Jürgen Habermas, "The Rationalization of the Lifeworld," pp. 119–26, 136–45, 147–8, 150–2, from *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1981). Translator's preface and translation © 1987 by Beacon Press. Originally published as *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, vol. 2: Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft.* © 1981 by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.

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General Introduction

It is common to distinguish between "classical" and "contemporary" sociological theory, but the demarcation is vague. Perhaps most significantly, the dividing line continually shifts. In the 1930s, for example, the great American sociological theorist Talcott Parsons set out to synthesize what he regarded as crucial in the "classical" tradition. In his view, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim were among the most important classics. Each wrote during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Parsons saw himself as continuing work they had started. Part of what made them classical was precisely this continuing importance their work had for later analyses. But Parsons also saw himself as the new kid on the block, an innovator in his contemporary scene. He continued to produce influential original work through the 1960s and remained active until his death in 1979. Today, however, *his* work seems "classical." This has four meanings:

First, calling work "classical" means that it has stood the test of time and we are still interested in it. It is the opposite of "best forgotten." In this sense, Parsons surely aspired to have his work become classical.

Second, work we call classical tends to define broad orientations in the field of sociology. Reference to classical sociological theory is used to signal analytic approaches; it offers signposts to guide readers in seeing the intellectual heritage on which new theorists are drawing. Reference to Parsons signals, for example, a concern for "functionalist" approaches to questions of social integration, that is, for understanding different social institutions and practices in terms of how they contribute to the successful workings of the whole.

Third, we term work "classical" when we acknowledge that there have been major new developments since it was written. This doesn't mean that the "classical" work has been superseded. What it means is that new perspectives and debates have been introduced to which the classical social theorist has not been able to respond. In Parsons's case, a variety of innovations began to come to the fore in the 1960s. Some of these were directly criticisms of or challenges to Parsons's functionalism. He did respond to many, defending his perspective most of the time but also modifying it where he saw potential for improvement. Other parts of the new work, however, represented approaches that Parsons didn't consider. Jürgen Habermas, for example, combined some of Parsons's concerns with Marxism and critical

theory in a way that Parsons had never anticipated.[1] Jeffrey Alexander led the way in developing a "neofunctionalism" that not only built on Parsons and Durkheim, but shifted the emphases of their theories in much more cultural directions, away from the sides of their work that emphasized economic organization and social institutions, and away from strong presumptions of value consensus.[2] Classical theory still matters, thus, but we see it in new ways based on new ideas and interests.

Fourth, in order to understand classical social theory we make a special effort to understand its distinctive historical context. In fact all theory needs to be understood in historical context, but part of what we mean when we identify certain theories as "contemporary" is that we share the same broad historical situation with their authors. This is a key reason why what counts as "classical" keeps shifting.

Mid-Twentieth Century Transformations in Sociological Theory's Historical Context

When Parsons started writing his great synthetic work, *The Structure of Social Action*, in the 1930s, the First World War was the biggest historical watershed separating the classical theories from the contemporary. Soon, though, the Great Depression of the 1930s – which was contemporary to Parsons – loomed larger as a divide. This was not just because of its historical importance but because of its theoretical importance. It led to work like that of the economist John Maynard Keynes and the sociologist Thomas Marshall. Keynes's theory played a central role in changing the way both social scientists and policy makers thought about the relationship of the state to the economy. Keynes held, notably, that states could use their financial clout as major purchasers of goods and services to help to stimulate the economy and smooth out the business cycle and the tendency Marx had noted for capitalism to suffer recurrent crises of overproduction.[3] His theories influenced the New Deal in the United States and the rise of the welfare state in Europe – both projects that shaped social life and changed the issues with which social theory had to deal. Marshall's theory of citizenship also responded to the Great Depression (and to the new sorts of state responses), suggesting that citizenship needed to be reconceptualized as referring not merely to political rights, but to social and economic rights as well.[4]

In addition to the Great Depression – and recovery from it – fascism and the Second World War and the Cold War between the Communist East and the Capitalist West were shaping influences on social theory during the course of Talcott Parsons's career. There is debate about how they influenced his writing – for example, about the extent to which he was an advocate for what he saw as American values in a specifically Cold War framework – but there is no doubt that the historical context shaped his work.

These factors also shaped the work of most social theorists writing between the 1930s and 1960s. They posed big questions – like what enabled some societies to develop democratic institutions while others were prone to dictatorship. As the American sociologist Barrington Moore famously argued, this was a matter of different paths to modernization and of some very old historical conditions – like whether the premodern agriculture of a country involved serfs who were tied to the land in near slavery, or was based on more or less independent peasants.[5] The Cold War influenced the ways in which American sociologists looked at other societies in the world. This was not just a matter of theoretical orientation but of financial support. Much new research was made possible by the fact that the US government gave grants for "foreign area studies," including help to social scientists to learn non-Western languages and engage in detailed studies of other ways of life. The government was concerned that in order to compete effectively with the Soviet Union in the Cold War, America needed experts on other societies. This provided the basis for great expansion in social knowledge. At the same time, this knowledge was often guided by theories that asked whether other societies were likely to become "modern" in the European and American way – that is, as capitalist democracies – or in the problematic communist way. It took some time before people began to consider that there might be other ways of becoming modern that didn't fit either of those models – or that the economic and political power of the USA and Europe might stand in the way of development in other countries as often as it helped it.

Especially from the 1960s forward, the historical context started to change in important ways. Not least of all, young sociologists began their careers who had been born after the Second World War and never experienced the Great Depression. This doesn't mean that there was a sharp break. Many of the sociologists who became important leaders of the field in the 1960s and 1970s were old enough to remember the war (if not very much the Depression). New historical perspectives were important, though, both in leading to new theoretical ideas and in encouraging different uses of resources offered by classical theory. Immanuel Wallerstein, for example, emerged as one of the most important revitalizers of the Marxist tradition, and moved it forward in new and distinctive ways with his "world systems theory."[6] One of Wallerstein's central points was that in a world dominated by capitalist trade, poorer countries could not grow wealthy simply by following the example of those who had done so earlier. Because European and American countries already dominated the core of the capitalist world economy, the fate of other countries was not simply based on how "modern" they were, but whether and how they could compete in capitalist trade. Countries with less advanced technology and industry were always at a disadvantage in this. The likelihood that they would suffer under dictatorships rather than democracies was also explicable not just by internal factors, but by the influence of more powerful countries – including the USA and the USSR.

