Introduction

Cultural political economy is an emerging and still developing trans-disciplinary approach oriented to post-disciplinary horizons. It is concerned with the semiotic and structural aspects of social life and, even more importantly, their articulation. It combines concepts from critical, historically sensitive, semiotic analyses and from critical evolutionary and institutional political economy. In this context, cultural political economy refers both to an increasingly 'grand theory' and to an expanding field of empirical study. Theoretically, it has six features (see 23–25) that, together, distinguish it from other approaches with similar theoretical ambitions. In brief, it combines the analysis of sense- and meaning-making with the analysis of instituted economic and political relations and their social embedding. More expansively, it aims to produce a consistent 'integral' analysis of political economy from the perspective of the interaction of its specific semiotic and structural features at the same time as it embeds this analysis into a more general account of semiosis and structuration in wider social formations. Thus, as a grand-theoretical project, its insights can be applied far beyond its home domain in political economy.

Cultural political economy (CPE) builds on our earlier work on state theory and political economy and our critical engagement with Marx's prefigurative contributions to language and discourse analysis (see Höppe 1982; Fairclough and Graham 2002). It also confirms the importance of Gramsci's elaborate philological and materialist studies of hegemony and Foucault's work on discursive formations and dispositives (see Chapters 3 and 4). On this basis, CPE posits that the economic field (or, better, political economy) is always-already meaningful as well as structured. Thus, whether or not meaning-making provides the initial entry-point, it must be included sooner or later to ensure the descriptive and explanatory adequacy of the analysis. The same holds for the need sooner or later to bring structural factors in. We now set out the rationale for this and other claims about CPE, beginning with some philosophical preliminaries that ground our subsequent remarks on critical realism.

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL PRELIMINARIES

It is conventional to distinguish four modes of philosophical inquiry: ontology, epistemology, methodology and ethics. Ontology concerns the nature and properties of being or existence and the categorial structure of reality. A derivative meaning, more important for our purposes, is 'the set of things whose existence is acknowledged by a particular theory or system of thought' (Lowe 1995: 634). Epistemology concerns knowledge (or belief), its very possibility, its defining features and scope, its substantive conditions and sources, its limits and its justification. Methodology deals with general rules for gaining and testing (scientific) knowledge, including analytical strategies, assuming such knowledge is possible. It is more practical and technical than epistemology, being concerned with the logic of discovery and methods of scientific inquiry. Finally, ethics concerns the good or right, that which should be. It has two main branches: deontological (concerned with the duties and obligations of individuals, focusing on their will and intention without much regard, if any, to the consequences of good conduct); and consequential (which defines proper conduct in terms of consequences rather than intentions). Cultural political economy can be considered from all four perspectives (see Box 0.1).

BOX 0.1   CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY AS A SOCIAL SCIENCE

Four modes of philosophical inquiry

- ontology: nature of being, existence, meaning
- epistemology: nature of knowledge
- methodology: rules for gaining, testing knowledge
- ethics: nature of the good, that which should be

Placing CPE as social science

- complexity and its reduction through semiosis and structuration
- intransitive and transitive dimensions interact in scientific inquiry
- pluralistic logic of research, logical–historical presentation
- commitment to critique of ideology and domination

Ontology

Our approach posits that the world is too complex to be grasped in all its complexity in real time (or ever) and for all permutations of social relations to be realizable in the same time-space. This is self-evidently and trivially true, of course, yet it has important implications for social science and everyday life. In particular, CPE does not aim to theorize or model complexity as such but to explore how complexity is reduced (but not thereby mastered) through sense- and meaning-making (semiosis)[1] and through limiting compossible social relations (structuration). In this sense, semiosis and structuration are both equally real, even though their character, generative mechanisms and effects differ. We deal with each in turn.

Regarding semiosis, this enforced selection occurs as individuals and other social agents adopt, wittingly or not, specific entry-points and standpoints to reduce complexity and make it calculable (if only to ease muddling through) so that they can participate within it and/or describe and interpret it as disinterested observers. This produces the paradox that the current complexity of the real world is also in part a path-dependent product of past and present efforts to reduce complexity. This holds both for the social world and the effects of social action in and on the natural world (e.g. the built environment, 'second nature', etc.). In this sense, attempts at complexity reduction may increase overall complexity; and the efforts of some forces (or systems) to reduce complexity may increase it for other forces (or systems). While the real world pre-exists current efforts at complexity reduction, actors/observers have no direct access to it. The 'aspects' that they regard as significant are not pre-given but depend on the meaning systems that frame its significance for them. Sense-making, to repeat the definition given in the Preface, refers to the role of semiosis in the *apprehension of the natural and social world* and highlights the referential value of semiosis, even if this is to as-yet-unrealized possibilities, to the 'irreal' (or 'irrealis'), to immaterial or virtual entities or to inexistent but culturally recognized entities (cf. Eco 1976; Graham 2001). *Meaning-making* refers in turn to processes of signification and meaningful communication and is closely related to *the production of linguistic meaning* but also includes non-linguistic modes of signification and communication. Thus sense- and meaning-making not only reduce complexity for actors (and observers), but also give meaning to the world.[2] They are foundational to all social relations in both senses of ontology as presented above.[3] In other words, CPE posits that the social world is always-already meaningful by nature and that its analysis must acknowledge the importance of sense- and meaning-making. This further implies that social explanation must be adequate at the level of meaning as well as of 'material' causation

(see Chapter 4). In fact, as we argue below, semiosis is causally effective and not a mere supplement to causal analysis.

For the sake of clarity, in this context, meaning does not denote 'linguistic meaning' as analysed by specialists in 'core linguistics'[4] who study how meaning emerges from the composition of linguistic units (e.g. Frege 1984; Grice 1989). Instead it denotes the 'sense meaning' involved in the apprehension (e.g. cognitive, normative or appreciative significance) of the world and which, when translated into intersubjective meaning-making, has important intertextual, contextual and pragmatic aspects. In this respect our approach to CPE is closer to the pragmatic tradition of Charles Sanders Peirce (1992) and Charles W. Morris (1946) without being located within it (see Chapter 3). Viewed thus, to make sense of the world is also to make sense of ourselves (Møller 2006: 65–8). In addition, construals may shape the natural and social world in so far as they guide a critical mass of self-confirming actions based on more or less correct diagnoses of unrealized potentials. In this sense construals become a 'material force', that is, have durable transformative effects in the natural and social world. It is the role of some, if not all, construals in constructing the world that justifies, indeed requires, an ontological cultural turn. Conversely, because not all construals lead to durable changes in the natural and social world, semiosis must also be linked to the extra-semiotic.[5] Recognizing that only some construals have constructive effects ensures, in the words of Andrew Sayer (2009: 423), that discourse analysis is not merely 'sceptical' (because all ideas or discourse are deemed equally ideational), but critical (because some discourses undermine the conditions for human flourishing). Indeed, underpinning CPE's contribution to *Ideologiekritik* is recognition that the effects of semiosis are not just internal to semiosis but also affect the natural and social world.

