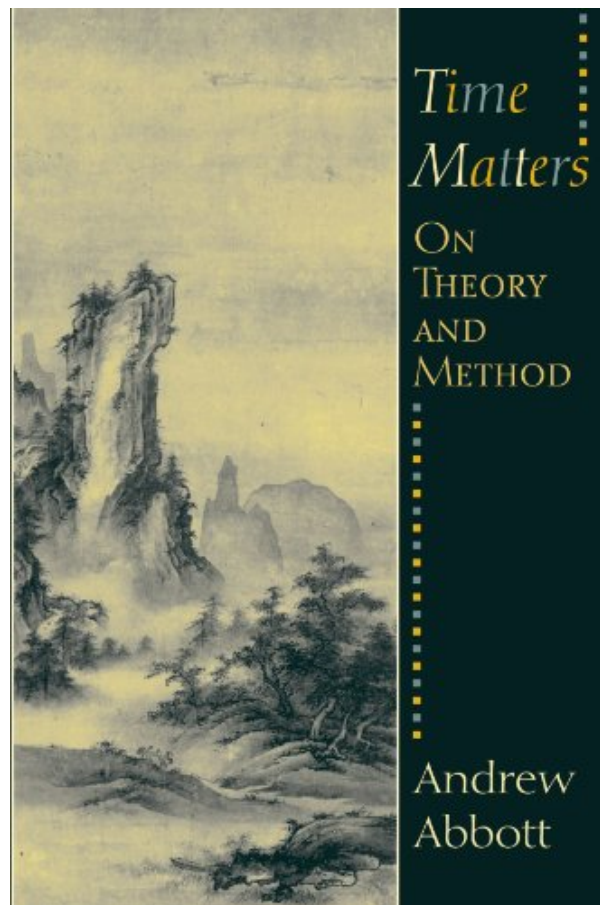
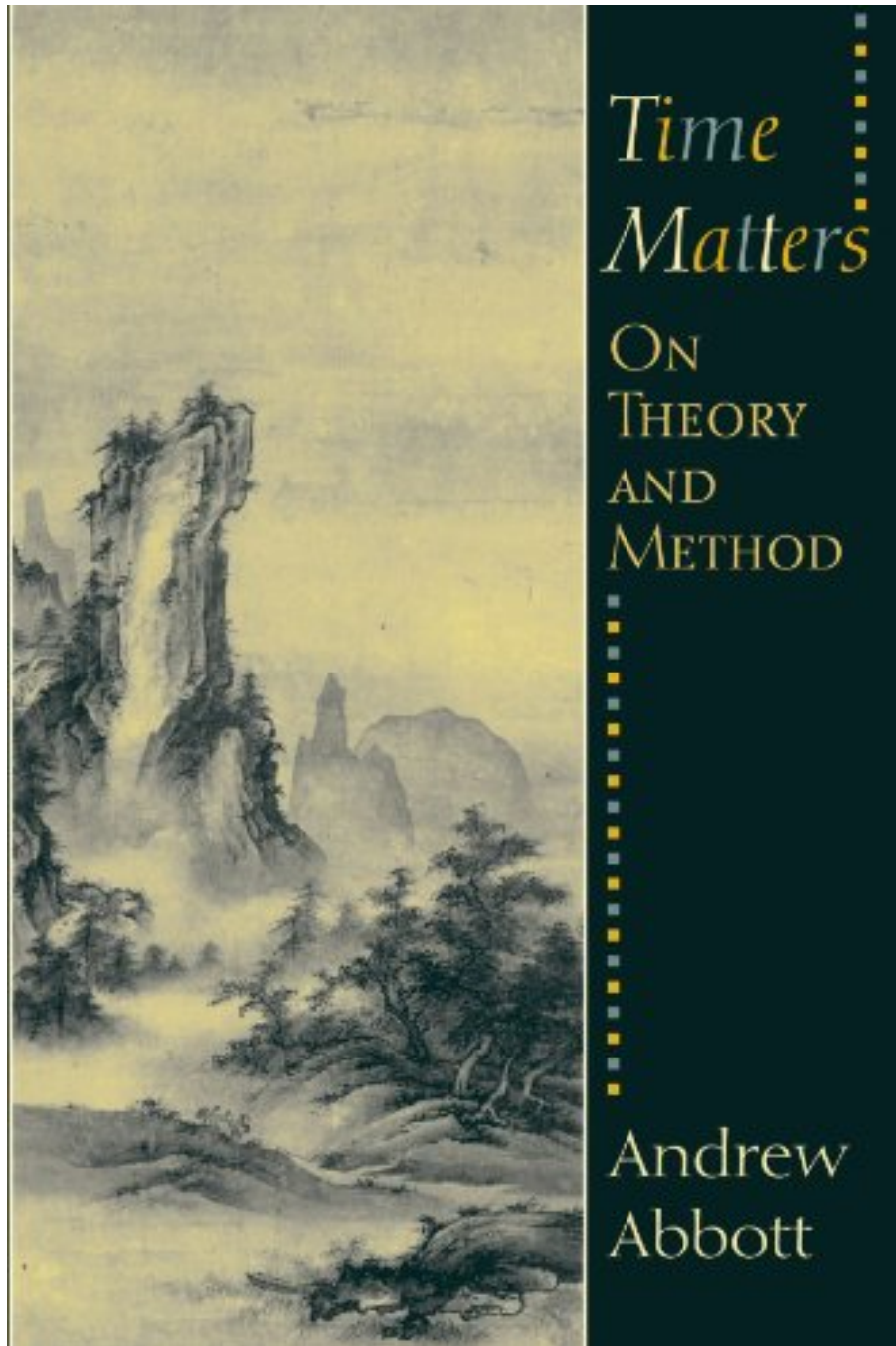


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What do variables really tell us? When exactly do inventions occur? Why do we always miss turning points as they transpire? When does what doesn't happen mean as much, if not more, than what does? Andrew Abbott considers these fascinating questions in *Time Matters*, a diverse series of essays that constitutes the most extensive analysis of temporality in social science today. Ranging from abstract theoretical reflection to pointed methodological critique, Abbott demonstrates the inevitably theoretical character of any methodology.

*Time Matters* focuses particularly on questions of time, events, and causality. Abbott grounds each essay in straightforward examinations of actual social scientific analyses. Throughout, he demonstrates the crucial assumptions we make about causes and events, about actors and interaction and about time and meaning every time we employ methods of social analysis, whether in academic disciplines, market research, public opinion polling, or even evaluation research. Turning current assumptions on their heads, Abbott not only outlines the theoretical orthodoxies of empirical social science, he sketches new alternatives, laying down foundations for a new body of social theory.

## About the Author

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bringing time back in.

By suburban dissident

Abbott's *Time Matters* makes the case that time does, in the case of sociological research, matter. While, on the surface, this would seem an uncontroversial claim, Abbott shows how both methodologically and theoretically (or, more precisely, meta-theoretically) sociological research has largely neglected elements of time, sequence, and event.

The book brings together a number of Abbott's more memorable articles and edited volume chapters, including his significant work of unpacking what he calls General Linear Reality - the assumed linear relation of causes and effects at the heart of positivistic social science - and denouncing it as deeply at odds with what we know of the social world. He makes similar contributions to fixing the misunderstanding of the importance of event orders, what events even are, what cases do, and proceeds to make a case for a narrative approach that embraces the sequential nature of social life.

Two caveats: (1) again, as a collected volume, these chapters are mostly available in their journal article form. (2) Abbott's work is methodologically and philosophically heady and thus not the best reading for the novice in the social sciences.

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