To draw a dividing line in the 1960s is partly symbolic but not arbitrary. It reflects the importance of the baby boom generation born after the Second World War, the renewed attention to internationalism and globalization that flourished in that decade after relative isolationism in the 1950s, the emergence of important new voices from the global South or Third World, the beginnings of the greatest phase so far of the modern women's movement, a variety of other social movements from environment to gay rights, and the impact of the American war in Vietnam. The events of the 1960s reshaped what social theorists saw as most significant in the social world – even if they did not always see these things in the same way. The 1960s pushed sociological theorists to focus more on processes of social change

(and resistance to change), on social inequality and on processes of marginalization and exploitation that shape it, on power relations and social movements that contest them, and on cultural and other differences among individuals and groups. These themes animate the work of many of the authors included in this volume.

The Individual and Society

Among the themes that came to the fore, none was more important than the relationship between the individual and society. This was obviously not all new, but it became newly unsettled and demanded attention. Erving Goffman, a pivotal American sociologist who changed for ever the way in which people understood interpersonal relations, was only a few years younger than Parsons and began to publish important work in the 1950s, but his analyses did not become widely influential until the 1960s. By then they were pivotal, however, in calling attention to the way in which ritual and strategy intertwined in everyday phenomena like dating.[7] A date is like theater, in that each person has a role to play, and can play it better or worse. To some extent everyone knows that they are playing roles, not simply expressing themselves openly. At the same time, a date – like all social interaction – calls for improvisation. Participants seek to manage the impressions others form of them. But in order to do this successfully, they have to accept the social roles at least to some extent. Among other things, the popularity of Goffman's work reflected a new critical perspective on the social conformity of the 1950s.

One feature in the changed context was a widespread sense that people had more choice about their lives and the social roles they would assume. This reflected the new opportunities opening up in a society that was rapidly growing wealthier. The percentage of the population going to college more than tripled, for example, reflecting not only wealth but the growing shift from an industrial to an information society. As the American sociologist Daniel Bell wrote in one of the first books to analyze this change, to an ever-greater extent society was being organized around the production of knowledge, not only material goods.[8] Renewed attention to individuals and how they might fit into society was also shaped by what another American social theorist, Philip Rieff, called "the triumph of the therapeutic."[9] By this, Rieff meant the prominent place that both introspection and attempts at reformation of the self had assumed in modern culture. People not only went to therapists, they expected therapeutic work from ministers, teachers, and even television. This encouraged sociologists not only to analyze therapy, but to ask what was behind the change in culture.

The critical theorist Herbert Marcuse noted that capitalism had long seemed to require a certain repression of impulses. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, for example, Weber had described the importance of saving and reinvestment, both dependent on resisting impulses to enjoy luxuries. Equally, it was important for workers and managers alike to be committed to hard work, disciplined, and rationalistic. This extended from strictly economic realms, Marcuse suggested, to sexuality and artistic creativity. (This is one reason why the Bohemian artist had long seemed such an affront to capitalism and to businessmen's understanding of

rationalism.) The more consumer-oriented capitalism of the late 1950s and 1960s, however, brought with it a loosening of repression.[10] Not least, Marcuse argued, disciplining workers was no longer the main issue for capitalists; it was increasingly supplanted by motivating consumers. This could be a matter of irrational eroticism – selling cars by showing them with sexy models draped over the hood. Tolerance for new levels of aesthetic and erotic expression not only encouraged consumption, it muted tendencies to challenge the established order. In the era of the Keynesian welfare state, the established system of power and wealth was better able to manage the resistance and rebellions of ordinary people. This very idea is an indication of why we see this period as "contemporary" in regard to society and social theory, even though there have obviously been significant changes.

There were many different ways in which sociologists explored the relationship between individual and society. These drew on different roots in earlier, "classical" social theory. What the new theorists shared was a sense that there was a tension in this relationship. Although most agreed that there was no such thing as "pure individuality" outside of society, and that human beings developed personhood only as parties to social relationships, they did not take this to mean that the relationship between individuals and actually existing forms of society was harmonious – let alone, as fulfilling as it could be. On the contrary, in various ways these theorists pointed to the ways in which people found themselves limited by the social conditions in which they found themselves. This was not just a matter of blockages in their way, of course, but often also of the absence of support systems. At the same time, people's aspirations did not simply come from within them; they were socially produced. Whether it was a matter of wanting faster cars, bigger TVs, or more fashionable clothes, this could not be understood simply from looking inside individuals but had to be understood at a sociological level. Likewise, the means people chose to pursue their goals were not automatic. Some would drop out of school to enjoy consumer goods immediately, even though this hurt their long-term prospects. Others would study hard in order to get into competitive colleges and graduate schools. Some would stick completely to legal means, others would turn to crime. Who did what was based on an interaction between personal characteristics and social organization.

One important approach to these questions focused on the ways in which people developed identities – or themselves and for others. "Labeling theory" was rooted in the symbolic interactionism of George Herbert Mead and his followers.[11] It started with the commonplace observation that many children steal but few become professional thieves (and conversely, most do homework but few become real scholars). Labeling theorists acknowledged that differences in talent and opportunity were and are important. For example, having parents wealthy enough to be able to send their children to college is a big predictor of whether those children become well-educated. But they added that what happens is also shaped by the labels that others come to apply (and individuals sometimes accept for themselves). Thus a youth who is caught and punished repeatedly for theft may come to be known as a thief (while one who gets away does not). Having the identity "thief" may close some doors, making it harder, for example, to get an honest job. Accepting the label for oneself may reduce inhibitions against stealing in the future. In short, the identity of the person and

the social role ("thief," in this example) are both socially constructed. They do not exist "objectively," separate from social life and culture.

