

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Appearances and Realities*. by Gustav Ichheiser

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Reminding us, to begin with, of the essential events of Tocqueville's youth (that he was an aristocrat concerned about the threat of democracy), Zeitlin shows how Tocqueville viewed various American institutions (federalism, decentralization, association) as so many means of insuring the maintenance of liberty in a social system identified with equality. But Zeitlin rightly underscores (pp. 11, 12, 30, 31) how impervious Tocqueville was to the extreme inequality that existed in the United States at the time and how, unlike Michel Chevalier, he overlooked the tremendous misery that followed in the wake of industrialization and urbanization. But such a statement ought to be toned down, since Zeitlin himself points out that Tocqueville, like Marx, believed that the division of labor as a means to spur productivity would lead to growing exploitation and alienation (p. 38).

Some original observations on the relationship between the works of Marx and Tocqueville can be found in Zeitlin's study. In my opinion, his analysis of certain matters appears to be hasty (for example, a bare page and a half are devoted to discussing revolution in a democratic society [pp. 40–41]). He is not quite fair to Tocqueville when he levels criticism at him based on books published well after Tocqueville had completed his research, some of which tend to invalidate his main theses (pp. 56, 62, 139, 162). Thus Zeitlin assumes an approach which has been traditional since Sainte-Beuve: while employing the latest works dealing with the French Revolution (although omitting those of Furet and Richet), he seems to underestimate the interest of the ideal-typical method employed by Tocqueville, who, as a genuine sociologist, should not be mistaken for a "philosopher of history." The pattern he devised can only be analyzed in terms of concepts of function, organ, equilibrium, and change, in accordance with the language of modern structural and functional sociology; it still retains to date its entire coherence, even though some of its specific theses happen to have been contradicted by a closer analysis of the facts.

Appearances and Realities. By Gustav Ichheiser. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1970. Pp. xiv+234. \$8.50.

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In a period witnessing reemergence and extension of the symbolic interactionist tradition, it is fitting that we take up the contributions of the late Gustav Ichheiser, a man who anticipated many of the important lines of this development. The publisher performs a service in bringing his more important essays together into one volume.

This book is divided into two parts. The first consists of six tightly connected theoretical statements on "Misunderstandings in Human Relations"; in the last part these principles find expression in seven essays on diverse substantive themes.

Central to Ichheiser's theoretical argument is the distinction between *expression* and *impression*: "I use the new term *expression* in viewing expressive phenomena from within, that is, in referring to the relations obtaining between expressive tendencies, on the one hand, and expressive manifestations, on the other. I use the term *impression* in referring to the meaning of those manifestations (or pseudo manifestations) from without, that is, as they look to other persons who function in the given situation as a 'receiving station'" (p. 16). Mechanisms of impression, not expressive manifestations, are for Ichheiser the crucial elements in social interaction. This corresponds to his central assertion of an inherent tension between inner personality and the way its expression impresses others. "A certain, sometimes even an extreme, incongruity and discrepancy within the expression-impression relations are not an abnormal but rather a very normal state of affairs" (p. 19). Ichheiser's work is thus more than just a gloss on the Cooleyan dictum "that the imagination which people have of one another are the *solid facts* of society." In his view, these facts are always wrong. This assertion raises the problem of identifying the mechanisms that condemn us to perpetual misunderstanding.

Ichheiser adopts the Simmelian assumption that men typically enter into social relationships with only part of their personalities; knowledge of one another is therefore segmental or, as they say nowadays, "specific" rather than "diffuse" in nature. Put differently, our images of a person are based upon that one segment of his status set relevant to our relationship with him. For us, he is "essentially" that kind of person. Moreover, the stereotyped classification that simultaneously grows out of and colors segmental interaction is "one of the absolutely essential preconditions of the existence of any society" (p. 60). This means that misunderstandings of personality are anchored in the functionally necessary (or, at least, useful) tendency to perceive and evaluate others as exemplars of a social type. In this way, perceptual distortion enhances the efficiency of the social process.

The assumption of ignorance fails, in Ichheiser's view, to inform the phenomenon of misunderstanding. Although we often do not feel what we know to be true, we act in terms of feelings as well as in terms of knowledge. The irrelevance of "objective" information in perception is underscored in the recurrent theme of visibility. While we know that a person acts differently elsewhere, we cannot forget what we *see*, especially if we have been implicated in that vision. "It is the *visible* appearance of an individual," Ichheiser insists, "which constitutes the basis of social identification" (p. 32). This tendency is reinforced by, and is, in fact, one aspect of the tendency to overestimate the personal unity of others. While the attribution of inner coherence does give expression to a "strain toward closure," this kind of misunderstanding, anchored as it is in segmental interaction, cannot be reduced to a strictly psychological property.

