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Against Capital-S Sociology

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For the longest while, at least over the course of the century just past, a substantial group of very intelligent men (and increasingly, of late, women) have taken upon themselves the most excellent vocation of advancing the cause of something they call, unqualifiedly, "Sociology." It would be hard, indeed, to dispute that their cause is a good one. With or without the strong capital S, sociology (or, if you prefer, Sociology) is an honorable and vitally important human activity. In this respect, proponents of Sociology are entirely beyond reproach.

Still, as associates of this good cause know very well, questions have been raised, if not about them as individuals, about their practices. At the defiant extreme of opposition, one question asked is, roughly: Where do these jokers get off taking their very local men's-club understanding of sociology as though it were a Sociology in the sense of a "singular, properly disciplined, and open-membership professional guild"? The question is defiant because it is posed out of chronic irritation arising from years of exclusion, real and imagined. Fortunately, there is a more temperate version of the question, which is, roughly: If there is a *Sociology*, as obviously there is in some real sense, then should it, or can it, represent the very great number of actually existing *sociologies*? As a sign of how things have changed in recent years, the classic source of the more temperate version of the question was Alvin Gouldner, who, in his day, was anything but temperate. Gouldner was first among equals in a movement that took on steam in the late 1960s—a concerted effort to rethink Sociology as sociologies (or, in the quaint phrase of that day, as a multiple-paradigm science).

Curiousier still, in contrast to *Against Essentialism*, the book of present attentions, Gouldner expressed his renegade view in—among other places—a book he called *For Sociology* (1973). This was a bit of a joke on Louis Althusser's at-the-time well-read book, *For Marx* (1965). Whether the author of *Against Essentialism* had in mind either of these older works when he chose his title, I cannot say. What I can say is that I did have them in mind, but sadly so, when I chose the title "Against Sociology" for this little essay. The sadness descends from the fact of life today that one can only be *for* something by first being *against* what would be called, in a now quaint word of this day, its "other." Inasmuch as it is very, very difficult to be *for* anything when one must start out *against* something of purportedly like, but arguably unlike, kind, the author of *Against Essentialism* deserves very high marks for his accomplishment.

In *Against Essentialism*, Stephan Fuchs offers a clever, intelligent, and robust defense of the deep structural properties of capital-S Sociology. Those who share Professor Fuchs's vision of capital-S Sociology will adore this book. They have sought and needed such a one for a long time now. Finally, it is here. If it serves them well, then it will serve all sociologies no less well. The only fear is that, like so many other ambitious and important books, it could be well praised and oft cited, but little read. The writing is quite good, occasionally hilarious, sometimes irritatingly apodictic, but

always direct and learned. It is not, I have found, the kind of book one takes to the beach or keeps by the bed. It demands wide-awake, upright reading. Those willing to pay the price will reap its rewards.

Against Essentialism deserves mention in a distinguished company of books that, over the years, have tried to care for Sociology, the science, as Fuchs does. Sociology is constantly redefining itself, but never more urgently than during and since the turmoil of the 1960s. Hence, the special place of Gouldner's later writings, beginning with *Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970) and *For Sociology* (1973) and including the great works of the end of his life (Antonio 2002). Gouldner aimed to rethink Sociology's *within* from a critical Marxist *without*. Somewhat later, Randy Collins did much the same, though without more than a shadow of Marxism behind his already mature commitments to the explanatory *within* of Sociology. His *Conflict Sociology* (1975) is an important but, today, largely neglected work. Collins, it hardly need be said, is of a younger generation than Gouldner's (though for a while Collins was a close associate of his in the founding of the magazine *Theory and Society*). Still, in the phrase Althusser himself helped to popularize, they were caught in the same "conjuncture"—the events that Immanuel Wallerstein aptly calls "the revolution of 1968." Wallerstein, closer in age and training to Gouldner's generation, deserves a mention in this all-too-brief history because his own challenge to capital-S Sociology appeared the year before Collins's *Conflict Sociology* and, unlike the works of this era by Gouldner and Collins, initiated an enduring change in Sociology by refusing to play its game. From (and since) the first volume of *The Modern World System* (1974), Wallerstein's work has had the effect of starting a new field of analysis that cuts across the official disciplines.

