

## Central Problems In Social Theory Action Structure And Contradiction In Social Analysis

Anthony Giddens is widely recognized as one of the most important sociologists of the post-war period. This is the first full-length work to examine Giddens' social theory. It guides the reader through Giddens' early attempt to overcome the duality of structure and agency. He saw this duality as a major failing of social theories of modernity. His attempt to resolve the problem can be regarded as the key to the development of his landmark 'structuration theory'. The book is the most complete and thorough assessment of Giddens' work currently available. It incorporates insights from many different perspectives into his theory of structuration, his work on the formation of cultural identities and the fate of the nation-state. This fa

Written with precision and clarity, this is a compelling analysis of the central problems of sociological theory today and of the means to resolve them. Argues that we should build on ideas from the 50s and 60s, and not dismiss them.

Many social scientists lament the increasing fragmentation of their discipline, the trend toward specialization and away from engagement with overarching issues. Opportunities to transcend established disciplinary boundaries are rare, but the extraordinary conference that gave rise to this volume was one such occasion. The W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki Memorial Conference on Social Theory, held at the University of Chicago, brought together an outstanding array of scholars representing a variety of contending approaches to social theory. In panels, presentations, and general discussions, these scholars confronted one another in the context of an entire range of approaches. But as readers of this deftly edited collection will discover, the conference was more than a forum for abstract theoretical debate. These papers and discussions represent original scholarly contributions that exemplify orientations to social theory by examining real problems in the functioning of society—from large-scale economic growth and decline to the dynamics of interpersonal interaction. By exploring a few central issues in different ways, this unique conference worked through some lively theoretical incompatibilities and established genuine potential for communication, for complementary and collaborative effort at the core of sociology. The excitement of that dialogue, and the intellectual vitality it generated, are captured for the reader in *Approaches to Social Theory*. "Meaty presentations and confrontations of ideas by people whose views we respect...Recommended to anyone interested in the current state of social theory." —*Contemporary Sociology*

Departing from a concern with certain 'hard' problems in social theory and focusing instead on the theoretical strategies employed in their solution, especially on how these strategies depend on what the author calls the theoretical attitude towards language, this book considers whether these strategies, far from being indispensable guides to thinking, might in fact lead social theorists to misunderstand the concepts constitutive of social life. Making use of the insights and practice of Ordinary Language Philosophy, understood as encompassing the work of Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin and their followers, *Clarity and Confusion in Social Theory* reveals the profound logical flaws in some of the central methodological procedures often employed in social theory for dealing with concepts, offering alternative approaches to social scientists and philosophers for tackling the conceptual issues that have so bedevilled social science from its inception. A lucid explication of Ordinary Language Philosophy and the potential that it offers for deepening and re-orienting theoretical work in the social sciences, this volume, apart from being a challenge to the influential Critical Realist paradigm, constitutes a radical critique of social theoretical reason. As such, it will appeal to social theorists and philosophers of social science, those with interests in research methods and theory construction, and anyone interested in thinking clearly about society.

This textbook offers a new approach to understanding social theory. Framed around paired theoretical perspectives on a series of sociological problems, the book shows how distinctive viewpoints shed light on different facets of social phenomena. The book includes sociology's "founding fathers", major 20th-century thinkers and recent voices such as Butler and Žižek. Philosophically grounded and focused on interpretation and analysis, the book provides a clear understanding of theory's scope while developing students' skills in evaluating, applying and comparing theories.

Written in an accessible and jargon-free way, *Environment and Social Theory* examines: \* the historical relationship between social theory and the environment \* pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment social theory and the environment \* twentieth century social theory and the environment \* economic theory and the environment \* the relationship between ecology, biology and social theory \* recent theoretical approaches to the environment \* the development of a green social theory The ideas and vies of key theorists including Hobbes, Locke, Freud, Habermas, Giddens and Beck are discussed to provide comprehensive coverage of social theory for non-specialist readers.

Giddens's analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Weber has become the classic text for any student seeking to understand the three thinkers who established the basic framework of contemporary sociology. The first three sections of the book, based on close textual examination of the original sources, contain separate treatments of each writer. The author demonstrates the internal coherence of their respective contributions to social theory. The concluding section discusses the principal ways in which Marx can be compared with the other two authors, and discusses misconceptions of some conventional views on the subject.

