SC715: THEORY PROSEMINAR I

This course examines the works of leading classical theorists. We will examine both their substantive concerns with the normative orientations and institutional character of emerging capitalism and their epistemological strategies of analysis. Special emphasis will be given to reviewing how these theorists combine the analysis of structure and agency, connect social organization and social consciousness, conceive and construct theory, and explain the dynamics and direction of social change. With rare exceptions, assigned reading will be from original sources.

The fifteen class meetings will cover the following topics:

Introduction.1
— Theory, Methodology, and Research as a Vocation—
— Central Theoretical Issues in Sociological Theory—
— Theoretical Problematic of Western Social Theory—
Introduction.2
— The Meaning of Theory, Sociological Theory, and the Theoretical Task

A. Anthony Giddens: A grand theory of structure and agency

B. Adam Smith: social-psychology and institutional forms of the new order

C. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach: philosophical and historical dialectics of culture, state (social formation of society), and destiny

D1, D2. Karl Marx: philosophy, social-psychology, political-economy, and the future

E. Friedrich Nietzsche: leitmotifs (leading thematic motives), leitworten (leading thematic words), passion, the irrational, and reason making individuals “masters of their passion” (Walter Kaufmann).

F. Georg Simmel: culture, social interaction, and personality

G1, G2. Emile Durkheim: method, culture, emotion, and modernity
For each section of the course I will provide one or two questions each week in the style of the theory questions asked on the theory-methods comprehensive exam. You will be expected to answer a total of 7 questions of your choice (no more than one from each section) over the course of the semester. Please keep your answers to five or six pages. Write the text single-spaced on the two-thirds of the page. This way, I have room to write some comments. Your arguments developed in such papers will be incorporated into the discussion each week. Therefore papers must be handed in at the class for which the proposed question was designated. Late papers will be lowered 1/3 grade. The course grade will be based on the evaluations of these papers. Please familiarize yourselves with the university’s definition and rules regarding plagiarism. They will be strictly enforced.

For each section of the course I will distribute a list of required and recommended readings. I will also provide one or two questions each week in the style of the questions asked on the theory comprehensive exam. You will be expected to answer a total of 7 questions of your choice (no more than one from each section) over the course of the semester. Please keep your answers to five pages. Write the text on the two-thirds of the page (that is covering four inches of the paper in 12 point Times--as is this paragraph). This way, I have room to write some comments. Your arguments developed in such papers will be incorporated into the discussion each week. Therefore papers must be handed in at the class for which the proposed question was designated. Late papers will be lowered 1/3 grade per day up to one grade. The course grade will be based on the evaluations of these papers.

All papers must be typed. Grammar and spelling will be evaluated along with the content of the papers.

Familiarize yourself with the University rules on plagiarism. (see below). They will be strictly enforced.
There will be a copying charge to cover the cost of various photocopied materials that will be passed out in class.

The following books are available in the bookstore (under SC715):


Occasional additional readings will be designated on the assignment sheets for each section. Copies will be made available or web sources provided. You may wish to order *The Portable Nietzsche* (Kaufman) from Amazon.
The following is part of the academic integrity policy that is from the Boston College Catalogue, pp 33-32. The entire policy is described in the Catalogue and at: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/enm/stserv/acad/univ.html#integrity

Academic Integrity

Policy and Procedures

The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the university and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others' work as one's own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but also undermines the educational process.

Standards

Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context including, but not restricted to the following:

Cheating is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

- the use or attempted use of unauthorized aids in examinations or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation;
- fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data, results, sources for papers or reports, or in clinical practice, as in reporting experiments, measurements, statistical analyses, tests, or other studies never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data;
- falsification of papers, official records, or reports;
- copying from another student's work;
- actions that destroy or alter the work of another student;
- unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination;
- the use of purchased essays or term papers, or of purchased preparatory research for such papers;
- submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved;
- dishonesty in requests for make-up exams, for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers, and in any other matter relating to a course.

Plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.
Other breaches of academic integrity include:

- the misrepresentation of one's own or another's identity for academic purposes;
- the misrepresentation of material facts or circumstances in relation to examinations, papers, or other evaluative activities;
- the sale of papers, essays, or research for fraudulent use;
- the alteration or falsification of official University records;
- the unauthorized use of University academic facilities or equipment, including computer accounts and files;
- the unauthorized recording, sale, purchase, or use of academic lectures, academic computer software, or other instructional materials;
- the expropriation or abuse of ideas and preliminary data obtained during the process of editorial or peer review of work submitted to journals, or in proposals for funding by agency panels or by internal University committees;
- the expropriation and/or inappropriate dissemination of personally-identifying human subject data;
- the unauthorized removal, mutilation, or deliberate concealment of materials in University libraries, media, or academic resource centers.

Collusion is defined as assistance or an attempt to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty. Collusion is distinct from collaborative learning, which may be a valuable component of students' scholarly development. Acceptable levels of collaboration vary in different courses, and students are expected to consult with their instructor if they are uncertain whether their cooperative activities are acceptable.
Introduction.1

—Theory, Methodology, and Research as a Vocation—
—Central Theoretical Issues in Sociological Theory—
—Theoretical Problematic of Western Social Theory—

Theory may be defined as the intellectual formulation of relationships. As such, theory may be formal or informal, verified (tested) or unverified (tentative). Sociological theory is the formulation of relationships stated in terms of a sociological perspective, that is, having to do with how people behave, feel, and think in interaction with other people. Sociological theory is also scientific in at least some minimal sense or, if one wishes, academic. This means that it is the statement of social relationships in the context of an explicit elaboration of the hypothesized relationships and an explicit statement of the data and arguments that support the case for the theory. My view of sociological theory, then, is the explicit elaboration of relationships about behavior and belief in society in a manner open to replication (verification) or falsification by others.

This section of the course introduces a series of considerations on the meaning and content of sociological theory with the purpose of your formulating your own tentative understanding of the nature of sociological theory and the issues entailed in defining it.

I will begin by summarizing my views on the definition of theory and sociological theory, the central theoretical issues of sociological theory, and the theoretical problematic of Western social theory.

Theory, Methodology, and Research as a Vocation

Research is the process of obtaining insight into how and why the social world works, that is, the discovery of knowledge. The two central tasks in the discovery of knowledge are (1) the formulation and verification of theory and (2) doing so in a systematic way. The first task is that of theory formation; the second task is that of methodology. Research is not about theory; and it is not about methodology. It is about the confluence of the two tasks, as the term “discovery of knowledge” denotes. The theoretical task always entails methodology; the methodological task always revolves around the quest for knowledge. Thus research, as the discovery of knowledge, is an unending vocation.

From infancy, if not from the womb, we are all at every moment informally carrying out research. Formal research carries out the discovery of knowledge in an explicit way.
Exploring a range of the explicit practices of the discovery of knowledge is, at least for me, the goal of this course.

In our first meeting I hope to accomplish three objectives: (1) set out my understanding of theory and theory formation as the central tasks of social science; (2) indicate a broad understanding of the nature and usefulness of methodology; and (3) suggest the kinds of dispositions surrounding research as a vocation.

Theory may be defined as the intellectual formulation of relationships. As such, theory may be formal or informal, verified (tested) or unverified (hypothetical and tentative). Social theory is the discovery of relationships having to do with how people think, feel, and behave as they engage in the social processes of socialization and social construction.

Formal discovery of knowledge is often spoken of as “scientific” or ”academic.” In my view, these are fortunate, terms. They emphasize an effort to explain social relationships by means of an explicit elaboration of the hypothesized relationships, an explicit statement of the data and arguments that support the case for the theory, and an explicit set of procedures that are open to being reproduced by others. The root notion of scientia I translate as skillfully obtained knowledge. My view of social theory, then is the explicit elaboration and provisional verification of relationships about behavior, sentiment, and belief in a methodologically explicit manner, that is open to replication (verification) or falsification by others.

This section of the course introduces a series of considerations on the meaning and content of sociological theory with the purpose of your formulating your own tentative understanding of the nature of social theory and social science methodology and the issues entailed in defining it.

During the class meeting I will summarize my views on the process of theory formation, the meaning of the social science perspective, the process of theory formation in sociology, and how to make sense out of the following array of nominally distinct working definitions of the theoretical enterprise in social science:

(1) detailed conceptual elaboration either with or without a corresponding theory;

(2) inductive substantive theories using anecdotal, historical, or observational data to explain how and why certain social phenomena occur;

(3) deductive substantive theories using systematically organized survey data to test, verify, and recast theories specified in the form of hypotheses and propositions;

(4) systematic expositions on the development and nature of sociological theory using existing theories as their data and striving to formulate a more comprehensive or critical theory;

(5) analytical efforts at a higher level of abstraction attempting to explicate the fundamental aspects of consciousness and behavior in society; and
philosophical reflections on the epistemological issues of knowing and truth as it applies both to interpreting the meaning of culture and meaning, on the one hand, and to understanding the stance in regard to truth of the investigator.

It should be noted that few, if any, theoretical writings can be categorized neatly into one of these categories; most, in fact, combine two or more of these six notions of theory. Throughout the course we will examine writings in each of these categories and will accept them as relevant for a course in sociological theory.

Theoretical writings also may be distinguished by their fundamental epistemological stance, the major questions they attempt to answer, the unit of analysis they deem most basic, the social relationships or institutions claimed to set the character of society, their central concepts, and overall organizing perspective or logic of analysis. As we cover the material of the course, be particularly aware of how each theorist treats each of these issues.

The central recommended reading for this section are from sections of Bernard Lonergan’s *Insight*. Next we will read selections from Robert K. Merton's chapters on sociological theory in his book, *On Theoretical Sociology*. Lonergan provides the most useful understanding of understanding, as he puts it, I have come across. Merton provides one relatively early definition of sociological theory along with a number of distinctions that remain important today. In contrast to many writings on theory and method, Merton's work appears uncomplicated and, to some, less sophisticated. It does serve the purpose, however, of introducing the central issues as I see them as well as presenting some of the key pieces of an important contemporary theorist.

**Recommend Reading:**


- Chapters 1 and 2.


- Preface and Part I.

- Introduction
- Chapters 13, 14, 15


- Parts I, II
- Preface, Introduction, Chapters I, II, III, IX

- Chapters 1, 2, 3.
Introduction.

The Meaning of Theory, Sociological Theory, and the Theoretical Task

Theory may be defined as the intellectual formulation of relationships. As such, theory may be formal or informal, verified (tested) or unverified (tentative). Sociological theory is the formulation of relationships stated in terms of a sociological perspective, that is, having to do with how people behave and think in interaction with other people. Sociological theory is also scientific in at least some minimal sense or, if one wishes, academic. This means that it is the statement of social relationships in the context of an explicit elaboration of the hypothesized relationships and an explicit statement of the data and arguments that support the case for the theory. My view of sociological theory, then, is the explicit elaboration of relationships about behavior and belief in society in a manner open to replication (verification) or falsification by others.

This section of the course introduces a series of considerations on the meaning and content of sociological theory with the purpose of your formulating your own tentative understanding of the nature of sociological theory and the issues entailed in defining it.

During the next class meeting I will begin by summarizing my views on the process of theory formation, the meaning of the sociological perspective, the process of theory formation in sociology, and the range of definitions of theory as outlined at the beginning of the syllabus.

