

Current Perspectives in Social Theory
Volume 29

**THE DIVERSITY OF
SOCIAL THEORIES**

**EDITED BY
HARRY F. DAHMS**



THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL THEORIES

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL THEORY

Series Editor: Harry F. Dahms

Recent Volumes:

- Volume 1: 1980, Edited by Scott G. McNall and Garry N. Howe
Volume 2: 1981, Edited by Scott G. McNall and Garry N. Howe
Volume 3: 1982, Edited by Scott G. McNall
Volume 4: 1983, Edited by Scott G. McNall
Volume 5: 1984, Edited by Scott G. McNall
Volume 6: 1985, Edited by Scott G. McNall
Volume 7: 1986, Edited by John Wilson
Volume 8: 1987, Edited by John Wilson
Volume 9: 1989, Edited by John Wilson
Volume 10: 1990, Edited by John Wilson
Volume 11: 1991, Edited by Ben Agger
Volume 12: 1992, Edited by Ben Agger
Volume 13: 1993, Edited by Ben Agger
Volume 14: 1994, Edited by Ben Agger
Supplement 1: *Recent Developments in the Theory of Social Structure*, 1994,
Edited by J. David Knottnerus and Christopher Prendergast
Volume 15: 1995, Edited by Ben Agger
Volume 16: 1996, Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann
Volume 17: 1997, Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann
Volume 18: 1998, Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann
Volume 19: 1999, Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann
Volume 20: 2000, Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann
Volume 21: *Bringing Capitalism Back for Critique by Social Theory*, 2001,
Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann
Volume 22: *Critical Theory: Diverse Objects, Diverse Subjects*, 2003,
Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann
Volume 23: *Social Theory as Politics in Knowledge*, 2005, Edited by Jennifer M.
Lehmann
Volume 24: *Globalization Between the Cold War and Neo-Imperialism*, 2006,
Edited by Jennifer M. Lehmann and Harry F. Dahms
Volume 25: *No Social Science without Critical Theory*, 2008,
Edited by Harry F. Dahms
Volume 26: *Nature, Knowledge and Negation*, 2009,
Edited by Harry F. Dahms
Volume 27: *Theorizing the Dynamics of Social Processes*, 2010,
Edited by Harry F. Dahms and Lawrence Hazelrigg
Volume 28: *The Vitality of Critical Theory*, 2011, By Harry F. Dahms

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL THEORY VOLUME 29

THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL THEORIES

EDITED BY

HARRY F. DAHMS

*Department of Sociology, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, USA*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Group Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2011

Copyright © 2011 Emerald Group Publishing Limited

Reprints and permission service

Contact: booksandseries@emeraldinsight.com

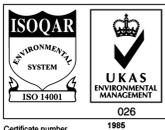
No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy of information contained in the text, illustrations or advertisements. The opinions expressed in these chapters are not necessarily those of the Editor or the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-85724-821-3

ISSN: 0278-1204 (Series)



Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Howard House, Environmental Management System has been certified by ISOQAR to ISO 14001:2004 standards



Awarded in recognition of Emerald's production department's adherence to quality systems and processes when preparing scholarly journals for print



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

EDITOR

Harry F. Dahms
University of Tennessee (Sociology)

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Alex Stoner
Shane Willson

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Robert J. Antonio
University of Kansas (Sociology)

Lawrence Hazelrigg
*Florida State University
(Sociology)*

Timothy Luke
*Virginia Polytechnic Institute and
State University (Political Science)*

EDITORIAL BOARD

Ben Agger
*University of Texas – Arlington
(Sociology and Anthropology)*

David Ashley
*University of Wyoming
(Sociology)*

Kevin B. Anderson
*University of California, Santa
Barbara (Sociology)*

Ward Churchill
*Formerly University of Colorado
(Ethnic Studies)*

Stanley Aronowitz
*City University of New York –
Graduate Center (Sociology)*

Norman K. Denzin
*University of Illinois at Urbana –
Champaign (Sociology)*

Molefi Kete Asante
*Temple University
(African-American Studies)*

Nancy Fraser
*New School for Social Research
(Political Science)*

Martha Gimenez
University of Colorado – Boulder
(*Sociology*)

