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ONE

THE CLASSIC SCHOOLS
OF URBAN STUDIES
AN INTRODUCTION
Richard Sennett

The essays in this book are the first modern explorations of what it means to live in a city; they are also the greatest essays on city culture yet written. Almost all of these works were composed between 1900 and the Second World War, but they belong together not simply because they share a common epoch or a common reputation. Most of the writers of these pieces worked with each other in sequence, and out of this personal contact has come a common body of themes, a step-by-step expression of certain ideas, that continues to dominate the way we understand the urban cultures of today.

Urban studies is a very recent field of study, yet cities are one of the oldest artifacts of civilized life. The reason for this is that up to the time of the Industrial Revolution, the city was taken by most social thinkers to be the image of society itself, and not some special, unique form of social life. In the ancient world this identification occurred in the writings of Aristotle, Plato, and Augustine; during the reemergence of city life in the late Middle Ages it could be found in the work of Machiavelli; during the 18th century this merging of city and society was powerfully stated in the social theory of Rousseau. Occasionally the city was treated as a special society, in the work of the 17th-century philosopher Jean Bodin, for instance, but the authority of the greater social theorists overwhelmed the view of those who felt as did Bodin. Thus, until quite recently, the field of urban studies had no real meaning of its own; the city was taken to be the mirror of a broader reality, more appropriate as a focus of thought.

This identification of society and city changed during the Industrial Revolution of the last two centuries because the cities themselves changed. They became immensely larger than anything known since the
time of Rome, and their growth came not from within, through internal population change, but from without, as a result of agricultural changes that either encouraged or, in fewer cases, forced men of the countryside to move to town. This human migration, unsettling itself, was conjoined to a new means of labor by which the experience of time, motion, and human relatedness became altered in men's lives. This new labor cannot simply be identified with the growth of "the factory" or of "capitalism," for extensive factory systems had existed in the medieval towns and Renaissance cities, and the process of orderly capital formation was more institutionalized, more coherently understood, in 14th-century Venice than in 19th-century Manchester. Something tangled and complex was involved in these industrial cities, something to be explored as a problem of itself, something that could not be understood by the use of a few easy labels or categories.

This was the task the writers in this book set themselves. It may be asked why it was their generation, at the opening of our own century, who performed this labor, and not the people who, 75 to 100 years earlier, first felt the brunt of the urban transformation. There was in fact a great deal of documentary evidence and discussion of the city by the people initially caught in its grip: in England the reports of commissions on child labor and factory conditions were read with concern by wide sections of the public; in France, the reshaping of Paris by Baron Haussmann in the middle of the century produced great debate; in America, the evils of the European factory cities were closely watched and the sylvan experiments of Lowell or Waltham offered up as a solution to the degradation of urban life in the Old World.

But holding sway over all these particular discussions and experiments was what Karl Polanyi has called the "grand idea" of the 19th-century intellectuals, that all these urban traits could be related in one way or another to society as a huge market place in which individuals or groups struggled with each other for gain. This system, generating the social conditions of cities, was thought to be perfectly clear as an idea, and useful new knowledge would be gained, supposedly, in discovering the good and evil of the system in practice.

It is the sway of the mechanical idea of a market economy generating urban social conditions that the writers in this book were the first to attack. They felt it was too simple and reduced away the complexity of experience that occurred in a city. Significantly, none of these new thinkers challenged the rightness or wrongness of the market idea as such, but rather sought to show that the economic life of the city was shaped in part by, or had at least a symbiotic relation to, noneconomic conditions peculiar only to urban areas. In this way, these classic urban theorists established themselves by enlarging the genera, the creative forces, that men understood to have produced the specific conditions of city culture.

This enlarging of the genera of social life helps explain why the essays in this book are so broad in the phenomena they treat. The generality was a breath of freedom for these men; it was the way in which they could tear down the rigid simplicities of thought that had made previous theories of city conditions sterile.

