

## SPECIAL COMMENTARY

### Living Theory

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As someone who has been teaching theory courses for 35 years, I had a visceral reaction to Alan Sica's editorial, "A Million Words of 'Theory,'" (*Contemporary Sociology*, July 2013). For him, the gold standard of the theory text is the two-volume 1961 edition of *Theories of Society*—a "monumental" compilation by Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, Kasper Naegele and Jesse Pitts with 169 excerpts from 87 theorists, amounting to, Alan notes, 1.4 million words plus 29 pages of bibliography. Next to this, he laments, subsequent compilations of the classics of social theory look slight: Ritzer's history of social theory weighs in at 367,000 words, Charles Lemert's anthology at 444,000 while Sica's own textbook comes in at a mighty 663,000 words and 144 authors, but still less than half the gold standard.

Why is a great Weber scholar like Alan Sica counting words to measure theory? I have always found Alan's knowledge of social theory staggering and inspiring, but I confess that it also induces in me a deep sense of inadequacy. If all this knowledge, or even a small proportion of it, is what it takes to be a social theorist or to teach social theory, then I'm dead in the water before I begin. I don't command a full understanding of even a tiny fraction of these theorists. And if I'm intimidated, what about those students for whom these textbooks are designed?

As I explain in more detail below, in my approach to teaching theory, less is more. By engaging students with a limited selection of key texts, they learn much more than in the survey approach represented by these textbooks. I use the word "survey" advisedly both in the general and technical sense. Each excerpt included in these texts is treated as a data point from the population

of possible social theories. They are then organized into categories, labeled and classified. As in a social survey, there is a double *decontextualization*: the excerpts are severed from their historical context as well as from the context of the editorial process that selects some and omits others. So too, there is a double *disconnection*: the excerpts are separated from one another as if they were independent entities, obscuring the ways in which they are in dialogue with one another, but they are also separated from other potential excerpts from the same theorist.

Alan Sica's *Social Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Present* is a case in point. In his short introduction he laments "the harsh financial forces that rule publishing today" that forced him to cut the length of the manuscript in half and the number of theorists from 185 to 144, so that whole populations (in particular women and theorists from the Africa, Latin America and Asia) had to be excluded. Nowadays the costs of publishing, especially reprint fees, make a "book like Parsons' huge *Theory of*

<sup>1</sup> My pedagogy has not arisen *tabula rasa*. It has been shaped by my own experiences as a student—both negative and positive. Among the latter I would mention two: my high school mathematics teachers, and Don Levine's introductory graduate theory course at the University of Chicago. Subsequently, I had the good fortune to teach with Adam Przeworski who showed me how theories can converse, to collaborate with dedicated teaching assistants who made theory live with an astonishing inventiveness, and to engage with legions of spirited Berkeley undergraduates who have made teaching theory the exciting and challenging project that it remains to this day. Finally, thanks to Alan Sica, ever the magnanimous editor, for encouraging me to write this response.

*Society* out of the question.” In addition, Alan avers, by eclipsing what little consensus there was, the canon wars have now made the editor’s job even more difficult. He reels off lists of theorists that deserve recognition, but were denied inclusion on the grounds of space, and apologizes to each and all for subjecting them to the editor’s ax. Surprisingly, that’s all we hear from Alan—the rest of the book places his chosen excerpts in chronological order without context or connection. This is the theory survey par excellence.

I have never had the chance to observe Alan Sica in a classroom, but I’ve seen my colleagues—devotees of the survey approach—assign graduate students hundreds of pages of Hegel, Marx, Weber and Durkheim each week. The subtext is: this is what you must know—learn it, regurgitate it, don’t question it. Similarly, in a textbook-based undergraduate course, the teacher wields the textbook over the students, expecting them to absorb one theorist after another, all too often in an incoherent and disconnected manner. The students are taught to survey the mountain range from below, rather than attempting to climb one or more mountains and see things from their summits.

Perhaps it’s good to get a glimpse of the mountain range. But it can only be a glimpse, for few can read and absorb such a vast terrain. So it easily becomes an excuse for the teacher not to engage the class, or more problematically, for the teacher to rule over the class, to deliver himself (or, less likely, herself) beyond contestation, favoring those who come with the cultural capital in an absurd game of make believe. You pretend to teach, we pretend to learn. Introduction to theory thus becomes a disciplinary tool, and all too often for first semester graduate students, a hazing ritual in which the instructor becomes a high-priest putting them in touch with the Gods. Quickly, they learn the rules of the game so well that they are not even aware that they are playing it. No wonder that today some colleagues object to classical theory *tout court* as a pile of dead wood, confined to the past, a distraction from serious scientific engagement, from the real problems of the day.