"One of the most creative among the younger generation of critical social theorists, Giddens stands alone in his concern for the classical tradition on sociology; but he also makes brilliant use of the latest philosophical and theoretical work of several contemporary schools and disciplines. A very important book for all of social science."—Jeffrey C. Alexander  
*Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* Univ of California Press

"*Law in Modern Society*" is a comparative study of the place of law in societies as well as a criticism of social theory. Under what conditions do different kinds of law emerge? What are the bases of the rule of law ideal that marks advanced liberal, capitalist societies? What can the study of law teach us about social hierarchy and moral vision in these societies, and, indeed, about the specificity of Western civilization? Why do we find it necessary to struggle for the rule of law and impossible to achieve it? What political possibilities are closed or opened by present-day changes in the established styles of legality and legal thought? Unger deals with these questions in a broad range of historical settings. But he also relates them to the central issues of social theory: the method of explanation, the conditions of social order, and the nature of 'modern' society. The book argues that to resolve its own internal dilemmas the science of society must once again become both metaphysical and political.

In Chris Barker's sequel to *Cultural Studies*, the author addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the discipline and investigates its practical and academic boundaries. The author also clarifies its underlying themes of study.

In this rich interpretation of the history of critical theory, Axel Honneth clarifies critical theory's central problems and emphasizes the social factors that should provide it with a normative and practical orientation. Axel Honneth's *Critique of Power* is a rich interpretation of the history of critical theory, which clarifies its central problems and emphasizes the "social" factors that should provide that theory with a normative and practical orientation. Honneth focuses on the dialog between French and German social theory that was beginning at the time of Michel Foucault's death. It traces the

common roots of the work of Foucault and Jürgen Habermas to a basic text of the last generation of critical theorists—Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—and draws from this connection the outline of a program that might unite and surpass their seemingly irreconcilable methods of critiquing power structures. In doing so, Honneth provides a constructive and nonpolemical framework for comparisons between the two theorists. And he presents a novel interpretation of Foucault's analysis of social systems. Honneth traces the internal contradictions in critical theory through an analysis of Horkheimer's early programmatic writings, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and Adorno's later social-theoretical writings. He shows how Habermas and Foucault in their distinctive ways reinserted the social world into critical theory but argues that neither operation has been wholly successful. His cogent analysis redirects critical social theory in ways that can draw on the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of the two approaches.

The marginalist revolution of the late nineteenth century consolidated what Karl Marx and Piero Sraffa called 'vulgar economy', bringing with it an emphasis on a scarcity theory that replaced the classical surplus theory. However, the classical political economy of Adam Smith and David Ricardo has been revived within the Cambridge economic tradition. This book looks at how different branches of the Cambridge economic tradition have focused on various aspects of this revival over time. The author shows that classical political economy is distinct from vulgar political economy in terms of its economic, social, and ethical theory, with each difference resting on an issue of ontology. Structured in three parts, the book examines the central contested aspects of these theories, namely the nature of value, the relationship between human beings and social structure, and the nature of human wellbeing. *The Cambridge Revival of Political Economy* will be relevant to students and researchers within the fields of political economy, history of economic thought, politics and philosophy.

Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber are indispensable for understanding the sociological enterprise. They are among the chief founders of the discipline and among the foremost theorists of modernity, and their work can stimulate readers to reflect on their own identities and worldviews. *Classical Social Theory and Modern Society* introduces students to these three thinkers and shows their continued relevance today. The first chapter sets the stage by situating the work of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber in the context of three modernizing revolutions: the Enlightenment, the French Revolution of 1789, and the industrial revolution. Three overview chapters follow that summarize the key ideas of each thinker, focusing on their contributions to the development of sociology and their conceptions of modern society. The last portion of the book explores the thinking of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber on four themes—the pathologies of modern society, the predicament of the modern individual, the state and democracy, and socialism versus capitalism. These thematic chapters place Marx, Durkheim, and Weber in dialogue with one another, offering students the opportunity to wrestle with conflicting ideas on issues that are still significant today. Classical sociology is essential to the teaching of sociology and also an invaluable tool in the education of citizens.

