

# SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND FREEDOM. THE SEMIOTIC STUDY OF CULTURES

---

IRENE PORTIS-WINNER

---

*I consider some troubling dichotomies which are pertinent to scholarship in all its dimensions. I look at how their various solutions interpenetrate as well as contradict each other, and how they affect our perceptions in the study of culture. I conclude with some applications from my own study of a transnational community in Slovenia and in the United States.*

Keywords: *semiotics, transnational.*

*Avtorica obravnava nevspečne dibtomije, značilne za znanost v vseh njenih razsežnostih. Predstavljeno je, kako različne se rešitve prežemajo in si nasprotujejo in kako vplivajo na naše dojemanje pri raziskavah kulture. Razpravo sklene nekaj rešitev iz avtoričine študije transnacionalne skupnosti v Sloveniji in Združenih državah.*

Ključne besede: *semiotika, transnacionalno.*

---

I consider some troubling dichotomies which are pertinent to scholarship in all its dimensions. I look at how their various solutions interpenetrate as well as contradict each other, and how they affect our perceptions in the study of culture. I conclude with some applications from my own study of a transnational community in Slovenia and in the United States. The underlying contrast is that of static as opposed to dynamic structures. This umbrella – like fundamental conceptualization and the tension it generates subsume intertwining paths of oppositions as the following: monofunctionality/polyfunctionality; monosemiotic/polysemiotic; cyclical time or timeless/linear time; history/science or fact/theory; or Polyani's tacit or personal thought/mere ideology. Thinking of the dynamic poles of these apparent oppositions, they may signal positive forces such as creativity, imagination, intuition, individual freedom. But on the other hand, introducing the factor of power, such terms may be lost to the negative pole that is static or nondynamic, and their meanings may be disguised, reduced, reversed, distorted in the service of a ruling power; such as a faction or leader (who may claim sanctions based on ideology, or even magical or mythical sources).

I can only briefly sketch the historical and philosophical background of these interrelated concepts as they bear upon the study of cultures. I begin with Emile Durkheim who classifies the structures of societies in binary opposition as mechanical or organic. For Durkheim these two types are stable, and change from mechanical to organic is only gradual and not based on individual activities and both support social solidarity. In the former type of society specialization is lacking and differentiation is limited to sex and age while the latter type of society is characterized by division of labor more complex than subsistence farming or hunting and gathering. In the simpler societies individuals are essentially all alike and distinguished mainly by sex and age differences. For Durkheim structure is defined as a set of relations among equal entities, continuity being maintained

by the life process made up of the activities of the constituent parts of the structure. Function is the contribution of partial activity to total activity of which it is a part. Mechanical structure is characterized

*by repetition of homogeneous segments. It is a society of resemblances where individuals differ from each other as little as possible. Solidarity is maintained in organic society since its system of different organs is coordinated and subordinated one to another around a central organ.* [Durkheim 1958: 181]

The effacement of the individual is associated with lack of centralization. The society is homogeneous and the individual is hardly distinct from the group because individual consciousness is barely distinguishable from the collective consciousness of the group [Durkheim 1958: 192, 194]. Social harmony in mechanical society depends on automatic cooperation as each individual pursues his own interest. Collective consciousness shared by all members of these societies is simply the body of beliefs and sentiments common to the average member of the group and has in a sense a life of its own [Aron 1970: 15]. Durkheim emphasizes this position in numerous statements as the following: *individuals are much more a production of a common life than they are determinants of it* [Durkheim 1966: 338]. And *If there is one rule of conduct which is incontestable, it is that which orders us to realize in ourselves the essential traits of the collective type* [396]. The function of this rule is to promote social solidarity and prevention of agitation [397]. The division of labor in organic society has the same function as does personality which is necessary for the cohesion of society and the maintenance of equilibrium [400]. The activity of the individual is the society acting through him and the individual is only the intermediary. Liberty is only apparent [404].

A moral fact is normal for a determined social type when it is observed as the average of that species; or it is pathological in antithetical circumstances. The only method of constructing a positive science of ethics is the observation of moral facts [422]. History has shown that what is moral for one people is immoral for another [423]. The possibility of discerning an eternal law of morality remains in the field of metaphysics. At this stage in every society, *all moral facts consist in a rule of sanctioned conduct* [425].

The mentioned remarks from Durkheim are the essence of circular reasoning where all acts by some method are reduced to one basic function of social solidarity and the composite maintenance of equilibrium. Art and its liberty are reduced to the after play of sanctioned behavior, and Durkheim remarks that emotive behavior lies here, although all such characteristics are rooted in the context of the moral life of the culture, and the basic method is empirical. Restrictive rules are universal for each social type, in this case organic and mechanical. Repressive diffuse sanctions underwrite rules of conduct and this excludes liberty and freedom.