But if this textbook-based survey approach is flawed, what is the alternative? One

possibility is the *interpretive* approach to social theory which is designed to bring the theory and the theorist into relation with one another and to the world in which they live, in a dynamic three-way relation. Charles Camic’s approach to theory is the prototype and Bourdieu’s field theory can help. This interpretive approach to the history of ideas, if it is to be more than placing theory and theorist in their life and times, requires a sophisticated theory of knowledge. It replaces the survey approach with a focus on a single theorist whose theory is constituted at the intersection of biography and history.

Another interpretive approach focuses on a selection of excerpts from the great thinkers of the past derived from the editor’s own distinctive theoretical vision, which is then promoted through its projection into the past. That’s what Parsons tried to do, by selecting pieces constructed as stepping stones to his own theory. Here excerpts are connected to one another in a teleological manner, culminating in this case in the architectonics of structural functionalism. By clarifying the criteria of excerpt selection, at least, this has the virtue of being open to critique.

These two interpretive approaches break from the survey in two contradictory directions: the first underlines the singularity of theory as a product of a specific time and place, even of a specific author, while the second strips the historical context away and instead presents the history of theory as a long staircase ascending into the present. As a teaching strategy, however, they may leave students just as bewildered as in the simple survey approach. Here too students are expected to be passive receptacles of the packaged knowledge congealed in the text book.

In my own teaching I have attempted to develop a third approach, what I call the *ethnographic* approach to social theory. It replaces the search for a universe of theories that are connected by an inner destiny with a focus on the connections within theories as well as connections among theories, although without any superimposed teleology. The development of this dual connectedness opens up a new relation of students to theory, which is no longer external to them.

Like ethnographers, students are not simply observers but *participant* observers, they learn that they are theorists themselves. They learn to live in theory so that theory begins to take root in them, occupying their lives, shaping their imagination. This may sound preposterous, so let me explain.

In opposition to the survey, the ethnographic approach focuses on a series of carefully chosen *extracts* from the original texts of each theorist, extracts that students can manageably study in the allotted time—from a few paragraphs to 10 or so pages per class depending on their difficulty. These extracts are like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle that are slowly assembled in the course of a dialogue between teacher and taught. Like the ethnographer's field notes they are read and re-read as they are put into relation with successive extracts (from the same theorist). Each extract is interpreted in the light of what came before and is re-interpreted in the light of what comes after. Slowly but surely, piece by piece, we create a vision of the whole.

Once the theoretical architecture is built, it is subjected to systematic critique, by searching out both internal contradictions and external anomalies—the latter often leading back to the former. External anomalies derive not so much from historical analysis, but from the lived experiences of the students themselves. Great theories harbor great contradictions that feed their continued discussion and relevance. The point, however, is not only to underline the limitations of a given theory, but also to seek to resolve those contradictions by reconstructing the theory on its own terms, that is, on the basis of its own assumptions rather than by adding arbitrary postulates. The idea is to refute the refutation. Students gradually master this technique of reconstructive critique through their own practice.

Critique of one theorist provides the basis for advancing to the next. The anomalies and contradictions can be addressed *either* within the theorist's original set of assumptions, thereby building a theoretical tradition, *or* by changing those assumptions and starting a new theoretical tradition. In either case, as with ethnography, the past is never eclipsed but becomes part of the present, as previous theories are embodied in successor theories.

The entire process is organized on the basis of student participation, which has its own rules, especially important with student enrollments of 200 or more. All dialogue in class is initially limited to the text at hand, which students are required to bring to class. But later, at certain points other theorists (but only those who have been assigned in the course) and the personal experiences of students may be invoked. The class begins with my writing out the set of questions students should take to the next readings, followed by a summary of where I think we are, where we have come from, and where we are going. We then launch into a collective discussion structured by the questions from the previous class, always in reference to the text in hand. Thus, the classes are conducted Socratic-style through an expanding discussion of specific quotations from the text, often represented visually in the form of an accumulating diagram on the board. This allows everyone to participate without unduly advantaging those who claim to have prior knowledge of theory. This is education for all, not just those well-endowed with cultural capital. And, in principle, any student can contest what the instructor says, which they invariably do. Indeed, they discover flaws in my arguments, offer alternative interpretations of texts, and in the second semester they often have been on the ropes as I vainly try to defend each theorist in turn.

