

MAD HAZARD

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL THEORY

Series Editor: Harry F. Dahms

Previous 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
- Volume 29: The Diversity of Social Theories, 2011, Edited by Harry F. Dahms
- Volume 30: Theorizing Modern Society as a Dynamic Process, 2012, Edited by Harry F. Dahms and Lawrence Hazelrigg
- Volume 31: Social Theories of History and Histories of Social Theory, 2013, Edited by Harry F. Dahms
- Volume 32: Mediations of Social Life in the 21st Century, 2014, Edited by Harry F. Dahms
- Volume 33: Globalization, Critique and Social Theory: Diagnoses and Challenges, 2015, Edited by Harry F. Dahms
- Volume 34: States and Citizens: Accommodation, Facilitation and Resistance to Globalization, 2015, Edited by Jon Shefner
- Volume 35: Reconstructing Social History, Theory, and Practice, 2017, Edited by Harry F. Dahms and Eric R. Lybeck
- Volume 36: The Challenge of Progress, Theory between Critique and Ideology, 2020, Edited by Harry F. Dahms
- Volume 37: Society in Flux: Two Centuries of Social Theory, 2022, Edited by Harry F. Dahms

This page intentionally left blank

CURRENT PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL THEORY
VOLUME 38

MAD HAZARD: A LIFE IN SOCIAL THEORY

BY

STEPHEN TURNER

University of South Florida, USA



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

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

First edition 2022

Copyright © 2022 Stephen Turner.
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

Reprints and permissions service

Contact: permissions@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. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

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

ISBN: 978-1-80382-670-7 (Print)
ISBN: 978-1-80382-669-1 (Online)
ISBN: 978-1-80382-671-4 (Epub)

ISSN: 0278-1204 (Series)



ISOQAR certified
Management System,
awarded to Emerald
for adherence to
Environmental
standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-------------|
| <i>About the Author</i> | <i>ix</i> |
| <i>Editors' Foreword</i> | <i>xi</i> |
| <i>Memoir Disclaimer</i> | <i>xiii</i> |
| <i>Preface</i> | <i>xvii</i> |
| <i>Prologue</i> | <i>xxi</i> |
| | |
| Meet the Family | <i>1</i> |
| Born Into Chicago: Participant Observer in a Time of Racial Succession | <i>11</i> |
| Miami: The Quest for Normalcy at the Edge of Change | <i>31</i> |
| Four Colleges in Fifteen Months: Higher Learning in the Sixties | <i>41</i> |
| Tulane and New Orleans: Sociology as an Identity | <i>49</i> |
| Semigraduate Student: Becoming a Theorist in a Time of Troubles | <i>55</i> |
| Florida Forever: Surviving in a Discipline in Crisis | <i>81</i> |
| Refugee from the War in Sociology: Conflict and Contention in 1970s Sociology and the Alternative of Philosophy of Social Science | <i>91</i> |
| Reconstructing the Philosophical Thought of Durkheim and Weber and the Turn to Science Studies | <i>105</i> |
| Graduate Research Professor and Divorce: Professional Crisis and the Turn to History of Sociology | <i>131</i> |

| | |
|--|-----|
| New Love and the Return to Philosophy: Living Beyond Disciplines in a Disciplinary World | 141 |
| <i>The Social Theory of Practices: Understanding Practices Naturalistically</i> | 145 |
| Pyrrhic Victories and a Family: Leaving the Sociology of the Nineties | 151 |
| The Nineties, Postmodernism, Normativity, and Other Controversies: Practices between Cognitive Science and Ethics | 159 |
| Strange Encounters in the History of Sociology and in Archives: Learning from Archives and the Politics of Collection | 175 |
| Causal Models Again: Understanding Statistical Causality and Its Problems | 179 |
| Cognitive Science: The Mutual Implications of the Cognitive Revolution and Sociology | 185 |
| Cleaning Up: Reconciling Normativity, Collective Intentionality, and the Brain | 197 |
| Politics and Law: Kelsen, Weber, and the Defense of Democracy | 207 |
| Epilogue: Luck and the Future of Academic Thought | 217 |
| <i>References</i> | 219 |
| <i>Index</i> | 231 |