The classic urban writers fall into two schools of research. The first school was a German one, centered in Heidelberg and Berlin; its members were Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and a little later, Oswald Spengler. All wrote in the first quarter of the century. The second school grew up at the University of Chicago in the 1920s, where most of its members remained active until after the Second World War; the leaders of this Chicago School were Robert Park, Louis Wirth, and Ernest Burgess, of whom Park and Wirth appear in this volume. While all three called themselves sociologists, their intellectual influence at the university spread widely, and one of the notable conjunctions it effected was in the theoretical work of an anthropologist, Robert Redfield, whose urban essays appear as the conclusion of this volume. Redfield's ideas were both a summation of the work of the German and Chicago schools and a transition into the thinking about cities current today, thinking that still largely revolves, as elaboration or dispute, around the work done by all these men.

The German School

The first modern effort in urban studies, Max Weber's The City, appeared in 1905. The subject was a new one for him, and he also treated it in a way unlike anything before written on cities. Weber's work on the city is difficult to read, yet its difficulties, which are reflected in the impossibly abstract language of the book, say a great deal about the intentions of the author.

Weber was in his own life torn between being a man of action, committed to practical goals and specific ethical standards, and being a scientist, committed to a "value-free" description of society; in his
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relationship in time. By the ideal-typical method, bureaucracies in medi-
eval Europe could be compared to those of ancient China, the city-
states of Greece compared to the republics of Renaissance Italy, and so on. The meaning was in the logical comparison of composite
social pictures; reason was to be used as a tool to bring out depths in historical experience that would not emerge if the observer’s vision
were narrowly limited to the historical material in sequence.

Using this method, Weber located an urban form, in the late
Middle Ages in the Low Countries, and slightly later in the early
Renaissance cities of Italy, that seemed most nearly to typify those
conditions of city structure which bred rich, diverse urban styles of
life. It was in the contrast of these cities to the cities of modern-day
Europe that Weber hoped to show, not what should be changed or
how change should occur, but what was now missing, what richness
was possible within the city’s borders.

Georg Simmel was a friend and younger colleague of Max
Weber, one of the first to appreciate the greatness of Weber’s work.
Weber in his turn spent much effort, out of his faith in Simmel’s
powers, in trying to have Simmel appointed to a good university post;
since Simmel was Jewish, he had a difficult time in the school
system of Germany and was never fully accorded the honors that
Weber and others sought for him.

Intelectually, Weber and Simmel shared a conception of the
structures forming the modern Western city, but Simmel disagreed with
Weber’s explanation of how the city came into being; in addition,
Simmel saw in these urban forms of the modern age the possibility
for a new and complex civilized life.

Simmel, like Weber, believed that cities could be described in an
“ideal-typical” form, but the elements of this description would be
psychological, not structural, as in Weber’s description of urban
markets, families, and laws. For Simmel, the inescapable fact of urban
life of all kinds was the feeling of being overwhelmed, the feeling
that there was too much around one in a city to be dealt with.
This excess of psychic stimulation, as Simmel called it, led men to try
to defend themselves by not reacting emotionally to the people around
them in a city; for Simmel this meant they would try not to react as
whole human beings with distinct identities.

As a defense against the complexities of urban life, men tried
to live, in Simmel’s account, in a nonemotional, reasoned, functional
relationship to other men; this defense was to break life into separate,
neat compartments in order to be in control over each one separately.
If men were in a city to try to mesh such realms of their lives as
their families, their work, and their friends, they would be de-
stroyed, Simmel argued, by compounding the complexities in each one
of these realms within an urban milieu.

The market economy and the office and factory bureaucracies
were the apotheosis of this fragmentation process, for in these socio-
economic forms the urbanite was most shielded from acting with
other men as a full, emotional human being, most directed toward
human contact in purely functional and rational forms. And since
the threat of overstimulation was great in all the mammoth cities of
Simmel’s time, he argued that it was no accident that they should all
appear so uniform; the market exchange and the office were the im-
personal means suitable in all of them as a defense against the
psychic disintegration of being overwhelmed.

