

of reality, because social phenomena cannot be isolated from the societal totality; therefore (2) sociological theory construction has to start from a prescientific experience of society, and the relation between theory and experience cannot be reduced to a controlled and reproducible ex-post check of hypotheses; (3) social theory has to describe "historical laws of movement" (*historische Bewegungsgesetze*); and (4) social theory has as its very reason to contribute to the emancipation of society and the acting individual.

The protagonists of critical rationalism counterargue that (1) the notion "societal totality" is an empty concept as long as it is not clear how the social phenomena can be structured and checked through hypothesis testing. An a priori understanding may be a false theory, which again has to be checked and criticized; (2) experience is at best a critical instance but nothing that can be a basis of cognition; (3) it is impossible to predict the development of history, as this depends on our knowledge, and it is logically impossible to forecast the future of knowledge (cf. Popper's critique of "historicism"); (4) to change the whole society is an impossible exercise in holistic planning and has for that reason to be refuted; and finally (5) the ideal of *Wertfreiheit* (value freedom) does not mean the negligence of interests and values in the research process but the recognition of "objective truth" as the leading value (Klima 1995:506–507).

Since the 1970s and 1980s, both positivism and the Frankfurt school increasingly came under attack from different sides: from philosophy (Ludwig J. J. Wittgenstein, Paul Feyerabend), from French postmodernists (Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, François Lyotard), and from feminists (Sandra Harding; for more details see Halfpenny and McMyler 1994).

What remains of the positivist dispute today? There is no doubt that today's mainstream social sciences are still dominated by different variants of neopositivism, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. Their utilitarian, pragmatic orientation, the dominance of the natural sciences—which in English reserve only for themselves the title of science; the other disciplines are just arts and/or humanities—make it difficult to realize a critical theory of society. Not that this is a new situation. Even in Germany, where philosophical approaches to sociology are more common, the Frankfurt school has always been in the minority because of their anti- and postpositivist approaches.

Nevertheless, both positions have a similar aim: to contribute to the goals of the Enlightenment—though with different means and paradigms. Since the 1970s, Claus Offe has tried to overcome the fundamental differences between these two schools of thought through a compromise. However, it is only very recently that this seems like a possibility due to Bent Flyvbjerg's rediscovery of the Aristotelian principle of *phronesis*, that is, the search for a "good society." *Phronesis* is placed between *episteme*, the basis for the arts and humanities, and *techné*, the basis for

natural sciences and technologies. *Phronesis* has its own logic and methodology, which overcomes the now outdated dichotomy, and by this it also aims to overcome the problems central to the positivist dispute.

— György Széll

See also Frankfurt School; Luhmann, Niklas; Marxism; Paradigm; Positivism; Postmodernism

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POSTCOLONIALISM

There is no agreed-upon definition of postcolonialism, as it is a highly complex and contested arena of thought and

practice. Postcolonial discourse constitutes a transdisciplinary arena of critical discourse that is most generally associated with developing theories and activism related to globalization and the politics of representation (race, class, gender/sexuality, ethnicity, nationalisms, religion) as well as to economic, political, social, and psychic dimensions of colonization, neocolonialism, recolonization, and postcolonial conditions. Furthermore, it includes the advancement of liberatory and resistant politics that support decolonization and engages subaltern experience, which involves the perspectives of dominated, marginalized, oppressed, and subordinated peoples.

Many scholars argue that the development of postcolonial culture must be understood within the historical and imperialist context of the European colonialism of the so-called third world or, as many postcolonial theorists describe it, the "tricontinental" (i.e., the southern continents of Latin America, Africa, and Asia), that began over 500 years ago. This violent history of colonization involved massive appropriation of land and territories, slavery, institutionalized racism, enforced migration, murder, torture, genocide, obliteration of cultures, and the imposition of Eurocentric, ideological sociopolitical, economic, and cultural values of the colonizers. This process escalated during the imperialist expansion of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. And although political, cultural, and economic reforms characterized many of the former colonies, which gained independence after the Second World War, one of the most deleterious effects of the multi-levelled process of colonization has been the development and implementation of a global supercapitalist economic system that is primarily controlled by the West and ultimately mediates all global relations.

Given this context, it is hardly surprising that much of colonial and postcolonial critique emerges before, during, and after the numerous struggles for liberation and decolonization in the twentieth century and employs a critical Marxian perspective, which translates from and transforms classical Western Marxist analysis. Hence, much postcolonialist critique involves the advancement of Marxian analysis that is developed from the perspective and position of the colonized and is situated within the complexities of relations that define the postcolonial experiences and realities. There is a strong focus on the kinds of cultural politics associated with the ideas and practice of cultural revolutions within primarily the tricontinents, which espoused resistance and devised strategies to combat ideological forces of colonialism and neocolonialism. Thus, one of its distinctions from orthodox, European Marxism is identified, by many postcolonial scholars, as "combining critique of objective material conditions with detailed analysis of their subjective effects" (Young 2001:5).

However, some critics argue that an overemphasis on the subjective dimensions of colonization and decolonization

in postcolonial discourse is given primacy over the material and concrete conditions, such as class. Yet it is this concern with the dialectics of the relations between the "self" and "other" and the "subjective with the objective" that distinguishes anticolonialist writings and postcolonial critique from more one-dimensional theories of oppression. Indeed, a central feature of anticolonial and postcolonial thought is the recognition that colonization is a sophisticated and multi-levelled ideological process, which operates both externally and internally. In reality, colonization is not restricted to physical deprivation, legal inequality, economic exploitation, and classist, racist, and sexist unofficial or official assumptions.

In fact, there is a psychopathological dimension of colonization that was described by Frantz Fanon (1967) as "psychic alienation." Fanon, a psychoanalyst and revolutionary anticolonial scholar from Martinique, worked in colonial Algeria and later joined the Front de Liberation National. He employed the Hegelian "master/slave dialectic" that depicts the contradictory relationship between the dominator and dominated, in which the master needs to be recognized by the slave as the master and hence convince the slave of her or his inherent inferiority and "otherness"—to depict the relationship between colonizer and colonized. It is in this sense that the colonized become their own oppressor, in that they exert the colonizers' imaginary suppositions of inferiority upon their own self-esteem. In this sense, it involves the objectification and dehumanization of the colonized.

Moreover, Fanon and, later, Paulo Freire (1972), argued that the colonizer, through the use of "tokens," or the aid of "collaborators," what postcolonial scholar Homi Bhaba (1994) describes as "mimic men" or women, ensures that the colonized remain in a "false" or "imaginary" consciousness. They not only reinforce the master's ideological values but often occupy a place of honor and power within the colonizers' regime. Hence, it is only through critical consciousness, what Brazilian educator and anticolonial pedagogue Paulo Freire called *conscientizacao*, that psychic and material decolonization can begin to take place. Therefore, anticolonial and postcolonial scholars are especially concerned with both the theoretical and practical dimensions of dialectics as an empowering process of decolonization in which the "colonized Self" can be liberated from the "tyrannical Other" and hence achieve liberation as well as "authentic individuality." It is important to note, as Edward Said (in Eagleton, Jameson, and Said 1990) reminds us, that this transformation of social consciousness must transcend and go beyond national consciousness, which often retains or develops colonized dimensions.

The topic of imperialisms' effects on both colonization and anticolonial resistance is a significant dimension of postcolonial analyses and critique of the kinds of master narratives that mediate sociopolitical, economic, and cultural relations, as well as help construct and transform

the politics of representation. Much of this postcolonial work is associated with arenas of literary criticism and, to a lesser extent, deconstruction theory with its emphasis on nonessentialism and the arbitrary, rather than the fixed, nature of language. Many postcolonial critics are deconstructing normalized assumptions about the nature of language and texts by critiquing the cultural imperialism that underlies this discourse as well as resisting and reappropriating imperial literature and ideological frameworks. Hence, they criticize the kinds of master narratives that characterize dominant white, Christian, Western, patriarchal, heterosexual thought and discourse (sometimes described as "the canon") that are produced and reinforced by both the dominant and the collaborator.

Moreover, anticolonialist and postcolonial critics are especially concerned with the provocation, authentication, and celebration of the "voice" of the "Other." Such narratives capture the multiplicities of differences and diversities of the subaltern, who have been silenced for too long under colonialist and neocolonialist constraints and practices. These discourses resituate colonized people within the location of the center, rather than the margins of the local and global world. Such postcolonial works have been especially evident within feminist domains, in particular in the criticisms and writings of women of color, who, in part, challenge the notion of the essentialization of women as a universal category. Indeed, critical feminists like Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty (1997) and bell hooks (1994) point out that the identities of marginalized women and/or othered peoples are constructed by the dominant ideology. Much of this kind of postcolonial critique has been expressed in terms of "a third space" or "borderland" epistemologies or standpoints that recognize and highlight the experiences and practices of sexism, racism, classicism, and homophobia within the context of cultural, historical, geographic, national, political, economic, and social differences at both local and global levels. Hence, the dialectics of divergent and shared experiences frames the resistant and global coalition politics of many postcolonial critics. Postcolonial research and activist work seek thus to resist and transform the legacies and realities of colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial conditions.

— Rhonda Hammer

See also Cultural Marxism and British Cultural Studies; Feminism; Political Economy

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POST-MARXISM

If Marxism is what comes after Marx, post-Marxism is what comes after Marxism as a theory and practice in its organized and relatively disciplined form characteristic of the twentieth century. Post-Marxism can be seen as an *ex post facto* category referring to developments in and after Marxism with the 1980s crisis of Marxism, the collapse of Eurocommunism, and the collapse of the Soviet empire. Post-Marxism is highly varied and contradictory in nature; it corresponds with the postmodern sense that anything goes, in theory, that any theory goes with any other theory. At the same time, post-Marxism can be more Marxist than the Marxists. The idea of post-Marxism has a complicated semantic relationship with the idea of the postmodern. Just as postmodern theory can place the emphasis on either of the two terms against the other—some postmoderns have a stronger sense of being post, or after, others of remaining in reviving modernity or modernism—so with post-Marxism. Some views in this field are more vehemently post, or after Marx or Marxism; others revive Marx or Marxism as a universal theory of the modern.

The historical semantics involved are also suggestive. In the first place, the idea of post-Marx is either truistic or ironic: We are, of course, after Marx; even the Marxists are after Marx. The "post" refers to the sense that something significant has changed since Marx; yet post-Marxism also seems often to involve a Marxist orthodoxy of a kind less frequently encountered since the 1930s or 1960s. The idea of post-Marxism therefore logically follows that of the postmodern, but with these further refractions, that Marxism (or Marx's theory) is thought to be the fundamental critique of modernity. If Marx is the great modern or modernist, and we are now after modernism, then we are also after Marx, so we must all be post-Marxist. More specifically, if, as in the Soviet experience, Marx and Marxism are identified with a particular, failed, alternative path to modernity, then for the peoples of the old Soviet empire we are definitionally post-Marxist, because postcommunist. In addition,

of post-Marxism are scattered around places like western Massachusetts and North Carolina. A leading journal here is *Rethinking Marx*, sometimes abbreviated as *Remarx*. A leading book is *The End of Capitalism as We Knew It* (1996) by Catherine Gibson-Graham. The most influential Marxist intellectual writing on culture today, Fredric Jameson, is equally a candidate for the prize of post-Marxism, though his trajectory is more consistently aligned to the melancholic element of critical theory than to French Marxism. Perhaps the most exemplary case of post-Marxism in the mixed sense is Žižek. Žižek's mix of bolshevism and psychoanalysis is wilfully provocative and iconoclastic. Combining a strong sense of humour, sparkling prose, and vernacular example from film and television, Žižek manages nevertheless to remain a bolshevik comic in a decisively postbolshevik world. In his essay in *Revolution at the Gates* (2002), as in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, Lenin is reconstructed as a nice guy who stumbled into bolshevism, but whose practice remains exemplary. Žižek postmodernizes Marxism by putting Lenin into cyberspace. Where Lenin in 1917 called for socialism = electrification and Soviets, Žižek calls for socialism as free access to the Internet and Soviets.

The irony of post-Marxism abounds. As with the post-modern, Marxists cannot be after themselves. The awkwardness of the category reflects the long and ambivalent relationship between Marxism and intellectual revisionism. An ever-changing world needs a changing theory. Marxism has to be open to revision; this is what compelled Western Marxists like Lukács and Korsch to insist that Marxism was a method, not a set of axioms, and which led Gramsci not to talk about Marxism but to do it by applying it to the local, Italian situation. In terms of social theory, the controversy over post-Marxism or revision indicates the fundamental nature of the Marxist claim to universal or total knowledge. Through its twentieth-century history as a social theory, Marxists have sought out supplements to strengthen Marx's work or to make it comprehensive—or to cover its lack—Darwin, Hegel, Freud. In sociology they have added Weber, in philosophy analytic or rational choice categories; for Althusser, Freud and structuralism, for Žižek, Lacan. Viewed from a distance, this theoretical will-to-synthesise in order to strengthen Marxism looks like an attempt to save Marxist theory against the world. In the long run, post-Marxism will surely be known as Marxism. An alternative approach, more often adopted by Marxist historians like Eric Hobsbawm or Bernard Smith, is to wear Marxism as a light cloak, to seek to apply it historically and comparatively. A more generalised cultural approach would be to acknowledge that Marxism emerged from European modernity and allow it to return there, to cease to be Marxist, truly to be after Marx.