The central reading for this section are from Robert K. Merton's chapters on sociological theory in his book, *On Theoretical Sociology*. He provides one relatively early definition of sociological theory along with a number of distinctions that remain important today. In contrast to many of the writers treated in the next section, especially Anthony Giddens, Merton's work appears uncomplicated and, to some, less sophisticated. It does serve the purpose, however, of introducing the central issues as I see them as well as presenting some of the key pieces of an important contemporary theorist. After treating the work of Giddens and other writers who write at a higher level of abstraction in the next section, and after reviewing some of the work of Talcott Parsons, we will return to some of Merton's substantive work.

The article by Stanley Liberson speaks to the issue of verification that we addressed in relation to Bernard Lonergan’s practical epistemology of theory formation. The article by Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite is a wonderfully clear example of the “circle” of deductive and inductive theory formation and of virtually all of the issues raised in Merton’s articles.
Question:

Draw on your lecture notes and readings from the first lecture and from Merton’s three chapters (as assigned below) to chart the elements of the article by Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite. Exemplify the systematic interconnection of as many elements as you can of the conceptual tools covered in the aforementioned sources.
Assigned Reading:


Recommend Reading:


- Chapters 1 and 2.


- Preface, Introduction, Chapters I, II, III, IX


- Preface and Part I.
Section A

A Contemporary Perspective on Sociological Theory:
Structuration Theory of Anthony Giddens

This section focuses on a range of substantive issues that have characterized sociological theory from the period of the classical writers through the present. The required reading is from the work of the English sociologist, Anthony Giddens who has become one of the foremost commentators on sociological theory and methodology as well as a prolific macro and micro social theorist.

Many theorists have attempted to delineate the basic underlying issues treated by various social theorists from the inception of sociology. These include the problem of order, materialism vs. idealism, macro- vs. micro analysis, consensus (or integration) vs. conflict (or coercion) perspectives, etc. When we study the writings of Talcott Parsons we will see his early efforts to derive a theory of social theory. In this section we focus on the views of Anthony Giddens who attempts to go beyond writing just another review of what has come to be the conventional wisdom about the nature and concerns of sociological theory. Rather, he criticizes such conventional learning and attempts to reframe the central questions first by criticizing what he calls four "myths" about social theory that have prevailed over the past few decades and, second, by addressing what he believes is the proper way to formulate "the central problems in social theory."

I recommend that someday you read Giddens' "Classical Social Theory" article listed below. In this piece Giddens first critically examines the four myths (that of the "great divide" being treated in the first section of the essay). Second, he calls for two reformulations of issues usually deemed essential to the history of social theory: (a) substantively, he argues that refuting the thesis of industrial society is a more important endeavor than refuting structural-functionalism; and (b) abstractly, he argues that moving beyond the model of utilitarian individualism to macro-structural analysis is more important than efforts simply to better formulate the utilitarian model.

In *The Constitution of Society* Giddens sets out his views on what he believes to be the fundamental theoretical issues that sociologists should focus on in place of the tired controversies heretofore inadequately examined in the name of theoretical analysis. His approach, as you will see, makes ample use of contemporary philosophy as a way to set sociology straight. His central insight revolves around his notions of "structuration" and "duality of structure." Through these frameworks, Giddens attempts to resolve the agency-structure problematic. He does this not so much by providing a single simple insight but by developing a language or discourse that reduces the opposition between voluntary action by agents and the existence of structures as both condition and outcome of agency. His work also opens up the avenues between traditional approaches to theory and much now known as "post-structuralism."
In *Modernity and Self Identity*, Giddens undertakes what I consider his most extended application of his theory of structuration. He outlines the rules and resources embedded in the social *structure* of modernity and discusses the implications for the performance of *agency* in the dynamics of self-identity. His major argument is that late-modernity is characterized simultaneously by globalization or “extensionality” (or the end of local tradition) and self-reflective identity formation or “intentionality.” Late- or high-modernity is not a new epoch of self and society but an intensification and extension of modern tendencies.

**Question**

Write an essay setting out the theoretical logic contained in the assigned chapters of Giddens. Make sure you get to some of the issues raised in chapters 5 and 6. By *logic of analysis* I mean the lines of argument running through each chapter and the contribution of the chapter in general to Giddens's overall argument about structuration and the duality of structure.

**Assigned Reading**


  Introduction,
  Chapters
  1 (all)
  2 (41-51, 83-92),
  3 (132-144),
  4 (169-179, 185-206),
  5 (256-262);
  6 (281-319, 327-354)
  [note Glossary]

**Recommended Reading**

**Major Items**

  --Sections: “Introduction” and “Anthony Giddens: Structuration Theory.”

—“Interview One: Life and Intellectual Career”


Introduction

Chapter 1, “The Contours of High Modernity”


Other Suggestions


Introduction, Chapters 1 (27-34); 2 (35-56) 3 (70-80) 4 (109-133)

[Note Glossary]


Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*. University of California Press. Berkeley: 1979. (This book is a key book in sociological theory and covers some of the same territory as *The Constitution of Society* as well as some important formulations of key areas of sociological thinking. Sections are worth reading in preparation for comprehensives.)

- Chapters 2, 3 (96-120), 4, 5, 6 (210-222).


- Parts: 2, 3


- Introduction (Knorr-Centina); 1 (Cicourel); 2 (Collins); 4 (Harre); 5 (Giddens); 9 (Habermas)


- Chapter 2


Adam Smith (1723 – 1790):
The Social-psychology and
Institutional Forms of the New Order

Adam Smith is the forgotten forebear of contemporary sociology. He is the explicit precursor of all modern economic theory, Karl Marx, and Talcott Parsons. He is also a precursor of modern symbolic interactionism.

Adam Smith's two renowned works, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, address, respectfully, the two central issues of the classical social theory: (1) the ways of thinking and feeling that characterize the transition to capitalism and (2) the institutional forms of economy and polity that shape the organizational life of society. In a word, Adam Smith is more a sociologist than an economist. Capitalism is a new way of feeling and a way of interacting. As such, in analyzing capitalism, Smith is, on the one hand, a social psychologist of emotion and, on the other, a sociologist of political and economic organization. It has been said that all social science after Marx is in response to him. Adam Smith (along with Hegel) were the two major thinkers to which Marx responds. Recall that Marx viewed the transition from Feudalism as a major development in the course of human freedom. The problem with modern capitalism was not its entrepreneurial petty commodity production, but the necessary march of capitalism toward domination of the relations of production which result in labor exploitation and underproduction of wealth. But more about this soon.

Question:

The assignment has two parts: a more elaborate analytical one and a briefer evaluative one. 1. Describe how the central logics of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations* intersect. That is, in what way do the social-psychological conditions and relations described by Smith in *Moral Sentiments* serve as the foundation for his understanding the post-Feudal institutional life of increased moral, political, and economic liberty that he charts in *Wealth of Nations*? 2. Conclude by indicating in what ways Smith’s ideas do or do not provide analytical directions for understanding contemporary society.
Assigned Reading

Look over the electronic files on Adam Smith I will email you. They provide a look at the importance of Smith’s work as a sociologist who is most interested in the social and normative underpinnings of economic life rather than simply the technical workings of an economy.

Heilbroner (Ed.), *The Essential Adam Smith*

- The Man and His Times 1-11

*Theory of Moral Sentiments*
- Editor's Introduction 57-63
  - Part I Section I 65-77
  - Part I Section II 77-78
  - Part I Section III 78-88
  - Part II Section I 88-91
  - Part II Section II 91-98
  - Part II Section III 98-100
  - Part III 100-117
  - Part V 118-123
  - Part VI Section II 135-147

*The Wealth of Nations*
- Editor's Introduction 149-157
  - Introduction and Plan 159-161
  - Book I
    - Chapters I,II,III,IV 161-175
    - Chapters V,VI,VII 175-194
    - Chapter VIII 194-198, 202-208
    - Chapter X 210-214
  - Book II
    - Chapter III 234-243
  - Book IV
    - Chapter II 265
    - Chapter VII 269-275
    - Chapter IX 284-290
  - Book V
    - Chapter I 290-312

Recommended Reading

Adam Smith's identity crisis
Scholarly tug-of-war: Left wing lays claim to founding father of the free market

Jeet Heer
National Post

Although Adam Smith is usually considered to be the founding father of right-wing free market economics, a rising chorus of left-wing academics are claiming him for their own. The scholars, who argue Smith was a radical critic of the establishment of his day, would place the famed Scottish economist next to Jean Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx and the pantheon of left-wing thinkers.

Smith is usually associated with conservative politics. In England, the Adam Smith Institute is a bulwark of Thatcherism. In the United States, The Leadership Institute markets an Adam Smith necktie that is proudly worn by such conservative luminaries as House Majority Leader Dick Armey, former U.S. attorney-general Edwin Meese, Nobel laureate Milton Friedman and National Right to Work Committee president Reed Larson.

But in the recent book Chomsky on Miseducation, the well-known linguist and political radical Noam Chomsky describes his own world view as belonging to "the Left libertarian tradition" which he traces back to Adam Smith.

Chomsky, who has long criticized capitalism, sharply distinguishes between Smith and his conservative followers, writing that: "It's quite remarkable to trace the evolution of values from a pre-capitalist thinker like Adam Smith, with his stress on sympathy and the goal of perfect equality and the basic human right to creative work, to contrast that and move on to the present to those who laud the new spirit of the age, sometimes rather shamelessly invoking Adam Smith's name."

Chomsky's own invocation of Smith is part of a larger trend where scholars writing from a variety of left-wing perspectives argue that Adam Smith's ideas have been wrongly appropriated by free marketers. For example, the May/June issue of the New Left Review includes an article by Michael Watts, a University of California, Berkeley geographer who notes that "in his own day Adam Smith was considered a friend of the poor, a free-thinker ... a voice for liberty -- not just of trade -- in the widest sense."
Adam Smith, born in Scotland in 1723, is widely regarded as the founder of modern economics. Prior to Smith, the dominant school of economics was mercantilism, which promoted the use of imperialism and protective trade barriers to enrich wealthy imperial capitals such as London and Paris. In his landmark work The Wealth of Nations (1776), Smith made the case that free trade, rather than centralized imperial control of the economy, was the road to enrichment.

However, left-wing scholars note that advocating free trade was merely one small part of Smith's larger agenda, which was aimed at promoting economic and political equality.

David McNally, a professor of political thought at York University in Toronto and an active member of Canada's New Socialist Party, agrees there is "a more progressive dimension to Smith's work, which really has been systematically neglected in the mainstream liberal and neo-liberal tradition." McNally points out that, for Smith, prosperity was measured by a rise in living standards for the working class. This sets Smith apart from other free market advocates who believed a low-wage economy was the key to economic development. Smith believed that economic policy should be secondary to moral and ethical concerns such as equality. "Smith had a through-going mistrust of capitalists," notes McNally. "He says over and over again in The Wealth of Nations that whenever possible they will collude to corner the market, to raise prices, and to deceive the public."

The argument that Adam Smith had a progressive dimension has been bolstered by the recent publication of Emma Rothschild's Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment (Harvard 2001) a widely praised book that links Smith to the radical French intellectuals of his day, who were instrumental in creating the French Revolution. According to Rothschild, Smith was considered a radical because he was "critical of religious establishments, of war, of poverty, and of the privileges of the rich." In the years immediately following his death, Smith was regarded with such fear that four of his Scottish followers were found guilty of treason and transported to penal colonies. But by the end of the 18th century, Smith had been appropriated by conservatives who focused on his advocacy of free trade but ignored his criticism of established institutions. More recently, the conservative interpretation of Smith has been advanced by the late Nobel prize winning economist Friedrich Hayek in his influential account of the history of economic thought, written in the early decades of the last century.