These three, among others, illustrate the three obvious ways by which any field like Sociology can be rethought—from without (as Gouldner did), from within (Collins), and by starting over (Wallerstein). None is analytically distinct from the others. All three ways overlap. All exhibit a loyalty to sociology, at least, and usually also to Sociology. The 1970s were, it seems, the era of stock-taking, during when these alternatives established themselves as deeper, more serious attempts to save sociology in ways that were not superficially (and passingly) experimental.

If *Against Essentialism* was written self-consciously with reference to works of this kind, it was not so much any of these (though Collins's and Jon Turner's witnesses on the value of explanatory sociology are clearly important) as it was postwar German social thought. Not, decidedly, Habermas, but Niklas Luhmann, who may well have been, if not one of Fuchs's teachers, a mentor.¹ Luhmann's rethinking of systems theory in Sociology (including his hostility to Habermas's quasitranscendental critical theory) is the principal ghost that haunts *Against Essentialism*. One cannot turn a page of the book without sensing the hammer's head ready to strike the hardening steel of very tough ideas: *Care for Sociology; forget the imitators. Think networks; forget actors. Think variation; get rid of essences; und so weder*. Every *for* comes with its *against*, never more strikingly than in my favorite chapter, "How to Sociologize with a Hammer," where Fuchs ranges far and wide beyond the resources of Sociology, rejecting what he considers junk, forging what he considers useful into Sociology's *within*. For myself, I agree at many points with Fuchs's critique of essentialism, even though I think the *outsider-within* position offers the better leverage. There is much to admire in Fuchs's *insider-without*

¹See Luhmann (1994), which was translated by Fuchs, who that same year published a notorious essay on deconstruction under a title and with an argument that belie his debt to Luhmann (Fuchs and Ward 1994).

approach, even when it goes too far or hammers too harshly. In any case, Fuchs offers his own amalgam of the three ways of the 1970s and deserves consideration in the company of those who led the way, which is a company, not of the like-minded, but of the similarly intended.

Readers will wonder about the book's title. To be *against essentialism* is to risk association with a good many of the extra-Sociological sociologies of culture, race, gender, sex and sexuality, postcolonial and identity politics, and much else. Given that the various closet sociologies are the principal source of the critique of essentialism about which one hears so much today, one must ask: What is Fuchs up to? What's the trick? These lowercase-s sociologies are, at least in part, that against which Fuchs directs his *Against Essentialism*. But, like him, they (whatever one thinks of them) are against essentialism. They are also, however, the very pretender sociologies that capital-S Sociology resents and dismisses by some generalizing phrase like *merely postmodern*. Fuchs makes it more than plain that he, too, is against the merely postmodern. Still, the genius of his book is that he discharges these other sociologies while also criticizing essentialism as it occurs in capital-S Sociology. I am not the least persuaded by his complaints against the merely postmodern (mostly because they are usually dismissed out of hand). But you have to respect the man's bravado.

Essentialism, the metaphysical concept, goes back at least to Aristotle. To hold, as this philosophical position does, that things have essences is to hold many things at once. In metaphysics, essentialism is the view that behind the being of objects there are essential categories. Today, analytic philosophy often calls these "natural kinds" (Fuchs 2001:122). Any naturally occurring woman, as she walks the street, is real only insofar as she is an instance of Woman, the natural kind. In premodern metaphysics (before Locke and Hume, then Kant; that is, not Heidegger), essentialism was a powerful philosophical position because, in cultures themselves inclined toward enduring and universal ideas, it was a ready principle from which everything necessary to metaphysics could be derived. Ontologically, if Being comprises essences, then the reality of particular things is a predicate of nothing less than the essential categories. If this, then epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics are all investigations into the essential nature of Being itself. Hence, traditionally, realism was a philosophy of essences for the most part. What opposition there was came in the form of various nominalisms (that the reality of particulars resides solely in their names). Still, in metaphysics, even certain nominalisms, anticipating Leibnitz, took the position that the names applied to essences, including individual essences. Just the same, nominalism was a classical form of the skepticism that blossomed in the modern era.

In modern philosophy, since at least Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1689), the realism controversy developed as an argument between empiricism and rationalism. Herein lay the persuasive power of Kant's formulation a century later. Modern philosophy, at least as it passed down into sociology, began with Kant's famous *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), where he developed to a considerable satisfaction the possibility of reason in the absence of proofs for the existence of the *ding an sich* (the thing itself). Kant threw out pure reason in order to salvage reason itself—this by locating it in the *a posteriori* mental categories, thus permitting practical reason to do the work that essentializing forms of pure reason attributed to the categories as *a priori* essences.

