

Teaching Vegan Sociology: Classic Theory

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Objectives

- ❖ The pertinence of classic sociological theory to contemporary vegan & Critical Animal studies
- ❖ Revisiting the trifecta
- ❖ Introducing new classical theorists



Constructing “The Classics”

- ❖ The classical canon of sociological theory is a social construction
 - ❖ Reflects the values and attitudes of a given era as well as available data
 - ❖ Is political and contested
- ❖ Only recently has the overwhelming androcentrism, white-centrism, and Eurocentrism of the canon come up against meaningful resistance
- ❖ Some classic theory (like that of Mead) created long-lasting barriers to multispecies sociology

Connell, R. 1997. “Why Is Classical Theory Classical?” *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (6): 1511-1557.

Peggs, K. 2009. “A Hostile World for Nonhuman Animals: Human Identification and the Oppression of Nonhuman Animals for Human Good.” *Sociology* 43 (1): 85-102.

Peggs, K. 2012. *Animals and Sociology*. London: Palgrave.

What Makes it Classical?

- ❖ Helped define the discipline
- ❖ Relevant to the contemporary
 - ❖ Can be “read and re-read with profit as a source of reflection upon today’s issues and problems” (Giddens 2004: 6).
- ❖ Transition to modernization; Industrial revolution



Ashley, D. and Orenstein, D. 2004. *Sociological Theory: Classical Statements*. London: Pearson.
Giddens, A. 1995. *Politics, Sociology and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Why Bother with the Classical?

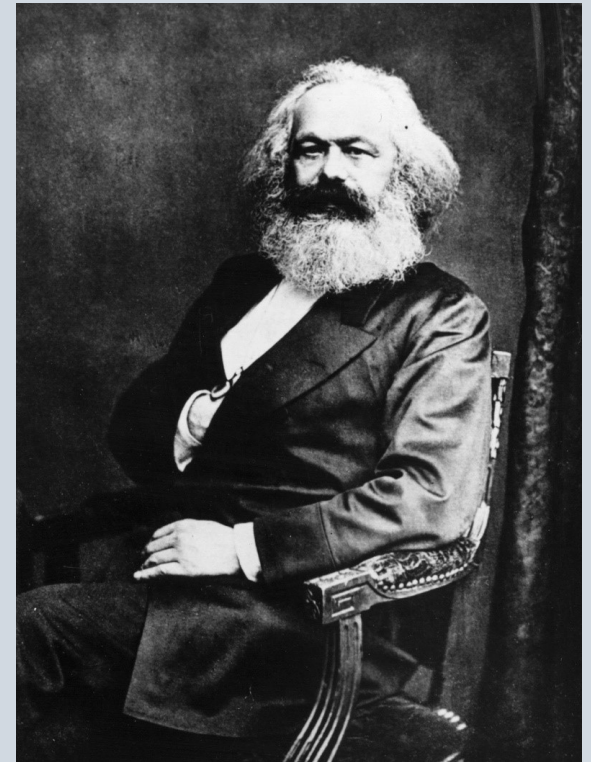
- ❖ Challenge outdated ideas about animal cognition and animal relevance
- ❖ Understand current climate, social justice, and animal rights crises caused by industrialization of speciesism



Marx

- ❖ “Species-being” and divorce from nature
- ❖ Animals as labor and/or commodities
- ❖ Utopias and social change

Czank, J. 2012. “On the Origin of Species-being: Marx Redefined.” *Rethinking Marxism* 24 (2): 316-323.
Foster, J. and B. Clark. 2018. “Marx and Alienated Speciesism.” *Monthly Review* 70 (7), December.
Nibert, D. 2002. *Animal Rights, Human Rights*. Rowman and Littlefield.
Torres, B. 2006. *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights*. AK Press.
Wadiwel, D. 2023. *Animals and Capital*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.



