

Table 2.1

Private	Public
gemeinschaft	gesellschaft
desire	reason
female	male
informal	formal
affectivity	neutrality
particularity	universality
diffusion	specificity
hedonism	asceticism
consumption	production

of privacy as a value presupposes the development of a doctrine of the private individual, an ideology of familialism, an institutional separation of family and economy in which the domestic unit ceases to have productive functions, and there exists a large bureaucratic apparatus by which the public life of individuals is measured and calculated for the purpose of social control. The union of capitalist industrialization, utilitarian individualism and the nation-state provided the general conditions for the rise of the division between the public and the private world. The important feature of this division in modern society is that the private space is characterized by the intimacy and emotionalism of the household which exists specifically for the servicing of the body, namely the production of children, socialization and the servicing of the labour force. There is thus a sharp contrast between the formality, impersonalism, neutrality and universalism of work in public space, and the informality, particularism and affectivity of the private home. In the social division of society, there is also a sexual division by which certain activities ('mothering' and 'working') become gender specific. In addition we can suggest that there is a spatial division between passions (private sphere) and reasons (public sphere).

This is illustrated in Table 2.1. In making this distinction between private/public, it would probably be more accurate to refer to private spaces in the plural. The modern home is opened to the world by an architectural emphasis on light and space. At the same time the home remains a castle cut off from other private spaces. The transition from the Renaissance to the modern world thus involves a transition from the 'open' body linked to the public world through ritual and carnival to the 'closed' body of individualized consumer society (Bakhtin, 1968). Desires are now inscribed in private bodies separated from the hygienic space of the public world.

Sociology of the Body

To write a sociology of the body is thus not to write a treatise on society and physiology. It involves the historical analysis of the spatial organization of

bodies and desire in relation to society and reason. The principal contours of such a study may be stated as the following.

- (1) For the individual and the group, the body is simultaneously an environment (part of nature) and a medium of the self (part of culture). The body is crucially at the juncture of human labour on nature through the medium of writing, language and religion and thus critically at the juncture of the human species between the natural order of the world and the cultural ordering of the world. The transaction between nature and society can thus be seen in terms of the body as physiology (that is, an internal environment). To take one obvious example, the body has physiological needs, in particular food, liquid and sleep. The nature, content and timing of these activities of eating, drinking and sleeping are subject to symbolic interpretations and to massive social regulation. We can thus think of the body as an outer surface of interpretations and representations and an internal environment of structures and determinations.
- (2) Corresponding to the internal/external division, it is important to make a distinction between, following Michel Foucault, the body of populations and the body of individuals. It has been argued that in Western culture the site of desire is the internal body which has to be controlled by the rationalized practices of asceticism (such as religious fasting and the medical regimen). Similarly, the body of the individual is regulated and organized in the interests of population. The control of group sexuality is the most obvious illustration. No society leaves social reproduction to the free choice of individuals. While in modern industrial society sexual behaviour often appears as the free choice of the private consuming citizen, there are regulations relating to abortion, infanticide, illegitimacy, homosexuality and prostitution. The regulation of the body of populations occurs along two dimensions of time and space, that is the regulation of reproduction between generations and the regulation of populations in political/urban space. The sociology of the body is thus a political sociology, since it concerns the authoritative struggle over desire.
- (3) The body lies at the centre of political struggles. While it can be argued unambiguously that the physiology of men and women represents a major difference (in reproductive functions), gender identity and gender personality have to be inserted into physiology by socialization into specific roles and identities. Similarly, while the body undergoes a natural maturation with ageing, the concepts of 'youth', 'infant', 'child' or 'senior citizen' are cultural products of historical changes in the organization of Western society (Ariès, 1962). The body – its character, structure and development – thus provides a basic metaphor of pre-modern social theorizing in such notions as the 'body politic', gerontology, gerontocracy, patrimonialism and patriarchy. For example, the debate about patriarchy, in its specifically political form,

goes back to Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (published posthumously in 1680). In this doctrine of patriarchal sovereignty, royal power is derived from divine power via Adam. Patriarchy rested on analogy. The king is the father over his kingdom; Adam was father over nature and humanity; God is father over man. Patriarchy thus comes before the authority of law and is the source of all rights and obligations. Authority is thus transubstantiated through the body of kings just as it is transubstantiated through the body of fathers. In religious systems, the authority of Christ is transubstantiated through the eucharistic elements of flesh and blood, just as in the political system the continuity of blood is essential to the continuity of power.