To infer from a limited range of visible acts a basic underlying character, moreover, helps stabilize and make rigid and definite an image of another. In this way, individual achievements and failures are viewed as expressions of what is central in personality instead of as outcomes of

situational contingencies. This theme receives its most extended treatment in "Toward a Psychology of Success," where Ichheiser describes how observers transform social constraints into properties of personality.

It is not enough to say that the tendency toward closure helps make the sociological imperative of distorted typing inwardly compelling. Stereotypes after all refer to real, that is, visible, traits—which is precisely what makes them so compelling. It is in his treatment of the stereotype, in fact, that Ichheiser gives most cogent voice to his view of the misunderstanding as a distortion rather than a mere delusion. The extraordinary difficulty of dispelling the former informs his critique of Freud ("Freud's Blind Spots"). There he argues that because misunderstandings are grounded in *social* reality they are neither explainable nor correctable by reference to personality. This same view is applied to the question of anti-Semitism in "Fear of Fraud, Fear of Coercion." In both essays the central message is the same: what lacks validity is the product of rather than the basis for the stereotypical assessment.

Ichheiser does not fail to attend to the interaction between assessments of others and assessment of self. One of his more important points in this regard is that misperceptions can become self-fulfilling. "[T]he images we hold of other people," he argues, "are not only mirrors which reflect, whether correctly or not, their personalities, but they are also dynamic factors which control the behavior of those people . . . it is often the personality itself which has to adjust to its distorted reflection in the 'mirror'" (p. 54). Here is the basic insight, reproduced by the labeling theorists, that social classifications not only simplify interaction but also mold what they subsume. The molding naturally follows the direction of the distorted classification. The subject thereby "corrects" the public mistake by becoming its embodiment. This he does until he is again misunderstood. Interaction is thus conceived as an interplay between misunderstandings and adaptations. In Ichheiser's unhappy world we are all framed.

Misunderstandings are anchored not only in segmental interaction and the attending psychological tendency to totalize and transform what is thereby ascertained; they are given as well in the very fact of social position. In this, Ichheiser draws explicitly on the Mannheimian insight that whatever is seen is seen partially. Ensuing "limits on insight" are discussed in "Misunderstandings in International Relations," "Social Perception and Moral Judgment," and "Illusions of Peace and War." However, Ichheiser is far less sanguine than Mannheim; his perspective provides no room for the clear-seeing, free-floating intelligentsia. In his view, we are all blinded. Nor are therapeutic implications to be drawn, for his very conception of misunderstanding indicates its impermeability to mere intellectual experience. That ideas are tied to social position is, from this standpoint, no liberating insight.

By positing an inherent antagonism and imperfection in interpersonal relations—which may be formulated but never obviated—Ichheiser represents a link between symbolic interactionism and conflict theory. But his is

an object lesson to those who, frantically seeking such linkages as grounding for modish attacks upon functionalism, have returned to Mead. So thoroughly pessimistic a view as Ichheiser's mocks such convergence. For the backdrop it provides sets in relief Mead's focus on the condition of mutual understanding. Mead unequivocally stated that condition: thanks to language and other symbolic gestures, men can evoke in themselves what they call out in others. That men can speak the same language is for Ichheiser rather the condition of misunderstanding, for consensus at the linguistic level merely brings men into relationships which, intrinsically, make for misperception at the level of identity.

Ichheiser's incompatibility with the classic figures defines his place in American social psychology, of which he was himself aware. "George Herbert Mead," he said, "who in principle adhered to a radically sociological theory of personality, never analyzed and described the various specific and concrete mechanisms which shape and misshape the perceptions and conceptions we have about others and about ourselves" (p. 21). Similarly, "the function of the 'looking-glass self' of Cooley and others has remained largely without substance because no one has ever asked or answered how these factors function" (pp. 21-22). By intelligently addressing himself to what is problematic in mutual interpretations and definitions, and drawing out their implications for general social psychological theory, Ichheiser makes a notable contribution to the symbolic interactionist enterprise. His book, therefore, deserves to be read; those who do so will find themselves returning to it regularly.

Fact and Symbol: Essays in the Sociology of Art and Literature. By César Graña. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. Pp. ix+212. \$7.50.

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It is a distinct pleasure to come across a piece of sociological writing, such as César Graña's volume of essays, that is executed with grace and literary skill. What a relief to read a sociologist who, when discussing American art collectors, can refer to "new money arising out of the egalitarian marketplace, [seeking] legitimacy in the odor and tokens of a pre-industrial society" (p. viii). One delights in Graña's incisive and terse characterizations, as when he describes aristocratic art as "putting craftsmanship under the shelter of social power" (p. 5).

Yet, I confess to some ambivalence as I try to set down my reactions to the substance of Graña's book. I cannot help but note that it is "thin." Rather than developing a sustained argument, the author presents bits and pieces that are only weakly interrelated. Just when he has begun to nibble at the periphery of a problem he leaves well enough alone and moves to another subject. More sustained attention to fewer and less disconnected topics would have made this a more impressive achievement.