Apart from the classroom discussion, there are also discussion sections, 20 students in size, led and organized by brilliant, devoted and above all creative teaching assistants who have collaborated with me in developing this approach to theory. Along with one-page reading memos due every week, each semester we assign a "theory in action" paper (no more than a thousand words) that requires students to choose current events or their own experiences to illustrate a theorist of their choice. In addition mid-term and final exams consist of three short 750-word take-home papers (once again less is more) that assume the form of an exegesis of a given theorist, a comparison of theorists, or an application of theory to real live situations as defined by an article from a newspaper or magazine.

The course culminates in a 20-minute oral examination with their teaching assistant in which each student has to reconstruct the entire course as a conversation among the theorists, again in answer to a specific question given ahead of time. They are encouraged to include images, pictures, drawings, in what essentially is a poster presentation. The posters they produce amply demonstrate to what extent the various theorists have become part of them, whether theorists have become different mindsets that they will take with them into their future lives.

This is the approach I've struggled to develop over the years in lieu of the survey approach, but consistent with the ethnographic disposition I didn't start from scratch. Especially, in the beginning, I too had to rely on surveyors and interpreters such as Raymond Aron, Anthony Giddens and, indeed, Talcott Parsons. They helped me choose my theorists and the themes that would make them comparable. Among other things they helped me discover the key ideas that are central to all social theory, what Robert Nisbet calls "unit-ideas" such as: "community," "authority," "status," "the sacred," and "alienation." More abstractly one could also include "social conflict," "social change" or "social order." In my courses I have experimented with various such ideas, but none have worked as well as "the division of labor," which is not only an issue of great concern to many social theorists but also an idea that students can grasp from within their own lives. It's all around them—in their families, their workplaces, their classrooms, their dormitories. Focusing on this theme leads to a set of questions posed in relation to each theorist we study: What is the division of labor? What are its origins, its conditions of existence, its tendencies, its consequences, and its future? This provides a framework for choosing both the theorists and the extracts that become the basis of the unfolding conversations.

In my two semester course, required for Berkeley sociology majors, I start with Smith and interrogate his assumptions, leading on the one hand to Marxism and on the other hand to sociology and beyond. The first semester shows how the Marxism is a living tradition that develops successively from

Marx and Engels to Lenin, Gramsci and Fanon, each theorist working off anomalies and contradictions in previous theorists as well as engaging specific historical challenges. You might call this an internal dialogue of theory reconstruction as opposed to an external dialogue of critique that takes place in the second semester where Durkheim faces off against Marx, Weber against Lenin, Foucault against Gramsci, and Beauvoir against Fanon. This critical dialogue does not lead to the conquest of one theorist over the other but the clarification of what makes them great social theorists, viz. their assumptions about human beings that allows them to conceive of society, their vision of history that allows them to project an alternative future, their explanation of social reproduction that allows them to understand social change, and their innovative methodology that allows them to put their theory to work in empirical studies. Their distinction, along with their limitations, creates the foundation for alternative living traditions.

To end with feminist theory—and we read Mackinnon and Collins after Beauvoir to catch a glimpse of the feminist tradition—is not so much to follow a chronology nor only to develop a critique of classical theory for sidelining gender, but to bring theory home, forcing students to reflect on their own lives and their own location in the division of labor. From there we turn the theory of the division of labor back on itself, calling attention to the social location of the theorists we studied and to think of social theory, in part, as a product of location. It compels students to think about the relation of the theorist to the subjects they theorize, and, thus, of themselves to the world they inhabit. As the conclusion to the course, feminism is the most vivid expression of the significance of social theory, namely to question the entrenched common sense we develop as participants in the world, to underline the presence of theory not only in disembodied texts but also in our own embodied lives. In denaturalizing our lives and challenging common sense, social theory shows that the world need not be the way it is and explores what it would mean to inhabit a better world. In their different ways that is what motivates and inspires Marx, Weber,

Durkheim, Foucault, and Beauvoir, and it is what defines every enduring sociological theory, infusing energy and meaning into the substantive fields of sociology. In the age of the internet, of distance learning and

of MOOCs it is especially important to uphold the idea of living theory: living with theory, living in theory and even living for theory.