Thus Simmel arrived at a portrait much like Weber’s of the
characteristics of modern city life: the impersonality, the faceless
bureaucracies, the rational market processes. But Simmel believed
these traits were the product of an urban condition social-psychologi-
cal in its nature, while Weber believed they were the product of the
confluence of economic and noneconomic forces called modern capi-
talism. Simmel also saw a possibility for life in these modern cities
that Weber’s indirect argument never approached.

Simmel’s description of the psychological mechanism that goes
into effect whenever large numbers of people live together assumed
that there is a selfhood, a human identity, which tries to protect
itself in the process. But this self, this emotional being, is not an
insulated, otherworldly sphere that can live untouched by the defense
mechanisms established in response to the city. The process of build-
ing defenses against the city inevitably molds the identity of the man
doing the building. The great subtlety of Simmel’s thinking was that
he did not reduce this connection between the outer city world and
the inner emotional world to a single form: there is no necessity for
alienated spirits to arise in men whose day-to-day lives are function-
al and impersonal; the emotional lives of men need not wither because
they have little outlet in ordinary affairs. These things could come to
pass, but the city condition could lead as well to something differ-
ent: a specially urban, specially civilized kind of human freedom.
Simmel believed that a man could, in a complex city, come to free his spirit from his acts, that is, come to understand that "who I am" is not simply "what I do ordinarily." There is something ironic in a persecuted Jewish intellectual giving this most Christian of ideas its first modern form in terms of city life, yet for Simmel the emotionless and functional qualities of most contacts in the city are powerful forces driving men to look for a more transcendent order of life, powerful forces to free men from making the circle of their routine acts the circle also of their feelings and intellectual horizons. Because the routine of life in the city is a defensive act, the person defending himself could believe that his own selfhood lay in the capacity to defend, to rise above mundane, emotionless things, and to live a life apart from them.

What Simmel envisioned, concretely, was that a man could learn in a city not to feel tied to his job, or his family, or his friends, but finally to turn in on himself for sustenance and growth, the way a monk would meditate. It is an open issue in Simmel's essay whether this freedom will prevail or whether men will become dispirited by the routine of their daily lives, but at least Simmel was willing to explore what good the great, impersonal metropoles of his and of our time could serve. Unlike almost all other writers during and since his day, Simmel was a visionary of the real world, not a visionary of the past or of some utopia to be established in the unknown future. He had the courage to look at routine and impersonality in order to see what could be made of it.

The final German theorist in this book, Oswald Spengler, was not a personal friend of either Weber or Simmel, nor a deep student of their work. Yet his writings on the city have a surprising affinity to certain of Weber's and Simmel's ideas, and his own thinking was later to influence the young American, studying with Simmel in Germany before the war, who was to found the Chicago School of Urban Studies.

Spengler believed that the stages of city development indicated the stages of civilized life as a whole in Western cultures. In this belief, he diverged sharply from the thinkers at the turn of the century like Weber and Simmel who were trying to specify unique features of the city as a social form. Further, the stages of civilized growth Spengler envisioned the city to embody were cyclical; the rise and fall of city cultures had a clear pattern which indicated the stages of growth and decay in society.

But Spengler parted ways with earlier thinkers by setting the course of urban growth inversely to the healthy growth of society, beyond a certain point. The large cities of his own time Spengler believed were a cancer, drawing off the sources of vigor and energy to be found in those less routinized, more brutal times when country and town were of equal strength. Soon, he prophesied, the giant metropolitan cultures of the present day should meet the fate of Rome, so that the cities would be destroyed in some apocalyptic war, and the society would revert to a barbaric agricultural life. Then the whole cycle of urban growth would reinstitute itself, civilized life would return, again become overcivilized at the point where the city overpowers the country, and collapse once more.