According to both Rothschild and McNally, Hayek was guilty of conflating Smith's moral defence of the market with the amoral celebration of self-interest found in other economic theories. Hayek, who was a product of Freud's Vienna, defended capitalism because it encompassed human irrationality. As an enlightenment thinker, Smith would have found such an argument alien to his sensibility. "Smith definitely does not have the sort of Hayekian contempt for human reason," says McNally.
The revisionist view of Adam Smith advocated by McNally and Rothschild is being echoed from a surprising corner: Some free market economists are willing to concede that Smith was not an advocate of pure capitalism. "Adam Smith was an advocate of free enterprise, but he qualified it very severely," says Walter Block, a libertarian professor of economics at Loyola University, in New Orleans, La. "Adam Smith should be seen as a moderate free enterpriser, who appreciated markets but made many, many exceptions. He allowed government all over the place."

If they agree in their overall view of Smith, the left-wing admirers of the Scottish economist often disagree about how Smith fits into contemporary left-wing politics and economics. McNally and Rothschild are more careful than Chomsky to stress the ways in which Smith is different from the contemporary left. For McNally, Smith is the intellectual forefather of a futile attempt to make capitalism more humane. Rothschild, a self-described "liberal in the American sense," is more ambivalent. As a historian, she resists attempts to categorize Smith in contemporary terms. "In England [my] book has been thought to have connections with New Labour, which is very strange for me since I haven't read any of the manifestoes about the third way or New Labour." Yet Rothschild does believe Smith can teach us to have a more expansive view of economic life. Smith and his contemporaries believed discussion and debate were part of economic life, a concept Rothschild believes has a renewed relevance at a time when bartering on the Internet is replacing a world of fixed prices.

For McNally, it is more a matter of placing Smith in his historical context. "We need to read Smith historically and recognize that he is neither an apologist for capitalism nor is he an anti-capitalist critic," McNally argues. "He is ultimately in the tradition of those who aspire towards a humane, decent, polite version of capitalism. I have no problem when people like Chomsky want to point that out, but I don't think we do ourselves or our historical understanding a service if we repackage Smith in contemporary guise."
Hegel (1770-1831) and Feuerbach (1804-1872): Philosophical Problematic of Economy, State, and Culture

If Adam Smith was Karl Marx's economic antagonist Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach were Marx's philosophical antagonists. As such, Hegel and Feuerbach present the philosophical problematic that influenced Karl Marx's early writings, generating his historical materialism.

In addition to being important for understanding Marx's thinking, Hegel and Feuerbach are important in their own right. Hegel, for instance, provided Marx with the dialectical method and a general theory of history. But he also inspired an entire generation of romantic thinkers and, in reaction to him, a generation of social scientists debunking the conservative power and illusion of religion and criticizing the exercise of state. Indeed, writes Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel's is still a viable philosophical endeavour with extremely important things to contribute to modern debates, particularly the debates about historical relativism, poverty and social alienation, the nature of freedom and political legitimacy, the future of art and the character of Christian faith" (1991: 3).

For his part, Feuerbach, while criticizing Hegel, did not go far enough for Marx. As such Feuerbach served as a valuable foil for Marx who used Feuerbach's critique of Hegel as the starting point of his materialism. According to Feuerbach, Hegel mistakenly attributes to the Spirit and the state, the creative attributes of human beings. According to Marx, Feuerbach mistakenly believes that simply acknowledging this reversal is sufficient for liberating the human species. The value of Feuerbach in his right is connected to the fact that the earliest piece of cultural theory in the Marxist tradition is Ludwig Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity. That work is also the precursor for much political theology, including the theology of liberation.

I have provided a copy of Hegel's Reason in History, along with Hartman's Introduction. This work will enable us to see Hegel's own words on the issues of history, freedom, the Spirit, and the state. To help you understand Hegel's writing, I have also provided a chapter from Frederick Copleston's A History of Philosophy. The writing of Ludwig Feuerbach, you will see is somewhat repetitive. But when you're onto something, why not say it more than once? In addition to sections from The Essence of Christianity, I ask you to look over the Introduction by the renowned theologian Karl Barth.
The following passage from Isaiah 55: 6-13, demonstrates the kind of cosmic vision, expressive totality, and the issuing forth and return of the Geist that marks Hegel's philosophy of history.

6 Seek the Lord while he may be found, 
call him while he is near.

7 Let the scoundrel forsake his way, 
and the wicked man his thoughts; 
Let him turn to the Lord for mercy; 
to our God, who is generous in forgiving.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, 
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

9 As high as the heavens are above the earth, 
so high are my ways above your ways 
and my thoughts above your thoughts.

10 For just as from the heavens 
the rain and snow come down 
And do not return there 
till they have watered the earth, 
making it fertile and fruitful, 
Giving seed to him who sows 
and bread to him who eats,

11 So shall my word be 
that goes forth from my mouth; 
It shall not return to me void, 
but shall do my will, 
achieving the end for which I sent it.

12 Yes, in joy you shall depart, 
in peace you shall be brought back; 
Mountains and hills shall break out in 
song before you, 
and all the trees of the countryside 
shall clap their hands.

13 In place of the thornbush, the cypress shall grow, 
instead of nettles, the myrtle. 
This shall be to the Lord’s renown, 
an everlasting imperishable sign.
In order to depict one aspect of my current thinking about Hegel and Feuerbach I offer the following paragraphs from a paper I am working on, “The Sense and Sensibility of Religion: Retrieving Spiritual Experience as an Authentic Sociological Variable.”

Hegel’s Apotheosis of History and Consciousness

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s practical philosophical grand synthesis of the workings of Providence, civil society, and popular consciousness is the last non-theological (see Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Pierre Teilhard de Chardan, and Karl Rahner) thinker to propose a unified theory of the heavenly and earthly domains. As is frequently the case with general theoretical systems, the fullest presentation of a worldview occurs near the end of an intellectual epoch when alternative paradigms have already begun to forge their challenges. I contend, but do not here demonstrate, the reasonable thesis that Hegel’s philosophy was the epitome of practical religious theodicy and reflected a cultural consciousness that subsequent behavioral science explicitly or implicitly rejected. Hartman for instance, claims that Hegel “was the one philosopher who decisively changed history” (1953, p. ix), and quotes Ernst Cassirer (1946, p.248) who maintained that “no other philosophical system has exerted such a strong and enduring influence upon political life as the metaphysics of Hegel. . . . There has hardly been a single great political system that has resisted its influence” In a word, says Hartman (p. xi) “as the greatest conservative, [Hegel] unchained the greatest revolution” (p. xi). Just what is the provocative Hegelian perspective that our classical predecessors took as their vocation to vanquish and, because of their efforts, engendered the enlightenment consensus that now pervades the treatment of religion in contemporary social science?

Hegel’s university lectures published as Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History is a relatively straightforward presentation of his practical metaphysics. Hegel’s point of departure is that the Divine is internal to the workings of nature and history. The presence of Providence is not an intervention but an initial condition permeating nature and actually inviting/requiring transformative human agency in the co-creation of history, morality, and religion. There is an unfolding dialectical relationship between God (the divine thinker or the Idea) and Nature. Nature reaches its pinnacle in the form of conscious human life, because through human consciousness, the Idea becomes conscious of itself. World and history are components of the expressive totality emanating from God, but not in a derivative or mechanical way. Yes, human agency of self-construction and world-building play out within the individual self and the world of Nature issued forth by God or Reason. (Marx was not the first to suggest that people create their own history, but not under conditions completely of their choosing.) At the same time, human agency carries out its innate mandate as a natural inclination within the realm of freedom it derives from the self-consciousness that God/Idea/Reason is embedded in all individuals.

God or Idea is the thesis, Nature (especially in the form of conscious human agency working on self and world) is the antithesis. Spirit is the newly forged synthesis combining the uncreated Idea issuing forth the “infinite power” (p. 11) of reason and energy with the self-conscious human agency shaping material nature. As such, Spirit closes the circle of knowledge/energy and brings the Idea to a new level where it is
“actualized and realized” (Hegel 1953 [1837] p. 20). Spirit is thus the self-aware synthesis of outflowing Idea and its material incarnation in nature mainly through conscious human agency creating society, history, morality, culture and so forth. As a result, says Hegel, “Spirit knows itself” (p. 23).

In terms that may be more familiar, Hegel is providing a religious cosmology akin to Anthony Giddens’s humanistic sociology. What for Hegel is the dialectic of Idea, Nature, and Spirit, is for Giddens the dialectic of structure and agency which he calls the duality of structure. Idea is structural condition of enablement and constraint--freedom and dependence, as Hegel puts it. Nature is the material realm of conscious human agency carrying out transformative reproduction within the enable and constraints of structure as embedded in what Giddens following Freud calls memory traces. “Spirit is essentially Energy,” says Hegel, that results from the “actual self-determination” of the Idea as it manifests itself “in the form of states and individuals” (p. 51) and religion. In Giddens’s language, Spirit is the reproduced/transformed outcome that in his dialectics becomes structural condition for further agency.

As the reader can already tell, there are several red flags that an Enlightenment thinker would find vexatious. One of which is not that Hegel is optimistic about human nature and the progressive teleology of history. The irksome ensigns have more to do with Hegel’s notions about (1) the genesis and destiny of history flowing from and returning to the Divine; (2) the almost exclusive emphasis on self-consciousness and comprehension as sufficient causes for advancing the actualization of history and human existence rather than actual acts of agency and the scientific laws of political-economic, cultural, and personal evolution; and (3) in general elevating the speculative operations of God above the demonstrable operations of the human species, classes, society, or personality. An additional red flag is Hegel’s discussion of the State, especially for those who have seen authoritarian or, later, Fascist foundations in Hegel’s political philosophy. Others (e.g., Hartman 1953) have written persuasively that, while Hegel may have been used to justify such regimes, neither in disposition nor in his writings did Hegel actually propose such a view. Rather, his notion of the State is akin to what Marx and now we call civil society. As Hegel explicitly says (sounding like Durkheim) the State is the composite “spiritual individual, the people, insofar as it is organized in itself, an organic whole (Hegel 1953, pp. 51-52). He goes on to clarify that “by ‘state’... one usually means the simple political aspect as distinct from religion, science, and art. But when we speak of the manifestation of the spiritual we understand the term ‘state’ in a more comprehensive sense, similar to the term Reich (empire, realm).” The state, then, is the “concrete actuality” (we would say, institutionalized form) of “the spirit of the people.” Furthermore, when looking not at its “external form” but at its “consciousness of itself,” this spirit of the people is “the culture of a nation” (p. 51, all italics are in the text). In the discourse of Giddens, the spirit of the people is virtual structure (the rules and resources embedded in memory traces), the State is the concrete actualization of and culture is the shared consciousness (practical and self-reflective) of virtual structure.

