

Introduction

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To the best of our knowledge, this is the first *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. There are, of course, encyclopedias of the social sciences (among others) that have addressed some of the topics assembled here. However, because their treatment of social theory has been only part of a much broader set of topics, these other sets of volumes have been unable to provide the focus and depth required to define the field of social theory in a reasonably complete (of course, inevitably there are topics that are not covered) and systematic fashion.

The purpose of an encyclopedia is to summarize and codify knowledge in a given field. This is in contrast to a handbook, which offers essays on cutting-edge research in a field, or a dictionary, which provides short, to-the-point definitions of key concepts in a field (Sica 2001). Certainly, an encyclopedia also does some of the things that one finds in handbooks and dictionaries. Thus, the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* offers handbook-like (albeit briefer) entries on cutting-edge topics, such as globalization, consumption, complexity theory, and actor network theory, and it provides state-of-the-art interpretations of long-established theories. Also, like a dictionary, the entries in this encyclopedia provide basic introductions to key ideas, concepts, schools, and figures in social theory. However, the entries tend to be far longer and offer much more depth than those found in dictionaries.

However, an encyclopedia is much more than the presentation of a set of ideas. Its publication is an acknowledgement that a field of study has acquired considerable intellectual coherence and that it is regarded as a legitimate source of knowledge. The publication of an encyclopedia of social theory, then, speaks to the importance and relevance of social theory to academia and to the world in which we now live. Social theory is not merely an afterthought of empirical work in the social and human sciences, but rather, it stands at the base of such work and as a body

of knowledge that offers a unique form of interpretation and engagement with the world.

This is not to say that all of the 300-plus entries contained in this encyclopedia cohere around a common set of world-views, philosophical outlooks, or political positions. Social theory encompasses a wide range of academic disciplines. Perspectives from sociology, economics, philosophy, anthropology, political science, women's studies, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, and media theory (among others) are presented in this encyclopedia. Some of these fields, such as economics, philosophy, and sociology, made especially critical contributions to the early development of social theory. While theoretical ideas continue to flow from those disciplines, others, such as media and cultural studies, are now having a particularly important impact on social theory. Despite the diversity of inputs and theories, what is common to the entries in this encyclopedia is a critical engagement with social issues, including the cutting-edge developments in modern, postmodern, and globalizing societies. Such a critical engagement requires, as its starting point, the careful articulation and study of ideas and theories about society and the people who live in them. It seeks understanding and clarification of our common (or perhaps uncommon) situation, and in many cases seeks reform or even social change.

While a multitude of disciplines are represented in these pages, it should be made clear that the reference point for much of this encyclopedia is the discipline of sociology. This is because of the central role that sociologists (or those, such as Marx and Veblen, who have come to be considered as sociologists, at least to some degree) have played in the development of social theory and also because the editor is both a sociologist and a social theorist. While the touchstone is sociology, most of the ideas and theorists to be discussed here either have their origins in other disciplines and/or are having an impact on them.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL THEORY