His major work, *Decline of the West*, derives its title from Spengler's belief that Western city culture had, by the early 20th century, become overripe; yet the cycle of urbanism was applicable, Spengler said, to other, non-Western cultures. For in all cases, cities of a certain size would corrupt their inhabitants by overinstitutionalizing the processes of human interchange, by making them routine and unemotional. This was also a possibility Simmel foresaw in the development of very large cities; but Spengler's notion of corruption was closest to the characterless cities of the modern world as they figured in Weber's account.

Spengler believed that every culture, Western and non-Western alike, formulated a "folk spirit" in its early agrarian phases, a spirit that gave the culture a particular identity; the growth of the massive city gradually obliterated this cultural character by encouraging a sense of individuality and separateness in the members of the city. Thus it comes about, Spengler argued, that all great cities are the same, though they spring out of radically different cultures, and that this sameness is a sign of their sickness and imminent collapse. The balance between town and country, which Weber believed critical in establishing the vigor of the Renaissance culture, was to Spengler the key to the health of all developing societies.

Spengler's argument may seem a facile, enormous generality, and indeed became so when perverted during the Nazi era in Germany. Yet cyclical accounts in which the city figures in some way as a symbol of growth or decline have deep roots in our culture; the Roman historian Polybius made a powerful argument along these lines;
there are some hints of this connection in the work of Herder, the 18th-century German writer who was one of the first to speak of a "folk-spirit;" and since Spengler’s time the linking of city growth to the cyclical development of culture has been powerfully expressed in the writings of the English historian Arnold Toynbee and the American urbanist Lewis Mumford. What is so annoying about this cyclical idea in Spengler’s essay, I believe, is that it was presented as a metaphor without a process; that is, the sense of the cycle was conveyed without a clear idea of the steps by which a large city could install separatism and isolated individualism in the place of common cultural character. One of the great achievements of the Chicago School taking form at the time Spengler wrote was to specify such evolution in concrete terms of migration to cities and the internal structure within the city itself.

This problem in Spengler’s writing on the city identifies an assumption about the city found as well in the work of Weber and Simmel, an assumption which the Chicago School did a great deal to clarify. Weber, Simmel, and Spengler all assumed the characteristics of city culture—the large impersonal bureaucracies, the rule of rational exchange and rational law, the lack of warm personal contact between city men—to be qualities that pertain to the city as a whole. The enterprise of all three writers was directed toward defining city culture as a unitary phenomenon, by contrasting it to other kinds of social entities.

The first members of the Chicago School set out in an opposite way to deal with the city: they asked questions about the internal character of the city, about how the different parts of the city functioned in relation to each other, about the different kinds of experience to be had within the same city at the same point in time. This second generation of urbanists took the city as a world in itself, and sought to define what the city was in terms of the relations between the parts in this world; their effort was thus a new departure from the Germans in that, during the early phases of the Chicago School, no searching attempt was made to understand the city through its relations to the social forms that lay beyond it. Only in the last phases of the Chicago School, in the work of Robert Redfield, was the insight of the wider social bearing of the city, as explored by the Germans, to be combined with the knowledge of the internal workings of the city developed by the first researchers of the city at the University of Chicago.

The Chicago School

Despite this difference, the themes in the work of the Chicago urbanists Robert Park, Louis Wirth, Ernest Burgess, and Robert Redfield were those of the earlier German generation, themes now thrown into greater focus and detail. Because of this continuity, urban studies as a discipline has been fortunate in achieving coherence over the course of time, while other areas of social study have become fragmented. These themes fall into two large groupings: What are the noneconomic forces that work to create the "culture" of the city? What are the possibilities for free choice and innovation in the culture of the city? In addition to these common concerns, Robert Redfield, working in conjunction with Milton Singer, arrived at a means of describing the evolution of cities that resolved a confusion prevailing both the German and earlier Chicago School writers on the nature of the evolution of the city form itself.