In contrast, I quote Eric Wolf's defense of individuality and heterogeneity. He writes that individuals are not monads and are differently constructed and social structures are not monoliths.

*We need to find new ways of thinking about heterogeneity and the transformative nature*

*of human arrangements and to do so scientifically and humanistically at the same time. The attempt to understand what humans do and conceive economically, politically, socially, morally, cognitively and emotionally, all at once has always been a hallmark of anthropology, and the goal remains a usable and productive program. [Wolf 1988: 76]*

Wolf's position is in strong contrast to the body of theory and practice which reduces liberty, creativity, imagination, and aesthetic and emotive behavior to its role in maintaining social solidarity. The individual who is essentially ruled by the collective consciousness of the society engages only in those activities and tasks which are sanctioned and moral.

Having presented two polar positions, that of Durkheim and Wolf, I now comment upon a famous study cast in the Durkheimian mold and then trace later positions following, deviating or contradicting the essence of Durkheim's strict empirical basis for study of culture, and society. Thus an early study by Radcliffe Brown, *The Andaman Islanders* [1984 (1932)], is in many respects a realization of Durkheimian perspectives. The Andaman Islands form a chain along the coast of Burma and Sumatra. What is of primary interest to Radcliffe-Brown is the social organization of the tribes of the Great Andaman group, as it existed before European occupation. Accordingly he must rely on memory of the elders and bracket the historical events and changes beginning with the European incursions.

The following are some illuminating remarks demonstrating Radcliffe-Brown's synchronic and positivistic bias for sociology and anthropology:

*I understand the study of the phenomena of culture by the same inductive methods that are in use in the natural sciences ... The task of the inductive sciences is to discover the universal or the general in the particular. [Radcliffe-Brown 1964: 123]*

Thus, *Every society adopts and imposes on its members, and toward certain objects, this attitude of mind and behavior I am calling the ritual attitude* [Radcliffe-Brown 1964: 123] a term which Radcliffe-Brown prefers to Durkheim's concept of the sacred. These terms, sacred and ritual for Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown, are essentially parallel and introduce us to further posed oppositions. For Durkheim sacred is opposed to profane as pure is contrasted to impure, friends to enemies, and other opposed cultural items. Those in the sacred category are differentiated by affection or sentiment or emotions, referring to their most essential properties [Durkheim and Mauss 1973: 35]. Speaking of the totem and expressing the monofunctionalism of ritual, Radcliffe-Brown writes that *the functions of the ritual attitude toward the totem is to express and so to maintain in existence the solidarity of the social group* [1964: 125]. For *the primary object of the ritual attitude is the social order itself*. Defining social structure as subject to empirical study, Radcliffe-Brown observes that human beings are connected by a complex of social relations, and social structure denotes this network of actually existing relations. In contrast culture, is not observable since it is an abstraction. In taking this to the extreme, Radcliffe-Brown holds that social phenomena are not the *result of the nature of the human beings but are the result of the social structure by which they are united* [Radcliffe-Brown 1964: 190–191]. The human being as a person is a complex of social relations, and an

object in which two or more persons have a common interest has social value. Following Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown defines *social function of a socially standardized mode of activity or mode of thought, as its relation to the social structure (is) to the existence and continuity of which it makes some contribution* [1964: 200]. It appears that meaning is equated with *a system of social sentiments which are developed in the individual by the action of society upon him and by which the conduct of the individual is regulated in conformity with the needs of society*. Furthermore ceremonials give collective expression to these sentiments [234]. Function is *the total contribution which a particular activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part* [181].

An English anthropologist, Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, writing somewhat later, breaks with the positivist, static and anti-historical stance of Durkheim and Radcliffe Brown taking up the other side of the dichotomy, history/science and placing anthropological studies in the humanities and not in the natural sciences. He expanded on history and structure in the following way: *A structure can only be meaningfully used as an historical expression to denote a set of relations known to have endured over a considerable period of time and a structure can be described as a set of functionally interdependent institutions or sets of social relations* [Evans-Pritchard 1962: 81].

As opposed to Durkheim, clearly Evans-Pritchard saw time as not only as circular, but linear, and historical in all societies. While change may be slow particularly in relatively isolated primitive societies, we realize that everywhere and particularly in the contemporary period, change and violence is ubiquitous, and history is charged with documenting the story. Thus we have gone from Durkheim's social solidarity and essentially static or circular time where structure is an organic or mechanical model, the comparative study of which may yet yield sociological universal laws, to Radcliffe-Brown who is essentially in the Durkheim tradition, the thrust being on equilibrium and mono-functionalism where in primitive societies like the Andaman Islanders all persons are alike, merely distinguished by age and sex, and time is essentially cyclical.