Most contemporary commentators trace the origins of social theory to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While humans have described and theorized the nature of social relations and social organization for thousands of years, only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did social relations and society—seen as an entity in itself—become an object of sustained reflection and study. Social theory emerged alongside of, and often in response to, forces that were radically transforming social life: capitalism, political revolutions in France and America, the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, and scientific thought. In response to and in accord with these changes, Enlightenment philosophers (e.g., Montesquieu, Rousseau) and their critics articulated some of the earliest social theories. Many Enlightenment thinkers believed that through the application of reason, it would be possible to design an ideal political community and social order. However, the failure of the French Revolution provoked strong criticism of Enlightenment ideals, which in part had guided its course. Conservatives such as Bonald and Maistre articulated theories of society that asserted the necessity of hierarchy and religious order against the liberal ideals of the revolution. Romantics lamented the rise of abstract reason, urban society, and the loss of humanity's connection to its natural, sympathetic impulses. These streams of thought, and many others, gave rise to what we now think of as social theory, and as evidenced by the entries in this encyclopedia, they remain a rich resource for contemporary theorizing (Rundell 2001; Taylor 1989). While the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* contains essays that specifically address these early years of social theory (see the Scottish Enlightenment, the German Idealists, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Bonald, and Maistre) as well as essays that discuss topics that relate to the ancient origins of some modern ideas and institutions (see Democracy, Citizenship, and Herrschaft), the majority of the entries address social theory as it has developed from the nineteenth century onward. In designing the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, four national traditions were singled out for detailed treatment because of their extraordinary contributions to social theory: the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the study of society was institutionalized through the creation of the discipline of sociology. During this period, the French philosopher and socialist Auguste Comte coined the term "sociology." In the late nineteenth century, Émile Durkheim played a central role in formally establishing sociology as a scientific discipline committed to the systematic and empirical study of "social facts." Along with his nephew Marcel Mauss and other collaborators, Durkheim created an influential journal, *L'Année Sociologique*, which was to define the study of sociology in early twentieth-century France.

At roughly the same time, Max Weber established the basis for a scientific sociology in Germany and along with several colleagues (including Georg Simmel) founded the German Sociological Society. In the United Kingdom, Herbert Spencer's evolutionary theories profoundly affected the development of British social theory, but British thinking and research also emphasized individual, utilitarian action, and this was to have a great impact in the United States. In 1889, the first American sociology department was founded at the University of Kansas; and in later years, the uniquely American schools of pragmatism and structural functionalism became influential. These "classical" years, and by extension, the social theory that emanated from them, are necessarily addressed in this encyclopedia. The work and life of Émile Durkheim, for example, is described in the entry about him, but other entries also reflect his conceptual legacy: Anomie, Sacred and Profane, Social Facts, and many others that involve a more indirect influence. In addition, classical figures who have traditionally been excluded from the sociological canon have been included in this *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. Marianne Weber, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and W. E. B. Du Bois are examples of theorists whose work is now being discussed not only for its historical significance but also for its relevance in developing social theories that more adequately account for the experiences of women and minorities today.

The twentieth century gave rise to a wide range of social theories, and many of these can be thought of in terms of national traditions. From the 1930s through the 1960s, the United States was the center of the rise and fall of structural-functional theory (with roots in the work of Durkheim and that of a number of anthropologists). Premised in liberal political values and confidence in social harmony provided by the welfare state, especially after World War II, structural functionalism offered an all-encompassing, synthetic system of social thought. The weakness of this kind of social theory—most notably its inability to offer convincing explanations of social conflict and the unequal distribution of wealth, as well as social change—led to its collapse beginning in the late 1960s.

In contrast to the singular control that structural functionalism once exercised over the field, American sociology in the 1970s could be characterized as multiparadigmatic. It included the revival and development at the macrolevel of a number of neo-Marxian theories and also saw the emergence of critical feminist social theories. These latter theories gave women's experiences, and later the experiences of many marginalized groups, a central position in social analysis. Significantly, these theories added the study of race and gender to Marx's primary emphasis on class inequality.

Beginning in the late 1960s, American sociological theory also pushed further in the direction of microsociology,

in large part to counter the macrosociological focus of structural functionalism. Inspired by earlier work in phenomenology, pragmatism, and behaviorist psychology, theories such as symbolic interactionism (with roots going back to the early twentieth century and the Chicago school), ethnomethodology, and exchange theory provided fine-grained descriptions of everyday life. The proliferation of macrosociological theories and microsociological theories, and the seeming gap between them, called for a reconciliation or synthesis, and in the 1980s, sociological theory took a decidedly “metatheoretical” turn. Metatheorists organized, characterized, and offered syntheses of the various sociological theories and helped give rise to a concern for “macro-micro” integration.