The Chicago School began to take form after the First World War when a young journalist-turned-sociologist, Robert Park, attracted to the University of Chicago two other scholars in the then novel field of city culture, Ernest Burgess and Louis Wirth. Park had done his doctoral work in Germany, at the University of Heidelberg, before the war, and there had been much influenced by the lectures of Georg Simmel. The first fruit of this work was an article of Park’s appearing in 1916, “The City: Some Suggestions for the Study of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment”; this landmark in the development of urban studies has influenced the course of urban research in America and Europe ever since.

Park in this article set out to understand the city both as a place and as a “moral order.” He believed that the city could be described in such a way that its functional, tangible character would ultimately reveal the cultural and ethical possibilities for life in it. What Park called the “ecology” of the city, the way it was internally divided and operative, was not to be simply a map of where things were and how they worked; rather, Park wanted to discover how these physical vessels shape the emotional, human experience of city men.
This is a more subtle undertaking than it first appears, for Park assumed that psychic and moral conditions of living in a city would reflect themselves in physical ways—in how space was used, in the patterns of human motion and transport, and so on. Park assumed, in other words, that a culture could be manifest directly through its tangible artifacts, and that the city must therefore have an organic character which writers like Spengler, contrasting the “organic manifestation” of the farm or village to the disembodied society of the city, had previously denied it.

Park’s idea was a suggestion as to where research on the tangible, immediate aspects of city life could lead. This organic picture, unfortunately, was achieved by few of Park’s many students, so that most ecological work during and since his time has produced dry and anesthetic studies of urban conditions that reveal little of what is experienced in the actual conduct of life. But among some of Park’s disciples the humane intent of his original formulation has been realized, notably in the theoretical essays of Louis Wirth and Robert Redfield, and in the concrete researches today of such Chicago urbanists as Donald Bogue.

We have seen that Simmel and Spengler both used the concept of a division of labor to describe the way in which city men lived in a fragmented and specialized relation to each other; the force urging on this division of labor was the desire for rational efficiency in performing tasks—rationality apart from, or as a defense against, the emotional relations involved in social acts. The writers of the Chicago School, notably Park and Wirth, were to show how this “force for rationality” was expressed in the physical arrangement of the city itself, how the geography of the place was the concrete expression of the division of labor and the fragmenting of social roles.

Because we are today so familiar with this geographical condition of the city, where business district, ghettos, slum, are distinct each one from the others, it is hard to imagine that any other kind of urban form could exist, or that the description of such a functional geography could have been a discovery. Actually, this ecology is unique to the industrial city. The geographical separation of house and factory, place to live and place to work, was unknown to the late medieval cities of northern Europe, or the Renaissance city-state of Italy. As late as the middle of the last century, in the rebuilding of Paris, living quarters could be planned themselves to include all units from rich to poor in the same place.

The segmentalization Park and Wirth sought to describe was therefore a new physical artifact of industrial cities, in which the efficient use of land and distribution of population was based on the concentration of homogeneously functional units in the same physical territory. It was this condition, Park and Wirth thought, that would make the city a cluster of separate worlds, but where each one would be all of a piece within its own boarders.

For Park, this kind of physical-functional separation had an immense impact on the way behavior could be controlled in the city, and thus determined the freedom of behavior and expression possible in the city. This concern for city freedom set Park apart from those of his students, like Louis Wirth, who explored the response of urban people to fragmentation in their lives in terms of paths of communication and power in the city, through such limited groups as voluntary organizations. Park’s emphasis on the freedom possible for men in cities as a consequence of the division of labor was rather in line with the concerns of his own teacher, Georg Simmel.