The Social and Cultural Construction of Knowledge

Many of the new explorations of the individual/society relationship were guided by attention to the capacities that individuals have for constructing the social world in new ways. As Alfred Schutz emphasized, for example, the ways in which people share understanding of their social world – what he called intersubjectivity – are effective in shaping that world itself as well as their identities as individuals within it.[12] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann drew on Schutz's work to explore the ways in which the very construction of social knowledge was itself analyzable not simply as a matter of externally verifiable discovery but as a reflection of social relations and everyday life concerns.[13] These theorists drew on phenomenology, a theoretical approach that had developed largely outside of sociology as a form of attention to individual consciousness, to develop a new sociology of knowledge and intersubjective understanding. Durkheim had been interested in phenomenology and some sociologists – like Goffman and Irving Garfinkel – combined Durkheimian attention to social structure with phenomenological concern for the ways in which individuals construct their social lives and their knowledge of the everyday social world.

The classical social theory of George Herbert Mead addressed similar questions and provided an alternative approach for many of the new generation of thinkers. Mead's theory was rooted in pragmatism, an American approach to philosophy that emphasized the extent to which all knowledge was grounded in practical experience and communication – not based simply on holding up a mirror to objective reality.[14] There are many different ways to understand any specific object in the world, the pragmatists suggested; which ones become important to people will depend on the tasks they are engaged in and the ways others they care about grasp the same objects. What this implied is that there is no way that anyone simply and directly gets reality right. Different cultures and even different scientific theories can with equal validity understand similar phenomena differently.

Questions about the social construction of knowledge – whether everyday or scientific – have become one of the major themes of the post-1960s period. Here the work of theorists reflects both struggles to come to terms with history and new awareness of cross-cultural diversity. For example, a number of social theorists have addressed the transformations in Western culture. Some of their work was shaped by a concern to understand how what had seemed in the nineteenth century to be a straightforward march of reason and progress could issue in the twentieth century in Nazism – or for that matter Stalinism. Their explorations involved not just research on fascism or communism as special cases, but inquires into how there might be potential for such disasters built into Western culture more generally.[15]

Michel Foucault, for example, sought to uncover the different characteristic approaches to knowledge of different epochs and emphasized the dramatic differences between them.[16] He saw the modern period as shaped by the rise of the individual, both as the basis of epistemology – the source of knowledge understood as empirical observation and philosophical reflection – and as a basic value – the independent actor. But instead of presenting this simply as progress, looking at it from within an individualistic point of view, he presented this as opening up a new set of problems. Individualism was a way of seeing the world and living in it, Foucault argued, and as such it was not a starting point for analysis but an effect to be explained. What produced this effect, he suggested, was more than anything else a set of disciplinary practices. The modern individual was ideologically understood as the fount of freedom – the self craving free expression – but in fact was produced by demanding of people that they take on the task of self-discipline. The new individual was a person constantly aware of the gaze of others, including especially the gaze of authority. This was produced by the development of medical examinations, of schooling, of government statistics. It was reflected in an approach to law and morality that emphasized not just what people did – the external manifestations of wrongdoing – but their inner intentions. Even sexuality, Foucault suggested, was not simply a natural self-expression but a social phenomenon. It was shaped by ideas about "normality" and "performance" that were reflected not just in hostility towards homosexuals or other "deviants" but in anxieties to conform to expectations, the proliferation of "self-help" and "how-to" books and comparisons of each individual's own experience to that in movies or literature.[17]

Foucault was one of the most important social theorists to emerge in an initially French intellectual movement commonly called "structuralism" and later "poststructuralism."[18] Structuralism shared some of its classical roots with the sociology of Emile Durkheim, especially in his examination of the social sources of knowledge and intellectual categories.[19] Influenced by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralism stressed the extent to which systems of meaning (language or culture) were based on the reference of terms to each other. Thus words get their meaning from relations to other words, not simply by pointing to things, nor from historical origins. The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein developed similar notions in his later work.[20] Both structuralism and Wittgenstein influenced social theory in and after the 1960s. They challenged not only ideas about language but underlying theories of knowledge that approached it as a more or less transparent mental representation of external reality. Some structuralists, like the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, endeavored to decode universal patterns of meaning – possibly rooted in the brain itself.[21] Others, including Foucault, focused increasingly on the ways power and historical change shaped knowledge; this was what led to the label of "poststructuralism." Poststructuralists emphasized the difficulties of transcending specific cultures or systems of meaning without the dominance of one over another. They also urged attention to the ways in which each system of knowledge blocked attention to some kinds of understanding, imposing silences as well as enabling speech. Together these influences led to a new concern with culture not – as it had been for Parsons – as a source of values that unite a society but as an arena of contestation and difference.

Another poststructuralist sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, emphasized "symbolic violence" and the "struggle over classification."[22] Even within one society, he argued, culture was used not only to unite but to dominate. Widespread ideology claimed

that culture was simply a matter of meaning, thought, or aesthetic taste. This suggested that it was somehow the opposite of power and economic determination. But clearly, claims to have highly cultivated taste could be used to exclude those with "baser" tastes. Moreover, ideas like "art for art's sake" might seem to represent the reversal of the economic world but in fact they revealed economies of their own in which participants struggled over "cultural capital" rather than material, monetary capital. The logic of the competition was different, but it was still a competition. Indeed, to gain prestige as an artist, it was necessary to demonstrate that one put creativity ahead of material gain; to show individual "genius" required not producing art that found too easy and widespread a popular acceptance. To be seen as a literary artist and not just a writer, thus, a novelist had to differentiate himself from a journalist.[23] Outside the specialized field of art, the state and other powerful actors used cultural goods – like diplomas and public honors – to supplement the direct workings of the monetary economy. The operation of schemes of classification by race, gender, class, sexual orientation, artistic taste or other criteria offered a way to uphold social hierarchies that granted privilege to those on top.

Inequality, Power, and Difference

One of the big issues that changed sociological theory in and after the 1960s was a new level of attention to class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Of course these had been noticed by earlier generations. Class was a central theme for both Marx and Weber. The Chicago School that helped to pioneer American sociology had studied ethnicity both as a feature of urban life and as one of the issues resulting from immigration to the United States.[24] Chicago sociologists had also addressed race, though the most important classic work was that of America's first great Black sociologist, W. E. B. Du Bois.[25] Despite the fact that sociologists had always been attentive to issues of social inequality and difference, though, during the period of functionalist dominance after the Second World War the theoretical emphasis had fallen overwhelmingly on social integration, consensus, and factors that held society together. The development of new social movements and conflicts during the 1960s and 1970s brought inequality, difference, and struggle to center stage.

