



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

Jurgen Habermas

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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.

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