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## What is Living and What is Dead in Theory Teaching

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Answering a critique put forth by an old and admired friend whose fan club spans the globe, whose YouTubed lectures cannot but charm, who personifies the public face of sociology's most public dimension, who has iconized the Berkeley sociology program for decades, whose printed prose comes with the same smiling goodheartedness that greets visitors to his home—is there any way to analyze his classroom practice of “living theory” via an “ethnographic approach” that does not take the form of a mutually congratulatory missive exchanged between old men whose real battles occurred too long ago to remember rightly, whose very existence inconveniences the youth they continue trying to teach, whose scholarly obsessions with Gramsci or Weber or Ibn Khaldun resonate with their students as vaguely as does Mao's *Little Red Book* with today's industrialists in Guangdong province?

Perhaps there is a way to speak pithily, even within the bounds of amiability. (Some mere enumeration, reader beware, will be put to use despite its apparently pedestrian nature, duly noted as such by Burawoy in his critique above.) But first, three simple corrections. Burawoy claims that I hold the weighty *Theories of Society* to be “the gold standard” among theory textbooks. Neither did I say nor imply this. I simply wished to remind readers of its existence as a marker for what “theory” meant in some important circles 50 years ago compared with the field's current condition. Second, he avers that my own *Social Thought* includes nothing of my voice except a short-preface. In fact, I wrote 144 one or two-page

introductions to the excerpts (before Wikipedia existed), which meant each one required considerable digging so that reliable information could be supplied to students before they tackled each theorist's own words. The book allegedly lacks the “context or connection” between theorists that Burawoy calls for, partly because that is what good lectures are meant to afford the beginning student. Sewing ligaments of meaning among such a large gang of writers would have required another 800-page book, which my publisher wisely did not permit.

Third, and most important, Burawoy champions the “*interpretive approach to social theory*” as being mightily superior to mere surveys. The former he attributes to Charles Camic, the latter to me, which made me laugh. He seems not to realize that my first book, 30 years ago, was called *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, that my first Weber book included a long digression on hermeneutic/interpretative technique, and that for me it goes without saying that teaching theory, survey or not, is always and by absolute necessity an interpretative exercise in which the teacher links the theorist's life with his or her writings in their socio-political environment. When I first “discovered” hermeneutics, 40 years ago via Gadamer's *Truth and Method* as well as in Dilthey's writings, my interest in this way of working was considered by my elders as strangely unscientific and irrelevant to sociology. My, how things do change.

With these small points behind us, we might reflect on the title of my response, a corny punning on Burawoy's own, stealing

from Benedetto Croce's wonderful polemic from 1906, *What is Living and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel*, surely one of the most borrowed expressions in scholarly writing. Everybody knows the title; nobody reads the book (as with Werner Sombart's *Why is There No Socialism in the United States?* [1906]). Just having published his own *Logic* (1905), Croce found Hegel's to be faulty, so he substituted what is "distinct" for what in Hegel is merely "opposite," and added "action" to the latter's triad. Why care? Because Marx learned to think dialectically from Hegel, as did Croce; and because Croce was the smartest Italian (European?) humanist of his long era, writing about everything with an ambition as grasping as Hegel's; and because one's brain becomes livelier when addressed by Croce's encyclopedic, synthesizing imagination. The reissued paperback copy of Croce's book on Hegel that I own was published in 1985, which meant that after I bought it, the low quality photocopied version I had made from a library copy in 1973 could finally be discarded, motivated as I had been by reference to Croce in the work of some trusted guide (George Lichtheim, perhaps). This is just the sort of retrogressive searching for influences that Burawoy finds counterproductive if dragged into lectures, particularly the undergraduate theory course at Berkeley, his singular forum for extended teaching of this type. Burawoy is as allergic to the pedantic as Marx was hostile to the authoritarian. One can admire both for their scholarly prejudices, even if refusing to join with them at every turn.