Whether or not one cares one way or the other about the philosophical issues, even a most cursory history easily demonstrates their importance to Sociology. Without

Kant, no Hegel; therefore, no Marx and, *mutatis mutandis*, neither Weber nor Durkheim (but possibly Chicago). Capital-S Sociology, in its main classical dispensations, has been inclined toward realism *and* empiricism, but also toward an essentialism of practical reason. Where there were exceptions—as in Simmel, the gloomy side of Weber, the early Marx, the later Durkheim, and so on—the exceptions were generally swallowed up by one or another essentialism. From *Protestant Ethic* (1904–1905) on, Weber held that the three types of authority and social order were essentially distinct (hence, his despair and the peculiar attitude toward the charismatic type). From *German Ideology* (1845–1846) on, Marx held the elementary labor process as the essential formula whereby ownership determined the modes of the production, even under despotism, where ownership was, at best, a figure of speech. The Durkheim of *Elementary Forms* (1912), the first serious argument for the idea that mental categories are actually socially constructed, went too far by suggesting that all societies construct them essentially the same way.

Sociological essentialisms are, thus, an excellent illustration of the limitations of essentialisms of all kinds. Whereas philosophical essentialisms tend to underestimate (or otherwise ignore) human freedom, essentialisms in Sociology (even when they are not structuralisms) tend to overestimate central tendencies at the expense of variance, thereby crippling its ability to generate empirically robust theories of social differences. This is why capital-S Sociology has been among the objects of criticism (not to mention derision) thrown down by various closet sociologies. Conversely, Sociology has dismissed each and all variants of the merely postmodern, including those (like various feminisms) that very often share capital-S Sociology's objections to theories even remotely French. Of these, none is more striking and persistent than feminism in Sociology (Alway 1995; cf. Thorne and Stacey 1985). The sad story of Sociology's resistance to feminisms could just as well be retold as the tale of its long marriage to methodological essentialism.

If women, in their particulate occurrences, are taken to be instances of a natural kind, then Sociology enjoys the convenience of taking gender as the sufficient variable unto a Sociology of Womankind. This operation works, however, if—and only if—gender is essentialized (even if as a nominal) as the covering concept for variations in the category of which women are proper members. Not incidentally, gender must also be stipulated a dichotomous variable, a move that benefits Sociology more than women in that it disallows (on technical grounds) the ever more probable likelihood that gender is better understood as continuous, probably contingent, certainly local (though not necessarily constructed), and surely not an essence (Butler 1990; cf. Fuchs 2001:67–68, *inter alia*). Hence, a particular woman is Sociologically interesting as a token of the gender type, considered dichotomously, as a digital—as, that is, the other to the one and only essential type, of which the standard measure is its deviation from the norm of Maleness (Goffman 1963:128–29). Though, to be sure, there are technical as well as principled attempts to get around this problem, it remains. Sociology understands variation as inherently measurable according to valid and reliable standards able to lend numerical weight to variables; the real variance will be artificially limited and differences ruled out (literally, measured away). Hence, also, the risk some feminisms take of reverting to a counteressentialism of the capital-O Other. Essentialisms—whether Sociological or sociological, whether Feminist or feminist, whether Homosexual or queer, and so on—are everywhere in any thinking enterprise that concerns itself with purportedly real social things. The question to ask of essentialisms is, therefore: Wherein subsists the reality of particular things, including social ones? If asked, always, in reference to real or purportedly real social things,

such as women, such a question allows practical and routine inquiry to determine how and which truths (if any) can be distinguished in respect to which real variations.

Stephan Fuchs understands all this very well, and with uncommon philosophical sophistication. He begins, therefore, as a Sociologist must, with Sociology's interest in the real (p. 2):

My major question is how cultures and observers do their work. . . . I am more interested in differences between modes of relating to the world, not constants or universals. If there are constants, this is because they are being held constant by an observer. When this happens, essences appear, along with things-in-themselves or natural kinds. Essences prosper in the deep core of cultures, where they house that which they cannot even consider, let alone deconstruct. The literature has many different terms for this core, including paradigm, tacit knowledge, practices, ethnomethods, common sense, and pretheoretical understanding.