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Turner is Distinguished University Professor. His PhD is from the University of Missouri. His dissertation, *Sociological Explanation as Translation*, was published in 1980 by Cambridge. He is the author of a number of books in the history and philosophy of social science and statistics, including books on Max Weber, on whom he also edited the Cambridge Companion volume. He is the coauthor of the standard one-volume history of American Sociology, *The Impossible Science*, and has recently published an update, *American Sociology: From Pre-Disciplinary to Post-Normal*. He has also written extensively in science studies, especially on patronage and the politics and economics of science, and on the concept of practices, including three books, *The Social Theory of Practices* and *Brains/Practices/Relativism*, and a collection of essays, *Understanding the Tacit*. His *Liberal Democracy 3.0: Civil Society in an Age of Experts* reflects his interest in the problem of the political significance of science and more broadly in the problem of knowledge in society. A collection of his essays on this topic, *The Politics of Expertise*, also addresses these issues. Among his other current interests are problems of explaining normativity, especially the conflict between philosophical and social scientific accounts, and issues relating to the implications of cognitive neuroscience for social theory, especially related to the problem of tacit knowledge and mirror neurons. His *Cognitive Science and the Social: A Primer* is a survey of the problems posed for cognitive science by the social, and for traditional views of the social by cognitive science. His book, *Explaining the Normative*, is a critique and an alternative to the accounts of “normativity” one

finds in philosophers like McDowell, Brandom, Korsgaard, Nagel, and the like. He has had fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies.

EDITORS' FOREWORD

Since the inception of *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* (CPST) in 1980, we considered monographs for inclusion on numerous occasions. For one reason or another, however, those prospects did not materialize. As a result, aside from a collection of previously published essays by a single author (vol. 28), all volumes have been original essays by different authors. Even though the opportunity has existed in the past, the present volume constitutes the first monograph published in this journal. Stephen Turner's memoirs are a most fitting contribution to the series. Turner has been a member of the editorial board of *Current Perspectives* for three decades, since 1991, and a leading contributor to and spokesperson for the style of theoretical work CPST stresses.

Working from a strong foundation in classical social theory, influenced especially by the works of Max Weber, and to a lesser extent by Émile Durkheim, Stephen Turner has played a key role in social theory circles for more than four decades, both in the United States and internationally. He has published important theoretical work in the most prominent general journals and in more specialized outlets. His corpus includes many single-authored and coauthored monographs and many edited and coedited volumes. His contributions have addressed an exceptionally broad spectrum of theoretic themes and issues, including philosophy of social science, cognitive science, and democracy. As a faculty member at the University of South Florida, initially in the Department of Sociology, and since 1984 in the Department of Philosophy – where he has been Distinguished University Professor and Director of the Center for Social and Political Thought – he has pursued and promoted social theory as an indispensable activity in the modern world that warrants strong and unwavering commitment as well as focused and resolute attention. Stephen Turner also has played a major organizational and interdisciplinary networking role in social theory, including being a founding member of the International Social Theory Consortium (ISTC) in 2000. He has since been involved in organizing or coorganizing yearly ISTC conferences rotating between the United States and other parts of the world.

Stephen Turner's biographical essay illuminates the highly varied academic activities and everyday-life contexts that shaped his work as a theorist. The combination of autobiography and memoirs elaborates how his thought emerged from the relationships he forged at different stages of life with family, friends, and leading theorists, at the many universities at which he has worked, and through diverse professional contexts. The detail Turner provides in this monograph on related matters in their multiplicity and multidimensionality is impressive, unusual, and in many ways, undeniably unique.

Stephen Turner has contributed substantially to interdisciplinary work on Max Weber and Weberian theory, sociology of science, and the methodological and philosophical foundations of social science. However, what makes his biographical monograph especially appropriate for *CPST* is his persistent and determined effort over the course of several decades to distinguish *social theory* from more narrowly drawn, specialized sociological theory, and to forge a distinct transdisciplinary space for a theoretical practice rooted ultimately in classical social theory. Indeed, it is ever more important to insist on the cosmopolitan outlook on social theory as a practice that requires and deserves its distinctive communicative space, which must be protected and maintained, beyond the increasingly hyperspecialized academic division of labor that has been shaping all disciplines – not just the natural sciences, but also the social sciences and humanities. In contrast to the dominant view of theory in disciplinary social science, Turner, as well as *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, represents the classical, “big picture” style of social theory as a living theoretical practice that provides rational means to argue the normative and analytical directions of more specialized, narrowly framed forms of disciplinary theory and of broader socio-cultural and political life.

Stephen Turner’s work in international social theory circles, his role in the formation of the International Social Theory Consortium, and his rich corpus of work across disciplinary lines have contributed substantially to later twentieth and early twenty-first-century social theory. He is a leader who has helped forge an interdisciplinary, international “home” for social theorists. Given the unequivocal and staunch devotion to the life of social theory demonstrated and illustrated in Turner’s memoirs, they are an indispensable and most fortunate part of social theory’s acknowledgment of its own social embeddedness and rigorous reflection of its history since the 1970s.