This book adopts a polemical stance. It approaches the problems raised by the media by way of a set of arguments with the two dominant paradigms now current for thinking about the media—post-modernism and Information Society theory. It argues that the media are important because they raise a set of questions that have been central to social and political theory since the Enlightenment. In a series of probes into different sets of questions raised by the media, the argument of the book focuses on the problem raised by what Kant called the unsocial sociability of human kind. Under what conditions could autonomous, free individuals live in viable social communities. Or to put it another way what are the related scope for, and limits on, human reason and emancipation. In conducting this argument the book first argues for a necessarily historical perspective. It then goes on to examine the implications for emancipation of seeing the media as cultural industries within the wider systems world of the capitalist market economy; of seeing the media as technologies; of the specialisation of intellectual production and of the separation and increasing social distance between the producers and consumers of symbols. It then goes on to argue, against current ethnographic trends in audience research and against the focus on everyday life, for a reinstatement of interest in the statistical reality of audiences and effects, and for a recognition through a return to the Hegelian roots of commodity fetishism, and the symbolic interactionist creation of identities, that an active audience can be actively involved in its own domination. The argument then turns to the problem of how we evaluate the symbolic forms that the media circulate and whether such evaluation can be anything more than a matter of personal taste. It is argued that evaluation is in practice unavoidable and without some standards that are more than just subjective any criticism of the media's performance is impossible. Via an examination of the debate between the sociology of art and aesthetics it argues for the ethical foundations of aesthetic judgement and for the establishment of agreed standards of aesthetic judgement via the discourse ethic that underlies the argument of the entire book. This foregrounding of the discourse ethic then leads on to a discussion of the media and politics. Here the argument is that arguments about the media and politics are at the heart of arguments about politics itself. These arguments focus, it is argued, upon the shifting division between the public and the private. Here the book returns to the roots of public sphere theory in Rousseau's arguments for the centrality of public spectacle and Kant's argument for the centrality of public reason in the practice of democratic politics.

The main theme of this book is collective subjectivity, analysed especially in connection with the work of Marx, Parsons, Giddens and Habermas, but also addressing the manifold tendencies of sociological theory, from its inception to the present. The book supports the idea that there is a conceptual shortcoming in the most relevant contemporary research programs in sociological theory, despite some recent efforts to re-develop concepts of collective actor, class or social movement. After the fragmentation of the sixties a number of syncretical approaches emerged. Some writers, such as Touraine, Laclau and Mouffe, Olson, Coleman, Hindess, Mouzelis and Eder have proposed some versions of concepts of collective subjectivity, focusing on collective actors, classes, genders, social movements, organisations and collective utilitarian action. But they do not, in terms of general conceptual construction, go further than Parsons and Marx: they often fail to match their original formulations. The concept of collective subjectivity is introduced to bring together these diverse approaches, which are synthesised and receive a more general definition. Moreover, this new concept is directly linked to those contemporary syntheses.

In this book Anthony Giddens addresses a range of issues concerning current developments in social theory, relating them to the

prospects for sociology in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Composed of closely integrated papers, all written over the past few years, the book includes seven essays not previously published, plus two have not appeared in English before. In assessing the likely future evolution of sociology in particular, and the social sciences in general, the author both draws upon ideas established in his more abstract theoretical writings and examines critically competing traditions of thought. Those looking for an accessible introduction to Giddens's writing will find in this book a set of clear expositions of his basic ideas. By situating these ideas in relation to the critical assessment of the views of others, however, the author provides new sources of insight into the distinctiveness of his own claims.

Important new work of social theory and challenge to Anthony Giddens from author of *Culture and Agency*.