It is important to understand that statements like this one launch a book that is in fact a program, if not a prolegomenon, and that the book itself is, in effect, a series of enunciations stipulating a Sociology that *ought* to be (as distinct from being that Sociology itself). This is fair, I think. Fuchs believes, as he says, that Sociology can be "a great science" (p. 6). This is why he is *against essentialisms*, since to be for them (whether knowingly or not) is to make it impossible to be *for Sociology* as he understands it.

The key to Sociology is the observer, by which Fuchs means neither the mind of some individual observer nor the mythical observer of Sociological ethnography—the one who heroically struggles with his own disinterestedness while trying to get closer to the real social things (pp. 43–47). Fuchs's observer is actually not a person at all, but a position in a network. "In the beginning, there were networks" (p. 337). This is the first of 25 wonderfully instructive theses with which Fuchs ends the book (pp. 337–39). Another of his theses bears on the idea of a network: "Persons do not act, much less act rationally. 'Action' is how some observers make sense of some events. Personhood is an institution" (p. 338; or, in the text, p. 104):

The basic antiessentialist premise is that "action" and "behavior," "persons" and "things," "nature" and "society," "science" and "humanism," and the other dichotomies are indeed not opposite poles of Being, separated by an unbridgeable essentialist gap. Rather, they are social devices of description and explanation that co-vary with other sociological variables, such as the status of observers, the conditions of observing, and the degree to which an observed system has been rendered predictable through normal science.

Passages like this one (of which there are many) are likely to drive the reader nuts. In one breath Fuchs says things that sound very *nouveau* (such as, forget the dichotomies because they make for essences), while in the next he is quite *ancien* (such as, submit observations to the judgments of normal science). What is going on here?

What is going on is that Fuchs is offering a most original reformulation of both systems and network theories in which the emphasis is less on the feedback loops or pathways resolving system tensions than on the "systems of relations wherein differences can matter" (p. 11). Those of us raised on Talcott Parsons and other earlier versions of systems analysis can hardly imagine such a statement. Again, you go a bit crazy. The things he says are neither quite what one was taught nor what one reads

today. Are not the merely postmoderns the ones preoccupied with differences? Is not the emphasis on relations and differences the very contrary of a coherent science? Whatever may be the debilitating effects of essentialism, does not an overriding emphasis on differences make empirical research technically unwieldy, if not impossible? If social reality is nothing but relations, do we not lapse into a world of observers observing observations in a plentitude of variation? The answer Fuchs would give is (like much of what he says) a loud and didactic *NO, of course not!*

Antiessentialist realism (to which Fuchs devotes an entire chapter) is precisely about variance. “Realism increases as the result of many interacting variables, . . . when a culture is grounded in routine machines, tools, and instruments” (p. 330). One can only say “Two cheers for Fuchs!” It is as plain as day that the difficulty Sociology has had in becoming the Science it aspires to be is that so much of its technical competence has been devoted to the control of measurement errors in the name of isolating causal pathways attributable to variables removed from routine operations. The technical progress Sociology has made in this respect must be admired. But, the progress has been at the expense of explanations of real and abiding social differences in favor of clear and distinct working variables. The problem is not the practical work itself, but in the thinking that inspires it and issues from it. If you cook your data with enough catsup, you’ll have a dish tasty to the kids who want familiar tastes. But if you want your data to taste like something real, you’ll have to find a way to mix the tastes so that none is diminished. The best stews are not familiar, but an unusual combination of the strangely complex. The real world is a stew of this kind, not an extruded snack. Overdone data create the appearance of a capital-S Science, but they are not Sociology, which, if it is to be both antiessentialist and real, must allow for the social reality of irrevocable variance and difference. That is the trick Fuchs seeks to turn. *Against Essentialism* is neither a cookbook nor a textbook. But it is a handbook of aphorisms and meditations that collectively compose an almost always thoughtful compendium of everything you need to know to know the real world without being merely postmodern.

Still, I give Fuchs only two cheers, deeply felt though they are. In the end, it seems to me that the *Againsts* from which he distinguishes his *Fors* are too needlessly many and too crankily dismissed. The result is that the book’s defense of Sociology too often consumes without digesting the actual variance in the network of observers of this real, actually existing, world, such as it may be, ontologically speaking.