One symptom of this was that when Talcott Parsons produced his account of classical social theory, Marx was not an important figure. Each new generation has the opportunity to redefine what it finds useful in the classics, though, and during the 1960s and 1970s Marx, later Marxists like the Italian Antonio Gramsci, and the German critical theorists were rediscovered. They had always been better known in Europe than in the USA (and indeed, functionalism was more dominant in the USA). Younger sociologists were looking for different classics largely in order to analyze better the inequalities and conflicts they saw in contemporary society. Influenced by Marx and by actual social conflicts, they presented a model of society in which tensions and struggles were basic and unity was largely maintained by power. Parsons, by contrast, had paid little attention to the ways in which some people wielded power over others and controlled aspects of social organization. When

he used the word "power" his emphasis was on the overall capacity of a society, not on the dominance of some members by others.[26]

Parsons and other functionalists emphasized the "systemic" character of social life, the extent to which social organization fitted together so that every feature was necessary to the whole. The new generation of theorists criticized the implicit conservatism in this. They asked more frequently how society could change, how individuals could have an impact on the whole, and whether the functionalist model of the system masked real differences among members of a society. When functionalists said that the social system "worked," critics asked "worked for whom?" In both Europe and America, younger sociologists pointed out that society might successfully educate workers to have the skills needed for its industry but that didn't mean it educated students in all social classes equally, or gave them equal opportunities for creativity. They argued that if generating wealth was one indicator of a society "working" then how equally or fairly that wealth was distributed should be another. Leading functionalists had argued that differences in wages and salaries mainly reflected a necessary incentive system.[27] The critics charged that it had more to do with power, with what class someone happened to be born into, with privileges based unfairly on sex, race, ethnicity, and similar characteristics, and with the needs of capitalism rather than of society as such.

Starting with the premise that social inequalities were not always necessary or fair, theorists set out to understand what form they took, why they existed, how they could change and what power structures resisted change. This applied both domestically and internationally. Rather than assuming that "modernization" would bring about a convergence of all societies in which these would necessarily develop on a European-American model, researchers analyzed the structures of global inequality, and examined who benefited from them, and how they were produced and maintained. Central to the new theoretical orientations were attention to power and to historical change and variability. These encouraged more critical perspectives because they shared the ideas that society could be different, that choices could be made.[28] It was necessary, in other words, to avoid equating the actually existing with the necessary or normal.

For example, many sociologists (and others) had long assumed that assimilation and integration were the necessary end results of migration (including the forced migration that brought Africans to America as slaves). Sociologists, like anthropologists, had long questioned the scientific status of racial distinctions. They argued that using skin color to classify human populations was arbitrary and a result of historical circumstance and pseudo-science (a view that genetic research has more recently supported). But during the 1960s, influenced by the Black Power movement, many sociologists began to go beyond this, questioning the goals of assimilation and racial integration. The basic question was, how much of their own culture, identity, and claims to respect did African-Americans have to surrender to assimilate? It appeared to many that ending forced segregation (a main goal of the civil rights movement) only addressed half the issue. It questioned keeping Blacks out of white neighborhoods and other preserves, but didn't question whiteness as such, or the extent to which integration was only offered on the condition that Blacks act like whites. It appeared, in other words, as if greater economic and political

equality for Blacks was offered at the expense of Black pride – that is, of recognition of the cultural achievements and self-understanding of Blacks themselves.

The issue, in other words, was not only one of equality but also one of recognizing cultural difference. This remains controversial, not least with regard to how much of their older culture new immigrants should retain. How rapidly, for example, should Spanish-speaking immigrants be expected to learn English? The other side of the question, of course, involves change in American society – including the growth in how many other Americans can speak Spanish. Immigration has also changed American religious life, both by bringing new religions and by changing the ethnic makeup of the members of different religious groups (as Latinos have become prominent in the American Catholic church). Church membership is also a way in which immigrants assimilate into American society, finding help with issues such as jobs and housing as well as worshiping. Similar issues have arisen in Europe, both with regard to non-European immigrants, especially from Muslim countries, and with regard to internal migrations facilitated by European integration. Sociological theory is at the center of debates about how to preserve social solidarity while including people of different races, cultures, and backgrounds.

Some societies, like the United States and Canada, have found it much easier to be "multicultural." This is based in part on their immigrant histories, but also reflects other parts of national culture – like a sense that there is open land and room for everyone. But as basic as immigration has been to American society and its growth, it has always been controversial. Immigration is also highly controversial in European societies today. In order to understand what is going on, sociological theory focuses our attention not only on the characteristics of immigrants, but also on the characteristics of host societies.

American culture, for example, tends always to emphasize race. Out of its history of dealings with Native Americans and African-Americans, the United States produced a distinctive racial formation.[29] Old categories were extended to new groups; for example, when Asian immigrants became more numerous Americans struggled to fit them into pre-existing racial categories and hierarchies. This process involved not merely the recognition of objective differences, but the racialization of social groups, the use of race to construct them in specific ways. Although this was most obvious in the case of minority groups against which there was discrimination, it was true also of whites. Whiteness was treated as a kind of "normal" characteristic, as simply American. Sociological research, however, helped people recognize that being white was also one particular – racialized – category, and that it was being given hierarchical privilege.

Similar concerns were raised in relation to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and other lines of difference. Rather than seeing differences between male and female as simply natural, for example, sociologists increasingly focused on the processes by which such differences were culturally constructed.[30] They did not treat this as a neutral feature of cultural difference, but went on to examine the ways in which the subordination of women was reproduced and maintained. The question was both one of cultural differentiation (women were more likely to become nurses, men more likely to drive trucks) and one of economic hierarchy (truck drivers were paid more than nurses).