Where Simmel believed city men could become free by transcending the routine of city life, by forming an “I” that was greater and apart from any of the emotionless daily acts that “I” performs, Park went a step further; he asked what it would mean for the control of human behavior if all the activities of daily life were broken up into small, routine parts in which men were not emotionally involved. His answer was that in such a city, no one of the parts would have the power, or the total desire, to dictate the acts of any other, beyond what was necessary to preserve functional relations between the two. This was because the people who under one rubric might be considered a coherent social segment would not uniformly remain as a group defined by another measure: if the Swedes, for instance, belonged to twenty different occupations in a city, with cross-loyalties to each, no one could organize the Swedes as a group to achieve one particular occupational goal, like supporting a printers’ strike; in the same way, the guild organization of workers, so common in the medieval and preindustrial cities of Europe, could not survive the fragmenting of loyalties within each worker in the industrial city as he comes to have at the same time a number of different and often conflicting interests in his various social roles.

The outcome of these crossed loyalties was, Park believed, the impossibility of enforcing uniform standards of behavior in the city.
even though most of the city's people might have similar codes of conduct, without the use of violent force. Thus the possibility for what Park called a "moral" range of deviant behavior would be very great in cities, no one nonviolent agency being able to limit nonconformers. But for a man to innovate, to free himself from old cultural restrictions is, exactly, not to conform. Thus Park saw the city as the medium for the emergence of free men, whose personal development could transcend general societal standards, whose innovations could provide the basis for historical change in urban society itself.

This urban freedom, as envisioned by Park, is sharply opposed to Simmel's concept of liberty in the city. The freedom Park envisioned was behavioral, and involved the capacity of men to express themselves through acts unlike, and unrestrained by, the community as a whole. The liberty Simmel envisioned does not suppose this condition of social deviance; it was instead a transcendental, inner activity of searching out a sense of selfhood beyond petty routine, routine Simmel took to be an ineradicable condition of metropolitan life. Where Park's free urban man is an innovator, a deviant, Simmel's free urban man is more like a monk.

Further, where Simmel's notion of a free urban man makes it innately impossible to point him out by the nature of his acts, and so directly study what his life is like, Park's concept of freedom clearly shows where the tangle signs of the condition could be found throughout the city: in the patterns of deviance which define the city's moral order.

A reader who has absorbed the ideas of Park will sense immediately the direction of thought in the essays of Louis Wirth, though Wirth emphasized a different result of the urban fragmentation process than Park. Wirth was a disciple in the best sense of the word; he was not a highly original thinker, but he was creative in his capacity to develop an idea, once germinated, into all of its logical possibilities. Wirth made a great contribution, in particular, trying to envision the ways in which the division of labor as an urban phenomenon would influence the relations of urban economics, urban land use, urban labor patterns, and urban political structures to each other; from this pattern of interrelation he sought to understand how the fragments communicated and influenced each other. What was suggested in previous accounts of division of labor was spelled out in great theoretical detail in Wirth, so that the process of urban specialization received for the first time a coherent and disciplined presentation.

To my mind, the most interesting essays to come out of the Chicago School are those by Robert Redfield. His work deepened that of his colleagues by showing how their views of the modern city were based on assumptions about the lives of nonurban, or what Redfield called "folk," societies. Together with a younger colleague, Milton Singer, Redfield went on to show how the difference between urban and folk societies were related to the evolution of the city form itself. In this way, Redfield was able to unite the explorations of the internal character of the city made by the early Chicago urbanists with the work of the German School on the city in the larger realm of society and social development.

Redfield's method of analysis was much like that of Max Weber: both used composite pictures of societies, "ideal-types," in order to build a rational discourse out of not necessarily rational historical materials. The special ideal-type Redfield was interested in was a picture of village or rural societies that could stand as a direct opposite to all that Park and Wirth had ascribed to the city. The essence of this folk culture was that all men could participate in the same way in society; nothing was so specialized that only a few people would be directly involved in it, since the scale of life was small in the sense that men knew each other as people, not as special performers with only functional relations to each other. Redfield brought his immense knowledge of anthropology to bear on tracing out how such an unsegmented society would affect religion, the exercise of power, and kin groups. In each case, his intent was to show what happened when men acted as full emotional beings, that is, when the principle of division of labor and roles was absent from their lives. In making this comparison, Redfield brought the enterprise of urban studies back to the generally comparative approach of Weber and Spengler; both urban and folk cultures, in Redfield's schema, were to acquire their reality by virtue of their differences.

