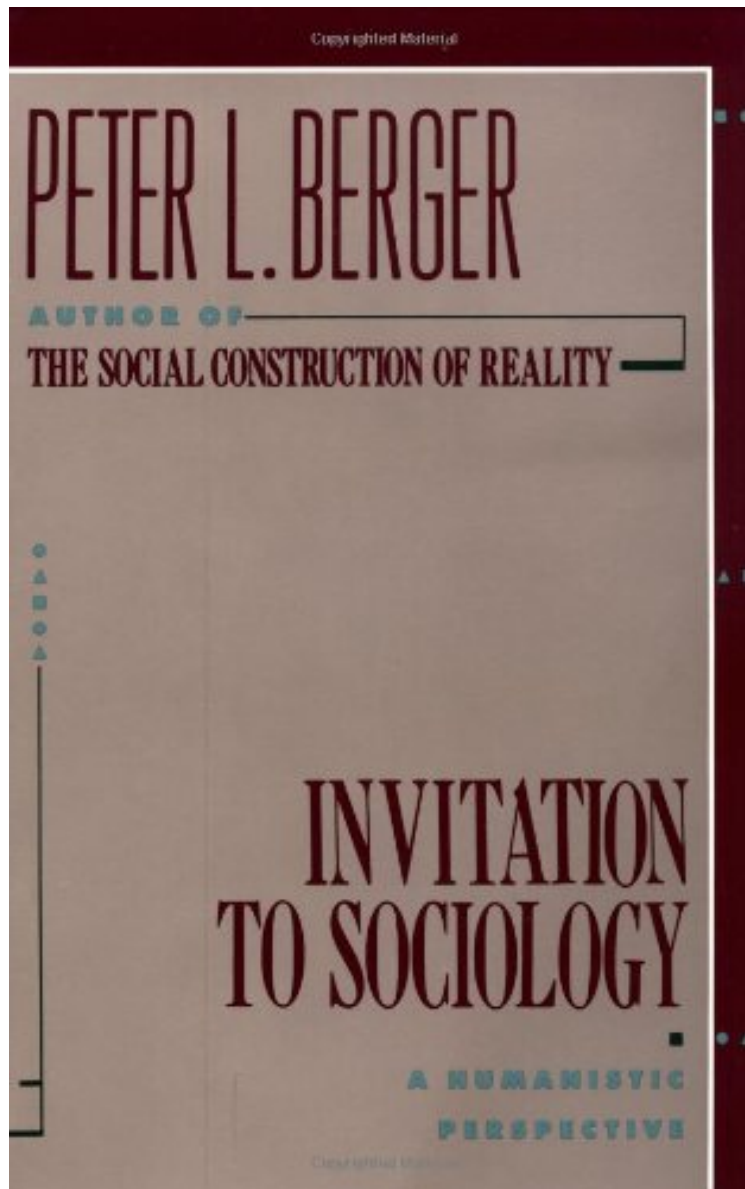


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Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective

Peter L. Berger

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Peter L. Berger : Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective:

28 of 28 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and entertaining intro to sociological thought By JDS Berger discusses the role and place of sociology in the modern world. He stresses sociological consciousness-- seeing how macro structures shape individuals. He shows how what we think to be our long-standing social traditions

and norms are really just arbitrarily socially constructed. Here he expands on the debunking tendency of sociology to question our commonly accepted assumptions about the social world. There are great examples of how society forms us internally and surrounds us externally. Berger demonstrates the different sociological perspectives as well as touching lightly on the different theorists (Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, etc.). In showing how one is boxed in by social forces, he uses a great metaphor of a person who stands in the center of concentric circles of social control (law, state, occupation, race, class, family, religion, etc.). Society also shapes us internally by providing systems of meaning, or ideologies, that help us make sense of the world. He relates sociology not only to the social sciences but to the humanities and philosophy. The ethical considerations for sociological research are looked at in "Sociological Machiavellianism". The overall theme is that society limits freedom and individuals should question tradition by debunking the established order. Easy and interesting, he makes sociology relevant to everyday life.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great Sociology
By Barbara A. Coscarello
A great, down-to-earth approach to Sociology. A must read for all Intro to Sociology college students.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant short tour of sociology
By Jordan Bell
I came to this book after reading Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. In fact it would have been better to read this (introductory) book first and then Berger and Luckmann's (more sophisticated) book. "Another system of social control that exerts its pressures towards the solitary figure in the center is that of morality, custom and manners. Only the most urgent-seeming (to the authorities, that is) aspects of this system are endowed with legal sanctions. This does not mean, however, that one can safely be immoral, eccentric or unmannered. At this point all the other instrumentalities of social control go into action. Immorality is punished by loss of one's job, eccentricity by the loss of one's chances of finding a new one, bad manners by remaining uninvited and uninvitable in the groups that respect what they consider to be good manners." "In other words, institutions provide procedures through which human conduct is patterned, compelled to go, in grooves deemed desirable by society. And this trick is performed by making these grooves appear to the individual as the only possible ones." "In the same way, society supplies our values, our logic and the store of information (or, for that matter, misinformation) that constitutes our 'knowledge.' Very few people, and even they only in regard to fragments of this world view, are in a position to re-evaluate what has thus been imposed on them. They actually feel no need for reappraisal because the world view into which they have been socialized appears self-evident to them. Since it is also so regarded by almost everyone they are likely to deal with in their own society, the world view is self-validating. Its 'proof' lies in the reiterated experience of other men who take it for granted also. To put this perspective of the sociology of knowledge into one succinct proposition: Reality is socially constructed."

This lucid and lively book, punctuated with witty, incisive examples, is addressed both to the layman who wants to know what sociology is all about and to students and sociologists who are concerned about the larger implications and dimensions of their discipline. Professor Berger places sociology in the humanist tradition and recognizes it as a "peculiarly modern, peculiarly timely form of critical thought." Without underestimating the importance of scientific procedures in sociology, he points out its essential affinity with history and philosophy, and he shows how sociology in this sense can contribute to a fuller awareness of the human world. "Unlike puppets," he notes, "we have the possibility of stopping in our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved. In this act lies the first step towards freedom." Professor Berger discusses this consciousness in detail, in relation to one's own biography, to the operations of social institutions, and to the makeup of an individual as a product of these institutions. In each instance, he outlines the major contributions to sociology of such classical sociologists as Weber, Pareto, and Durkheim in Europe; Veblen, Cooley, and Mead in the United States; and some of the most important names in the field today.