These positions are then opposed to those of Evans-Pritchard's since he broke with the view that social structures are like organs, to be studied empirically by scientific quantitative methods following the natural sciences. For, according to Evans-Pritchard the study of social structures is part of the humanities and such structures are entwined with non-conjectural history.

Let us look briefly at the position of the geologist, Stephen J. Gould that does not separate science and history as have the scholars we have discussed, nor does he accept the position that change if it exists is gradual. For J. Gould geological time is metaphorically depicted as *time's arrow and time's cycle*. And change in his linear time is not purely gradual change since punctuated equilibrium, based on geological evidence, accounts for sudden change. Moreover, according to Gould, such a dynamism applies to all time not just geological. For Gould those who separate science and history overlook the interrelations of fact and theory and science and society. Humans are immersed in culture but endowed with imagination, writes Gould, all that Peirce meant by abduction [Gould 1987: 6]. As Peirce wrote, *abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation*

which introduces any new ideas [Deledalle 2000: 8] in explaining the dialectics of Peirce's method. As Gould holds, *All dichotomies are simplifications* [Gould 1987: 8] such as *uniformism/catastrophism, empiricist/speculator, reason/revelation, true/false* [9] and *linear/circular vision of time* [10]. Gould comments, *Dichotomies are useful or misleading, not true or false. They are simplifying models for organizing thought, not ways of the world ... [they] are underpinned by visions about the nature of things. They may be called metaphors but they are not from observed fact* [9]. We must have both sides of the so called dichotomies. Thus *times arrow is the intelligibility of distinct and irreversible events, while time's cycle is the intelligibility of timeless order and law like structure* [15–16].

Gould traces the argument concerning the nature of time through the constructions of various thinkers starting with the Greeks and concludes that »Something deep in our tradition requires for intelligibility itself, both the arrow of historical uniqueness and the cycle of timeless immanence-and nature says yes to both.« He tells us that *The boundaries between oneness and twoness are human impositions* [200] using examples from the arts to demonstrate this. Gould's comment, concerning the universal perception of the double nature of time is exemplified in even the simplest societies where time is both circular, reversible or timeless, as for example the life cycle, the seasons, and cultivation schedules, while time is also perceived as linear and irreversible, and punctuated by unique events: witness memory, genealogical kinship structures, and traditional history as born out by tales and myths.

I turn now to another version of basic dichotomies we have discussed, which intertextually reverberate with Gould's notion. Here Isaiah Berlin deconstructs the varied meanings and cultural and historical contexts of the term freedom and the associated meanings of roles of the individual. Berlin differs radically from Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard in his *Freedom and its Betrayal. Six Enemies of Human Liberty* [2002]. To Berlin, as for Gould the conflict between statics and dynamics is built into human tradition. He asks how this conflict is played out through human history. He departs from the assumption that the concept of freedom, as we inherited from the Enlightenment, is diversely transformed, distorted, reversed and contained, to support authoritative or tyrannical rule by power holders. To illustrate such permutations Berlin looks at six thinkers prominent just before and just after the French Revolution. A fundamental question posed by Berlin is *why should one individual obey other individuals* [Berlin 2002: 1]. The six examples are: Helvetius, Rousseau, Fichte, Hegel, Saint Simon and Maistre. Berlin finds that all six thinkers except Maistre claimed they were in favor of liberty yet in the end their doctrines are inimical to liberty in the sense of John Stuart Mill's goal – namely that it is the right of individuals to freely to live one's life as one wishes with the reservations that the same rights and the common security of all must be protected [5].

I briefly comment on several examples cited by Berlin:

Helvetius came to the position that man is conditioned to do only what is good and society is ruled by the despotism of elite scientists creating what Berlin calls a technological tyranny, which has been used as a justification for totalitarian regimes [26].

Rousseau's social contract is also in default since it essentially holds that liberty and

authority are one and all share the general will. As Berlin notes, the cult of the savage man led to anti-intellectualism as opposed to reason. Each individual must surrender to the whole community [44]. Here as above liberty turns out to be the opposite of the traditional liberal view since all individual rights are absorbed by the social contract which expresses the general will. Of course most modern anthropologists would not accept the absence of reason in primitive cultures but assumes that reason is differently employed in such societies for the particular problem solving tasks utilizing the resources of their environment, while magic etc. aids reason where the solution of the task is too challenging.