— Peter Beilharz

See also Marxism; Revolution; Structuralist Marxism

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POSTMODERNISM

The current historical moment goes by a variety of names, including postmodern, postnational, global, transnational, postindustrial, late capitalist, and the society of the spectacle. The ingredients of postmodernism and the postmodern self are given in three key cultural identities, those derived from the performances that define gender, social class, race and ethnicity. The patriarchal, and all too often racist, contemporary cultures of the world ideologically code the self and its meanings in terms of the meanings brought to these three cultural identities. The postmodern self has become a sign of itself, a double dramaturgical reflection anchored in media representations, on one side, and everyday life, on the other. All too often this self is reduced to its essential markers, which carry the traces of these three terms.

The postmodern terrain is defined almost exclusively in visual terms, including the display, the icon, the representations of the real seen through the camera's eyes, captured on videotape, and given in the moving picture. The search for the meaning of the postmodern moment is a study in looking. It can be no other way. This is a televisual, cinematic age.

Classical sociological ways of representing and writing about society require radical transformation. If sociology and the other human disciplines are to remain in touch with the worlds of lived experience in this new century, then new ways of inscribing and reading the social must be found (Lemert 1997; Lyon 1999).

DEFINING AND WRITING THE POSTMODERN

The postmodern as postmodernism is four things at the same time. First, it describes a sequence of historical

moments from World War II to the present. These moments include the Vietnam War, the two Gulf Wars, the worldwide economic recessions of the 1970s and 1980s, the rise to power of conservative or neoliberal political regimes in Europe and America, the failure of the Left to mount an effective attack against these regimes, the collapse in the international labor movement, the emergence of a new, conservative politics of health and morality centering on sexuality and the family, totalitarian regimes in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and South Africa, the breakdown of the Cold War and the emergence of glasnost, and increased worldwide racism.

Second, the postmodern references the multinational forms of late capitalism that have introduced new cultural logics and new forms of communication and representation into the world economic and cultural systems. Third, it describes a movement in the visual arts, architecture, cinema, popular music, and social theory that goes against the grain of classic realist and modernist formations. Fourth, it references a form of theorizing and writing about the social that is antifoundational, postpositivist, interpretive, and critical.

Postmodern theorizing is preoccupied with the visual society, its representations, cultural logics, and the new types of personal troubles (AIDS, homelessness, drug addiction, family and public violence) and public problems that define the current age. At the most abstract level, the cultural logics of late capitalism define the postmodern moment (Jameson 1991).

But postmodernism is more than a series of economic formations. The postmodern society is a cinematic, dramaturgical production. Film and television have transformed American, and perhaps all other societies touched by the camera, into video, visual cultures. Representations of the real have become stand-ins for actual, lived experience. Three implications follow from the dramaturgical view of contemporary life.

First, reality is a staged, social production. Second, the real is now judged against its staged, cinematic-video counterpart. Third, the metaphor of the dramaturgical society or "life as theater" has now become interactional reality. The theatrical aspects of the dramaturgical metaphor have not "only crept into everyday life" (Goffman 1959:254), they have taken it over. Art not only mirrors life, it structures and reproduces it. The postmodern society is a dramaturgical society.

Accordingly, the postmodern scene is a series of cultural formations that impinge upon, shape, and define contemporary human group life. These formations are anchored in a series of institutional sites, including the mass media, the economy and the polity, the academy, and popular culture itself. In these sites, interacting individuals come in contact with postmodernism, which, like the air we breathe, is everywhere around us: in the omnipresent camera whenever

lives and money exchange hands, in the sprawling urban shopping malls, in the evening televised news, in soap operas and situation comedies, in the doctor's office and the police station, at the computer terminal.

The cultural formations of postmodernism do not have a direct, unmediated effect on the worlds of lived experience. The meanings of postmodernism are mediated and filtered through existing systems of interpretation. These meanings may be incorporated into a group's ongoing flow of experience and become part of their collective vocabulary and memory (i.e., the New York postmodern art scene during the 1970s and 1980s). Here the postmodern supports and strengthens a group's scheme of life. On the other hand, the multiple, conflicting cultural meanings of postmodernism may be judged to have no relevance to what the members of a group do, and hence be rejected (i.e., the rejection of postmodernism by mainstream American sociologists). Still other groups may incorporate portions of the postmodern and reject its other features (i.e., the cultural conservatives who value nostalgia). In this case, the postmodern will have a disjunctive effect, settling into one part of a group's way of life, without incorporation into its overall interpretive scheme. For still other groups, postmodernism may disrupt a way of life and even undermine it, as when postmodernists in the academy challenge the traditional literary canons of Western civilization and propose radical new reading lists that express the positions of racial, ethnic, and gender minorities.

In writing about this historical moment, the sociologist understands that there is no privileged position of absolute spectator, for how can the postmodern self write about itself when the very postmodern stuff it is made of conditions what it says, sees, feels, and hears? Of course, any hint of objectivity predicated on the privileged position of the absolute spectator must be relinquished. As an observer of the postmodern scene, I must recognize that I am grafted into every action and situation I write about. My point of contact with the contemporary postmodern world is the origin of my insights into this world.

THE TERM *POSTMODERN*

The term *postmodern* is a paradoxical oxymoron with a short history. How can something be post, or after the modern, when the modern represents the present, or recent moment (Hassan 1985:121). What comes after the present but another present, or period in history, which is a continuation of the present? It is a paradoxical oxymoron because it comes at the end of a series of other "post-isms," most important, poststructuralism, that amorphous theoretical formation that has theorized language, meaning, and textuality after the semiotic-structural revolution inspired by Saussure (1959). In a sense, postmodernism should have come first, for it describes the very conditions of experience these

earlier isms responded to. Predictably, as postmodernism emerges as a distinct theoretical formation, it comes under attack from the very perspectives it seeks to surround and make sense of.

Users of the word are attempting to describe fields of political, cultural, aesthetic, scientific, and moral experiences that are distinctly different from those that were taken for granted in an earlier historical, commonly called modern or Enlightenment, phase of world history. It is not possible to give a precise date to the beginning of the postmodern period, as Virginia Woolf did for modernism, which she said began "in or about December, 1910" (Hassan 1985:122), although we may with, Hassan (p. 122), "woefully imagine that postmodernism began 'in or about September, 1939.'"

For present purposes, postmodernism will be defined as the cultural logic of late capitalism (see Jameson 1991). I intend the following meanings with this phrase. First, I reference the self-reflective working through of a multitude of contradictory meanings and understandings concerning human experience and its aesthetic, sociological, media, and textual representations in the current historical moment. This is commonly called intertextuality. Second, I ask, after Mills (1959), "[W]hat varieties of men, women [and children] now prevail in this . . . period" (p. 7), what personal troubles and public issues define this epoch, and how are these troubles and lived experiences represented in the cultural texts that cultural experts like sociologists, anthropologists, journalists, politicians, philosophers, and artists write?

Third, by cultural logic, I designate the logics of use, utility, exchange, and status or prestige value (Baudrillard 1981:66), which surround the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural commodities in the present moment, including human experience. That is, how are cultural objects transformed into instruments, commodities, symbols, and signs that circulate in fields of productive and conspicuous consumption (Baudrillard 1981:125–26)? A political economy of signs, unique to late capitalism, now mediates the worlds of cultural objects and lived experience. A double ideology of prestige and work ethic invades the signs that surround the objects that are consumed in this culture (Baudrillard 1981:32–3). This ideology is stitched into the linguistic fabrics of everyday life. More deeply, this ideology is now communicated via the print and electronic media in a way that transcends pure production and consumption. The new cold universe of the TV screen becomes a site where, as one skips from channel to channel, multiple texts split and fracture the self and its images. A near obscene, ecstasy of communication, which has eliminated all boundaries between the public and private self, is experienced. The viewer quietly sits with a channel switcher in hand, moving from one world to another, controlling a universe of experiences emanating from the cold screen that just sits and stares (gazes) back.

Fourth, by late capitalism is meant contemporary multinational, state-sponsored capitalist activities that cross-cut political regimes and national boundaries. Late capitalism corresponds to Baudrillard's (1983:25–6, 83) fourth historical order, the hyperreal, or the fourth order of the simulacrum (the previous three historical orders being pre-Renaissance, Renaissance, and the Industrial Age, and the previous regimes of representation being the orders of: sign = reality (pre-Renaissance), the counterfeit (Renaissance), and the simulation (Industrial Revolution).

This extended definition views postmodernism as a worldview, or unique set of structured experiences, shaped by late capitalism and given expression in new artistic, representational, and theoretical practices. Postmodernism may not be what we want it to be, but it is, as Jameson (1991:56) and Lemert (1997:xiii) argue, a condition that is no longer an option.

— Norman K. Denzin

See also Baudrillard, Jean; Deleuze, Gilles; Fordism and Post-Fordism; Jameson, Frederic; Modernity; Postmodernist Feminism; Simulation; Virilio, Paul

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POSTMODERNIST FEMINISM

Like ecofeminism, postmodernist feminism is an amalgam of two distinct perspectives. This strand of feminist theory combines postmodernist with feminist standpoints, albeit in diverse shapes. The result is extremely powerful expressions of resistance to or rejection of Enlightenment notions, especially universalism, human nature, and

around object worlds. In areas of self-testing “edgework” (extreme sports, high-speed trading, etc.), individuals also appear to gain empowerment from their engagements and show a similar tendency to aggregate in object-focused groups. Human relations may take second place vis-à-vis these engagements. The welfare state, with its goals of social solidarity and redistribution, also operates in terms of a logic orthogonal to a culture of life. It is geared to horizontal social structural divisions rather than to intra- and intergenerational life, skeptical vis-à-vis some of the newly feasible life advantages, and dedicated to the provision of services that often seem deficient in the light of projected and phantasized technological possibilities and the powers of collective human, nonhuman, and hybrid agents.

Postsocial systems include sociality, but in reconfigured, specialized, more mediated, and limited ways, as liminal forms of sociality. Postsocial relations are human ties triangulated with object relations and forming only with respect to these relations. A postsocial system may be one where information structures have replaced previous forms of social coordination, as when sophisticated hardware and software systems substitute for social networks and enable expanded, accelerated, and intensified global financial markets. Postsocial is what one might call a level of intersubjectivity that is no longer based on face-to-face interaction and may in fact not involve interaction at all but rather “communities of time” formed by the joint observation of common, electronically transmitted content. Postsocial systems may arise around the sort of relatedness enabled by the Internet, for which the characteristics that have traditionally defined human relationships (feelings of obligation and trust, etc.) are not constitutive or even relevant. Postsocial forms are not rich in sociality in the old sense, but they may be rich in other ways, and the challenge is to analyze and theorize these constellations.

— Karin Knorr Cetina

See also Actor Network Theory; Consumer Culture; Freud, Sigmund; Identity; Individualism; Latour, Bruno; Mead, George Herbert; Self and Self-Concept; Social Studies of Science

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POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Poststructuralism is a loosely connected set of reflections on and extensions and critiques of structuralism that emerged mostly in France in the mid-1960s. Poststructuralism does not advocate a wholesale rejection of the premises and arguments of structuralism; rather, poststructuralist thought is best viewed as a sequel to the structuralist works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude

Lévi-Strauss. It is most often associated with the work of thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Hélène Cixous, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Richard Rorty, although few of these theorists apply the term to their work. Poststructuralism is known primarily for its critiques of humanism, essentialism, and foundationalism; its rejection of the search for absolute meanings and lawlike generalizations; its decentering of the subject and the death of the author; and its skeptical attitude toward the so-called project of modernity.

Structuralism, as exemplified in the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, the anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, and the early literary theory of Roland Barthes, sought to create a theoretical apparatus that would become a foundation for rigorous analysis and research in all of the human and social sciences. Structuralism propounds four basic tenets. First, it rejects the argument that all meanings, practices, and actions can be understood in terms of and are propelled by subjective consciousness. Second, structuralism holds that meanings, practices, and actions can be explained only by studying the relations among elements in structures or systems. Third, structuralism views the binary opposition as the key to understanding structural relationships among elements (e.g., signifier/signified, raw/cooked, male/female). Finally, structuralists tend to be concerned mainly with synchronic analysis, that is, studying the relations among elements of a structure at a moment in time. Poststructuralists generally agree with the first tenet, but for various reasons to be explored in what follows, reject the others. For present purposes, the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault best illustrates the poststructuralist critique of structuralism.

