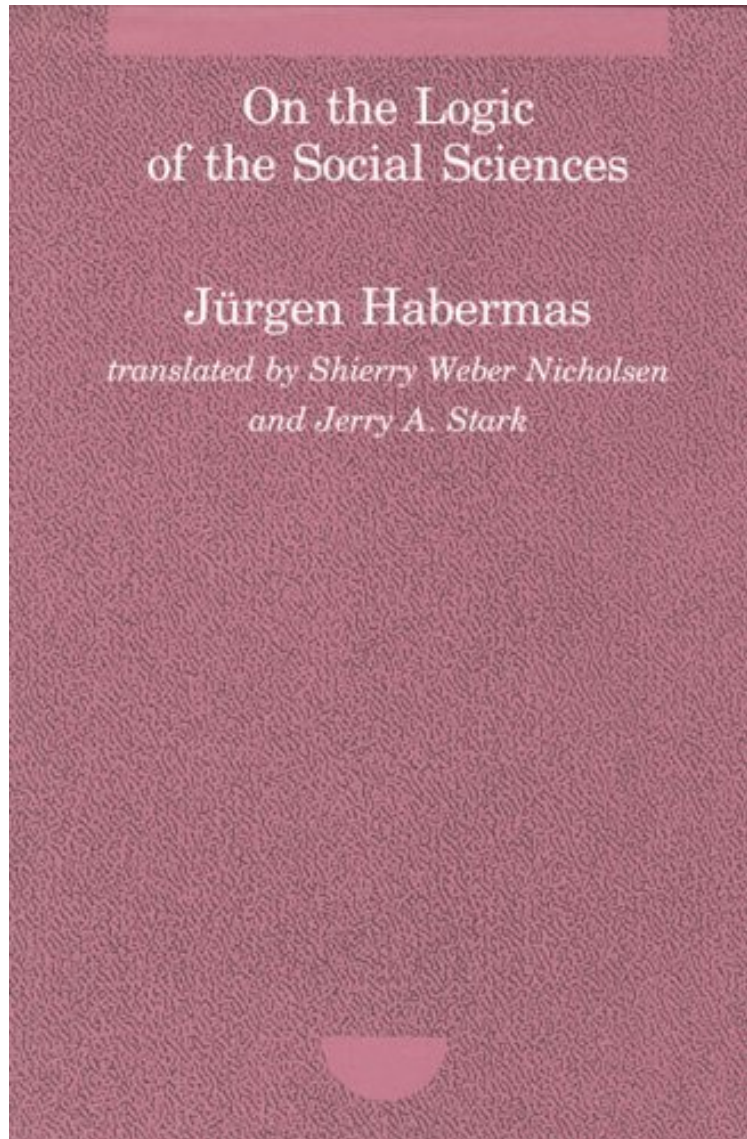


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On the Logic of the Social Sciences (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought)

Jurgen Habermas

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Jurgen Habermas : On the Logic of the Social Sciences (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On the Logic of the Social Sciences (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought):

