoretical resources of post-Durkheimian tradition in the sociology of emotions. The author proposes to use concept “shared affect” as theoretical frame. Being used on the context of key for sociology of emotions distinctions, such as “feeling/expression,” “consciousness/unconsciousness emotion,” “involvement/distancing of emotions,” this concept lets to highlight relation of specific problems of sociology of emotions and ones of theoretical sociology.

Dmitry Kurakin. **Editor’s Afterword: The Strong Program in Cultural Sociology: Commentaries on Theory, Methodology, and History**

The paper summarizes development of the special issue and provides framework for perception of broadening project of cultural sociology with special emphasis on the “strong program.” The paper’s basic issues embrace historical context of the program’s development, its crucial points in theory, overview of main research areas, analysis of key methodological means and our own suggestions concerning ways of the program’s improvement. The peculiarities of Russian translations and reception of the terms used in the strong program are also discussed. The paper proceeds from the assumption that Durkheimian sociology is the most promising ground for cultural sociology in theory as well as in methodology. That is why it reconstructs the main argument of cultural sociology with special regard to Durkheim’s theory of sacred and his heuristic hypothesis on collective emotions. The “effervescence” as well as other models that are closely connected with the sacred use to assert causal power of the meaning and hence to insure performing the prime task of the program which is to obtain autonomy of culture in sociological way. In terms of methodology those models inform cultural sociology with the most relevant and demanded means of explanations. Finally the paper suggests current misinterpretations of the concept of the sacred and outlines how its overcoming can reinforce the overall explanatory power of the program.