

Time and Social Theory



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Time is at the forefront of contemporary scholarly inquiry throughout the humanities and the natural sciences. During the last twenty years, the study of time has fueled a rapidly growing exchange of ideas between different disciplines. Yet the social sciences have remained substantially isolated from time-related concerns in other fields. Taking on the task of changing that situation, this book is an exciting academic exercise in its own right. But more importantly, it serves to focus concern upon issues that have emerged as central to an adequate understanding of the social world in the late twentieth century.

Through her analysis of time, Barbara Adam shows that our contemporary social theories are firmly embedded in Newtonian science and classical dualistic philosophy. She then exposes these classical frameworks of thought as inadequate to the task of conceptualizing our contemporary world of standardized time, computers, nuclear power, and global telecommunications.

The author argues that the complex aspects of time should be made a key part of social theory especially if individuals are to take responsibility for their actions: past, present, and particularly the long term future. An explicit understanding of time Adam contends, generates not only a basis for a more adequate social theory, but a chance to be a participating agent in a world where human creations have all too often become the factor controlling human life. To grasp the multiplicity of time is to come to terms with the complexity of our times.

This book will be of great interest to anyone working in social theory, cultural theory, sociology, and philosophy.

Acknowledgments

Introduction: Time is a Fact of Life

1. Time in Social Theory: Destiny, Necessity, and Enigma

The Diversity of Contemporary Approaches • Dualisms and Disciplinary Isolation Rejected • Making Distinctions Philosophy's Way • All Time is Social Time • Reflections

2. From the Measure of Motion to Entropy

The Newtonian Measure • Relative Time and Quantum Temporality • Thermodynamic Change • Reflections

3. Rhythmicity: Source of Life and Form

Biorhythms: The Clock that Time Us and Know Time • Organisms and the Machine Metaphor • Living Change • Reflections

4. Human Time Studied

Aspects of Mind • Time Budgeted • Orientation and Perspectives • The Life Cycle • Social Change and Order • Reflections

5. Industrial Time and Power

Timed Social Life • Social Time Controlled • Waiting • Reflections

6. Time Transcended

Life Unto Death and Beyond • The Extended Present and the Myth of Eternal Return • The Future: Expanded, Colonized, and Lost • The Past: Possessed, Recorded and Constructed • Reflections

7. Time for Social Theory: Points of Departure

Social Time and Natural Time Revisited • Knowing through Metaphors • Resonance and Non-hierarchical Levels • Simultaneity and Extended Time-Spans

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Barbara Adam is a British sociologist.

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评论

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