For Fichte, the German absolute dependence on the prince led to the escape to, and the dependence on, the inner self, but *selves are not individual human beings*. The self is not an empirical individual. It is a self which is common to all bodies, a super-self which may be identified with nature, god, history and with the nation. In fact for Fichte man is nothing without society [67]. The group alone exists and freedom is submission [71]. This leads to freedom is power and freedom and conquest are one. Freedom becomes the imposition of your powerful will on others.

As Berlin concludes, two notions of liberty were present at the beginning of the nineteenth century representing two irreconcilable views of life, namely liberal and authoritarian, or open and closed; and the word freedom, with its only superficial resemblance to its meaning as enunciated by John Stuart Mill and others, has been a central symbol for both notions, in the latter case no matter how skewed.

For Hegel the individual is reduced to an abstract element of a concrete social structure. There is a supreme spirit who can foresee every move that the individual makes. Thus the dilemma is how can the individual be free. Freedom is only possible if the individual does not defy the rules. The individual must most understand why things cannot be otherwise which means he does not want them to be otherwise [89]. To be free and to be rational are the same. Similarly, but departing from materialism, the Marxist position sees change in society as irrevocable proceeding by thesis, antithesis and new synthesis and the individual life is determined by this model. Thus freedom is dissolved into antifreedom.

Berlin's final examples are Saint-Simon and Maistre, illustrating again the transformations of the concept freedom, and all the ramifications that such reverses imply, Saint Simon celebrates the rule of the technological elite with its own morality, an enormous business establishment. The state is obsolete. Saint-Simon originated the idea of a secular religion. For Maistre subjection to power and the view that man is vicious outlines his negative position pertaining to man and society and liberty is not even rationalized in his program [135].

We have named various logistics that consider the dichotomies of statics/dynamic and one of its variations- freedom and traditional concepts of social structure as well as history and science. In most cases freedom in its enlightenment cast, has been the loser, no matter how redefined or rationalized to fit into a particular ideology. Why this is so cannot be answered in more detail in this discussion except to say that history and context including cultural and intercultural influences, as well as the more abstract phenomena of

intertextuality are powerful forces and when we look at cultures and world views without accounting for these factors the results are neither powerful nor comparable.

I conclude the theoretical part of this discussion with a famous philosopher's comment which resonates with those of Gould, namely the remarks by Hillary Putnam in his series of lectures entitled *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* [2002]. I follow this discussion with examples from what I call a transnational society, namely the village culture of Žerovnica in Slovenia and their migrant family members in Cleveland and Hibbing Minnesota. The story of this double society illustrates some of the interpretations and dependence on context of the terms freedom, liberty, as well as the dynamics of change, the conception of the individual and the relativity of space and permeability of boundaries. Clearly power as a concept and force is variably woven through all these notions having crucial meanings pertinent to the structure and change of human society.

As Putnam holds, *philosophy failed to come up with anything in absolute terms. Nevertheless, recognizing that our judgments claim objective validity, and recognizing that they are shaped by a particular culture and by a particular problematic situation, are not incompatible... and this is true of scientific questions as well as ethical ones* [Putnam 2002: 45]. The arguments over the fact/value dichotomy originated in an impoverished empiricist and later an impoverished logical positivist conception of fact. On the contrary it is necessary to see that facts and value are deeply entangled [46].

Now, believing that various of these conclusions are relevant to our thinking and indeed misconceptions in analyses of cultural groups I turn to my transnational example (Žerovnica and its environs in Slovenia, Cleveland and Hibbing Minnesota). I pause first to rehearse a few relevant facts concerning the history and geographical environment of these people.

The village of Žerovnica lies in the now independent nation of Slovenia about 70 kilometers from the Slovene capital of Ljubljana. The agricultural economy has been semi self-sufficient with a small surplus for the market. Land holdings were small averaging 8.27 hectares, but a significant number of land holdings were smaller, and some peasant families were landless while a few larger holdings measured 50 hectares at one time. Stony valleys and karstic soil limit the productivity of the land although the waters of the so called disappearing Cerknica lake bordering the village land recede in summer laying bare hay lands harvested by all surrounding villagers. The village is composed of 59 houses and is known to be very old. Under the Austrians serf obligations were finally abolished in 1848. However the agrarian crisis of the 1890s led to widespread emigration to the United States. The inter-war period under the new South Slavic state is remembered by villagers as one of poverty and increased difficulties for emigration as well as conscription in the army. During the World War II, Italians and Germans occupied Slovenia but partisan resistance was widespread, in which many of the villagers participated. The communist period following World War II brought pressure for collectivization although only to a limited degree successful, while the *občina* (local administrative unit) attempted to abolish what local autonomy there was and instituted control over all local markets for lumber, cattle and other products cutting deeply into the household economy. Communist rule ended in 1991, when after a short period of resistance, Slovenia attained independence.