Robert Goldman
Lewis and Clark
College (Sociology
and Anthropology)

Mark Gottdiener
State University of New York
at Buffalo (Sociology)

Douglas Kellner
University of California – Los
Angeles (Philosophy)

Lauren Langman
Loyola University
(*Sociology*)

Eric R. Lybeck
Cambridge University
(*Sociology*)

John O'Neill
York University (Sociology)

Patricia Mooney Nickel
Victoria University
(*Social and Cultural Studies*)

Paul Paolucci
Eastern Kentucky University
(*Sociology*)

Moishe Postone
University of Chicago (History)

Lawrence Scaff
Wayne State University
(*Political Science*)

Steven Seidman
State University of New York
at Albany (Sociology)

Helmut Staubmann
Leopold Franzens University,
Innsbruck (Sociology)

Frank Taylor
Edinboro University of
Pennsylvania (Sociology and
Anthropology)

Stephen Turner
The University of South Florida
(*Philosophy*)

Christine Williams
The University of Texas at Austin
(*Sociology*)

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

<i>Amy Allen</i>	Department of Philosophy, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA
<i>Karl P. Benziger</i>	Department of History, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI, USA
<i>Colin Koopman</i>	Department of Philosophy, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, USA
<i>Helgard Kramer</i>	Institute of Sociology, Freie Universitaet Berlin, Berlin, Germany
<i>Eric Royal Lybeck</i>	Department of Sociology, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK
<i>Johanna Meehan</i>	Department of Philosophy, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA, USA
<i>Geoff Pfeifer</i>	Department of Philosophy, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA
<i>Natalia Ruiz-Junco</i>	Department of Sociology, American University, Washington, DC, USA
<i>David Norman Smith</i>	Department of Sociology, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, USA
<i>Jeb Sprague</i>	Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA, USA
<i>Richard R. Weiner</i>	Department of Political Science, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI, USA
<i>Christopher F. Zurn</i>	Department of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, USA

INTRODUCTION

The contributions included in this volume provide critical assessments of both a range of traditions in social theory, and of their current relevance. In addition, they represent endeavors to apply, refine, integrate, or advance particular traditions in order to enhance our ability to analyze conditions of social life in the twenty-first century and to confront a variety of related challenges. Several of the contributions present efforts to combine the application, refinement, integration, and advancement of particular theoretical traditions. Thematically, they cover several areas in social theory and a spectrum of perspectives, including poststructuralism, feminist theory, and especially critical theory. Chapters address such issues as the authoritarian personality; charisma; the relationship between power, agency, and subjectivity; self-estrangement; pragmatism; and globalization.

The contributions in Part I combine an interest in theory with an interest in history. The first two chapters address directly issues in critical theory, while the third is a contribution in a poststructuralist key. Helgard Kramer is concerned with the fate of the research program relating to the Frankfurt School's authoritarian character studies. In particular, her focus is on differences between two versions of this research program as it evolved at the Institute of Social Research. Kramer's study traces the history of the program and illuminates its termination in the late 1960s. David Norman Smith, on the other hand, addresses another theme that commonly has been associated with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School: the reluctance among its representatives to subscribe to the notion that the working class is the "subject of history" – that is, the driving force behind qualitative historical change. Focussing on the early work of Herbert Marcuse, Smith tells the story of how Marcuse grew increasingly disenchanted with the idea that a charismatic agent – whether a social class or a political leader – could bring about positive and lasting social change. In addition to demonstrating how Marcuse's growing appreciation of sociological realism and political responsibility played an important constructive role in the development of critical theory as an explicit research program, Smith's analysis resonates with the previous chapter inasmuch as he concludes that the early critical

theorists were able to illuminate the problematic nature of political authority by engaging in a critical analysis of “personal authoritarianism.”

