Culture: A Reformer's Science by Tony Bennett was published in 1998, the year I submitted my PhD. As Bennett's 'Acknowledgements' make clear the collection of essays and arguments presented in the book were developed over the preceding six years or so. This coincided with my time as a PhD candidate under the supervision of Bennett, working as a tutor in the Studies in Culture and Policy undergraduate subject area, and as a research assistant at the Institute of Cultural Policy Studies at Griffith University, at the time the centre of the so called 'cultural policy debate' of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This proximity has meant that the arguments presented and developed in *Culture: A Reformer's Science* have had a significant effect on my own work in cultural policy studies. The task set for this *Cultural Policy Review of Books* was to select a book that I believe new students of cultural policy should read. That task requires the identification of an intellectual influence which is as relevant and significant now as it was when first encountered. Against that benchmark, of contemporary relevance and significance for cultural policy studies today, I want to recommend *Culture: A Reformer's Science*.

Being critical AND practical:

The underpinning mission of *Culture: A Reformer's Science* was to present and argue for a particular position in relation to the study of culture generally and in relation to the field of cultural studies in particular. Specifically, Bennett argued that studies of culture could (and should) make a (more) valuable contribution by developing a pragmatics of analysis which would involve accounting for culture by engaging with the specific conditions of its management (1998, 4). This 'engagement' should not simply be at the level of analysis but also, and it was perhaps this element more than any other that was controversial, Bennett advocated fostering practical working relationships with those who actually worked on cultural policy- cultural bureaucrats (1998, 4). In this latter recommendation Bennett was specifically critical of the tendency he identified in cultural studies for academics to identify themselves as exclusively unfettered by institutional conditions and therefore exclusively able to undertake critique.

In presenting his argument 'towards a pragmatics for cultural studies' Bennett responded to some of the critiques directed at proponents of a pragmatic focus for cultural policy studies. The counter position to Bennett and others arguments of pragmatic engagements with the conditions of cultural governance (see for instance Craik, 1996; Hunter, 1988; Meredyth and Minson, 2001) was put primarily on the basis that it was impossible to be both useful and critical (see McGuigan, 1996; and O'Regan, 1992 for sophisticated critiques). While Bennett comments that 'the tide has now turned considerably' and that working with the bureaucracy and on policy is less likely to be perceived as a 'sell-out' (1998, 5), ten years later there is evidence that there is an ongoing anxiety in the cultural policy field about its relationship with cultural governance. We can see some of these anxieties manifest in the negotiation of concepts of 'critique' and 'practice' present in the debate on instrumentality at it has been played out in the pages of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* and other cultural policy journals over the last 5 years or so (Gibson, 2008). These anxieties are perhaps even more present in discussions around value and evaluation, where the delineation of research categorised as 'advocacy' in comparison to

‘critical’ research is depressingly familiar, with the former deemed as the realm of consultants and the latter the exclusive realm of academics. Perhaps I am being overly schematic (but only a little) here but the question of how to be both critical and practical is one which is as pertinent, and as unresolved, in contemporary cultural policy studies as it was 10 years ago.

Policy, Power and Politics:

The power of Bennett’s analysis of cultural governance lies in his bringing together of a particular range of theorists, such as, Pierre Bourdieu especially in relation to cultural capital, Nikolas Rose in relation to technologies of power, and Marcel Mauss in relation to conceptions of personhood. Bennett’s approach is most influenced by Michel Foucault and particularly his identification in ‘Governmentality’ (1978) of the emergence of a new form of ‘governmental’ power (through cameralism, the science of police, and eventually 19th century liberal government) through which ‘power is dispersed and applied through mechanisms which make the population an object as well as a subject of knowledge; and power itself, rather than being blazoned forth in an attempt to augment its effects in making them manifest, now also hides behind, or within, the processes of its own exercise’ (1998, 77). Thus, for Bennett cultural policies and programmes (which are not only mechanisms of the State) are ‘technologies’ which both make up particular subjects and categories of persons and in doing so provide new arenas and possibilities for being. This is far from the paranoid position which at times Bennett’s work has been mistaken for. The possibilities of this argument are perhaps best summarised by drawing attention to Bennett’s argument for the *constructive* and *positive* power of cultural technologies. For instance, in relation to the modern, more inclusive, museum,

is it not ... true that the communities that the museum is to involve in dialogues are often the artefacts of its own activities rather than autochthonous entities which come knocking at the museum’s door seeking rights of equal expression and representation?... Are museums not still concerned to beam their improving messages of cultural tolerance and diversity as deeply into civil society as they can in order to carry that message to those whom the museum can only hope to address as citizens, publics and audiences? And do we not, through a battery of access policies, wish- indeed require- that they do so? (1998, 212-213).

Conclusion:

In this tiny space I’ve attempted to identify a couple of the key elements of Bennett’s work that I have found helpful in thinking about my own work in cultural policy and which I believe are relevant to the field today. There are other important aspects I could have mentioned, not least Bennett’s argument for understanding cultural governance in relation to its long history rather than in only immediately contextual terms. This is a theoretical position and methodological approach which I believe is necessary so that analysis does not take at face value discourses of self evident value which are often brought into play in discussions of cultural institutions,

programmes or practices. I hope that what I have achieved in this brief space is to identify a few of Bennett's arguments engagement (but not necessarily agreement) with which are, I believe, central to a critical and practical cultural policy studies.

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