Meanwhile the emigrants to Cleveland began to compose a *little Slovenia* in the industrial heart of the steel mills, in which the village of Žerovnica was very well represented. The complex intercommunication and the changing world views of members both at home and overseas as well as the persistence and changing meanings of many traditional patterns, rituals and objects both at home and in the migrant community, led me to consider the two communities as interlocked creating a transnational phenomena. Such brief narrative barely hints at the subtleties and complexities and changes of our transnational communities.

I ask what is the pertinence of the discussions of the various authors to a semiotic interpretation of the changing transnational community on which I focus here, its part separated by two continents? As a beginning such an approach engenders looking behind the first impression of a peaceful and aesthetically charming cluster of house and surrounding cultivated strips, overlooked by the counts castle as it has from time immemorial, and behind the common aphorism, *We are friendly village and all have equal amounts of land.*

Firstly Putnam's entanglement of various dichotomies is highly relevant before and after the period of emigration. In other words fact and values are interrelated and are shaped by a particular culture and as he implies by the point of view of the observer but with these reservations they maintain an objective validity. For example, while lumbar was traditionally seen as the greatest security for peasants, as villagers say lumbar is like gold, this did not prevent the ruling power from seeing lumbar as a threat, as a private industry which must be controlled so that lumbar sales would not become an unregulated form of private ownership. Secondly, agreeing with Evans-Pritchard, history has been a powerful formative factor, and historical awareness of the various epochs affecting the village from serfdom to today is very much in the consciousness of the villagers. Thirdly, notwithstanding outside impressions of the village of Žerovnica as an unchanging and homogeneous well-bordered village of happily cooperating peasants, as Radcliffe-Brown saw the Andaman Islanders or as Robert Redfield saw Tepotzlan (only altered when Oscar Lewis restudied that village), nevertheless these perceptions did not reflect reality or the inner view of the various inhabitants. Indeed factions and particular changes of the social structure and values bears some resemblance to Stephen J. Gould's punctuated equilibrium. Finally Berlin's *Freedom and its Betrayal* is echoed. There were at least four epochs in Žerovnica history: which I briefly described.

Since the 1890s, memory and rituals bound the urban migrant and the villagers at home often on a semiotic level where objects, songs, etc. gained new power and changed meanings when the villagers were split from the migrants. In all these events space was anything but fixed but rather semiotized, endowed with particular values, from the feudal period where high over the village was the value of the Church and even higher the overlooking counts castle. Boundaries were equally vulnerable to changing perspectives. Indeed the village boundary came to be perceived as incorporating communities in America, and for the elder generation the once distant Ljubljana became a commuting trip to the present younger generation. Traditional music that faded out during the communist period became a semiotic index of the overseas villagers who organized a chorus and brought back the

resurrected songs to the villagers in their frequent returns home. Everyday objects were imbued with new and special value which became particularly clear in the ethnic community but also in the home village. For example the sound of threshing reminds villagers of the earlier atmosphere of collective activities. Or in the ethnic community replicas the *kozolec* (the traditional hay drying rack), becomes a powerful symbol of former village activities. Throughout these examples of apparent binary oppositions or reversals of meaning of concepts we must take account of Peirce's third, thus the symbolic, indexical and iconic levels of sign texts. Indeed Peirce's fallibilisms, and abduction mentioned by Gould, pertains to the complex entanglement of fact/value and other oppositions and most importantly static and dynamic structure, as opposed to changing values of space and changing social structure. Thus Žerovnica is not Redfield's Tepoztlan or Radcliffe-Brown's Andaman Islanders.

## REFERENCES

- Aron, Robert  
1970 *Main Currents of Sociological Thought*. Garden City, New York.
- Berlin, Isaiah.  
2002 *Freedom and its Betrayal Six Enemies of Human Liberty*. Princeton, University Press.
- Durkheim, Emile  
1958 *The Rules of Sociological Method*. New York, The Free Press.  
1966 *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York, The Free Press.
- Durkheim, Emile and Marcel Mauss  
1973 The Social Genesis of Logical Operations. In: Mary Douglas (ed.), *Rules and Meanings*. Harmondsworth, Penguin: 32–37.
- Deledalle, Gerard  
2000 *Charles Peirce's Philosophy of Signs*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E.  
1962 *Social Anthropology and Other Essays*. Glencoe, The Free Press.
- Gould, Stephen Jay  
1987 *Time's Arrow and Time's Cycle*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- Lewis, Oscar  
1963 *Life in a Mexican Village. Tepoztlan Restudied*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
- Peirce, Charles Sanders  
1931–38 *Collected Papers. Vols 7–8* (Hartshorne, Charles and Paul Weiss, eds.). Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- Portis-Winner, Irene  
2002 *Semiotics of Peasants in Transition. Slovene Villagers and Their Ethnic Relatives in America*. Durham, Duke University Press.
- Putnam, Hilary  
2002 *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Radcliffe-Brown A. R.