Structuration (or structure-building) is also included in 'the set of things whose existence is acknowledged by a particular theory or system of thought'. It is a form of enforced selection that sets limits to compossible combinations of relations among relations within specific time-space envelopes. The core concept here is compossibility. For not everything that is *possible* is *com*possible. Compossibility is, as indicated, relative to specific time-space structures and horizons of action. To illustrate, several 'varieties of capitalism' coexisted in the European Union before the Economic and Monetary Union was established and, indeed, its heterogeneity had increased with each round of expansion. This prompted a turn from integration measures based on coordination and indicative planning towards greater reliance on market forces to facilitate mutual adjustment. In addition to increased trade, investment, and a more extensive division of labour, another result was intensified centre–periphery relations. The

formation of the eurozone removed key sources of flexibility. What was previously compossible (a relatively benign co-evolution of varieties of capitalism) became hard to maintain, leading to increasing crises and, more importantly, crises of crisis management. This situation can be contrasted with the pathological co-dependency of the USA and China (sometimes known as 'Chimerica'),[6] where growing interdependence has not yet produced a ruptural incompossibility (see Jessop 2007c; and Chapters 6 and 11).

Structuration (or structure-building) is subject to processes of variation, selection and retention in the same way as semiosis. In other words, even where agents try to limit the covariation of relations among relations, these attempts rarely fully succeed. Indeed, there are many efforts at many scales to structure social relations and, if structural coherence and a strategic line do emerge, even in a provisional, partial and unstable way, this result cannot be attributed to a single master subject. It is a contingently necessary outcome of the asymmetrical interaction of competing structuration attempts and, most importantly, of blind co-evolution (Jessop 2007b; cf. Foucault 2008a, 2008b; Poulantzas 1978).

The ontological distinction between semiosis and structuration is crucial to our approach. Since our arguments are first developed in Parts I and II, we refer here to the renowned cultural anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, who defines culture as 'an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols' (1975: 89). Given this definition, he might be expected to privilege semiosis over structuration. But he argues that the study of society must explore the articulation between cultural and social structures, without superimposing one on the other (via the metaphor of a mirror) or implying that one mechanically generates the other (1975: 142–69). Geertz adds that, if one studies only cultural symbols, the social dissolves into the meanings attributed to it by social agents via their theoretical or practical knowledge of it. But social structure has hidden depths due to the hierarchical layering of different kinds of social relations. Thus, as Luhmann might say, social agents 'cannot see what they cannot see'. This clearly raises epistemological questions.

Epistemology

Inspired by the Marxian critique of political economy and Foucault's analyses of truth regimes (among other sources), CPE assumes that knowledge is always partial, provisional and incomplete. 'Knowledging' activities can never exhaust the complexity of the world. On this basis, against a universal, trans-historical account of the 'economy', we emphasize the inevitable contextuality and historicity of knowledge claims about

historically specific economic orders. The same holds for other positivist social science analyses that take for granted their respective research objects. The basis for our understanding of (scientific) knowledge production is critical realism (see next section) with its distinction between the intransitive and transitive moments of scientific investigation. The intransitive moment refers to the external world as the object of observation and, in many cases, intervention; the transitive moment refers to the practices of science and scientific communities as a set (or sets) of observers and, perhaps, interveners.

Critical realists analyse knowledge as the fallible result of interaction of the intransitive and transitive moments and view its production as a continuing but discontinuous process. Of course, one can also study science as a set of social practices. In this case, scientists remain 'located' in the intransitive world (which varies across the natural and social sciences) and those who observe them act *as if* they operate outside it, at least for observational purposes. In good recursive fashion, one could also study the science of science studies (and so on) as well as the history of science and scientific disciplines – including their relationship to other kinds of social practice. Interesting topics here include how disciplines are distinguished from each other and from other forms of knowledge production. There is much work on the scientific practices, scientific communities and scientific knowledge that considers how knowledge production is mediated through scientific imaginaries, the structure of communities of scientific practice, scientific methods and techniques, and, of course, the ability of certain scientists or teams to produce 'scientific revolutions'.

Because not all knowledge is produced through scientific practices (even science is embedded in other practices and its practitioners may have mixed motives), other modes of knowledge production and knowledge claims also affect social practices and how they get structured. A useful entry-point into knowledge production and its effects is Foucault's concept of 'truth regimes'. Later chapters explore situated knowledge production, its reception by social agents, and its long-term social effects within and beyond its sites of production (for example, Chapter 5 considers intellectuals, Chapter 4 treats reception and societal effects, Chapter 7 considers the genealogy and impact of alternative post-Fordist imaginaries, and Chapter 12 explores the genealogy and impact of changing views about the BRIC economies). Of interest is how 'knowledge' enters strategic calculation, policy formulation and implementation, and, in some cases, becomes the basis for 'knowledge brands' that are marketed as patent remedies to solve socially diagnosed problems and to realize socially constructed objectives (on knowledge brands, see Chapter 8).

Methodology

CPE works with a critical-realist and strategic-relational approach that relies on a pluralistic logic of discovery and a logical–historical method of presentation. Pluralism can be justified deontically and/or pragmatically in many ways, but it is grounded ontologically in the complexity of the world, which entails that it cannot be fully understood and explained from any one entry-point. Nonetheless, this does not exclude well-grounded critiques of individual entry-points as an important part of scientific practice. It is not a recipe for an 'anything-goes' relativism.

The logical–historical method entails the movement from abstract–simple analytical categories to increasingly complex–concrete ones. Whereas this movement initially relies more on elaborating and articulating analytical categories and identifying basic mechanisms, tendencies and counter-tendencies, later steps consider their historical and conjunctural actualization, with due attention paid to the interaction of different causes and conditions. Nonetheless, as our comments on complexity imply, this process of discovery and method of presentation cannot culminate in the exhaustive reproduction of the real world (or, as Marx put it, the 'real-concrete') in all its complexity (for Marx, as a 'concrete-in-thought'). Positing such an outcome contradicts the foundational ontological postulate of the complexity of the real world. Thus the same method of presentation can be used for a wide range of research programmes that start from different entry-points, mark out some aspects of the world as objects of investigation, and pursue multiple lines of inquiry. The aim is to provide adequate explanations for these research problems as they are posed with different degrees of concreteness–complexity. We discussed these epistemological issues in *Beyond the Regulation Approach* (2006) and will shortly consider their implications for pre-disciplinary, disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary and post-disciplinary research. Chapter 4 presents the analytical tools for CPE in more detail, after we introduce concepts for structural (especially institutional) analysis in Chapter 1 and some crucial concepts for the study of semiosis in Chapter 3.

Ethics

CPE can be extended to include ethics in both senses (deontological and consequential) as part of its subject matter. Within the broad church of CPE this is the set of pews reserved for the study of moral economy (Thompson 1971; Sayer 1995, 2002, 2005, 2009; Scott 1977). This is concerned with revealing and evaluating the often implicit ethical and moral values, sentiments, commitments, feelings, temporal horizons, attitudes

to the environment and judgements that shape everyday life, organizational practices, institutional orders and societal self-understandings. It examines capitalist as well as pre-capitalist social formations. Within a CPE framework, moral economy involves the critique of ideology and the ways in which morality and ethics are enrolled in reproducing domination. In this sense, by virtue of its commitment to the critique of ideology and domination, CPE also rests on certain ethical convictions on the part of its adherents (for an incisive account of moral economy consistent with the broader CPE project, see Sayer 2002). This does not commit cultural political economists to (1) a utopian belief in a social world with no traces of ideology or domination or (2) a relativist position that all sets of social relations are equally bad, neutral or good. Within these limits, convictions are contestable and must be justified.

Missing from these observations is the substantive character of CPE. This concerns how these general philosophical principles are reflected and refracted in a particular theoretical programme. This question can be answered by identifying the positive heuristic of the CPE research agenda, that is, the concepts, assumptions, guidelines and theoretical models with which it operates. The present volume, like its predecessor, is an exercise in elaborating a substantive CPE research programme that is consistent with the ontological, epistemological and methodological principles that we have set out. We present the six basic features of this research programme below (see 23-35) and develop them in the rest of the book.

