



Review: [untitled]

Author(s): Kari Lerum

Source: *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (Sep., 1998), pp. 543-544

Published by: [American Sociological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2654550>

Accessed: 15/05/2011 17:38

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=asa>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Sociological Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Contemporary Sociology*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

extended, made absolute and transcendent. Religiosity consists in a faith relationship to a personalized (if absolutized and abstracted) deity. In fact, in one passage that is sure to be contested, Simmel claims that Buddhism is not a religion because it lacks this social relationship at its core and “teaches a complete withdrawal from social life . . . [and] is no more than a severing of oneself from existence” (p.159).

There is perhaps less to distinguish Simmel's ideas from Weber's. Like Weber, Simmel sees as a key modern problem the institutionalization of religious forms and their separation from individuals' fundamental religious yearnings and instincts (the routinization of charisma). Simmel, however, seems less pessimistic than Weber about individuals' chances against the juggernaut of routinization and rationalization. Unlike Weber, Simmel is “religiously musical.” His empathy for religious persons and their religiosity leads him to ask how religiosity may change in its encounter with modernity, rather than to predict its death or disenchantment. There is much here to support a critique of some forms of secularization theory. Simmel sees religion surviving especially in mystical forms where religious individuals come to see life itself as having metaphysical value and sustaining religious attitudes and experiences. Religious people do not need a religion in order to be religious. Religious mystics could read some of these passages as devotional literature. Sociologists of religion might note that Simmel was discussing “Sheilism” nearly 80 years before Bellah et al. “discovered” it and wrote about it in *Habits of the Heart*.

Characteristic of Simmel's writing, there is a potpourri of other interesting insights and armchair analyses that will engage a broad range of scholars. A section on religion and art, especially his essay “Rembrandt's Religious Art,” will interest sociologists of culture. His chapter on the epistemology of religion will interest social philosophers, methodologists, and theologians. Not surprisingly, given the nature of this sort of comprehensive collection, there is considerable repetition of arguments across essays, and some self-contradiction as well.

Fortunately, Helle makes what might have been a confusing welter of essays quite accessible by means of a thematic rather than chronological organization. Readers can dip into the book at any point that interests them and not feel lost at sea. Each essay is also clearly dated, so readers

who want to follow the development of Simmel's thought can easily read chronologically. The only obstacle to accessibility is that the English prose translation retains a very Germanic complexity. This is not a “quick read.” Nevertheless, teachers and scholars of social theory, religion, and culture will want to add this book to their shelves and their intellectual repertoire.

A Glossary of Feminist Theory, by **Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell, and Carol Wolkowitz**. London: Arnold, 1997. 351 pp. \$59.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-340-59663-5.

KARI LERUM
University of Washington

In the last 30 years, feminist writings have proliferated, and this book joins the effort to map this vastly expanding intellectual territory. For this task, several approaches are possible. One is to flag important feminist people, events, and groups. Another is to identify and describe distinctive feminist theories. Yet another tactic is to isolate, define, and link the *ideas* that drive feminist people, events, groups, and theories. This last tactic, used by Andermahr, Lovell, and Wolkowitz, distinguishes their work from other currently available feminist guidebooks. Their book is an impressive undertaking, only slightly reduced by the focus on second-wave feminist theory. Additionally, the authors' consciousness of how knowledge is constructed creates an even greater (but welcome) challenge—that of defining terms without attempting to permanently capture them. Endorsing Edward Said's (1983) vision of “traveling theory,” they see theory as constantly transforming as it moves “from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another” (p. 1).

The identification of key concepts, the cross-referencing of these concepts, the consciousness that theory “travels,” and 56 pages of bibliography make this glossary a fresh, ambitious endeavor and a worthy resource especially for those interested in wrestling with, as the authors put it, the “more obscure reaches” of feminist theory.

Unfortunately, the authors neglect to identify their own focus, which is heavily European and postmodernist. This emphasis is partly understandable since in many academic corners

European and postmodernist theorists are the heavyweights of contemporary feminist theory. However, since postmodernist theorists and their concepts are tangential for many U.S. feminists and sociologists, people in these camps may feel alien to, and unfairly excluded from, the territorial claims outlined in this book. Further, I found many entries unnecessarily jargon-filled and lacking in contextual anchors, thus holding obscure concepts within their intellectual stratospheres. Nevertheless, in other cases the entries (and their cross-references) are lucid and insightful. For those who use theory as a pragmatic tool (rather than an end in itself), this book will disappoint, but for those seeking greater access to feminist postmodernist traditions, this is a valuable navigational guide.

Ideologies and the Corruption of Thought, by **Joseph Gabel**. Edited by Alan Sica. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1997. 229 pp. NPL cloth. ISBN: 1-56000-287-5.

MICHAEL DONNELLY
University of New Hampshire
michael.donnelly@unh.edu

The name Joseph Gabel is probably unfamiliar to most American sociologists, and not well known even to the theorists and historians of social thought among us. Alan Sica and Transaction Books have done a useful service in bringing out this collection of Gabel's essays. Although the essays are relatively minor examples of his work, their translation and republication will perhaps stimulate interest in Gabel and in his earlier, more systematic writings.

The title only partly indicates the contents of the book. The various essays collected do discuss Nazi ideology, Stalinism, Orwell's *1984*, McCarthyism, and other varieties of political ideology; but they also allude frequently to clinical case studies of schizophrenics. In fact, it is psychopathology that gives Gabel his principal interpretive key for analyzing ideological thinking and its distortions. The central claim that Gabel advances is that extreme political ideologies produce distorted patterns of thought strikingly similar to the thought disorders of schizophrenics. Just as the schizophrenic manifests "a Manichean mental structure," so does the collective "totalitarian mind" similarly perceive the world in distorted black-and-white

extremes. Or, as Gabel formulates his point broadly, "Ideology is a social neurosis which may in some cases turn into social psychosis" (p. 151).

In making this argument, Gabel writes as both psychiatrist and sociologist. As a student of psychiatry he has worked particularly in the vein of existential psychiatry; as a student of ideologies he draws on the sociology of knowledge tradition of Lukács and Mannheim. Sociologists may feel that their discipline gets slighted in the exchange. While the clinical case materials Gabel cites are often vivid, evocative, and detailed, his treatment of political ideologies is often summary, thin, and abstracted from social contexts. What Gabel is searching for are the logical similarities and formal parallels between psychopathology and ideological thinking. He says characteristically little about why, when, or how extreme political ideologies take hold—in his parlance, why certain (but only certain) social neuroses develop into social psychoses. In effect, Gabel leaves it to others to study the conditions of possibility of these collective social phenomena. Although this is undoubtedly a limitation to Gabel's approach, that should not lead sociologists to dismiss his work; to highlight only this limitation would be to miss the point of what he is trying to do, and to miss what is most distinctive and interesting about his contribution.

The roots of Gabel's thinking go back to the Hungarian Marxism of the interwar years—an important and too little understood intellectual current, of which Gabel is one of the last surviving representatives, and also one of the most sophisticated analysts (see his *Mannheim and Hungarian Marxism* [Transaction, 1991]). Hungary in the early part of this century was a crossroads of sorts, at which German and other occidental influences met, and Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish currents commingled. Its dynamic, modern, and Western-oriented capital, Budapest, confronted a still largely feudal and overwhelmingly rural hinterland. Moreover, its conservative official intellectual culture was counterbalanced by a lively, progressive intellectual scene largely separate from the universities. Such contrasts and contradictions, Gabel argues, conditioned the Hungarian intelligentsia; more than intellectuals elsewhere, they were an essentially uprooted social stratum, who were thereby relatively freed from the alienating effects of conformism