

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, featuring numerous illuminated skyscrapers. A large, bright red moon is visible in the upper left portion of the sky, partially obscured by the tops of two buildings. The city lights create a dense pattern of small, warm-colored points of light against the dark night sky.

# SOC 755 General Sociology

18 September 2018

# Dilemmas

- I. Social problems and sociological problems
- II. Sociology and common sense
- III. Subject and method
- IV. Platonic and value-free sociology

# I. Social problems and sociological problems

- P.L.Berger: Invitation to sociology
- Sociology vs. Normativity
- Everyday life as an object of doubt, of study
  - Georg Simmel (1905): How is society possible?
  - Pierre Bourdieu: „epistemic radicalism“

## II. Sociology and common sense

### **Sociology**

- Rules of a responsible discourse (reliability, openness, critique)
- Beyond individual biography (biography + history)
- Against particular worldviews (not from individual viewpoints)

### **Common sense**

- Explains but is not explained (confirms itself, is not subject to doubt)

# III. Subject and method

- E. Durkheim: The subject of sociology are social facts
  - Super-individual
  - Have power over individuals

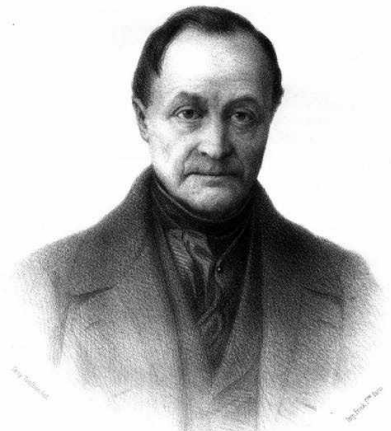


- M.Weber: The method of sociology is understanding
  - Action carries meaning
  - Understanding (Verstehen) of it



## IV. Platonic and value-free sociology

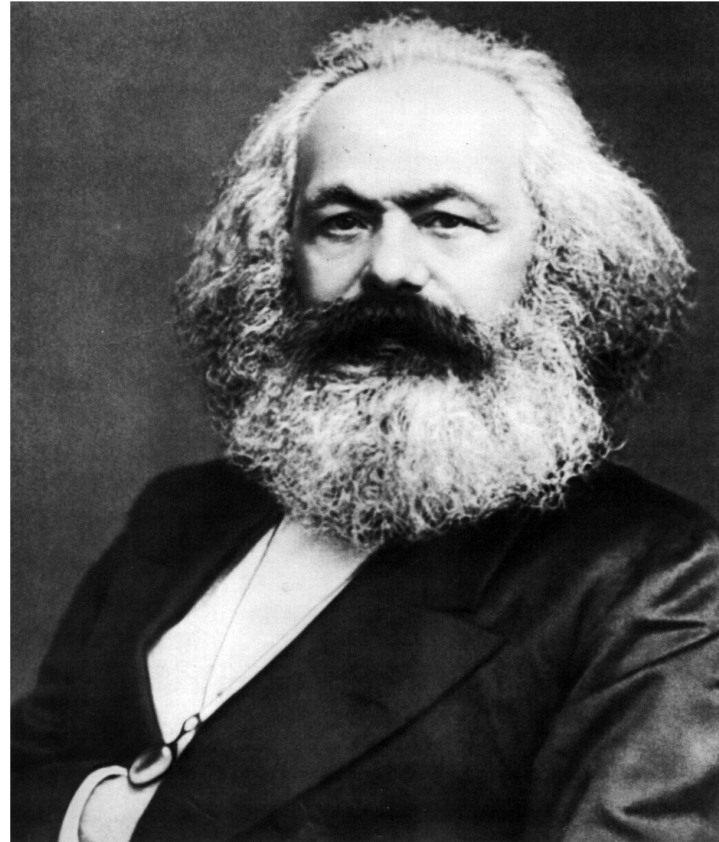
- Auguste Comte: A science of society will allow us to understand social mechanisms and therefore govern the society in the right way
- Max Weber: Sociology is value-free. It does not comment on the normative status of its results.