Derrida's most trenchant critique of structuralism takes issue with the second and third tenets of structuralist thought. Derrida argues that the structuralist view of language as a stable system that can be studied only by reference to the relations among its elements relies on a number of untenable assumptions. The most problematic of these assumptions is what Derrida calls logocentrism, which is, moreover, a problematic assumption of most of Western thought. Logocentrism is a term that describes the tendency of Western thinkers to privilege one term in a binary opposition over the other term, thus creating a hierarchy that organizes thought (e.g., speech over writing, male over female, reason over superstition). This hierarchy then appears to be a stable and natural one that has its roots in a stable system of language and its elements. Derrida aims to upset these hierarchical relationships by showing that binary oppositions are rarely exhaustive and mutually exclusive, and are often contradictory, rendering the binary useless for any descriptive or epistemological purposes. In addition, the two terms of a binary opposition define themselves against each other (which he calls supplementarity), and any hierarchy is therefore merely arbitrary. Derrida's

project can be described as the deconstruction of logocentrism, which involves breaking down the ways in which logocentrism operates in order to dismantle its hegemony in Western society. In short, Derrida takes aim at the assumed stability of language and the ways in which structuralists construct binary oppositions.

Foucault's early work on the archaeology of knowledge, particularly *The Order of Things* (1966), proceeds in structuralist fashion and actually praises structuralism for providing the human sciences with a theoretical framework for analysis that discards the centrality of meaning and action based on subjective consciousness and its representations. The "death of man," according to Foucault, opens up opportunities for social science to think about phenomena of life, language, and labor without encountering the many philosophical pitfalls of subjectivity. Foucault's archaeology of knowledge also demonstrates the early influence of structuralism in his work insofar as it represents a search for the rules that govern what can be said in any particular discourse at a given historical moment.

While Foucault's *The Order of Things* and other archaeological works employ structuralist methods and underscore the ingenuity of structuralist thinking, they also provide many reflections on the shortcomings of structuralist thought. The most important critique of structuralism, for present purposes, concerns its inability to explain how systems and structures change over time. Foucault considered himself a historian of systems of thought, and, as a historian, he was interested in how systems and structures change (change over time is diachronic), while structuralism limits itself to studying the relations among elements of structures in synchronic fashion, that is, at one moment in time.

In order to ask and answer questions about historical change, then, Foucault began to develop a method of inquiry that became known as the genealogy of power, which is exemplified in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1979). Adopting a genealogical method provides a way to approach historical problematizations of knowledge and governing. A genealogical method, according to Foucault, studies events, but not the events of traditional political history or the history of great men; rather, genealogy may take the formation and articulation of a problem (e.g., how a society deals with those who have violated its laws) as its event. Genealogy focuses on problems, moreover, in order to study the heterogeneous lines of descent that form assemblages of practices, the multitude of problematizing discourses that such practices generate, and the regimes of truth that these practices and problematizing discourses instantiate. In addition, Foucault characterized the genealogy of power as a "history of the present." This does not, however, imply that the present is a necessary outcome of past historical events. Instead, it tries to make use of history to understand the present and to demonstrate the contingency

of what has transpired historically. The genealogy of power is therefore often viewed as a form of social criticism.

Foucault's genealogy of power contends that power and knowledge are inextricably linked. This is known as the power/knowledge nexus. Critical to Foucault's genealogy is the contention that power is a source of dynamism that is productive (i.e., not simply repressive) and dispersed throughout society into many local centers. Through this lens of power, Foucault traces the ways in which early modern European states responded to such problems of governing as criminality, the practices of punishment and social control that emerged as ways of dealing with criminality, and the bodies of knowledge (e.g., penology, criminology, and other social sciences) that emerged alongside these practices. Foucault adds that, while power is pervasive, it always meets some form of resistance. While Foucault's genealogy of power does not indict bodies of knowledge that emerge from practices of power as false or invalid (some of them may even state universally objective truths), it does challenge scholars and practitioners to consider alternative practices and discourses in order to counter the established regimes of truth and practice.

James M. Murphy

See also Deconstruction; Deleuze, Gilles; Derrida, Jacques; Foucault, Michel; Irigaray, Luce; Kristeva, Julia; Lévi-Strauss, Claude; Logocentrism; Postmodernism; Rorty, Richard; Saussure, Ferdinand de; Structuralism

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POWER

In its broadest sense, *power* refers to the capacity to produce effects on the world, to bring about changes in it. The entity or agent possessing this capacity may be natural, organic, or human. Thus, we speak of the power of windstorms, electric grids, and animals, including human

beings. Both Thomas Hobbes's definition of power as "man's present means to any future apparent good" and Bertrand Russell's as "the production of intended effects" refer solely to humans and are therefore relevant to the social sciences, Russell's on the assumption that humans alone are capable of full intentionality, that is, of conscious purposive action. Hobbes identified power with the possession of "means" to achieve desired ends (or "goods"), whether they are employed to that effect or not, but like Russell he restricted power, at least implicitly, to intended action. Russell's definition by contrast specifies only the actual exercise of power rather than regarding power as a *capacity* or *potential* when not exercised. These limits are overcome by defining human power broadly as any capacity for action that produces effects or outcomes and then proceeding to enumerate the diverse forms it may take. Such a definition recognizes the possession, or latent existence, of power when it is not actually being exercised, nor does it exclude the unintended effects of an action. These may on occasion be more consequential than those intended, although since most human conduct involves intended action, unintended effects are often one of its by-products.

Power as the production of effects by some persons on others clearly includes social interaction with at least a minimal mutuality or reciprocity of influence, which indeed *defines* social interaction. "Power" and "influence" are here synonymous. Asymmetrical power "over" other people exists when an actor regularly produces more and greater effects on others than the reverse, although so long as there is some reciprocal response by the subordinate party, it is a *social* rather than a physical relation affecting only a person's body, as in bodily obstruction or confinement or violence and the infliction of pain. Such regular *social* power relations are clearly a primary concern of the social sciences.

Power may be exercised over few or many persons; its scope, the spheres of life and range of actions of the power subject it governs, may be narrow or comprehensive; it may be limited or intensive in its effects, that is, relatively unrestricted in the kinds of effects it produces from life-and-death concerns to minor adjustments of behavior. Power described as "absolute" is highly comprehensive and intensive but is likely to be low in extensiveness, even limited to a single person, as in the power of a master over a slave (Aristotle's original example of unrestricted power), a parent over an infant or small child, or a jailer over a prison inmate, although such dyadic power relations are usually regulated by law and custom. The extremely comprehensive, intensive, and extensive power exercised in the twentieth century by several states with large populations, notably Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, came to be described as "totalitarian" and was regarded as identifying a new and altogether unprecedented kind of political regime dependent

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PUBLIC SPHERE

The public sphere describes a space of reasoned debate about politics and the state. The public sphere is the arena of political participation in which ideas, alternatives, opinions, and other forms of discourse take shape. We can recall the ideas of John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* to think of the public sphere as the space in which persons come to join a contest over true, partially true, and wrong ideas about how the state and politics should address the major issues of the day. Along with debate, the public sphere also encompasses the arena of political action, by both individuals and groups. In modern democracy, the public sphere is, in particular, the arena of social movement activity, as collective action seeks to bring issues to the fore that have hitherto been excluded from, or at least marginalized in, the important political debates of the day. As a space of collective action, the public sphere encompasses both narrative and textual discourse (which includes speech, journalism, letters, articles, broadsheets, songs, popular theater, etc.) and performative actions that communicate about politics

(which includes all the forms of contentious demonstration or protest that remain civil, even if civil disobedience, and peaceful).

The contemporary theory of the public sphere is rooted in the work of the Frankfurt School and critical theory. Jürgen Habermas's 1962 dissertation, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, provided a clear history of the development of public debate about politics in various European settings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Great Britain was the case in which the public sphere developed earliest and most fully, and Habermas traces the emergence of debate in salons, letter writing, and other venues. He identifies the public sphere as a space opened up by private citizens who took control of political debate from the state. Habermas identifies a free public sphere open to the participation of all comers as a prerequisite of democracy; indeed democracy is staked on the equality of entry and participation in the public sphere. Yet, by the 1950s, Habermas concluded that the mechanisms of communication in the public sphere were increasingly controlled by a few, small corporate concerns. The advent of big media threatened (in the late 1950s) a privatization of the public sphere, privileging the concerns of big media and corporate power. Public debate and with it liberal democracy, Habermas concluded, were under grave threat.

Habermas's work was well ahead of its time. These are the debates that emerged in the Anglo-American world only after the 1970s. Habermas's dissertation was not translated into English until 1989, and discussion of the public sphere in the Anglo-American world remained somewhat muted until then. Meanwhile, Habermas continued to develop his interest in the communicative politics of public interaction; moreover, he was searching for ways to understand the potential for public politics and social transformation in the contemporary era. Through the 1970s and 1980s, he developed the theory of communicative action, as a way of understanding how public politics could proceed to empower ordinary people even in a situation where the mass media really reflected the views of a small corporate oligarchy and sought to control and constrain public debate (the opposite of the public sphere's origins in free, equal, and reasoned debate).

In 1989, Habermas's original 1962 dissertation on the public sphere was translated into English, sparking a major debate in the Anglo-American world. Social theorists and researchers of women's and other minority political communities took issue with Habermas's formulation of the open public sphere as a critical component of modern democracy. These critics noted that the public sphere that Habermas had discussed was in fact a highly exclusionary arena of politics, confined mainly to male, bourgeois, European (white), actors, leaving out of the story of the development of democracy other actors, who included the

vast majority of the population in Great Britain and other Western democracies—nonpropertied or less affluent males, the working class, women, members of the African and other diasporas, youth, homosexuals, and other marginalized groups. Yet these critics by and large remained open to the notion that public spheres were important to the development of democracy, and Habermas responded in the 1990s by formulating what he called a “discourse-centered” theory of democracy that embraced the pluralist notion of dominant and popular public spheres that, along with the action of social movements, pushed democracy along even while the bourgeois public sphere had been, according to his earlier analysis, largely co-opted by private, market forces in the mass media.

Other researchers began to develop empirical analyses of the kinds of historical and documentary evidence that supported a thesis claiming that the public sphere was a crucial feature of modern democracy. By the late 1990s, the public sphere literature had broadened to include not only the dominant public sphere controlled by privately owned mass media but also the actions of social movements and other collective actors that created popular and oppositional public spheres that described the actions of “counterpublics” striving for inclusion in public politics. Understandings of the public sphere by this point now included not only media studies but also social movement studies, feminist theory, African American and Afro-diaspora politics, queer theory, and studies of popular movements and collective action in general.

These developments in public sphere studies were matched in the real world of politics by the “Third Wave” democratizations in Southern Europe, Latin America, and across the developing world. The Third Wave began in the mid-1970s in Southern Europe, exploded in the 1980s across Latin America, and in the 1980s and 1990s came to affect countries across the developing world. Latin American analysts, in particular, have been keenly aware of how movements to develop public politics were key forces that helped to destabilize military regimes and hasten their exit from power. At this time, we see the reemergence of civil society in writings on democratization and transitions

from authoritarian rule, which is matched by the emphasis on voluntary organization and civil society in both the analysis of and political discourse of neoliberalism, the political philosophy and program that emerged from the Thatcher and Reagan administrations in Great Britain and the United States, respectively. In development programs supported by the World Bank in the developing countries, for example, we see an emphasis on the participation of persons affected by development through civil society and social movement organizations in a way that explicitly acknowledges the role of public politics in the implementation and success of policies.

— John Guidry

See also Civil Society; Democracy; Frankfurt School; Habermas, Jürgen; Social Movement Theory

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guidance will be all the more effective if it employs methods that “trick” the general will’s claim to encompass the participation of all in full consciousness. One can point to the figure of the legislator as a sort of extra-political *deus ex machina*, who breaks through the circle of civilizational alienation while adapting contractual principles to local circumstances. And one can describe all the infrapolitical instruments that the legislator employs to inscribe the contract’s clauses in the citizens’ hearts, if not their minds. The social dimension of Rousseau’s theory, then, would speak to his discussion of identity formation, civil religion, the patriotic rites and ceremonies of emulation, and more generally, all the half-submerged institutional and civilizational mechanisms that seem to underpin every conscious, volitional consensus. Such a discussion would open onto larger ethical questions concerning a pedagogy of freedom where, unbeknownst to oneself, one is made to be free. The *Émile* provides particularly rich resources in this regard.

A third and final approach would read the social theory into the tensions, if not the seeming impossibility of a purely political “solution.” If the social contract appears in the form of an exchange, it can never be upheld solely on the basis of a purely rational calculation. As a moral relation, the social bond is underwritten by the sentiment of virtue. And virtue is the expression of both the individual’s absolute moral autonomy and his or her desire to submit to (as well as the duty to uphold) the general law of the community. This double character of virtue follows from the definitional axiomatics of the social contract. And yet if the definition appears clear, Rousseau’s work vents the very real tensions that such a doubled sentiment implies. Sometimes virtue appears in the purely individual terms of an authenticity of feelings rooted in an inner nature (the phylogenetic equivalent of the ontogenetic state of nature). But the love of self (*amour de soi*) and sense of pity characteristic of the natural state barely imply a relation with others, let alone a moral or ethical relation. In other words, virtue here appears fundamentally asocial. At other times, virtue appears in the most austere terms of social heteronomy, demanding the sacrifice of one’s desires, happiness, and even children in the name of patriotism. One suspects that, given these two virtues, the conflict between individual and community cannot but exist even in the best of societies. And this conflict between the individual and collectivity is repeated within the individual who is torn between his or her asocial nature, social passions, and political obligations. It is as though, once individuals become aware of themselves in relation to others, they develop the social passions of an *amour propre* (as borne by imaginary fears, dreams of omnipotence, and desires for domination) that resist the demands of both inner conscience and external duty. Social theory here, then, would insinuate itself between the natural individual and the political whole, and speak to the impossibility of living entirely comfortably within either.