Throughout the same period, the most influential developments in European social theory (especially in France, Germany, and Great Britain) came from traditions outside of sociology, including linguistics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and literary theory. These various traditions profoundly shaped social theory in Europe and since the 1980s have had an increasing impact on American social theory, thereby making it increasingly difficult to make any clear-cut distinctions between American and European social theory.

In France, the work of Swiss-born linguist Ferdinand de Saussure laid the groundwork for structuralist social theories. These took as their starting point the assumption that the social world and, as argued by anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, symbol systems more generally were organized like and through language. Structuralism combined with currents from other European schools of thought, giving rise to, among others, structuralist Marxism (Louis Althusser), structuralist psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan), and structuralist sociology (the early work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu). The existential work of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir also had an impact on social theory both in Europe and the United States. Sartre’s writings were influential in the development of various microtheories as well as more humanistic branches of neo-Marxian theory. Its focus on human agency also functioned as a negative touchstone for those developing structural theories. Beauvoir’s work was especially influential in the formation of feminist social theories.

Following widespread political uprisings in 1968, especially in France, the humanistic and scientific ideals of earlier social theories were challenged as never before. This gave rise to a widespread reassessment of the underlying assumptions of social theory. In this context, the literary theorist Jacques Derrida offered deconstruction as a critique of existing theories of knowledge and as a method for the study of society. These critical poststructuralist efforts were also developed through Michel Foucault’s “genealogical” method and the later postmodern writings of Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, and Jean Baudrillard.

By the 1980s, just as a number of American social theorists were working toward greater micro-macro integration, many of their European colleagues were attempting to reconcile the theoretical split between theories that privileged the autonomy of social structures and those that valorized the freedom and agency of individuals (following the work, among others, of Sartre on existentialism). In light of these concerns, Pierre Bourdieu (in France) developed a theory integrating habitus and field; Anthony Giddens (in Great Britain; see also, the work of Margaret Archer) proposed and elaborated a “structuration” theory; and Jürgen Habermas (in Germany) offered a theory of the relationship between system and lifeworld (as well as a concern for the degree to which the system was colonizing the lifeworld).

German social theory has contributed other concepts and ideas central to the development of twentieth-century social theory. Karl Marx, a lifelong exile from his German home, was deeply sympathetic to the cause of the European working classes. His work offered both a political vision of the modern Europe, most energetically outlined in the *Communist Manifesto* (written with his colleague and financial backer, Friedrich Engels) and an economic theory of social change, articulated in the three volumes of *Capital*. Clearly, Marx’s work has been influential. It has stood, and continues to stand, as an inspiration for large-scale social change and political organization, and it has given rise to a wide variety of neo-Marxist social theories, academic organizations, and journals. As a counterpoint to Marx, Max Weber, writing a generation later, emerged as a giant in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German sociology and social theory. Whereas Marx anticipated the inevitability of revolutionary change, Weber offered a more staid and pessimistic vision. His studies in comparative and historical sociology led him to conclude that modern societies (whether capitalist, socialist, or some other) faced increasing rationalization, which he characterized with the metaphor of an “iron cage,” an image that continues to compel contemporary social theorists. Furthermore, since the 1970s, Weber’s work on social organization and institutional structures has had a strong impact on historical and comparative sociology.

Like his French counterpart, Durkheim, Weber was also interested in scholarly disputes about method and theory in sociology. He was influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey, who articulated the influential distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* (natural sciences) and the *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences). Should social science follow the natural sciences and embrace a “positivist” theory of knowledge, or should it recognize itself as a moral and cultural science dedicated to a hermeneutic interpretation of social life? Indeed, at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, German philosophers and social scientists articulated tensions and developed arguments that continue to occupy social theory. The

history of these debates is presented in this encyclopedia with entries on the Positivismstreit and the Werturteilstreit (among others), as are contemporary articulations of “positivist” and “interpretive” social theories.

