



Social Theory: A Historical Introduction

Alex Callinicos

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The eighteenth-century Enlightenment saw the birth of the concept of modernity - of an era which sought legitimacy not from the past but from the future. No longer would human beings invoke the authority of tradition; instead, the societies emerging in the West would justify themselves by their success, through the application of scientific knowledge, in increasing control of the world. Ever since this idea of modernity was formulated, it has provoked immense debate. In exploring this debate, Alex Callinicos provides a wide-ranging historical and introduction to social theory which traces its connections with central themes in modern philosophy, with the development of political economy, and with the impact of evolutionary biology on social thought. The theorists treated include Montesquieu, Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment, Hegel, Marx, Tocqueville, Maistre, Gobineau, Darwin, Spencer, Kautsky, Nietzsche, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, Freud, Luk, Gramsci, Heidegger, Keynes, Hayek, Parsons, the Frankfurt School, L, Althusser, Foucault, Habermas and Bourdieu. A concluding chapter considers the contemporary condition of social theory including the analysis of "late modernity" by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. Alex Callinicos's volume provides a remarkably comprehensive and lucid account of social theory. It will be essential reading for students of politics, sociology and social and political thought.

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