# Karl Marx and Marxism

General Sociology, 1 October 2019

# Karl Marx (1818-1883)





# Karl Marx

- Alienation and human potential
- Alienation from
  - Work activity
  - Work product
  - Other workers
  - One's own potential

# Karl Marx

External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. (...) the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self. As a result, therefore, man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc. And in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. **What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.**

# Karl Marx

- Alienation and human potential
- Commodity, use value and exchange value, commodity fetishism

# Karl Marx

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. **All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.**

# Karl Marx

- Alienation and human potential
- Commodity, use value and exchange value
- Reification

# Ludwig Feuerbach

- What man needs, he makes his God.
- What man wishes to be, he makes his God

# Ludwig Feuerbach

“The essence of faith ... is the idea that that which man wishes actually is: he wishes to be immortal, therefore he is immortal; he wishes for the existence of a being who can do everything which is impossible to Nature and reason, therefore such a being exists[.]”

“Christianity set itself the goal of fulfilling man’s unattainable desires, but for that very reason ignored his attainable desires. By promising man eternal life, it deprived him of temporal life, by teaching him to trust in God’s help it took away his trust in his own powers; by giving him faith in a better life in heaven, it destroyed his faith in a better life on earth and his striving to attain such a life. Christianity gave man what his imagination desires, but for that very reason failed to give him what he really and truly desires.”

# Karl Marx

- Alienation and human potential
- Commodity, use value and exchange value
- Reification
- Capitalism, exploitation



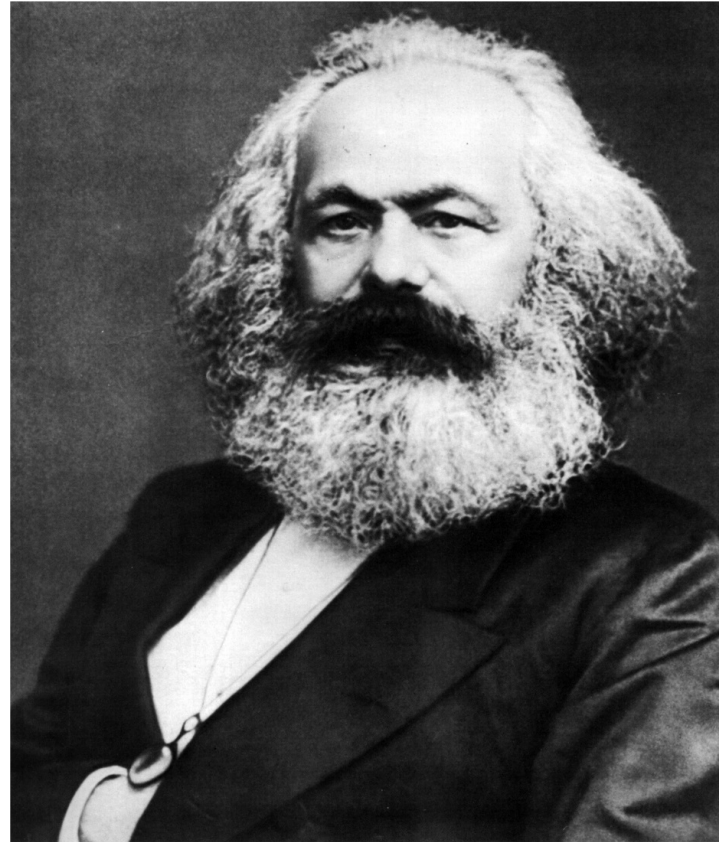
# Karl Marx

- Alienation and human potential
- Commodity, use value and exchange value
- Reification
- Capitalism, exploitation
- Class conflict, teleology of history