By contrast, the focus of the third chapter, by Karl P. Benziger and Richard R. Weiner, pertains to the reverberations caused by the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 for the future (i.e., the future decline) of the Soviet empire. Placing particular emphasis on the “pathos of the lost cause,” Benziger and Weiner show how the revolution provided people in Hungary with a narrative of democracy and progress, beyond Soviet communism. Still, the narrative rather distracted from Hungary’s troubled past, as has become apparent to a growing degree in recent years. To clarify this nexus of issues, Benziger and Weiner emphasize the need to explicate the role of traumatic memory, by relying on historical sociology as well as “memory studies.”

The volume’s second part is dedicated to the discussion of a recent contribution to critical theory that deservedly has attracted a large amount of attention, Amy Allen’s *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (2008). In her book, Allen directly confronts the tension between the question of whether and how the self results from and reflects power relations, and the supposition that the self represents an independent potential to engage in critical reflection and the capacity of undergo qualitative transformation in ways that reveal self-awareness. On the basis of her thorough and careful discussion of such theorists and philosophers as Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Judith Butler, and Seyla Benhabib, Allen contends that precisely the power relations through which the self is constituted provide the foundation for the self’s capacity for autonomy. Drawing attention to the phenomenon of *subjection*, her purpose is to demonstrate how it is possible for the self to be constituted by power, while also being able to constitute him or herself autonomously – thus profoundly advancing our understanding of issues relating to the constellation between power and agency, in social theory generally, and especially in critical theory and feminist theory. Specifically, her concern addresses why and how it is necessary to reframe the normative thrust of critique in Habermas within a reference frame that emphasizes the treatment of subjection in the writings of Foucault as well as Butler, and how, as a consequence, the project of critical theory can be provided with a fresh impetus, and reenergized accordingly.

The first three chapters in Part II are critical assessments of Allen’s book by Colin Koopman, Johanna Meehan, and Christopher F. Zurn. Koopman’s critique concerns the status of critical theory as a philosophical project, with an eye toward the contemporary tasks of critical theory.

Should critical theory be viewed as a kind of social-scientific inquiry geared toward current critical social, political, and ethical issues, or as resembling a rather traditional philosophical project that is conducive to providing a specific approach to social, political, and ethical critique? Meehan's contribution, by comparison, includes – but is not limited to – reflections on the issue of philosophy and empirical relevance, and points out how even though Allen's orientation in *The Politics of Our Selves* is above all theoretical in nature, the questions with which she is concerned have empirical relevance as well, for example, for the relational dynamics of racism, poverty, gender, and class. Zurn's piece, finally, centers on the question of whether – and if so, how – such accounts of subjectivity as those proposed by Foucault and Butler – with their emphasis on its socially constructed nature, and the central role of power – are compatible with the strong normative orientation of Habermas and other proponents of critical theory who share his stance to varying degrees. Their contributions are followed by Amy Allen's "Reply to Critics," in which she restates her position, illuminates further the objectives that drove her inquiry, and expands on opportunities for expansion and application.

The first contribution to Part III is a discussion by Natalia Ruiz-Junco of the current utility of the concept of *self-estrangement*. Although in the theoretical discourse, dating back to the early translations of Marx's writings into English, *estrangement* and *alienation* appeared to be interchangeable, in recent decades a more specific use of the two concepts appears to have taken hold. Accordingly, estrangement serves as a means to focus on the subjective dimensions of *alienation* as an experience that is central to the modern condition: in Marx's famous rendering, the separation of the individuals not just from the product of their labor, but also from their own selves, from nature, from others, and from the human species, is the essence of alienation. In a manner that is consonant with one of the most notable contributions to related debates in recent years, Rahel Jaeggi's *Entfremdung* (2005), a text that is not (yet) available to readers in English, Ruiz-Junco is less interested in how alienation functions as a social force that deprives individuals of the option to choose between an alienated and non-alienated existence, by undermining the possibility of such a choice. In this latter reading, individuals do not have the choice to lead an unalienated existence, due to the fact that it is a social condition – a condition of society – in such a manner that allows for strategies to "overcome" alienation merely (or rather, largely) as a consequence of the recognition that the modern condition is a condition of alienation that is structural, systemic, and dynamic at the same time. By contrast, estrangement ought to be understood through multiple theoretical lenses. Ruiz-Junco

contends that both critical and interpretive classical theories failed to place sufficient emphasis on *self-estrangement*. In the interest of reconstructing the idea of self-estrangement, she identifies several of its interactional incarnations, by stressing the linkages between self-estrangement, institutional environments, emotions, and the body, and concludes by pointing out how the concept may serve as a means to analyze and theorize patterns of political exclusion.