Not only have the *Émile* and *The Nouvelle Héloïse* been seen as illustrating the tensions between nature and culture, conscience and public opinion, individual desire and communal imperatives with exceptional psychological acuity, both books have been variously interpreted as providing, relative to these conflicts, a genuine resolution, a “magical” resolution, and the (unconscious or conscious) demonstration of the impossibility of any resolution. But however one interprets these works, what is certain is that in Rousseau’s personal life, these conflicts were never resolved. Instead, within the darkness of a developing paranoia, he retreated from a seemingly hostile world into a solitude from which he could proclaim an inner goodness that only a virtuous posterity would recognize.

— Brian C. J. Singer

See also Bonald, Louis de; Citizenship; Democracy; Individualism; Maistre, Joseph de; Montesquien, Charles Louis de Secondat; Power; Revolution; State; Utopia

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RUBIN, GAYLE

Gayle Rubin (b. 1949) has been writing articles that have energized gender studies and feminist theory since the 1960s. Her research is pivotal to studies in queer theory, and her essays continue to be republished, translated, cited, and referenced. While studying at the University of Michigan in the late 1960s, she constructed a major in women’s studies by taking advantage of the open-ended honors program. The thesis she worked on for this major later became the often cited essay, “The Traffic in Women:

Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." She earned her PhD in anthropology and continues to teach and write. She is also a longtime activist in gay and lesbian politics.

Rubin's (1975) essay, *Traffic*, examines Levi-Strauss' kinship models and shows how women have been constructed as commodities to be traded and owned by husbands, brothers, and fathers. She extensively analyzes what Adrienne Rich describes with the concept "compulsory heterosexuality." In arguing that "kinship systems do not merely exchange women. They exchange sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage names and ancestors, rights and people—men, women, and children—in concrete systems of social relationships" (Rubin 1975:177), she makes concrete the economic and political oppressions that women face historically and currently on a daily basis. Furthermore, *Traffic* examines the way that Freudian and Lacanian binary theoretical models support the political institutions and power structures that are born from these oppressive kinship relations. Her purpose here, as well as in much of her work, is to deconstruct how these power inequities and underlying assumptions continue to shape and codify the way we build our social and, thus, sexual selves.

"Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" (1984) continues to examine how sexuality and sexual identity is constructed. In contrast to her previous work, this essay is more focused on how deviance and difference is constructed and legally maintained. Here, she roots sexual oppression in historical contexts and, in the tradition of Michel Foucault, shows how medical and legal institutions construct and maintain sexual difference for political ends. In particular, this essay is useful for its discussion of the concept of sexual essentialism. Sexual essentialism is the idea that our sexual selves and our experience of sexual difference are innate and biologically determined. Sexual essentialism tends to demonize those who reject the hegemonic model of acceptable sexual practices. Finally, it maps out a sex hierarchy, or what Rubin (1984) refers to as the "charmed circle" and "the outer limits." In this hierarchy, acceptable sexual practices are those that are "heterosexual, married, monogamous, procreative, non-commercial, in pairs, in a relationship, same generation, in private, no pornography, bodies only, vanilla" (p. 13).

Rubin is an advocate for the sexual others who are marginalized and criminalized in our current heterosexist culture. Furthermore, Rubin examines how feminist theory and gay and lesbian activists themselves have contributed to this marginalization in their attack on sadomasochism, pornography, sex professionals, pedophiles, and transsexuals and transgendered persons. Her essay "Of Catamites and Kings" (1992) takes up the oppressive practices that exist within feminism and lesbian feminism when those who self-identify as butch/femme are attacked. Here, she brings voice and agency to those who typically are vilified and in doing so traces the history by which these voices

have been silenced. She illustrates how "playing with" dominant categories of sexual identities can actually disrupt the very premises that these identities rely on for their continued legitimation. More generally, she shows that the ongoing attacks from both the dominant culture and the feminist and lesbian communities maintain the oppressive forces that work to constrain all persons.

Rubin has also worked within these communities for voice and change. She is one of the founders of Samois, the first sadomasochist feminist lesbian organization, which published *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M* (1981). This anthology is particularly pertinent for its combination of activists' and academics' writings on sexuality and power. In this collection, Rubin's essay "The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M" continues to examine the ways that certain sexual practices are legitimately maintained and prioritized while others are designated as deviant and dangerous. She shows how this practice contributes to larger oppressive practices and that privilege and power are contained in concepts of sexual freedom of speech and the possibilities of consent. In this work, she calls for a politics of sexuality and otherness that allows for sexual diversity. She argues that sexual diversity, as well as all forms of diversity, is crucial to the continuing fight against totalizing tendencies that strain toward homogeneity.

— Marga Ryersbach

See also Feminism; Lévi-Strauss, Claude; Postmodernism; Radical Feminism

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something fixed. Instead, sociologists need to recognize the tentativeness and fragility of religious structures of meaning. Religious concepts easily lend themselves to reification. As ideational systems, religions are always in interaction with material culture, social structure, other cultural systems, and individual personalities. The theological bias of secularization theory within the sociology of religion (especially via Troeltsch and Herberg) has underwritten conceptions of "religion" as essentially fixed rather than essentially variable. *Sociologically*, however, there is far more reason to conceive religion as variable—indeed, whereas among social institutions religion deals uniquely with a nonempirical, "uncontrollable" referent, religion is *infinitely* variable in a way that other action orientations are not. Theological, rather than sociological, presuppositions and prejudices warrant the notion of religious fixity; thus, sociological theories of religion need to be attentive to change as *inherent* in religion, just as change is in other institutional spheres and cultural dimensions, precisely because religion is a sociocultural institution.

— William H. Swatos Jr.

See also Dahrendorf, Ralf; Parsons, Talcott; Religion; Weber, Max

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SELF AND SELF-CONCEPT

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Harvard psychologist William James laid down a cornerstone of modern self theory. In his 1890 *Principles of Psychology*, James distinguished between the *self as knower* (the I) and the *self as object known* (the Me, or self-concept). This formulation offered a language for talking about matters that had been obscured by reifications such as psyche, mind, soul, spirit, and ego. Following James, the self could be seen as both a process—acts of perception and knowing—and the outcome of that process—knowledge about the knower. James's distinction remains basic to self theory today.

The origins of self theory lie in human prehistory. As our hominid ancestors sought to explain the world around them, they likewise struggled to explain themselves. The world of dreams, images, thoughts, and feelings was perhaps no less troubling a mystery than the outer world of animals, plants, weather, and landscape. Where did these inner forces come from, and how did they relate to the outer world? What made one person different from another? To wrestle with these questions was to begin to theorize about the self.

Reflecting on the capacities, dispositions, and inner processes that make us human may thus be as old as consciousness. By the time such reflections began to be recorded, people surely had been thinking about human nature for ages. When Socrates (470–399 BCE) urged "know thyself," he presumed an intellectual framework within which disciplined introspection made sense. The Socratic admonition leaves open, however, the question of precisely what it is we should seek to know. And that is the question that has occupied subsequent social theorists.

To try to identify a history of thought regarding the self raises, first, the question of whether there exists a body of thought that constitutes a coherent tradition of theorizing about the self. By modern standards of scholarship, the answer is no, at least prior to the nineteenth century. Before then, one can find a great deal of philosophical and theological discourse about the inner processes—or, more often, "essences"—that constitute human nature. Absent is conceptual consensus or continuity. Psyche, soul, spirit, mind, proprium, and ego may all be answers to roughly the same question, but the answers, cast in such disparate terms, refuse to add up.

A major shift in thinking began to appear in the eighteenth century. Before this, Leibniz, Descartes, and other rationalist philosophers of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Renaissance period embraced a neo-classical view of the human being. In this view, the mind—that which made us self-aware and uniquely human—is an indisputably natural, indeed axiomatic, feature of individuals. This was expressed in Descartes's famous dictum: *I think, therefore I am*. By the end of the nineteenth century,

however, this dictum was supplanted by one that has remained foundational ever since: *I am social, therefore I can think*.

This shift had vast implications for theorizing about the self as a social phenomenon and a matter for empirical study. The eighteenth-century Scottish moral philosophers, notably David Hume and Adam Smith, drew attention to how social life engendered the moral habits and sentiments that make us human. Hume and Smith (and later Marx, Weber, and Durkheim) saw how capitalist industrialization was altering social relationships, giving rise to new categories and groups, creating new moral strains, and in these ways, generating new patterns of thought. In light of such changes, it was no longer tenable to see the human mind as insulated from social life. The inner processes that make us human were coming to be seen as inexorably linked to the organization of social life.

James's contribution opened the way to deeper understandings of these connections between self and society. In James's view, the self as object known—what he called the *Me*—becomes more complex as society becomes more complex. The more different ways it is possible to exist in a given society—materially, socially, and spiritually—the more different ways we can know ourselves. The complexity of the *Me* is also enhanced by the multiple relationships that can exist between individuals and groups. As James (1890) put it in a key passage,

Properly speaking, a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any one of these his images is to wound him. But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct *groups* of persons about whose opinion he cares. (p. 294)

This passage foreshadows Charles Horton Cooley's notion of the *looking-glass self*, which refers to self-conceptions that derive from imagining how others judge us. The emphasis on feelings attached to self-images also foreshadows Erving Goffman's discussion of the self as a virtual reality created in interaction. Further implied is a central idea of reference group theory: Behavior is aimed at pleasing the audiences that most powerfully affect our self-conceptions.

Following in the pragmatist tradition, John Dewey and George H. Mead built on James's ideas concerning the social nature of the self. Dewey emphasized the "I" as a conditioned subjectivity: a configuration of habits shaped by our relationships with others and by our choices in response to the moral dilemmas inherent in social life. Dewey's contribution was thus to highlight the self as both a social product and an agent of its own making. Mead drew

on James, Dewey, and Cooley, powerfully and creatively extending their ideas (see Mead [1934] *Mind, Self, and Society*). Mead's profound contributions lay in theorizing about the development of the self, the role of language in this process, and the relationship between mind and self.

Although Mead adopted James's "I" and "Me" terminology and sometimes referred to these as alternating phases of the self, Mead uniquely conceived of the self as an internalization of the social process of communication. According to Mead, this process entails the use of significant symbols, which are those that evoke, by virtue of learned convention, a similar response in the user and the perceiver. Using such symbols requires taking the perspective of the other—that is, sympathetically imagining the other's response to the symbol (be it gestural, oral, or textual). Taking the perspective of the other implies, in turn, the ability to look back on oneself as an object. To do this—to act and then, in the next moment, perceive the meaning of that act from the standpoint of an other—is, for Mead, what it means for an individual to have a self.

In Mead's view, the self is not inborn but emergent. This occurs as the child learns to use language (rather than impulsive cries and gestures) to evoke responses in others. To use language in this way requires perspective taking, which in turn enables perception of oneself as actor/object. As the child masters the use of language to evoke precise responses in others, the child also learns to carry on the process imaginarily. The unfolding of this internal conversation—in which one's acts, the reactions of others, and one's reactions to those reactions are represented in consciousness—is the process that constitutes the self. Further development occurs as the individual gains facility with language and the ability to take the perspectives of diverse others. Adult development is achieved when individuals are able to take the perspective of a community, or what Mead called the *generalized other*.

Mead's view also distinguishes self from mind. Rather than use the static term *mind*, Mead preferred to speak of *minded behavior*, by which he meant behavior that was not merely impulsive but was mediated by internal representations—imagery—of external objects and completed acts. Mead argued that the highly complex human nervous system enables the internal representation and imaginary manipulation of complex external states. This use of imagery and cognitive manipulation occurs "in the field of mind," wherein also arises the process of self as described above. A prominent feature in the field of mind is the *Me*—the person as a social object—which is taken into account, along with other persons and objects, in forming minded behavior, or what contemporary symbolic interactionists call a "line of action."

James and Mead are the giants of classic social theorizing about the self. They conceived the self as distinct from and not reducible to psyche, spirit, mind, or ego. Both theorists

also linked the self—as process and object—to social life. The distinction between self as knower and self as object known also has been enormously important for later work on the self. It would be fair to say that twentieth-century social-psychological study of the self is not merely indebted to James and Mead, but barely imaginable without them.

CONTEMPORARY THEMES

Beginning early in the twentieth century, the self has been one of the most heavily studied topics in social psychology. Review articles began to appear in the early 1900s (e.g., Mary Calkins [1919]). Yet most of the theoretical and empirical work on the self throughout the century can be seen as moving along paths cut by classical self theorists. Four themes, or focal concerns, thus continue to dominate self theory: (1) the nature of the self as knower; (2) the content, causes, and consequences of self-conceptions; (3) the interactive construction of virtual selves through expressive and interpretive behavior; and (4) the etiology of the self.

Until the 1980s, little effort was made to further theorize the self as knower. It was as if this aspect of the self, the *I* of James's formulation, simply had to be assumed rather than explained. The cognitive revolution in psychology changed this. Under the influence of ideas associated with computer science, the brain was now seen as a kind of organic computer, and mind as "software" that ran on this organic platform. Some social psychologists, mostly in psychology, took this computer metaphor seriously and used it to reconceive the self as knower.