This approach can also be applied to itself. It can assess the place of CPE in the social sciences and compare its practices and achievements, if any, with others. It can compare its philosophical presuppositions, that is, its ontological, epistemological, methodological and ethical horizons, with other approaches. It can inquire into its own conditions of possibility, the distinctiveness of its knowledge, its particular modes of inquiry, and the normative commitments of CPE scholars. These are interesting meta-analytical questions but will not be explored at length here.

ON CRITICAL REALISM

We now briefly introduce critical realism as the philosophy of science that has informed our development of CPE. Critical realism has an important 'underlabouring' role in the natural and social sciences. In other words, it examines, critiques, refines and reflects on the ontological, epistemological, methodological and substantive presuppositions of different theoretical traditions, disciplines, schools and so forth. This 'underlabouring' role also implies that critical realism in general cannot provide the substantive

concepts and methods necessary to develop particular critical-realist theoretical approaches. These have to be produced through other means – but can then be subject to further critical-realist reflection as one among several ways to elaborate their substantive implications.

In general terms, adherents of critical realism posit the existence of real but often latent causal mechanisms that may be contingently actualized in specific conjunctures but may also, thanks to diverse factors or actors, remain latent. On this basis, critical realists distinguish among real mechanisms, actual events and empirical observations. Specifically, the real comprises the defining emergent features, causal properties, affordances (i.e. the possibilities of action afforded, or offered by, a given material object or social network)[7] and vulnerabilities of a given set of relations – which may or may not be actualized. The empirical concerns evidence about the actual, that is, those inherent potentials that are actualized. Together the empirical and the actual provoke questions about the nature of the real (for introductions to critical realism, see Bhaskar 1972; Archer et al. 1998; and Sayer 2000; and on its relevance to the regulation approach, Jessop and Sum 2006: 259–78).

This approach invalidates the naïve positivist method of inferring causation from empirical regularities, as if these could reveal cause–effect relations without prior or later theoretical work. The existence of the real world is a crucial 'regulative idea' in critical realism but its adherents do not claim to have direct access to this reality. Instead they rely on a method known as retroduction. This asks 'what must the world be like for "x" to happen?' This is an open process that switches among concept-building, retroductive moments, empirical inquiries, conceptual refinement, further retroduction and so on. Theory-building and testing are never final and complete: they are always 'under construction' based on a movement between more theoretical and more empirical phases. For critical realists, then, science involves a continuing, spiral movement from knowledge of manifest (empirical) phenomena to knowledge of the underlying structures and causal mechanisms that generate them.

Knowledge of and/or about the real world is never theoretically innocent. This implies, as cultural political economists, among others, would insist, that the starting point for inquiry is discursively constituted. The movement is one from a research problem that is defined in more or less simple and, perhaps, one-sided, superficial or, worse, chaotic, terms to an account that is more complex and has greater ontological depth. This kind of problematization synthesizes multiple determinations, identifies the underlying real mechanisms, and connects them to actual and empirical aspects of the explanandum. As the spiral of scientific inquiry continues, the explanandum is defined with increasing complexity and concreteness.

Thus, as Michel Aglietta, a pioneer regulation theorist, noted, 'concepts are never introduced once and for all at a single level of abstraction but are continually redefined in the movement from abstract to concrete – acquiring new forms and transcending the limits of their previous formulations' (1979: 15–16). He added, 'the objective is the development of concepts and not the "verification" of a finished theory' (ibid.: 66).

Critical realists also posit that the real world is stratified into different layers and regions that require different concepts, assumptions and explanatory principles corresponding to their different emergent properties. Obviously, while philosophical argument can justify a 'critical-realist ontology and epistemology in general', it cannot validate a 'critical-realist ontology and epistemology in particular'. The latter depends, as indicated above, on specific analyses of a specific object rather than on a simplistic and generic application of the critical-realist approach. We illustrated this for the regulation approach (RA) in our earlier book and do so for semiosis in Chapter 4.

PRE-DISCIPLINARITY, EMERGING DISCIPLINES AND RESEARCH CHALLENGES

Concerns with big questions and grand theory emerged well before disciplinary boundaries were established and have continued without much regard for them. Examples in the modern epoch include classical political economy, Hegelian philosophy, the German Historical School, other 'old institutionalisms' and some versions of CPE. Relevant here is Marxism, considered as a family of approaches rather than a single unified system. It originated in a creative synthesis of German philosophy, classical English economics and French politics (and more besides), and has remained open (in its non-ossified, undogmatic variants) to other influences – witness the impact at different times of psychoanalysis, linguistics, structuralism, post-structuralism,[8] 'cultural turns', feminism, nationalism and post-colonialism. Among important developments in the last 25 years or so are the RA and trans-national historical materialism (Jessop and Sum 2006; see also Chapter 2). Marxism offers a *totalizing perspective* on social relations as a whole in terms of the historically specific conditions of existence, dynamic and repercussions of the social organization of production. This does not commit this approach (although it is often assumed that it does) to the claim that the world comprises a closed totality that is unified and governed by a single principle of societal organization (e.g. accumulation). CPE explicitly rejects this. It insists on a plurality of competing principles grounded in different sets of social relations associated with different

grammars (codes, programmes, orders of discourse) and different social logics (systemic, institutional, organizational) and competing efforts and struggles to make one or other of these principles of societalization hegemonic and/or dominant. The very existence of competing principles and their uneven instantiation at different sites and scales of social organization invalidates attempts to understand societies or social formations as closed totalities (see Chapter 6).

Another important pre-disciplinary intellectual tradition is the so-called *Staats-* or *Polizeiwissenschaften* (state or 'police' sciences) approach that developed in the eighteenth-century German-speaking world and elsewhere in Europe. This was a hybrid theoretical and policy science that explored the nature and obligations of the state with a view to promoting economic development and good governance. This has been revived in the concern (whether Foucauldian or non-Foucauldian in inspiration) with governance and governmentality. It is particularly relevant to the articulation of the economic and political in institutional, organizational and practical terms – especially to the political economy of state policy. It is also reflected in recent work on global governance in international political economy and in the practices of international agencies such as the World Bank.

More orthodox forms of political economy began the retreat from these wide-ranging concerns in the early nineteenth century; and pure economics as a distinct discipline degenerated further as it became increasingly rigorous (mathematical and formal) at the expense of real-world relevance. More generally, only in the mid-nineteenth century did more specialized disciplines emerge, corresponding to the growing functional differentiation of modern societies in this period and to struggles to establish a hierarchized division of mental labour within and across expanding academic and technocratic communities. Political economy was separated into disciplines: economics; politics, jurisprudence and public administration; and sociology and/or anthropology (see Wallerstein 1996). These coexisted with history (typically subdivided in terms of distinctive historical periods, areas and places, and borrowing many concepts from other branches of the humanities and social sciences) and geography (which has an ambivalent identity, employs eclectic methods due to its position at the interface of nature and society, and is prone to spatial fetishism). At the turn of the nineteenth century two other major disciplines emerged: linguistics and semiotics – one focusing on language, the other on signs more generally (linked to Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce respectively).