An argument could be made that contemporary social theory has pushed beyond these disputes and that new fusions of science and art are now being undertaken. Moving beyond old distinctions between art and science, complexity theory, for example, draws on cutting-edge “chaos” theories in physics and mathematics to analyze and describe social systems. Moving beyond modern distinctions between human beings and inanimate objects, actor network theories and “postsocial” theories (both largely based in France and Great Britain) grant objects unprecedented agency, thereby inviting interpretive investigations of objects and relationships that might once have been studied through the lens of natural science.

Contemporary social theory is also indebted to the writings and research of a variety of neo-Marxian theorists, including those associated with the Frankfurt school in Germany. Beginning in the 1920s, the members of this school provided a synthesis of Marx, Weber, and Freud and offered critiques of modern fascist and democratic/consumer societies. The Frankfurt school influenced mid-century American social theory after its move, in the midst of the ascendancy of Nazism in Germany, to Columbia University in New York in the 1930s. The work of the Frankfurt school has been central in establishing the basis for critical cultural studies. Equally important to the history of cultural studies and social theory is the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), or the “Birmingham school,” established at the University of Birmingham, England, in the 1960s. In contrast to what many now see as the overly elitist perspective of the Frankfurt school, members of the CCCS offered theories of popular culture and the media that combined elements of Marxism, poststructuralism, feminist analysis, semiology, and a number of other perspectives. The views of both of these schools are addressed in entries on culture, such as *Media Critique*, *Television and Social Theory*, *Cultural Marxism* and *British Cultural Studies*, and many others. Finally, contemporary German theorists such as the previously mentioned Jürgen Habermas (extending the work of the Frankfurt school), Niklas Luhmann, and Ulrich Beck have offered comprehensive theories of society that exhibit a powerful European style, rich in philosophical reflection and grounded in interdisciplinary knowledge. These authors confirm that social theory, especially in its current incarnations, reaches beyond sociology to include a wide range of disciplines and problems (economic, political, social, and psychological).

It would be impossible to list all of the national or intellectual traditions that have contributed to the development of social theory, and it is, in any case, an artificial

enterprise, for as we have seen, even in its earliest stages, social theory reached beyond nations and disciplines, and in the present, these old boundaries are becoming increasingly less relevant. Critiques of the “grand narratives” of science and social progress have led to a reassessment of social theory and its Western, liberal commitment to progress and reason. Too often, despite the good intentions of their creators, the grand narratives excluded the experiences and voices of social minorities and supported the political, economic, and military oppression of non-Western peoples. This view is reflected in a number of the postmodern essays in this encyclopedia, as well as those coming from feminist traditions. These include widespread critiques of the positivist theories of knowledge that had been especially central to Anglo-American social theories and the formulation of alternative epistemologies: social constructionism, feminist standpoint theory, queer theory, revivals of hermeneutic techniques, and the integrative perspectives mentioned above. Indeed, even as the heyday of postmodern deconstruction has passed, social theory has been deeply influenced by the critique of normal science, stable identities, and settled forms of thought. At the same time, in a globalizing world, social theory has gone global. If there was a time when certain theories could be thought of as emerging from particular national traditions, reflecting their concerns, interests, and style of thought, then a strong argument can now be made that social theory is no longer organized around national problems and orientations. (Instead, as Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider argue in their entry on *Cosmopolitan Sociology*, social theory should organize its thinking around the global.)

Postmodern critique and globalization present challenges to the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. After all, the concept of the modern encyclopedia developed, at least in part, out of the Enlightenment hope that it is possible to arrange knowledge systematically and that this arrangement could contribute to ideals such as scientific progress, the accumulation of knowledge, and social change. If the postmodernists are correct, then such systematization is deeply problematic, if not impossible. The impulse behind this encyclopedia continues to speak to some of the Enlightenment ideals. It is worthwhile to take stock of existing forms of knowledge, and as a resource for study and critical engagement with the social world, this encyclopedia can contribute to the development of our common understanding. In this regard, the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* aims to be comprehensive and to compile most of the theories and ideas that have been central in shaping the way that social theorists now think about their work and the world in which they live. At the same time, we recognize that, especially in the social sciences, knowledge is always in the process of transformation, and social theorists engage in a reflexive activity rediscovering and reinterpreting their history and foundations. In the