Feuerbach’s Idealist Antithesis Ludwig Feuerbach’s The Essence of Christianity presented a prominent and influential response to Hegel’s metaphysics. Indeed, in praise seldom bestowed so generously on his intellectual adversaries, Marx said that
Feuerbach’s critique of Hegel and religious theology was the “fiery brook” of purification through which all philosophy of political economy must wade. Feuerbach’s critique provided the antithesis to Hegel’s contention that comprehension of the divine Idea’s expressive creation was the purpose and fulfillment of humanity. Feuerbach did not dispute Hegel’s notion that comprehension was the central task of praxis. But he did dispute the content of what was to be comprehended. For Feuerbach, all theological formulations, including Hegel’s, suffered from a profoundly mistaken reversal of subject and object. The mistake of Hegel and his predecessors was to attribute to God instead of to the human species all positive attributes such as knowledge, creative power, and love, and then to assert that any presence of these predicates in human beings was the result of the creative and redemptive work of God. Feuerbach claimed the opposite. Feuerbach argued that although theology says that God is subject and humans the object of creation, the fact is that the human species is the subject of history and God its object of creation. The reason for this is clear. Individuals authentically experience the origin and destiny of their positive attributes as coming from and going toward a reality larger than themselves. But under the alienating mystification of church and theology they fail to realize that the true origin and destiny of their lives is the human species and not God. In this way, authentic spiritual and religious inclinations to honor the source and content of their cherished characteristics results in inauthentic consciousness and practice. As such, Feuerbach’s enlightenment vocation was to stand history back on its feet and send it more steadfastly on its way by dethroning God and returning the human species to its proper dignity as world-historical agent. Henceforth, religious consciousness, as noble as it may be, was a retarding false consciousness.
Questions (Choose 1)

1. In what ways do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Feuerbach was known in his day as a Left Hegelian. This means that he retained Hegel’s dialectical /historical method but enunciated a critical antithesis to Hegel by attributing to human agency what Feuerbach attributed to the Divine Idea. Explicate Feuerbach’s critical assessment of Hegel and indicate a rejoinder Hegel might make.

2. Hegel's philosophy is often described as enunciating a theory of "expressive totality." This means that all historical reality is in one way or another a direct expression of the Idea or Spirit. Feuerbach, in contrast, sees history flowing from the agency of the human species. Summarize the logic of Hegel and Feuerbach by showing how Hegel gives precedence to structure (in the sense of focusing on the conditions of human existence) and Feuerbach gives precedence to agency (in the sense of focusing on the transformative/reproductive capacity of human beings). Or is this a false dualism such that both are dealing with conditions of agency and agency simultaneously?

Assigned Reading:

Hegel


Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
-Reason in History
  -Robert S. Hartman, Introduction
  -G. W. F. Hegel
    - especially 11-71

Feuerbach

Ludwig Feuerbach
-The Essence of Christianity
  -H. Richard Niebuhr, Forward
  -Karl Barth, Introductory Essay,
  -Ludwig Feuerbach
    Preface Chapters I, IV, XII, XIV, XV, XVIII, XXVII
Recommended Reading
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born in Stuttgart in 1770, the son of a revenue officer.

His career at school and university was undistinguished - his certificate mentioned his "inadequate grasp of philosophy". At Tübingen university he studied not philosophy but theology - and in a sense all his philosophy was essentially a theology, an exploration of the workings of the world-spirit which he identified with God.

On graduation he became a family tutor in Berne and Frankfurt, with plenty of time for private study. In 1801 he won his first university post at the University of Jena. After the Battle of Jena in 1806 when Napoleon defeated the Prussians, Hegel saw the emperor riding past.

The encounter had a profound impact. "I saw the Emperor - this world-spirit - go out from the city to survey his realm," he wrote on October 13, 1806. "It is a truly wonderful experience to see such an individual, on horseback, concentrating on one point, stretching over the world and dominating it" For Hegel, Napoleon embodied the world-historical hero of the age, driving forward the self-realization of God in history.

After the battle the university fell on bad times, and Hegel left his post. Facing
He took a job editing a newspaper in Bamberg, and then was headmaster of a secondary school in Nürnberg. In 1816 he became professor of philosophy at Heidelberg. Two years later he accepted the chair of philosophy at Berlin, where he remained till his death in 1831.

Hegel's philosophical system was perhaps the most ambitious since Aristotle, comprising logic, psychology, religion, aesthetics, history, law. As well as his published works, many volumes were compiled from the notes of his long-suffering students. Though they laboriously took down almost every word, one wonders how much they understood. Hegel's language is abstruse and sometimes tortuous, and makes great demands on the reader.

Pantheism is the motivating force and the core of Hegel's system. It is a grandiose idealistic pantheism, in which all existence and all history are part of God's cosmic self-development.

God is absolute spirit. But he also desires to manifest himself and to know himself. So it is part of his essence to become real, in particular material things, in individual persons and in the process of change and history. God is present and active in the real world. He acts through humans, and is conscious of himself through humans.

God embodies and develops himself first in nature, then in the rising stages of human consciousness and civilization. Human history and culture are God's working out of his self-realization in the world. Individual humans - especially the great heroes of world history - are the principal means of change, while peoples and states are the embodiment of each phase.

Hegel seems to have had an ethnocentric and egocentric view of the culmination of this great process. The German nation were the highest carriers of the wave of God's development. The bureaucratic monarchy of the Prussian type was the highest form of state. The pinnacle of philosophy - through which God at last becomes fully conscious of himself - was, implicitly, Hegel's own system.

Hegel had an immense influence on German thought - not always positive. Some of his ideas had a clear aftermath stretching down to Hitler: his insistence on the identification of the individual, the nation and the state; his stress on Great Men as the only real agents of history; his belief that individual welfare or suffering simply did not matter in the sweep of world history, advancing like a juggernaut over the corpses of individuals.

Hegel also had influence through the young philosophers who rebelled against his system, or developed it in ways that he would have disowned. The best known of these were David Strauss, Max Stirner, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx and Engels rejected Hegel's idealism, but took on his view that history proceeded through the dialectical process of thesis, contradiction and synthesis.
Hegel also had a powerful impact on the development of pantheism and panentheism. The central idea of the Process Theology of A. N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne - the idea of a God evolving in the universe through history - derives from Hegel. So do more modern ideas that the universe is an God evolving towards ever greater complexity and consciousness, and that we humans are somehow a central part of this drama.


Selected passages.

_God is the root and end of all._

What God creates he himself is . . . God is manifestation of his own self.

God is . . . the absolutely true, that from which everything proceeds and into which everything returns, that upon which everything is dependent and apart from which nothing else has absolute, true independence. (Philosophy of Religion, p 368)

Whatever subsists has its root and subsistence only in this One . . . God is the absolute substance, the only true actuality . . . All through his development God does not step outside his unity with himself. (Philosophy of Religion, 369)

_God is the substance, energy, material and final goal of the universe._

Reason is the substance of the Universe, viz, that by which and in which all reality has its being and subsistence. On the other hand, it is the infinite energy of the Universe; since Reason is not so powerless as to be incapable of producing anything but a mere ideal, a mere intention - having its place outside reality, nobody knows where; something separate and abstract, in the heads of certain human beings. It is the infinite complex of things, their entire essence and truth. It is its own material, which it commits to its own active energy to work up; not needing, as finite action does, the conditions of an external material of given means from which it may obtain its support, and the objects of its activity. It supplies its own nourishment and is the object of its own operations. While it is exclusively its own basis of existence and absolute final aim, it is also the energizing power realizing this aim; developing it not only in the phenomena of the natural, but also of the spiritual universe - the history of the world. (9-10)

_God is Spirit and Freedom._
Spirit is self-contained existence. Now this is Freedom, exactly. For if I am dependent, my being is referred to something which I am not; I cannot exist independently of something external. I am free, on the contrary, when my existence depends on myself. (17)

Spirit may be defined [in contrast to matter] as that which has its centre in itself . . . This self-contained existence of Spirit is none other than self-consciousness - consciousness of one's own being . . . It involves an appreciation of its own nature, and also an energy enabling it to realize itself; to make itself actually that which it is potentially. (17-18)

The essential nature of freedom . . . is to be displayed as coming to a consciousness of itself and thereby realizing its existence. Itself is its own object of attainment, and the sole aim of Spirit (19)

*The world spirit is active and dynamic development.*

The very essence of Spirit is activity; it realizes its potentiality - makes itself its own deed, its own work - and thus it becomes an object to itself; contemplates itself as an objective existence.

Spirit is essentially the result of its own activity; its activity is the transcending of immediate, simple, unreflected existence - the negation of that existence; and the returning into itself. (78)

[Although Nature changes, it does so only is self-repeating cycles]. Only in those changes which take place in the region of Spirit does anything new arise. (54)

This development implies a gradation - a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of freedom . . . it assumes successive forms which it successively transcends. (63)

Change, while it means dissolution, involves at the same time the rise of a new life - while death is the issue of life, life is also the issue of death . . . Spirit, consuming the envelope of its existence - does not merely pass into another envelope . . . it comes forth exalted, glorified, a purer spirit. (73)

*Development takes place in dialectical mode.*

Thus Spirit is at war with itself; it has to overcome itself as its most formidable obstacle . . . What Spirit really strives for is the realization if its ideal being; but in doing so, it hides that goal from its own vision, and is proud and well satisfied in this alienation from it. Its expansion therefore does not present the harmless tranquility of mere growth, as does that of organic life, but a stern reluctant working against itself. (55)

[Spirit] certainly makes war upon itself - consumes its own existence; but in this very destruction it works up that existence into a new form, and each successive phase becomes in its turn a material, working on which it exalts itself to a new grade.
The World Spirit realizes itself through History.

History in general is . . . the development of the Spirit in time, as nature is the development of the Idea in space. (72)

Universal History is the exhibition of Spirit in the process of working out the knowledge of that which it is potentially. (17)

The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom . . . The destiny of the spiritual world, and . . . the final cause of the World at large, we claim to be Spirit's consciousness of its own freedom, and ipso facto, the reality of that freedom . . . This is the only aim that sees itself realized; the only pole of repose amid the ceaseless change of events and conditions, and the sole efficient principle that pervades them. This final aim is God's purpose with the world; but God is the absolutely perfect Being, and can, therefore, will nothing but himself. (19-20)

This aim is none other than [Spirit's] finding itself - coming to itself - and contemplating itself in concrete actuality. (25)

The will, self-interest and action of humans are the means by which Spirit realizes its goals.

The nature and idea of Spirit is something merely general and abstract . . . a hidden, undeveloped essence, which as such . . . is not completely real . . . That which exists for itself only, is a possibility, a potentiality; but has not yet emerged into Existence. A second element must be introduced in order to produce actuality - viz, actuation, realization; and whose motive power of the Will - the activity of man in the widest sense. It is only by this activity that Idea as well as abstract characteristics generally, are realized, actualized; for in themselves they are powerless. The motive power that puts them in operation, and gives them determinate existence, is the need, instinct, inclination and passion of man. (22)

Nothing has been accomplished without interest on the part of the actors . . . nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion. (23)

This vast congeries of volitions, interests and activities constitute the instruments and means of the World-Spirit for attaining its object; bringing it to consciousness and realizing it. (25)

World-historical heroes and peoples are the decisive forces of history.