# Karl Marx

- Alienation and human potential
- Commodity, use value and exchange value
- Reification
- Capitalism, exploitation
- Class conflict, teleology of history
- Ideology

# Karl Marx (1818-1883)



# Émile Durkheim and the collective in society

SOC755 General Sociology

8 October 2019

# Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)



- The collective has primacy over the individual
- Society can be studied scientifically
- „*man is less a point of departure than a point of arrival*“ (Ritzer on Durkheim)

# Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)

- Social facts: external, coercive, constructed
  - Material and non-material
  - Collective consciousness and collective representations
- Mechanical and organic solidarity
  - Unification and difference
  - Division of labour
- Law and crime
  - A functional view of crime



# Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)



*M. and Mme. Durkheim and their grandson, Claude Halpben, 1916. Photo courtesy of Etienne Halpben.*

- Suicide: regulation and integration
  - Egoistic, altruistic, anomic, fatalistic
  - Anomie = lack/mismatch of norms and values
- The sacred and the profane
  - Religion, society as transcendence
  - Symbol and ritual

# Max Weber and the theory of action

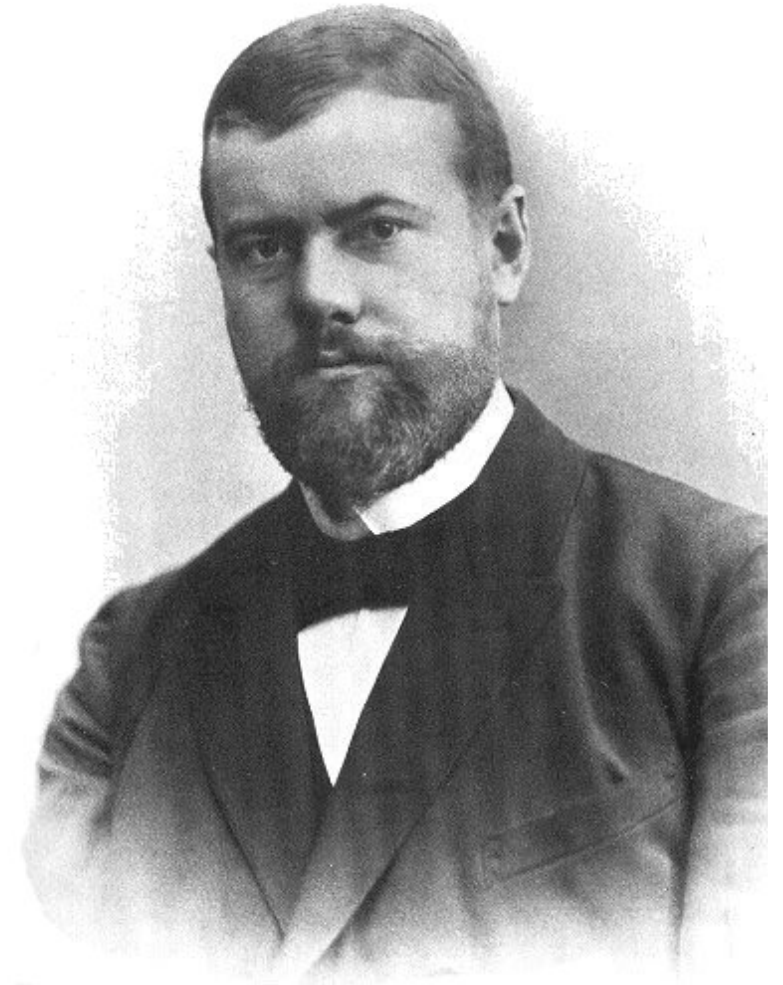
SOC755 General Sociology

15 October 2019



# Max Weber (1864-1920)

- Methodology of social science
  - Meaning and verstehen
  - Ideal Types
- Social Action
  - Means-ends (instrumental) rationality
  - Value rationality
  - Affectual action
  - Traditional action
- Value-free sociology: facts vs. values



