



Human Institutions: A Theory of Societal Evolution

By Jonathan H. Turner

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In recent years 'the New Institutionalism' has focused more on organizations in their social and cultural environments than on societal-level institutional systems. Thus, missing from these studies has been a larger sociological analysis of institutions, per se. In his newest book, leading social theorist Jonathan H. Turner offers a creative, richly grounded reinterpretation of social evolution. He ressurects a level of analysis undertaken by earlier functionalist theorists, but with a new-found emphasis—that of discovering the larger forces driving the formation of human institutional systems. Only by exploring the larger macro-dynamics can the institutions of economy, kinship, religion, polity, law, and education be fully understood, as Turner persuasively shows in this magisterial explication of twenty millenia of human social life.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a stunning achievement by a first-rate scholar and social theorist. Highly recommended. (*CHOICE*)

[Turner's] book is an excellent contribution to the theoretical literature on social evolution. Turner has an excellent feel for how the process of long-term social evolution works, both descriptively and in terms of the key casual forces. His book should be read far and wide. (*American Journal of Sociology*)

Using innovative methods, concepts, and notations developed in his earlier works, and eschewing a 'prime mover,' Turner outlines a cogent and comprehensive macro-level theory of social organization and social change. Avoiding the pitfalls of earlier functional analyses of social institutions and social order, the theory identifies the key 'macro-dynamic' forces that shape and alter the 'institutional order,' and it proposes general models of their impact, and of the patterned interrelationships, and mutual causality among the key institutions of societies. (Patrick D. Nolan, University of South Carolina)

About the Author

Jonathan H. Turner is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at University of California, Riverside. Among his many influential books is the recently published *Face to Face: Toward a Sociological Theory of Interpersonal Behavior* (2002).

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