In both geographical and instructional terms, Burawoy's "living theory" does not live where I do for two reasons, the first pedagogical and mundane in nature, the second solidly intellectual. The differences between his style of teaching social theory and mine reflect variations in our teaching environments, and perhaps more interestingly, our contradictory understandings of what "social theory" can or should mean when being introduced to undergraduate students (and, for the most part, also to beginning graduate students). He believes short readings from a small canon, mixed with lots of talk, are best, particularly when the students' own viewpoints are brought into

close contact with brief, assigned texts. He encourages them through "Socratic-style" teaching to embrace theory, to make it their own, which they are then "empowered," one might say, to develop in discussion sessions with graduate teaching assistants. They become, in his terms, "participant observers" within Theory World. Though Burawoy does not criticize my theory-pedagogy as such, he finds my *Social Thought* textbook not to his liking, and since it was designed to suit my classes, he is *ipso facto* claiming that his way of doing things in his theory class is better than what I do in mine. Thus, rather than debate generalities with him (e.g., "The anomalies and contradictions [of a given theorist's work] can be addressed *either* within the theorists' original set of assumptions, thereby building a theoretical tradition, *or* by changing those assumptions and starting a new theoretical tradition"), I would prefer to speak directly to the dynamics of the classrooms we face and the goals we have for each, including our use of assigned readings.

My everyday experiences as a theory teacher have by happenstance been broader than Burawoy's, including stints in many zones: at a junior college in Virginia, the finest liberal arts school in the country, Burawoy's alma mater in Chicago, the University of California itself, state schools in Kansas and Pennsylvania, and a fine private university in Philadelphia. My 40th year of teaching theory is now with me. As much as I enjoy listening to Burawoy's Berkeley theory lectures via the internet, hearing him provoke, prod, amuse, and inform his large audience of undergraduates, and as lucky as his students are to have that experience, my approach and his, as revealed by his online syllabi, are entirely different. Like so many other theory experts, I have tried many approaches and techniques during decades of experimentation. For my Penn State students, undergraduate and graduate, the best method for warming their hearts and minds to the cadences of theorizing, so it now seems, is to show them via brief readings the entire gamut of possibility from John Locke forward. Following that, emphasis shifts and intensifies to four of the founders (the classical theory course), and to a half-dozen or more contemporary writers

(the second semester, only for graduate students), once again after a swift trot through a crowd of modern theorists whose works appeared after 1920.

The problem with Burawoy's "living theory" regimen lies in its specificity to the Berkeley scene, trivial as that may seem in the context of his larger argument. His syllabi reveal his use of five to seven T.A.s ("brilliant, devoted and above all creative") from one of the best graduate programs in the world, who talk theory with some of the world's best undergraduates in 10 groups of twenty each, feeding off of two weekly meetings in a large lecture hall where Burawoy works his magic. Naturally, with hyper-motivated students of that type and quality, one can rely on them to "do the readings" for the most part, and for the T.A.s to work hard at bringing out the fine points during discussion groups. One can also assume such students can already write English well when they arrive on campus, and that virtually all of them aim at post-graduate work.

Though Penn State does not vary significantly from that scenario, it is different in a key aspect which I think gives its students a healthier theory education than Burawoy's might receive, despite his protean efforts. This is mainly because none of the Penn State classes is larger than 30 students, and all sections of it are taught year-round by experts who assign papers (not exams, and not oral recitations) which are edited and graded for style and content. Thus, the required undergraduate theory course renders service not only as a conduit of sociology's main ideas but also, and perhaps just as importantly, as that increasingly rare course in which students are persuaded to write well about difficult topics, meanwhile overcoming their anticipatory dread of having to deal with abstractions. Put another way: had I spent the last 35 years at Berkeley as has Burawoy, I would likely have adopted some form of "living theory" as he describes it. But since I, along with 99% of all theory teachers, do not live in that pedagogical environment, other *modi operandi* presented themselves.

Yet even with all such pedagogical issues aside, there are profound differences in the way Burawoy and I conceive of "theory"

that would jeopardize our teaching the course together. His first semester is mostly Marx/Engels (12 lectures over 6 weeks), then Lenin (4 lectures and a movie over 2 weeks), then Gramsci (4 lectures), then Fanon (one movie and 3 lectures). Burawoy has the great good fortune to have two semesters during which to teach the history of social thought, and I—like most other sociologists today—have only one (for undergraduates). His second course, then, begins with 7 Durkheim lectures, 5 on Foucault, 9 on Weber, concluding with one movie and 6 lectures on the feminisms of Beauvoir, MacKinnon, and Pat Collins.

