describes it as 'a heady *compôte* of history, political science, philosophy and polemic' (p. 16). Above all, it is engaging, and challenges democratic truisms and received theories in a fashion that is both unsettling and salutary.

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The Future of Social Theory

Nicholas Gane

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In the course of nine interviews, Nicholas Gane explores the present situation and future of social theory. The central theme is the changed significance of the social. The presuppositions of classical sociology — the notion of the objectivity of society, or the idea that sociology is concerned with objects that are to be understood only in relation to the intentions of social actors, for instance — have been undermined today as a result of developments especially in the nature of technology. Gane and his interviewees do not claim that this means the end of the social as such, although there are suggestions that we may be speaking of the end of society. The key thesis that Gane attempts to advance in his lucid and insightful interviews is that the social is changing its form rather than disappearing. This is explored in a different way with each of the theorists interviewed.

Zygmunt Bauman argues that the notion of postmodernity is no longer adequate to account for developments in the nature of modernity, the contemporary form of which he calls liquid modernity. This liquid modernity is characterized by social forms based on transience, uncertainty, anxieties and insecurity, and results in new freedoms that come at the price of individual responsibility and without the traditional support of social institutions. Judith Butler explores the language of theorizing about the social, noting that the social tends to fall away in the current concern with the political and the cultural. One way the social can be conceptualized is in the social organization of exclusions, such as in family and kinship structures. But this is always a way of speaking, a discursive constitution.

There appears to be general agreement that the social is not a fixed condition, but is also constituted in language. Bruno Latour argues that the

social as society explains nothing; it is, he says, like the notion of ether in late 19th-century physics, namely a necessary illusion we have lived to learn with. In his view, the central issue is associations, that is the social concerns relations between things and what social actors do, rather than something that lies behind them and constitutes, as in Durkheim and Bourdieu, a reality or objectivity of its own. Scott Lash argues for a notion of sociological vitalism in the recognition that technologized forms of social relations have transformed the social, erasing the distinction between media and society and creating new vitalic forms akin to the flows and flux Simmel wrote about. John Urry takes this theme up in an argument for the salience of the social as mobilities, and the total irrelevance of the category of society. Mobilities are not just flows but networked relations, globally organized in new kinds of spaces and temporal processes. As with many arguments for the redundancy of society, the functional equivalent thereof seems to slip in, as in Urry's argument for the centrality of systems based on relations between mobilities and immobile elements. Globalization brings about new social forms beyond national, bounded societies. Saskia Sassen sees the global city as one of the key spaces of the social today. She highlights new transnational spaces that can be identified with mobile and globally connected social actors and other social forms such as global capital. The global is not outside the national; however, it filters the national through its imaginaries and institutional orders, including cross-border flows and exchanges.

Globalization lies at the centre of the reconstitution of the social. Ulrich Beck argues that sociology must cease to be national and become cosmopolitan in order to grasp the new transnational realities that now constitute the social. Internationalism is not enough, for this simply takes the perspective of a particular society and universalizes it, as in modern American sociology with its concern with the process of modernization. Cosmopolitanism entails taking into account different historical backgrounds, experiences, modernities. For Beck the key development that a cosmopolitan conception of the social is addressed to is not simply the fact that the world is becoming more and more connected but the reality of a transnational space.

Nikolas Rose discusses his Foucauldian approach to the social. The social, he argues, concerns a specific domain that came into existence with modernity and is beginning to fade today when other realities are emerging. Society still exists, but not in a social form. The suggestion made here is that the social has given way, not to the political but to the ethical, since many of the key debates today are less about the social or the political than the ethical. Rose hesitates to use the term society, given its association with bounded national societies, but he is also cautious about the term the social, given its association with the set of specifically social issues that arose with modernity and that are allegedly abating today.

The final interview, with Françoise Vergès, concerns the relation between the social and the formation of empire. She argues that the constitution of the social in modernity was closely connected with colonial relations. The interview draws attention to the continuation of the model of colonization today in the new spaces created by globalization. In the grey zones of globalization are to be found 'postcolonial colonies'. Her hypothesis is that processes of creolization exist alongside other processes produced by globalization, which entails not just networks and contacts, but also conflict. Indeed, the distinctive feature of creolization is violence and it signals an entirely different conception of the social than that in modern sociology.

As interviews, we do not get fully worked out answers to complex and challenging questions. The volume does succeed in its aim in orienting critical thinking and promoting debate and further questions. The interviews are excellently edited and contain much that is new. The only criticism that can be made is that the problematic of globalization tends to overshadow other dimensions of the contemporary challenge to social theory.

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The Philosophical Foundations of Environmental Law

Sean Coyle and Karen Morrow

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Most writings about environmental law read it narrowly, with an assumption that it is merely an instrumental response to the contemporary problems of environmental management. Rarely do writers investigate the deeper philosophical currents that shape environmental law and its applications. In a very compact discussion, the authors have gone far beyond this limited view and attempted to link the substance and structure of current environmental law with broader changes in the philosophical treatment of human–nature relationships. The writing is dense but not inaccessible, and the authors have made a conscious attempt to keep the reader oriented to their thesis. The difficulties primarily reside in the authors' attempt to make a broad statement about environmental law which, in fact, is limited to common law and most particularly to the English experience. This criticism is offset by the care that