Such are all great historical men - whose own particular aims involve those larger issues which are the will of the world-spirit. They may be called Heroes, inasmuch as they have derived their purposes and their vocation, not from the calm, regular course of things . . . but from a concealed fount . . . from that inner Spirit, still hidden beneath the surface. (30)
Such individuals had no consciousness of the general idea they were unfolding while pursuing those aims of theirs . . . But at the same time they were thinking men, who had an insight into the needs of the time - what was ripe for development. (30)

In the history of the world, the idea of Spirit appears in its actual embodiment in a series of existing forms, each of which declares itself as an actually existing people. (79)

*The State is the end of history - the embodiment of Reason.*

All the worth which the human being possesses, all spiritual reality, he possesses only through the State. For his spiritual reality consists in this, that his own essence - Reason - is objectively present to him, that it possesses objective immediate existence for him. . . . For Truth is the unity of the universal and subjective will; and the Universal is to be found in the State, in its laws, its universal and rational arrangements. The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth. We have in it, therefore, the object of history in a more definite shape than before; that in which Freedom obtains objectivity. For Law is the objectivity of the Spirit . . . Only that will which obeys law, is free; for it obeys itself - it is independent and so free. (39)
Feuerbach, Ludwig. A (1804.7.28 - 1872.9.13)

Encyclopedia of Marxism: Glossary of People

Fischer, Ruth (1895-1961)

Leader in the German CP in the 1920s. Expelled in 1927, she helped found the Leninbund with Maslow and Urbans.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872)

As a member of the "Young Hegelians", Feuerbach criticised what he called Hegel's reduction of Man's Essence to Self-consciousness, and went on to prove the connection of philosophical idealism with religion. In rejecting Hegel's philosophy and advocating materialism, criticising religion and idealism, Feuerbach emphasised the individual, purely "biological" nature of man. He saw thought as a purely reflective, contemplative process, and in his understanding of history remained an idealist. Nevertheless, his critique of Hegel's idealism laid the basis for Marx and Engels' work. Two years before his death he joined the German Social Democratic Party founded by Marx, but he was not politically active.

Both Marx and Engels were strongly influenced by Feuerbach, though they thoroughly critiqued him for inconsistent materialism: Theses on Feurbach; M German Ideology, and
Ludwig Feuerbach and The End of Classical German Philosophy (and others). Engels wrote in the latter work:

“the main body of the most determined Young Hegelians was, by the practical necessities of its fight against positive religion, driven back to Anglo-French materialism. This brought them into conflict with the system of their school.

“While materialism conceived nature as the sole reality, nature in the Hegelian system represents merely the "alienation" of the absolute idea, so to say, a degradation of the idea. At all events, thinking and its thought-product, the idea, is here the primary, nature the derivative, which only exists at all by the condescension of the idea. And in this contradiction they floundered as well or as ill as they could.

“Then came Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity. With one blow it pulverised the contradiction, in that without circumlocutions it placed materialism on the throne again. Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Nothing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence.

“The spell was broken; the "system" was exploded and cast aside, and the contradiction, shown to exist only in imagination, was dissolved. One must oneself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians.”

In the Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, Feuerbach puts his philosophical position concisely and comprehensively into one work. The first section includes Feuerbach's interpretation of the history of philosophy up to Hegel. The second section is probably the best, Feuerbach's critique of Hegel, and final part puts forward his own position, which is very weak really, and is subject to withering criticism in Part III of Engels' booklet.

Feuerbach, who Marx described as the “true conqueror of the old philosophy”, was a revolutionary, and at the end of his life joined the German Social Democratic Party, but he retained his differences with Marx to the end. Nevertheless, his contribution to the revolutionary movement should never be forgotten.
Karl Marx 1818-1883 (and Friedrich Engels 1820-1895)
Philosophy, Social-psychology, Political-economy, and the Future

Adam Smith and G. W. F. Hegel were Marx's two major intellectual forebears. While Smith wrote before Hegel and Feuerbach, Hegel and Feuerbach show up more prominently in Marx's early writings as his foils.

If Hegel considered history under the control of the Absolute Spirit, and Feuerbach considered history under the control of the human species-being; Marx considered history under the control of classes. Hegel was an idealist, Feuerbach a voluntarist, Marx was a materialist. By this we should never mean that Marx considered crass material motives to be the driving force of history. Rather, as a materialist, Marx believed that the laws of motion of history were based on the dynamics of class interests as determined by the dialectical progress of modes of production.

Feuerbach's major criticism of Hegel was that Hegel alienated to the Geist what should properly be attributed to the goodness and creativity of the human species. Feuerbach's de-alienating strategy was to point out and examine this fundamental inversion with the result that humans would self-consciously assume their direction of history. At the level of feeling, people always persisted in giving the proper priority to human agency in their religion. However the dominant theoretical reflection on religion--that is, theology--removed this agency and granted it to God.

Marx appreciated Feuerbach's initial criticism and remarked that all of us must pass through the "fiery brook" of Feuerbach's initial purification of Hegel. But ultimately Marx saw Feuerbach as offering a misguided solution, indeed one that was perverse. By rejecting the Hegelian totality, Feuerbach had also presented an ultimately alienating position. In fact, by appearing to bring humans back into history, Feuerbach may be even more distorting than Hegel. What Hegel clearly missed and Feuerbach, despite some steps in the right direction, failed to see was that the march of history was based not on the increasing self-conscious correspondence of individuals and society with the all encompassing Spirit (Hegel) or the increasing self-appropriation by the human species of their rightful place as subjects of history. Marx, in contrast argued that yes, history was unfolding with a teleology (Hegel) and human beings were the agents of history (Feuerbach), but this unfolding of history did not occur automatically under the influence of the Spirit or by self-awareness of those agents. Rather it occurred as a result of the historical contradiction (in each mode of production) between the relations of production and the forces of production that created classes, material class interests, objective
historical forces that led to growing contradictions within a mode of production, and the enactment of a class struggle to overcome those contradictions.
In order to depict one aspect of my current thinking about Hegel and Feuerbach I offer the following paragraphs from a paper I am working on, “The Sense and Sensibility of Religion: Retrieving Spiritual Experience as an Authentic Sociological Variable.”

Marx’s Materialist Synthesis

If, among the Young Hegelians, Feuerbach is the antithesis of Hegel, Marx is the synthesis, a creative tertium quid emerging from the point, counter-point of the previous controversy. Marx recapitulated much of the progressive, evolutionary, and teleological perspective of both Hegel and Feuerbach. At the same time, Marx ardently chastened his two predecessors for the same sin: they substituted speculative contemplation for social contention. For Hegel and Feuerbach, the antidote to misguided history was comprehending their ideas. By doing so, people would be (re)aligned to the pulse of history and advance its flow. If for Hegel and Feuerbach, the aphorism is “read ideas, learn, and be transformed” for Marx it was “read history, learn, and transform.”

Hegel understood that humans create history, but saw his role and the role of philosophy as striving to “to recognize the content, the reality of the divine Idea, and to justify [explain] the spurned actuality; for Reason is the comprehension of the divine work” (pp. 47-48). Marx, of course, focused on the comprehension of the historical conditions of class relations, but only in order to direct the praxis of liberating struggle in order to change history. Still, Marx never abandoned his Hegelian heritage. For despite all his rejection of idealism (in which comprehension was the primary road to actualization) Marx retained a world-historical overview in which origin and destiny, genesis and telesis, were mutually endogenous.

It is much the same story with Feuerbach. In calling Feuerbach the “fiery brook” of understanding, Marx applauded the former’s Copernican revolution that fixed the human species at the core of the social solar system. But despite the fact that Feuerbach had correctly returned the human species to center stage, Feuerbach remained trapped within an idealist social strategy. For Marx, the key was not just to correctly contemplate history, but to change it. Yes, Feuerbach caught the historical inversion of subject and object, but he was not correct about its materialist origins. The mistaken centering of religion was not due to a mistake in consciousness, as Feuerbach insisted, and could not be corrected by undoing that cognitive error. Rather, the religious “halo” elevating God and subordinating humanity arose from the desire of the superordinate class to justify its exploitative ways, and the need of the subordinate class for the consolation of meaning-giving hope. Neither religion nor its theologians were to blame for the indefatigability of hegemonic theodicy. The culprit was exploitative class relations.

In his negation of Feuerbach’s negation Marx was less accusatory than Feuerbach of religion. He was, however, equally steadfast about removing religion from the list of authentic independent variables. Religious feelings and institutions, even when they act as relatively autonomous culprits, are at worst historically derivative intermediate variables, and at best inconsequential epiphenomena. Although some Marxists may disagree, Marx contends that religious life isn’t causally potent enough to be the source of alienation, much less the source of liberation. We must keep attuned to the laws of
historical materialism whereby theoretically informed praxis pursues the class struggle rather than the task of understanding. An individual taking religious experience seriously, then, may not be the cause of exploitative relations of production, but keeping political economists and the working class struggle from taking religion seriously is the noble goal of scientific socialism.

In regard to Smith, Marx's criticism took three directions. The first was Marx's incorporation of the Hegelian and Feuerbachian romanticism and progressivism. Smith was sober about two things. The first was that human beings, while corrigible, tended toward pursuing their self interest and would thus reach only certain qualified levels of virtue. Second, capitalism, while progressive, was a fairly stable and ultimately middling historical form. There was in Smith, little vision about an impending idealistic horizon of a new mode of production and a new human being. Human nature and society, while corrigible, were not perfectible. Marx's first move beyond Smith, then, concerned an appropriation of a romantic teleology.

The second theoretical break with Smith was Marx's rejection of Smith's assumptions about self-regulating economic relations. Smith assumed that capitalism supplied enough liberty for individuals and firms that competitive relations would never allow one actor or class to dominate another. If this did occur, the government should step in and rectify the imbalances of power by restricting monopoly. Marx, in contrast to Smith, believed that by its very nature, every historical mode of production (including capitalism) was a setting not for equality of power in the market but the setting for relations of domination. Despite the theory and despite its earlier forms, capitalism naturally became a social formation of unequal power between the classes. And the state, far from rectifying this imbalance, actually contributed to it because the dominant class always gained control of the state. Capitalism was by nature exploitative in the sense that capital would always appropriate the surplus value produced by labor.

The third break with Smith concerned something quite technical. Smith, you will recall, enunciated the labor theory of value. But Smith rejected the notion that one could derive prices from the underlying value of labor embedded in goods and services. Marx, in his later work, went further than Smith and claimed that it was not only possible to document the qualitative fact that surplus was extracted from labor but to actually measure the quantitative extent of such exploitation. Such quantitative measurement would thus enable Marx to claim a scientific methodology whereby he was able to estimate the level of exploitation and to estimate mathematically the social processes whereby capitalism became immersed in crisis and increasingly unable to reproduce itself as a mode of production.

Now, in all this, Marx was never one to deny or ignore the role of consciousness either in embedding the relations of domination or in overcoming them. Hence, we find Marx thoroughly imbued with a dialectical consciousness in which contradictions in the
substructure also were played out at the level of superstructure as contradictions in consciousness, politics, religion, and philosophy.
Week 1

Question

What is the essence of Marx’s historical materialism as it emerges in his early writings? More specifically, what aspects of Hegel and Feuerbach’s theory and method did Marx incorporate and which aspects did he criticize and transcend.

Assigned Reading:

George Ritzer. Chapter on "Karl Marx."

Karl Marx: Selected Writings. David McLellan (Ed.)