Harry F. Dahms, Editor
Robert J. Antonio, Associate Editor
Current Perspectives in Social Theory

MEMOIR DISCLAIMER

This is a memoir, and based on recollections, recollections of what I was told, and records my reactions to these events. Recollections can be faulty, and certainly are partial. Doubtless these are both, but no malice is intended: what is included here is presented solely for the purpose of explaining my own motivations and choices. If I misinterpreted, misheard, or misremembered an event, I have simply recorded what I remembered. It is not intended to be anything more than an expression of my own responses. It is not meant as a depiction of other people, or of facts to which I had no personal access. It is a personal remembrance of a life and intellectual journey, from a personal perspective, and should be read accordingly.

This page intentionally left blank

...academic life is a mad hazard.
Max Weber

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

I have been asked if I am writing a memoir. My initial answer was no, but on reflection, I have gone ahead and written one. I have published two short accounts of particular episodes in my life, and a third on rural sociology that was also personal, but they were largely oriented to my academic career. This one will be a little different, though I need to make some qualifications. My life has not been a terribly eventful or interesting one. I did not, as my father's father did, rise to an overwhelming challenge. I have not been torn by inner conflicts, doubts, profound regrets, and the like. I have had many disappointments in life, like everyone else, but only one has gnawed at me, and I believe that even here what ultimately happened was probably for the best. I have never thought of myself as a lucky person, but I did have one stroke of luck that changed my life. Whether it was a matter of merit, and whether I deserved it, is for others to judge. It did allow me to behave as a research scholar without getting a job at a major university, and to stay in Florida, which was always my priority. I have always tried to repay it and other kindnesses done for me through helping others with their academic careers. In a sense, this memoir is a repayment as well, to others who have found themselves on the margins of the intellectual communities they thought they were a part of. It is not designed to give them hope, but perhaps some solace and a sense that it is possible to live a worthwhile life of the mind despite the realities of present-day academia.

I can explain what happened to me, what my thoughts and motivations were at the time, what I took pleasure in and what produced pain, and say something about the people I was related to, my teachers and mentors, my friends and colleagues, and the larger world I enjoyed. This is thus a "life and times" memoir, with an emphasis on the times. If my life was not interesting, the times were. It is a cliché from Kierkegaard that life must be lived forward and can only be understood backward. I am not at all sure that I understand the world I was thrown into and the transformations I lived through. Women's liberation, the sexual revolution, the demise of sociology, the transformation of academic life, the decline of national loyalty and civility, and the end of the traditional religious substrata of social life – all this happened during my life, and affected me. My longtime helper, Eileen Kahl, has pointed out to me that I have omitted any discussion of the work that has occupied much of my time – mentoring – helping graduate students with dissertations, editing, and otherwise advising and encouraging. This has been gratifying work, and I am pleased that so many of these students and colleagues have prospered and achieved, or, in the harsh academic present, survived. Out of discretion and a reluctance to appear to take

credit for what they have accomplished, I have left this out. The successes and happy lives of others have nevertheless been a great source of satisfaction for me.

My major motivation for writing this memoir is that I never felt I had communicated any of this, or enough of this, to my sons. There is a moment to tell one's story, a moment when it can be a kind of dialogue, and this moment never seemed to come. My own father told me much more, and I spent several summers going around to buildings with him, doing what needed to be done, but mostly just watching him supervise, negotiate, deal with businesses – shade shops, laundries, plumber supply shops, paint stores, and so forth. With my own sons I tried to give them the childhood I didn't have: little league, support for anything they wanted to do, lessons, and a bit of soccer, and availability at all times to play catch, go to the beach, toss the football, and interact. I took time to travel with each of them, and there was no lack of contact. But I didn't feel there was ever the right time or the right receptivity to tell the rest of it. It is difficult to explain one's attitudes apart from the environment in which they were formed. This is in part what I have tried to do here.

Autobiographies are often either triumphal accounts or complaints. I hesitate to make this one either. It is not bitter, or at least not intended to be bitter. Nor is it a story of triumph, over the odds, or in any sense other than the story of a satisfactory life of the mind and the partial fulfillment of early dreams. Many biographies and autobiographies of intellectuals resemble the journey of an express train, rushing between major stops, going from success to success. This one is more like the meandering route of a local, with stops in many villages. These villages, the small communities in which friendships and mutual understanding are made, were my primary intellectual homes. The phrase "in the village everyone is famous" applies to them. They were the little platoons of intellectual life, not the towering heights, or the precincts of the mandarins.

It is necessarily a story of loss. Most of what I will describe, inevitably, is lost worlds, lost social worlds, and lost intellectual worlds. My partially fulfilled dreams were of Miami, as it was in the 1950s and 1960s, and in a sense of what it was in the 1920s, as will become clear. This is where I was comfortable and wanted to be, but could not be. It is an academic and intellectual memoir, at least after I come to my thirties. By this time I was pulled along by the ordinary currents of academic life – invitations, roles, PhD students, and a terminal position with its own demands. These demands get some attention, and are revealing about the transformation of universities.