Some of us are, in effect, against capital-S Sociology precisely because we consider sociology so very important. The trouble with capital-S Sociology is only partly its not-very-well-thought-through essentialism. The even more troubling aspect of disciplinary Sociology is that it has become so needlessly defensive. There is a difference between a carefully worked through *against* and defensiveness. Again Fuchs is a marvel. He is not defensive in the usual obsequious manner. But he is by his off-handed treatment of that which he opposes: for example: “There is nothing new in postmodernism; its central topics—for example, the death of the Subject, antifoundationalism, or the critique of representation—can be recovered from the classics, without all the philosophical essentialism [sic!] of postmodernist critiques” (p. 3). The merely postmodern is far from the only baby thrown out with the bath water. So too are ethnomethodology, constructivism, capital-S Science, capital-C Culture, the Double Hermeneutic, and certainly deconstruction, among others. Where he bothers to say more about his *Againsts*, one hardly recognizes the subject (as in the case of ethnomethodology, pp. 43–47). When he delves into the details, they come out transformed into something truly obnoxious.

Stephan Fuchs is such a trustworthy guide to the ideas he favors that it is a shame not to be able to trust his dismissals, of which the most notorious is his earlier essay on deconstruction (Fuchs and Ward 1994a). It is not that it is worthless—hardly that. But it does raise doubts about the method. Here he (apologies to Steven Ward) quotes not quite one line from Derrida (and that not from the principal source of Derrida's early thinking on the subject). All the rest is from secondary commentators. Then when he is called on his interpretation of Derrida (Agger 1994), he responds that the trouble with Agger is that “he has nothing at all to say about the substance of our argument” (Fuchs and Ward 1994b:506), when what Agger was saying was that Fuchs had nothing to say about the substance of Derrida's argument. You might have thought that in the passage of time, this sort of wise-guy dismissal would have softened somewhat. But no, and apart from the book, we see it again in 2001 in a review so nasty as to make your hair stand on end (Fuchs 2002), beginning with the title “To Whom It May Concern.” Well, for one, it concerns me quite a lot when we speak to each other that way. We guys do this sort of thing to each other all the time. But isn't there a limit somewhere? Of course there is, and the limit is to be found in the desiderata of Fuchs's own book.

If, in the beginning, there are networks, and if networks nest observations, and, given that Sociology (like some but not all networks) must observe itself, then, by extension, observations of Sociology may (if not must) take place in some network other than formally organized disciplinary Sociology itself. Fuchs allows for—indeed, he insists on—the necessity of observations of networks from within. I agree unreservedly with his critique of the transcendental observing Subject. Self-observation is indeed one of the important ways the networks underlying cultures and sciences “care” for themselves (p. 42). Sociology cannot be disinterested, he says (pp. 42, 339) because like other network-embedded cultures, its business is this self-caring. This notion of cultures as caring for themselves is easily the most disarmingly tender thought in the whole book. If Fuchs means it, then he must care for what he means, and this leads to complications having to do with the self-referential nature of systems and networks. They may observe others. But, in caring for themselves, how do they avoid self-involvement? At one point, Fuchs says self-caring is to avoid being “care-less” (p. 42), but in the end (p. 339) he clearly also means “caring” in the more tender sense. You cannot speak of caring as a virtue of cultures without facing up to the entailments of the figure you chose, even if (and especially if) you mean only to avoid being “care-less.”

To dismiss too handily, or too nastily, is at least careless. It is also not to care about the network. In Sociology, as in other social networks, there may be capital criminals who do not deserve to be cared for. But we must be as cautious in these executions as in all others. The reason for this caution is, of course, that to kill too readily is to be care-less about the network and one's own interests in keeping it going. If you doubt this, ask yourself if you'd choose to live in Texas—or, for that matter, in a capital-S Sociology that executes its own, or those at least seeking to be wise to its ways. More likely than not, if you had a choice, you'd look for some other network to live in, because you understand very well that anyone is at some risk in most networks, any number of which come with a hangman looking for work.