Readings (by editor's number)
[page numbers are given where the entire reading is not assigned]
—page numbers in regular type are from first edition;
—page numbers in italics are from the second edition.]
1. 4. 26-27 32-33
7. 63-69 71-77
8.
9.
12. 134-144 148-161
13.
14. 159-185; 190-191 175-201; 207-208
16. 197-198 215
18.
30
Week 2

Question

Review the logic of Marx's later economic writings indicating how, in contrast to Smith, capitalism inherently embodies relations of domination, how these relations give rise to major social, economic and political contradictions, and how these contradictions generate both a crisis and an opportunity for transformation.

Assigned Reading:

*Karl Marx: Selected Writings.* David McLellan (Ed.)

Readings (by editor's number)

[page numbers are given where the entire reading is not assigned]
—page numbers in regular type are from first edition;
—*page numbers in italics are from the second edition.*]

30
  12. 131-133  145-top of 148
  31. 411-414  447-450
  29. 345-358; 360-365  379-top of 393; 395-399
  32. 415-443; 455-483; 488-492; 506-507  452-480; 492(bottom)-top 521
  33. 511-522  550-561
36.
38
Georg Simmel (1858-1918)  
*Culture, Social Interaction, and Personality*

Georg Simmel is one of the neglected resources in our sociological heritage. Undergraduate majors sometimes receive a smattering of Simmel, but advanced students often know Simmel only by name.

One reason for the relatively low interest in Simmel is that while both Weber and Durkheim knew of and referred to his work, they did so only sparingly and seem not to have been much influenced by Simmel.

For our part, Simmel should be approached as an innovative thinker who crosses the boundaries between sociology, history, and phenomenology. By means of the notion of exchange, Simmel bridges macro and micro analysis as well as providing a dynamic view of society in which issues of consensus and conflict no longer make sense. The issue is not that transformation is or is not taking place—for Simmel transformation is the very nature of society. More important for him is the substantive content or culture of a society.

It is beyond the scope of this course to enter into an analysis of Anthony Giddens’s notion of structure as borne by the emotional memory traces of individuals. Structure is not a thing with needs and society must not be understood as a structure in this sense. Society is written onto and carried by the emotional consciousness of individual agents just as grammar is carried by sentences. Although I have found no significant reference to Simmel in any of Giddens’s writings, I am becoming persuaded that Simmel’s careful philosophical understanding of individuals as bearers of society is an important precursor of Giddens’s understanding.

This last point is supported implicitly by Donald N. Levine’s argument that Georg Simmel can be read as one of the first social-psychologists attempting to link micro and macro issues in an organic manner. People and interactions do not exist in society. Rather, they are society (Levine, p. 27). The stream of life (society) does not flow through individuals; it flows as individuals (Levine, p. 362). In agreement with this assessment, I consider Simmel’s central argument to be that individuals do not simply live within society but are bearers of society.

The following quote from Simmel summarizes his view that the ever-present interdependence individual and society is situated in the very a priori nature of human

The empirical society becomes "possible" only through the apriori which culminates in the "vocation" concept, which apriori to be sure, like those previously discussed, cannot be characterized by a simple phrase, as in the case of the Kantian categories. The consciousness processes wherewith socialization takes place - unity composed of many, the reciprocal determination of the individuals, the reciprocal significance of the individual for the totality of the other individuals and of the totality for the individual - run their course under this precondition which is wholly a matter of principle, which is not recognized in the abstract, but expresses itself in the reality of practice: viz., that the individuality of the individual finds a position in the structure of the generality, and still more that this structure in a certain degree, in spite of the incalculability of the individuality, depends antecedently upon it and its function. The causal interdependence which weaves each social element into the being and doing of every other, and thus brings into existence the external network of society, is transformed into a teleological interdependence, so soon as it is considered from the side of its individual bearers, its producers, who feel themselves to be egos, and whose attitude grows out of the soil of the personality which is self-existing and self-determining. That a phenomenal wholeness of such character accommodates itself to the purpose of these individualities which approach it from without, so to speak, that it offers a station for their subjectively determined life-process, at which point the peculiarity of the same becomes a necessary member in the life of the whole - this, as a fundamental category, gives to the consciousness of the individual the form which distinguishes the individual as a social element!

Our reading is drawn largely from Levine’s edited volume on Simmel. The most important material that is underrepresented in that volume is from Simmel’s increasingly celebrated book, *The Philosophy of Money*. I will make a few sections of that book available to supplement the three selections from the book provided by Levine.
Question
Review Simmel’s logic of analysis, indicating several key ways by which he uncovers and explores the following statement:

There is no such thing as society “as such”; that is, there is no society in the sense that it is the condition for the emergence of all these particular phenomena. For there is no such thing as interaction “as such”—there are only specific kinds of interaction. And it is with their emergence that society too emerges, for they are neither the cause nor the consequence of society but are, themselves, society. [p. 27 of Levine Volume.]

Assigned Reading:


Georg Simmel On Individuality and Social Forms. Donald N. Levine (Ed.)
Donald N. Levine
Introduction
Readings (by editor's number)
[page numbers are given where the entire reading is not assigned]
2. p. 8 bottom -21 top
3.
4.
5.
6.
7. pp. 96-108
11. I, II, III, VI, VIII
12
18 pp. 251-259; 268-282
22
23


Pp. 210-214 235-251

Suggested Reading


Gary D. Jaworski. *Georg Simmel and the American Prospect*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1997. This new book reviews the contribution of Simmel to the thinking of the early American sociologists who took it as their goal to analyze their nation.
With Emile Durkheim we come to the second major voice of our sociological heritage, Marx, of course, being the first. Durkheim’s major works appeared from 1893 (*Division of Labor*) to 1912 (*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*). In between, he published *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) and *Suicide* (1897).

In 1887 Durkheim taught the first sociology course in a French university and from 1898-1913 he published the journal *L’Année sociologique* which served as the intellectual foundation for the growth of sociology in France and throughout the West.

Durkheim’s fundamental theoretical concern, as with Marx and Weber, was to analyze the new social order of modern capitalism. For Durkheim, this new order presented both new forms of social organization and new forms of normative consciousness. Thus again we find a focus on the organizational framework of capitalism and on new cultural consciousness—hence a focus on religion. In addition to analyzing the intersection of social organization and social consciousness, Durkheim also addresses the issue of socialization and social construction. Once again, let us transcend the tired bromides of conflict and consensus and materialist vs. idealist analysis. Look instead for Durkheim’s positive contribution to social-psychology—one that takes both elements of that latter term seriously.

Equally important as Durkheim’s substantive and theoretical contribution is the fact that Durkheim is a philosopher of social science. To the extent that he explicitly reflects on the philosophical presuppositions and methods of sociology he is the foremost descendant of August Comte and, along with Weber, an eminent progenitor of our current discipline, especially its contemporary concerns with epistemology and method.

We begin with a section on epistemology from Durkheim’s last important work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. In the introduction to that volume, Durkheim presents his neo-Kantian position that social life shapes not just our consciousness but the categories of our consciousness. In contrast to the utilitarian philosophy of J. S. Mill, Durkheim emphasizes the continued force of moral obligation (Kant). But in contrast to Hegelian idealism, Durkheim sided with the utilitarians in holding that moral
individualism, while not deriving from the notion of the individual (but from a new form of moral conscience collective) is congruent with notions of voluntary agency by free individuals. From there we turn to some readings from Durkheim’s *Rules of Sociological Method*. From there we move to readings from *Suicide*, *Division of Labor*, and *The Elementary Forms*, in that order.
In the Dustbin of Sociology?

Durkheim has been misread largely because he has gone unread. The greatest irony in regard to Durkheim, perhaps, is that Talcott Parsons’s attempt in *Social Theory and Social Structure* to introduce Durkheim to American sociology has resulted in Durkheim’s ideas being reduced to a series of conceptual paradigms (such as types of suicide, forms of solidarity, types of society, types of law, the notion of collective consciousness, and so forth) and methodological injunctions (explaining social facts by other social facts, distinguishing sociology from psychology, the normalcy of deviance, and structural-functional analysis). Textbook writers and classroom professors scoured Durkheim’s major writings for the passages that exemplified the foregoing disembodied topics, and assigned those texts to the next generation of sociologists. Without ever excavating the details of Durkheim’s writings and intellectual intent, these teachers criticized Durkheim for succumbing to what turns out to be a series of theoretical and methodological simplicities that Durkheim never proffered in the first place.

Such stubborn conventional reading of Durkheim has taken on many different representations. One, Durkheim is read most despairingly for the mortal sin of showing up as the primary classical case of being a proponent of “consensus” in that impotent dualistic segmentation of thinkers into vice-ridden consensus theorists and virtue-driven conflict theorists. Two, Durkheim is proclaimed to be an anti-Marxist, anti-materialist idealist who maintains that society must be understood primarily, if not exclusively, from the perspective of normative socialization. In this reading, social consciousness is seen to trump social organization; superstructure to over-determine substructure. There are no dialectics. But forgotten is Durkheim’s careful consideration of the organizational and institutional “structures” that mark the early era of industrial capitalism. Three, Durkheim is seen as an advocate of the status quo, capitalism, and all the other ailments of modernity. From the paradigm which views the classical sociological heritage as concerned with the “problem of order,” Durkheim is seen as the advocate and legitimizer of order over freedom. Forgotten or dismissed are his critical socialist aspirations and his advocacy of individual liberty. Four, Durkheim is a methodological objectivist and positivist whose influence on the gene pool of our sociological heritage has to be uncovered and eliminated. But who more than Durkheim highlights the field of emotion, will, desire, and culture? Five, Durkheim is castigated for being a “structural-functionalist.” Again, for some reason having to do with the subjugation of sociology to conventional thinking, this is seen as necessarily conservative rather than critical. Six, and most recently, Durkheim is chastised for being modernist by post-modernists, a structuralist by post-structuralists, and, in general, a misguided child of the Enlightenment. Ignored is Durkheim’s dialectical sensitivities in which he recognizes the ever-unfolding manner in which reality produces opposite and contradictory tendencies.
Emile Durkheim is less disconcerted than Marx about the existence of religious feelings and practice. But in his scientific dispassion, he deals a more devastating blow to the sense and sensibility of religion among mainstream social scientists. Durkheim readily refers to religion as a natural phenomenon, for it is humanly created and reasonably so at that. Searching for the origins of the religious life, Durkheim is not looking to defend or criticize the metaphysical etiology of religious ontology. On this score Durkheim remains agnostic. He would not be particularly disquieted to learn upon his death that religious life is an a-priori category of human consciousness because there is a God. What he does argue, in concert with his extrapolation of Kantian epistemology in the Introduction to The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, is that the social countenance of religion, in general, and its specific characteristics in each society, derive from and continue to be reinforced by social interaction. Whether “true” or not, religion and religious experience are inherently linked to and find expression in an effervescent experience of social cohesion. It is not by accident that the characteristics of God as external, enduring, coercive, and general are the same as the attributes that can be scientifically shown to be those of collective consciousness (culture) and society. It is not that the further step to metaphysics is necessarily wrong, it simply doesn’t matter to the sociologist. All the necessary analytic power needed for explaining whatever it is that educates us to mores, and sanctions our compliance and deviance can be found in the socializing dynamics of social cohesion. What Weber refers to as the requirement to produce explanations with sufficient subjective (motivational) and causal (behavioral) adequacy can in Durkheim’s view be provided without reference to a religious metaphysics. In a word, as Durkheim frequently repeats, the realm of sociology is a distinctive form of understanding in which social facts are explained by other social facts. Thus began the multiple-hat compartmentalization of knowledge that characterizes sociology to the present. There is no need to deny or advocate an ultimate footing for the religious life. Sociologists may, indeed, should bracket (as Giddens would say) such a question if they are to ascertain the distinctive knowledge that sociology has to offer. While for Hegel bracketing the expressive presence of God in the human formation of culture and civil society would invalidate any proffered explanations, for Durkheim it was the precondition of authentic scholarship.
Question for Week 1

Review the readings for Week 1, exploring how his epistemology (Introduction to the Elementary Forms) and his methods (The Rules) come into play in his social-psychological analysis of the linkage between the normative orientation of consciousness and the social organization of behavior (Suicide).