The issue of difference was not just a matter of groups defined by a specific identity like race or gender. It applied to a whole variety of social practices. Consider family. The term "nuclear family" was coined in 1949 by the anthropologist George Peter Murdoch. Murdoch described it as a basic building block of larger structures – lineages, clans, and "extended families." He acknowledged, though, that America was unusual because it was commonly expected for the nuclear family to stand alone. This expectation took on the force of normalization. Television shows like *Ozzie and Harriett* and *Leave it to Beaver* presented this as simply the way families were. But, as the sociologist Stephanie Coontz pointed out, this is not how most families ever really were.[31] And in fact, starting in the 1960s, nuclear families began to account for a smaller and smaller percentage of American households. From 45 percent in 1960 the proportion fell to 23.5 percent by 2000.[32] Even as this happened, the nuclear family continued to be treated by many as what was both morally right and normal – an implicit denigration of the actual – and often stable and supportive – living situations of others. From a functionalist point of view, this sometimes appeared as a breakdown in the normal pattern of social organization. To others, it didn't signify anything good or bad in itself; the questions were whether the other living arrangements brought people satisfaction, support, or other desirable results. Many pointed out that part of the rise of other living arrangements was in fact made possible by new levels of affluence and freedom of choice.

Theoretically, the most important of the new theoretical orientations emphasizing difference was feminism. Women's struggles for social equality entered a new phase of growth in the 1960s and theory was closely linked to the practical movement. This reflected in part the need to explain why gender inequality was as pervasive as it was – and simultaneously why this was not inevitable (as functionalist theory suggested) but open to change. Feminist theory simultaneously addressed two crucial themes: the material inequality between men and women, and the implications of the conceptual construction of gender categories. Sociologists studying class had often compared the incomes or wealth of men without attention to that of women; many reasoned that this was necessary because men were the main breadwinners in families. Especially in and after the 1960s, research focused on questions like what men and women earned when they had similar jobs or levels of education – and what explained the substantial inequalities that were found. As in the case of race and ethnicity, many of the newer sociological theories emphasized the role of power. This was often physical power, sometimes backed up by law. But it was also often the power of dominant culture. This raised the second major theme. The Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith, for example, drew on both ethnomethodology and Marxism to construct a theory of the "conceptual practices of power."[33] Work like this drew attention to the ways in which seemingly neutral classifications like those of law courts and welfare agencies, censuses and indeed sociological surveys reproduced and helped to enforce certain normative understandings of how the world *should* work. These normative understandings commonly benefited men at the expense of women – for example by associating housework "naturally" with childbearing.

Feminist theory generally argued that material equality would be hard to achieve so long as cultural categories remained biased against women. This left open a major question, though. Did the elimination of bias necessarily mean seeing men and women

as essentially the same? Or could it mean recognizing gender differences but valuing men and women equally? The issue was similar to that of whether the elimination of ethnic and racial discrimination necessarily depended on the assimilation of immigrants into host cultures – or, in the case of US race relations, on making Blacks more like whites. An influential strand of theory in both racial and gender studies argued that such assimilationist thinking was a further reflection of inequality and power, not a way around it. Why should women need to become more like men in order to gain equivalent political or economic rights? While much of the empirical research in sociology continued to focus on material dimensions of gender inequality – in workplaces, political institutions, and families – a major strand of feminist theory focused more on questions of the cultural construction of difference. This was influenced by both the critical theory tradition and by French poststructuralist theory. Feminist theory of this sort also influenced the development of critical theories of sexuality. Linking these theories was concern to avoid assuming that there was one correct model for human identity or social life. Rather, theorists suggested, theory needed to address the ways in which differences could be recognized without unjust discrimination.

On an international scale, paying attention to power, inequality, and cultural difference meant reconceptualizing the ideas of progress and development. Much earlier work was based on evolutionary assumptions about social change and indeed (unlike most biological theories of evolution) suggested that historical change moved "forwards," that societies "advanced," and therefore that the conditions of the "leading" societies of any one period would reveal the future of others.[34] It was this sort of thinking that led Alexis de Tocqueville to travel to America to see Europe's future and Friedrich Engels to go to England during the Industrial Revolution to see what lay in store for Germany. Neither Tocqueville nor Engels was strictly an evolutionary theorist; Tocqueville stressed political choices that Europeans could make about how to democratize (though he thought democracy a trend of the age); Engels stressed conflict and struggle as shapers of social change. Many other theorists placed a greater emphasis on the "natural" ways in which they thought society would develop. The most influential of these in the twentieth century were "modernization" theorists.

Modernization theory drew on the actual social conditions of the richer Western European countries and the United States to construct a model of modernity. Then followers analyzed the paths by which other countries and parts of the world could become more modern – emphasizing the lessons offered by past "successful modernizers" like Britain and the United States. A common concern was for how poor countries – conceived as "traditional" – could achieve the developmental momentum to "take off" into a process of self-sustaining economic growth and modernization.[35] Modernization theory guided a range of important research projects which did indeed produce useful knowledge. However, especially in and after the 1960s, it was challenged on several fronts. Among the most important was the unilinear concept of social change widespread within it. Modernization was understood as a process moving in one predetermined direction. Closely related was the criticism that modernization theory neglected power, including the power by which some societies dominated others and also the power by which elites within societies shaped the

course of their growth and change. Third was the argument that modernization theory lumped all manner of very different cultural and social formations together into the category of "traditional" or premodernity.

As we noted above, more recent thinkers often argued that it was difficult for newly developing countries to follow the paths of those that industrialized in the nineteenth century precisely because they had to compete with these already technologically and economically advanced countries. Some have also questioned whether "modern" is a sufficiently precise concept. If one means "capitalism" or "democracy," these theorists suggest, it is best to say so clearly and study when and how they are linked rather than assuming that they automatically combine in "modernity." In the same vein, many hold that it is important to ask whether there might be multiple versions of modernity, different projects of modernization rather than a single path. For example, is socialism an alternative form of modern economy to capitalism? Is it right to see religious conservatives as always anti-modern? Or, are some Islamists, Hindu fundamentalists, and many Catholics and Protestants seeking to shape versions of modernity that accord with their values? These questions have come to the fore recently in response to the renewed pace of globalization of the 1990s and early 2000s. What it means to be a part of the modern world system has become an even more important question with expansion of market relations, globalization of media, and far-flung migrations. But fights over the World Trade Organization, exploitation of the environment, human rights, and other questions all suggest that there are diverse visions of modernity. Power and struggle, not just a natural course of development, shape which ones are realized. One of the advantages of recent sociological theory is the opportunity to learn from the history of the twentieth century.

