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INTRODUCTION:
KEY ISSUES
IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF INTELLECTUALS

Simon Susen and Patrick Baert

Abstract This chapter offers some preliminary reflections on Simon Susen and Patrick Baert's *The Sociology of Intellectuals: After 'The Existentialist Moment'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). The chapter emphasizes three principal objectives of this book: first, to explore a new set of conceptual and methodological tools for the sociology of intellectuals (*theoretical level*); second, to assess how the phenomenon of the public intellectual has altered since the beginning of the twentieth century (*historical level*); and, third, to examine the extent to which intellectuals can play a constructive role in influencing social and political developments in the modern era (*normative level*). The chapter goes on to give a brief overview of both the structure and the contents of the book. Finally, the chapter explains why, in light of recent social and political transformations, the challenge of providing a theoretical framework for the sociological study of intellectuals has become particularly pressing.

Keywords Baert · Intellectuals · Public intellectuals · Sartre · Sociology of intellectuals · Susen

This book seeks to provide a cutting-edge account of key issues in the sociology of intellectuals. To this end, it centres on Patrick Baert's latest contribution to this field of inquiry: *The Existentialist Moment*:

The Sociology of Intellectuals
After 'The Existentialist Moment'

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