Where Fuchs's hammer builds him a gallows is, precisely, in his rejection of resources among the lower case-s sociologies—in particular, feminism. Of all the traditions of thought that have taken capital-S Sociology seriously without necessarily being merely postmodern, feminism leads the list. It is true that a great deal of feminist sociology draws on thinking outside *the* Network. But, since at least the

earliest writings of Dorothy Smith (1974) in the 1970s, sociological feminism has taken seriously the questions Fuchs puts at the center of Sociology. The first, if not only, point of standpoint feminism is precisely that one observes the world, not as persons, but from positions in networks. Hence, what women see is different from what men see—not because they are smarter, but because their experiences are shaped by different networks. Neither Smith nor any other feminist theorist has used *network* as Fuchs does. But they mean much the same sort of thing—up to a point. The point, among others, is chiefly that standpoint feminists want to avoid “objectified knowledge,” which they very often consider a result of the prevailing “relations of ruling” (Smith 1974:14–18), which, in real social networks, are still today, generally speaking, relations ruled by men. There is an important difference between standpoint (and other) feminisms and what Fuchs wants to achieve for Sociology. He believes that a science (lower case-s) is possible for Sociology, even if the S in Sociology’s science is only implied. It is true that, by and large, most feminisms reject the authority of the disciplines, even when they are important players in their fields, as they are in Sociology.

What, more specifically, might Fuchs and those who will be enchanted by his book have to gain from giving up their defensive dismissals of other networks? There is one example from *Against Essentialism* that is particularly striking. The book is about culture, to be sure. But if there is one concept that is just as difficult to tame as *culture*, and also one without which it is hard to make sense of culture, it is *power*. Fuchs recognizes this: “Power is the juice that flows through the networks, without ever being concentrated in a single source or reservoir” (p. 260). Still, save for a few pages here and there, he has little to say about how that juice may flow differently in different networks, some of which surely are less well electrified than others. One cannot fairly expect Fuchs to take the feminist position on networks, their cultures, and their juice. But somewhere it might occur that there are real classes of persons whose networks have insufficient power to see the light of day; that, having less power, they might have a different—perhaps even a more acute—ability to observe in networks from which they are excluded, not to mention those in which they are proper members. This is precisely the point of standpoint feminism—a point as old as Hegel’s master-slave doctrine. Women and slaves, among others of relatively under-juiced networks, may be forced to use their lack of power to sharpen their observing cultures. In either case, you can be sure that they know differently and certainly know what they know on the basis of an ability to do precisely what Fuchs wants from his Sociology—to know relations, not essences, in order to understand differences and variances.

Another feminist who has been at once indifferent to the merely postmodern and loyal to Sociology very well illustrates this alternative. For some time now, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) has attempted to rework the sociology of feminist standpoints. Among her most challenging ideas is one borrowed from outside Sociology, the matrix of domination (Collins 1990:221–38). Though the influence of Weber is apparent (domination), the possibilities of the matrix figure for network theory are nearly as clear. The network metaphor tends, at best, toward the two-dimensional. Fuchs clearly wants to go well beyond the feedback-loop and pathway thinking of earlier systems and network theories. He wants, in short, a multidimensional view of networks as being capable of generating different observations. What better figure than the matrix, which (whether taken from mathematics or the movies) is, by its nature, multidimensional? Of course, this is not about figures of speech. Still, it is about getting sociology done properly, and one can hardly get it done without a more

robust theory of power than what one finds in *Against Essentialism*. Some networks have juice. Others have the juice cut off when the powers decide to enforce a curfew. Collins proposes a solution. You cannot have a sociological theory of culture or knowledge with a theory of power because it is at least likely that what one knows, for better or worse, is a function not of juice but of learning to live without it. Fuchs seems to believe that the entailment of his first thesis ("In the beginning, there were networks") is that everyone lives in some or another network and that all networks are at least similar, if not the same. This may not be essentialism, but neither is it a robust theory of variance and social differences.

One might wonder if, as Fuchs admits, Sociology's network is different from some others in being required to observe itself, then in what does this difference subsist? Collins would say (and here she would agree with Smith and others) that, apart from Sociology, there are sociologies in networks in which observations are made by the "outsider-within" (Collins 1998:3–78, *inter alia*; cf. Smith 1974:21–24). Fuchs recognizes this possibility (pp. 35–40), but he resolves its tensions in favor of his own *insider-without*, where the without is highly circumspect. He grants that the outside observer has a different angle, but it is not an angle (especially not in the case of Sociology) from which he can accomplish real science, which is always facing variances that must not be covered by essentializing ideas. In short, much like the short shrift he gives to real outsiders, whatever their relations to the network of Sociology, Fuchs may well have limited himself needlessly.

Against Essentialism is an excellent book. Its first words are a confession that it is "unfinished and incomplete" (p. 1). And so it is. But it is a compelling beginning from which to begin the next book, in which Fuchs might very well care for the Sociological network he defends by being less care-less, more caring, about the networks he dismisses.

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