Empirical Research

When Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels began to develop their sociological theory in the 1840s, empirical research was also in its infancy. Marx relied heavily on government reports and investigations into industrial conditions undertaken by British Parliamentary Commissions. These were not products of scientific research but rather interviews undertaken by officials, physicians, and others concerned about public welfare. Engels actually conducted one of the first sociological investigations into urban life. He walked several routes through Manchester and its environs and systematically recorded what he saw, and what he learned from those he talked to. Along with other data garnered mainly from businesses, this became a crucial basis for his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*.

At roughly the same time, a few other social scientists were pioneering empirical research methods. Economics was in the lead, but sociology second and close behind. Frédéric Le Play, for example, set out to examine the conditions of family life, systematically comparing different communities and economic conditions to see how they affected the organization of households.[36] Though he himself did not conduct significant empirical research, Auguste Comte heralded the significance of empirical evidence in his designation of a new "positivist" epoch in the organization of

human affairs, in which science could truly guide practical organization.[37] Herbert Spencer relied on systematic examination of the reports of missionaries, colonial administrators, and occasionally scientists to describe the social organization of different peoples around the world and construct his evolutionary theory.[38] His contemporary Charles Darwin had the advantage of personal participation in documenting biological diversity, but also relied on similar analyses of the reports of others, including substantially lay observers.[39]

The situation was only modestly better at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, when Max Weber and Emile Durkheim produced their pioneering sociological analyses. Governments had begun to collect information about the population of most European countries at regular intervals – the modern census was basically created during the nineteenth century. Censuses were supplemented by labor statistics, mortality statistics, and a host of other indicators of the social experience of populations. Economic data on trade, business organizations, taxes and the like led the way, but widespread concern for the possible effects of industrialization and other social changes pressed the collection of other sorts of social data to the fore as well. When Durkheim set out in the 1890s to examine the social causes of suicide, he was able to rely on data about deaths collected by government agencies in several countries.[40] This improved the record keeping that had long been undertaken by churches as they recorded births, marriages, deaths and similar information in different parishes. It was not yet fully scientific data – insofar as there was relatively little research underpinning techniques of data collection – but it was increasingly systematic data. Indeed, the growth of the state – and especially of a variety of government agencies charged with specific administrative tasks from education to defense to regulating the quality of food – was basic to the development of systematic data collection. The data gathered, in turn, were basic to helping sociology (and other social sciences) become more scientific.

At the same time, sociological theorists began to see the need to collect their own data. Max Weber was not satisfied with the information publicly available when he set out to analyze property relations and economic conditions in Germany's East Elbian district; he organized the collection of new data on "Junker capitalism" and the proletarianization of German peasants.[41] George Herbert Mead conducted both systematic observations of children and rudimentary experiments.[42] In each case, the developments of their theories led these pioneering sociologists to ask questions that previously available data couldn't answer.

From the seventeenth century on, but especially in the twentieth century, the simple availability of more reliable data was supplemented by improvements in statistics – quantitative techniques for the analysis of data.[43] Indeed, in many early cases the development of statistical techniques outstripped the availability of rigorous data. It was especially hard to gather certain sorts of data because they were controversial. Early sociologists wanted to know, for example, how employers treated their workers, how many hours child laborers worked, and what occupational injuries workers in different crafts suffered. They were not able to go directly to factories and survey employees; they relied instead on those who came forward as voluntary witnesses. Early social scientists also pioneered ways of collecting data systematically even when it could not be rendered in quantitative form. Anthropologists

carefully documented kinship systems, for example, while at the same time sociologists set out to describe the forms of life in Europe's and America's rapidly growing cities or to record how immigrants adjusted.

What is most important to see here is the extent to which the growth of social theory was intertwined with the development of new approaches to empirical social research. If this was a factor in the nineteenth century, it became ever more vitally important in the twentieth. The development of sociological theory was more clearly separated from the normative concerns of political philosophy; explanation became increasingly its goal. Theory also became part of a shared sociological enterprise with empirical research. Attention centered increasingly on the way the two came together in analyzing specific phenomena, and answering specific questions. Not only, how did society work in general, but how did cities grow – and why in those patterns? Why did people migrate from one country to another – and what determined their success or integration into new settings? What kinds of social groups stuck together under pressure, which ones tended to split up, and why? How sociologists posed these questions, which ones they thought were important, and how they went about answering them were all shaped by theory. But at the same time, the theories offered predictions and explanations that either fitted with available data or didn't – and contradictory data could drive the theorists back to the drawing board.

New data didn't change overall perspectives on society, but they changed the ways in which theorists explained specific aspects of social life within each perspective. For example, there was no datum that could prove it right to follow Weber in a more individualistic approach to social action or Durkheim in a more holistic approach to society as a separate level of analysis. But from either perspective, theorists struggled to explain new information about how society worked. This included both the results of empirical research into the relationship between specific variables and empirical observations of new events and historical developments. For example, the rise of fascism in the 1930s involved something new in history; it had not existed before and it challenged theories based on previous experience. But Weber's and Durkheim's theories were able to contribute to the analysis of fascism because they grasped important features. Weber's account of charismatic leadership could help explain Hitler's or Mussolini's roles in German and Italian mass movements. Durkheim's account of how large-scale rituals bind people together could help to explain why the grand spectacles staged by fascists were effective not just in spreading ideology or offering entertainment but in leading individuals to accept that the social whole was more important than any of its parts. But new research also added new dimensions that neither theoretical perspective completely anticipated. In their research on "the authoritarian personality," for example, Adorno and his colleagues showed that how individually rational people would be, and how they would respond to charismatic leadership depended on their upbringing and experience of work and other relationships. This new research didn't overturn either Weber's or Durkheim's theory, but it pushed followers of each to add new dimensions, and to make general arguments about the nature of human beings and social life more attentive to variations in historical circumstances and culture. It also pressed for better integration between sociological and psychological analysis.