Weber

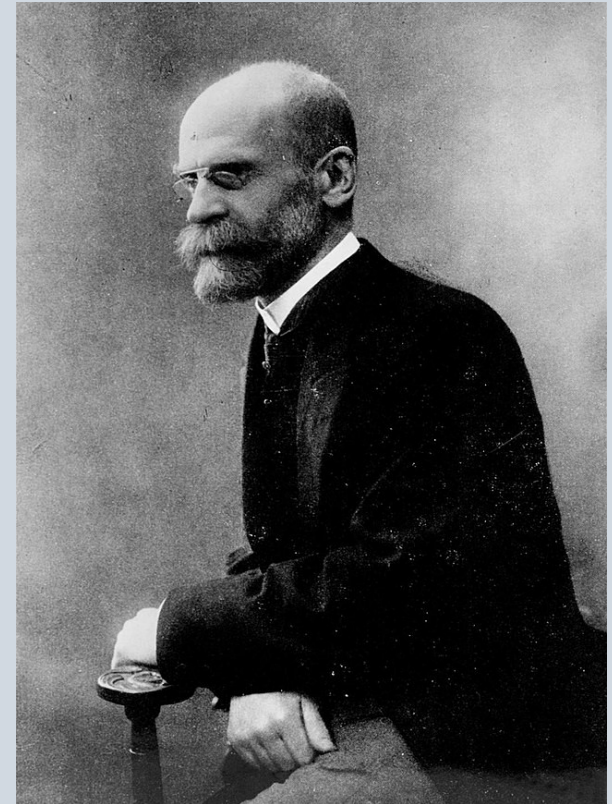
- ❖ Politics of objectivity, knowledge production, and history-making
- ❖ Role of rationalization
- ❖ Bureaucratization, power, and diffusion of responsibility



Weber, M. 1917. (1946). "Science as a Vocation." Pp. 129-156, in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H. Gerth and C. Mills (Eds.). New York: Oxford University Press.
Wrenn, C. 2016. *A Rational Approach to Animal Rights*. Palgrave.

Durkheim

- ❖ Individual choice vs socialization
- ❖ Speciesism as functional (or dysfunctional)
- ❖ Sacredness of the individual/human rights



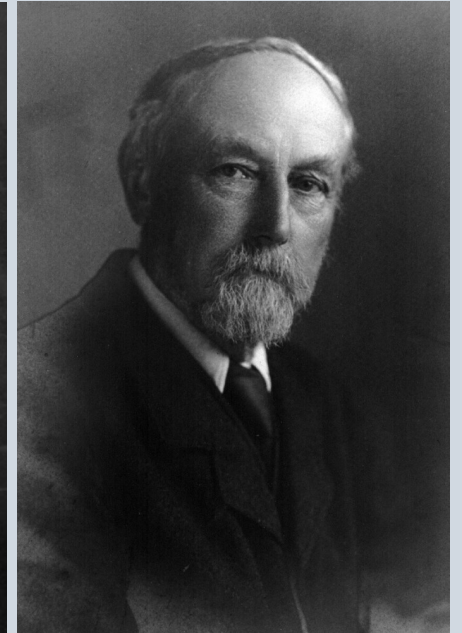
Cristi, M. 2012. "Durkheim on Moral Individualism, Social Justice, and Rights: A Gendered Construction of Rights." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 37 (4): 409-437.
Marske, C. 1987. "Durkheim's 'Cult of the Individual' and the Moral Reconstitution of Society." *Sociological Theory* 5 (Spring): 1-14.
Parker, D. 1997. "Viewpoint: Why Bother with Durkheim: Teaching Sociology in the 1990s." *The Sociological Review* 45 (1): 122-146.

A New Canon

❖ Charlotte Perkins Gilman

❖ Henry Salt

❖ Spencer?



Gilman, C. 1911. *Moving the Mountain*. New York: Charlton Company.

Gilman, C. (1915). 2001. *Herland*. London: The Women's Press Ltd.

Salt, H. 1892. *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress*. London: George Bell and Sons.

Concluding Thoughts

- ❖ Sociology's classic theory can help students understand
 - ❖ human-nonhuman relationships
 - ❖ institutionalization of speciesism
 - ❖ rise of the animal rights project
- ❖ Overlooked scholars who theorized more directly about nonhuman animals can also be revisited

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