In the next chapter, Eric Royal Lybeck proposes a new kind of social theory informed and inspired by pragmatist perspectives. Focusing on the “pragmatic turn” in both philosophy and social theory, as exemplified in particular by Richard Rorty and Hans Joas, Lybeck draws attention to the place of *habit* as well as *creativity* in social action. Yet neopragmatism appears to sidestep key insights formulated by classical pragmatists, necessitating a determined move toward a project of *critical public pragmatism* along the lines of – but not necessarily following directly – Burawoy’s notion of public sociology and Mills’s pragmatist outlook, thus setting the stage for a stance on democracy that would be conducive to the practical fostering of Dewey’s idea of “creative intelligence” in contemporary societies, in a manner that is consonant with Mills’s “sociological imagination.”

The two remaining chapters constitute explicit assessments of contributions to social theory that have informed current debates: Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*, and the increasingly expansive œuvre of Slavoj Žižek. Jeb Sprague is driven by the question of how critical sociologists who dedicate their labor to illuminating global capitalism have been influenced by Hardt and Negri’s best-known and arguably most influential work to date. Sprague concludes that in light of recent developments in the sphere of political economy, and subsequent contributions by social scientists, especially in sociology, central features of *Empire* turn out to be highly problematic, and may indeed be inversely related to efforts to grasp the logic of global capitalism and the direction of what continues to be referred to as globalization. The purpose of the chapter by Geoff Pfeifer is to excavate what could be referred to as a “positive” project in Žižek’s work, drawing out the place of Hegel as well as Lacan in the latter. Contrary to appearances, Pfeifer asserts, Žižek’s work may not be as inconsistent with opportunities to take an oppositional stance as many interpreters have concluded. Rather, as Žižek’s interest relates to the concurrent processes of the creation of the social and of the subject, it is necessary to balance the status of the positive and the negative, respectively, in his writings, such that what appears as “negative” may better be grasped as a “positive” in the form of a radical form of subjectivity.

Thus, the chapters included in this volume provide a spectrum of perspectives that illustrate how “social theory” is not a set of practices or projects that can be construed as a particular mode of inquiry or type of theorizing, but a multidimensional endeavor that has been accompanying and expanding alongside the history of modern society. Like modern society, social theory continues in search of common foundations and consonant voices, even – or perhaps, especially – when the latter appear to become more and more elusive.

REFERENCES

- Allen, A. (2008). *The politics of our selves: Power, autonomy, and gender in contemporary critical theory*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Jaeggi, R. (2005). *Entfremdung. Zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems*. Frankfurt: Campus.

Harry F. Dahms
Editor

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FATE OF THE AUTHORITARIAN CHARACTER STUDIES OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL. A LEGACY FOR THE STUDY OF RACISM, ANTISEMITISM, AND FASCISM?

Helgard Kramer

ABSTRACT

Following Lakatos' strategy of a rational reconstruction of science, I present a concrete example of the rise and decline of a research program from the history of the social sciences: the authoritarian character studies of the Frankfurt School. The first version of the authoritarian character studies of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research was based on a Marxist social and psychoanalytic theory, and included an initial empirical survey. The preliminary results of this survey motivated the Institute's just-in-time emigration from Germany in 1932, and at the same time do not fit into the later theory of the authoritarian character (1936). The second version of the authoritarian character studies (1950) gained the status of a social psychological paradigm, but soon turned into a declining research program, which came to a complete stop around 1968 as far as the Institute

The Diversity of Social Theories

Current Perspectives in Social Theory, Volume 29, 3–31

Copyright © 2011 by Emerald Group Publishing Limited

All rights of reproduction in any form reserved

ISSN: 0278-1204/doi:10.1108/S0278-1204(2011)0000029005

of Social Research was concerned. Internal and external factors combined to bring about the sudden end of the authoritarian character studies.