Even though all these writings have indubitable intrinsic value, they cannot convey to novices the full range of voices that fall under the heading "social theory," a goal to which survey theory courses should aspire. Rather, they represent Burawoy's particular enthusiasms, most of which he has voiced ever since graduate school. Whereas Marx and Engels will never lose their place in the pantheon of classical theory, it seems quixotic, if not self-serving, to offer nine lectures on Lenin and Gramsci while saying nothing about Saint-Simon, Comte, Malthus, Fourier, Mill, Quetelet, Tocqueville, Douglass, Spencer, Le Play, Maine, Dilthey, Tönnies, Tarde, William James, Le Bon, Mosca, Small, Gilman, Veblen, Simmel, Mead, Michels, Pareto, Freud, Cooley, Du Bois, Sumner, Trotsky, Sorel, Lukács, Troeltsch, Scheler, or Thomas. (Burawoy will recognize these names as appearing in the Table of Contents of my *Social Thought*.)

Every theory teacher knows that it is far easier and more pure fun to teach Marx/Engels and Fanon than, say, Weber, Durkheim, or Simmel. College students are the perpetual proletariat, especially now when crushed under a trillion dollars in loans, so they immediately "relate" to the Leftist tradition in ways that do not arise when they first face books like *Suicide* or *The Protestant Ethic*. As sincerely as I sympathize with Burawoy's attachment to that tradition, I do not regard it as a suitable substitute for "everybody else" during a one-semester course. He does indeed have the luxury of a second semester, yet the die has been cast. Once the Left perspective is firmly

set in students' minds, everyone else's work becomes a weak foil to it, so that the functionalist or Weberian or interactional traditions seem uninspired by comparison. It is hard to engender in novices the thrill of righteous indignation that comes from studying *The Communist Manifesto* when they turn, e.g., to the fine points of Simmel's essays on fashion, the nobility, mental illness, or even his *Philosophy of Money*. That Simmel was (not unlike his colleagues) the perfect bourgeois gentleman, enjoying croissants while Marx's family starved, is not lost on smart undergraduates, and most especially at Berkeley.

Among my favorite courses to teach were graduate seminars on *Das Kapital*, another on Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*, and an entire semester devoted to Weber. It is very easy to understand the appeal such classes hold both for ardent students and their energized instructors. Anyone who does not enjoy such a class should find other employment. Yet I view them as aristocratic braincandy, not as the meat and potatoes that feed the hungry masses, longing to learn about social theory from a starting point of almost pristine ignorance. Burawoy and I agree that reading should be assigned realistically; a week on Hegel's *Phenomenology* or on *Economy and Society* is a bad joke, and worse teaching. We agree that students must by hook or crook become invested in the process of theorizing, not only concerning past fluctuations in societal developments, but also in their everyday world. Where we seriously depart is in defining the canon, and how to use it when addressing young scholars who in most cases have never thought along the lines of the people they are being asked to read for the first time.

There is no smarter apologist for organized religion than Joseph de Maistre. Once students read his explanation for theocracy, they can more readily understand those countries which still live under such a regime in a way they will never get from

Marx's puerile reduction of religious sentiments to deluded wrong-headedness. Similarly, once Adam Smith's notion of sympathy and justice is absorbed, or Edmund Burke's reflections on the virtues of conservatism, or Thomas Paine's concern for political rights, or Wollstonecraft's treatment of men's rights as well as women's, or Spencer's analogies of social structure and bodily organs, they will have in their minds material which speaks directly to today's concerns, but in an elevated and sharpened theoretical language unavailable through PBS or CNN. They will be welcomed into a world of ideas and of carefully wrought terminology, of which they might have seen a glimmer on their own, but will not have had time in their short lives to perfect. Burawoy rightly says that theories to the extent historically plausible ought to be taught as if they are in dialogue, not cut off from each other, then jammed into artificially remote boxes of disembodied terms and charts. It is astonishingly easy to connect Marx/Engels with Lenin, Gramsci, and Fanon. After all, they are family members. This, however, is not enough. We do not exclusively live in Gramsci's world, or in Fanon's. Instead most of the world's citizens face what Tom Paine knew too well: an overpowering state, its despotic leaders and allied plutocracy doing everything they can to repress dissent and popular organization. It becomes wise, then, to do what Paine did, to study the most accomplished ideologue of the Right, Mr. Burke himself, and to respond to him in kind. One does not learn enough about these matters from today's ordinary media outlets, so one function of a well-rounded social theory course is to bring students into contagion with the entire offering that falls under the magnificently inchoate label "theory." And the more voices they hear clearly, the better will they be able to digest and dissect the social and political reality of their own troubled times.