



Editor's Note:

"Your class has had a positive influence on me and has changed not only the way in which I see myself, but also the way I see and think about everything in my life."

"It forced me to define a large part of 'who I am'—this is useful due to my graduating next week. I feel I am going out into the world with a much firmer grasp of my goals, expectations, and abilities due to this course."

"The readings presented entirely new concepts to me which I will never forget. I made valuable self-discoveries as suggested by the readings."

"I have never taken a course like this before and this has been one of my favorite classes taken here in four years. How can you not like a class that focuses on yourself and how you can improve your life?"

"This was the 1st time I really studied myself, and it was good."

The self-exploratory essays gathered in this debut issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, were assignments undertaken by undergraduate students enrolled in various sociology courses recently offered on two State University of New York campuses at Binghamton and Oneonta, New York. The courses ranged from the "Sociology of Global Self-Knowledge" and "Social Change: Sociological Frameworks" (Binghamton University, Spring 2000 and Fall 2001), to two sections each of "Introduction to Sociology" and "Social Policy and the Life

Course" (SUNY Oneonta, Fall 2001).

What these courses shared was their common use of the sociology of self-knowledge as a strategy for learning about their respective subject matters. Each course required students to engage throughout the semester in an ongoing self-exploratory sociological research focusing on a specific unresolved issue, problem, or question still facing their everyday lives. They were required to link their self-explorations to the study of society at large through various class and outside readings and films studied in class throughout the semester.

The sociology of self-knowledge is a new field of research concerned with the dialectics of personal self-knowledge and world-historical social structures. Its conceptual origins in the critique of the Mannheimian sociology of knowledge is briefly outlined in an article reproduced at the end of this issue. An expanded version of that critique can be found in my dissertation on "Mysticism and Utopia: Towards the Sociology of Self-Knowledge (A Study in Marx, Gurdjieff, and Mannheim)" (forthcoming). The latter also contains the origins of the concept "human architecture" and its relationship to the sociology of knowledge, a broad outline of which is presented in the editorial perspective of this journal.

The sociology of self-knowledge centrally addresses the problems of whether and how individuals can radically understand and change their world-historically constructed selves. The present issue of *Human Architecture*, and the personal self-exploratory essays contained herein, are admittedly only beginnings in addressing and exploring that central concern. The gaps between everyday personal self-identities and knowledges of world-historical social structures cannot be easily traversed within the confines of a single essay conducted in the course of a semester's work. Nor can the empirical, theoretical, and methodological dilemmas faced in building a new research field be resolved within

the confines of a single journal issue. Both the practical and the intellectual tasks above are indeed projects worthy of life-long pursuits. I only hope that readers of the essays contained herein will discover fruitful beginnings towards those ends.

The richness of self-explorations, self-critical dialogues, and social concerns contained in the student essays can hardly be captured in a short editorial summary. For this reason, I will not attempt to do so here, and encourage readers to approach the essays with the same spirit of personal search and discovery with which they were written. I only would like to appreciate here the trust and the opportunity for mutual learning students extended to me as their instructor throughout several semesters of teaching. I sincerely hope that their good works may continue, not only in terms of further pursuing their personal growth, but also in terms of building new de-alienated communities of selves—within and without—that continue to be as engaged in self-research as they were during their coursework.

Aside from recognizing the research undertaken by students within the limits of a semester's work, the purpose of this issue of *Human Architecture* is to provide a medium through which students can communicate the results of their findings to one another in the current and future generations of similar class participants (including the mechanism of reserve library use of the journal in future courses). The journal is also a vehicle for students to communicate their work to others outside the class, on-and/or off-campus. Students were given the option of publishing their articles in the journal using their real or pen names, or anonymously. They extended permission in writing to the editor for the publication of their papers in *Human Architecture*.

Apart from publishing other works in the sociology of self-knowledge, *Human Architecture* will involve a self-publishing dimension as well. Besides invited and/or

submitted manuscripts, the journal will also publish the working papers of the Omar Khayyam Center for Integrative Research (OKCIR) in Utopia, Mysticism, and the Academy. The need for an independent self-publishing channel for OKCIR is not incidental but intrinsic to the nature of the project at hand. New printing and internet industries have increasingly eroded the powers of the privileged to use control over the means of production and distribution of knowledge as a vehicle to deny or degrade the value of alternative imaginations, perspectives, and praxes. There still is much stigma attached to the self-published word, to be sure. But the question really is whose interests and power does the stigmatization of self-published knowledge serve? How does the "other-" run system of traditional publishing limit the production and distribution of new *self*-knowledges? The effort undertaken herein to self-publish is a part and parcel of the effort to empower the self against the habituated practices of our social and academic institutions—and as such is of the essence to the purpose for which this journal is launched.

In closing, I would like to thank the Sociology Departments at Binghamton University (SUNY) and SUNY Oneonta, and their wider institutions, for providing me and their students the curricular opportunities to practice the sociology of self-knowledge first-hand. I would also like to acknowledge here the advice and encouragements extended to me over the years by my mentor and friend Jesse Reichel, Professor (Emeritus) of Design in the Department of Architecture at U.C. Berkeley. This debut issue of *Human Architecture*, full of original efforts in the sociology of self-knowledge by undergraduate students, must justly be dedicated to Jesse, for it was his undergraduate seminars at Berkeley that sparked my interest in "human architecture."

Tamdgidi
March 2002