Last time I asked this question I was asked by one of the students to clarify the question for our week 1.

Clarification:

In the second section of the introduction to Elementary forms, Durkheim explains his position that the categories of consciousness are general to all people (e.g., space, time, causality, etc.), but the content of those categories (e.g., what is the arrangement of space, the meaning of time, etc.) are socially formed and vary by society. In the Rules, Durkheim suggests specific methods for studying the socially formed aspects of consciousness and behavior. He then applies those rules to the study of Suicide. In that study he does a sociological analysis, following his sociological methods, about how and why the rates of Suicide vary within and across different groups and societies. In doing so he explains how variation in social relations create variations in forms of consciousness that lead to variations in rates of suicide. The essay you write should trace these steps (or your cut on them) through the texts that are assigned. In other words, dig into the inner workings of Durkheim’s analysis by exploring how his writings are part of his relatively unified theory and method.

Hope this helps.

Question for Week 2

The Division of Labor and The Elementary Forms are usually read from the perspective of showing the difference between organic and mechanical solidarity. While this is fair enough, Durkheim is up to something more profound. In reviewing Durkheim’s logic of analysis, point out the ways in which both works are addressing the common problem of how a society is held together by emotion or morality (in the root sense of normative orientation). Watch throughout how Durkheim implicitly and sometimes explicitly rejects rational, utilitarian explanations of social cohesiveness and suggests how modern society as much as traditional society is regulated by forms of emotional solidarity (albeit new ones).
Assigned Reading for Week 1


*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life—Fields Translation*

Introduction

*The Rules of Sociological Method*

Introduction by Steven Lukes  
Durkheim’s Prefaces and Introduction  
Chapter I  
Chapter II  
Chapter III: Section II, 97, Section III, 97-104  
Chapter VI: Section II, 150-155  
Marxism and Sociology: The Materialist Conception of History  
The Contribution of Sociology to Psychology and Philosophy  
The Psychological Character of Social Facts and their Reality

*Suicide* [Note detailed table of contents at end of book.]

Durkheim’s Preface and Introduction  
Book One  
Chapter 3—review quickly  

Book Two  
Chapter 1  
Chapter 2  
Chapter 3, 171-180, 208-216  
Chapter 4, 217-228  
Chapter 5, 241-258, 273-276

Book Three  
Chapter 1, 321-325  
Chapter 3, 386-392
Assigned Reading for Week 2

*The Division of Labor In Society: A Study of the Organization of the Advanced Societies.*
Introduction by Lewis Coser

Book I
- Chapter I: 11-12
- Chapter II: 31-44, 60-64
- Chapter III
- Chapter V: 105-109
- Chapter VII: 149-154, 172-174

Book II
- pp. 196-207, 219-223
- ANOMIC DIV OF LABOR
- FORCED DIV OF LABOR

*The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Karen E. Fields, Trans.)
- Book 1
- Chapter 1
- Book 2
- Chapter 1
- Chapter 6
- Chapter 7
- Conclusion

Recommended Reading

Stjepan G. Mestrovic


Max Weber is the third major voice of the sociological heritage whom we will study. Like Durkheim, Weber can be located within the philosophical tradition of Immanuel Kant. For Kant the object of all science (social science and natural science) is phenomena which the researcher organizes into law-like causal explanations. Weber agrees that phenomena are the object of study of social science but these phenomena are of a particular type: meaningful actions. If Durkheim can be said to have advocated the study of social phenomena in the same way as natural phenomena, Weber, inspired also in part by German Idealism, argued that social science (sociology) was unlike natural science. Like natural science, sociology could systematically study the world. But the world to be studied—the world of meaningful actions (actions directed toward valued ends) could not be ordered into general laws.

According to Max Weber (1968, pp. 4-28) the goal of sociology is to obtain what he calls a causally and subjectively adequate explanation of human behavior. By this he means that sociologists can properly explain the trajectory of social life only by locating those variables that are socially potent enough to produce the chain of outcomes one wants to explain and emotionally potent enough to motivate actors to forge or move along the links in that causal chain. By their very nature, meaningful actions of human beings required a special methodology (ideal types and verstehen). Sociologists could come up with explanations of events but no universal laws of society or history are possible. Instead, cultural sciences and history are able to come up with meaningfully and causally adequate explanations of particular series of events.

Thus it is possible for Weber to construct a theory of the rise of capitalism in the West as a form of meaningful action, but he would not generalize from this explanation to general laws of history. While we may debate whether Durkheim was a positivist, Weber is explicitly not one. Referring to Raymond Aron’s (German Sociology, 1957) argument Don Martindale (The Nature and Types of Sociology Theory, 1960: p. 379) says that Weber’s “interpretive sociology treats the historical world not as a collection of objects but as a process of development of human lives.”
I speak of Weber designating three vocations of meaningful action within which sociologists as well all people act. The first is the vocation of politics in which action is oriented toward values revolving around the production and distribution of power. The second is the vocation of science in which action is oriented toward values revolving around the production and distribution of (knowledge) interpretation. The third is the vocation of economics in which action is oriented toward values revolving around the production and distribution of wealth. In fact, all of Weber’s sociological thinking can be viewed as setting out one or other type of value-oriented action (e.g., bureaucracy, forms of religion, etc.).

Weber on Religion

[Although, to my knowledge Max Weber argues that ascetic religious consciousness provides a subjectively adequate explanation for the rise of capitalism in Western Europe, he never addresses the methodological and theoretical issues surrounding the metaphysical authenticity of religious experience. It is enough for social scientists to subjectively understand (verstehen) such emotional dynamics and to analyze their social causes and consequences. Explaining how my position can provide explanations with even greater subjective and objective causal adequacy than Weber’s discerning treatment of religious faith, is one good test of the adequacy of my notions.]

{It provides more adequate understanding precisely because instead of bracketing or dismissing the connection to the divine, it excavates the experience of such connection and allows us to study how such a connection actually influences the transformative reproduction of daily life.}
Question for Week 1

Max Weber’s theory of social action maintains that the object of attention is socially motivated behavior. Explain how for Weber, social acts then form relationships, relationships form social organizations, and social organizations then form society. Given these conceptualizations, why are the notions of subjective and causal adequacy, ideal type, and verstehen required as methodological tools for analyzing society?

Question for Week 2

Max Weber is often viewed rightly as a major contributor to the sociology of religion. But in many ways with which I believe Weber would agree, his sociology of religion is really a theoretical and empirical contribution to understanding of social action, social organization, and society in general. As you examine his sociology of religion, indicate the various ways in which his analysis of religion contributes to understanding “non-religious” aspects of society such as politics, social movements, class relations, family, and institutional life.

Assigned Reading for Week 1


Max Weber, Economy and Society
Part I
Chapter I
Preface
Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 15, 16
Chapter II
Sections 1, 2, 11, 41
Chapter III
Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10,11
Chapter IV
Part Two, Chapter IX, Section 6

Part Two
Chapter II
Section 4
Chapter III
Sections 1, 2
Chapter V
Chapter XI
  Sections 1, 2, 6 (973-976), 7
Chapter XIV
  i. Sections 1-6
  ii. Sections 1-4
  iii. Section 1
Assigned Reading for Week 2

Max Weber, *Economy and Society*
Part Two
Chapter VI
i. Sections 1, 7
ii. Sections 1, 2
iii. Sections 1, 6
iv. Sections 1, 3
vi. Sections 4, 5
vii. Sections 1, 2, 8
viii. Sections 1-4
ix. Sections 1-4
x. Sections 1-3
xi. Section 1
xii. Sections 1-3
xv. Sections 1-5
Chapter XV
Sections 1, 2, 3, 12, 14


*page numbers in italics are those from the traditional Parsons translation*
Max Weber
Introduction
Chapters 1, 2 (13-27 Kalberg; 35-65 *Parsons*), 4 (53-80 Kalberg; 95-128 *Parsons*), 5

Suggested Reading


Section I
Harriet Martineau (1802-1876)
*Daily Life, Observation, Induction, and Gender*

Section J
Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)
The Individual, The State, and Civil Society

**Note**

I am providing the complete syllabus for both Tocqueville and Martineau. You may answer a question on one or both if you choose—or you can write your own question and hand in a paper in which you compare and contrast Tocqueville and Martineau.

There is far more reading here than you can possibly do—so pick and choose wisely. Happily, the readings are more straightforward than usual. But if you do a paper make sure, of course, to read all the relevant material for your subject.
Harriet Martineau is the most important of the most forgotten founders of contemporary sociology. As translator, she was instrumental in bringing August Comte’s *The Positive Philosophy* to the English speaking world in 1851. As an analyst, she wrote the three volumes of *Society in America* (1837) and the three volumes of *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838) based on her 1834-1836 travels in America; more discursive in content yet filled with insight these volumes are a good companion to Alexis de Tocqueville’s two-volume *Democracy in America* (1835). As a methodologist, she wrote an incisive and philosophically reflective treatise, *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838), which is the first systematic treatment of the methodology of sociological research. Note, once again, how the two topics of her analysis—morals and manners—continue the theme of analyzing the intersection of moral sentiment and institutional life of the contemporary political economy she studied. In addition, we find here the beginnings of her incorporation of scientific positivism (which she later writes about explicitly in her introduction to Comte’s *Positive Philosophy*). For her and many of her contemporaries, positivism was the radicalism of their day.

Gayle Graham Yates writes in *Harriet Martineau on Women* (Rutgers University Press, 1985) that “Harriet Martineau was the most astute female politician in England through almost four decades of the mid-nineteenth century. She did her work as a writer, an investigative traveler, correspondent, and an interpreter of a multitude of intellectual trends. In all the vast number of her works and interests she was ever conscious of being female. She knew that being a woman meant that she had to do whatever she did differently form a man. Early in 1832 she wrote a letter to Francis Place from her native Norwich, ‘I wish I were in London, . . . I want to be doing something with the pen, since no other means of action in politics are in a woman’s power.’” The readings that follow indicate that indeed she did do something quite insightful with the pen.