1964 *Structure and Function in Primitive Societies*. New York, The Free Press.

1984 *The Andaman Islanders*. Glencoe, The Free Press of Glencoe.

Redfield, Robert

1930 *Tepoztlán. A Mexican Village*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Winner (Portis), Irene

1971 *A Slovenian Village. Žerovnica*. Providence, Brown University Press.

Wolf, Eric R.

1988 *Inventing Society*. In: *American Ethnologist* 15(4): 762–761.

## DRUŽBENA STRUKTURA IN SVOBODA. SEMIOTIČNE ŠTUDIJE KULTURE

*Avtorica v razpravi premišljuje o dibotomijah, ki so stalno navzoče pri razlagi fenomenov, s katerimi so se ali se v konkretni izkušnji terena srečujejo raziskovalci kulturnih praks. Osnovni kontrast je razmerje med statično in dinamično strukturo, tj. razmerje, ki pokriva temeljne konceptualizacije in napetosti, ki jih generira v obliki opozicij: mono- vs. polifunkcionalno; ciklični vs. linearni čas itn. Vsi ti dinamični poli labko nakazujejo pozitivne sile, npr. ustvarjalnost, domišljijo, osebno svobodo; v primeru rabe moči pa postanejo ti koncepti statični, njihov pomen se sprevrne, saj morajo služiti vladajočemu.*

*Emile Durkheim je klasificiral družbene strukture na način binarne opozicije kot mehanične ali organske. Tipa sta stabilna, prehod iz mehanične v organsko je le postopen – ne sloni na dejavnostih posameznika, podpira pa družbeno solidarnost. V prvem primeru je delitev dela enostavna, tj. po spolu in starosti, pri drugi pa kompleksnejša. V obeh primerih pa je družba homogena in se v njej posameznikova zavest težko razlikuje od skupinske zavesti [Durkheim 1958: 192, 194]. Nasproti Durkheimovemu modelu Winnerjeva izpostavlja model Erica Wolfa, ki zagovarja individualnost in heterogenost, saj posamezniki niso monade in družbene strukture niso monolitne.*

*Avtorica v nadaljevanju govori o Radcliffe-Brownu, ki je z delom *The Andaman Islanders* [1984], v mnogih ozirih uresničil Durkheimove perspektive. Pisca zanima družbena struktura, ki je (naj bi) obstajala pred pribodom Evropejcev. Pri tem se je oprl na spomine starejših, odmisli dogodke in menjave, nastale zaradi posegov Evropejcev, in z indukcijsko metodo, znano iz naravoslovnih znanosti, odkrival splošno v posebnem [1984: 123]. Uvedel je pojem rituala, ki je v marsičem paralelen Durkheimovemu svetemu, oba pa sta tvorila nadaljnje opozicije ritual/neritual, sveto/profano. Radcliffe-Brown meni, da družbeni fenomeni niso »rezultat narave cloveških bitij marveč rezultat družbene strukture, v kateri so povezani« [190–191].*

*Edward E. Evans-Pritchard prelamlja s pozitivistično, statično in protizgodovinsko držo Durkheima in Radcliffe-Browna, in se opre na drugo stran dibotomije – zgodovina/znanost – pri čemer umešča antropološke študije v humanistiko in ne v naravoslovne znanosti; časa ne dojema le ciklično, marveč tudi linearno, zato zapiše, da labko »struktura pomeni nekaj kot zgodovinski izraz niza razmerij, ki je vztrajal upoštevanja vredno časovno obdobje« [Evans-Pritchard 1962: 81].*

*Za geologa Stephena J. Goulda je geološki čas metaforično izražen kot časovna puščica in časovni cikel. Kdor razlikuje med znanostjo in zgodovino, spregleduje medsebojna razmerja med dejstvi in teorijo, med znanostjo in*

družbo. Ljudje so potopljani v kulturo in bkrati opremljeni z domišljijo ali abdukcijo, ki je po C. S. Peirceu edina logična operacija, ki prinaša nove ideje. Gould dodaja, da so vse dibotomije poenostavljeni modeli organizacije misli, ne pa načini, na katere funkcionira svet [Gould 1987: 8–9]. Pri tem je časovna puščica inteligibilnost različnih in neponovljivih dogodkov, časovni cikel pa inteligibilnost brezčasnega reda in zakonu podobne strukture [15–16]. Tudi v najpreprostejših družbah je čas ciklični, npr. pri letnem ciklu, in bkrati linearen, označen z enkratnimi dogodki, npr. spomini prič in tradicionalno zgodovino, porojeno iz zgodb in mitov.