These more specialized disciplines tend to reject philosophical anthropology (a concern with the essential, trans-historical character of the human species or its alleged subtypes) as pre-modern, unscientific, or

overtly normative – although neoclassical economics retains a touching faith in *homo economicus*. In other cases they tend to work with attenuated assumptions about functionally specific rationalities (modes of calculation) or logics of appropriateness that provide no real basis for a more general critique of contemporary societies. These disciplinary boundaries are now breaking down in a period when space and time are seen as socially constructed, socially constitutive relations rather than mere external parameters of disciplinary inquiry. To clarify these points we now distinguish forms of disciplinarity, indicating how they affect the study of economic rules and institutions, and noting their implications for a political and ethical critique of economic activities.

It is impossible to return to the pre-disciplinary age[9] that existed before specialized disciplines were institutionalized in the mid- to late nineteenth century in Europe and North America. But this does not require us to think and act in terms set by mainstream disciplines and correspond to often outdated epistemic concerns, ideological biases and ontological realities. Indeed the dominance of disciplinary thinking has prompted many scholars to attempt to escape or transcend the limited horizons of disciplines. To understand what is at stake here we now consider the nature of disciplines and different approaches to escaping from disciplinary straitjackets (for some different positions on disciplinarity, see Table 0.1).

A narrow disciplinary approach to a given topic explores themes identified in terms of a single discipline. For example, in mainstream economic analysis, this would entail focusing on themes that are identified in terms of vulgar political economy and its subsequent development as a specialized, mathematized discipline concerned with economizing behaviour. It would also correspond to the naïve, positivist belief that the market economy exists and can be studied in isolation from other spheres of social relations. This naturalization of the economy is linked to top–down pedagogic practices that reproduce an unreflecting and fetishistic approach to the laws of the market and the basic tendencies of the market economy. It also neglects the ethico-political dimensions of the economic field. Instead it would be better to develop and combine pluri-, trans- and post-disciplinary analyses of economic activities that not only draw on different disciplines and research traditions but also elaborate new concepts and methodologies to transcend disciplinary boundaries.

A pluri- or multi-disciplinary approach proceeds from a problem located at the interface of different disciplines and mechanically combines the inherently valid understandings and knowledge of different disciplines about their respective objects of inquiry to produce the 'complete picture' through 'joined-up thinking'. Whilst this is better than a one-sided disciplinary analysis of complex problems, inter- and/or trans-disciplinary

Table 0.1 *From pre-disciplinarity to post-disciplinarities*

	Thematic concerns	Methodological approach	Epistemic and ontological outlook	Extent and form of scientific reflexivity
Pre-disciplinary period	Focuses on holistic, multi-faceted themes Analyses pre-date the rise of distinct academic disciplines	Polymathic, holistic and integrative methodologies, often with humanistic as well as positivistic aspects	Tied to a world with low functional differentiation. So society–nature–cosmos often seen as integrated under God or by natural laws	Tends to naturalize a holistic world and hence tends to assert need to study it from all available perspectives
Disciplinary	Focuses exclusively on themes that are identified in terms of categories of a given discipline; ignores all other aspects of an entity and other possible themes	Approach to any theme is based on categories of a given discipline. Can prompt efforts to colonize other disciplines via disciplinary imperialism	Distinct disciplines correspond to the structure of the real world – each set of ontological entities has its own discipline	Tends to naturalize respective disciplinary objects of analysis as real-world entities and so does not reflect on the constructed nature of disciplines
Multi- or pluri-disciplinary	Focuses on themes located at intersection of the categories of two or more conventional disciplines	Combines approaches from these disciplines to produce a simple *additive* account of the chosen topic	Conventional disciplines correspond to simple and/or emergent entities in the real world. Joining them helps to understand a complex world	Aware of *epistemic* limits of disciplines and of resulting need to combine them to get a 'complete' account

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Table 0.1 (continued)

	Thematic concerns	Methodological approach	Epistemic and ontological outlook	Extent and form of scientific reflexivity
Inter- or trans-disciplinary	Focuses on selected topics or themes that are compatible with categories of several disciplines	Combines approaches from these disciplines to produce a more complex account	Objects are always complex and cannot be understood just by adding together a series of given disciplines	Aware of *ontological* limits of disciplines and of resulting need to combine them to get better accounts
Post-disciplinary	Identifies and studies specific problems independently of how different disciplines would classify them, if at all	Draws on/develops concepts and methodologies suited to problem(s) without regard to specific disciplinary proprieties. Often develops new concepts not rooted in any 'discipline'	World is descriptively inexhaustible and nomically complex. Study it in terms of problems that are constructed for specific research purposes	Critically self-aware of epistemic and ontological limits of inherited disciplines and of resulting need to follow problems
Anti-disciplinary	Reject the idea that there are clearly identifiable themes open to discipline-based research	'Anything goes'	Real world is one of largely unstructured complexity, chaos and even catastrophe	Disciplines are socially constructed and arbitrary

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approaches are preferable. These focus on complex problems that can be approached in terms of the categories of two or more disciplines and combines these categories to produce a more complex, non-additive account. They recognize the ontological as well as the epistemic limits of different disciplines, that is, that they do not correspond to distinct objects in the real world; and therefore accept the need to combine disciplines to produce a more rounded account of specific themes.

Rejecting the legitimacy of disciplinary boundaries is not a licence to engage in an anti-disciplinary conceptual free-for-all in which, as Paul Feyerabend (1978) suggests, 'anything goes' and the most likely outcome of which is eclecticism and/or incoherence. It is a commitment to a problem-oriented rather than discipline-bounded approach and, indeed, a move towards the most advanced form of such problem-orientation, that is, post-disciplinarity.

Post-disciplinarity requires further steps. These are to recognize the conventional nature and inherent limitations of individual disciplines and disciplinarity as a whole and to remain open to new ideas that may be inconsistent or incommensurable with any or all established disciplines. This approach refuses historically contingent disciplinary boundaries. Instead, post-disciplinary analyses begin by identifying specific problems independent of how they would be classified, if at all, by different disciplines; and they then mobilize, develop and integrate the necessary concepts, methodologies and knowledge to address such problems without regard to disciplinary boundaries. In sum, this research orientation is critically self-aware of both the epistemic and ontological limits of inherited disciplines and is explicitly problem-oriented rather than tied to disciplinary blinkers. As such, this is a research programme that should be discursively and structurally resistant to disciplinary institutionalization, that is, to becoming another discipline alongside others.

This creates the space for looser-textured, more concrete and more complex analyses that may also be more relevant to political and ethical issues. It also leads to more critical pedagogic practices and presents us with a constantly moving target as disciplines and their relations are reorganized. In an age when established disciplines still dominate higher education and the intellectual division of labour, trans-disciplinarity is often sufficient for many purposes and is also easier to deliver.

RESPONSES TO DISCIPLINARITY STRAITJACKETS

While the origins of classical political economy were pre-disciplinary, contemporary political economy is becoming trans-disciplinary and, in

some cases, has post-disciplinary aspirations. Classical political economy was a pre-disciplinary field of inquiry for two reasons. First, it developed in the early modern period of Western thought, when the market economy was not yet fully disembedded from other societal spheres and when, in particular, the commodity form had not been fully extended to labour power (cf. Tribe 1978). Second, it was formed before academic disciplines crystallized and began to fragment knowledge in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Thus it was pioneered by polymaths who regarded political economy as the integrated study of economic organization and wealth creation, good government and good governance, and moral economy (including language, culture and ethical issues). They examined how wealth was produced and distributed, and explored the close connection between these processes and the eventual formation of civil society and the modern state. Exemplars include John Locke, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, John Millar, Montesquieu and Hegel. A potential downside to this approach was its penchant for philosophical anthropologies (i.e. sets of assumptions about human nature and its development) that were often linked to ethico-political considerations.