IMRE LAKATOS' CONCEPT OF RATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AS A NEW HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SCIENCE AND THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL'S AUTHORITARIAN CHARACTER STUDIES

Starting from the question how to measure progress and failure in the social sciences, I have used the method of rational reconstruction of science proposed by Lakatos (1982); see also Lakatos and Musgrave (1974) to view early critical theory in a new perspective.

In the wake of Kuhn and Popper, Lakatos developed a new model of the historiography of science (1974, p. 56). Following Lakatos, I start from the epistemological assumption that every research program necessarily combines theoretical and empirical elements; it develops a certain relationship between theoretical and empirical research that can be described in relation to the premises of the research program, especially its positive and negative heuristics, the context of discovery, the psychological and social conditions in the concrete scientific community undertaking the research, the operationalization of the program, the results of empirical tests of the theory, and how the results are put to us.

In any stage of development of a research program, internal as well as external reasons can produce epistemologically progressive transformations of the research program, a shift of focus that can lead to more knowledge, and thus to the program's renewed preliminary confirmation. Alternatively, internal and external factors may produce a degenerative shift of focus that merely enlarges the "protective belt" that researchers built around the core concept. Researchers working on a certain program usually try to keep its core elements working, tending to defend the paradigm from which they start against the critique of others. In so doing they enlarge the protective belt of subsidiary hypotheses and ad hoc explanations for "scientific abnormalities" that cannot be explained by the original program. A program is successful as long as a series of changing versions of the program can be developed. A program fails when its core elements can no longer be immunized against critique.

I will discuss the authoritarian character studies of the Institute of Social Research as a research program from a meta-level, and largely bypass questions of individual authorship, of the history of the writings of specific

researchers, and of general issues concerning the culture of science. It means to pass by more or less the questions of the psychology of researchers in the genealogical context of discovery, and the process of acceptance and/or refusal within the research groups of the Institute from the 1930s to the 1960s as well as in the wider social sciences community. This means that I will also largely pass over the psychology of the individual researcher and the acceptance/rejection of his or her finding both within the Institute and in the wider social science community. All these questions have been researched extensively and one could mention examples such as Jay (1973), Wiggershaus (1986), Kellner (1989), and Marcus and Tar (1984).

Although Lakatos concentrated on physics rather than the social sciences, the authoritarian character studies of the Frankfurt School fit well into his concept since it puts forth law-like relations between, on the one hand, social formations and social structures, and, on the other hand, typical character structures of individuals. In this way, it includes ideas about causes and effects in the social sciences similar to a paradigm. The theory and the related empirical studies formed for more than 30 years a consistent research program that underwent several transformations until it came to a sudden end in the late 1960s.

The early works of critical theory have continued to be found compelling by many scholars and intellectuals who emerged from the New Left. To Jürgen Habermas, the second-generation theorist of the Frankfurt School, the materialist, multidisciplinary theoretical *and* empirical project of Max Horkheimer's early research program of 1931 was eventually lost in the pessimistic turn of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944/1947), which Habermas considered to be the starting point "for generations of students a new, for a totalizing, self referential critique of reason" (1986, p. 10). According to Habermas, it is here that the retreat of the critical theorists into mere philosophical contemplation began.

The first interdisciplinary research program was outlined by Max Horkheimer in his inaugural address as the Director of Frankfurt University's Institute for Social Research in July 1931. Dubiel goes so far as to speak of a "paradigm group" (1978, p. 189, 195).

The research group included Horkheimer, representing sociology and philosophy; the psychoanalyst and social psychologist Erich Fromm, a founding member of Karl Landauer's Psychoanalytic Institute, housed by the Institute of Social Research from 1929 until both Institutes were closed down by the Nazis in the spring of 1933; the economist Friedrich Pollock; the philosopher Herbert Marcuse; the educational theorist and literary scholar Leo Löwenthal; the economic historian Karl August Wittfogel; and

Andries Sternheim, head of the Geneva office of the Institute, cooperating with the International Labour Organization at Geneva, and in charge of organizing European surveys for Volume II of *Autorität und Familie* (Horkheimer, 1936).