Redfield took this simple idea as the cornerstone of an elaborate, sophisticated description of what happens to men as they come to be urbanized. Passage from folk to urban society was Redfield believed, a two-stage process, the first a kind of halfway structural absorption into the city, the second an internal change of attitude in the mind of the new urbanite. The kind of urbanization Redfield envisioned was a teleological one; that is, the move from folk to urban cultures was a process with a definite beginning and a definite end. This teleological approach is similar to the method of Max Weber in that both men as-
umed there was some final and definable condition of life that could be called urban.

But Redfield, with his colleague Singer, went a step beyond Weber by arguing that once this process of urbanization had been fully achieved, further development to the nature of the city itself could occur. What the city does to people and the nature of the city as a formal structure were separate forces to Redfield and Singer. The forms of the city were themselves in evolution, and the evolution is ontological; that is, there is a process of development, but toward no clear end. The typing of cities in the Redfield-Singer article was to illustrate the kinds of stages through which cities might pass, although no one of these stages would be final. Thus, during or after the time a people experienced the defined passage from folk culture to urban culture in a teleological way, the cities themselves were freely developing historically.

This may seem an unnecessarily abstract description of city life, but in fact these ideas made clear a puzzle in city culture that previous writers could not resolve: how, if the city is a special kind of society, can it evolve without losing the marks of its specialness?

Weber believed that in fact there were certain conditions under which the development of the city meant the decline of the special marks of city life; the industrial cities of the modern world were his prime examples, for most people had come to live in them, yet they had no character of their own.

Redfield and Singer, unlike Weber, believed that cities could innately possess the power of growing without losing their special character because they existed in two dimensions at the same time. In one dimension, the teleological one, their character was fixed, in the transforming of folk culture into urban culture; in another dimension, the functional relations of the city to other elements of society, left the city itself free to change its form as the culture in which it existed changed. Redfield and Singer believed there was nothing inevitable, and thus unfree, in these larger relations; there was only an inevitable change on the people who came from another culture into the sway of the city itself.

By resolving this problem, Redfield and Singer came to a much stronger picture of the city as the agent of social change than did Spengler; instead of being the harbinger of unceasing, regular patterns of growth and decline, the city becomes the medium by which a regular rhythm of human change is combined with the free evolution of social life. If this idea is joined to Park’s notion of how innovators within the city are free, there emerges a comprehensive portrait of the means by which the people in a city have a definite character and yet a real freedom, just as their city has an identifiable structure and yet the capacity to change.

There is one common quality to all these essays, and that concerns their relevance to the turbulent search for a decent social order in the cities of our own time.

By a strange twist of events, as more and more people come to be concerned about creating just and humane urban life, the work of the professionals in urban studies has become increasingly removed, and in fact irrelevant, to the new search for values. The field of urban studies is now plagued by a kind of superstitious belief in scientific purity of research, as though, like Faust, if we had perfect and pure knowledge the world around us would suddenly change. As a human discipline, urban studies shows all the signs of rapidly dying out. The emotional perspective of the essayists in this book, for all the generality of their ideas, are probably the only guides to the conduct of modern urban life on a moral plane, apart from a few modern writers like Lewis Mumford, that are relevant to renewing a sense of freedom and vitality in our cities. Despite the sweep and abstractness of the first great urban schools, their members were in earnest is conveying to other men what human values are destroyed, preserved, or generated in the city. I believe there is therefore nothing out of date about these essays, for they are the works that still speak most directly to our search now for a city life not merely to be endured but to be prized.