In this view, the self as knower is theorized as a *schema*. A schema is not static but rather, as Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984) define it, "an active, self-monitoring knowledge structure" (p. 142). A knowledge structure that can assimilate information, manipulate that information using a stable set of algorithms, and then modify itself as a result, is, in essence, a highly sophisticated computer program. Theorists who take this approach treat the self as a program for which the original code is not directly accessible. The empirical task, then, is to observe how the program functions—that is, how the self as knower processes information—and thereby infer its hidden operating logic.

Perhaps because it seemed more empirically accessible, far more attention has been paid to the self as object known, or what is now called the *self-concept*. Theorists have thus sought to specify, first, the content of the self-concept—that is, the kinds of knowledge we have about ourselves. We know ourselves, for example, in terms of public and private roles, categorical and group identities, and a set of character traits. Study of the content of the self-concept has also examined the organization of this knowledge. Some theorists have suggested, for example, that the self-concept is a theory we have about ourselves—a theory consisting of axioms, first-order propositions, and a host of logical implications.

Also recognized as key parts of the self-concept are *self-evaluations* and *self-esteem*. Although the self, like any object, can be evaluated in many ways, it has been suggested that the two main dimensions of self-evaluation, in Western societies, are competence (also referred to as self-efficacy) and morality (also referred to as self-worth). Self-esteem is then often defined as the affective response to these evaluations. Theorists have also posited two kinds of self-esteem: (1) "global," referring to chronic, generalized feelings of positive or negative self-regard, and (2) "situational," referring to more transitory feelings about the self that are influenced by events in a particular context.

Among all the concepts associated with self theory, self-esteem has gained the greatest currency in popular culture (see Hewitt 1998). Folk psychologists and moral entrepreneurs often invoke self-esteem as the cause of all manner of behaviors, good and bad. Crime, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, and failure in school have been alleged to result from low self-esteem. The obvious solution is then held to be *raising* self-esteem. Research has consistently found, however, that self-esteem is of only slight predictive value, relative to situational variables, when trying to explain social behavior.

The self-concept is universally seen as social in origin. Roles and identities derive from one's place in a social order; the meanings of identities are socially constructed and situationally variable; terms for character traits, as well as criteria for applying them, are aspects of culture; standards for self-evaluation are likewise socially learned. This view suggests that the self-concept is not only a product of social life but that its shape and content mirror the culture and social organization in which an individual develops. There is also agreement that the self-concept is formed by, and remains subject to the influence of, feedback from others (reflected appraisals); the ways we measure ourselves against others (social comparisons); and our observations of what we do and make happen (self-perceptions).

Three self-concept motives have been posited to explain how the self-concept shapes behavior. The tendency to behave in ways that affirm central identities is attributed to a *self-consistency* or *self-verification motive*. The tendency to behave in ways that generate positive reflected appraisals (from important audiences), favorable social comparisons, and perceptions of morality and competence is attributed to a *self-esteem motive*. And the tendency to behave in ways that produce observable and valued effects on the world is attributed to a *self-efficacy motive*. Theorists have thus sought to understand the self-concept not only as a social product but also as a social force.

A different approach to the self is found in theoretical work associated with the dramaturgical and semiotic perspectives. In the dramaturgical view, associated with Erving Goffman, the self is a "dramatic [or rhetorical] effect," that is, an attribution of character that is interactively

constructed through expressive and interpretive behavior. The only self that matters, in other words, is the one attributed to us based on our acts of signification, because this is the self to which others respond. Other than presuming a concern for protecting the feelings attached to cherished self-images, the dramaturgical perspective has little to say about cognition or self-conceptions. The semiotic perspective similarly focuses on expressive behavior, analyzing the signifying acts (sometimes called *identity work*) through which virtual selves are created in interaction.

A related approach that also treats the self as a linguistic construction points to what Kenneth Gergen calls "narratives of the self." In this view, similar to the dramaturgical, the self is an impression, a virtual reality, created in our minds and the minds of others. This impression, however, is created not only through situated expressive behavior and reactions to that behavior but through lifelong storytelling about ourselves. Who we are is thus seen as a result of how we selectively weave the purported facts of biography into stories about ourselves. Studies of the narrative construction of the self have examined cultural templates for biographical storytelling and the interactive creation of self-narratives in therapeutic groups.

In the 1980s, there emerged a strain of self theory influenced by postmodernist social theory more generally (see Elliott 2001). The core argument was that as social life had become more fast-paced, fluid, fragmented, and soaked in media images, the self had changed correspondingly. According to postmodernist self theory, the idea of a solid, stable self as the basis of personhood is passé. "The postmodern self," as Gecas and Burke (1995) described it in a critical review of the literature, is "decentered, relational, contingent, illusory, and lacking any core or essence" (p. 57). Some theorists went so far as to argue that the self had disappeared. Critics of the postmodernist view granted that changes in society could produce changes in self-conceptions and experiences of personhood but preferred to treat any such changes as matters for empirical study rather than accepting the self's demise by theoretical fiat.

At the start of the new century, studies of the self and self-concept continue to move along the paths outlined above. Researchers remain concerned with how culture and social structure shape the self and with how the self in turn shapes thought and behavior. Narrative approaches to studying self and identity seem to be gaining ground relative to older approaches based on experiments and surveys. At the other end of the spectrum, an emerging neurobiological perspective aims to theorize the relationship between the organization of neural networks in the brain and the emergence of self-consciousness. Each path carries on the ageless human project of understanding the self as knower and as object never fully known.

— Michael Schwalbe

See also Cooley, Charles Horton; Dramaturgy; Goffman, Erving; Identity; Mead, George Herbert; Postmodernism; Pragmatism; Symbolic Interaction

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SEMIOLOGY

Semiology has its modern origins in the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, especially in the various versions of his *Cours de Linguistique Générale* [*Course in General Linguistics*] ([1916] 1971). Some of the basic principles expounded by Saussure are also discussed by classical writers such as Plato and Aristotle, although neither of these thinkers explicitly set out to develop a science of semiology as such. In the present discussion, the term *semiology* will refer to those developments that stem from Saussure in the early twentieth century and that have contributed to the further development of Saussure's thinking. The term *semiology* is to be distinguished from the term *semiotics*. The latter term, at least in its modern usage, is traceable to the work of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and will not be discussed here. Increasingly, the term *semiotics*, irrespective of the Peircean lineage, has become the more widely used term.

In Saussure's conception, semiology is the study of systems of signs. According to the notes compiled by Riedlinger and Constantin of Saussure's third *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (Saussure 1993), semiology is defined as "studies of signs and their life in human societies"

Teaching was also a way to communicate the love of ideas and appreciation of the rich intellectual heritage we are bequeathed. In his inspired teaching, Smelser effectively communicated reverence for those giants of social and psychological thought who sought to understand the vast changes in culture, social organization, and personality associated with the development of the modern world. Yet his respect was tempered with critical analysis and the insight that every way of seeing was also a way of not seeing. He honored our intellectual past without being stifled by it.

— Jeffrey C. Alexander and Gary T. Marx

See also AGIL; Historical and Comparative Theory; Parsons, Talcott; Psychoanalysis and Social Theory; Structural Functionalism

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SMITH, DOROTHY

Dorothy E. Smith (b. 1926) a Canadian sociologist, is one of the most prominent feminist theorists of the twentieth century. Educated at the University of London School of Economics (BSc), the University of British Columbia (LLD), and the University of California at Berkeley (PhD), she was one of the founders of an influential theoretical framework called feminist standpoint epistemology. Smith asserts that certain standpoints can provide a more reliable vantage point from which to assess how power is woven into institutions that contour women's daily activities. Smith's approach situates women's experiences within the local institutional practices that organize their lives. By using this "everyday world" perspective, researchers remain sensitive to women's experiences while also exploring how varying institutional practices such as welfare policy and higher education differentially organize their lives.

Smith's theoretical approach draws on a variety of traditions, including phenomenology and ethnomethodology as well as Marx's historical materialism and poststructuralism. She was on the faculty of the University of Essex, the University of British Columbia, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). She also served as head of OISE's Centre for Women's Studies in Education. She was recipient of the Jessie Bernard Award for Feminist Sociology from the American Sociological Association, the Kerstin Hesselgren Professorship in Sweden, and the Lansdowne Professorship at the University of Victoria. She was also awarded the Degré Prize Lectureship at the University of Waterloo and the John Porter Lectureship of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association. Her doctoral thesis, completed in 1963, was titled *Power and the Front-Line: Social Controls in a State Mental Hospital*.

In her highly acclaimed book *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*, Smith (1987) argues for a sociology that will reveal the everyday practices of people that abstractions typically developed by sociologists both "express and conceal" (p. 213). Theorizing from her own experience as a single mother of two young children, Smith developed the concept of "bifurcated consciousness" to capture the tensions women in particular experience when they enter the textually organized world of academia

that is independent of the everyday world of preschool schedules, visits to doctors, and trips to the parks. As a mode of consciousness, the practice of sociology, requires distancing from the everyday world of child care and meal preparation, among other particularities. Smith argues that these different modes of consciousness are gendered and that women are constructed as the "Other" in the academic world. As a result of consciousness-raising strategies developed by the feminist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, women collectively articulated new issues and concerns that called into question the presumed genderless organization of the knowledge production enterprise.

Smith first published her critique of the dominant methods of sociology in a 1974 article titled "The Ideological Practice of Sociology." As a corrective to the abstractions developed by sociologists, Smith created a methodological approach to social research called "institutional ethnography" that is designed to explore links between everyday life experiences and broad-based social structural processes. Smith's methodological goal is to examine the social relations that shape everyday life experiences, revealing how local experiences are organized by relations of ruling. Smith (1987) defines *relations of ruling* as a term "that brings into view the intersection of the institutions organizing and regulating society with their gender subtext and their basis in a gender division of labor" (p. 2). The term *ruling* is used to identify organizational practices of government, law, financial management, professional associations, and other institutions that shape everyday life. Smith argues that bureaucratic procedures and textual forms that rationalize the organizational practices create a screen of neutrality that masks the gender, racial, and class subtexts of institutional activities and discourse.

Smith (1999) resists providing content to the standpoint of social actors. For Smith, a standpoint functions like an arrow on maps in malls. Standpoints are sites in and through which to explore the relationships between diverse local sites. Smith's map-making strategy helps an investigator map the activities that coordinate and reproduce oppressive systems. This strategy also provides a useful tool for activist research. It helps capture less formal activities and institutional processes that intersect in particular social or institutional locations. This knowledge can be used as a resource for social change efforts, providing an assessment of how power operates in local practices of ruling or *ruling relations* where activist interventions might be most successful.

In *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*, Smith (1990a) furthers her analysis of "women's experience as a radical critique of sociology" and takes issue with what she terms "the ideological practice of sociology." *The Conceptual Practices of Power* concentrates on the ways relations of ruling are organized through texts and the ideological properties of textual accounts of factual accounts. As two examples of these practices,

Smith demonstrates how statistics on mental illness and constructions of what counts as suicide are inseparable from the professional and bureaucratic practices that give rise to these phenomena. In the first example, she calls attention to the patriarchal relations that inform the production of statistical evidence. She argues that what counts as mental illness is constructed along with the categories used to organize patients' problems into objects of psychiatry. In the second example, Smith draws on Marx's notion of "social relation" to produce a materialist analysis of the social processes that organize factual accounts and define them as "suicide." Implicated in these processes is the increasing bureaucratic and professional push to standardize organizational forms to produce coherence between the clinical encounter, the production of an account of the encounter, and the development of a specific psychiatric syndrome.

In *Texts, Facts, and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling* (1990b), Smith extends her conceptualization of relations of ruling and the social organization of subjectivity. She discusses her epistemological link to Marx's method of historical materialism and argues that "social forms of consciousness also exist only in actual practices and in the concerting of those practices as an ongoing process" (p. 7). She offers a powerful analysis of femininity as a textually mediated discourse. Smith explains that individuals in diverse locations who do not know each other are coordinated by the same texts and, consequently, new social relations are created.

Despite her interest in discourse and the power of texts to mediate social relations, Smith is critical of postmodernism and differentiates her materialist feminist approach from Foucault's theory of discourse. While Smith (1993) finds value in Foucault's analysis of discourse, she criticizes his emphasis on discourse to the exclusion of nondiscursive processes. As she explains, "There are indeed matters to be spoken and spoken of that discourse does not yet encompass" (pp. 183-84). In contrast to Foucault's "conception of discourse as a conversation mediated by texts," Smith (1999) argues for the incorporation of how people use texts and how texts coordinate an individual's activities with another's or others' activities (p. 158).

In *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory, and Investigations*, Smith (1999) further explicates her critique of postmodernism. For Smith, it is essential that analysis makes "reference to what is beyond discourse" (p. 127). Smith offers a social theory that envisions subjects of investigation who can experience aspects of life outside discourse. Smith's institutional ethnographic approach provides the methodological framework to explore the material consequences of local discourses and institutional practices for social, cultural, political, and economic processes that shape social actors' everyday lives.