# Max Weber (1864-1920)



- Power, domination and **authority**
  - Rational (legal)
  - Traditional
  - Charismatic
- Bureaucracy = the purest form of rational authority
  1. Continuous organization of offices bound by rules
  2. Each office has a sphere of competence
  3. Hierarchy
  4. Technical qualifications for office
  5. Staff do not own the means of production
  6. Positions not personally appropriated
  7. Actions, decisions and rules recorded in writing

The great virtue of bureaucracy - indeed, perhaps its defining characteristic - was that it was an institutional method for applying general rules to specific cases, thereby making the actions of government fair and predictable (...)

A fully developed bureaucratic mechanism stands in the same relationship to other forms as does the machine to the non-mechanical production of goods. Precision, speed, clarity, documentary ability, continuity, discretion, unity, rigid subordination, reduction of friction and material and personal expenses are unique to bureaucratic organization.

# Max Weber (1864-1920)



“It is horrible to think that the world could one day be filled with nothing but those little cogs, little men clinging to little jobs and striving towards bigger ones (...) This passion for bureaucracy ... is enough to drive one to despair. It is as if (...). we were deliberately to become men who need "order" and nothing but order, and become nervous and cowardly if for one moment this order wavers, and helpless if they are torn away from their total incorporation in it. That the world should know no men but these: it is such an evolution that we are already caught up, and the great question is, therefore, not how we can promote and hasten it, but what can we oppose to this machinery in order to keep a portion of mankind free from this parcelling-out of the soul, from this supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life.”

# Max Weber (1864-1920)

- Rationality and rationalisation
  - Formal rationality
  - Heritage of enlightenment
  - Disenchantment (Entzauberung)
- Religion
  - As a factor of economic development
  - Protestant ethics and spirit of capitalism
    - Vocation/calling, ascetism
    - Rational and systematic pursuit of profit
    - Effectiveness as a virtue; planning, calculation
- Iron cage of rationality



# Max Weber (1864-1920)

„The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. It is not accidental that our greatest art is intimate and not monumental.“





“In Baxter’s view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the “saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment”. But fate decreed that **the cloak should become an iron cage** (...) “No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.’”

# Georg Simmel, modernity and forms of the social

General Sociology, 22 October 2019



# Georg Simmel (1858-1918)

- Formal sociology; forms are an object of study
- Forms contain a central conflict (Fashion, stranger, seduction)
- Money in modern culture
  - Money is common; the tragedy of levelling
  - Money as a layer between person and object
  - A new relationship of dependence vs. independence
  - Means and ends;



# Money

By Philip Larkin

Quarterly, is it, money reproaches me:

‘Why do you let me lie here wastefully?

I am all you never had of goods and sex.

You could get them still by writing a few cheques.’

So I look at others, what they do with theirs:

They certainly don’t keep it upstairs.

By now they’ve a second house and car and wife:

Clearly money has something to do with life

–In fact, they’ve a lot in common, if you enquire:

You can’t put off being young until you retire,

And however you bank your screw, the money you save

Won’t in the end buy you more than a shave.

