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0521642205 - Cultures of Inquiry: From Epistemology to Discourse in Sociohistorical Research

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## Cultures of Inquiry

*From Epistemology to Discourse in Sociohistorical Research*

*Cultures of Inquiry* provides a unique overview of research methodologies in social scientific, historical, and cultural studies. Facing Kant's proposition that pure reason cannot contain social inquiry, John R. Hall uses a method of hermeneutic deconstruction to produce a "critique of impure reason," thereby charting a "Third Path" to knowledge. Inquiries conventionally allocated to science or interpretation, modern or postmodern, he argues, depend upon interconnected methodologies that transcend present-day disciplinary and interdisciplinary boundaries. *Cultures of Inquiry* identifies four formative discourses and eight methodological practices of inquiry, and explores new possibilities for translation between different types of knowledge. Its analysis neither exoticizes academic subcultures nor essentializes Culture as the spirit of Academe. Instead, it addresses workaday issues of research via a sociology of knowledge that speaks to controversies concerning how inquiry is and ought to be practiced under conditions of epistemological disjuncture.

JOHN R. HALL is Director of the Center for History, Society, and Culture and Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Davis. His publications include *Culture: Sociological Perspectives* (1993), with Mary Jo Neitz, and *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (1987). He has also published widely on topics in sociological theory and sociohistorical research.

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The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.

Archilochus, quoted by Isaiah Berlin 1970: 1

Pragmatism, pending the final empirical ascertainment of just what the balance of union and disunion among things may be, must obviously range herself upon the pluralistic side. Some day, she admits, even total union, with one knower, one origin, and a universe consolidated in every conceivable way, may turn out to be the most acceptable of all hypotheses. Meanwhile the opposite hypothesis, of a world imperfectly unified still, and perhaps always to remain so, must be sincerely entertained. This latter hypothesis is pluralism's doctrine. Since absolute monism forbids its being even considered seriously, branding it as irrational from the start, it is clear that pragmatism must turn its back on absolute monism, and follow pluralism's more empirical path.

William Jones 1908: 161

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## Acknowledgments

On the argument of the present book, foreshadowed in the prologue below, the analysis of cultures of sociohistorical inquiry contained herein can only be the product of a particular perspective. It is neither a view from nowhere nor objective truth: it is an account shaped by my own experiences. I grew up in an academic family. My interest in C. P. Snow's famous "two cultures" – science and the humanities – goes back to formative influences of my father, an embryologist, and my mother, a student of the relation between old French epics and medieval English literature. From the 1960s to the present, I have studied and worked under the institutional conditions of public and private universities in the United States.

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## xii Acknowledgments

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