What is the use of social theory to historians, and of history to social theorists? In clear and energetic prose, a pre-eminent cultural historian here offers a far-reaching response to these deceptively simple questions. In this classic text, now revised and updated in its second edition, Peter Burke reviews afresh the relationship between the fields of history and the social sciences and their tentative convergence in recent decades. Burke first examines what uses historians have made - or might make - of the models, methods, and concepts of the social sciences, and then analyzes some of the intellectual conflicts, such as the opposition between structure and human agency, which are at the heart of the tension between history and social theory. Throughout, he draws from a broad range of cultures and periods to illustrate how history, in turn, has been used to create and validate social theories. This new edition brings the book up to date with the addition of examples and discussions of new topics such as social capital, globalization and post-colonialism. The second edition of *History and Social Theory* will continue to stimulate both students and scholars across a range of disciplines with its challenging assessment of the roles of history and social science today.

The field of sociology itself - and sociological theory by extension - is relatively new. Both date back to the 18th and 19th centuries. The drastic social changes of that period, such as industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of democratic states caused particularly Western thinkers to become aware of society. The oldest sociological theories deal with broad historical processes relating to these changes. Since then, sociological theories have come to encompass most aspects of society, including communities, organizations and relationships. The basic insight of sociology is that human behaviour is largely shaped by the groups to which people belong and by the social interaction that takes place within those groups. The main focus of sociology is the group, not the individual. This compendium offers selections that present special propositions, specific concepts, or examples of substantive theorizing rather than discussions of integrated systems. The present attempt is made to describe the different aspects of sociological theory generally being explained by the social scientists and it is hoped that it will be of great use for all those concerned with sociology.

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The landscape of social theory has changed significantly over the three decades since the publication of Anthony Giddens and Jonathan Turner's seminal *Social Theory Today*. Sociologists in the twenty-first century desperately need a new agenda centered around central questions of social theory. In *Social Theory Now*, Claudio E. Benzecry, Monika Krause, and Isaac Ariail Reed set a new course for sociologists, bringing together contributions from the most distinctive sociological traditions in an ambitious survey of where social theory is today and where it might be going. The book provides a strategic window onto social theory based on current research, examining trends in classical traditions and the cutting edge of more recent approaches. From distinctive theoretical positions, contributors address questions about how social order is accomplished; the role of materiality, practice, and meaning; as well as the conditions for the knowledge of the social world. The theoretical traditions presented include cultural sociology, microsociologies, world-system theory and post-colonial theory, gender and feminism, actor network and network theory, systems theory, field theory, rational choice, poststructuralism, pragmatism, and the sociology of conventions. Each chapter introduces a tradition and presents an agenda for further theoretical development. *Social Theory Now* is an essential tool for sociologists. It will be central to the discussion and teaching of contemporary social theory for years to come. Built upon a series of critical encounters with major figures in classical and present-day social and political thought, this volume offers not only a challenging critique of major traditions of social and political analysis, but unique insights into the ideas which Giddens has developed over the past two decades.

This issue of *Political Power and Social Theory* explores the changes in science associated with the rise of neoliberalism since the 1970s. The collected papers together chart an important theoretical agenda for future research in the study of science-society relations in the contemporary era.

A unique and engaging volume which is both a critical evaluation of Giddens' work and a guide to some of the theoretical issues which are at the forefront of the social sciences today.

This compilation of some of Masaryk's major writings reveals the intertwining of politics and social theory that is characteristic of his thinking. Chapters in *Constructive Sociological Theory* include "The Development of the Modern Suicide Tendency"; "Essence and Method of Sociology"; "The Epistemological Problem of Russian Philosophy"; "The Religious Question and Modern Philosophy"; "The Class Structure of Society"; "Central Problems of Marxist Policy"; and "Democracy versus Theocracy".

The internet has fundamentally transformed society in the past 25 years, yet existing theories of mass or interpersonal communication do not work well in understanding a digital world. Nor has this understanding been helped by disciplinary specialization and a continual focus on the latest innovations. Ralph Schroeder takes a longer-term view, synthesizing perspectives and findings from various social science disciplines in four countries: the United States, Sweden, India and China. His comparison highlights, among other observations, that smartphones are in many respects more important than PC-based internet uses. *Social Theory after the Internet* focuses on everyday uses and effects of the internet, including information seeking and big data, and explains how the internet has gone beyond traditional media in, for example, enabling Donald Trump and Narendra Modi to come to power. Schroeder puts forward a sophisticated theory of the role of the internet, and how both technological and social forces shape its significance. He provides a sweeping and penetrating study, theoretically ambitious and at the same time always empirically grounded. The book will be of great interest to students and scholars of digital media and society, the internet and politics, and the social implications of big data.