Za Isaiaba Berlina [2002] je tako kot za Goulda konflikt med statičnim in dinamičnim načelom vgrajen v človeško tradicijo. Pri tem izbaja iz domneve, da je koncept svobode, ki smo ga podedovali od razsvetljenstva, preoblikovan, sprevrnjen, da bi podpiral avtoritativno vlogo vladajočega. Permutacije ponazori s šestimi misleci, pomembnimi pred in po francoski revoluciji, in jih presoja ob vprašanju, »zakaj bi moral biti posameznik pokoren drugemu posamezniku.« Na začetku so ti misleci zagovarjali svobodo, na koncu pa so vsi nasprotovali cilju Jobna Stuarda Milla, ki pravi, da je pravica posameznika, da svobodno živi svoje življenje, kakor si želi, a da so te pravice dane tudi drugemu [5]. Za Helvetiusa je človek pogojen, da dela dobro, družbi pa mora vladati elita znanstvenikov, kar je bilo po Berlinu pogosto opravičilo za totalitarne režime [26]. V Rousseaujevi družbeni pogodbi pomenita svoboda in avtoriteta eno. Vsak posameznik se mora podrediti celotni skupnosti [44], posameznikove pravice so izčrpane z družbeno pogodbo, ki izraža občo voljo. Po Fichteju nemška odvisnost od princa vodi do pobega v notranji jaz, a »jazi niso individualna človeška bitja.« Zato Fichteju človek brez družbe nič ne pomeni [67], obstaja samo skupina; svoboda pomeni podrediv [71]. Svoboda je moč, svoboda in zmaga sta eno. Berlin zaključuje, da sta bili stališči o svobodi navzoči že na začetku 19. stoletja in sta bkrati nespravljiva pogleda, liberalni in avtoritarni, odprt ali zaprt, pri čemer je bila beseda svoboda osrednji simbol za obe stališči. Za Hegla je posameznik zveden na abstraktni element konkretne družbene strukture. Kako je mogoče biti svoboden pri vrhovnem dubu, ki labko napove vsak posameznikov korak? Po marksistični poziciji menjave v družbi in z njimi posameznikovo življenje določajo nepreklicni postopki ravnanja v okviru teze, antiteze in nove sinteze. Svoboda se tako spremeni v nesvobodo. Po analizi Saint-Simona and Maistreja avtorica ugotovi, da je bila svoboda v razsvetljenski obliki največkrat okrnjena, ne glede na to, kako so jo redefiniirali ali racionalizirali, da bi jo prilagodili določeni ideologiji.

Premislek avtorica sklene s komentarjem misli Hillaryja Putnama [2002], pri čemer uporablja primere iz transnacionalne družbe, tj. vasi Žerovnica v Sloveniji in njenih družinskih članov in sorodstva v Clevelandu in Hibbingu, Minnesota. Zgodba dvojne družbe ponazarja nekatere interpretacije in odvisnost od konteksta pojmov svoboda, prostost, dinamika sprememb; koncepta individualnega, relativnosti prostora in prepustnosti meja. Pri tem je moč kot koncept in sila različno vtkana v vsa ta stališča, ki imajo ključne pomeni, ustrezne strukturi in spremembam človeške družbe.

Putnam ugotavlja, da je filozofija zgrešila cilj, da bi karkoli opisala z absolutnimi pojmi [45]. Naše presoje so oblikovane v določeni kulturi in določeni problemski situaciji, kar velja tako za znanstvena kot za etična vprašanja [45]. Razprava o dibotomiji dejstev in vrednosti izvira iz osiromašenega empiricističnega in pozneje osiromašenega logično pozitivističnega koncepta dejstva. Dejstvo in vrednost sta globoko in zapleteno prepredena [6].

Z upoštevanjem izbođišča, da so različni sklepi pomembni za naše mišljenje, a tudi za zgrešene predstave in analize kulturnih skupin, se avtorica osredotoči na transnacionalni primer Žerovnica.