nineteenth century, Wilhelm Dilthey argued that because social knowledge is historically embedded, it is always open to this kind of interpretation and clarification. He thereby distinguished the social and human sciences from the natural sciences. More recently, Anthony Giddens has described this reflexivity with the term “double hermeneutic.” Social theorists interpret the world in which they live; social theories serve to alter the social world that social theorists study; and therefore, the theorists must constantly revise their theories of that world. With this in mind, we hope that the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* will not only serve as a foundation for learning but will also inspire a creative and reflexive engagement with the ideas contained within it.

ORGANIZATION AND USE OF THE *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOCIAL THEORY*

The *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* is a two-volume set that includes 336 entries written by authors from 14 countries (United States, Canada, Australia, Britain, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, the Netherlands, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, and Singapore). Entries range in length from 400 to 6,000 words and contain information on specific theories, theorists, schools of thought, key concepts, and topical subjects. Most entries begin with a short definition or description of the concept or idea. Entries on specific theorists are written as reviews of the theorists' intellectual contributions but include biographical information, including connections to other theories and theorists. Furthermore, all entries conclude with a brief section on further readings and a set of cross-references that point readers in the direction of related topics discussed elsewhere in the encyclopedia.

To ensure adequate coverage, an editorial board consisting of 12 members from five countries (United States, Canada, Germany, Australia, and Britain) was selected. These editors are recognized experts in their fields, and all have contributed significantly to the development of social theory. Many of these editors have also contributed essays to these volumes. Peter Beilharz wrote on a number of topics related to Marxism; Karen Cook contributed essays on Social Exchange Theory and Richard Emerson; Mary Rogers wrote numerous essays on Feminist Theory; Jonathan Turner provided pieces on Conflict Theory, Janet Chafetz, and Rae Blumberg; Andrew Wernick wrote an essay on Auguste Comte and coauthored the piece on Jean-Paul Sartre; Peter Kivisto wrote on Industrial Society and Alain Touraine; Gary Alan Fine dealt with Collective Memory; Gerd Nollmann wrote on Jürgen Habermas and Ferdinand Tönnies and, along with Hermann Strasser, authored an essay on Ralf Dahrendorf; Douglas Kellner contributed essays on Cultural Marxism and British Cultural Studies, Frederic Jameson, and the Frankfurt School.

In consultation with George Ritzer and Todd Stillman (the first of two managing editors; Jeff Stepnisky succeeded Stillman and helped complete work on the encyclopedia), the deputy editors created lists of entries for the encyclopedia in 10 areas of specialization. American, British, German, and French editorial areas reflect the contributions of these national traditions to the development of social theory. While macrosociological theories are covered under several headings, separate domains were created for microbehaviorist and microinteractionist theories. Feminist, Marxian, and cultural theories were defined as separate editorial areas, and they were intended to cover the work of theorists that have become particularly salient in the twenty-first century. Finally, the “key concepts in social theory” domain was created to allow us to include topics that did not fall into any of the above categories.

The authors chosen by the editors to write entries are experts in their fields of study and are regular commentators on social theory more generally. Thus, the encyclopedia includes entries by Ulrich Beck (on Risk Society and Cosmopolitan Sociology), Bryan Turner (on Individualism), Charles Lemert (on Foucault, Discourse, Genealogy, Governmentality, and W. E. B Du Bois), Craig Calhoun (on Nationalism), Erik Olin Wright (on Social Class), Jeffrey Alexander and Gary Marx (on Neil Smelser), Karin Knorr Cetina (on the Postsocial), Norman Denzin (on Postmodernism), Paul DiMaggio (on Cultural Capital), and many other notables too numerous to mention.