This Handbook provides the hidden common threads that tie sociological inquiry together and featuring eminent scholars, it separates itself from its predecessors in substance and organization. Rather than rehashing old debates or longingly gazing at the past, this book presents sociologists with new ways of conceptualizing the organization and presentation of sociological theory. At the heart of this Handbook's vision is the twin goals of making theory a viable enterprise by reconceptualizing how we teach theory and keeping theory closely tied to its empirical applications. Three strategies are offered: (1) Elucidating how classic issues like integration or interaction are interrogated today; (2) Presenting a coherent vision of the social levels of reality that theorists work on such as communities, groups, and the self as well as how the coherence of these levels speaks to the macro-micro link; and, (3) Theorizing the social world rather than celebrating theorists or theories; that is, one can look at how theory is used holistically to understand the constraints the social world places on our lived experience or the dynamics of social change. Hence, in the second decade of the 21st century, it has become clear that sociology is at a crossroads as the

number of theorists and amount of theory available is increasingly unmanageable and unknowable by the vast majority of professionals and students. As such, this Handbook of Contemporary Sociological Theory presents the novice and the expert with the a roadmap for traversing this crossroad and building a more coherent, robust, and cumulative sociology.

This major study develops a new account of modernity and its relation to the self. Building upon the ideas set out in *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens argues that 'high' or 'late' modernity is a post traditional order characterised by a developed institutional reflexivity. In the current period, the globalising tendencies of modern institutions are accompanied by a transformation of day-to-day social life having profound implications for personal activities. The self becomes a 'reflexive project', sustained through a revisable narrative of self identity. The reflexive project of the self, the author seeks to show, is a form of control or mastery which parallels the overall orientation of modern institutions towards 'colonising the future'. Yet it also helps promote tendencies which place that orientation radically in question - and which provide the substance of a new political agenda for late modernity. In this book Giddens concerns himself with themes he has often been accused of unduly neglecting, including especially the psychology of self and self-identity. The volumes are a decisive step in the development of his thinking, and will be essential reading for students and professionals in the areas of social and political theory, sociology, human geography and social psychology.

Anthony Giddens is widely recognized as one of the most important sociologists of the post-war period. This is the first full-length work to examine Giddens' social theory. It guides the reader through Giddens' early attempt to overcome the duality of structure and agency. He saw this duality as a major failing of social theories of modernity. His attempt to resolve the problem can be regarded as the key to the development of his landmark 'structuration theory'. The book is the most complete and thorough assessment of Giddens' work currently available. It incorporates insights from many different perspectives into his theory of structuration, his work on the formation of cultural identities and the fate of the nation-state. This far-reaching work also touches on issues such as the transformation of modern intimacy and sexuality, and the fate of politics in late modern society.

This is a comprehensive, critical review of social theory that places leading contributions in their larger context. Written predominantly for students, the scope and range of the subjects and authors dealt with results in one of the most comprehensive introductions to social theory published to date. Ranging from the philosophical foundations of sociology and the discovery of 'the social' to distinctive sociological approaches, to the significance of issues pertaining to gender and patriarchy, to questions of modernity and post-modernity, the book is comprehensive in subject matter.

In this new and brilliantly original book of essays, Anthony Giddens discusses three main theoretical traditions in social science that cut across the division between Marxist and non-Marxist sociology: interpretive sociology, functionalism, and structuralism. Social theory is open to many passing currents. Claims to originality tend to thrive and past achievements are often ignored. In *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong?* Mouzelis claims that "problems" currently being isolated are not really problems, and that "achievements" claimed are little more than pretensions. He argues that we have been premature to dismiss thinkers from the late 1950s and early 1960s and that we can build on their ideas to produce a more effective, more relevant social theory. Written with precision and with clarity, *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong?* is a compelling analysis of the central problems of sociological theory today and of the means to resolve them.

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