Cooperating with the Institute – without being formal members – were Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, Siegfried Kracauer, and Walter Benjamin.¹

Dubieli (1978), Brunkhorst (1983), and Söllner (1979) proposed reconstructions of this interdisciplinary research program from the perspective of the theoretical aims of older critical theory – that is, immanently – while I use a model of the historiography of science based on Lakatos, which has been developed mainly through the study of the “hard” sciences. I concentrate on the relation between theory and empirical research in the authoritarian character studies, while all of the above-mentioned authors concentrate on the relation between theory and practice. One exception to this is Bonss, writing in collaboration with Fromm during the 1970s.

By developing a rational reconstruction of the epistemological fate of the authoritarian character studies, I do not try to revise the arguments Habermas put forward to situate his own theory of communicative action as a new beginning with respect to the early tradition of critical theory that had been discontinued by its adherents. Rather, I propose a quite different reading of the interdisciplinary research program of older critical theory as a part of the history of the social sciences. In this way, I examine its research program and its epistemological fate in a context that is closer to that of the history of social sciences. This means singling out different points of departure and different endpoints to create a different version of the Frankfurt School narrative. I also focus narrowly on the core element of the original interdisciplinary program of Horkheimer, the theory of the authoritarian character, which was continued by several generations of researchers in the Institute who tried to prove its empirical validity by explaining why people in capitalist societies would act politically against their very own interests.

THE POSITIVE AND THE NEGATIVE HEURISTICS OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAM

Marcus and Tar write: “The Frankfurt School pioneered the concept of interdisciplinary research to deal with the problems of the age” (1984, p. 13). The positive heuristics of the research program of the Institute is defined by the effort to integrate Marxist socioeconomic theory and psychoanalysis.

The program is usually referred to as early critical theory, and has been receiving much attention ever since the early books and articles of Horkheimer, Wittfogel, Gurland, and others who were considered Marxists were reprinted without their permission during the West German student movement of the 1960s.²

Writing during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dubiel (1978) and Brunkhorst (1983) might have been especially inspired by the lively discussion of Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) that was going on at the time. Like Bonss, Habermas, and Honneth, they were concerned with figuring out the dynamics of the development of critical theory. Feminist approaches on the part of Benjamin (1988), Becker-Schmidt (1999), and Rumpf (1990) attempted to connect critical theory to the problems of women's emancipation. Due to limitations of space, I cannot elaborate on this here.

All of these approaches to critical theory have focused on the (political) theory–practice relationship, while I will focus on the relationship between theory and empirical social research.

According to Lakatos the negative heuristics of a research program means those laws, rules, and methods that may *not* be used in the research program. As social scientists today, we are so familiar with the negative heuristics of the authoritarian character research program that it is at first difficult to see it at all.

That neither genetics nor “race” can explain the character structure of persons or their psychic problems and disorders is the common sense of the social sciences and of neurobiology today.³ This was not the case during the 1920s and 1930s, notwithstanding the fact that the Nazi era escalated the use of biological, social Darwinist theories in an unprecedented way and produced absurd racist theories. But before the publication of Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944), with its concise review of studies of “racial differences” between whites and blacks, many a sociologist would leave the door open for biologically based race theories⁴, while the Frankfurt School excluded race theories from explaining anything.

First, Dubiel (1978) links the core of the research group – with Horkheimer at its center – with the philosopher Ludwig Paul Landsberg. Landsberg, who was a member of the Institute, wrote an article on race theories in the second volume of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* in 1933, in which he elaborated a critical overview of contemporary “racial” theories, ending with the laconic statement that there were no conclusive theories about human races. And in this regard, Fromm, a member of the inner circle during the first years of the Institute, was not only its

psychoanalytically oriented specialist linking Freudian to Marxist theory in the research program on the authoritarian character. During the same period, Fromm also wrote several articles on criminology, considering, for example, statistical variations in criminal behavior without ever uttering a single word on any supposedly biological disposition toward criminal behavior in certain individuals or minority groups (Anderson & Quinney, 2000). Anderson links Fromm's early criminological articles to the positive heuristics of the research program, which surely can be done at the same time: "Fromm actually began his attempt to unite Marxian class analysis with psychoanalysis in a critique of the criminal justice system" (Anderson, 2007). My point, however, is taking Fromm's articles on criminology indicates the negative heuristics of the research program on the authoritarian character: excluding biological, racial, and any "natural" explanations of individual or collective behaviour from being even considered.