It is worth noting that a decision was made to devote considerable space in this encyclopedia to people, to social theorists, including many now living. Both of these decisions are controversial. There is a view among some of those involved with work on encyclopedias that people, especially those still living, should either be excluded or given minimal space. However, social theories are very much the products of individuals and in many cases are hard to distinguish from the people who created them. Furthermore, to this day, social theorists and students of theory read and seek to master the work of individual classic and contemporary theorists. There is, we think, little debate that there should be entries on classic thinkers such as Marx or Du Bois. More controversial is the inclusion of many entries on living theorists. However, just as scholars have read, and continue to read, the work of Marx and Du Bois, they also devote themselves to the body of work created by contemporary theorists such as Giddens and Habermas. Thus, even though they are dwarfed by the number of entries on theories and theoretical ideas, this volume is characterized by a significant number of entries on social theorists, both living and dead.

The editors have also developed a guide to point readers in the direction of specific entries. This Reader's Guide is organized around 20 headings. In addition to the editorial areas chosen while developing the Encyclopedia, we have added a number of categories: Theorists, Schools and

Theoretical Approaches, Macrosociological Theories, Comparative and Historical Sociology, Psychoanalytic Theory, Postmodern Theory, Politics and Government, Method and Metatheory, and Economic Sociology. Furthermore, we have included a category for Other/Multiple National Traditions. This category includes all those theorists who do not belong to the four national traditions identified in this introduction. No doubt, such distinctions are difficult to make, and particular theorists who have worked in more than one national tradition might identify themselves differently than we have here or may even consider the notion of national traditions unimportant. We find this category useful in distinguishing theorists who do not easily fall within the traditions noted earlier. In all, the headings used in this Reader's Guide were chosen not only because they represent notable areas of study within social theory (both past and present) but also because these themes were well represented in the encyclopedia both within and across seemingly independent editorial areas. These categories are primarily guides for accessing materials within the encyclopedia and should not be taken as definitive of the major areas of study within social theory. Finally, entries have not been assigned to only one category. Most entries appear under two or more headings.

As with all such efforts, the creation of this encyclopedia had its highs and lows. The editors performed well and did what was expected of them. In fact, in most cases, the editors performed far beyond anything we could have hoped, and deep gratitude is owed to them, indeed to all the editors. In one case, an editor was forced to resign relatively early in the process but was replaced by a team that completed the task with aplomb.

Of course, much the same story applies to the authors of the entries in this volume. There were a few "no-shows" and "dropouts," and they were generally replaced with little difficulty. A few people were late with their submissions. However, in the end, virtually everything we wanted to see in the encyclopedia is here, authored by scholars well qualified to write the material. As we have looked over what has been produced here, we find ourselves more than pleased with the results. Most of the authors have outdone themselves and

in some cases have produced entries that far exceed what we could have ever hoped for. The merits of this volume are directly traceable to the work of the editorial board and, especially, of the hundreds of authors.

A word about the managing editors, Todd Stillman and Jeff Stepnisky. It is they who did the truly hard work involved in bringing this mammoth project to a successful completion. They handled *all* of the day-to-day tasks involved in producing this encyclopedia, including the regular contact and seemingly endless e-mails with editors, authors, and personnel at Sage. Their hard work freed up the editor to concentrate on matters of substance and multiple readings of each entry.

Finally, a word of thanks to Sage Publications, especially to Rolf Janke, vice president and head of the reference division. Rolf believed in this project from the beginning, provided all of the technical support we needed, and offered a supportive environment in which to work. We thank him as well as other Sage people who were involved along the way, including Sara Tauber, Vince Burns, Yvette Pollastrini, Denise Santoyo, Carla Freeman, Barbara Coster, and Linda Gray. At the University of Maryland, Laura Mamo, Michael Ryan, James Murphy, and Jon Lemich provided crucial aid in bringing the project to completion. We thank all of those who have been involved with the project. Because of their efforts, we are confident that the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* will stand as an important resource for social thought well into the twenty-first century.

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