

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

920:515 Fall'07

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We can subject reality to thought only by separating individual parts of its content and by knowing these parts in isolation. For thought cannot comprehend reality in its complex form (Dilthey, *Introduction to the Human Sciences*).

Dilthey's comment sets the tone for what I consider to be a good way to approach the works of the classical thinkers we will be engaged with during this all too short semester. My interpretation of his point is that we can valuably read each of these thinkers as attempting to understand an isolated part of social existence. This is a helpful approach precisely because of the desire of some of these theorists, a human desire I would say, to comprehend reality in its complexity, in its totality. Thus, if we accept the fact that they, like us, are limited to knowing only parts of social existence, we can more fully appreciate what each has to offer to us about some significant aspects of society. Even further, we will be able to appreciate what each offers as possible ways of going about knowing isolated parts of society. This approach is intended to keep us away from the need to determine which theorist is "right," or "better" relative to the others. Rather, our approach is that each provides us with tools for undertaking the enterprise of the analysis of social existence. With this orientation, the fact that they might disagree on minor or significant points gives us multiple tools to work with rather than puts us in the position of having to choose among them.

I see the following seven issues as the basis for questions that we can pose to the readings during the seminar: Model of society [organic, mechanical, etc]; Relationship to Kant/Hegel; Historical moment, if any, around which the texts focus; Narrative style; Data; Method; Relation to contemporary theoretical perspectives.

Those issues relate to the deep dialogues that underlie the conversations among the classical theorists. While not all of them are explicit about their position on the seven topics, the topics nonetheless allow us to engage in conversation with each theorist and at times they will help us clarify some of the bases for the similarities and differences among them.

I have structured the class to operate as a seminar. What I mean is that we will engage with the texts as a basis by which to engage in constructive conversation with each other. This establishes a context for the raising and exploring of questions as valuable group activities.

Texts at the Livingston Campus Bookstore

Durkheim, E.

Division of Labor in Society

Durkheim, E.

Elementary Forms of Religious Life

Durkheim, E.

Suicide

Freud, S.

Civilization and its Discontents

Mead, G. H. *Mind, Self and Society*
 Simmel, G. *Conflict and Web of Group Affiliations*
 Tucker, R. (ed.) *Marx-Engels Reader*
 Weber, M. *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
 Wolff, K. (ed.) *Sociology of Georg Simmel*
 Additional readings will be posted on SAKAI or accessed via the Internet

Expectations

Class participation based on the ideas in “The Seminar” essay 20pts
 4 short essays (5-6 pages) [20pts each] 80pts

WEEK I

Sept 10

Discussion of the seminar style

Introduction to the historical and intellectual currents of 18th and 19th century Europe

WEEK II

Sept 17 *Some conceptual roots of early sociology*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778); Immanuel Kant (1724-1804); Auguste Comte (1798-1857); Herbert Spencer (1820-1903); Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911); Georg Simmel, (1858-1918),

Bowman, C. “Kant and the Project of Enlightenment,”

<http://www.phil.upenn.edu/~cubowman/kant.html>

#Comte Excerpt from *A general view of Positivism*

#Spencer “Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of M. Comte”

#Dilthey Excerpt from *Introduction to the Human Sciences*

\$Simmel Part One, Section IV: “Individual and Society in 18th and 19th

Century Views of Life,” in Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*

WEEK III

Sept 24 *Social systems shape ideas (Materialist, Structural)*

Karl Marx (1818-1883); Friedrich Engels (1820-1895):

\$Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*:

“The German Ideology, part I”.

“Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”

“Alienation and Social Classes”

WEEK IV

Oct 1 *Marx and Engels: Historical Method: The historical context of the present*

\$Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*:

“Working-Class Manchester”

“The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850

“The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,”

“The Civil War in France”

“On Imperialism in India”

WEEK V

Oct 8 *Social change and their long-term impact on members of society*

Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936); Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

#Tonnies, Chapter 5 “Summing Up,” of his *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*

\$Durkheim, *Division of labor*

Preface to the 2nd edition

Book I: “The Function of the Division of Labor”

Chapter I: “The Method of determining this Function

Chapter II: “Mechanical Solidarity”

Chapter III: “Solidarity arising from the Division of Labor: Organic

Chapter VII: “Organic Solidarity and Contractual Solidarity

Book III “Abnormal Forms

Chapters, I-III

FIRST ESSAY DUE (Material through week 4)

WEEK VI

Oct 15 *The empirical tradition (Sociological vs. Psychological explanations)*

\$Durkheim, *Suicide*

pp. 152-89; 197-216; 241-276; 297-325

“What is a Social Fact,” from *Rules of Sociological Method*

WEEK VII

Oct 22 *Learning about the present by investigating the past; Moral basis of Society; Collective*

Representation; The making of Identity,

\$Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

Author’s Introduction (1-18);

Book 1: Chapter 1, part 3;

Book 2: Chapters 1-4

Chapter 7, Parts I, II IV

Chapter 8, Parts II, V, VII

Book 3: Chapter 1

Chapter 4, Part III

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Parts I, III, IV

WEEK VIII

Oct 29 *Historical (Macro; ideas shape social systems)*

Max Weber (1864-1920)

\$Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

#Weber, “Ideal Types,” pp. 47-57 of *Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy*

SECOND ESSAY DUE (Material from weeks 5-7)

WEEK IXNov 5#Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. I

“The definition of Sociology and Social Action,” Chapter 1, pp. 4-26

“Political Communities,” Chapter 9, pp. 901-940

WEEK XNov 12 *Attempts at gaining an understanding of the ‘intended meaning’ of human action: (MICRO Sociology, methodological individualism)*

Alfred Schutz (1899-1959)

#Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. I

“The Types of Legitimate Domination,” Chapter 3, pp. 212-254

#Schutz, A. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Chapters 1 and 5**WEEK XI**Nov 19 *Sociological Theories and Modern Life*\$Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*

Part One, “The Field of Sociology,” Chapters I-III

Part Two, “Quantitative Aspects of the Group,” Chapters I and III

“The Metropolis and Mental Life,” pp. 409-426

WEEK XIINov 26 *Showing complexity in the apparently simple*\$Simmel, *Conflict and Web of Group Affiliations*

“Conflict,” Chapters 1 and 3

\$Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*

“The Negative Character of Collective Behavior,” pp. 396-401

THIRD ESSAY DUE (Material from weeks 8-11)**WEEK XIII**Dec 3 *The making of modern civilization; the making of modern dilemmas*

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939); W.E. B. Dubois (1868-1963)

\$Freud *Civilization and Its Discontents*

#W.E. B. Dubois (MACRO: Suppression of the African Slave Trade)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17700/17700-8.txt>

Chapter V, “The Period of the Revolution,” (pp. 31-39)

Chapter VI, “The Federal Convention: 1787,” (pp. 39-49)

Chapter IX, “The International Status of the Slave Trade (pp.93-106)

Chapter X, “Rise of the Cotton Kingdom (pp. 107-117)

Chapter XI, “The Final Crisis,” (pp. 117-134)

Chapter XII, “The Essentials in the Struggle,” (pp. 135-138)

The Dubois text is an historical take on the complexity of grappling with ideals (see the earlier discussions on Rousseau, Kant and the Enlightenment) in the face of practical interests. It fits nicely with Freud’s concern with pulling the blinders off of our eyes about the human condition.

WEEK XIV

Dec 10 *The regeneration of membership for societies; micro sources of social stability*

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931); Charles Cooley (1864-1929)

\$Mead, *Mind Self and Society*

pp. 42-51; 117-125; 135-175

#Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order*

pp. 118-124; 136-141; 165-167; 181-185; 189-194

4TH ESSAY DUE DEC. 17 (Your choice of materials to focus on)

Location of Readings

\$ Bookstore

Sakai

Internet: as sites indicate