

non-routine play setting are implicit only. The authors essentially fail to mine their material. An intensive analysis would involve linking sociability functions to urban markets and politics. Until we are informed about specific linkages that connect licit and illicit organizations, we are left with little more than a limited case study of one minor social organization.

Early sociologists ventured into ethnography leaving a classic tradition to be relearned by a later generation. The authors obviously have mastered one significant stylistic feature: intensive description of a social world. The unfinished business of contemporary ethnography is to link the style to a substantive, critical sociology. This would more adequately delineate the social context and institutional consequences of impermanent urban settings. The hip and beat types are evident in this book. Deviance literature may be better enriched by a political interpretation of changing urban reality.

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**SKEPTICAL SOCIOLOGY. By Dennis H. Wrong. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976, vi + 322.**

This collection brings together seventeen essays written during the past two decades. All except four (C. Wright Mills and the *Sociological Imagination*, "Force and the Threat of Force as Distinct Forms of Power," "Competent Authority: Reality and Legitimizing Model," and "Max Weber: The Scholar as Hero") have been previously published, six appeared in scholarly journals, the remainder in *Dissent* and *Commentary*. The essays which established Wrong's reputation as a defender of moderation and humane wisdom in an era fascinated by the enthusiasms of would-be system-builders are reprinted here: "The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology" and its less well known but in many ways more persuasive sequel, "Human Nature and the Perspective of Sociology"; "The Functional Theory of Stratification: Some Neglected Considerations"; "The Idea of 'Community': A Critique"; and "On Thinking about the Future." The book is organized into three thematic motifs: "Human Nature and the Perspective of Sociology," "Social Stratification and Inequality," and "Power and Politics." However, Wrong's intellectual range is so broad that this categorization is largely cosmetic.

## SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

For Wrong, Max Weber is "the" sociologist: scholar, hero. Wrong's essays on Weber are among the most lucid portrayals of the great sociologist that the Weber renaissance has produced. A student whose initiation to Weber takes place through these pages is fortunate indeed. Wrong is at his best in the essays on power: engaging in conceptual clarifications and extracting the sense from the nonsense in the works of others—this is his metier. The essays on stratification are more dated and less original. Wrong contends that the concept of class is inappropriately applied to American society although he acknowledges "There is indeed some justification for calling blacks the American lower class" (p. 129). He maintains that the emerging social structure of post-bourgeois industrial society can be best understood if the work done under the label of class analysis is redefined as a contribution to the sociology of equality and inequality. Perhaps, but Wrong does not attempt to integrate his observations regarding the inequalities of economic distribution associated with race, age, and sex into a coherent theoretical statement.

Wrong adopts the label, "skeptical sociology," to distance himself from the "self-congratulatory aura" of some recent versions of humanistic sociology although he maintains "the best sociology arises out of concerns shared with the humanities" (p. 1). Similarly, he distances himself from the Frankfurt version of critical theory although he fully agrees with two major propositions of critical theory: (1) that the sociologist is always a part of the social world he is studying and must therefore assume a "reflexive stance; (2) that the sociologist should take a critical attitude toward existing society and thereby refuse to regard established structures, institutions, and culture as exhaustive of the historical possibilities. Wrong portrays the sociologist as a member of Joyce's "brood of mockers" but insists she/he must be more than a mere debunker: "The skeptic, however, is not a nihilist or cynic in the sense of denying or denigrating all values; he is, rather, committed to intellectual integrity, to telling the truth, as his own chosen highest value. His tragic sense stems from his insight that this value is often subversive of the values that men must live by" (p. 12).

Wrong engages in rhetoric of reconciliation in listing the practical tenets of skeptical sociology: (1) he contends the skeptical sociologist should oppose the present fragmentation of sociological discourse which has produced "a stalemated pluralism of divergent 'approaches'" (p. 13) whose apologists talk only to each other; (2) he reminds skeptical sociologists that even though their own sym-

pathies may be with the political Left they should not forget John Stuart Mill's contention that liberals and radicals ought to wish for able conservative opponents upon whom to test in debate the rationality and subtlety of their own convictions; (3) he maintains a skeptical sociologist should be even more reflexive in scrutinizing his own positions (without necessarily abandoning them) than a 'critical' sociologist, whose focus may remain entirely external. But Wrong does not intend his advocacy of skeptical sociology to herald the development of a new movement in sociology: "skeptical sociologists may wryly recognize a kinship with one another under various disguises, but it would be self-defeating for them to organize as a group or even to adopt a common label" for ultimately "there can be no such thing as a skeptical sociology, only skeptical sociologists" (p. 14). Perhaps if the "brood of mockers" who are not above entertaining self-mockery multiplies, humane dialogue may prove more enticing than "stalemated pluralism."

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**YOUTH AND HISTORY: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770 - Present. By John R. Gillis. New York: Academic Press, 1974, xiv + 232.**

The transition from one age group to another can reflect a plethora of social structural characteristics. Gillis provides a socio-historical analysis of emergent, traditional and existent conditions which illustrate both macro and micro dimensions of youth in society. His consideration is especially unique due to its focus on the interactional effect that youth has had on the meaning and societal responses made in the delineation of the period of youth and the formation of the concepts of childhood, youth and adolescents.

Essentially Gillis contends that no explanation of youthful behavior can be complete without considering the social and economic characteristics which serve as the milieu for the gestation of youthful traditions. His focal concepts, *tradition* and *change*, orient the reader to an informative and scholarly consideration of the age grouping process. The historical perspective explores the social mechanisms of continuity and social change, posing the following rhetorical question: what is "youth's" role in creating the social and cultural forms typically associated with youth?