New intellectual currents have emerged that are pertinent to political economy. Here we mention just five. First, political ecology transcends the nature–society dichotomy and associated disciplinary boundaries to better understand, explain and critique the complex interconnections in and across the natural and social worlds (Altvater 1993; Gorz 1980; Harribey 1998; Lipietz 1995; Peet et al. 2010). Second, semiotics, critical linguistics and discourse analysis have partly shifted from specific disciplines focused on particular objects of inquiry (signification, language, discourse respectively) to become, for some scholars, analytical strategies for developing 'grand theories' about social order (see Chapter 4). They have moved beyond text analysis to study pragmatics, that is, the use of language (and other forms of signification) as an important moment of social practices in different social contexts. This current is reflected in diverse 'cultural turns': narrative, rhetorical, argumentative, linguistic, metaphorical, translational and so on (see Chapter 3). Concern with semantic conceptual history, the analysis of discursive formations, and, more recently, historical genre analysis also have major implications for the discursive constitution and regularization of the capitalist economy and the national state as imagined entities and their cultural as well as social embeddedness (see Chapter 4).

A third, related, trend is the massive expansion of cultural and/or media studies. This is a wide-ranging field defined by its thematic focus (or foci) rather than by agreed ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. Indeed, as one authority notes, cultural studies are marked by significant ontological and methodological differences, ranging from

a more macro-historical, dialectical cultural materialism concerned with everyday life through to a more micro-analytical, constructivist concern with power/knowledge relations (Babe 2009: 61–88; on cultural studies, see also Bowman 2003; Chen and Morley 1996; Hartley 2003; Gregg 2006; Grossberg 2006, 2010).

A fourth current, less significant as yet but with obvious import for political economy, is 'queer theory'. This aims to subvert the heteronormative assumptions of feminism as well as malestream theory, stresses the ambivalence and instability of all identities and social entities, and aims to create a space for marginalized voices. In this sense, it, too, is an imperial, potentially unbounded project (on queer theory, see Butler 1990, 1993; Duggan 1994; Halley and Parker 2007; Sedgwick 1990; Warner 1993; for partial applications to political economy, Gibson-Graham 1995; Cornwall 1998; Gibson and Graham 2008; see also Hearn 1996; Jacobsen and Zeller 2008; and Winnubst 2012). This current partly overlaps with intersectionalist approaches. These emphasize the semiotic and material interdependence of different forms of exploitation, oppression or disadvantage and tend to reject (or be agnostic about) the primacy of any given identity, set of interests or type of domination (see Degele and Winker 2009; and Chapter 4). The fourth current is critical geo-politics and critical security studies. This applies various new intellectual currents to deconstruct and redefine the nature of international relations (e.g. Deudney 2000; Farrell 2002; Campbell 1992; O'Tuathail 1996; Wæver 2004).

ON THE AMBIVALENCE OF CULTURAL TURNS

The case for trans-disciplinarity against disciplinarity (especially when it takes the form of disciplinary imperialism) can be strengthened by developing two main lines of argument. The first concerns the continued relevance of Marxism as a pre-disciplinary intellectual tradition committed to the critique of political economy and the continuing scope for its creative development. This remark needs less defence and merits less defensiveness in the last decade than some deemed prudent during the boom years of the 'new economy' in the 1990s and early 2000s (heralded by some as 'the great moderation'; see Chapter 11). We illustrate the continued relevance of historical materialism, especially its concern with basic social forms and fundamental contradictions, at many points below (notably in Chapters 6 and 11). The second line concerns the significance of diverse 'cultural turns' for rethinking political economy. These have been instrumental in directing political economy away from neoclassical economics, rational-choice institutionalism and realism in international political

economy. In this sense, as turns, they are important. But they can prove counterproductive if they encourage neglect of the materiality of political economy as regards its objects of analysis and its methods of inquiry.

To clarify and qualify this remark, we note that there are many cultural turns with diverse denotations, connotations and significance depending on their intended contribution to the social sciences and humanities.[10] Four main types can be observed: thematic, methodological, ontological and reflexive. These occur in many disciplines but our focus is political economy. In this context, the first type highlights hitherto neglected themes (e.g. the political economy of art); the second suggests a new entry-point into the analysis of economic subjectivity, activities, institutions or dynamics (e.g. constructivist accounts of the financialization of everyday life); the third claims that economic order always involves meaningful action and that a valid explanation of economic phenomena must be adequate at the level of meaning as well as of causality (e.g. analysis of the ideational as well as institutional foundations of catch-up competitiveness); and the fourth applies one or more of these turns to economic analysis itself (e.g. the critique of economic categories in classical political economy, in neoclassical economics, or of rhetoric in economic debate; see respectively Marx 1972; Häring and Douglas 2012; and McCloskey 1998). We discuss these turns in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

Given the range of recent cultural turns and of their starting points as well as the widely different definitions of political economy (and its critique), contemporary scholars disagree about the nature of CPE. We have identified five projects, besides the present one, that self-designate as 'cultural political economy' or 'cultural economy'; and another eight that invoke some kind of cultural turn to advance the critique of political economy and/or identify significant shifts in capitalism. Others undoubtedly exist. Those that we have noted comprise:

1. An eclectic interest in the broad field of study constituted by 'the cultural dimensions of the economy, the economic aspects of culture, and the political character of both' (Best and Paterson 2010b: 2; also Best and Paterson 2010a).
2. Studies of the relation between cultural production and political struggle by developing CPE as a 'bridging concept at the intersections of anthropology, sociology, economics, political theory, and literary and cultural studies' (Sheller 2006, discussing recent work on the Caribbean region).
3. The addition of cultural anthropology to economic and political history as proposed by Wickramasinghe and Hopper (2005) in their account of cultural political economy.

4. An argument that political economy should be studied at the level of everyday experience as well as in terms of elite practices and projects (Aitken 2007; Langley 2008; Hobson and Seabrooke 2007).
5. Efforts to overcome the stultifying base–superstructure dichotomy inherited from orthodox Marxism and to develop cultural studies as a trans-disciplinary enterprise that shows the intricate connections and reciprocal determinations of these spheres (e.g. Thompson 1963; Williams 1980; Jones 2004; Hall 1980; Chen and Morley 1996; Grossberg 2006, 2010).
6. Proposals to reintegrate cultural studies and the study of political economy by returning to the cultural materialism of Harold Innis, Theodor Adorno, Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and E.P. Thompson (e.g. Babe 2009: 3).
7. Interest in the political economy of culture on the grounds that the economy 'contains' culture, that is, that material provisioning touches all major belief systems and modes of understanding and acting (cf. Calabrese 2004).
8. Arguments about the culturalization, or aestheticization, of the economy and the economization of culture, sometimes with an emphasis on the declining significance of 'material' use-values relative to the importance of 'sign-value' (e.g. du Gay and Pryke 2002; Lash and Urry 1994; for a critique, see Bryson and Ruston 2010).
9. Privileging the soft features of the lifeworld, such as aesthetics, affect or consumption, over the hard logic of economic and political systems (for critiques of this, see Sayer 2001).
10. Applying the insights of social studies of science to issues in political economy (e.g. Callon 1988; MacKenzie 2006, 2009).
11. Applying 'cultural theory' as a useful tool in policy analysis or, indeed, in shaping cultural policies for development and competitiveness (see, e.g. Bennett 1998; and, for critiques, Craik 1995; Barnett 1999).
12. Examining culture in terms of norms and values and how they influence economic institutions and growth (de Jong 2009).
13. Extending and deepening the regulation approach by integrating the economics of conventions and/or through appropriating cultural and sociological insights from Gramsci or Bourdieu (see Jessop and Sum 2006; and Chapter 3).