See also Ethnomethodology; Feminism; Feminism Epistemology; Foucault, Michel; Historical Materialism; Phenomenology; Postmodernism; Poststructuralism

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SOCIAL ACTION

Social action occurs when thought processes intervene between a stimulus, an actor, and their subsequent response. In other words, it is a process whereby an individual attaches a subjective meaning to his or her action. This is different from reactive behavior in that a simple reaction involves a response to a stimulus with no intervening thought. The concept of social action is of particular importance to sociology because many aspects of the field are built on the principle of understanding the subjective meanings that actors attach to actions and how they come to understand the actions of others (and themselves).

The sociology of Max Weber rested on his concept of social action. He stated that the goal of sociological analysis was "the interpretation of action in terms of its subjective meaning" (Weber [1921]1968:8). This did not, however, lead him to support the psychological study of the mind but, rather, to pursue a sociological study of mental processes. He was not as concerned with the roots of action in consciousness as much as he was interested in the ways in which social structures affected individual action.

The focus of Weber's interest in social action was on the individual. He acknowledged that there were occasions when the collective had to be treated as an individual, but only as "the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons, since these alone can be treated as agents in a course of subjectively understandable

action" (Weber [1921]1968:13). Therefore, in contrast to what the name might imply, social action is in nearly all instances performed by the individual actor and not the social collective.

Weber outlined four basic ideal types of action. The most important to him were the two basic types of rational action because these are the ones most likely to be understood by sociologists. The first of these, means-ends rationality is based on a set of expectations of other actors and their assumed responses to environmental stimuli and other human actors. These expectations are the "means" by which the actor calculates his or her own actions in order to obtain his or her desired "ends." An example of this type of action would be extending one's hand to a new acquaintance with the expectation that that person will shake your hand and the goal of a successful social exchange. The second type of rational action, value rationality, is based on the belief that some actions must be undertaken for their own sake regardless of whether or not they will be successful. The confession of sins to a Catholic priest in hopes of saving one's soul is an example of this type of action.

The other two types of action for Weber have a seemingly more irrational basis. Affectual action is the result of the emotional state of the actor. An example of this would be throwing expensive dinner plates across the room in a fit of rage or acting in socially unprescribed ways in the name of love. Traditional action is rooted in the individual's routine systems of behavior. This would include things such as showering at night versus in the morning, having tea at a certain time every day, or celebrating one's birthday with a cake and candles.

Although Weber outlined four specific types of social action, he made it clear that nearly every instance involved some combination of these four ideal types. For example, celebrating one's birthday with candles and a cake is not only traditional action but could be interpreted as value action as well.

Weber's concept of social action led to a more general action theory. Although it has declined in popularity since the 1930s and 1940s, a number of notable theorists at that time, including Robert MacIver (1931), Florian Znaniecki (1934), and especially Talcott Parsons (1937), all engaged in action theory. It was mostly the work of Parsons, however, that brought action theory to the spotlight.

Parsons did not intend his action theory to explain all parts of social reality. Instead, he recognized that such a theory was limited primarily to the most basic forms of social life. In turn, the most basic component of his action theory is the unit act. The unit act, for Parsons, has four characteristics: (1) an actor must be present, (2) the act must have a goal to which it is oriented, (3) the situation in which the act occurs must be different from the ends that it aims to accomplish (which is not the same as saying the means must be different from the ends; Parsons saw the

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STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

Although it was once the dominant sociological theory, structural functionalism is now more of a relic. Recent decades have seen this theoretical orientation slip into the background as more contemporary theories (including neofunctionalism) have taken its place.

Structural functionalism is one type of consensus theory— it posits that society is based on mutual agreements, sees the creation and maintenance of shared values and norms as crucial to society, and views social change as a slow, orderly process. Examples of prominent consensus theorists include Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton. These theories stand in contrast to conflict theories, such as those of Karl Marx, that view the world as based on a system of oppressive hierarchies, social order at the whim of dominant groups, and social change as rapid and disorderly resulting from struggles between groups.

The term *structural functionalism* can be broken down into its constituent parts. An analysis can be made of structures without reference to functions, and conversely, an analysis can be made of functions without reference to structures. Generally, however, these two are used in conjunction with one another. Furthermore, most theorists in this field were particularly interested in societal functionalism, or the specific structures and functions of society as a whole.

Parsons (1937, 1970) was the founder of, and perhaps the most prominent contributor to, structural functionalism. He was concerned with the question of how society was able to maintain order and not fall into utter chaos. He answered this question from the viewpoint of structural functionalism and outlined what he believed are its major tenets: (1) Systems are ordered and their parts are all interdependent; (2) systems tend toward a goal of equilibrium or self-maintenance; (3) systems may be either inert or change in an ordered manner; (4) each part of the system has an effect on the forms the other parts can take; (5) systems create and maintain boundaries separating them from their environments; (6) allocation and integration are necessary for a system to reach a certain state of equilibrium;

and (7) systems will tend toward self-maintenance by maintaining their boundaries, the interdependent relationship among parts, and the relationship between parts and the whole; by controlling variations in the environment; and by controlling tendencies of the system to change from within.

In addition to structures, Parsons was also concerned with functions. Parsons saw functions as those activities that had the goal of fulfilling a need of the system. He believed that there were four necessary functional imperatives of all systems: [A] adaptation (how a system copes with its outside environment by both adapting to it and by adapting the environment to meet the needs of the system), [G] goal attainment (the definition and achievement of the primary goals of the system), [I] integration (how the system regulates the relationship of its various parts as well as the relationship among the other three functional imperatives), and [L] latency, or pattern maintenance (how the system provides, maintains, and rejuvenates the motivation of individuals and the cultural patterns that stimulate and maintain that motivation). These functional imperatives are known as Parsons's AGIL scheme.

Functions become integrated with systems in Parsons's theory as each component of the AGIL scheme is handled by a different system. Most generally, adaptation is handled by the behavioral organism that adjusts to and transforms the outside world. Goal attainment is handled by the personality system that defines the goals of the system and mobilizes the necessary resources to reach outlined goals. Integration is done by the social system that controls the various components of the system. Latency is performed by the cultural system that provides individuals with norms and values to motivate them to action.

Merton (1968), a student of Parsons, continued and enriched the tradition of structural functionalism. He argued that traditional postulates in functionalism, as outlined mainly by anthropologists such as Malinowski, were grounded too heavily in abstract theory and lacked the empirical evidence needed to give them credence. He believed that to conduct proper functional analyses, theory must be coupled with empirical research. Merton helped define his viewpoint by criticizing several postulates of functional analysis. First, he criticized the postulate of functional unity by arguing that in complex societies not all components had to be integrated to a high degree. Second, he criticized the postulate of universal functionalism by contending that not all forms and structures in society have positive consequences or functions. Finally, he criticized the postulate of indispensability and rejected the idea that every aspect of society served a necessary and vital purpose; there are components that the society could function without.

Merton defined functions as those consequences that lead to the adjustment or adaptation of a system. In addition, he argued that not all functions had positive consequences and that some, in fact, were better described as dysfunctions. In

addition, nonfunctions are those consequences that have no effect at all on the system.

The development of dysfunctions and nonfunctions to complement the existing theory of functions led Merton to develop the idea of a net balance. A net balance is an understanding of the relative weight of functions and dysfunctions in a given system. It is more of a theoretical orientation than an empirical tool because the magnitude and evaluation of what constitutes functions and dysfunctions are highly subjective.

The issue of how to study a net balance led Merton to the idea of levels of functional analysis. He argued that society did not have to be studied as a whole but that organizations, groups, and other subcomponents of society were also valid as research topics. Merton, in fact, was a proponent of "middle-range" theories. Thus, what is the net balance of those functions, and dysfunctions, at one level may well be different at another level.

Another valuable contribution of Merton to the field of structural functionalism was the idea of manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions are those that are intended, whereas latent functions are those that are unintended yet still functional for the system. Closely related to the idea of latent functions is that of unanticipated consequences, although this term encompasses not only those unintended consequences that are functional for the system but also those that are dysfunctional and nonfunctional as well.

Merton defined culture as a system of norms and values that is present in society and is common to, and governs the behavior of, its members. He defined social structure as the ordered system of social interactions in which the members of a given society are occupied. In addition, Merton was interested in the relationship between culturally defined ends and the structurally possible means of achieving those ends. *Anomie*, or a state of normlessness, occurs when the available means make it difficult, if not impossible, for members of a society to achieve the culturally defined goals. The reaction of individuals to this discrepancy can involve deviant behavior because they are forced to attempt alternate (sometimes illegal) means to achieve their desired (as prescribed by society) ends. *Anomie*, for Merton, represents the disjuncture between social structures and cultural goals and hence can be dysfunctional for society.

Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945) wrote what is perhaps the best-known piece of structural functional literature on the topic of social stratification. They argued that a system of stratification is not only functional but also necessary for societies to persist and remain healthy. This idea led them to argue that a classless society had never existed because the need for a system of stratification had always created such a system. They did not, however, believe that the creation of such a stratified system was always a conscious undertaking on the part of society but, rather, that it could be, and often was, an "unconsciously evolved device."

Following their structural functional orientation, Davis and Moore saw stratification in society not in terms of people but in terms of positions. This meant that they were primarily interested in how certain positions came to be ranked higher or lower than other positions, not in how certain individuals came to fill those ranked positions. They did believe, however, that one of the biggest problems faced by society was how to get the right people to fill the right positions and then, more important, how to keep them there.

Their argument was that some positions in society are more pleasant to occupy, some are more crucial for the health and continuity of the society as a whole, and different types of positions require different types of knowledge and skills. Those positions that are generally attributed with a higher social ranking (e.g., politicians, bankers, lawyers) are not as pleasant to occupy, are more important to the overall health of society, and require the highest level of skill and education. Consequently, it is these positions that must also carry the highest level of social prestige, monetary compensation, and available leisure time.

Davis and Moore's structural functional explanation of stratification has been criticized by many for a number of reasons. First, it assumes that a system of stratification has always existed in every society and that such a system will exist in all societies in the future. Second, it provides a theoretical rationale for perpetuating the privileges of the elite. Third, many find it difficult to accept that any position in society is more or less important than any other position. Garbage collectors, for example, are arguably as important as politicians. Fourth, the stratified system makes it difficult for those in lower rankings to obtain the education and training necessary to achieve a higher ranking. Finally, there is no consideration of individuals being motivated to accept a higher (or lower) position based solely on intrinsic rewards.

Given that it was the dominant theory in sociology for such a long time, structural functionalism has also been critiqued by many in the field. A number of the more noteworthy critiques include (1) that it is ahistorical (it did in fact develop in reaction to the historical evolutionary approach of many anthropologists at that time); (2) it is unable to deal with contemporary processes of social change; (3) it cannot adequately deal with conflict (it is generally viewed as a consensus theory and hence in contradiction to conflict theory); (4) it has a conservative bias that maintains the status quo and the dominating power of the elite class; (5) it is generally too abstract, vague, and ambiguous to bear much relationship to the real world; (6) the theories are too grand and ambitious when more historically and situation relevant theories might be more appropriate; (7) there are inadequate methods to research the questions of interest; and (8) comparative analysis is virtually impossible.

Turner and Maryanski (1979) also saw the problems of teleology and tautology plaguing structural functionalism.

More specifically, they saw illegitimate teleology as a problem. It is legitimate to assume that society has certain goals and that it brings certain structures and functions into creation to achieve these goals. What many structural functionalists do, however, that is illegitimate is to assume that the current structures and functions in society are the only ones that could have been created to achieve these goals. In addition, tautology is a problem because both the whole and its parts are defined in terms of the other. The whole is defined in terms of its parts and the various parts are then defined in terms of the whole. Hence, neither is truly defined at all.

At the barrage of such critiques as those outlined above, structural functionalism eventually fell out of the limelight of sociology. Jeffrey Alexander and Paul Colomy (1985), however, made an attempt to revive interest in the topic by developing neofunctionalism in the mid-1980s. The term itself, *neofunctionalism*, implies both a strong relationship to "functionalism" as well as the implications of a new, "neo," direction. This is exactly what Alexander and Colomy had in mind; they saw neofunctionalism as broader and more integrative than traditional structural functionalism.

Although neofunctionalism is not considered so much a fully developed theory as a "tendency," Alexander (1985) has outlined some of its basic tenets: (1) It sees society as composed of interacting elements (that are not controlled by an overarching force) that form a pattern that allows it to be differentiated from the outside environment; (2) approximately equal attention is given to action and order; (3) integration is seen as a possibility rather than an accomplishment; (4) there is still an emphasis on personality, culture, and social systems, although the tension between these systems is seen as a source of control as well as change; (5) there is a focus on social change found in the differentiation within the personality, culture, and social systems; and (6) it implies a promise to the autonomy of conceptualization and theorizing from additional levels of sociological investigation.

Although it did succeed in its goal of reviving interest in the work of structural functionalists, and particularly Parsons, neofunctionalism seems to have gone the way of its predecessor and fallen out of style. This is even acknowledged by Alexander (1998) who has abandoned this orientation in lieu of pursuing what he believes will be a new wave in the creation of theory that is able to go beyond even the advances made by neofunctionalism.

