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Put Philosophy to Work: on the Relation between Philosophy and Social Theory

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Lindgren, Lena (Sociology Lund University, 22100 Lund Sweden [tel: +46 46 12 90 85; fax: +46 46 222 44 34; e-mail: lena.lindgren@soclaw.lu.se]), **“Put Philosophy to Work”: On the Relation Between Philosophy and Social Theory**, *International Sociological Association, Gothenburg, Sweden*,

¶ This paper discusses the relationship between sociological theory & different philosophical traditions. The contemporary “sociology of philosophy,” which considers philosophical thinking either as part of a “sociological critique” (Bourdieu) or in terms of a more disinterested analysis (Collins), does not seem to alter the relationship; mainstream sociological theory leaves analytical philosophy largely aside. The second part of the paper regards the relationship between sociology and philosophy through the lens of “legitimacy.” The idea of legitimacy is one of the oldest in political & legal philosophy and has been a part of sociological theory from the very beginning. A brief historical account of shifting attitudes towards the normative concept of political legitimacy is presented, extending from the Comtian disdain of its metaphysical heritage to today’s use of it as an uncontested part of common sociological knowledge and vocabulary. Jürgen Habermas’s widely accepted normative theory of legitimacy & legitimation is discussed. Could the lack of competing non-normative sociological views be explained by difficulties in formulating viable alternatives to philosophical scholarship? In the concluding section it is argued that the customary borders between philosophy & social & political science should be crossed. The analysis of the concept of legitimacy is seen as exemplifying the advantages of a non-normative interdisciplinary approach.