It was not a life without its passions and turmoil, but it was also uxorial, and always surrounded by pets, or children, or both. I have tried to be as honest as possible about the motives I had, or reflected on, at the time. This kind of second order reflection – reflections on memories of reflections – is inevitably subject to error and confabulation. The story told here is not didactic. My experience is not a model anyone could follow today. The good and bad luck of the present does not resemble the luck of the past.

I got the life I wanted, though not in the crucial detail of location. But what I did get, namely the privilege of living half my life in Pass-a-Grille, brought me in many ways closer to the life I envisioned. Although not a triumphal life, it was

productive and externally successful. I had many hours to sit on the porch and watch the mockingbirds and many hours with cats snuggled next to me or laid out on my chest. I made breakfast for two little girls during summers in Michigan. I played a lot of catch with my sons. These are the things I got pleasure from. I escaped Chicago, with scars. Others will need to judge which they were and how deep they were.

Texts like this can veer into name-dropping, but the names I will drop here are mostly obscure, though a surprising number of them can be easily traced. I don't think there are any illuminating stories about the rich and famous, though occasionally there are some about people who did lead interesting lives. The things reported here are the products of the failing memory of an old man. I have sometimes gone back to my "archive," but there is not much there. After the fire inspector insisted that my office be cleaned up and out, we separated the valuable documents into a container and prepared to throw out the less important stuff. Instead, the valuable box was tossed. It did not contain anything profound, however.

Although this is an academic memoir, it is not as impersonal as many such memoirs are. Indeed, for an academic memoir it is probably indecorous, and too personal. Nevertheless, this is how I experienced and valued what went on in my life, and it would be misleading and dishonest to leave it all out. I have not named many names in these connections, to preserve the privacy of people. But I have tried to convey the relationships as I saw them. I was fortunate in these relationships, and my regrets about them, though real, are few. I always looked for the silver linings in the clouds, and continue to do so. The powers we have to make things right for other people are real, but limited. I like the idea that Stoicism was a formulation of the philosophy of Sparta, and I have always been prone to, and comforted by, this approach to life, for myself, at least. And that is reflected in this memoir, and perhaps explained as well by my childhood, in which finding the silver lining was a necessity.

This page intentionally left blank

PROLOGUE

The bookshelves in my father's office in the basement of our house in Chicago had a copy of Saul Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals* of 1946, a first edition "second impression," with an endorsement by Jacques Maritain, saying "this book is epoch-making," and a dust jacket quoting a newspaper description of Alinsky as a "hardboiled sociologist and criminologist who refuses to pull punches when he believes the welfare of the people with whom he works is being jeopardized." I was in my mid-sixties when I learned that the reports he published on gangs omitted the gang rapes they executed, and that his account of the rehabilitation of a robber had failed to explain that the thief had eventually gone back to crime. This book sat alongside my mother's gynecology textbooks from the 1930s and beyond, her copy of the Kinsey report on the Human Female (1953), Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis* (1945), a crumbling paperback collection of de Maupassant short stories that my father had kept from his time in the Army Air Force in Guam, and a paperback of Plato's *Republic* with a few additional dialogues, which I appropriated. There was also a how-to book on making a million dollars in real estate (Nickerson 1959), which taught me a great deal. There was a paperback of *The Best American Short Stories 1959* that included Phillip Roth's breakthrough "The Conversion of the Jews" (1959), which spoke to my own deepening skepticism about theology.

There were many other books that I took note of, idly. Some were by people that my parents knew, such as James Nichols' history of Protestantism, others on such topics as Christian Sexual Ethics and the Dead Sea Scrolls. And there was a long run of *National Geographic*, in which one could find articles from the late 1940s on experimental aircraft, which fascinated me. My father's office had two large cluttered desks, covered with receipts from the family business. Clutter was a habit I inherited. My mother had a desk on the other side of the room, which she rarely used, with her case of medical instruments for house calls, which she seldom made, her medical school microscope, which I sometimes used, and the slides and data cards for her medical research. She used what amounted to a pre-Hollerith card sorter, with what looked like knitting needles that threaded through gaps punched at the edge of the cards. It was sufficient for her purposes. After she got the publication needed for her appointment as an Assistant Clinical Professor at Northwestern the system was never used again.

The basement was the warmest space in the house in the winter, and the coolest in the summer. It had a phone, which was used when people wanted privacy. I sat at the desk when my mother called from South Orange to tell me her father was dying of prostate cancer – I was 12; and when I needed to call my high school girlfriend four years later. This room was in a sense where my life as an “intellectual,” with my own tastes and concerns, began: the stepping stone to my later interests.