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SCIENCES By Steven H Propp Jürgen Habermas (born 1929) is a German philosopher and sociologist who is one of the leading figures of the Frankfurt School. He wrote many books, such as *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, *Truth and Justification*, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, etc. He wrote in the Preface, This review of literature pertaining to the logic of the social sciences was written in the mid-1960s, when analytic philosophy of science, with its program for a unified science, still largely dominated the self-understanding of sociologists. It contributed to the basic changes in that situation that took place in the following decade. This review was written for a particular reason. One reason for its cursory character is that I am not a specialist in this area. Moreover, the logic of research has always interested me only in connection with questions of social theory. The theory of communicative action that I have since put forward treats the presupposition of action oriented to mutual understanding independently of the transcendental preconditions of knowledge. He says, When we call the abstraction of need satisfaction and deprivation reward and punishment, we are referring to a system of prevailing norms; and no matter how elementary the drives we distinguish qualitatively from one another by referring to enemies, prey, and sex may seem to us, we shall never arrive at such a thing as drives that have not been linguistically interpreted. (Pg. 73) He concludes the second chapter with the statement, Only when split-off motives and deeply internalized rules have been understood in their objective connection with the rational compulsions of collective self-preservation on the one hand and the irrational compulsions of superfluous authorities on the other, when they have been reconciled with subjectively meaningful motives in the minds of the acting subjects themselves, can social action develop as truly communicative action. But a theory that does not incorporate this understanding will make unreflected predeterminations in a matter about which we have no a priori certainty; it will be making methodological decisions about whether we more closely resemble animals or gods. Those who have prematurely concluded that we resemble gods lead their heroes through a back door into the animal realm again. The acting subjects whose intentions have been acknowledged suddenly find themselves and their cultural values yoked in systems that respond only to the fundamental biological values of survival and efficient adaptation. (Pg. 88) He observes, there are no uninterpreted experiences, neither in everyday life not, especially, within the framework of scientifically organized experience. Standards of measurement are rules in accordance with which everyday experiences that have been interpreted in ordinary language are reorganized and transformed into scientific data. No such interpretation is fully determined by the experienced material itself. It could be the case that we transform sensory experiences into data through measurements differently than we communicative experiences. Perhaps the modes of transformation are different in the sciences of action than in physics; and perhaps as a consequence the relationship of data and theories is different in the latter than it is in the former. (Pg. 97) He states, General linguistics is, however, not the only alternative to a linguistic analysis that proceeds historically and immerses itself in the plurality of language games without being able to justify the language of analysis itself. To break through the grammatical boundaries of individual linguistic totalities we need not follow [Noam] Chomsky and leave the dimension of ordinary language. It is not only a theoretical languages distance from the primary languages that can guarantee the unity of analytic reason in the pluralism of language games. (Pg. 143) He notes, There is good reason to conceive language as a kind of metainstitution on which all social institutions depend. For social action is constituted only in ordinary-language communication. But clearly this metainstitution of language as tradition is dependent in turn on social processes that cannot be reduced to normative relationships. Language is also a medium of domination and social power. It serves to legitimate relationships of organized force. (Pg. 172) He concludes the book with the statement, the framework of a general interpretation, however saturated it may be with prior hermeneutic experience and however much it may have been confirmed in individual interpretations, retains a hypothetical moment. The truth of historically oriented functionalism is confirmed not technically but only practically, in the successful continuation and completion of a formative process. Here we are again confronted with the problem of that singular relationship to theory of practice that since the eighteenth century has appeared wherever the logic of inquiry has involved the intention of enlightenment. (Pg. 189) Not one of Habermas's major works, this book will nevertheless have some value for anyone studying Habermas and the development of his thought.

For two decades the German edition of this book has been a standard reference point for students of the philosophy of the social sciences in Germany. Today it still stands as a unique and masterful guide to the major problems and possibilities in this field. On the *Logic of the Social Sciences* foreshadowed the direction in which methodological discussions have traveled since it appeared and anticipated the problems they presently face. Habermas's statement of the principal issues is concise and elegant, and his own original resolution of them is of continuing relevance. He considers the main lines of thought pursued by epistemologists and methodologists of the social sciences, from neo-Kantianism to behaviorism, and from problems of measurement to those of interpretive logic, in a sustained and provocative argument that involves analysis and critique at every point and ends with his own sharply profiled position. Beginning with the turn of the century debates on the distinction between natural and cultural sciences,

Habermas discusses the relationship between sociology and history. He takes up the problem of a general theory of social action, focusing first on the nature of "interpretive understanding" and then on the scope and limits of functionalist explanation. In the concluding sections, he draws on psychoanalysis and classical social theory to sketch the outlines of his view of sociology as a critical theory of the present. Along the way he provides a great deal of material that is useful in understanding his own work. Jürgen Habermas is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* is included in the series *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*, edited by Thomas McCarthy.

A long-awaited translation. The study-already a minor 'classic' in its field -- is noteworthy for its clear conceptualization of the relation between natural and social sciences and between intentional and behavioral analysis. Contemporary readers will savor particularly Habermas's subtle discussion of types of functionalism and of phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches to social inquiry. (Fred Dallmayr, Dee Professor of Government, University of Notre Dame) *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* is a work of exceptional scholarship and world-wide reputation. It traces recent developments in the philosophy of social sciences and engages these with a sustained critique. It offers a penetrating overview of many of the key problems in the social sciences and develops, as is well known, an original resolution of these. The book is of great significance. (David Held, The Open University, UK) Written in 1967 as an exercise in self-clarification, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* is unmatched in its scope, insights, and impact. The point of departure for Habermas' twenty-year effort to reconstruct critical social theory, it is an indispensable aid to understanding his recent work on the theory of communicative action. The book also stands on its own as one of the best general overviews of the field, and should be required reading for students of the methodology and philosophy of the social sciences. (James Schmidt, Boston University) Language Notes: English, German (translation) From the Back Cover In a provocative argument that ends with his own sharply profiled position, Jürgen Habermas considers the main lines of thought pursued by epistemologists and methodologists of the social sciences--from Neo-Kantianism to behaviorism.