- (4) Most forms of sociological theorizing make a sharp separation between the self and the body. G.H. Mead who in many respects provided the original philosophical basis of symbolic interactionism, wrote in *Mind, Self and Society* that

We can distinguish very definitely between the self and the body. The body may be there and operate in a very intelligent fashion without there being a self involved in the experience. The self has the characteristic that it is object to itself and that characteristic distinguishes it from other objects and from the body. (Mead, 1962, vol. 1: 136)

While the Self/Society contrast became the main focus of interactionist theory, it is also the case that most proponents of interactionism argue that the self is realized through performance. Crucial to self-performance is the presentation of the body in everyday life. It is possible therefore to reinterpret Goffman's sociology as not the study of the representation of the self in social gatherings but the performance of the self through the medium of the socially interpreted body. One important focus of his work is the question of the breakdown of the micro-social context through events which discomfort the self and social interaction. These include embarrassment and stigma. Significantly social disruptions are repaired by 'face-work' which reasserts the normality of interaction. These disruptions of interaction are typically, but not exclusively, focused on the body – flushes, tears and stigmatic abnormalities. The body is thus crucial to both the micro and macro orders of society. The body is the vehicle for self-performances and the target through rituals of degradation of social exclusion. Intimacies and exclusions focus on the body as the means of indicating the self (Garfinkel, 1956; Weitman, 1970). A sociology of the body would thus also have to embrace a sociology of deviance and control, since mortifications of the self are inextricably bound up with the mortifications of the body. Again it would be appropriate to distinguish between the deviance of body surfaces (blushes, flushes, unwanted excreta) which are subject to cultural surveillance and those 'deviances' of the inner body (disease and illness) which are likewise objects of moral evaluation. The sociology of the body as vehicle of

information about the self would thus divide around the stigmatology of the outer surface and a teratology of deformed structures.

A sociology of the body is not sociobiology or sociophysiology. It is not reductionism, although it is genuinely and literally a materialist analysis. As I shall elaborate later, a sociology of the body is a study of the problem of social order and it can be organized around four issues. These are the reproduction and regulation of populations in time and space, and the restraint and representation of the body as a vehicle of the self. These four issues presuppose the existence in Western society of an opposition between the desires and reason, which I have suggested articulates with a further set of dichotomies, especially the private/public, female/male dichotomies. The control over the body is thus an 'elementary', 'primitive' political struggle. The sociology of the body is consequently an analysis of how certain cultural polarities are politically enforced through the institutions of sex, family and patriarchy. This institutionalization is itself subject to certain major transformations of society (for example, from feudalism to capitalism) and the saliency of the four dimensions (reproduction, regulation, restraint and representation) is historically conditioned.

Locations for a Theory

While sociology has not overtly incorporated a sociology of the body, it has inherited the classical Western dichotomy between desire and reason which has informed much recent debate within sociological theory. This implicit theory has not been adequately or systematically examined. Crudely speaking, we can divide social philosophy between one tradition which treats nature/body/desire as the source of value and happiness in opposition to society/technology/reason, and a second tradition which regards desire/pleasure/the body as the negation of human value located in the life of the mind. My argument is that, mainly implicitly, sociological theory has been shaped by the opposition: civilization versus desire. As Daniel Bell has noted:

The rational and the passionate – these are the axes around which social thinkers have organized their conceptions of human nature since the dawn of philosophy. But which is to prevail if men are to be just and free? For the classical theorists, the answer was plain. (Bell, 1980: 98)

That answer was the necessity of subordinating passion to reason in the interests of social stability and social order: Apollo over Dionysus. While that polarity has characterized Western philosophy from Plato onwards, the debate about passions received a significant impetus in the nineteenth century following the opening of a new discourse on sex in the late eighteenth century. First there was the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), whose work has recently attracted considerable reappraisal (Barthes, 1977; Carter, 1979; de Beauvoir, 1962), and second there was the neglected