These approaches can all contribute to multi- or trans-disciplinary studies in political economy but they are not central to CPE as we develop it. This is especially true of the vague notion that CPE is a broad field of study located at the intersection of cultural, political and economic analysis. In

contrast, our concern is to reconstruct critical political economy in the light of the cultural turn. Thus, arguing that the social world has semiotic (cultural) *and* structural (social) properties, our version of CPE studies the variation, selection and retention of semiosis and semiotic practices, their role in complexity reduction, and their articulation with technologies and agency (see below). It is far from the only variant and is compatible with several others, such as that proposed by Ray Hudson, an economic geographer, who suggested that our version of CPE as of 2007 should be supplemented by greater concern with the political economy of the circuits of capital and the materiality of production and consumption flows (including its environmental impact) (Hudson 2008). We return to these fruitful suggestions in Chapters 6 and 13. CPE as presented below is not exclusionary. Indeed, this would conflict with the meta-theoretical foundations for CPE that we set out below. Hereafter, the term CPE will usually refer to our approach rather than the wider set of cultural turns in political economy, which may often use other self-descriptions. The context should make it clear when CPE is used more broadly.

TOWARDS A POST-DISCIPLINARY CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

As the Preface indicated, one of our several convergent paths to CPE has been critical engagement with the regulation approach, materialist state and/or governance theories (including Foucault's work on govern-mentality) and critical discourse analysis. Among their positive features is many adherents' commitment to dialogue and interdisciplinarity. This risks eclecticism based on superficial similarities between middle-range theories. A genuine rapprochement requires, as Dorothy E. Smith (2000) notes, work on the underlying ontological, epistemological and methodo-logical foundations of different theoretical approaches as a basis for their subsequent articulation. Not all studies that have something to 'say' on specific middle-range phenomena or processes are really commensurable; thus unreflexive attempts to combine them (especially when this is based on fad and fashion) risk serious inconsistency. Chapter 1, which considers institutionalism, identifies and criticizes this problem.

This said, our 2006 volume ended with a call for a creative synthesis of regulationist, state-theoretical and discourse-analytic concepts:

> All three approaches work with realist ontological and epistemological premises; they have each produced concepts to describe the principal underly-ing causal mechanisms, powers, liabilities, tendencies and counter-tendencies in

their respective fields; and they have also produced concepts on a middle range, institutional level to facilitate detailed conjunctural analyses. The regulation approach and state theory have also been concerned with stages and phases of capitalist development rather than with abstract laws of motion and tendencies operating at the level of capital in general and/or the general form of the state. But the three approaches differ in their emphases on different institutional clusters in the process of societalization. The regulation approach stresses the successful development and institutionalization of a mode of regulation whose principal features are defined in terms of their contribution to maintaining the capital relation. State theory is more concerned with the state's central role as a factor of social cohesion in class-divided societies more generally and is more inclined towards politicism. Discourse analysis, strongly influenced by Gramsci's work on hegemony, emphasizes political, intellectual, and moral leadership. In short, while all three approaches concern societalization, they tend to prioritize economic, political, and ideological factors respectively. (Jessop and Sum 2006: 376)

This project still has merit and is feasible because these approaches do not focus exclusively on separate economic, political and discursive fields but productively privilege different starting points, standpoints and concepts for addressing capital accumulation and bourgeois domination. This may facilitate development of commensurable sets of concepts for what are described, more conventionally, as economic, political and ideological analysis. CPE aims to overcome this compartmentalization of analysis into distinct fields of inquiry. Its two-track strategy to achieve this is to bring semiosis into the analysis of economics and politics (or, better, political economy) and to analyse semiosis in institutional and evolutionary terms. We suggest how to do this and indicate its potential in Parts II to IV.

One turn that has been useful in developing this trans-disciplinary synthesis is the 'complexity turn'. The intuition, hypothesis or discovery that 'complexity matters' leads to two conclusions: (1) a major task of science and other disciplines concerned with complexity systems is to develop theories or models of complex systems; and (2) complexity requires individuals and social agents to reduce it in order to be able to 'go on' in the world. We take the first conclusion as an important *theme* and heuristic *entry-point* in our work on how social agents understand complexity in seeking to govern complex systems (e.g. Jessop 1997b, 2002, 2007; and Jessop and Sum 2010). The second conclusion is a *foundational (or ontological)* premise of the entire CPE project. We develop this point in Part I and trace its implications in our case studies as part of the broader CPE agenda.

While an ontological complexity turn has played a catalytic role in developing CPE, CPE can also be seen as a response to the malign influence of

certain types of cultural turn. We have sometimes described our approach as making a consistent cultural turn in critical political economy. On reflexion, this claim is misleading. For CPE is better understood as a *response* not only to a one-sided emphasis on the materiality of economic and political institutions but also to one-sided cultural turns in political economy. This explains why, referring to the mythic Greek challenge to steer a perilous path between two sea monsters on either side of a narrow strait, we describe CPE as attempting to navigate between a structuralist Scylla and a constructivist Charybdis (see Chapter 4). Thus, while we recognize the value of cultural turns in escaping the dangerous structuralist rocks of Scylla, it is equally important not to be sucked inescapably into the cultural whirlpool of Charybdis.

Our integration of semiosis into political economy does not mechanically add the study of 'culture' to studies of politics and economics to generate CPE through simple aggregation. It does not aim to produce an additive, three-dimensional analysis but stresses the role of semiosis in enabling social actors to 'go on' in a complex world in *all* spheres of social life. It does not accept that there is a separate field of culture (comprising semiotic practices and relations) that can be contrasted with other kinds of social relations. Indeed, the view that there is a distinctive 'cultural sphere' is itself the product of cultural (and other) imaginaries.

As we argued in *Beyond the Regulation Approach* (2006), Antonio Gramsci's work provides an important link between the critique of political economy and critical semiosis (see Chapters 2, 3 and 5). We draw on his anticipations of the regulation approach, his application of historical linguistics to the analysis of everyday life and the task of developing a new language to help build a new social order, and, most famously, his work on hegemony as political, intellectual and moral leadership. Thus, rather than constructing CPE through mechanical aggregation, we have been elaborating it stepwise through a recursive and reflexive synthesis of regulationist, state-theoretical and discourse-analytical concepts. Another important catalyst has been Michel Foucault's work. This provides a bridge between discourse analysis and critical political economy and, in particular, through the concept of dispositive, offers powerful conceptual tools to explore the intersection of different types of strategic selectivity along with the role of techniques of government. Thus we consider power/knowledge relations, governmental technologies, and the production of subjects and identities. Indeed, we argue in Chapter 5 that their work can be used to 'governmentalize' the critique of political economy in important ways. This demands sustained theoretical and empirical engagement between a materially grounded critical semiotic analysis and an evolutionary and institutional political economy informed by the cultural turn.

SIX FEATURES OF CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

The novelty of our approach can be seen in six features that *in their combination* distinguish it from others on similar terrain (see Box 0.2). Not all features are developed to the same extent (let alone in every chapter), but listing them helps locate the contributions of different parts of the book, our individual and joint interests, and how different arguments fit into the bigger CPE picture.

The first three features are the most distinctive. In this sense, even before we endeavour to show how competing economic, political and social imaginaries in capitalist social formations are related to the fundamental categories of the critique of political economy, we can show that it is essential to combine them because they are relatively concrete–complex instantiations of the need to reduce the complexity of the real world. CPE

BOX 0.2   SIX DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE PRESENT CPE APPROACH

(1) The manner in which it grounds the cultural turn in political economy in the existential necessity of complexity reduction.