I listen to money singing. It’s like looking down

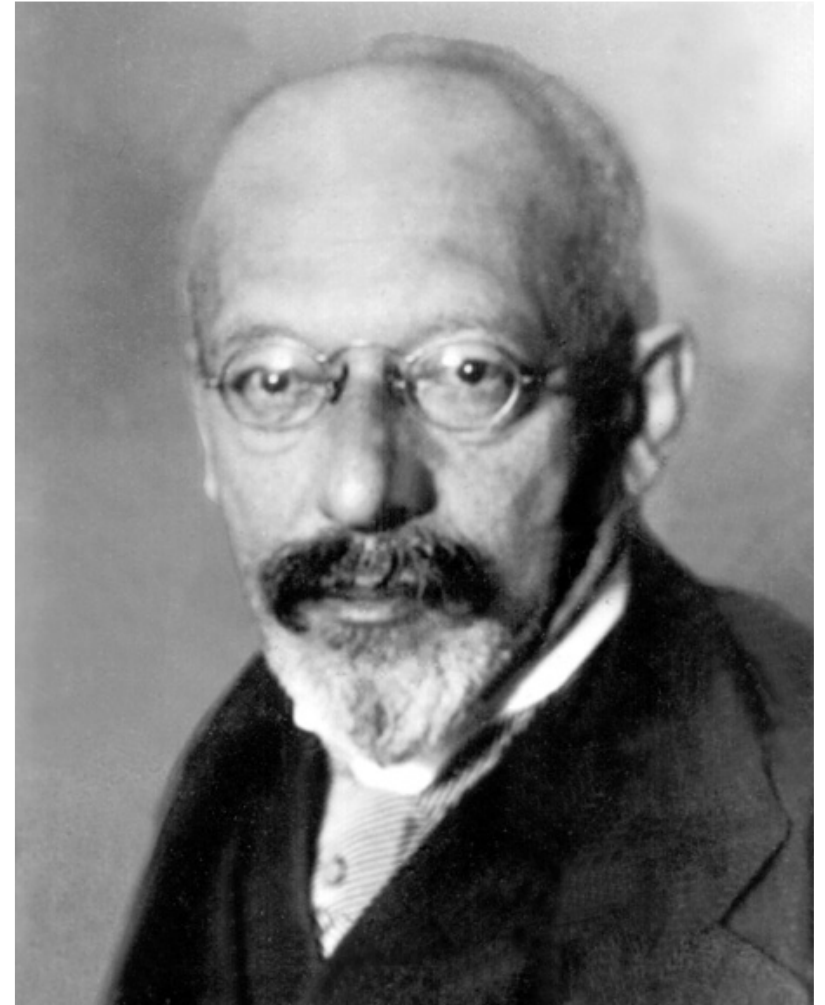
From long french windows at a provincial town,

The slums, the canal, the churches ornate and mad

In the evening sun. It is intensely sad.

# Georg Simmel (1858-1918)

- Metropolis and mental life
  - „Blasé attitude“
  - Disengagement and rationality
  - Metropolis and money



# Stanley Milgram: The experience of living in cities

- System theory:
  - Stimulus overlad
  - Reduction in cognitive functions
- Indifference, reduced responsibility
- P. Zimbardo: anonymity reduces social control



# Georg Simmel: Conflict of modern culture



- Conflict of modern culture: life vs. Forms
- Life exists only through forms
- The attempt to escape forms

# Conflict of modern culture

- „perpetual struggle between life, with its fundamental restlessness, evolution and mobility, and its own creations, which become inflexible and lag behind its development. Since, however, life can take on external existence only in one form or another, this process can be clearly identified and described in terms of the displacement of one form by another.“

# Conflict of modern culture

- The mania for originality in so many young people of today (...)  
Originality is only the ratio cognoscendi, so to speak, which guarantees that life is purely itself and that no external, objectified, rigid forms have been absorbed in its flux, or its flux in them. We may have here a more general underlying motive for modern individualism

# Conflict of modern culture

- It is the nature of life to produce within itself that which guides and redeems it, and that which opposes, conquers and is conquered by it. It sustains and enhances itself by way of its own products. The fact that these products confront it as independent judges is the very foundation of their existence, their modus vivendi. The opposition in which they thus find themselves to the life which is superior to them is the tragic conflict of life as mind. This conflict is now, of course, becoming more perceptible with the growing awareness that it is in fact created by life itself, and is therefore organically and ineluctably bound up with life.



# Conflict of modern culture

- **What we are** is, it is true, spontaneous life, with its equally spontaneous, unanalysable sense of being, vitality and purposiveness, but **what we have** is only its particular form at any one time (...) Life is ineluctably condemned to become reality only in the guise of its opposite, that is as form.