When we remember how heated and acrimonious the debates on environmental versus genetic heritage were in the German political and social sciences from the 1880s to the Weimar years,⁵ it emerges that the research program started from the Marxist premise that causal explanations of attitudes and behavior are to be sought in social and cultural structures or processes but never in biological or natural conditions. At the same time, social Darwinist conceptions of society and eugenicist notions of improving the nation were discussed not only among right-wingers but also in the social democratic Marxist movement,⁶ in small radical democratic circles,⁷ in the feminist movement, in the early gay movement, and later they were discussed seriously in the Communist movement.

Helmuth Plessner, who was trained as a biologist before he started to study sociology with Max Scheler and Max Weber, has defined "the analysis of social reality" as the research subject of sociology. Plessner has described the obstacles to the institutionalization of sociology as an academic discipline at German universities during the second half of the 19th century. He comes to the conclusion that scientific Darwinism and social Darwinism had long been a leading paradigm for anthropological and historical thought in many academic disciplines, and this was why German university professors were not interested in the "analysis of social reality." Plessner refers specifically to the fact that in 1859 Heinrich von Treitschke⁸ published a pamphlet against the social sciences:

In this field of interacting forces an important scholarly event should not be forgotten. If the year 1859 has already been called a marker on the German road to sociology, 1859 is also the year in which Darwin's magnum opus *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* ... Its influence not only on biological thought but also on the conceptions of man and of history was enormous. It layed to ground for the idea of development and for the idea

of a naturalization of human society, and thus almost inevitably pushed the analysis of social reality aside for mythologems of race disposition, race wars and breeding better races.[...] It was just alluring to hold up a suggestive picture of a 'natural society' instead of sticking to the painstaking business of sociological diagnosis and therapy, especially since it seemed to be as attractive to the masses as the Marxist doctrine of salvation was, and at the same time it promised to all strata of the middle and upper classes – by means of eugenics and imperialistic power politics – to change their fate from the inevitable downfall that the doctrine of class struggle had imposed on them. For this nature-oriented feeling, for the Romantic nature pantheism in German thinking which always had tended to understand social relations according to models from the plant and animals, Darwinism was very convenient. We had to go through the horrifying experience of National Socialist ideology and National Socialist practice in their concentration camps to learn that Darwinism's impact had reached deep into the categories of half-knowledge where theoretical short circuits caused discharges. (Plessner, 1960/1985, p. 195)⁹

The configuration of political and mental forces, which Plessner describes, survived imperial Germany, World War I, and the democratic November Revolution of 1918. Knowledge of scientific Darwinism and social Darwinism remained superficial but widespread among the general public during the Weimar years. According to Plessner, the promise of a cure for the problems of a revolutionary working class needs to be seen as one of the important roots of the Nazi victory.

Thus, the Frankfurt School's authoritarian character research program, with its negative heuristics concerning racialist theories, had been holding out in vain against the social Darwinist racist discourse at the very time when the latter started to transform reality.

FROM VERSION 1 TO VERSION 3 OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAM: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

Version 1 of the Authoritarian Character Studies (1936)

Horkheimer, M. (1931/1989). *Die gegenwärtige Lage der Sozialphilosophie und die Aufgaben eines Instituts für Sozialforschung*. Frankfurt: Frankfurter Universitätsreden (Inaugural Lecture: The state of contemporary social philosophy and the tasks of an institute of social research).

Horkheimer, M. (Ed.). (1936). *Studies on authority and the family, research reports from the Institute of Social Research, Paris*.