(2) Its emphasis on the role of evolutionary mechanisms in shaping the movement from social *construal* to social *construction* and their implications for the production of domination and hegemony.

(3) Its concern with the interdependence and co-evolution of the semiotic and extra-semiotic and the diverse ways in which this co-evolution is mediated.

(4) Its integration of individual, organizational and societal learning in response to 'problems' or 'crises' into the dialectic of semiosis and structuration and, by extension, of path-shaping and path-dependency.

(5) The significance of four modes of selectivity: structural, discursive, (Foucauldian) technological and agential in the consolidation and contestation of hegemony and domination in remaking social relations.

(6) Its denaturalization of economic and political imaginaries and, hence, its role in *Ideologiekritik* and the critique of specific forms of domination.

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posits an existential need for complexity reduction as a condition for social agents to 'go on' in the world and distinguishes two basic forms of such reduction: semiosis (*Sinnmachung*) and structuration (*Strukturierung*).

Reference to semiosis has ontological and terminological functions: first, sense- and meaning-making is one of the two crucial bases of the ontological grounding of the CPE approach; and, second, given the great variety of cultural turns with their diverse theoretical and methodological assumptions, semiosis is a useful umbrella concept that subsumes them all. This reflects Umberto Eco's definition of semiotics as 'concerned with everything that can be *taken* as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else' (Eco 1976: 7; cf. Eco 1984: 59–67). Note that the referent need not exist for the sign to be acted upon. Indeed, Eco adds that '*semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie*' (Eco 1976: 7, italics in original; cf. 1984: 58–9). This expansive description indicates the reciprocal but variable relation between the sign and meaning beyond the sign. Thus it rejects the 'fatal semiotic confusion between the *signified* and *referent*' (Eagleton 1991: 209) and explores the contingent relations among signifier, signified and referent. This confusion is the specific semiological expression of the more general 'epistemic fallacy', that is, the interpretation of statements about being as statements about knowledge. By analogy, the semiotic fallacy reduces statements about being to statements internal to discourse and regards ontological and ontic questions as unanswerable (Chapters 3 and 4). This must be rejected if we are to understand and explain experience and learning as well as evaluate the adequacy of crisis construals, crisis management and so on.

The other ontological basis of CPE is the need to reduce unstructured complexity in the 'relations among relations'. This involves setting limits (however achieved) on the articulation of different sets of social relations such that 'not everything that is *possible* is *compossible*'. In other words, in contrast to the immense variety of individual *elements* of a social formation that are possible when considered in isolation at a given point in space-time, there is a smaller set of elements that can be combined as articulated *moments* of a relatively coherent and reproducible structure. This limits the chaotic variation of social relations in a given spatio-temporal matrix but cannot eliminate all interstitial, residual, marginal, irrelevant, recalcitrant and plain contradictory elements. Indeed, these may provide redundancy and flexibility in the face of crises. In addition, a key part of securing order within a given spatio-temporal framework depends on the capacity to displace and defer problems elsewhere and into the future (see Chapter 6).

Cross-cutting these themes, we draw on the strategic-relational approach (SRA) to explore four modes of evolutionary selection. These

are structural, semiotic, technological and agential. These involve different modalities of variation, selection and retention within and between the semiotic and extra-semiotic. Examining the interaction of these selectivities helps to provide explanations that are adequate at the level of meaning (semiosis) and material causality (through discursive, strategic, agential and technological selectivities). Their interaction also illuminates the nature and effects of dispositives, that is, contingent discursive–material fixes that emerge in response to specific (and specifically problematized) challenges to social order (see Chapters 3 and 5). Thus these four selectivities are crucial to the theoretical elaboration of features 3 to 5 and we illustrate their significance in Parts III and IV.

Although the study of crisis is not included in the six defining features of CPE, we argue that combining these features provides a powerful heuristic for this topic. Indeed, crisis is of great theoretical and practical interest for the CPE agenda. First, when linked to specific theories about the natural and social world, it provides the means to observe crises and investigate their real causes and their actualization in specific conjunctures. Second, because of their profound disorienting effects, crises are important revelatory moments about the improbability of sedimented discourse and structured complexity in any social formation. This may prompt efforts to repoliticize discourse and seek new ways to re-establish order, whether through restoration, reform or more radical transformation. And, third, it provides the means to observe how actors engage in retroduction to make sense of the phenomenal forms and underlying mechanisms that produce crisis. In other words, given its concern with meaning-making, structuration and evolutionary mechanisms, it offers a framework to understand why semiosis and extra-semiotic factors have varying weight across different stages of economic crisis and why only some of the many competing crisis construals get selected and why even fewer strategies are retained. In addition, crises are powerful stimuli to learning processes that shape discursive as well as structural, strategic and technological innovation (see Chapters 11 and 12).

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

We build on these six features and elaborate them through case studies to redirect the cultural turn(s) in political economy and put them in their place by making and illustrating the case for a distinctive approach to 'cultural political economy'. We suggest that analogous approaches are possible for non-capitalist regimes and also that the CPE approach to semiosis and structuration is useful in other fields of inquiry in the humanities and social sciences.

Chapter 1 distinguishes four types of institutional turn, introduces different kinds of institutionalism, and assesses their limitations from a critical-realist, strategic-relational perspective. It reviews a wide range of institutionalist analyses in political economy and the social sciences more generally. In particular we critique the three conventionally identified institutionalisms (rational choice, historical and sociological) and address one recently suggested and actively promoted 'fourth institutionalism', that is, constructivist, discursive or ideational institutionalism. This variant marks a belated acknowledgement, by some in the field of new institutionalism, of the importance of ideas, discourse and argumentation in institutionalization, institutional dynamics and institutional change. We ask what needs to be recovered from classical political economy and classical social theory in order to 'put institutions in their place' and connect them with questions of agency and meaning-making. We examine recent social theory and heterodox political economy for critical concepts and insights that reveal the potential static bias of institutional analysis and its privileging of social order over potential sources of instability. And we indicate how institutions can be related to broader questions of sense- and meaning-making, social practice, power and knowledge.

Chapter 2 considers one possible supplement to institutionalism when we review the initiatives by some regulation schools and scholars to make a cultural, hermeneutic or, as we would say, semiotic, turn (Jessop and Sum 2006). This is often intended to break with rationalist accounts of economic agency (especially where the rationality is that of *homo economicus*) and/or to illuminate the socio-cultural embedding of economic calculation, conduct and institutions. We consider the value of cultural turns in ways analogous to our critique of institutional turns. This is where we introduce the concept of the 'imaginary'. Whereas 'institution' belongs to a family of terms that identify mechanisms implicated in regularizing expectations and conduct within and across different social spheres, despite tensions and crisis tendencies, the 'imaginary' is one of a family of terms that denote semiotic systems that shape lived experience in a complex world. In short, institutions and imaginaries can be studied as sets of mechanisms that contribute crucially to the always problematic, provisional, partial and unstable *reproduction–régulation* of the capital relation (and much else besides). Bringing them together productively requires that both institutions and imaginaries are 'put in their place', that is, located in wider sets of semiotic and structural relations and their articulation – with all due regard for the possibilities of contradiction, conflict and crisis.