Vas je okrog 70 km oddaljena od slovenske prestolnice, Ljubljane. Podeželska ekonomija je bila na pol samozadostna, z nizkimi prezežki za tržišče. Lastniki so imeli povprečno okrog 8,27 hektarja, nekaj kmečkih družin

je bilo brez zemlje, redki pa več kot 50 hektarjev. V vasi je 59 hiš, služnostne obveznosti so bile odpravljene leta 1848. Agrarna kriza ob koncu 19. stoletja je povzročila široko razširjeno izseljevanje v Združene države. Časa med obema vojnoma se vaščani spominjajo kot časa revščine in naraščajočih težav za emigracijo in vojaškega nabora. Med drugo svetovno vojno so Italijani in Nemci zasedli Slovenijo in so se morali spoprijeti s partizanskim odporom, ki so se mu pridružili mnogi vaščani. Za prva leta po vojni je značilna kolektivizacija, ki pa je bila uspešna le do določene meje. Odpravljena je bila lokalna avtonomija in zaostril se je nadzor nad lokalnim trgov stavbnega lesa in živine, kar je negativno vplivalo na kmečko ekonomijo. Komunistična vladavina se je nehalo leta 1991, ko je po kratkem obdobju upora Slovenija dosegla neodvisnost.

Medtem so izseljenci v Clevelandu, v industrijskem jeklarskem središču, začeli sestavljati »majbno Slovenijo«, v kateri je bila Žerovnica zelo dobro predstavljena. Kompleksna interkomunikacija in spreminjanje nazorov Žerovničanov doma in na drugi strani oceana, kakor tudi vztrajanje in spreminjajoči se pomeni mnogih tradicionalnih vzorcev, ritualov in objektov, so avtorico napotili, da je obe skupnosti obravnavala kot trdno speti, ustvarjalni, transnacionalni fenomen.

Kaj nam torej za semiotično interpretacijo spreminjajoče transnacionalne skupnosti, ki živi na dveh kontinentih, prinašajo obravnave omenjenih avtorjev? Gre za pogled, ki preseže prve vtise o spokojnem in estetsko očarljivem občestnem naselju, obkroženem z negovanimi progami, ki jih je v pradednem času nadziral grajski grof, in splošni skupni aforizem »Tu smo si prijazni in vsi imamo enak delež zemlje.«

Putnamova prepletenost različnih dibotomij je posebej relevantna pred in po obdobju izseljevanja. Dejstva in vrednosti so med seboj povezane in oblikovane v določeni kulturi in s pogledom opazovalca, a s temi pridržki vzdržujejo objektivno veljavnost. Stavbni les, ki so ga včasih imeli za zlato, je pomenil vladajočim grožnjo, saj so želeli v celoti nadzirati zasebno industrijo. Po Evansu-Pritchardu je bila zgodovina močan formativni dejavnik, zgodovinska zavest o različnih obdobjih od tlačenstva do današnjih dni je pri vaščanib zelo uzaveščena. Kljub zunanjim vtisom o vasi Žerovnica kot nespremenljivi in homogeni, lepo razmejeni vasi in kmetib, ki srečno sodelujejo, kakor je Radcliffe-Brown videl andamanske otočane ali Robert Redfield Tepotzlan, te percepcije ne izražajo resničnosti notranjega pogleda samib vaščanov. Različne pripadnosti in spremembe v družbeni strukturi in vrednotah so podobne Gouldovemu poudarjenemu ravnovesju.

Skozi Berlinovo delo lahko ugotovimo, da so bila v zgodovini vasi najmanj štiri pomembna obdobja. Od 1890 so spomini in rituali na semiotičnem nivoju povezovali migrante in vaščane. Novo moč in nove pomene so dobili, ko so bili vaščani ločeni od migrantov. V vseh teh dogodkih prostor ni bil fiksiran, temveč semiotiziran, obogaten z določenimi vrednostmi (pomen cerkve, grajskega grofa). Tradicionalna glasba, ki je zginila v času komunističnega obdobja, je postala semiotični indeks čezoceanskib vaščanov, ki so organizirali zbor in ob pogostih obiskih domov prinesli vaščanom znova obujene pesmi. Vsakdanji objekti so bili prepojeni z novimi vrednostmi, ki so postale posebej razločne v etnični skupnosti, a tudi v domači vasi. V Clevelandu obnovljeni kozolec je postal močan simbol nekdanjib vaškib dejavnosti. V vseh teh primerib navideznib binarnib opozicij je treba upoštevati Peirceov tretji, tj. simbolični, indeksikalni in ikonični nivo znakovnih tekstov. Peirceov koncept zmotljivosti in abdukcija se nanašata na kompleksen prepadek dejstva in vrednosti in tudi drugib opozicij, statične in dinamične strukture kot opozicije spreminjajočib vrednosti prostora in spreminjajoče družbene strukture. Zato Žerovnica ni niti Redfieldov Tepotzlan niti Radcliffe-Brownovi andamanski otočani.

---

Prof. dr. Irene Portis-Winner  
986 Memorial Drive, Cambridge MA, 02138, ZDA