It was mainly in the 1950s and 1960s that quantitative empirical research in sociology took on its modern form and became a large-scale enterprise. The USA was in the vanguard of this development.[44] The Depression and the Second World War played decisive roles as social science research was mobilized to aid first the New Deal and similar projects of social reconstruction elsewhere and then the war effort. On topics from social stratification and mobility to formal organizations, demography and group dynamics this produced important new knowledge and more precise tests of hypotheses. At the same time, the advances in research contributed to a differentiation between two senses of theory. On the one hand, some theory was very close to empirical research projects; it consisted largely of relatively formalized structures of hypotheses. On the other hand, much of the classical tradition of sociological theory tried to offer large-scale perspectives on social life in general. Writing in the late 1950s, the American sociologist C. Wright Mills contrasted what he called "grand theory" and "abstracted empiricism."[45] The "grand theory" to which he referred was the attempt to build an all-encompassing theory of society exemplified by Talcott Parsons's functionalism. The "abstracted empiricism" was the practice of social research more and more concerned with technique, especially statistical technique. Mills was unhappy about both. While they took opposite paths, they complemented each other because neither encouraged the kind of critical awareness of social life that Mills thought important. Moreover, neither engaged adequately with the challenge of understanding specific patterns of historical change. They didn't help as much as the classical traditions of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim to connect the social issues people experienced in their everyday lives to an analysis of large-scale social patterns. Unemployment, divorce, and military service, for example, were biographical experiences of millions of individuals. The job of sociology, Mills contended, was to help people see how these were also organized on a society-wide scale: who was most likely to experience each? How did this reflect the class structure or the nature of political power?

Mills's Columbia University colleague Robert Merton was also concerned about the gap between the broadest theoretical perspectives that illuminated social life in general and the specific hypotheses and tests of empirical research. His suggestion was to emphasize what he called "theories of the middle range."[46] By these he meant theories that attempted to explain social phenomena which occurred in many different situations. They were thus more general than specific empirical findings about particular cases and less all-encompassing than broad theoretical perspectives like functionalism, Marxism, or symbolic interactionism. Merton thought these broad perspectives valuable as orientations, aids to thinking through more specific analyses. But he thought it crucial for a relatively young science like sociology to seek rigorous explanations of phenomena that were concrete but generalizable. His examples included theories of social roles, deviance, and reference groups. The last, for example, refers to analysis of the ways in which people compare themselves to others. Everyone derives a sense of his or her particular identity, level of success in life, and other characteristics largely through comparisons to other people. But no one compares himself to everyone; a key sociological question is how people determine who are the relevant comparisons. In the army, for example, sergeants are apt to compare themselves to lieutenants and corporals but not to generals. In high schools, football players are likely to compare themselves to other athletes more than to students in general – but to other students more than to drop-outs or adults. This and other examples yield the generalizable finding that the most meaningful comparisons are those to fairly similar and local others. There is more to reference group theory, but this illustrates the idea of identifying a generalizable phenomenon – comparisons within specific groups – that is neither a general theory of society nor a research finding specific to one case, merely a single tested hypothesis. Reference groups are influential in dating behavior (as people judge who is likely to go out with them or how others view their partners), in job satisfaction (as people judge their salaries and their treatment by peers and superiors), and even in job performance (as people look at others to see whether they are working hard enough, or harder than they have to).

The connection between empirical research and sociological theory is often strongest and most balanced at the level of theories of the middle range. These may focus on a wide variety of phenomena, from revolutions to consumer behavior. Two of the most important lines of development of middle-range theories address structures of social relations (networks) and the way social actors make decisions (exchange and rational choice theories). In the work of the most ambitious advocates for each theory, these may look like grand theoretical perspectives like Parsons's functionalism – i.e., a few passionate theorists claim that *everything* is a matter of either network structures or rational choice. But though these theories, like others, are shaped by broad perspectives and orientations, they are at their most productive in abstracting certain generalizable features of social life and concentrating on how they operate in many different kinds of social circumstances. Rational choice theorists know that no one is perfectly rational and network theorists know that structural patterns are only part of what makes social relationships meaningful. But each of these theories makes it possible to abstract from particular cases and compare aspects of social life across diverse contexts.

The central idea in network approaches to social structure, for example, is to abstract the *form* of social relationships from their *content* and then to compare formal structures and analyze the effects of variation. For example, within any collection of people, we could start by asking what is the density of their interrelationships (i.e., how many of any specific type of possible connections between them actually exist). How many of the brothers in a fraternity are actually close friends, for example? Then one can go on to ask what factors explain where the connections exist and where they are absent (is it, for example, a matter of which year in school the men are, or what they study, or where their rooms in a shared house are located?). Then, one could compare many fraternities and ask what are the differences in the patterns of relationships found. The same sort of analysis has been applied not only to friendship groups but to structures like those linking corporations through their boards of directors; those linking banks or law firms to particular clients; those shaping the organization and recruitment of participants to protest movements; and those determining the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. In developing such analyses it is as important to see where relationships are absent as where they are present. For example, in groups of equivalent density, there are usually some members densely knit into social relationships and others relatively

isolated from them. Analysts ask whether there are consistent, predicable patterns to the behavior of these social isolates or to those more strongly integrated into networks.

While the phenomenological and symbolic interactionist (or pragmatist) approaches to relations of individual and society emphasized the construction of meaningful relationships, others emphasized pursuit of strategic advantage. People did not simply adapt to social norms or follow cultural rules, theorists suggested. Rather, social actors chose strategies for trying to present themselves in the most favorable light, trying to get the best possible response from other people, trying to come out ahead in interpersonal relationships even while preserving the illusion of equality or reciprocity. Drawing on economics and on behavioral psychology, theorists like Peter Blau and George Homans approached social interactions as exchanges.[47] Later theorists expanded these approaches into "rational choice theory," continuing to draw on interdisciplinary collaboration with psychology and especially economics.[48] They stressed Weberian methodological individualism, but for the most part abandoned Weber's interpretative search for the meaning actors attach to their social actions. Instead, rational choice theorists tried to develop models that predicted what rational, self-interested actors would do to pursue their advantage in any situation. When would it be rational to cooperate, for example, and when not? The answer would depend, of course, not just on the characteristics of the actors but on the structure of opportunities and constraints open to them. These models could then be used to explain actual behavior – or to identify deviations from rational action in order to seek explanations for these.