— Michael Ryan

See also Alexander, Jeffrey; Anomie; Comte, Auguste; Durkheim, Émile; Merton, Robert; Parsons, Talcott

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STRUCTURALISM

It is important to understand structuralism not only in and for itself but also as a precursor to poststructuralism and ultimately to postmodern social theory. Structuralism came to be most highly developed in France (and hence is often called French structuralism). Its greatest flowering involved, at least in part, a backlash against the humanism, and especially the existentialism (Sartre was the major exponent of this perspective), that was so pervasive in post-World War II France. Humanists such as Sartre gave considerable attention to individuals and afforded them a great deal of autonomy and agency. Structuralists turned this perspective on its head by focusing on the structures that they saw as the true base of the social world. Instead of having autonomy and agency, people were seen as being impelled, if not determined, by structures.

The roots of structuralism are not in sociology but, rather, are traceable to various disciplines.

Many structuralists focus on what they believe are the deep underlying structures of society. For example, Karl Marx focuses on the underlying economic structures of society that he sees structuring not only the economy but much of society. For the economy and the larger society to change, these structures need to be uncovered, understood, and transformed. Later structural Marxists (Althusser, Poulantzas) came to see Marx as a structuralist as evidenced by his concern with the largely invisible economic structure of a capitalist society. It is this concern with underlying invisible economic structures and a rejection of empirical analysis that makes structural Marxism a form of structuralism.

Other thinkers focus on the underlying structures of the mind, especially those found in the unconscious. Sigmund Freud was a leading exponent of this idea and thought it was important not only to understand these underlying

indicates their objectively possible, general potential for meaning—that is, if the case-specific significance of action is made evident in contrast to a general horizon of significance. Such an interpretation aims for a reconstruction of a social first-order construction, oriented along the lines of the case structure of the documented action. It is case specifically laid out, elaborating for the case, “interpretive understanding” of social action in Weber’s sense of the term.

The path from the interpretive understanding to the “causal” explanation of the procedure and the effects of social action passes through the construction of a *theoretically pure type* of subjective meaning attributed to the hypothetical actor or actors in a given type of action: a second-order construction. Only in the realm of the ideal-typical constructions of rational action can it be decided how an actor “would act in a scenario of ideal rational action” and would have acted. Only with the help of these ideal-typical constructions, which better serve their purpose terminologically, classificationally, and heuristically the more “abstract and unrealistic” they are, can comparisons with the documented actors be made. Only then is it possible “to explain causally” the gap between action in ideal-typical rational action on one hand and documented action on the other so that the elements of the case being examined that were mixed in with the “pure rational action” can be identified.

The specific individual case is thus exclusively causally explained with regard to its distance from and difference to the terminologically “pure” ideal type of rational action. The individual case cannot be understood by the causal explanation of the difference—the opposite is true. By way of the interpretive understanding of social action, the constructions of ideal types can be found, which in turn cast light on the individual case and help it get its just deserve. In that they explain the case’s difference to the ideal type, they aid in the understanding of a case in its singularity and concretion.

In this sense, sociology is the progressive interpretive understanding of social action that takes seriously the individual case and thereby people, their orders, and their history. The scientific second-order constructions, the historic-genetic ideal types, aim exactly and equally for this historical understanding of the individual case and the understanding of history.

Social scientific, historic reconstructive hermeneutics is thus much more than a methodology and the repertoire of procedures that spring from it. It is a specific historic self-reflexive style of perception with the background supposition that there is no conclusive, ahistorical, ensurable knowledge, no social theory of a final solution. And this style of perception succeeds in naming good reasons for its background supposition.

— Hans-Georg Soeffner

See also Dilthey, Wilhelm; Historicism; Ideal Type; Phenomenology; Schütz, Alfred; Simmel, Georg; Weber, Max

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VIDEO AND COMPUTER GAMES

An ever-expanding category, the term, *computer games*, may refer to almost any recreational activity that can be performed using digital technologies and may include games played on self-contained machines within an arcade space, games played on self-contained platforms (Nintendo, Sega, X-Box, Sony PlayStation) attached to the television set, games played on the personal computer, games played online, and games played using portable handheld technologies. An inherently imprecise category, the term collapses distinctions historically drawn between games, sports, toys, play, stories, and role-playing.

The first games were played on computers within the programming community starting in the early 1960s, but they did not reach the commercial marketplace until 1971 with the introduction of the first arcade technologies and in 1972 with the release of the first home computer game consoles. From this modest start, and following some commercial setbacks in the 1980s, computer games have expanded into one of the most profitable sectors of the American entertainment industry and a significant force for technological and aesthetic innovation.

The medium had an enormous impact on the generation of American youth that has come of age since the early 1980s. Some studies have found that as many as 92 percent of Americans between the ages of 2 and 17 have played games, with adolescent males typically the heaviest game players. Some evidence suggests that boys' earlier and more frequent interactions with computer games makes them more self-confident in their relationships with new media technologies and thus contributes to a gender gap in computer access and use. Periodically, the games industry has made efforts to broaden its offerings to attract female consumers with mixed results. The number of girls playing computer games has dramatically increased over the past decade but still lags behind boys in almost every classification; the notable exception would be Web-based games where women slightly outnumber men.

Games technologies emerged at a moment when American youth had diminished access to real-world play space, and the technology seemed to respond to the need to provide entertainment and recreation to a generation of latchkey children who spent much of their out-of-school hours at home. In many ways, the traditional values and activities associated with boys' backyard play culture were mapped onto digital space, with the computer offering more opportunities for exploratory play than these youths would have experienced otherwise. Paralleling traits that E. Anthony Rotundo identified in boys' culture historically, players saw digital space as a realm of autonomy from adult supervision, sought recognition from their peers on the basis of daring and risk-taking, used games as a means of demonstrating self-control and mastery and as a means of social bonding through competition, and relied on digital environments to enact adult roles. With the emergence of multiplayer online games, opportunities for team-based competition expanded, with advocates claiming that participating in "brigades" might offer teens some of the same opportunities for building self-confidence and developing leadership and collaboration skills as traditional team sports. Other games-related activities, such as amateur-level design and game modification might be read as the contemporary equivalent of building crystal radios, constructing balsa wood models, or working with erector sets, hobbies that helped boys develop technical skills and insights.

Game arcades inherited a space in American teen culture previously occupied by pool halls or pinball parlors and also inherited adult concerns that these gathering places encouraged truancy and gang-related activities. As games moved into the home, the concern shifted from the idea that games drew kids together outside of school toward the idea that games were socially isolating and addictive, distracting kids from schoolwork or social interaction. Games also embraced and built on a tradition of blood and thunder imagery that had run through boys' books since the

nineteenth century and remained a persistent concern of adult reformers; with each improvement in computer technology, games perfected the ability to represent graphic violence through game play and thus provoked anxieties about whether media violence contributed to real-world aggression.

Over several decades of debate, two strands of thinking about youth access to game technologies has emerged: (a) one seeing games as a normative part of childhood culture and largely continuing traditional forms of boys' play into digital realms and (b) the other seeing games as disruptive technologies with a largely negative impact on child development. A series of school shootings in the late 1990s, including those in Paducah, Kentucky, and Littleton, Colorado, intensified this debate. The marketing of media violence to youths became the focus of a series of congressional hearings and governmental investigations; court cases were filed in several jurisdictions by parents whose children had been killed in school shootings seeking claims against specific game companies whose products had been found in the shooters' possession; state and local ordinances sought to regulate youth access to violent or sexually explicit video games drawing parallels to the regulation of youth access to cigarettes, alcohol, or pornography.

David Grossman (1999), a military psychologist, has emerged as the most visible reformer, echoing many of the same concerns raised by previous generations of media reformers, such as Frederick Wertham's charges that comic books contributed to an alleged increase in juvenile crime in the 1950s: "If we had a clear-cut objective of raising a generation of assassins and killers who are unrestrained by either authority or the nature of the victim, it is difficult to imagine how we could do a better job. The inflicting of pain and suffering has become a source of entertainment and vicarious pleasure rather than revulsion. We are learning to kill, and we are learning to like it." Citing the use of games in military training, Grossman argued that games were murder simulators that would desensitize their users to the consequences of real-world violence and thus psychologically prepare them to pull the trigger. Grossman's criticisms of video game violence have attracted support from other reform groups, most notably The Lion and the Lamb Project and the National Institute on Media and the Family. They are also embraced by a range of political leaders, including Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT.) and conservative think tank leader William Bennett.

Others, such as journalist Jon Katz (2001), challenges such arguments, noting that despite the pervasiveness of games in contemporary youth culture, federal crime statistics indicate that youth violence was at a 20-year low. They charged that the moral panic about youth access to video games was inspiring adult authorities to punish young gamers, citing the use of recreational habits as a criteria in many school districts for determining whether teens needed

to receive therapy, or the suspension or expulsion of students for ideas expressed in classroom discussions or in assigned papers dealing with the controversy. Some writers, notably Gerard Jones (2002), go further, making an affirmative case that aggressive fantasies play important developmental roles for children, helping them to work through their aggression and antisocial impulses and granting them a space of fantasy empowerment at a time in their lives when they feel limited control over their physical surroundings.

Mirroring larger debates in the social sciences, these disagreements often center on competing research methodologies: The reformers most often rely on quantitative evidence, mostly derived from the media effects tradition, whereas critics of the reform movement rely primarily on qualitative findings, mostly from ethnographic research, with a few researchers also examining broad sociological trends or correlational research. Some powerful organizations, such as American Psychological Association and American Academy of Pediatrics, issued reports claiming conclusive links between media and real-world violence, whereas other equally influential bodies, including the U.S. Surgeon General and the Australian National Censorship Board, concluded that the case had not yet been satisfactorily made. A group of scholars, representing a diverse range of academic disciplines and affiliated with the Free Expression Network, filed a succession of amicus briefs in court cases testing the regulation of violent game content, arguing that the media effects research significantly distorted the cultural phenomenon it sought to document, reducing game play to simple variables that could be tested in a laboratory.

Much of the controversy centered on titles, such as *Quake*, *Doom*, and *Grand Theft Auto 3*, which the industry itself rates as inappropriate for teens. These titles emerged as the industry sought more mature content to reflect its market demographics, which showed that 66 percent of all PC gamers and 54 percent of all platform gamers were over 18. The generation that grew up with Nintendo in the 1980s was continuing to play games but now demanded new content. Many parents still perceive games as predominantly a children's entertainment and often fail to distinguish adult from youth-oriented content. The Federal Trade Commission charged the games industry with actively marketing the more violent game titles to underage consumers, although the same study found that 85 percent of game purchases for youth consumers were made either by parents or by parents and children together, suggesting that adults were important mediators between the games industry and their younger consumers. Reform groups called for tighter enforcement of ratings at the point of sale, while the industry argued for greater efforts to educate parents about game content.

Adult uncertainty about the place of games in American youth culture reflects a significant generational gap in access and comfort with digital technologies. As with

earlier communications technologies, youth are often early adopters and display greater competence with the emerging media than do their parents. One can also position the controversy within the context of a long-standing debate about whether theatricality and role-playing constitutes forms of deception that are apt to lead participants to confusion about the line between fantasy and reality, as well as a much more recent debate about the place of play in adult life, which reflects the expansion of consumer and leisure culture in the twentieth century. Finally, by the early twenty-first century, the number of people under the age of 18 in the United States equaled the number of people in the so-called baby boom generation, placing generational issues front and center on the American political agenda.

In the midst of these controversies, educational technologists began to make the case that games could become a powerful force in American education. For some, such as Marc Prensky (2000), the argument rests on the need to develop new modes of teaching for the so-called "twitch generation," whose learning style was shaped by their early and consistent access to digital technologies. Others, such as MIT's Education Arcade project, make the case that games can enable powerful simulations inside and outside the classroom, enable and support peer-to-peer learning, become important motivators of learning, and encourage exploratory play and intuitive experience of complex content. Mark Lepper's educational psychology research group at Stanford examined games as an extraordinary example of intrinsically motivated play and developed principles of designing engaging instructional materials based on studies of video game players. Other groups, such as the OnRamp project in South Central Los Angeles, worked with teams of kids to plan and develop Web-based games, seeing the design process as itself educationally beneficial.

— Henry Jenkins

See also Consumer Culture; Internet and Cyberculture; Sport

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WALLERSTEIN, IMMANUEL

Immanuel Wallerstein (b. 1930) is certainly among the most influential social theorists of his generation despite his explicit denials of the possibility of general theory in social science. Wallerstein's conceptual approach to world history, what he has called the "world-systems perspective," has had a wide and deep impact in both the social sciences and the humanities wherever scholars and organic intellectuals have tried to penetrate what Giovanni Arrighi has called "the fog of globalization." He is the cofounder, with Terence Hopkins, of the Fernand Braudel Center at Binghamton University and is now a senior research scholar at Yale. Wallerstein is past president of the International Sociological Association and has published more than 30 books and over 200 articles and book chapters.

With Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank, and Giovanni Arrighi, Wallerstein discovered, or rediscovered, the modern system of societies as it arose with European hegemony. Born in 1930, Wallerstein grew up in the pungent broth of the New York Left. The *Monthly Review* scholars were putting together the third worldist rendering of Marxism, and Wallerstein took up the political sociology of African nationalism and pan-Africanism. Dependency theory emerged from the effort of Latin American social scientists and activists to confront sociological modernization theory (Talcott Parsons and his minions) with the realities of 500 years of European colonialism and U.S. neocolonialism. Wallerstein saw the relevance of this approach to the history of Africa, and when he read Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean* and Marian Malowist's studies of sixteenth-century Poland, he realized that core-periphery relations have been fundamental to the rise of capitalism in Europe for centuries. Thus, did Wallerstein discover the core-periphery hierarchy as a crucial dimension for understanding the last 500 years of world history.

Wallerstein's metatheoretical stance is signified by his use of the term *historical system*, which is meant to radically collapse the separation in the disciplinary structure of the modern academy between social science and history—the contrast between nomothetic ahistoricism and idiographic historicism. His narrative of the history of the modern world-system tells the story of a hierarchical inter-societal system in which class relations, state formation, nation building, race relations, geopolitics, capitalist competition, and core-periphery domination and resistance have constituted the main outlines of social change.

Wallerstein formulated the modern core-periphery hierarchy as an asymmetrical division of labor between producers of highly profitable core commodities and producers of much less profitable peripheral goods. He also asserted the systemic importance of an intermediate zone, the semi-periphery. This tripartite spatial division of labor, reproduced over the centuries despite some upward and downward mobility, is the most important of the conceptual schemas that Wallerstein's historical-structural analysis of world history has produced.

Wallerstein's big point is that it is impossible to truly understand and explain the development of modern capitalism without attention to the core-periphery hierarchy. The ability of core capitalists and their states to exploit peripheral resources and labor has been a major factor in the competition among core contenders, and the resistance to exploitation and domination mounted by peripheral peoples has also played a powerful role in world history.

There have been two major critiques of Wallerstein's work. Some Marxists have alleged that Wallerstein pays too little attention to class relations as the key to capitalist development. His claim that peripheral class relations—serfdom and slavery—have played a fundamental role in shaping the modern world-system is alleged to water down Marx's insistence on wage labor as the sine qua non of modern capitalism. And Wallerstein has been lumped with other "Smithian

Marxists" (such as Paul Sweezy) because his emphasis on the centrality of core-periphery relations is argued to privilege the importance of exchange relations (trade) over production relations (the appropriation of surplus value by capitalist exploitation of wage labor). These oft-repeated critiques have allowed many Marxists to continue to indulge in an analysis of societal class relations as if national societies were separate and autonomous entities, at least until the allegedly recent emergence of globalization.

The second main critique has come from those who contend that Wallerstein has privileged economic factors over and above politics and states. Some political sociologists have argued that Wallerstein's focus on the core-periphery division of labor glosses over important differences between the institutional structures of particular state apparatuses and struggles over policy changes that have occurred in the realm of politics. Curiously, both the point-of-production Marxists and the "bringing the state back in" political sociologists seem to have missed the specifics of Wallerstein's narrative account of the historical development of the modern world-system. He repeatedly tells how differences in regional or national class structures led to significant outcomes such as Portugal's leading role in fifteenth-century European expansion or the rise of the Dutch and British hegemonies. Wallerstein's insistence on the study of the whole world system and his resonant avowal of the relevance of historical and comparative knowledge scare those scholars whose specialized expertise is spatially or temporally narrow.

Despite all the breathless claims about globalization having changed everything since 1960, Wallerstein contends that globalization is as much a cycle as a trend and that the wave of global integration that has swept the world in the last decades is best understood by studying its similarities and differences with the wave of international trade and foreign investment in the last half of the nineteenth century. Wallerstein insists that U.S. economic hegemony is continuing to decline, and he sees the current U.S. unilateralism as a repetition of the mistakes of earlier declining hegemons who attempted to substitute military superiority for economic comparative advantage. Once the world system cycles and trends, and the game of musical chairs that is capitalist uneven development are taken into account, Wallerstein sees far more continuities than radical transformations. The title of one of his essays is "What Globalization?"

Wallerstein's stellar performance as brilliant historical sociologist and brave public intellectual demonstrates that social theory is not merely a pastime for academics. It still has voice on the stage of world politics.

— Christopher Chase-Dunn

See also Annales School; Capitalism; Globalization; Historical and Comparative Theory; Imperialism; Marxism; World-Systems Theory

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WEBER, MARIANNE

Marianne Schnitger Weber (1870–1954) is best known for her marriage to sociologist Max Weber and her efforts to ensure his scholarly legacy by editing 10 volumes of his writings and penning his biography, published in 1926. In Germany during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Weber was recognized as a feminist intellectual who wrote and spoke widely on women's issues. Her feminist theoretical writings provided a counterpoise to sociological theories by contemporaneous male academicians, which brought to sociological discourse a focus on women's roles in society. Weber rejected the assumption that sociological theory written from a male standpoint is applicable to all social actors.

In 1896, Weber was one of the first generation of women to study at the University of Heidelberg. Here, she joined a feminist organization and began to develop her sociological investigations that begin with women's experiences and situations. Weber completed a dissertation at the University of Freiburg titled, "Fichte's Socialism and Its Relationship to Marxist Doctrine" (1900). In 1904, she traveled to America, meeting a number of women activists, reformers, and educators, including Jane Addams and Florence Kelly of Hull House and Lillian Wald of the Henry Street Settlement. It was M. Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr College, and Ethel Puffer Howes, professor of philosophy and psychology at Wellesley College, however, who most shared Weber's belief that women should be given the opportunity for intellectual development through coeducation. Weber based her arguments concerning women and education not on economic opportunity but on feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's thesis that women would experience financial and marital freedom through paid employment. Weber's critique, informed by an awareness of social differentiation as well as current statistics assumed that the majority of women would endure the double burden of low-wage physical labor plus the duties of motherhood and housekeeping. Weber argued that housework and child care be given economic value in her essay "On the Valuation of Housework" (1912). In this essay, Weber posits that the underlying

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ŽIŽEK, SLAVOJ

Slavoj Žižek (b. 1949) is one of the most outspoken proponents of Lacanian psychoanalysis working in contemporary social theory. Born in 1949 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Žižek holds a PhD in philosophy from the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Ljubljana and a PhD in psychoanalysis from the Université Paris-VIII. Over the last 15 years, the aptly nicknamed “Giant of Ljubljana” has attended over 250 international philosophical and cultural studies conferences, published over 25 books, and is currently the senior researcher in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana. Not only is he an internationally recognized social theorist, he has also been known to dabble in politics, campaigning for the Slovenian presidency in 1990. Overall, Žižek is a provocative voice that has challenged many assumptions both inside and outside of academia.

While the scope of Žižek writings is far too vast to cover in this brief entry, there is a clear theoretical argument that runs throughout his work. His overarching theoretical program is perhaps best outlined in the book *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) in which he presents a Lacanian-inspired form of ideological critique. For Žižek, ideology attempts to stitch together the fractured social field, which is traversed by inconsistencies and antagonisms. Social antagonisms, such as class struggle, are for Žižek equivalent to Lacan’s notion of the Real as a traumatic kernel that resists symbolization. There are essentially two mechanisms by which ideology reconstructs the social as a unified, harmonious, and coherent totality. To effectively erase internal contradictions, ideology propagates sublime objects such as “the nation” or “the people.” These symbolic fictions act as virtual stand-ins, repressing internal social antagonisms, which nonetheless reappear in the form of symptoms (e.g., class conflict, World Trade Organization

[WTO] protests, global warming, or the increasing homeless population). Second, to purify its harmonious self-image, ideology not only represses social ambiguities but also externalizes them. In this manner, internal contestations are projected outward onto the proverbial other. Through ideology as a fantasy construct, the social is able to maintain its illusory integrity.

For Žižek, a Lacanian-inspired form of ideological critique is paramount to going through the social fantasy until the subject is able to identify with the symptom. As an example, Žižek references the Nazi construction of the Jew. Within the ideological fantasy of National Socialism, the Jew becomes the stumbling block that prevents the realization of the perfected Aryan race. The internal antagonisms found within the German social field are conveniently projected onto the Jew as the external other. To deconstruct this ideological projection, the subject should “traverse the phantasy” of Nazism, realizing that the traumatic kernel preventing the full realization of the Aryan myth is not external but internal to the Nazi project itself. Through the application of Lacanian concepts to the study of ideology, Žižek thus equips cultural critics with powerful analytical tools that complement and enlarge the leftist vocabulary.

In texts such as *Looking Awry* (1991), *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (1992), and *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)* (1992), Žižek brings cultural studies and Lacan into dialog with one another. As a philosophical DJ, Žižek likes to mix it up, often employing a surprising combination of Kant, Marx, Hegel, Schelling, Badiou, and of course, Lacan to explore a wide range of contemporary cultural phenomena that include, but are by no means limited to, the Internet, Hollywood films, television, tea bag mantras, and other banal aspects of the American cultural sphere. While other cultural theorists see popular culture as merely an ideological mystification, Žižek believes that an understanding of the media is paramount to understanding the human psyche

as such. According to Lacan, the unconscious is quite literally the symbolic order, or the discourse of the Other. Rather than a deep, dark, secret hidden within our minds, the unconscious resides outside us, embedded within everyday institutions, media culture, and social practices. Taking advantage of the ubiquity and the popularity of the American media, Žižek often employs concrete examples drawn from mainstream culture to clearly elucidate rather opaque Lacanian concepts. In perhaps his most famous example, Žižek uses sitcom laugh tracks to demonstrate the Lacanian maxim "desire is the desire of the other." In a typical Žižekian inversion of commonsense assumptions, he argues that laugh tracks do not tell us when to laugh, instead they literally laugh for us. The symbolic order—that is, the Lacanian Big Other—has relieved the viewer of the burden to laugh, laughing in our place.

Žižek also uses the explanatory power of Lacanian concepts to analyze contemporary politics. In particular, Žižek attacks New Agers, liberals, feminists, postmodernists, and multiculturalists. For Žižek, these movements are forms of micropolitics that do not challenge the hegemonic rule of capitalism or its political counterpart, liberal democracy. In fact, identity politics are endorsed and even encouraged by the new, flexible, transnational capitalist order. In *The Ticklish Subject* (2000), Žižek observes, "The depoliticized economy is the disavowed 'fundamental fantasy' of post-modern politics" (p. 355). Through a Lacanian perspective, Žižek argues that these movements are in fact forms of "interpassivity." In psychoanalysis, the interpassive subject remains fanatically active to prevent something from occurring. Applying this term to the realm of politics, Žižek contends that postmodern social movements constantly produce new pleasures, new identities, and new desires that remain fully within the scope of capitalism, thus preventing radical social transformation. Although identity politics have made important strides that should not be forgotten or abandoned, Žižek nevertheless sees such forms of activism as limited.

Consequentially, Žižek calls for the recentralization or a repoliticization of the economy in leftist politics. In *Repeating Lenin* (2001), Žižek endorses the radical political imagination of V. I. Lenin as an intervention that does not accept the "natural" and "unavoidable" status of the global economy. Instead of simply returning to Lenin's political project, Žižek instead argues for a rehabilitation of the spirit of Lenin's radical break with the hegemonic status quo. As opposed to identity politics, which remain situated within the logic of the capitalist market and the ideologies of liberal democracy, an extreme break with the status quo would be the embodiment of a "Lacanian act," creating new horizons of political, cultural, and economic possibilities. Thus Žižek views Lenin's project as a true historical event—an articulation of the void at the heart of symbolic order that opens up a space for radical social and political alternatives.

In conclusion, Žižek is important for social theory because he has demonstrated the wide-reaching explanatory power of Lacanian psychoanalysis. While receiving praise for his theoretical innovations, Žižek is no stranger to criticism. In the book *Contingency, Hegemony, and Universality* (2000), Žižek, Judith Butler, and Ernesto Laclau enter into an extended debate concerning these three concepts. Butler in particular questions Žižek's ability to account for the historical specificity of trauma. From her perspective, his Lacanian approach reduces all forms of oppression to the ahistorical category of the Real. In response, Žižek has argued that Butler is in fact ahistorical, creating a teleological narrative that posits her own theory of performative identity as a universal "truth" rather than a historically and culturally embedded form of knowledge. Furthermore, the Lacanian real is not really ahistorical but is rather the traumatic, unsymbolized kernel that is unique to each historical period. Thus, Žižek remains a highly controversial figure whose theories are read and debated across disciplines.

— Tyson Lewis

See also Butler, Judith; Lacan, Jacques; Marx, Karl; Marxism; Media Critique; Psychoanalysis and Social Theory; Simulation

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ZNANIĘCKI, FLORIAN WITOLD

Florian Znanięcki (1882–1958) was a Polish and American sociologist and philosopher of culture, born on January 15, 1882, in Świątniki, Poland. He died on March 23, 1958, in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. He formulated a theory of cultural systems with a humanistic coefficient that relates to the active experience of meaning and the axiological significance of cultural data. For Znanięcki, cultural data consist of values, and these differ from the mere "things" that are the object of research in the natural sciences. With his writings in Polish and English, Znanięcki developed a systematic sociological theory built on a theory of action that aimed at the understanding and explanation of

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