Because we are exploring together this “new” voice in our sociological heritage, I will rely on a couple of introductory essays and couple of autobiographical selections by Martineau for background information. One thing to note is that Martineau writes *Society in America* from a slightly more metaphysical viewpoint (one she later modifies on the road to becoming a positivist and Deist) than she did her subsequent three-volume travelogue, *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838). Still the former volumes remain remarkably instructive (1) not only about Martineau’s thought but about institutional life in 19th century America and (2) not only as historical treatises but also as an earlier
model of value-laden sociological analysis. Note also that in contrast to our “scholarly” writing standards today, Martineau’s works are exceptionally colloquial. In many ways her substantive writings are extended field notes sprinkled with analytical insights and theoretical generalizations. The question below asks how we might accumulate her insights and generalizations into a more explicit theoretical understanding.
Question

There are many theoretical traditions in sociology to which Harriet Martineau may be connected, but little has been done to do make those connections. It is clear that she became knowledgeable about and a practitioner of the evolutionary perspective of Comte and others, namely that rational explanation was to replace metaphysical explanation of the empirical world. In *How to Observe Morals and Manners* Martineau sets out some methodological principles for the scientific study of society. Less clear throughout her writings is an explicit theoretical argument about the nature of society, social relations, social consciousness, socialization, social construction, social change, agency, structure, etc.—in general and specifically in the U.S. See what you can do to surface explicitly Martineau’s implicit general social theory and her specific theory of how and why ante-bellum U.S. society carries out its transformative reproduction.

Assigned Reading

There is quite a bit of reading. As you will see, much of it can be read quite quickly or skimmed. The major pieces to read are from *How to Observe Morals and Manners* and *Society in America*.


  “Preface”
  “Chronology”
  “Introduction”
  “Self-Estimate” from Yates 29-49
  --”Private: A Writer’s Resolutions” 33-35
  --”An Autobiographic Memoir” 35-49

  Michael R. Hill
  Preface and Introduction
  Harriet Martineau
  Part I
  Part II
  Chapter I
  Chapter II
  sections 1,2,3,4,6,10,11

Volume I
- Introduction
- Chapter III

Volume II
- Chapter V

Volume III
- Chapter II

Part IV


Volume I
- “Preface”, “First Sight of Slavery”

Volume II
- “Restless Slaves”

Volume III
- “Originals”

**Suggested Reading**


In addition to this piece, Hill’s introduction to How to Observe Morals and Manners cites a number of other references on Martineau as well as lists her major writings.
Alexis de Tocqueville is an increasingly important analyst of American society and indeed of modern industrial society in general. While not explicitly a sociologist, his two-volume *Democracy in America* (1835) merits serious attention for three reasons. First, it is an incisive analysis of the underlying cultural and social currents of American life—currents that continue to shape the American character despite wave after wave of immigration. Second, Tocqueville’s work is important because it provides the earliest contribution to the theory of mediating groups, voluntary associations, and civil society. Tocqueville both recognizes the importance and develops a theory of the forms of voluntary association by which Americans band together to overcome individualism (atomism) on the one hand and totalitarianism (mass society) on the other. That is, he explores the aspects of civil society that in addition to the state and the economy determine the lives of citizens and empower citizens to shape their lives. Finally, similar to Harriet Martineau, Tocqueville offers an incisive analysis of the problems and prospects of America’s political and cultural contradiction between the ideals of equality and liberty, on the one hand, and the reality of treatment of “Negroes,” “Aboriginal” Indians, and women, on the other.

Accordingly, Tocqueville’s writing provides the basis for much contemporary exploration of the role of what is variously called the third sector, the nonprofit sector, or non-governmental organizations. He speaks of the tension (that continues today) in American society between equality and quality, the role of self-interest properly understood, and the general contribution to democracy of social movements and social groupings based in civil society outside of the commercial and political realms. Tocqueville’s *Democracy* is, in the end, treatise on political sociology, cultural analysis, the American character, voluntary associations, social movements, and the sociology of religion.

I offer a chapter on Tocqueville’s writings by French philosopher and sociologist Raymond Aron. All the primary readings are from *Democracy in America*, although you should be aware too of Tocqueville’s brilliant analysis of the forces inducing the French revolution, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. 
I am also providing some readings that may help locate the contextual importance of Tocqueville’s work. The first is an excerpt from Robert Michels’s *Political Parties* first published in 1911. This excerpt includes Michels’s famous *iron law of oligarchy*, namely that “Who says organization, says oligarchy.” You will note that Michels’s context for this argument is slightly different from Weber’s iron cage of growing rationalization. For Michels the degradation of attentiveness to democratic principles and procedures is a function of the internal dynamics of organizational evolution rather than of contemporary rationalization. The second context-setting reading is from William Kornhauser’s 1959 classic, *The Politics of Mass Society*. The short section from the conclusion sets out the

basic problematic of mass society and suggests the importance of voluntary intermediate organizations as the basis for countervailing the tendency for democracy to move toward the coexistence of autonomous individualism and the politics of mass society. Finally, the 1956 work of Lipset, Trow, and Coleman, *Union Democracy*, sets out the issues of oligarchy, mass society, and the democratic impetus of intermediate groups in a study of the democratic dynamics of the International Typographical Union.

**Question**

In reviewing the major lines of Tocqueville’s analysis, elaborate the main lines of his social-psychology. That is, indicate Tocqueville’s often implicit but sometimes explicit explanation of how American organizational forms shape American cultural consciousness and emotional dispositions—and visa-versa. In other words, what is the dialectic by which organizational life of American institutions “educates” the inner emotion of personal social relations, and the inner emotion of personal social relations “educate” organizational life of American institutions. Be explicit in locating what Tocqueville considers to be the distinctive aspects of the American historical, cultural, and geographic heritage that led to its distinctive normative orientations and organizational forms that he calls democracy in America.

or

In reviewing the major lines of Tocqueville’s analysis, elaborate the main lines of his sociology of knowledge. That is, how in his view did the demographic and historical realities of America, including land and absence of aristocracy lead to distinctively American associational forms; which, in turn, led to mores that led to laws that led to enforcements and social patterns which, finally, led to American democracy.
Assigned Reading

--read especially pp. 237-262 and chronology

**See good summary article on Tocqueville in Voluntas vol 9 no 4, December 1998**

Robert Michels. Excerpts from *Political Parties* (1911).


Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Volume I
Author’s Introduction
Part I
Chapters
3
4
5 (sections 8, 12)
8 (sections 2, 21)

Part II
Chapters
1
4
5 (sections 2, 8, 14)
6 (sections 2, 4)
7 (sections 2, 4, 6)
9 (sections 4, 5, 6, 7)
10 (section 2)

Conclusion

Volume II
Author’s Preface
Part I
Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 7
Part II
Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20
Part III
  Chapters 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 19, 22
Part IV
  Chapters 1, 2, 6, 8
Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Dialectics of the Psyche, Culture, and the Methodology of Social Science

The following introductory statement, Question 1, Recommended Reading, and suggestions for assigned reading were graciously prepared at my request by Ross Glover.

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, has probably been one of the most controversial thinkers of the twentieth century, and his ideas have seeped (maybe unconsciously) into each of our psychic lives. Actually, the case could be made that Freud created psychic life to begin with, and while we will be reading primarily Freud’s attempts at understanding society, his analysis is always first and foremost a psychological analysis. However, through his psychoanalytic explorations, Freud realized that in “the individual’s mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent; and so from the very first individual psychology...is at the same time social psychology as well.” (1959, p. 3) The social (for our Phallic Father) tends to remain more implicit than explicit, but nevertheless, he recognized that our existence must always be relational.

Freud’s most astounding theoretical move was to suggest that the child has an erotic life. He supposes that our first relational acts are sensuous (suckling the mother’s breast) and these sensuous experiences then translate into various ways of our being in the world. We develop psychically through our relation to the body. The child has certain “erotogenic” zones which connect him/her to the cessation of pain or creation of pleasure, and this pleasure/pain dynamic becomes immanent to our psychic development, culminating in the theoretically unstable but certainly provocative “Oedipal complex.” The Oedipal complex suggests that the pubescent male child seeks to have what the father has (the mother), but due to fear of castration must repress his desire. This concept implies much of Freud’s work with social organization in the sense that we all have certain libidinal energies which are always driving us, and yet in some way those energies must be curtailed; this is the function of society. According to Freud, the super-ego (one part of the psychic trinity: id, ego, super-ego) represents the formation of conscience, a mechanism to control our desire. The id is the primal aspect of ourselves, our drives (mistakenly translated as instinct), and ego suggests that psychic apparatus engaged with the world which functions as a mediator between the id and the super-ego. Individuals as well as society must tenuously waver between pleasure and pain, Eros (life) and Thanatos (death), reality and fantasy.

It seems to me that Freud’s greatest contribution may be a methodological one. In creating psychoanalysis, the two most important tools Freud utilized were his ears. He listened for hours upon hours of people (primarily women) talk about their existence.
Patients in the psychoanalytic setting were asked to simply speak (free association) anything and everything in their minds (uncensored and often uninterrupted), and the analyst listened. Through this method, Freud began to hear similarities, to make connections, to comprehend the ways in which we repeat ourselves both discursively and in lived ways, and to recognize that discourse often masks appearances. I would suggest that much of interpretive sociological analysis based on the interview has its roots, at least to some degree, in psychoanalysis.

Finally, not to address feminist critiques of Freud would be irresponsible. Undoubtedly, Freud leaves himself wide open for feminist criticism with the concept of “penis envy” or phrases like “anatomy is destiny;” however, even though he probably was a phallocrat, he not only gave a sexuality to children, but he also did so for women. Coming out of the Victorian era, the concept of women having sexual desires certainly fueled a truth that impacted society on many levels. In addition, his psychoanalytic descendants and those who broke from him during his life have managed to retheorize the subject so that female subjectivity no longer remains locked in the position of subservience. In fact, many feminist theorists use psychoanalysis as a tool for both understanding and resistance. Such thinkers include: Karen Horney, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Jane Flax, Jane Gallop, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Toril Moi... This far from exhaustive list suggests that even though Freud may not have been the most profound of feminist thinkers, his theoretical base has been often appropriated to the service of feminist analysis, especially so through the rereadings of Freud by Jacques Lacan. It should also be noted that Freud did not find his theories of women completely satisfying. In a frustrated confusion with one of his clients he asked possibly his most profound question (a question heterosexual males and lesbians alike (I imagine) continue to grapple with), “What do women want?”

**Question 1**
Freud’s proclivity for reading subjectivity and psychic life as both historically and socially determined creates a sense of the world in which agency becomes somewhat illusive. Often the Freudian subject seems more a determination of the forces of time and relation than a participant or actor in that construction, and yet Freud’s entire project revolves around being able to “cure” those subjectivities through their coming to understand their own discourse. Given this, how can agency be understood as acting within Freud’s social schematic, or are we simply doomed to be continually (re)made, repressed, and controlled by our environment?

or

**Question 2**
All the theorists studied thus far would be comfortable with, if not insistent upon, the fact that individual consciousness derives at least in substantial part from collective ideas, sentiments, and behaviors. In this way, we find the “social” as the constant general force and the “personal” as a variable particular. Freud is the first to forcefully push the
reverse proposition. Collective ideas, sentiments, and behaviors derive at least in substantial part from psychodynamics. That is, we find the “personal” as a constant general determinant and the “social” as a variable particular. Explicate and evaluate (or reframe) this Freudian reversal of dependent and independent variables in social theory.
Required Reading


- Introduction and Chronology
  - Civilization and Its Discontents: 722, 728-763
  - The Interpretation of Dreams: 129-140
  - On Dreams: 165-172
  - Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: 239, 259-293
  - Character and Anal Eroticism: 293-297
  - Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning: 301-306
  - Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices: 429-436
  - Totem and Taboo: 481-495, 505-509
  - Beyond the Pleasure Principle 594-601

- Chapters I, II, V, VII, VIII, IX, X

- The Ego and the ID: 628-650
- Future of an Illusion 685-703

Recommended Readings