Examining the relationship between individual and society is one of the sources of intellectual excitement in modern sociology, and also one of the reasons why it is perennially controversial. This is partly simply because sociology challenges a widespread everyday individualism in contemporary society – an individualism that is particularly extreme in the USA. Sociology reminds people who like to think they are in complete control of their own lives that they are not; it reminds people who say they are completely independent that they in fact depend on others and on a whole social system. It even reveals that when we make our own choices they do not simply express our individual distinctiveness but also predictable sociological patterns. Much in our contemporary world is set up to encourage people to think in terms of the uniqueness of individual identity and the complete freedom of choice – people sometimes resist recognizing limits to these.

Controversy and Resistance

Sociological theory has often been controversial. Perhaps no reason is more basic than the efforts of sociologists to make explicit and openly understandable social phenomena that many people have strong interests in keeping implicit and inaccessible. Certainly this includes issues like who benefits from social inequality and injustice. Call them the "big issues"; there are certainly big interests behind keeping them obscure. But the resistance to clear sociological understanding comes not only from the rich and the powerful but from all of us.

We all invest ourselves in social misunderstandings, and some of these actually help to make social relationships work. We say, for example, that we give gifts out of a pure spirit of love or generosity. In fact, however, most people modulate their giving to match gifts they receive from others. The American sociological theorist Alvin Gouldner attributed this to the "norm of reciprocity," the idea that social relationships depend on exchanges that people judge to be appropriate.[49] This applies even in conversation itself. If I say "hello," the norm of reciprocity requires you to respond in kind. But, as the French sociological theorist Pierre Bourdieu points out, this is a more complex game. It depends not only on a good sense of what is appropriate (how to play the game) but on shared and socially reproduced "misrecognitions."[50] We say the gift requires no response, but in fact we expect one – either a matching gift in a kind of exchange or appropriate thanks and deference. But we resent having this pointed out. We prefer to think of ourselves simply as being generous, and the gift only does its work in cementing relationships if the norm of reciprocity does not become too obvious. If it is seen as too transparent an attempt to curry favor, to get something in response, it is less valuable.

From the relatively humble example of gifts, we can see sources of resistance to sociological analysis, to attempts to expose the real interests behind accepted social practices and arrangements. And this extends through the building of personal relationships (e.g., dating and marriage), the building of complex organizations (like businesses or political parties), to the creation of states, governments and whole societies. People getting married say that it is "until death us do part" even though they know that nearly half of marriages end in divorce. They often really mean it, and meaning it may help nurture commitment and make marriages last. A variety of social factors influence whether marriages actually last – financial circumstances, career pressures, children, support groups. Love and commitment between two individuals are important elements, but not the whole story. Yet, we tend to resist the message that something so personal could be explained by generalizable social factors – or at least, we resist applying those generalizations to ourselves.

Take a different example: is rap music an expression of individual artistic creativity, Black culture, or corporate capitalism? Rappers have an investment in the first and they and their listeners often have an investment in both the first and the second. But rappers, audiences, and music companies all have an interest in the last not being too apparent. As West Indian-born sociologist Paul Gilroy observes, rappers may appear as sexual rebels and as Black men challenging authority, but the organization of the music industry channels this for profit and the organization of actual politics makes this form of challenge much less radical than some other forms of Black Power movements. Gilroy worries that a musical tradition that was genuinely creative and politically challenging is being reduced to "marketing hollow defiance."[51] But listeners who want to hear a deeper politics, or fit into a fashion, or simply have a good time all have an interest in not considering the question – as do rappers who want to stay popular and music companies that want to make money.

This is not simply a matter of deceit. Rappers and record companies may both be honest about being in the business for the money. It is a matter of how people construct meaning in social life and resist disruptions to it. This works on a larger

scale too. Many people believe that their ethnic, racial, or national identities are clear-cut and natural. They resist sociological analyses showing how blurred the boundaries are, how much the categories are invented, and how often they are manipulated. Within each group, people may have an ideology that stresses community and sharing – a common fate – and obscures how some members of the group take advantage of others. They resist sociological analyses demonstrating how deeply members of the same race or nation are divided by class or how appeals to upholding traditional ethnicity may carry a gender bias.

Conclusion

Contemporary sociological theory is enormously diverse and multifaceted. It includes macroscopic studies of the structures of power, production, and trade that link and separate countries. It includes studies of interpersonal relations that emphasize both the process of communication and the formal structure of networks. And it includes a variety of levels of analysis in between.

No single theory or perspective is dominant. Contemporary sociological theory includes a variety of contending but also often complementary perspectives and is informed by work in various neighboring disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. While any particular sociologist may make more use of feminist theory or rational choice theory or some other specific approach in his or her analyses, almost all draw on several theoretical traditions. These include both classical and more recent theoretical writings. Indeed, all contemporary theories draw on some combination of classical influences, though some of today's theorists follow more in the line of Marx, others Weber, and still others Durkheim or Mead.

That different theories can complement each other doesn't mean that they always fit neatly together. On the contrary, theories often start with different assumptions about human nature, or about the nature of knowledge (epistemology); they frequently focus on different levels of social reality. These differences mean that fitting them together in any specific analysis always requires creative work and decisions. Theory is something to do, not simply to read. The theoretical resources available to today's sociologists are enormous, but this doesn't mean that theoretical work can stop.

NOTES

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13 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Knowledge* (New York: New American Library, 1967).
14 Richard Rorty clarifies the difference between pragmatism and more conventional philosophical epistemology in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).
15 As we considered in *Classical Sociological Theory*, this was an important theme for the critical theory of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, e.g., *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972; orig. 1946). This enjoyed a surge of popularity in the 1960s and 1970s.
16 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1977) and *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1966) among many other works.
17 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1976–88, 3 vols.).
18 See François Dosse, *History of Structuralism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Though related, this is distinct from the structural approach to the study of social relationships and networks prominent American sociologists (see below).
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25 See especially W. E. B. Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover, 1989; orig. 1903).
26 Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951); Anthony Giddens, "The Concept of 'Power' in the Writings of Talcott Parsons," in *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (New York: Basic Books, orig. 1967).
27 In the words of Kingsley Davis and W. E. Moore, "Social inequality is . . . an unconsciously evolved device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons," "Some Principles of Stratification," *American Sociological Review* 10 (1945), 2, 242–9, p. 48.
28 This is the basic premise of critical theory in contrast to what is often called "positivism". See C. Calhoun, "The Critical Dimension in Social Theory," in J. Turner (ed.), *Sociological Theory Today* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage).
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