Third, given the relative failure of the main regulation schools to realize the potential of the cultural turn (especially compared with their advances in institutional analysis and periodization), Chapter 3 introduces some

basic concepts, assumptions and analytical tools for a more profound and critical analysis of semiosis. It does not aim to provide a complete review of critical discourse analysis (let alone of linguistics, semiology, semiotics or symbology more generally), but to highlight some useful theoretical resources that would facilitate an ontological and reflexive cultural turn in the critique of political economy without this becoming one-sided. Thus, whereas Chapters 1 and 2 address the limits of the institutional and cultural turns that have occurred in political economy, Chapter 3 reviews semiosis in general and semantic change in particular from institutional and/or evolutionary perspectives.

Recognizing the importance of semiosis and identifying the limited capacities of some contributions to political economy (including the regulation approach) to address this topic does not entail that semiosis is always the best entry-point into the critique of political economy, let alone that it is the only valid approach. It does imply that semiosis must be brought in sooner or later to provide explanations adequate at the level of meaning as well as other forms of causality. This requires attention to semiosis and structuration, their interpenetration and their disjointed co-evolution. Thus the chapters in Part II present the core conceptual and methodological features of the CPE research programme in its own terms, drawing on the results of the preceding analyses. Chapter 4 introduces our current synthesis of these two bodies of theoretical work and highlights the specificity of CPE and its foundational concepts. Chapter 5 presents several ways to operationalize the CPE research agenda in terms of the articulation of structural, discursive, technological and agential selectivities. These chapters aim to synthesize, within a critical-realist, strategic-relational framework, insights from the regulation approach, materialist state theory, semiology and relevant Foucauldian studies. Attentive readers will have noted the substitution of semiology for discourse analysis in this list, and the addition of Foucauldian studies compared with our 2006 book. This reflects subsequent work, especially in the field of semiosis and semantics, to discover the most appropriate and commensurable approaches for the grand theory that we aim to develop.

Parts III and IV reflect our individual and collective development of the CPE research programme with one or other of us as the principal author of specific chapters (as indicated in the list of sources in the Acknowledgements). Individual chapters develop specific aspects of the overall research agenda. For example, Chapters 6 and 11 focus mostly on the cultural political economy of social imaginaries and their role in shaping accumulation regimes and modes of regulation, paying particular attention to the role of semantics, and institutional and spatio-temporal fixes in facilitating 'zones of relative stability' within the contradictory flux

of the world market. Chapters 7, 8 and 12 are more focused on economic imaginaries, the social practices (which always have discursive as well as structural, 'material', or 'extra-discursive' moments) that promote them, and the ways they are selected, recontextualized and retained to remake social relations. Chapters 9 and 10 explore in turn the changing, always uneven, interaction of four different modes of strategic selectivity (structural, discursive, technological, agential) to examine, interpret and explain recent developments in particular enterprise forms (Wal-Martization), economic strategies (leading to a 'new ethicalism'), and the hegemonic project of competitiveness–integration (dis)order. Part V summarizes the main points in the CPE research programme and explores their implications for future research.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Critical-realist analyses do not call for an 'anything-goes' approach to scientific investigation but nor do they provide an automatic warrant for the set of disciplines that happen to prevail in a specific stretch of time-space. Indeed, through its interest in the distinctive properties of the intransitive and transitive worlds and their coupling in scientific inquiry, critical realism indicates the importance of studying the history of disciplines and resisting the fetishization of disciplines and disciplinary boundaries. While these certainly have instrumental value in the development of scientific inquiry, this benefit should not be emphasized at the expense of critical reflection on the histories of disciplines, their articulation and the epistemological selectivities involved in defining disciplines in one way or another. After all, scientific practice is another field amenable to strategic-relational analysis that also contains its own ideological elements and plays its own roles in maintaining different forms of domination. Our approach to CPE draws, *faute de mieux*, on concepts, theoretical arguments and empirical studies written from existing disciplines. It is just as impossible to start with a tabula rasa in the scientific field as it is in any other. But we describe our approach as pre-disciplinary in inspiration and post-disciplinary in aspiration. It addresses specific problems in the critique of political economy and many others have followed similar paths in their own fields. The contingency of the concepts, assumptions and methods developed in CPE precludes that it become another discipline. Like many other critical approaches, it is bound to exist in a limbo at the intersection of disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary practice.

In this light, let us bring a provisional end to this beginning by repeating

that we are not so much concerned to 'bring culture back in' for the purposes of economic or political analysis as to make the cultural concerns of recent contributions to critical political economy more explicit and to highlight their compatibility (indeed, compossibility) with the more self-conscious concern with semiosis found in some versions of critical discourse analysis. We emphasize that the cultural and social construction of boundaries between the economic and political has major implications for the forms and effectiveness of the articulation of market forces and state intervention in the '*reproduction–régulation*' of capitalism. And, in offering an alternative interpretation of this insight, we combine arguments from the regulation approach, neo-Gramscian state theory, historical semantics, and some key theoretical and methodological insights from Foucauldian analysis to highlight the contingency of social imaginaries, the contingency of structuration, and the contingency of their translation into social practices and institutions.

NOTES

1. While semiosis initially refers to the inter-subjective production of sense and meaning, it is also an important element/moment of social practice (and hence 'the social') more generally. It also involves more than spoken or written language, including, for example, forms of 'visual imagery'.
2. Note that reality 'exists in the way that it does, only in so far as it is assigned meaning by people, who are themselves entangled into and constituted by discourses' (Jäger and Maier 2009: 44).
3. Meaning systems are shaped in various ways, with different theories identifying different mechanisms. Cognitive linguistics emphasizes neural and cognitive frames and includes conceptual metaphor theory, which argues that language is inherently, not contingently, metaphorical (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Other approaches emphasize social interaction, meaning-making technologies and strategically selective opportunities for reflection and learning (e.g. Nord and Olsson 2013).
4. Core linguistics (Kress 2001) comprises the main subdisciplines (e.g. phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics); to this can be added 'non-core' linguistics, such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis.
5. 'In using the metaphor of construction it is vital to distinguish participants (constructors) from spectators (construers) and acknowledge that constructions succeed or fail according to how they use the properties of the materials – physical and ideational – involved in the construction process' (Sayer 2006: 468).
6. See, for example, Ferguson and Schularick (2007, 2011).
7. Affordance is an important concept in critical realism and the strategic-relational approach. For introductions, see Gibson (1979) and Grint and Woolgar (1997); Hutchby (2001) uses this concept in treating technologies as texts.
8. Post-structuralism is a broad intellectual and academic reaction to an equally ill-defined structuralist tradition. Its proponents reject the latter's claims about the feasibility of 'scientific objectivity' and universal truths. It denies that there are firm grounds for knowledge (hence its description as 'anti-foundationalist') and it highlights the plurality of meanings and difference. It also foregrounds the role of discourse and knowledge not only in construing but also in constructing reality.

9.   This remark concerns the overall tendencies in the organization of scientific practices. It is not a comment on the scope for particular individuals or schools, through years of reskilling, to adopt the attitudes and practices of the pre-disciplinary age. But this would involve the reinvention of a pre-disciplinary tradition in specific circumstances – not a return to an age of pre-disciplinary 'innocence'.

10. For a good survey of seven turns (interpretive, performative, reflexive or literary, post-colonial, translational, spatial and iconic), see Bachmann-Medick (2006). For an accessible introduction to the tools of cultural studies, see Thwaites et al. (1994). And, for introductions to different kinds of critical discourse analysis, see Fairclough (2003); Lakoff and Johnson (1980); Hodge and Kress (1993); Kress (2001); van Dijk (1977); van Leeuwen (2008); Wodak and Mayer (2009); and Chapter 3.